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Enriching outcomes by relaxing conventions and bridging divides in the teaching-research nexus

Abstract
Relaxing conventions and bridging divides within the nexuses of research and teaching, and language and culture, fosters a diversity of enriched, multiple outcomes of mutual benefit with surprising impact. Little of this was planned, instead growing organically out of ‘accidental’ and symbiotic processes and relationships in the production and reception of a bilingual anthology of poems called ‘After my father disappeared/Selepas bapakku hilang (2009)’, composed by Indonesian teenager, Fitri Nganthi Wani. These experiences are also informing my current project, which is similar but more ambitious: ‘The flower and the wall’ is a biography on the poetry and praxis of Wani’s famous father, Wiji Thukul, an activist people’s poet who was disappeared by the Suharto New Order regime during its collapse in mid-1998.

The 2009 symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, aptly entitled ‘Taking Stock’, recognised the importance of exploring alternative, less rigid, more collaborative ways of conducting academic research and writing, publishing and distribution. Within the spirit of that discussion, this study illustrates some of the conventions and borders blurred in the production and reception of ‘After my father disappeared’, including: individual versus collaborative authorship, the authoritative scholar versus research informant, between academic writing, youth literature and language learning in schools, and between target language learner and native speaker audiences and sensibilities. Interesting outcomes or spinoffs from this publication also illustrate the innovative fluidity of interaction between production and reception. ‘The flower and the wall’ project attempts to produce more systematically similar collaborative, fluid processes and outcomes organised around the new media ‘Wikispaces’.

The Next Step: Introducing the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities.
Selected Proceedings of the Inaugural LCNAU Colloquium
1. Introduction and background

The 2009 ‘Taking Stock’ symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH) acknowledged changing times and called for more flexible, creative cross-sector collaboration in the production and presentation of academic research. Alistair Thomson (2009) and Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2009) for example noted that with the social ubiquity of new digital modes of communication, academics are interacting increasingly with a variety of people from non-academic backgrounds in the creation and discussion of knowledge. Thomson sees new opportunities for academic experts in this milieu as authoritative facilitators in the construction, organisation and interpretation of knowledge (2009: 17-18). Such opportunities can enhance the ‘socially innovative’ strengths of language and culture research, which according to Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, AAH president (2011), deserve greater recognition in the formal mechanisms for academic research evaluation.1

A departure from conventional scholarly research in language and culture provides opportunity for broader, multi-level uses and audiences. Flexible, collaborative arrangements in the processes of research production and presentation blur roles and boundaries between:

1. Scholarly author and subject/informant.
2. Academic writing and (youth) literature.
3. Tertiary and secondary teaching resources.
4. Target language learner and native speaker audiences.
5. Production and reception.

This study describes these processes and outcomes in the production and reception of a bilingual anthology of poems by an Indonesian teenager, Fitri Nganthi Wani (2009), called ‘After my father disappeared’. Wani’s father, Wiji Thukul, was a dissident people’s poet who in 1998 was forcibly disappeared by Suharto’s New Order regime. His biography with translations of selected poems is my current project, called ‘The flower and the wall’. This study concludes with a brief mention of how ‘The flower and the wall’ project draws on lessons learnt in the production and reception of Wani’s anthology, whilst aiming to harness the benefits of fluid, collaborative arrangements in research and presentation through utilising new digital social media.

A short history of the relationship between myself, Thukul and Wani (father and daughter) as my research subjects, provides the reader contextual understanding on how the two ‘lifewriting’ projects, ‘After my father disappeared’ and ‘The flower and the wall’ evolved.

I first met Wiji Thukul in 1993 as one of the subjects of my PhD research completed in 1997 (Curtis 1998). I observed and became involved in the alternative arts and education workshops he and his wife, Sipon, ran for disadvantaged children in his impoverished neighbourhood in urban Solo, Central Java. Joining in the workshop activities was a precocious, woolly haired Wani who was four years old at the time.
In July 1996 Thukul became an enemy of the state, as the national leader of the cultural wing of the outlawed Peoples’ Democratic Party (PRD), branded by the regime as communistic. Thukul has not been seen since around April 1998, just prior to the fall of President Suharto.

