
BRIDGES OF HOPE: SENIOR CITIZENS' MEMORIES

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I. Chairil Anwar

One day in August 1999, when I had nothing urgent to do on my own project, I went to visit the "Collection of H. B. Jassin," the national literary archives in Jakarta. A friend had recently mentioned Chairil Anwar, the poet, in an interesting way, so I went to see what is there, in the archives, of the man. The archives building is in "Ismail Marzuki Gardens," a complex of several cultural institutions, located not far from the city center. The taxi took me to the Gardens, passed the guard at the main gate, turned right, and stopped there. Arrows pointed to the archives, toward an area where there was no more asphalt, just a trace of a grassy path surrounding the big building in front of which the taxi stopped. Through the open doors and windows, in this building's otherwise empty halls, I saw pairs of, evidently cultural, officials playing Ping-Pong. The arrows led me further around the building, among and over heaps of trash—insect-buzzing and rat-lively, soft, and occasionally ankle-deep. At the end of the path, at the back of the Ping-Pong building, at a stinking pond, a man in a stark-white shirt and dark starch-ironed trousers was fishing. Crossing over an unsteady plank, across a pool of even more stinking sewage, I entered the archives.

Inside, it is true, it was air-conditioned. After making my request, I got about two dozen boxes—about half marked "Chairil Anwar: The Life," the other half marked "Chairil Anwar: The Work." As I loosened the straps, the boxes burst open, violently, like a flood, spilling mostly newspaper clippings. Efforts to put things in chronological order made it even more violent. At some moments, in the past, evidently, something happened and, suddenly, newspapers were clipped, mostly reports of a commemorative poetry reading on Chairil's birthday and death-day celebrations, some reviews . . . an avalanche of clippings. Then, equally sudden, came another gap of months and years.

I found a book now and then among the clippings: "Books belonging to Chairil Anwar." As a rule, they were smeared, and many pages were torn out. There were some European avant-garde titles of the nineteen-twenties, cheap editions of classics, poetry; *Junge Kunst Band 8*; *Van l'art pour l'art tot Poèsie pure* editions; *The Best English Stories of 1932, vol. I*; *Matisse, Les éditions bleu*; E. T. A. Hoffman; Klaus Mann's *André Gide*; *Contemporary British Literature: a critical survey of 232 authors . . .*

The names of the books' original or previous owners were often inscribed on the flyleaves, sometimes crossed out and sometimes not. Almost all were Dutch. This was a lost property at best. As the German armies invaded the Netherlands in 1940, and then, as the Japanese invaded the East Indies in 1942, and then, as the Indonesian Revolution flared out in 1945, the Dutch were escaping invasions, being herded into the camps, trying to return, and escaping again, these books were sold off in a hurry or just left behind. Then, they could be bought for almost nothing—even Indonesians could have them!—at the second-hand markets that boomed in the moments of disaster; or they might be simply taken from abandoned houses. Chairil Anwar's signature appears on the fly-leaves wherever there is still a place on the page. Sometimes, if there is no place, the poet's name is scribbled over a previous name. Besides, phrases, lines of possible future poems, and rows of numbers—possibly lists of expenses—in Chairil's hand are found all over the books, written in the margins and between the printed text. These are some of the most powerful pieces of writing I have ever encountered in Indonesia. They evoke, too, some of the most violent—violently beautiful—scenes of a colonial interior broken in and ravished.

When Chairil Anwar died in 1949, at the age of twenty-seven, H. B. Jassin, his contemporary, the critic and mentor of the Chairil's literary generation, took the books, often scribbled in his own name over the other names on the flyleaves, and sometimes wrote his own phrases, lines of possible future essays, and lists of expenses on the margins and between the printed text. I was never entirely sure who had written what. After Jassin suffered his series of strokes (he died this year), he gave the books to the archives that carried his name. Or, maybe—he could not speak any more—the books were taken from him.

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Chairil Anwar is a lesson for a historian. He teaches the historian to think of the past as a stream, *banjir*, flood, rushing across the time. The people of courage, the revolutionaries and the poets, try to wade through, and to break the flood.

He was wholly a city man, a walker. And the street in his time—he came to Batavia/Jakarta just when the war was about to start—literary, was the wildest of all streams: muddy, with dissolving heaps of trash, with animals and people alive, almost dead, dead, or decomposing. Chairil's way of walking through was loafing *dipinggir jalan*, "along the sidewalk," at the edge of the street . . . loitering. *Gelandangan* was the word in which he described it often: "vagrant."¹

¹ The broader social meaning of the word in postwar Indonesia is discussed in Onghokham, "Gelandangan sepanjang zaman," *Prasarat disampaikan dalam Seminar Nasional Pola dan Strategi Terpadu tentang Alternatif Penanggulangan Masalah Gelandangan*, Kaliurang 1-4 Mrt 1982 (Yogyakarta: Lembaga Riset dan Pengabdian Masyarakat. Fakultas Hukum, Universitas Indonesia, n.d.); and Aswab Mahasin, ed.,

As a good loafer, Chairil Anwar too was stealing, snatching away phrases, lines, and whole poems from American, Dutch, German, and English poets, from Poe, Rimbaud, Marsman, Rilke, Slauerhoff, Ascot, MacLeish, or Auden; like he was stealing food and other things, to survive, and for the heck of it.²

