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**Deep Sound, Country Feeling:
Kroncong Music in a Javanese Neighbourhood**

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Deep Sound, Country Feeling: Kroncong Music in a Javanese Neighbourhood

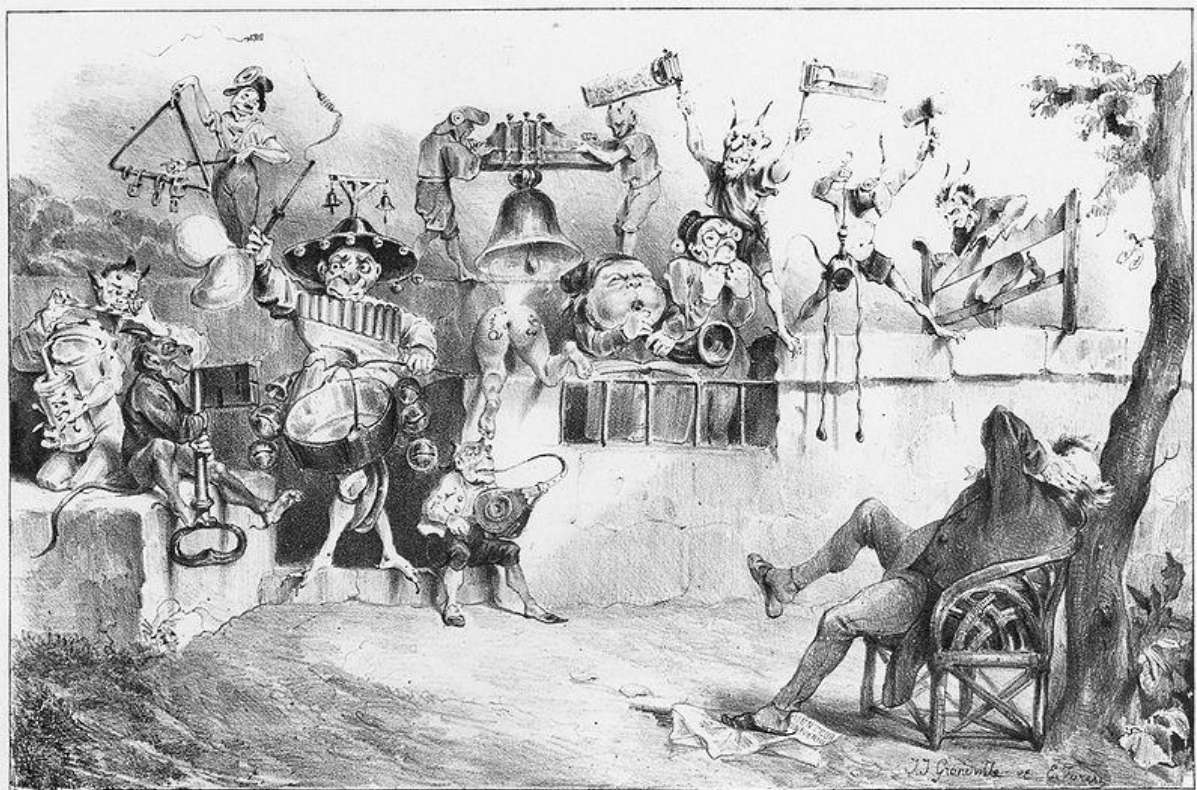


Figure 1. La caricature, Paris 1831. J.J. Grandville (*Charivari* 1831-09-01).

<http://zero.org>. Accessed Nov. 2, 2009.

ROUGH MUSICKING, OR “IT’S JUST NOT THE NOISE”¹

After three days of lengthy negotiations (*tawar-menawar*) in the *ruang tamu* (front room of Javanese homes where guests are entertained) of newly made friend, surrounded by gamelan instruments, some finished, some waiting final touches before beginning their travels around the world, I handed over the agreed upon rent (*kontrak*) for our home, and was given something to eat, of course. It struck me at the time that the presence of gamelan instruments “became a metaphor for the style of negotiations – refined, at least on the surface, tied together with strands of etiquette embodied in the language, action, gesture, body, space, and time” (fieldnotes May 31, 1992) that was our conduct at the negotiation table (another metaphor).

Four brothers were negotiating on behalf of an older sister who along with her husband, owned and built the house. The small house itself was new, and constructed within a very small space available in an already crowded compound. We were to learn more, later, about the implications of its presence as built form introduced into socially built lives (see Newberry 2006). Not so unlike our own sudden import into the lives of our kampung friends and neighbours. Negotiations were in Javanese, a language I had no sense of at the time (still don’t), leaving my friend to broker negotiations on multiple levels. My fieldnotes report “bursts of speech intermingled with

¹ E.P. Thompson, *Rough Music Reconsidered*, *Folklore* 103(i), 1992: 3.

excruciating lapses of silence, during which no one looked at each other, choosing to stare at the floor waiting for some tension to build towards speech.” I go on to write that “expressions were expressionless,” and then I digress into lengthy descriptions (the dutiful anthropologist) of the conduct around drinking the sweet syrupy drinks that my friend’s maid served us as we worked to come to an agreement on the year’s rent for the house.

