

themselves, their country, and the future. These interviews have been updated, and this version is still as fascinating as the earlier edition.

Chapter 11 discusses Indonesia's foreign policy, past and present. Its interesting relationship with Australia is explored in some depth.

The final chapter discusses Indonesia and the future. The problems with a successor to Suharto are discussed. The author did not really predict the grave economic and political difficulties with which Suharto and Habibie have had to contend, nor was Grant sure that Habibie would be Suharto's successor.

The book includes a useful glossary, bibliography and index. While, in the author's words, it is not "scholarly" (there are no footnotes), the book is easy to read and would provide the high school teacher or survey-level university instructor with a firm background and perhaps the impetus to make Indonesia a part of the curriculum over and above a "current event" mention. ■

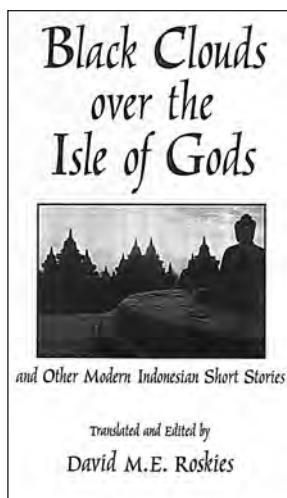
Thomas Bibler

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Black Clouds over the Isle of Gods and Other Modern Indonesian Short Stories

Translated and Edited by David M. E. Roskies

ARMONK, NEW YORK: M. E. SHARPE, 1997
223 PAGES




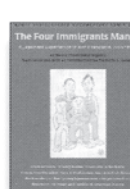

The short story is "by far the favored prose form" in Indonesia, David M. E. Roskies tells us in the introduction to this collection (p. xiii). There he discusses also the dilemmas of translation, as well as the major historical events and conditions that inform these stories of the late twentieth century—the revolution for Indonesia's independence, the 1965 coup and its cataclysmic aftermath, the wide-spread ambivalence about development, and a bureaucratic, authoritarian state. Roskies imagines his readers as persons interested in

"the real foundations of modern Indonesian life," those who want to look behind or beneath the surfaces a tourist might capture with a camcorder (p. xviii).

Paired with the author's useful introduction, a section of notes and comments closes the book. These valuable sketches on each of the eighteen writers introduce the reader to some of Indonesia's best known authors of contemporary fiction, including Idrus, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Achdiat Karta Mihardja, A. A. Navis, Nasjah Djamin, Satyagraha Hoerip, Nh. Dini, Taufiq Ismail, Putu Wijaya, Danarto, and Putu Oka Sukanta. References to the writers' other major works provide entree to a wider literature. Only through Roskies's notes and comments, in fact, will most students understand what is especially "Indonesian" about these works.

Roskies selected some stories to evince the figural realism that is the mainstream in modern Indonesian fiction, that is, writing that presumes a "belief in the efficacy and truthfulness of words" (p. 203). Pramoedya's "For Hire" fits into this category, vignettes about poverty and murder told through the eyes of a young boy whose life is privileged by comparison to that of the tragic family he describes. "Three Tales from the Occupation," by Idrus, short-short stories also in the realist mode, set off the "honeyed words" of Japanese propaganda against a deathly backdrop of starvation and conscription.

Other writers strike an avant-garde pose, parodying life rather than simply imitating it, or inciting "mental terror" by eliding the line between nightmare and reality. In Satyagraha Hoerip's "The Last Train But One," a young man gradually realizes that he is trapped aboard a train with an endless corridor, and bound for Eternity.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Roskies guesses this to be an oblique commentary on the horror that ushered in the New Order. "Stop Thief!" by Taufiq Ismail begins with the comic scene of a man paying a Thieving Tax, his penalty for having been robbed. Out of this bureaucratic absurdity he walks into a parade swirling mindlessly around a woman in the throes of giving birth. This woman represents the national heroine, "Kartini Our Mother," who by the end of this violent, slap-stick tale has become a corpse, her body and that of her still-born infant transported away by a procession of shoeless children wearing white socks. Stories like these, Roskies notes, "make you feel in more ways than one that you are treading on eggshells" (p. 203).