The book cover to Wani’s anthology (Figure 1) is taken from the back of Thukul’s children’s workshop magazine. The original woodcut print by Wani of family members and neighbours queuing up to use the meagre public amenities was confiscated in 1996 from the family’s living room wall by security forces as they raided the house looking for the fugitive poet. The print was considered subversive because it had Wani’s signature on it. ‘Wani’ means ‘brave’ in Javanese language (Curtis 2009).

Since Thukul’s disappearance my family has remained in close contact with his family, supporting them in various ways, such as assisting sometimes with the costs associated with Wani and her younger brother, Fajar’s schooling. In late 2006/early 2007, during professional development leave, I began new research on Wiji Thukul. The objective was to produce a bilingual book of Thukul’s life and poetry. Although Thukul has become an icon of Indonesia’s leftist democracy movement both leading up to and since the fall of Suharto, only a handful of his poems had been translated into English — ten of which I translated for a Jakarta based literary journal (Curtis 2003).

My research, back in 2006/7, centred on interviewing Thukul’s associates, friends and, in particular, family members — Wani being one of my informants. I knew Wani had, since the age of eight, taken to writing poetry as a therapeutic means of coping with the trauma surrounding her father’s disappearance, including the fearful, sleepless nights born out of continuing intimidation by the state’s security apparatus. In fact, my wife, Endah, had some time ago given her an elegant diary which she filled with poems she had written over the ensuing years. Originally, these poems were written on scraps of paper scattered around the house that were thoughtfully gathered up by her mother, Sipon.

By 2007 a few of Wani’s poems, such as ‘Come home papa’, written at the age of eleven, were also receiving a public audience at human rights forums, film documentaries, and television current affairs programs, that invited the families of activists tortured or disappeared during the fall of the New Order regime to give their testimonies. Here, invariably Wiji Thukul and his family were emblematic.

Reading the collection of poems neatly written in Wani’s diary, I decided to put my research on Thukul on hold and change tack. In part, the nascent public exposure of Wani’s poetry, intrinsically tied to the attention on her father’s disappearance, meant the moment was ripe to publish her work. Thukul’s poetry could thus be deferred, as it would always have an important historical place. However, Wani, whilst still a child, had produced a sizeable body of work that was written from the time she was in primary school through to her final year in senior secondary school. Soon she would be attending university and her literary merit would be judged as
an adult. To me, timing was crucial to how Wani’s poetry would be received and the degree of its impact in society.

Allowing this serendipitous moment to (re)direct my research also provided opportunity to test the waters before diving into the more daunting lifewriting project on her father. Apart from the chance to hone my own abilities as researcher and biographer/translator, I wanted to gauge the levels of Thukul family cooperation and approval, and public response.

Figure 1: Book cover of bilingual anthology of poems by Fitri Nganthi Wani

2. Ethical partnership between research writer and subject-informant

The process of production of Wani’s anthology, from initial research to publication, and book launches and other outcomes in Australia and Indonesia continued to be directed largely by serendipity and evolving symbiotic relationships. Space does not permit me to narrate all the stages in these relationships with their fortuitous twists and turns.

Instead, the main relationship I’d like to focus on for the purposes of this study is that between myself as scholarly writer and Wani as chief informant-subject. This
relationship, along with the nature of her poetry, ultimately determined the shape of the project, including its outcomes.

In line with my 2006 professional development leave and ethics clearance applications, my intention was to publish an academic analysis of Wani’s life and poetry in its social and political context in a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal.

I started by recording a series of interviews with Wani about the meanings in each of her poems and how they related to her changing life experiences. These interviews greatly assisted the accuracy in my translation of her 70 plus poems written between the ages of 10 to 17 years.

It soon became apparent, however, that a scholarly article with its restricted audience would not do justice to her poetry. First, Wani herself wanted to offer her collection of poems ‘as a means for engaging her [friends and young] peers in frank and honest conversation about shared experiences and hopes’ (Curtis 2009: xxvi). Second, I saw the content of her poetry, a mixture of sharp socio-political critique and the typical thoughts and feelings of a schoolgirl’s experiences, as a wonderful teaching resource to which young students of Indonesian language and culture would relate.