It wasn’t until the end of the second day that a price was enumerated, at which time negotiations picked up at an amazing speed, and before I knew it we had arrived at a price for the year. The following day we discussed the details of the agreement (money to be handed over at a later time), at which time we were asked a series of questions that allowed myself, and now my partner, to provide some background about who we were at the time and what we were up to, at the time. The interchange had lightened dramatically, and smiles appeared in addition to idle chatting, questions about the instruments, and so on. During these lighter moments my friend’s wife appeared in the doorway with their young daughter. She immediately fell to her knees, entering the room knee-walking her way to a place among us with her daughter in her arms. The visible social topography evoked spatial conduct to match, in this case, lowering one’s body so as remain as low as those present in spatial terms as we were all sitting on *tikar* (mats) arranged on the floor of the room for our use. Several days later we met with the sister and her husband in the actual house itself, and passed along the cash, signing a rental agreement for the year.

Our arrival into the *kampung* (neighbourhood) as we took up residence was met with a mix of curiosity, suspicion, ambivalence, puzzlement, as well as some assumptions and expectations that we were unaware of at that time. Why have these foreigners (*orang asing*) decided to rent this house and live here? What will they do here? What will they eat? Will they shop here? What will this mean for our community? How will their presence matter?

This ambivalence and uncertainty were clearly expressed in the tentative approach displayed by our neighbours and others in the *kampung* in these early days of being there. The *kampung* children, of course, ignored this tentative sense of propriety, scampering in and out of our home, venturing into its deep recesses, for example the kitchen, where other older residents feared to tread. For those beyond the years of childhood the face of the community towards our residence was standoffish and contemplating, waiting to see what *our* next move was going to be. Getting ahead of myself here, the breakthrough came when my partner, also an anthropologist began shopping for food in the local *pasar* to be locally cooked by her in our local house. More importantly, or just as important, was the fact, made known by the fearless children that we ate *nasi* (rice) for breakfast. This social fact sealed the deal and began our gradual integration into our corner of the larger *kampung* community.

But as this aspect of social integration was taking place, and a relatively gendered one at that, other aspects in this process were unfolding. My fieldnotes from these early days capture other (gendered as well) aspects of the process of social integration:

From our perspective our only problems with our neighbours, well not our only problem, but one that is consistent is with the group of young men and boys who congregate nightly, daily, whatever, in front of our house. The *bapak* (lit. father, but household head) of the house next to ours built a small platform on stilts made of bamboo under a tree in the corner of our yard that connects to our front porch. The men and boys gather to play cards, chess, and sing and play guitars. The card playing and chess are quiet activities, but the guitar playing and singing are loud and go until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning (night from their perspective). Their voices pierce our

walls and I have already had many sleepless nights. (September 12, 1992, Yogyakarta, author's journal. pp. 102-103)

My notes go on to examine these activities in terms of local knowledge. As I questioned some of my neighbours about the nightly crooning it was explained to me that these young men had little to do (*malas*). It is important here to consider this explanation briefly. *Malas*, the term used by our neighbours, is more often than not translated into English as lazy. Unfortunately there is a burden of cultural baggage carried in this translation, especially an emphasis on the will and agency of individuals, groups that hearkens colonial imagery and attitudes of the lazy native. But my understanding of the intent of this term as it is often used by my neighbours is as an observation of individuals in context in which action is required but more so with an emphasis on whether or not a context provides possibilities and limits for action to occur. I have described this structure of and for experience elsewhere (2001) drawing upon Pete Becker's descriptions of the kinds of contexts for action that appear in Javanese expressive culture.² Javanese experience, and especially in the case of working class Javanese for which life's choices are engaged within class-based constraints, is organized within a labyrinth of forces, energies, spirits, bodily winds and fluids, and of course people and things that are the social life of Javanese.

This phenomenologically apparent labyrinth forms a complex of limits, possibilities, and coincidences in the production and reproduction of Javanese subjectivity as what I refer to as the pneumatic self (drawing upon Coomswamy's [1977] cultural psychology described from another context).³ This labyrinth, experienced as copious flows and pneumatic winds saturate human existence, emphasizing a notion of experience (*pangalaman*) that takes shape within desire for a fluid fitness among a complex of coincidentally aligned and dynamically interdependent categories of power and elements within the universe (Ferzacca 2001: 19). Such a cultural logic has some deep roots, and certainly some primordial illusions attached, but nevertheless, represent an adaptation anchored in the confluence of rank society, colonial, post-colonial, and class-based consciousness and practicalities. *Malas*, then, is hardly an individual personality (or group) characteristic nor psychological predilection, although these explanations are available. Rather, *malas* is a context in which possibilities for action are absent or not required.

I was told that the majority of this particular local group of young men – the late night crooners -- were without responsibilities; at the moment they had no jobs, no wives, no children, therefore, no need to attend too much of anything that typically happens in the morning. Late night sing-alongs can come and go within shifting and relative sets of responsibility related to shifting and relative social categories and associated forms of social status. Local knowledge focused on the gendered nature of the political economy that manifests in kampung like this one. It is knowledge that is produced in "friction", by and through "contingent articulations of different scales (Tsing 2005: 76), described by Jan Newberry (2008) in the case of this very kampung as an articulation which provides the "possibility for self-exploitation in the production of surplus value, particularly on the part of women."⁴ For the crooners outside my door the surplus value was *malas*, available to the men and boys as men and boys without much to do, with few contingencies to speak of.