Chairil was good at breaking things, and he knew very well what he was doing. Otherwise, the stream might sweep him away. He understood the importance of dense texture and of the tangibility of things—something that can be touched, that answers to a touch, and which can be held. Thus, also, he understood the significance of surface. One “seeks the heart of a dream,” he wrote in 1948, and “feels just a skin of hope.”³

He sought anything tangible, and, as he was a good poet, he particularly sought the tangible in language. At the time when virtually everybody was chanting with mystical reverence the word *semangat*, “spirit, enthusiasm, vigor,” Chairil kept to *jiwa*, “spirit, soul.”⁴ When *merdeka*, “freedom,” at the same time became the most sacred word in the language flood, Chairil wrote about himself and his, sometimes over-arduous, girlfriend: *Merdeka, juga dari Ida*, “Freedom, also from Ida.”⁵

Chairil was breaking the flow of language, the true *banjir*, flood, at the time of war, occupation, and Revolution, of the language of pathos, of verbal heroism, of the passive mode of collectivity. He was trying to break and split the stream of language by throwing plain words in it, words that might stick out: Dutch words, English words, dialect words. He used algebraic symbols sometimes: *susu + coca cola*, “milk + coca cola.” About himself and his girlfriends, he wrote: *aku dan Tuti + Greet + Amoi*, “me and Tuti + Greet + Amoi.”⁶ People, in Chairil’s poems, are bodies, often naked, each by itself, often, made into stone by his poetry, into a piece of marble: often corpses. The people, like the things, were to stay staunch amidst the flow—“this cadaver . . . roamer without history.”⁷ They were to be like boulders in the stream.

This, most significantly, was a way of thinking about a future, and a bridge to that future. As Chairil wrote, he tried to “carve” and “chisel” his poems in a *tugu*, “monument,” and as a message: “a broken ship at the bottom of the ocean.”⁸ His message makes one think of the most impressive of all bridges—bridges destroyed by

Gelandangan: pandangan ilmuwan sosial (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1984).

² He was arrested several times during the Japanese occupation and perhaps later as well. Once, at least, Soetan Sjahrir, Chairil’s relative, vouched for him and helped get him released from the jail. Interview with Lily Sutautio Sjahrir, April, 1982.

³ Chairil Anwar, “Ina Mia,” *Krikil Tadjam dan Jang Terampas Dan Jang Putus* [henceforth *KTJT*] (Jakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1949), p. 47.

⁴ Chairil, “Krawang-Bekasi,” *KTJT*, p. 44; and Chairil, “Buat Gadis Rasid,” *KTJT*, p. 49.

⁵ Chairil, “Merdeka,” *KTJT*, p. 32.

⁶ Chairil Anwar, “Tuti artic,” *Deru Tjampur Debu* [henceforth *DTD*] (Jakarta: Pembangunan, Tjetakan kedelapan, 1966), p. 41. Ben Anderson pointed out to me that *Amoi* can be used as a general noun for attractive Chinese girls, and, perhaps, *Greet* is a “general” term here too for Dutch girls.

⁷ Chairil, “Kepada Penjair Bohang,” *DTB*, p. 37.

⁸ Chairil, “Suara Malam,” *KTJT*, p. 12; this is Burton Raffel’s translation in Chairil Anwar, *The voice of the night: Complete Poetry and Prose of Chairil Anwar*, trans. Burton Raffel (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center of International Studies, Southeast Asia Series, 1993), p. 17.

war, just pillars in the stream, conveying more intensely than any other bridge the bond between this and the other shore.

Yet, how does one get from one such pillar—stele of memory, ruin of language—to another one? How does one cross a bridge like that? There is a transcript of a radio speech given by Chairil Anwar in December 1945. The Japanese war and Occupation were over, Indonesian Independence was proclaimed, and the National Revolution was in full swing—or flood. In this particular several-minute speech, I believe, Chairil wrote his epitaph. Here, Chairil told his listeners how, in modern Indonesia, in this world, for a modern Indonesian, it might be possible to cross the bridge.

It is already in the title of the speech: *Hoppla!* The word sticks out. It is, sort of, an English word, a strange word, in any case, in an Indonesian text. The *Random House* dictionary defines “Hoopla” as “*informal*: 1. bustling excitement or activity . . . 2. speech and writing to mislead or to obscure an issue . . .” There is, certainly, an irony in the word, but irony of the most serious sort. “*Hopplaa!*” Chairil ended his speech on the microphone: “Jump! Fire the pure fire, the fire of the brotherhood of nations, that will not be extinguished.” “*Hopplaa!* Up, my generation, toward the flawless Indonesia. The flawless world—”⁹

The bridge for modern Indonesians was at last (almost) constructed out of an elegiac power of lightness, and of the frivolous.

II. Senior Citizens

The people whom I interviewed for my current project, “dialogue and nostalgia,” I call it, are of Chairil Anwar’s age (except that he is dead, and they are not); of Chairil’s habitat: urban Indonesia, mostly Jakarta; of Chairil’s education: high school, in most cases, which they attended during the Dutch late-colonial period or the Japanese Occupation, or both (some of them entered the college just before the Japanese arrived). When I asked them also, they told me that Chairil Anwar is “their poet.”