Wani’s poetry would also provide an opportunity to break down the common perception from teachers and students alike that poetry is a difficult esoteric language and culture learning medium. This is important for students of Indonesian because unlike in the ‘west’, poetry writing, performance and appreciation is a mainstream cross-generational cultural practice in Indonesian society that retains strong oral traditions.

Thus, the scholarly journal article morphed into a bilingual anthology accompanied by a CD of selected poetry readings aimed at the growing youth literature market in Indonesia and as a language teaching resource in Australia. What also ensued over the coming months, as I wrote the introduction contextualising Wani’s poems with her changing life experiences, was what I now recognise as an ‘ethical partnership’ between us.

I relinquished, grudgingly at first, scholarly objectivity to accommodate the subjectivity of the main informant, Wani. The most obvious benefit in collaboration between scholar and informant was the correction of any errors of interpretation and fact on my behalf. Other changes, also valid, were more in accordance with Wani’s sensibilities and the promotional function of the introduction. Apart from reducing the overall size and complexity of the piece, there were several subtle changes, of which I will briefly mention two by way of example.

1. We reduced focus on Wani’s iconic father, including background information on him and his influence on her. Wani has been at pains to not merely be identified as the daughter of her legendary father, Wiji Thukul, but to have her own identity and be judged on her own merits.
The issue of establishing one’s own identity is central for a young adult who is also a budding writer. And, as is evident in several of her poems, this issue is more critical for Wani whose life continues to be affected in so many ways by both her father’s public reputation and her personal loss.

As such, Wani was initially uncomfortable also with my proposal for the book’s title, ‘After my father disappeared’, because of the inclusion of ‘father’. Searching for an alternative title, she briefly considered the title of her last translated poem, ‘Are all men rotten, my dear’ (translation in appendices). Recently, Wani agreed that it was fortuitous that we couldn’t think up a ‘better’ title as the original title has encapsulated her story. It also resonated with public awareness of the circumstances surrounding her father’s fate. This is reflected in the book launchings and other outcomes discussed later.

2. Another concern was de-emphasising her humble background. Although Wani is not ashamed per se of her family’s impoverished background she perceived that my characterisation of this was demeaning. From my perspective, I wanted to highlight how her living conditions informed her life and poetry, and acknowledge her struggle and achievements amidst such disadvantage and adversity. We resolved to temper the description of her living environment from slum and poverty to basic and unassuming.

There is some argument against allowing the informant to compromise scholarly authority. David Hill (2007: 220, 224-226), for example, asserts that it is ‘virtually inconceivable’ that an ‘academically rigorous’ biography cannot at some stage offend or embarrass the subject. Nevertheless, Hill (in accordance with Australian ethics committees) would also agree that ‘particularly vulnerable subjects’ should be protected. Wani, was vulnerable on several fronts. Wani was technically an adult, turning 17 in May 2006, about six months prior to my interviewing her about her poetry. However, in Indonesian society Wani was still considered a child, unmarried and living with her mother. As such, I deliberately involved her mother, Sipon, in every aspect of the research process and decision making.

Furthermore, coming from the urban proletariat, Wani does not have the financial resources and connections required if she later wanted to formally challenge anything she considered offensive or defamatory. Finally, due to the circumstances surrounding Thukul’s disappearance, Wani and her family continue to be traumatised, intimidated and politically vulnerable.

By accident rather than design, the ethical partnership between Wani and I conformed to Thomas Couser’s position in ‘Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing’ that ‘subjects should have some degree of control over the shape their stories take and, in some cases, an opportunity to share the proceeds from the sale of their stories’ (2004: 23).
Wani’s say in the content and role of the ‘introduction’ to her own book subordinated my biographical analysis of her poetry. This process was a safe guarantee of informed consent from a ‘vulnerable subject’. In accordance with Couser, also, the full proceeds of all Australian sales of her book went to Wani, subsidising her university tuition fees and brother’s school costs.