² Steve Ferzacca, 2001. *Healing the Modern in a Central Javanese City*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

³ Coomaraswamy, Ananda Kentish. 1977. *Coomaraswamy 2: Selected Papers Metaphysics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴ Tsing, A. L. (2005). *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press; Jan Newberry, 2007. "Rituals of Rule in the Administered Community: The Javanese Selamatan Reconsidered." *Modern Asian Studies* 41: 1-35.

In an earlier analysis of the events associated with music in the kampung (Ferzacca 2006) I incorporated this local knowledge of the political economy of gender relations with a non-local analytic category of “musicking” in order to understand the appearance and then disappearance of a series of music rehearsals of a genre of music referred to as *kroncong*.⁵

First the non-local analytical concept: Christopher Small (1998) describes musicking as musical “activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world, not as they are but as we would wish them to be.”⁶ Alfred Schutz (1951) similarly describes making music as making social relations, however, with less attention on the norms and ideals which musical performances necessarily draw from.⁷ In my previous analysis I approached the musicking of *kroncong* in the Javanese kampung as cultural practice in which participants “learn” and “explore” relationships so as to “affirm” (Small 1998), and appraise, therefore, culturally critique these relationships as they existed in friction; at least as far as I understood Anna Tsing’s notion with some emphasis on the generative potential of friction.

What I did not do was locate a specific observation of musicking in the intra-sonics of community-based musicking, or in kampung sonority sounded-large. In the earlier analysis I did not include the late-night crooners. Here I want to avoid the intertextuality of my previous analysis; an approach that evokes the comparison of *kroncong* music to other genres of popular music in Indonesia. Instead, the intra-sonics of this community-based musicking remains situated in the soundscape of the kampung community where I have lived, that for me began with the “rough music” described at the outset.⁸

This noise was most certainly, at least in part, directed at us. It was a musicking similar to the “rough music” Thompson addresses in the European context in which music is public culture used to comment upon local realities and in particular, instances in which community members were judged to have been involved in “crossing forbidden frontiers or mixing alien categories” (Thompson 1993: 509). Musicking *kroncong* and the late night rough music are certainly of the same “mode of life in which some part of the law belongs still to the community and is theirs to enforce” (Ibid. p. 530). What I felt as *noise*, was noise for me. My exchange with this music evoked my valuation of it as noise, nevertheless, my reflex as a general human one immersed in noise also evoked “ideas of the causes that produce it, dispositions of action, reflexes” (Nancy 2007: 15) indicative of the centrality of exchange in sensing sound or sensing in general.⁹ In the previous analysis I considered *kroncong* musicking within a “semi-presence the whole system of sound” (Ibid.). Working from this latter perspective I came to conclusions that centered on the local function of making *kroncong* music at the time to judge, comment, appraise those conditions of social relations, especially around gender.

⁵ Steve Ferzacca, 2006. “Learning How to Listen: *Kroncong* Music in a Javanese Neighborhood.” *The Senses in Society* 01(03): 331-358.

⁶ Christopher Small, 1998 *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

⁷ Alfred Schutz, 1977. “Making Music Together: A Study in Social Relationships.” In *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meanings*, Janet L. Dolgin, David S. Kemnitzer, and David M. Schneider, eds., New York: Columbia University Press: 106-116.

⁸ E.P. Thompson, 1992. E.P. Thompson, *Rough Music*, In *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*, pp. 467-538. New York: The New York Press, 1993.

⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 2007, *Listening*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York; Fordham University Press.

Here, after the fact, I attempt to re-work this project; a project I want to refer to as *deep sound*. A caveat: as I noted in the earlier analysis, I did not give my full 'attention' to the kroncong rehearsals; I did not join in nor deliberately sit down and listen to the music making, even though I had my own guitar and was heard by my neighbours and the men involved in the kroncong rehearsals on numerous occasions making my own music. I did record the events in my fieldnotes, and forgot about the notes and the events themselves. Some years later I was invited by colleagues to contribute a paper to a panel on country music (1998 Ethnomusicology Annual Meetings, Pittsburgh). A criticism I open myself to here is, how deep can one go given such inattention, after the fact, even dismissive (at the time of the rehearsals) dispositions?

What do I mean by deep? I follow Geertz, Huizinga, and others here. In Geertz's (1973) analysis of the Balinese cockfight he notes that as the attentions among the participants is drawn to the betting taking place in the center of the cockfight ring in favour of the betting taking place "outside" the deepening of the play begins.¹⁰ The play becomes deep because the attention has deepened and shifted, due to the quantity and quality of the bets – or perhaps more precisely, the quality and quantity of exchanges – for which interest shifts from attention to whether or not a particular rooster will win or lose to the relative human status transacted through exchange, and not only the cockfight itself. Geertz argued that what becomes "at stake" in such circumstances is framed by a local and particular moral economy, in this case one among Balinese men, in which esteem, honour, dignity, respect are emergent and relative to the cock *play* itself; and in my reading I think he emphasized the indexical function of exchange not the cock as person. Unlike Kleinman et al (2011), deep is not the moral system itself, shifting to reflect history, predictable yet highly variable as our persons and their histories.¹¹

Deep in my usage highlights the capacity of, in this case sound, to circulate and so exchange attention in the kampung. Jean-Luc Nancy in his philosophy of listening argues that sound (and noise) "spreads in space, where it resounds while still resounding in me" (2007: 7). Hence, sound, unlike visual sensing is weighted toward the metaxic faculty of human sense making; what we anthropologists might recognize as one of the sympathetic laws of magic – the law of contagion, whereas visualizing is weighted toward the mimetic faculty or the law of similarity.¹² In another analytics, syntagms in favour of paradigms, metonymy in favour of metaphor, perhaps. Just as Frazer noted for the "bastard art" of magic both faculties always intersect for sound and all sensorial experience (sight as well), yet the intense capacity of sound to connect, to share and therefore, evoke contact, and so "participation" (Nancy 2007: 10) of varying degrees requires analysis beyond a music's ability to merely, or only imitate. This is what I mean by deep sound.