They are old people. The *banjir*, flood of history, in recent months especially, is reaching close to their doorsteps. They are courageous, but often cannot help but be scared by the flood. Some of this can be heard on my tapes. The former director of the Revolutionary radio, for instance, talked to me at his house, located on a small street in Jakarta behind Hotel Indonesia. Suddenly, a distant sound of *masa*, the “masses,” demonstrating and perhaps looting, was heard. The sound came nearer. He paused nervously and then said with a forced little smile: “station break.”¹⁰ These old people are important to me. They aged into an era that is no longer theirs (as my mother did, and as, eventually every one of us will).

These people are important for Indonesia as well. They are people of *tiga zaman*, “three eras”—the Dutch, the Japanese, and the post-colonial. Being part of a very tiny well-schooled minority of their nation, they were crucial in articulating Indonesia for its

⁹ Chairil Anwar, “Hoppla!” reprinted in *Chairil Anwar: Pelopor Angkatan 45*, ed. H. B. Jassin (Cetakan Keempat, Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1978), pp. 144-145.

¹⁰ Interview with M. Jusuf Ronodipuro, November 1998.

own inhabitants and, also, for the outside world. If anybody, they were to be some bridge. A whole book may be written about the interweaving of the old people's lives and memories, and I hope it will be. Here are merely a few early impressions.

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Language, first of all, seems crucially important. These people most often tell me that through the years of their schooling they spoke Dutch, plus one or more regional languages, and those in Batavia-Jakarta area also spoke the *Betawi* dialect. They spoke, they say, an organic mixture of the two or more components—*gado-gado*, they often explain, *gado-gado* being a popular vegetable salad on the islands. When the Japanese arrived, Dutch was forbidden, and Indonesian was decreed the language of communication. Not many people in Jakarta at the time knew more than a simple street version of *Melajoe*, the language out of which Indonesian—as a language of national unity—was being constructed as recently as the late 1920s. Even the Indonesian best schooled elite knew little Indonesian grammar, literature, and scientific terminology.

The entrance to the building that housed the high school in Jakarta during the Japanese Occupation now displays a plaque recording that this was the first school in the country where students were taught in Indonesian. The memorial endowment for the same school is named after the school's first teacher of Indonesian. The school's alumni remember the sudden change from Dutch to Indonesian, but not in the way I might expect it, given, for instance, my own memories of sudden switch from Czech to English: it was painful and I am still covered by wounds and inappropriate accents.

Few times I heard or read these people remembering the sudden change as an act of "re-acquiring" a language "that had been forgotten," or as a "chivalrous battle."¹¹ Mostly, as a rule in fact, the stories are rather funny: light or, better yet, frivolous. A Sundanese teacher, for instance, became famous by lecturing in his self-made Indonesian. His Sundanese students believed that he spoke Indonesian, and they understood his every word. The non-Sundanese students believed that he spoke Indonesian, and they did not understand anything at all.¹²

Several times they said that they *switched overnight*; and some said it in English.¹³ Facilely, as when an electric switch is turned to "off" and a reflection of the light still, for a fraction of second, remains in your eyes. *Switched overnight*, they say, but as you listen, the Dutch language is still there. They remember that they met, after classes, at the Senen Market, between the bookstalls, in a small restaurant they called *Tussen de Boeken*, which is Dutch for "Among the Books." They organized *tenteerclub*, Dutch for "study-drill club." The students commuting to Jakarta by train were called *treinleerlingen*, Dutch for "train students." A girl with a peculiar way of walking was

¹¹ Amin Singgih, in *Jembatan Antar Generasi: Pengalaman Murid SMT Djakarta, 1942-1945* [henceforth JAG], ed. Tim Redaksi (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1998), p. 106.

¹² Eddy Djoemardi-Djoekardi, JAG, p. 288.

¹³ Rosihan Anwar, JAG, p. 236.

called *de laatste wagon van de trein van vier*, Dutch for “the last carriage of the four-o-clock train.”¹⁴

This might be Dutch remembered in the same way these people remember old clothes, about which they also speak very often. They sold the old clothes from the pre-war Dutch era, during the Occupation, on the blackmarket to get some food; as the war progressed, less and less of the Dutch-era clothing remained.

But, I believe, Dutch in this case was not, like the clothes, disappearing item by item. Rather, it was, suddenly, a new use of an old language. Dutch words and sentences were sought at critical moments, when these people’s lives, or remembered lives, came dangerously close to touching the unbearable—when the stream, *banjir*, the flood of history, threatened to become too strong.