Apart from the ethical virtues, a process of close collaborative engagement between scholar and subject can enrich, rather than weaken, research quality. Ross Gibson (2009), another ‘Taking Stock’ Australian Humanities symposium speaker, argues that effective research should freely move in and out of modes of detached, focussed, analytical discipline and intimate engagement with the world of the subject-audience.

Being thus immersed and extracted, involved yet also critically distanced, ill-disciplined and shifty but also disciplined and reflective, you stand a chance of knowing both the world and yourself more comprehensively, not only more intuitively but also more analytically. It’s the paradoxical and re-disciplined capability that we need for finding our way through the complex world (2009: 47).

Gibson dissolves the lines between, and the conventional roles of, the objective, distanced researcher, rarefied, static subject and passive audience. His new-media-facilitated artworks interact with visitors leading to an on-going, changing stream of new phenomena for both ‘researcher’ and ‘subject-audience’ to explore. My current project, ‘The flower and the wall’, has conceptually similar aspirations, gaining insight from the innovative outcomes that evolved through the production of Wani’s book.

3. Indonesian and Australian outcomes

Wani’s book attracted considerable attention and public engagement with a number of tangible outcomes both in Indonesia and Australia. It is difficult to imagine that Wani’s biography and poetry as a piece of scholarly writing buried in an academic journal would have had a similarly immediate, visible and diverse impact.³

The book was launched in Indonesia on the 16 June 2009 at Jakarta’s prestigious cultural centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki. The venue, with a seating capacity of over 1000, was full, with mainly invited guests. The event was an annual remembrance of the victims of state sponsored violence and other human rights abuses; in particular those kidnapped and disappeared during the fall of Suharto, 11 years ago. At the centre of proceedings was Wani reading a selection of poems from her book accompanied by her younger brother, Fajar, playing acoustic guitar.

Amongst the literary figures, entertainment celebrities, politicians, NGO representatives and journalists present on stage and in the audience was Indonesia’s most loved outspoken rock musician Iwan Fals.⁴ In the 1980s and 1990s his satirical ballads critiqued social inequity and injustice, and the excesses of wealth and power.
Two of his songs, ‘Bento’ and ‘Bongkar’, mocking greedy conglomerates and crony capitalism gorging on state economic developmentalism, were temporarily banned from the airwaves. Like the final line of one of Thukul’s most well-known poems, ‘There is only one word: resist (see appendices),’ ‘Bento and ‘Bongkar’ became the catch cry of protesting workers and students leading to the fall of Suharto. The climax of the night was Iwan’s heart rendering rendition of Wani’s poem, ‘Come home papa’ (mentioned earlier).

The event was timed three weeks before the presidential elections and was in part a call to support re-election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), and his vice presidential nominee, Boediyono. There were speeches during the event warning against two other presidential candidates and retired generals, Wiranto and Prabowo, who were implicated in past human rights abuses, including the disappearance of Wani’s father and military backed atrocities in East Timor.5

The event was recorded and later televised regionally. Wani’s book launching was also widely covered in the regional and national print media, such as the Jakarta Post and Kompas, and on several cultural and human rights orientated internet websites and blogs.6

After the Jakarta book launching Wani also attended much smaller, more austere, book launches such as cultural forums in Central Java and Bali. In Indonesia, the main outlets for sales of literary works such as Wani’s book are at book launches, literary and cultural forums, and NGO conferences and school poetry workshops. (Poetry books in particular do not sell well in bookshops.) Typical of post publication activities and outlets for Wani’s book was her facilitating a children’s poetry workshop at iKOHI, an NGO for families that have experienced domestic and state violence. A lot of the books have also been distributed through word of mouth or given away to her school or university friends who, like her, cannot easily afford the ‘luxury’ of buying books.

In Australia the intended audience of Wani’s book is scholars, teachers and students of Indonesian language and literature, specifically, and those with an interest in Asian literature and area studies more generally.