Roskies, "trying to steer a course between the rocks of a too-literal rendition and a fanciful recreation" (p. xvi) aims "creatively to transform" the language of these stories (p. xvii). Without seeing the originals, I found that the translator's interpretive choices, especially the slang or idiomatic terms, often made me unduly curious about just which Indonesian or Javanese phrase he was glossing. His wording will certainly ring off-key in the ears of American students when he writes, for example, ". . . he'd done a flit" (p. 125), or "If it's kudos you're after, Son, good on you," and "She was cheesed off" (p. 165). Even when Roskies writes in his own voice, the prose sometimes made me stumble and run for the OED, such as this sentence: "Po-faced, the author sets about making his characters come a cropper" (p. 203).

Teachers who assign literature in introductory survey courses on Southeast Asia will probably not be able to use this collection. These

sophisticated stories, and their editorial commentary, may appeal to advanced undergraduates, perhaps those who are studying Bahasa Indonesia or who have returned from a study abroad program in Indonesia. Instructors who know Indonesian history and society in some depth will be best able to make classroom use of these fascinating, but sometimes abstruse, tales. Teachers and students in a position to study these stories, however, will be repaid with insider glimpses of the humor, horror, pathos and ironies of life in modern Indonesia, telling glimpses available only through literature or through the experience of living somewhere longer than most tourists care to stay. ■

Rita Smith Kipp

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Buddhism in Practice

EDITED BY DONALD S. LOPEZ

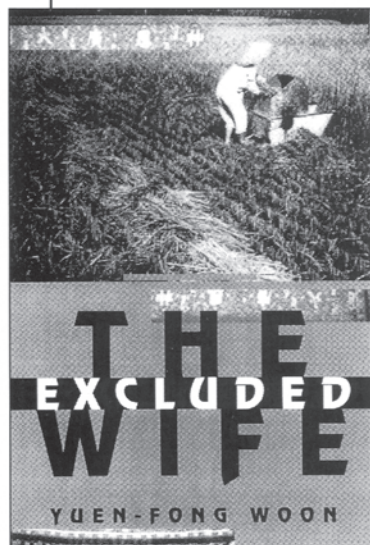
PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1995
XVI + 608 PAGES

Many new and some surprising English translations of texts have been collected in an anthology by Donald Lopez with thirty-nine contributors. In all there are forty-eight texts with extensive introductions. The impression gleaned from the variety reveals Buddhism as quite a varied and complex tradition.

Like an all-star professional athletic team, the contributors to this volume bring credentials as world famous scholars of Buddhism, if mostly in American institutions. A trust in the validity of the book may in part be dependent upon the respect one holds for the illustrious company who prepared this tome. At the same time, readers may still wonder what was the principle of selection of the texts which were included in the volume? Who found these texts? Did each contributor pick her own? Or did the text get chosen for them and sent to them to read and offer an introduction? Lopez explains in the introduction that the intent was "identifying areas of shared concern and continuity, as well as areas of contestation and conflict among the widely varied practices of different Buddhist communities." The volume certainly goes a long way in achieving such an aim.

One may wonder which of the forty-eight selections were originally complete texts or taken from longer works. Each seems to be treated in the volume as a complete and separate piece. The introductions are sometimes as long as the text which they introduce,

<http://www.mcgill.ca/mqup>



Based on the true stories of Chinese women who immigrated to Canada, Yuen-Fong Woon tells the riveting story of Sau-Ping who escaped civil war, famine and lawlessness in 1920s China only to be stopped at Canada's border by the Chinese Immigration (Exclusion) Act. Her husband was already here, but she like so many others, was *The Excluded Wife*.

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