At a moment, close to a shock, when a student leaving home for a Japanese-era school (all this is narrated in correct, flowing Indonesian), his father is remembered saying to his son in Dutch: *Neem de daag zoals het is, en tracht het beste ervan te maken*, “Take the day as it is, and try to make the best of it.”¹⁵ At another moment, when the Japanese time got almost beyond the young persons’ endurance, they remember the teacher of Indonesian telling them, in Dutch, *Laat de haan in je hoofd kraaien, niet alleen in je borst!* “Let the rooster crow in your head, not merely in your chest!”¹⁶ A moment of the ultimate inhumanity for those young people came when several doctors—some of them teachers and relatives of the students—were accused by the Japanese of tampering with the tetanus vaccination and killing patients. They were tortured and butchered, and only pieces of bodies returned to their families. The event is commonly described in just three—and Dutch—words, *De Serum Kwestie*, “The Case of Serum.”¹⁷

When the stream of the war and the Occupation had grown in its power into *banjir* of the Revolution, as Indonesian Independence was declared in August 1945, one of the now old people remembers his feelings five decades later, “*ketika kemerdekaan . . . [kami] senang, gembira dan bangga, eindelijk*”; in Indonesian, “when the freedom came [we were] happy, cheerful, and proud” and in Dutch, “at last.”¹⁸

This was, I believe, a new quality of Dutch: a language now existing only in fragments and ruins. Thus, it could be used, its pieces could be thrown into the stream to break the stream and, perhaps, even to span it. The power of this “broken” Dutch rested—and rests in these people’s memories—in its qualities of non-fitting, un-touching. It was, and is, a usable language, because it so stuck, and sticks, out.

¹⁴ O. E. Engelen et al., *Lahirnya Satu Bangsa dan Negara: '45 Prapatan 10* [henceforth *LSB*] (Jakarta: Penerbitan Universitas Indonesia, 1997), p. 16. *Tenteerclub* is a strange word for many of my friends in Holland, and it is not in Dutch dictionaries. It comes from *tenteren*, an equivalent to *tentamiren*, meaning “probe, examine.”

¹⁵ Ario Senosastro, *JAG*, p. 130.

¹⁶ Soebardi Soeria Atmadja, *JAG*, p. 258.

¹⁷ Latifah Kodijat-Marzoeki in Naskah Yayasan Kawedri, ed., *Aku Ingat . . . Rasa Sekolah Kolonial di Awal Merdeka Bangsa* [henceforth *AI*] (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1996), p.11; interview with Soebandrio, August 1999.

¹⁸ Tira Soekartono-Djajadiningrat, *AI*, p. 27.

Some languages might function even better as the boulders in the stream than Dutch. German might, for instance. The Japanese declared German to be the only “great” Western language allowed in Indonesia. It was not taught very much in schools. It suggested a sort of surreal connection to things Dutch because it was so close to Dutch in the past, and it was now completely opposed; thus, it suggested a surreal connection to both the past and the present.

Some of the most potent notions of the era are remembered, and stick out, in the Indonesian narratives in German. The almost sacred notions of *rasa kesetiakawanan dan gotong royong*, meaning “sense of honesty and mutual help,” are recalled by the old people as *Ehrlichkeit und Treue*. These people remember how they, half a century ago, yearned to be *bersama*, “together,” and they express the idea in German, *durch Leide und Freude*, “through grief and joy.”¹⁹ The exaltation and tumult of their youthfulness is often recalled and summed-up as *Sturm und Drang*, meaning in German “Storm and Stress” (a term that usually refers to an eighteenth-century German literary movement, of course). I have repeatedly heard and read the phrase *Sturm und Drang* translated by these people, peculiarly and powerfully, as *puber*, meaning “teenager” or “puberty.”²⁰

Most usable in this language game, it appears, was and is English. It pops up at the most crucial moments. When the times got really bad, close to zero, to hunger, they ate—one remembers, suddenly in English—*sweet potatoes*. When the recollections come close to admitting how elitist, and thus isolated, in fact, they were (and still are)—the most awkward moment of all—at that moment, after Indonesian *kami tergolong*, “we are of the group,” an English, foreign, unfamiliar, untranslated, and strange word, *privileged*, is injected.²¹ Among the texts composed by these people, oral or written, there is one, a rarity, in which memory is fluent in expressions like “patriotism,” “heroism,” “martyrdom,” and “responsibility to transfer our experience to the next generations.” This is a speech given by an alumnus at his Japanese-times school reunion fifty years after. Among all the speeches at this reunion which, of course, are in correct Indonesian, this very fluent speech, without any apology or explanation, is entirely in English.²²

And again, in 1945, it was the climax of the story. These people entered, and were entered by, the stream, the flood of Revolution. Some of them, indeed, were swept away, killed, or they disappeared. One of those who did not die remembers the climax this way: *Baru kemudian terjadi actions*;²³ first, in Indonesian, “Then happened, ” after this, *actions*, in English. As if one were to say: *Hoppla*.

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Place in these memories is as important as language. Place, like language, as it can be expected, is often mentioned in connection with unity and the building of the nation. These people came together from all over the places to Jakarta, namely. Like language, however, place is rarely recalled as an agent of putting in roots. There is very little

¹⁹ O. E. Engelen et al., LSB, p. 22; interview with Aboe Bakar Loebis, July 1997.

²⁰ Soebardi Soeria Atmadja, JAG, p. 268; Indraningsih Wibowo, JAG, p. 194.

²¹ Zulaika Rachman Masjhur-Jasin, AI, p. 79; interview with Bebsi Soenarjo, August 1999.

²² Hilman Djajasasmita, JAG, pp. 177-178.