The Regional Universities Indonesian Language Initiative (RUILI), a consortium of four Australian universities which include Charles Darwin University (CDU), the University of New England, The University of the Sunshine Coast and the University of Tasmania has included Wani’s poetry in the shared curriculum it developed for internal, online and in-country delivery.7 Her poems were also included in the curriculum for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)-funded Endeavour Language Teachers Fellowship (ELTF) program in which over 100 trainee and practising Indonesian teachers participated and which I coordinated over four years between 2007 and 2010.

Generously acknowledging my time and the contribution Wani’s poetry made to the program, $2,000 from the ELTF income was provided by CDU to fund
the publication of Wani’s book and CD (1000 copies). A small portion of this also 
subsidised regional book launches in Indonesia.

As these figures suggest it is much cheaper and easier to publish in Indonesia, 
and increasingly so. As the technology needed is more accessible and affordable, 
thousands of small businesses involved in publishing are sprouting like mushrooms. 
It also made sense to publish in Indonesia where the largest proportion of the target 
readership was located.

In 2008, Baskara T. Wardaya and Tri Subagya, academics who ran the Centre for 
History and Political Ethics at the Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, agreed to 
take responsibility for the book’s publication process after meeting with Wani, her 
mother, Sipon and I. Wani had just finished her first semester there undertaking a 
bachelor’s degree in Indonesian language, literature and performance studies. Her 
father used to regularly visit academic friends at the campus, and so Sanata Dharma 
University was also keen to look after Wani’s wellbeing. Meanwhile, I hired a small 
studio for Wani in Solo to record a selection of her poems to accompany the book. 
The audio recording would be of use to Australian teachers and students as well as 
Wani’s contemporaries interested in performing poetry.

After publication, students and work colleagues brought over from Indonesia 
to Australia copies of Wani’s book with the accompanying CD. About 70 of these 
books have been sold to lecturers and teachers throughout Australia via conferences, 
workshops, language teacher associations and email discussion lists.

A teacher in Perth, Kate Reitzenstein, provided me feedback about one poem she 
uses in class called ‘Kira-kira (About)’, which is a chronology of blossoming teenage 
love. Kate said:

I have used ‘Kira-kira’ with my Year 12 class and they loved it (an all-boys class). I 
cut up each stanza (jumbled up) then they had to place each stanza on a timeline 
in the correct order. They then had to draw a picture to convey meaning. It was 
a perfect text to stimulate discussion about relationships, expectations, cross 
cultural differences and similarities, etc.8

As a consequence of exposing Wani’s work to a broad number of Australian teachers, 
two educational resource publishing companies have incorporated Wani’s poetry in 
their publications. The Western Australia Department of Education and Training has 
included Wani’s poems, ‘Hey, how come’, ‘I don’t resemble him’ and ‘My brother’s 
longing for father’ and two of her father’s poems in a resource for upper secondary 
school called ‘The Indonesian Unit 3A Aneka Wacana Learning Resource’ (2009). 
Wani’s poems were chosen to prompt discussion on themes of nationalism and 
personal relationships. Another company, Cengage Learning Australia has chosen 
three other poems by Wani, ‘Letter to Indonesia’, ‘My childhood wish’, and ‘Off to 
school’ for a resource aimed at lower secondary school, entitled ‘Dari kami ke kita: 
book 2’ (Kohler, Morgan and Harbon 2010). The approach here is one of intercultural
reflections leading students to think about their own experiences and feelings through reading Wani’s poems.

4. Conclusion

Whether in Indonesia or Australia these outcomes discussed were not planned or contrived but evolved organically through branching networks of friends and associates. However, the core that facilitated these diverse outcomes was the mix of universal themes in Wani’s poetry: human rights, social justice and environmental issues and growing up at home and school, wrestling with issues of identity and personal relationships. The decision not to focus on purely academic writing, but to target non-academic audiences with a bilingual book and audio recording of selected poems also gave access to wider audiences. In doing this, conventional roles and boundaries were blurred between scholarly writer and subject, academic and general literature, tertiary and secondary teaching resources, and Indonesian language learner and native speaker audiences.