Before moving on, it is useful to summarize my analysis of country music in this urban kampung at the time.

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, 1973 "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. BasicBooks.

¹¹ Arthur Kleinman, Yunxiang Yan, Jing Jun, Sing Lee, and Everett Zhang, 2011. *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹² Nancy, 2007: 10.

DEEP SOUND

My previous analysis argued from a position that the soundscape of kampung life is performed and heard as an “audible dialogue with the world” (Hirschkind 2006: 83) in as many ways and from as many perspectives as there are kampung residents.¹³ One channel from which to enjoy the kampung soundscape is to listen to its sonority as a resounding of the moral economy of kampung existence – it is everyday politics and operates somaphorically (Ferzacca 2010) as one of among several “visceral modes of appraisal” (Connolly 1999) available to kampung residents.¹⁴ If I may return to my brief description informed by the after effects of “learning to listen” in Java, I can extend this discussion for some benefit here.

I learned to tune out the call to prayer from the local mesjid (mosque) early in the pre-dawn morning, followed by the rustlings of pots and the steam of boiling rice, the crowing of cocks, splashes of bathwater, the rhythmic clip-clop of flip-flops, the musical advertisements of roving prepared-food vendors, flourishes of children's voices fading off towards school, pulsating dangdut music adding rhythm to morning chores, cackling hens and chirping chicks scrounging for something to eat and the bustle of men and women off to work and the market.

I stopped listening to the aural cadence of fading mornings into afternoons, and the kampung quiets, underscored again with the call for prayer and sputtering motorbikes. Small children and women appear from inside their homes to talk and fancy the musical parade of food. A kind of lazy quietude until other sounds--the swish of bamboo brooms cleaning the public dust and clutter of the day, followed by the splashes of water--herald the arrival of late afternoon. Then, a jamboree of all-over social life breaks out as kampung residents congregate in the lanes and back streets out in front of or near their homes for sore, the late afternoon social time valued by kampung residents. Escaping from behind closed doors of those who own televisions the laugh tracks and dialogue of Indonesian cinetron (sitcoms) spill out through the thin walls falling upon ears of envy. Night approaches, the call for prayer returns and the sounds of people are carried into their homes as they eat and take their evening bath. An occasional radio news program mixes in with the chatter of dinnertime. With nightfall the re-emergent laughter and talk fill the streets along with the sputter of motorbikes. Groups shuffle along on their way to prayer meetings. Polite greetings are exchanged by congregates and passers-by. As evening proceeds the pitch of sociality builds. Youths, young men and women, begin to gather together to gossip, romance, and play music. Middle-aged men smoke and dream, while their wives and small children relive their day. As nine o'clock approaches, women and children return to their homes. The murmurs of men are overwhelmed by the croons of youths singing Indonesian pop songs and fractured American hits at the top of their lungs. After midnight the murmurings of men, the lusty songs of romantic youth and the lizard songs of the gecko dovetail into the all-night radio broadcasts of shadow-puppet performances with bell percussions of

¹³ Charles Hirschkind, 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. Columbia University Press.

¹⁴ William Connolly, 1999. *Why I am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Steve Ferzacca, 2010. “Somaphoric Organizations of Self and Society in Java.” In *Everyday Life in Asia: Social Perspectives on the Senses*. Devorah Kalekin-Fishman & Kelvin E. Y. Low (eds.), Ashgate.

gamelan music punctuated by the verbal gymnastics of puppeteers. Then it all begins again. (Ferzacca 2006: 332-333)

Social positions, statuses, roles, tasks, obligations, derivations from such subject positions of men, women, the old and young, the haves and have nots, and numerous other subject positions are audible as the noise of daily life. Rather, what we have is the everyday audible dialogue of social structure and praxis. The stiff bristles of the broom swish across the narrow street and alleyways as kampung neighbours each and every afternoon clean in front of their home in preparation for *sore*, that late afternoon early evening social time that takes place in the kampung all over Yogya and Java for that matter.

The broom sounds the time but also the fulfillment of social obligation and contract expected of neighbourly participation in the daily life of the community. All over Indonesia community cleanliness is a government dictum as well as locally sanctioned value. The acronym Bestari -- *bersih* (cleanliness), *sehat* (healthy), *tertib* (orderly), *aman* (safe), *rapi* (neat), and *indah* (beautiful) – represents the government interest in such things, but in the corners of kampung like ours it's governance that matters as much if not more so. The sound of the broom is a call to others that the time has come to act as members of the community. As decades of ethnography have illustrated for Javanese, whether living in the *desa* and *dusun* (villages) of the countryside, or the urban villages like the kampung we moved into, "living publicly" (Mulder 1992: 41) is a paramount feature of everyday life.¹⁵ Patrick Guinness (2009) reviews once again the literature on Javanese kampung life and the emphasis on "social harmony" (*rukun*) in and for community life.¹⁶ What still matters, in the past (Geertz 1961; Jay 1969), and in the more recent present (Guinness 1986, 2009; Newberry 2006; Sullivan 1980; Sullivan 1994) is proximity to *tetangga* (neighbours) on one's left and right (*tetangga kanan-kiri*) in terms of simply getting along on a daily basis.¹⁷ This getting along with one's close-by neighbours is managed by fulfilling daily duties and obligations, like sweeping the street and splashing water afterwards to settle the dust in front of one's house; this is done each day at the same time by residents of the home, or the maid if one can afford such a household addition. The sound of the coconut stick broom (*sapu; gagang sapu*) resounds with such depth; it is deep sound because it is a sound of reciprocal exchange, embedded and embodied in numerous other daily exchanges that signal social participation, or at least the willingness (and unwillingness) to participate in social life.