²³ Sjarif Soedomo, AI, p.150.

touching, even. Rather, the memories, strongly and with insistence, suggest the new-unity place as a quality of purity, and purity as a quality of blankness. The memory of place, like of language, is supposed to work toward uplifting. It should never be connected with sinking; rather with leaving again. One of the old men remembers: "In the Dutch time, in Semarang and Yogya," his friends were East or Central Javanese. "Outside" his school and home, in addition to it, there were Chinese and Dutch. When the Japanese came, he went to study at a high school in Jakarta. There the change took place and marked him for the future. After the war, he served throughout the archipelago, and "people thought that I am not a Javanese, when they heard me speaking without any Javanese accent."²⁴

There is little sense of intimacy in these people's memories about the place where they lived and learned during the Occupation, though at the time they were in their mid- or late-teens, living in Jakarta, a city that was then, as now, a hellish place but bursting with its own kind of sensuality and vigor! Virtually no details about interiors surface in these people's recollections—there is virtually no sense of dwelling.

Un-touching defines the memory of the urban landscape. Jakarta's topography is most often drawn by these people's memories of marching. It is a commonly accepted view that marching, in the Japanese Indonesia—an important part of policy and life—equaled militarism. The memories of the Chairil contemporaries who survived, however, and I had this experience with quite a number of them, quickly turn the memory of marching into a memory of something very different, of jogging. *Kakeashi*; they would use a Japanese term and then either translate it into Indonesian as *lari-lari kecil*, a "running which uses very short steps," or "leave it" as *jogging*, in English.²⁵

From the school in Menteng (most of the higher level schools were located in this area of Jakarta), they "jogged" in the direction of Gambir, Jakarta central square, and Pasar Baru, the "New Market":

. . . other times we run [*kakeashi*] to Tanah Abang, singing patriotic songs . . . then, back to the kiosk [*kios*] in the Van Heutszplein near the school . . . Other times we *kakeashi* to Oranje Boulevard (later Diponegoro Street) by the house of Brother Hatta . . . through the Suropati Square and back again . . .²⁶

Remembering the place names as loosened from the actual time—the most colonial-imperial Dutch names, *Oranje Boulevard* or *Van Heutszplein*, thrown amidst the most patriotic-heroic Indonesian names, *Diponegoro Street* or *Suropati Square*—helps to flatten the remembered landscape even further.

²⁴ Sayidiman Suryohadiprojo, *JAG*, p. 249.

²⁵ Anonim, *JAG*, pp. 227-228; interview with Soedarpo Sastrosatomo, November 1998. The term *kakeashi* made it into the post-war Indonesian language dictionaries both as "a special military style of marching" (its original meaning) and as "jogging." See e.g., John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Indonesia-Inggris*, 3rd ed., rev. by John J. Wolff and James T. Collins (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1989) defines *kakéas* as "doubletime, quicktime in marching" and also as "jogging." A. Teeuw's *Indonesisch-Nederlands Woordenboek* (Leiden: KITLV, 1996) has *kakeas*, *kakias* only as *joggen*, "jogging." For some memories formulated as those of "kakiashi alias *jogging*," see also Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Nyanyi Sunyi Seorang Bisu* (Jakarta: Lentera, 1995), p. 185.

²⁶ Anonim, *JAG*, pp. 227-228.

They jogged from school to school. In fact, their route is still in use, and one can see Jakarta's elite still jogging there on Sunday mornings in their Nike shoes. Still, the question is legitimate: how much does this differ from the Chairil Anwar's *menggelandang*, the poet's loafing, his never staying in one place, trying to survive *dipinggir jalan*, "along the sidewalks," building his own identity at the edge of the stream?

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Bodies do not appear very often in these people's memories—if we mean warm, sensual, porous, leaking bodies. Although, bodies in sport, *korfball* and soccer bodies, jogging bodies, are intensely recalled. *Body building* (in English) is often mentioned: Joke Moeljono, known also for writing poetry, is remembered as being particularly good at it.²⁷ Regardless of what actually happened back then, these old people now remember the physicality of their youth and, especially, relations "between boys and girls" as "completely innocent." Whenever such relations approached a brink—the brink that divides dancing from something less guarded, for instance—a teacher (always present) made a clean end to it: *Gaan jullie maar naar huis*, he said (in Dutch), "Time to go home."²⁸

The less the bodies are there, the more they remember their clothing. The students of the high school in Japanese Jakarta, for instance, recall wearing "all-white uniforms, white caps, and white trousers." The school anthem of a sort, written in 1943, was *Petji Poetih, Petji Poetih*, "White Cap, White Cap."

For a long time I was perplexed by the way that *mengundulkan kepala*, "head shaving," was so often recalled and granted such importance. Whoever asks about the period is invariably regaled with stories about Japanese head-shaving. The Japanese made it a policy to require that students' (as soldiers') heads be shaved throughout their empire. At the Medical School in Jakarta this led to a student strike which spread to the nearby high school as well. Two top Indonesian leaders, Sukarno and Hatta, it is recalled, became involved and tried to defuse the situation. Some students were beaten by the *Kenpeitai*, and some were expelled from school. Important figures, and much of the solidarity surviving into the later periods, one is told repeatedly, emerged from the affair.