The innovative, yet unanticipated, outcomes from the publication also illustrate an on-going fluidity in interactions between production and reception. In Indonesia the book launch extravaganza became a new cultural and political product, whilst in Australia some of the book’s contents were recreated into learning activities in high-school curricula.

Even now, a Tasmanian academic and poet, Andrew Peek, who is not conversant in the Indonesian language, is working with Barbara Hatley, an expert in the field of Indonesian performing arts, on a selection of English language translations of Wani’s and her father’s poems for an Australian radio documentary on Indonesian poetry. Andrew is transcreating these poems to resonate with the sensibilities and cultural background of an English speaking audience.9 His translation of Wani’s ‘Are men just a waste of time?’ and Thukul’s ‘Resist’ poems are provided in the following appendices.10

5. Postscript: The flower and the wall

With my current project on the life and poetry of Wani’s father, Wiji Thukul, I am pursuing further the idea of collaborative writing, using new media technology to facilitate the process. I have set up a Wikispaces site called ‘wijithukul’, http://wijithukul.wikispaces.com/, where I have initially invited a small number of people with a close association with, or keen interest in, Wiji Thukul. This currently comprises a few university students and high school students and teachers, a professional translator, an Australian poet, Indonesian and Australian scholars, and friends and family members of Wiji Thukul. My aim is that according to each individual’s interest and time commitments we will collectively produce a rich and accurate account of the stages in Thukul’s life with English language translations of selected relevant
poems. The site will also include other resources, such as an archive of unpublished poems and links to video documentaries and other relevant realia.

As project facilitator, I am composing a draft of Thukul’s life story, stage-by-stage, uploaded into the closed ‘Wikispaces’. There, family and friends can check for details that may be incomplete, inaccurate or offensive. I also intend to extend an ethical partnership with Thukul’s family towards what Michael Frisch (1990) terms ‘shared authority’. I have asked for separate contributions from Wani and Sipon. Wani intends to write about her personal understanding of Thukul’s thinking and poetry as his daughter in comparison to the iconic public perspective constructed by cultural and social activists. Sipon intends to write on how her life has been transformed by the experience of her husband becoming a disappeared fugitive of the state.

Alistair Thomson perhaps best articulates my likely role in this partnership with Thukul’s family, stating that ‘Where memory is seared into contemporary politics, oral historians often become participants and advocates for the politics of memory’ (2009: 16). This doesn’t obviate a responsibility of the biographer to ‘[negotiate and] confront any tensions between advocacy and scholarship’. Nevertheless, rather than reacting to, or making adjustments for, informant (and biographer) subjectivity, the overall approach will embrace the notion of biographer and subject as ‘co-creators’ developing an ‘interpretive relationship’ (Thomson 2009:16).

Eventually, the Wikispaces site for Wiji Thukul’s life and poetry will be made open for public interaction. The site can be used as a teaching and research resource. In Indonesia there are also many progressive cultural workers, activists, students and labourers inspired by Wiji Thukul.11 I am hoping that interested parties will continue to contribute to the site, through discussion forums or adding new content, such as their own reflections or creative works. As such the site has potential to further blur conventional divisions between production and reception, author and audience.12

Notes

1. Professor Joe Lo Bianco’s opening plenary presentation at this symposium, ‘Languages and research in the new ERA’, criticises the ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) process which fails to recognise fairly the true value of language and culture research. He asserts that when valuing research that supports innovation, academia and government should also be ‘including the language of social innovation, and extending usefulness from labour market indicators to individual learners, groups of learners, to the social climate of acceptance of minorities, of foreigners, of foreign ideas and, most abstractly, but perhaps most importantly, [to the idea that] languages are ‘useful’ to the acceptance and understanding of difference itself...’, quoted in Lane (2011).

2. For many years Thukul had brazenly attacked the ruling elite over its often violent oppression and exploitation of the lumpen proletariat and working classes, from which he came, through his street poetry and involvement in other forms of social action, such as rural community empowerment projects and factory worker strikes.
3. Over the years, in short gasps between year round language teaching and related administrative commitments, I have produced a few pieces of peer reviewed scholarly writing. However, the greatest feedback I have received is from a short article available online in ‘Inside Indonesia’ on Wiji Thukul’s disappearance (Curtis 2000). Here, also, my writing style was adapted to attract what the then chief editor described as the fleeting concentration of this quasi-scholarly magazine’s readership.

