

*L'image de la femme dans les littératures modernes indonésienne et malaise.*  
By Monique Zaini-Lajoubert. Paris: Cahier d'Archipel 24, 1994. Pp. 221. Bibliography, index.

Feminism is developing and becoming more apparent in several domains such as linguistics. For instance, in English, the term "chairperson" is often used instead of the usual "chairman", and in French more jobs have been given a feminine equivalent, especially in Canadian French. It is quite natural to find more interest in women's writings in literature world-wide and the appearance of Monique Zaini-Lajoubert's study is therefore timely.

The author has chosen to present her findings in a comprehensive manner and also gives the reader a broad idea on how women have been depicted in modern Indonesian and Malaysian literatures. The author has been comprehensive in the sense that she has not only selected works from different periods in both literatures, but has also chosen female characters described both by male and female authors and finally discussed works by female writers. Additionally, the bibliography is rather impressive and the index quite useful. After providing readers with a broad overview of the period, she has also considered a few novels, which constitute the corpus of her study.

Our first question addresses this so-called corpus. We are not told how she has reached such a list of titles or why some novels are included and others not. For instance, one of the most famous female Indonesian writers is undoubtedly R.A. Kartini. But she is not given any prominence in this study. True, Kartini has often been studied and does not deserve an introduction, but when one tackles the subject of feminism in Indonesian literature, she should be given more attention. Moreover the index has only one entry for "Kartini" when there should be two; one is the famous writer and the other is the character from *Atheis*. Although Pramoedya Ananta Toer is mentioned a few times in the book, one of his novels, *Gadis Pantai*, which is rather fascinating, is not mentioned at all.

So we get the impression that no proper distinction has been made between high and popular literature. Yet such a distinction exists in

Malay between *Kesusasteraan* and *Sastera*. The first term is precisely high literature, while the second refers to any type of writing. Was it necessary to spend so much time on La Rose?

Another point is that although Zaini-Lajoubert's research is analytical, there is no real synthesis. The reader is left with a lot of titles, characters, dates, places, and names, but without a proper appraisal or assessment of the literary works mentioned. As a matter of fact, the conclusion is rather brief — it has less than five pages.

The question of reception of such literature has also not been addressed. Yet it is a pertinent issue very often mentioned in modern studies of literature, anywhere in the world. For example, how has such literature been regarded by male writers and the public at large? Is it possible to ascertain the influence on female writings by male novelists and vice versa? Once again we are left in the dark.

A few statements made in the study are questionable. For instance, on p. 76, it is said that ASAS 50 has been quite different from ANGKATAN 45 in Indonesia, which was more left-wing. Actually it has recently been found that ASAS 50 also had left-wing inclinations. One can cite, for instance, the article by Abdul Rahman Hanafiah, entitled "Asas 50 berfahaman komunis?" in *Utusan Malaysia*, 22 May 1993, p. 20.

There are also a few comments to make with regard to language. For instance, two place names are not very accurate. First, the name of the historical town in Malaysia should be either spelt Malacca, as that town has been traditionally written, or Melaka, as the official spelling stands. But to use the term "Malaka" is strange. The name of the country should be "Malaisie" in French instead of "Malaysia"; the French term "Malaisie" has been coined long before the English equivalent. On p. 34, it is stated that *poejangga* (more often spelt *pujangga*) means "poet". Actually this Indonesian term has a wider meaning as it refers to any writer or author. The author of the book does not seem to be aware of the differences which exist between usages in Malay and Indonesian. Thus, *pribumi* (p. 35), which is very common in Indonesia, is rarely used in Malaysia, where the equivalent term is *bumiputra*. Similarly, *penghulu* is the village headman in Malay, and not the religious chief (p. 54), al-

though he may, at times, officiate as such.

Apart from the few points mentioned above, the study by Monique Zaini-Lajoubert is quite interesting and would definitely help in our understanding of modern concerns of literature in Indonesia and Malaysia.

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