It is recalled as *the* moment, the ultimate drama of the period: the shears in the hands of the Japanese, the locked doors of the classroom where hair was cut. The explanations one might expect, and, indeed, can find in the newspapers of the early revolution, are rare in these memories: the worries, for instance, about the sanctity of the head are almost never mentioned. Rather, again, the frivolous is put into play to deal with the trauma, the brutality, and the humiliation. Several of those who experienced and recalled the high drama told me how "funny Koko [one of the leaders] looked" when shaved at last—"hilariously, like the Last of the Mohicans."²⁹

Fashion is shielding untrained bodies. Surface, again, is crucial.

²⁷ Rosihan Anwar, *JAG*, p. 236; interview with Rosihan Anwar, July 1997.

²⁸ Harjati Soebadio, *JAG*, p. 168.

²⁹ O. E. Engelen et al., *LSB*, p. 25; interviews with Soedjatmoko, July 1983, and Soedarpo, August 1997.

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They were children—by Indonesian standards—of affluent families. But they, certainly, nevertheless, felt much privation as well. At the Medical School dormitory at *Prapatan 10*, for instance, the daily ration of rice per student dropped from two hundred grams early in the Occupation to fifty grams toward its end. They had to ride *sepeda ban mati*, bicycles on hard rubber-filled tires. Some of them, as we have noted, were beaten by the Japanese military police. Many had a premonition, and some were correct in it, that they were to be swept away and killed in the upheavals at the end of the war and during the Revolution.

They were surrounded by immense misery. "During the Dutch period," one of them remembers, "father liked to tell stories about the masses' suffering."³⁰ Now, the flood ran much closer to them. They could not help but see *romusha*, the "volunteers of labor," slaves assigned to Japanese war projects, as they marched through the city, rested "in front of *Prapatan 10*," the student dormitory, "under the trees," scrawny, with their bodies full of sores, dirty, just "half-corpses."³¹

When these *privileged* young people felt a "surge of patriotism" in them, toward the end of the Japanese Occupation, they recall, they thought to themselves: "Perhaps the people in the villages have the same feeling."³² They call the crowds of these memories, the crowd of fifty years ago, as they call the crowds demonstrating and occasionally looting on the streets today: *massa rakyat*, or *massa*, the "masses of people," or the "masses."³³

They remember that they were a part of *gerakan masuk kampong*, the "movement to enter the [common people's] quarters." Their task there, they say, was *kebersihan*, "cleaning." They "visited the places where people lived" *kelompok demi kelompok secara teratur dan bergilir*, "group after group, orderly, and in shifts."³⁴ In school formations, marching—or jogging, perhaps. They were like stones thrown into the water.

The Medical School students from Jakarta helped in hospitals where the most miserable, "volunteers of labor," were dying. One group went to Bayah, a place west of Jakarta, known by its coal mines, a railway under construction, and by tens of thousands of the *romusha*. One of the students remembers that this was part of a "summer internship," a *klinik*, "clinic," organized in the last, and worst, year of war, in 1945. They stayed a few weeks, and then in August they went home because "the vacations were over, and the Indonesian Independence was proclaimed."³⁵

³⁰ Tira Soekartono-Djajadiningrat, *AI*, p.26; interview with Aboe Bakar Loebis, December 1998, and interview with Soebandrio, August 1999.

³¹ O. E. Engelen et al., *LSB*, p. 15; interview with Islam Salim, August 1999.

³² Indraningsih Wibowo, *JAG*, pp. 192-193.

³³ Aten Suwanda, *JAG*, p.137.

³⁴ O. E. Engelen et al., *LSB*, p. 33.

³⁵ Zus Pangalila Ratulangie, *AI*, p. 201. This was the place where Tan Malaka, unrecognized at the time, worked as a clerk on one of the *romusha* sites. Interestingly, one of the students who went to Bayah in summer 1945 was Paramita, a niece of Soebardjo, and she stayed in Soebardjo's house, the same house where Tan Malaka hid out in August 1945 when he at last came to revolutionary Jakarta. Unfortunately, I failed to ask Ms. Paramita about the coincidence when I interviewed her a few years ago, before her death.

Seeing *romusha*, the slaves of war, of course, had to be the most climactic experience. The same woman who recalled the Bayah summer clinic remembers how she often saw the horrifying half-naked creatures as she was sitting and talking after the classes with school friends at the verandah of her parents' house³⁶—"at the side of the street," she might say as well.

Here, the *menggelandang*, loafing through streets littered with agony, wading across the flood, becomes as real as in Chairil's poetry. These people recall the dead bodies *di jalan*, "on the street," *dijumpa*, "met," *dipinggir jalan*, "along the sidewalk," on their way to school in the very center of Jakarta, "when passing the Harmony Club," *mayat dipinggir kali Ciliwung*, "corpses along the river Ciliwung."³⁷

* * *

Scent or *smell* comes up during the moments of memory when there is an almost touching. "I lived in Gang Tengah (Salemba Tengah today)," one, now old, man remembers, and at some moments:

the smell of corpses reached as far as to our house. Its source was the morgue of the hospital five hundred meters away, where the corpses were being stacked outside the building to await transport.³⁸

Like fashion, smell shields the memory and builds up some distance. Thus, the importance of smell is in the same category as the importance of the radio.

There is some violence *a priori* connected with the radio in Japanese Indonesia. As the Japanese were approaching, radios (like the Chairil Anwar books in the Jassin collection) were sold off by the Dutch in a hurry. Many radios, no doubt, were simply taken from abandoned houses. I am almost sure that Chairil, too, snatched a radio like that at the time or, at least, he thought about it.