¹⁵ Niels Mulder, 1992, *Individual and Society in Java: A Cultural Analysis*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.

¹⁶ Patrick Guinness, 2009, *Kampung, Islam and State in Urban Java*. Singapore; NUS Press. See Also Mary Hawkins, 1996, "Is Rukun Dead? Ethnographic Interpretations of Social Change and Javanese Culture." *TAJA* 7, 3: 218-234; Janice C. Newberry, 2006, *Back Door Java: State Formation and the Domestic in Working Class Java*. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press.

¹⁷ Hildred Geertz, 1961. *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe; Patrick Guinness, 1986, *Harmony and Hierarchy in a Javanese Kampung*. Singapore: Oxford University Press; 2009, *Kampung, Islam and State in Urban Java*. Singapore; NUS Press; Robert R. Jay, 1969. *Javanese Villagers: Social Relations in Rural Modjokuto*. Cambridge, Mass; The MIT Press; Janice C. Newberry, 2006, *Back Door Java: State Formation and the Domestic in Working Class Java*. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press; John Sullivan, 1980. *Back Alley Neighbourhood: Kampung as Urban Community in Yogyakarta*. Melbourne : Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University; Norma Sullivan, 1994. *Masters and Managers: a Study of Gender Relations in Urban Java*. Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Sweeping the alleyway in front of one's home before sore begins brings about attention, and so, is the "sensuous conduct" (Crossley 1998) Javanese who live in this urban kampung value.¹⁸ Such every day and daily sensuous conduct is one source from which to appraise the competence of others, and operates as I have argued elsewhere as the somaphoric organization of social life. The materiality from this perspective of the somaphor is not the "material abode" (Thompson 1993) of production and the economy per say, but the one of action experienced, and like the rough music performed our way upon arrival, and the kroncong rehearsals I will explore further, the sonority of everyday kampung life resonate a "mode of life in which some part of the law belongs still to the community and is theirs to enforce" (Ibid. p. 530). The quintessential country music of Indonesia, kroncong, musicked in this kampung, on these evenings, in those times, was a stream with which to navigate within labyrinths of interaction and anticipatory exchange among actual social relationships in salient, actualized works of the imagination.

Deep sound resounds profoundly – it is soundings from the fathoms of social life. The profound implications and consequences of deep sound are multi-sonorous in affect and meaning, the depth enabled by the *milieu* in which social lives occur. Foucault (2007) described the milieu as "a certain number of combined, overall effects bearing on all who live in it" (p. 21). This immersion opens up participants experientially to local "devices of saturation" (Ibid. p 45) that are points and moments of "intensification" in local experience.¹⁹

Saturation is a common Javanese theme as well. Geertz (1960: 238) wrote that an "articulate informant" explained that "feeling" and "meaning" is life.²⁰ This Javanese phenomenology is captured by the concept of *rasa*, which Geertz's informant described as "whatever lives has *rasa*, and whatever has *rasa* lives" (ibid.). Geertz elaborated further on *rasa*, and others (e.g. Stange 1984), including myself have worked this concept over as well.²¹ There are two points I want to emphasize here. First as Geertz (1960) pointed out, Javanese tend to view subjectivity from this phenomenological analytical perspective in which "feeling" and "meaning" are one and "tied to everything." Secondly, this "everything" is the crux in terms of being a person the Javanese way (to lift a phrase or two). As a particularly articulate informant related to me in 1992, some 30-plus years later after Geertz, the lived everything matters:

Tap the copious flows that saturate your authentic identity. The meaning of this is *rasa* lives. We feel because we live, and life saturates our entire body. (*Galilah rasa yang meliputi seluruh tubuhmu, kepribadianmu yang asli. Artinya, rasa itu hidup. Kita bisa terasa ini karena kita hidup. Dan hidup itu meliputi seluruh tubuh.*) Malang, Indonesia (East Java), 6/24/92.

This fundamental feature of Javanese experience (*pangalaman*) that is conceptualized as saturation in life, a life characterized as feeling and meaning (*rasa*) as one, provides an entry into making sense of society in Java. In order to understand the manner in which Javanese direct us to the centrality of somaphoric organizations, this sense of self is crucial to consider (see Ferzacca 2001). In this way the content of daily life is felt content. The sounds of the broom that are audible each day resound as a

¹⁸ Nick Crossley, 1998. "Emotion and Communicative Action: Habermas, Linguistic Philosophy and Existentialism." In *Emotions in Social Life*, ed. Bendelow, G. Williams, S., 16-38. London: Routledge.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, 2007. *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. Translated by Graham Burchell. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁰ Clifford Geertz, 1960 *The Religion of Java*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²¹ Paul Stange, 1984. *The Logic of Rasa in Java*. *Indonesia* 38 (Oct.): 113-134.

device of saturation, compelling as “surveillance procedures” but more importantly, as a call to the human feeling of community.