4. In attendance also were Suciwati, the widow, and Allende the nine year old son of Munir, the head of Kontras (The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violent Actions, or Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan). In 2004 Munir was poisoned by agents of the Indonesian state on a Garuda flight to Amsterdam. Munir’s case remains unresolved. Kontras is investigating the disappearance of 14 activists, including Thukul.

5. Arguably the book launching of Wani’s anthology was co-opted by dominant political interests. See for example Febriansyah (2010: 15). However, Thukul’s family and the NGOs involved such as IKOHI (The Indonesian Association of Families of the Disappeared or Ikatan Keluarga Orang Hilang Indonesia) are not dupes. In February 2010 they went to Jakarta and delivered a message to President SBY through public protest and a private meeting with the director-general of Human Rights demanding action on the stalled investigations over the kidnapping/disappearance of activists, including Thukul.

6. See, for example, Maslan’s (2009) account from a political and human rights perspective.

7. RUULI, a collaborative project completed in 2009, was largely funded by DEEWR through the Collaborative and Structural Reform (CASR) fund in conjunction with a smaller grant from DASSH (Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) as detailed in Kerry Dunne and Marko Pavlyshyn’s study, ‘Languages of small enrolment’, at this symposium (see Dunne and Pavlyshyn, this volume).

8. Email communication 18/9/2011.

9. In writing about another Indonesian poet, Binhad Nurrohmat, Clark (2009:1) notes the necessity and tensions in translations that must both maintain a poem’s original cultural context whilst being ‘universalist’ in appealing to a global audience.

10. Reproduced with permission from Andrew Peek.

11. See, for example, Iswandono’s (2010) conversation with Mega Vristian, a domestic worker in Hongkong. Mega and other Indonesian migrant workers, originally inspired through the writings of Wiji Thukul and others, articulate their everyday experiences and struggles through poetry, short stories and theatre.

12. Through the ‘wijiwiki’, I am investing in Morris-Suzuki’s (2009: 48) assertion that ‘digitised information networks’ are changing the landscape in which knowledge is created and disseminated; where academics across varied disciplines and others from non-academic backgrounds coalesce, receive, interact with, and contribute further to ‘human knowledge’.

References


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Appendices

Are Men Just A Waste of Time?

by Fitri Nganthi Wani (translated by Andrew Peek)

Are men just a waste
of time, love?
Don’t be angry if I ask.
I see how women suffer
over second wives
their husbands take
—there’s hurt,
there is injustice.
Are men
just a waste
of time, love?
Don’t be angry if I ask.
I see the loss,
desire, futility,
in Mother’s eyes
since Dad left, my own father.
Are men
just a waste
of time, love?
Don’t be angry if I ask.
I see broken hearts
of girl-friends
dumped by lovers,
hurting others, so it goes.
Are men
just a waste
of time, love?
Don’t be angry if I ask.
I see a father make his son’s girl
pregnant, then just walk away.
The poor boy dies in pain.
Are men
just a waste
of time, love?
Don’t be angry if I ask.  
I see male porn-stars without faces,  
women’s bodies taken,  
used, consumed—school friends  
get excited by this junk.  
So are they just a waste of time, love,  
will you turn out like the rest?  
If you say ‘No’, then  
show me, teach me  
how to overcome my fear  
and prove you’ll care  
for both of us  
and never leave.

Resist

by Wiji Thukul (translated by Andrew Peek)

If the people walk off, leave  
officials’ speeches, bail out  
—hope going, going, gone!  
the worst possible has happened.  
If the people are driven to whisper  
to hide their fears, officials  
should wake up and LISTEN.  
If the people are afraid to question,  
to complain to those whose job  
is to protect them, then truth  
is out the door  
Thought gone, freedom  
in a heap, voices silent, dissension,  
discussion, disagreement of any kind  
out of bounds: what’s left?  
One word: RESIST.