Like marching, radio commonly serves as a textbook example of Japanese militarism in Indonesia. *Radio umum*, the "public radio," is often mentioned in this connection; sometimes it is called *radio taisho* because of the Japanese gymnastic, *taisho*, that was broadcast from "talking towers" on the city squares and street corners. Indonesians were expected to listen to and follow the instructions.

In my interviews, however, most of the time, I heard the *radio umum* smoothly bypassed. *Klandestin*, "clandestine," radio, was remembered, called also *radio bebas segel*, "broken-seal radio,"³⁹ on which the short-wave news by the Allies could be heard—or rather, *lebih suka*, "better," as one after another of the interviewed people recalls—"jazz, the Andrews Sisters, and Vera Lynn."⁴⁰ Classical music is remembered too; in the house of Soetan Sjahrir, later the first Indonesian prime minister, it was

³⁶ Zus Pangalila Ratulangie, *AI*, p. 200.

³⁷ Asmini Jusuf-Wirjosapoetro, *AI*, p. 54; Abd. Fatah Untung Soerjadaja, *JAG*, p. 161; interviews with M. Jusuf Ronodipuro, November 1998 and Soedharmoto, December 1998.

³⁸ Chalid Arifin, *AI*, p. 73.

³⁹ Japanese ordered all the radio receivers in Indonesia be sealed so that only the approved and censored, all of them medium-wave, stations could be heard.

⁴⁰ Chalid Arifin, *AI*, p. 72; interview with M. Jusuf Ronodipuro, November 1998.

played for the young people regularly on a “broken-seal radio.”⁴¹ Like jazz, and like the fragments of Dutch, German, or English, recollected at least, it had the power of un-fitting and sticking out.

Kroncong might be even more significant. The origins of this often sentimental and nostalgic music extend back, arguably, to the pre-Dutch era, and thus it could be played even on the Japanese public radio. It was as easy for *kroncong* as for anything, it seems, to “switch overnight.” The big Occupation-radio hits like “Kota Tokyo,” “The City of Tokyo,” were capable of cutting through the time, like the sweet smell of a corpse, with the same, eternal, *kroncong* sighs, orchids, and moon.

Kroncong—here the allusion to Chairil Anwar strikes again—possessed some, and, perhaps, the best of the *hoppla* qualities, certainly its capacity for the trivial in the most grave circumstances. My old people remembered the last words they ever heard from the Dutch radio as the Dutch capitulated on March 8, 1942: *Vaarwel, tot betere tijden*, “Farewell, till better times.” The phrase announced the end of the empire, the Götterdämmerung. Some of the old people told me that it sounded “like a line from *kroncong*.”⁴²

A climax is often conveyed by recalling a smell; or the sound of radio. When the war ended in 1945, when the Independence of Indonesia was proclaimed by Sukarno and Hatta on August 17 in Jakarta, in Menteng, most of my people lived very close to the place where it happened, and some were physically present. Yet the moment is remembered almost uniformly as *hari ini disiarkan Proklamasi Kemerdekaan*, “today, the Proclamation of Independence was broadcast.”⁴³

On one of my tapes there is a voice of a man, a songwriter who lived through the Dutch Period, the Occupation and, then, the Revolution.⁴⁴ He sings for me a Japanese-time song popular among the Indonesian youth. The “lyrics” could not be more brutal—crush, destroy, mash the enemy, use a hot iron. The man, now in his seventies, sings in a style of *radio kroncong*. If I did not understand Indonesian, I would think he was singing about the orchids and the moon. The man sings as if he were laughing a little to himself. There it is, on the tape, both the warmth of his personality and the lightness of his remembering.

III. Die Angestellten

There might be an optimistic conclusion. *Puber*, “teenager” or “puberty,” is a key word in many of these memories; *senior citizens* (often in English) is the other key phrase paired with *puber* and strongly suggestive of temporality. *Cucu-cucu*, “grandchildren” (rather than middle-aged and socially active *anak-anak*, “children”) are mentioned often and affectionately, and indeed, they were often around during my interviews. Perhaps this might be what Proust called a “great renunciation of old age

⁴¹ Daan Anwar, *AI*, p. 89.

⁴² Moh. Su’ud, *JAG*, p. 272; interview with Soedharmoto, December 1998.

⁴³ E.g. Minarsih Soedarpo-Wiranatakoesoema, *AI*, p. 44, emphasis mine.

⁴⁴ Interview with Soedharmoto, December 1998.

as it prepares for death."⁴⁵ These old people—it might be—made light by their age, light like feathers, sit on their doorsteps waiting for the next generation to take over.

In the photographs taken at school reunions, these aged, smiling men and women, dressed in their best clothes, stand in groups posed behind a "presidium table" decorated with the school emblem or the name of the school's endowment. While the groups change, the "presidium table" stays the same. This creates a "family album" of a sort, like the one Pierre Bourdieu wrote about:

. . . there is nothing more decent, more reassuring, or more edifying than a family album: all the particular adventures that enclose individual remembrance in the particularity of a secret are excluded from it . . . [what remains is a] lowest common denominator of the past . . . almost coquettish neatness of a frequently visited funeral monument.⁴⁶

From these reunions, the voices of memory sound most clearly. Inside the walls of their school, they say—meaning reunions—they feel safe. Reunion endowments are the momentum.