The country feeling of kroncong is deep sound, not only due to the referential qualities of the music and lyrics, but perhaps more significant, the musicking of kroncong in the community resounded in that saturation of social life. The social fabric of kampung experience is not only rendered but validated in sensuous terms. Once again, I refer to this relationship between making sense and society as the somaphoric organization of social life, and deep sound captures this attention to the everyday exchanges that make up individual experience and social existence in such communities.

DEEP SOUND AND COUNTRY FEELING

Kroncong music is a musical genre played on string instruments, sung by both men and women. Kroncong is considered a cultural product of the encounter between indigenous groups of this archipelago and foreign traders during the heady days of the western European age of discovery.²² Previously, I focused on gender relations in the cultural production of kroncong in this neighbourhood.

In 1850, on a visit to the south coast of Java, Sir Francis Drake visited Java in 1850 and encountered kroncong music he described as “a very strange kind” of “country musick”, with a “pleasant and delightful” sound (Kunst 1973: 5). As string-band music kroncong features an ensemble of guitars, ukuleles, banjos, viola, string bass or 'cello, flute, and vocals, and keyboard. Kroncong shares a heritage with the “urban folk music” of Portugal known as *fado*. Kroncong musicking emerged from an ethnic mix of urban dwellers that included “Indo-European populations”²³(Kunst 1973: 375), other “Eurasians” (Kornhauser 1978:104), “Africans, Indians, and Malays” (Sumarsam 1992: 19) and other “mestico (mestizo) persons” (Tsuchiya 1989: 11) who inhabited the urban kampungs of Java’s and other trading port cities throughout the Asian and Silk Maritime Trade Network.

Kroncong’s musical elements continue to sound these and later cultural encounters as well as subsequent periods of change in the developing Indonesian imagination. As a “syncretic,” “acculturated,” or “hybrid” form of expressive culture, kroncong musicians have continually combined musical elements from other local musical genres, particularly gamelan (Lockhard 1998: 63). Kroncong’s growth in popularity occurred during the period of national awakening and Independence that was to a great degree due to its travelling character; a music without a country, yet malleable to any local circumstance, the coasts of Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, for example, and of course of Europe as well. Sumarsam has argued that kroncong had a dynamic inclusive

²² Judith Becker, 1975 “Kroncong, Indonesian Popular Music.” *Asian Music* II(1): 14-32. Harmunah, 1987 *Musik Keroncong: Sejarah, Gaya, dan Perkembangan*. Yogyakarta: Pusat Musik Liturgi. Bronia Kornhauser, 1978 “In Defense of Kroncong.” In *Studies in Indonesian Music*, Margaret J. Kartomi, ed., Clayton, Vic: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University: 104-183. J. Kunst, 1973 *Music in Java: Its History, Its Theory, and its Technique*. Third, Enlarged Edition. Volume One. Edited by E. L. Heins, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. Craig A. Lockhard, 1998 *Dance of Life: Popular Music and Politics in Southeast Asia*. University of Hawai’i Press. Philip Yampolsky, 1989 “Hati yang Laku, An Indonesian Hit.” *Indonesia* 47: 1-17; 1991 *Indonesian Popular Music: Kroncong, Dangdut and Langgam*. Music of Indonesia Series 2, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40056, liner notes. CD-4735 v.2.

²³ See Kunst 1973: 375, and Kornhauser 1978:104, as well as Sumarsam 1992: *Gamelan: Cultural Interaction and Musical Development in Central Java*. University of Chicago Press: 19, and Kenji Tsuchiya, 1989 “Batavia in a Time of Transition.” In *The Formation of Urban Civilization in Southeast Asia*, Yoshihiro Tsubouchi, ed., 1-23, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University: 11.

capacity for sounding the collective Indonesian imagined community in-the-making (Sumarsam 1992: 119-120). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries kroncong music found its most devoted audience in the Eurasian populations and among the lower classes of urban kampung (Kornhauser 1978: 131), and became an “urban folk music of the proletariat” (Heins 1975: 21).

Kroncong, a very strange kind of country music, spread through musicians and musicking throughout the emerging world system because of its musical capacity to capture local meaning, and to circulate local milieu. Tsuchiya (1989:19) argues that it is precisely this “otherness” that later on was important for the association of kroncong with Indonesian nationalist projects. Scholars have illustrated (Becker 1975; Kornhauser 1978; Sumarsam 1992) the history of kroncong as a “national” music, and for contemporary Indonesia; a truly country music if there ever was one. Musicians and the music performed the sound and sentiment of protest, revolution and independence. In the heady days of the nationalist movement, kroncong music, without its ties to any one ethnic group or tradition, became an expression of the revolutionary spirit, and found a country within the spirit of Indonesian independence and the “unity in diversity” of the Indonesian nation-state. Kroncong, like Bahasa Indonesia, flattens difference rather than mark it through specific ethnic affiliation (like Javanese gamelan for example). Kroncong could be heard as an auditory sign of a new and emerging kind of “modern” society, representing a rupture with traditional relations of rank and circumstance and the appearance of a new age.