There, however, might be a much less optimistic conclusion. The reunion sort of memories might be a method, and not necessarily connected just with old people. Thinking of what, generally, makes photographic portraits beautiful and touching, one realizes that in the Indonesian reunion portraits few individual faces are really clearly visible, and one definitely cannot feel the eyes.

* * *

Having arrived at this place, I myself would like, too, to inject a stick-out, German word into the otherwise mostly English text. *Angestellten*, sometimes translated as "salaried masses," sometimes as "white-collar workers," or (best, in my view) "office workers," is a term used by Siegfried Kracauer in his 1930 study of Berlin.⁴⁷ According to Kracauer, it was:

an objective fact . . . the social space in which we still find modern slavery . . . is no longer the plant in which the great mass of workers work; that social space is instead the office.⁴⁸

I would like to suggest that, like Kracauer's *Angestellten*, the Indonesian middle class, born out of colonialism, has been defined by office. The culture of the Indonesian middle class was, and remains, rather than a bourgeois culture an office-like culture. Through colonialism, the Indonesian *Angestellten* were robbed of the essential means of production—production of their own material wealth and their own spiritual culture—and, in the post-colonial era, they have not gotten them back. The Indonesian

⁴⁵ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. 1 (New York: The Modern Library), pp. 201-202.

⁴⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Un art moyen: Essais sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (1965) quoted and translated in Jacques LeGoff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 89.

⁴⁷ Minarsih Soedarpo Wirantakoesoema, *AI*, p.45; interviews with Minarsih Soedarpo, June 1997, November 1997.

⁴⁸ Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten: Aus dem neusten Deutschland* (1930) translated as *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 30.

Angestellten may be richer or poorer—some of them are very rich, indeed—but they all are dispossessed.

This was, and remains, what Kracauer called a “certified society,” a society structured by office position. To be certified by colonial or global political and economic power structures even the dreams. Even the usual hope for the future, the students in Indonesia, are *Angestellten* students because their schools are proto-offices. Here Walter Benjamin, another German and Kracauer’s friend, comes to mind. Benjamin wrote about the German youth of the 1910s, a chilling warning, indeed, that they were “not the youngest generation,” but, rather, “the aging generation.”⁴⁹ Even villages in the dispossessed Indonesia of the past, and the present, are like (barren) offices with *Angestellten* peasants in them.

The Indonesian culture of *Angestellten* is unified, as nationalism always wanted it to be. It is one body, and a sense—sometimes latent, sometimes acute—of being dispossessed travels through the body, from the top down and from the bottom up. This is a sense of failed revolution.

Moreover, the Indonesian *Angestellten* are proletarianized, yet they do not live in a proletarian home—songs, warmth, the solidarity of the working class do not belong to them. In addition to being dispossessed, they are *homeless*. Their culture, essentially, is a *lumpen* culture.

* * *

It might help, for a moment, to think about modern Indonesia in terms of the dynamics between “mob violence” and “middle-class anxiety.” Perhaps, for a moment. But these terms, ultimately, veil the reality. There is, in Indonesia, a multiform, but one, *Angestellten* violence.

I cannot rid my mind of a particular snapshot. In a December 1998 issue of an American weekly magazine, published during a time when the tide of street violence was rising again in Jakarta, a young Indonesian man is pictured with a bamboo spear. He watches me as I watch the picture. In fact, I was not far from the photographer when this was happening. What one cannot see is a dead, or half-dead, man lying in front of the man with the spear. The spear is raised, pointing at the body, and it will be driven into the body again.

However uneasy it is to think of it, there is much of Chairil Anwar, as well as of my old Indonesian friends, senior citizens, in the picture. There is much of myself in it, too, behind the camera.

In Indonesia, somebody else is still in possession of the means of production. Somebody else possesses the camera and can remain behind the camera. Indonesia, still, is somebody else’s secure place. A great Dutch painter of the past once wrote, “I mean painting is a *home*,”⁵⁰ and his friend once said about him: “Vincent gives me the impression of somebody who stands in his own light.”⁵¹ The Indonesian *Angestellten*,

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Life of Students (1914-1915),” in *Selected Writings I (1913-1926)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 45.

⁵⁰ Vincent van Gogh, *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 50.

⁵¹ Rev. Pietersen to Van Gogh’s parents, *ibid.*, p. 229.

on the street, on the sidewalk, or even on the verandah of their houses do not give that impression. They are homeless, and, as homeless people always are, they are watched. The violence in the American weekly magazine scene stems from these people being caught on their way to disappearance. They know that they are being watched and that they will be caught unless they manage to escape quickly, violently, into some dark corner—or, for instance, into some kind of reunion album. Some make it, some do not.

This is the pessimistic conclusion. What is described above, I am afraid, is a success story—as successful as it might be—of bridges of hope, of senior citizens' memories. These bridges, and these memories, are most powerful when they make everything appear most trivial and/or most boring. Chairil Anwar, let us remind ourselves, tried that trick with bridges and memories, too. He lived in the same (post) colonial world, except that everything was younger. He is violently beautiful to us, and *visible*, because he had not yet learned the trick well enough.