The vocals and instrumentation of kroncong are produced with “conspicuous” vibrati that, from my ear’s perspective, edge towards an over-wrought, ostentatiously projected sense of yearning and melancholy (Kornhauser 1978: 143). Depending on lyrical content and context in which music is performed and heard, kroncong musical elements attempt to evoke a sense of nostalgia in which yearnings for human relationships lost, moments in history lost, or places lost, particularly the rural countryside are often, but not always central. However, the most obvious feature of kroncong is its “sense of place” (Feld and Basso 1996) for which a rustic lament replete with locally relevant referents from nature is lyrically evoked.²⁴

In my previous analysis I argued that strict attention to these mimetic elements of kroncong produced a certain kind of conclusion that can miss how such elements resound in musicking – making music as making social relations. Situating those nights of music making within the milieu of social relationships at the time of that work allowed me to engage broader analytical terrain -- a country of musicking that drew attention to the fact that the history of kroncong in Indonesia (and elsewhere for that matter) could be heard as masculine lament. Kroncong’s historical associations, images and activities were formed by urban kampung dwellers, particularly low-class men, and as Lockhard (1998), Becker (1975), Yampolsky (1991) and others note, kroncong musicians were mostly men whose attributes were less than savoury. I noted that the characteristics of kroncong musicians were from time to time identified as persons who led unsettled, wandering lives, tended toward masculine bravado, stylized as sexual *buaya* (crocodiles) forever on the prowl. This “déclassé, disrespectable image” (Lockhard 1998: 64) of the kroncong musician competes with its emerging association as the sound of modernity and Indonesian nationalism, and its later commercial successes propelled by its dominance in radio broadcasts, film scores, and later television.

²⁴ Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), 1996. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

The rehearsals that year began after dark. Loud affairs, with PA system, microphone for singers, the *latihan* (practice, lessons, and rehearsals) as the men described them to me lasted until midnight, and often later. The musicians assembled in front of the open door of a garage across the alley from our home. The music could be heard well beyond our little corner of the kampung. Except for the small group of men, my neighbours seemed to pay little attention to the music. The rehearsals did not draw an audience. The majority of the participants, except the sponsor and owner of the house across from mine, were unemployed, underemployed husbands and youthful bachelors. The musicians themselves were imports from other kampung hired as far as I could discern to rehearse with the local men. The sponsor was providing a *pangalaman*, an experience ostensibly for his friends, the men, and for the kampung. The sponsor, who since moved out of the kampung to another, is an entrepreneur who makes and sells hand-crafted *wayang* (shadow puppets) mostly to sell to tourists, and like myself and my wife, was a new resident of this urban kampung; he had arrived only months before I rented our house in August of 1992. He dressed in jeans and leather jackets and bore a worldly, cosmopolitan air, which were admired by some of the men and in the neighbourhood, particularly those attending the rehearsals.

I argued that for the men involved making kroncong music nostalgia evocative of simpler times and places for urban men living the uncertainty of contemporary city life was certainly at play. Equally, and perhaps, more so, musicking was also an instrumental use of music that sought at least some attention (as John Cage would argue); some recognition of their plight as men in the context of changing relationships between men and women in the kampung.

I would still hold to this analysis. I tried to show that while other studies of kampung social relations note class distinctions made among kampung residents that are derived spatially between those who live in the inner realm and those better-off residents who live along the outer streets, in terms of space at this time, in this kampung what mattered was the ongoing process of the gendering of the kampung as women's space. The cultural logic and social use of kampung space have been significantly impacted by the activities of the state-sponsored housewives organization that implements the government's health and development programs at the community level. Additionally, these grassroots efforts at making community articulate with the multiple-earning strategies often undertaken by women that are necessary for the social reproduction of family and community (see Newberry 2006).²⁵

And so my argument centered on the proposal that making music was an attempt on the part of some men in the kampung to address their increasing impotence as men in the affairs of kampung life. The country and rustic elements of the music, as well as the unbridled masculinity sometimes associated with some kroncong musicians arranged as a locally meaningful ensemble or sonoric structuration that introduced into the kampung soundscape a novel, yet familiar phonography of social life. Both methectic and mimetic qualities are certainly at play, as the musicality and historically relevant qualities of the music performed, as Huizinga (1950: 14) noted, "a helping-out of the action" in addition to spreading throughout kampung space the "sound of sound" (Taussig 1993: 80).²⁶

²⁵ Murray (1991: 73, 84) also encountered an "internal community... culturally defined as women's space" for which matrifocality is the major pattern of residence and where the degree of mobility in and out of the kampung has come to define the public space of the kampung as domesticated, women's space in Jakarta. See Alison J. Murray, 1991. *No Money, No Honey: A Study of Street Traders and Prostitutes in Jakarta*. Singapore; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Johan Huizinga, 1950. *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston; Beacon Press. Michael Taussig, 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sonic depth is about correspondences and consequences rather than merely acoustics, or the recognitions of signs and attentions in and of social life and relations. Deep sound extends mimesis from its double-layering of “sentience and copying” to include communications in the context of difference, even friction. In this way sound is deepened and is methectic in function and affect.

This became clearer to me after some talk with the men and musicians. I remind that I did not direct my attentions to these rehearsals in any sustained way. In fact, the men chided me for not staying up all hours of the night to attend the rehearsals. I was told I was weak. As we sat and smoked cigarettes, listening to the kroncong, the sponsor remarked that making this music was an ascetic practice he referred to as *prihatin*. His evidence-based appraisal cited the fact that the rehearsals lasted until well past midnight, transforming this leisure activity into ascetic practice. Making kroncong music, therefore, constituted a method of developing and maintaining power, which is the purpose of asceticism in Java. Rusticity often plays an important role in ascetic practice. Places traditionally considered ascetically potent, the same places nostalgically remembered in kroncong music - the river, the cave, the mountain -- are inhabited in the music and lyrics. Practicing asceticism, while not limited to men, nevertheless, is generally gendered as male, at least forms of asceticism that require movement and mobility through space to places where intense forms of ascetic experience can take place. In addition to sounding nostalgia for the lost paradise of the pastoral, these men are nostalgic, I argued, for lost potency as Javanese men in the everyday social relations of the *kampung*. In this sense, leisure as *prihatin* is not merely a rationalization of play as something other than what it really is - rather, the conflation of leisure and ascetic practice points toward what I believe is the crux of the matter regarding the appearance of kroncong music in the *kampung*. My previous analysis concluded that, as Ward Keeler noted in his work on Javanese expressive culture, that Javanese asceticism “offers an antidote to the corrosive capacity of interaction” (1987: 19).²⁷ The ends to the kroncong rehearsals seem to support not only my argument but the men’s argument as well. It was suspected that the group were up to no good; there was likely alcohol and gambling involved, even though the rehearsals were entirely public for all to see if one wanted to. These suspicions were confirmed when one of the participants, the husband of the *jamu* (health elixirs) maker who lived next door to me, one of the men who fancied himself an aspiring kroncong singing star, was alleged to have taken money from the purse of his wife in order to play cards (gamble). Unbeknownst to me, but reported to my wife, some of the women approached a neighbour just across from the house where the rehearsals were taking place for some help. The man they consulted was considered an elder and looked to from time to time to speak and moderate public affairs in the *kampung*. As the story goes he put a stop to the musicking.

It seemed to me that the making of kroncong music could be “listened to” as a resounding recognition of things as they are as these men see it, and perhaps as they see themselves, and as they wish to see themselves given their particular social and cultural circumstances at the time. The music was heard but unappreciated given the expectations of appropriate behaviour in the neighbourhood community managed in terms of gender relations. In the end, the men and their “passions” were kept in check; their invented ascetic disguises brought to light for what they really were: uncontrolled urges that the sponsor and the men had the audacity to resound.

For those who made the music, the yearning and melancholy, the rustic and country feeling sounded musically and lyrically that are central to kroncong music made some sense. However, the attempt to revise the rehearsals as ascetic practice transformed this musicking as a particular act-of-remembering taking place within the biographies of those involved, and the arrangements of those biographies as social relations.

²⁷ Ward Keeler, 1987. *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

A FINAL NOTE

There was all that in the voice of a man who stood chanting in the sun, and we were in his voice...

Driss Chraïbi, *Heirs to the Past* (1962)

All of this I have already argued in more detail elsewhere. What I want to bring more attention to in this case, however, is an orientation to sound in social life that does not only account for its presence a “judgement” or an appraisal of the nature of the social fabric. Sound as Nancy argues is “made of referrals” (Nancy 2007: 7). As sound spreads in space “meaning and sound” come to share “the space of the self, a subject” (Ibid., p. 8). Sound-meaning, then, resounds in places by “resounding in me” (Ibid.). Nancy (Ibid., p. 10) goes on to say that this echoing is accomplished through the “methexic” (Huizinga’s methectic) qualities of sound which capture human attentions, resonating “participatory” experience as a contagious form of exchange – “sharing.” Sound as sense, to summarize these points Nancy makes perhaps too briefly, “is the ricochet, the repercussion, the reverberation: the echo in a given body” (Ibid. p. 40). James Donald notes John Cage and his distinction between silence and sound “not so much acoustic as a question of attention” (2011: 34).²⁸

The musicking of kroncong, coupled with the rough music performed upon our arrival begins another interpretive rendition of the musicking of kroncong in this Javanese kampung. Musicking kroncong should also be heard – listened to -- as “populist ideology,” (Fox 2004) that as popular culture expresses and codes “class specific cultural response(s).” Considering Fox and Thompson in light of my earlier analysis brings special attention to a tradition of popular culture studies that view expressive cultural practice often from below for its “social and cultural contradictions... fracture and oppositions within the whole” (Thompson 1993), “mediated primarily by ritualized forms of intimate social interaction” (Fox 2004: 30).²⁹ Kroncong music as it was made in the kampung shares common sense with the country music of Texas honky tonks as a “working class art” (Ibid., p. 31), in that its making on those cool evening in a central Javanese city expressed, captured, absorbed, penetrated, administered within the “simple jurisdiction” (Nancy 2007: 52), the intimate social interactions that make up in the social lives and arrangements in this corner of the world with and through the tactical and strategic capacity of making sense. In this way, the rough music and the country feeling of kroncong were deep sound engaged in the daily exchanges that saturate the experiences of local milieu. The social life of Javanese sensuous conduct reveals forms of agency that navigate and occur within labyrinths of exchange among these actual and imagined relations of people and things. These are the somaphoric organizations of everyday life.

²⁸ James Donald, 2011, *Sounds Like Hell: Beyond Distopian Noise*. In *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City*, Gyan Prakash, Editor, pp. 31-52. Princeton University Press.

²⁹ Aaron A. Fox, 2004. *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Duke University Press.