It is also not always clear who is telling the story. The editor sometimes seems too eager to take over from the author and thus he becomes too visible, for we are interested in the De Groots.

Nevertheless, the book is very valuable and informative. I hope the Netherlandic Press will be able to publish more of these first-person immigrant stories before none of these pioneers are with us any more.

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Tineke Hellwig: *Adjustment and discontent, representations of women in the Dutch East Indies.* Windsor: Netherlandic Press, 1994. 103pp. Can$11.95.

Tineke Hellwig: *In the shadow of change, images of women in Indonesian literature.* Berkeley Univ. Press, 1994. 259pp. US$22.

Tineke Hellwig teaches Indonesian literature, history and civilisation at the University of British Columbia. She was born in Surabaya of a European father and an Indonesian mother, but was brought up in Utrecht and, as she says, thought of herself as an ordinary Dutch girl. Her admiration for her mother, however, combined with a visit to Indonesia, led her to specialise in the study of that country's literature and culture. Much of what she discusses in the first book we review here, and all the contents of the second, are largely unknown to Western readers, and we are grateful to her for filling in a large gap in our knowledge. I will therefore describe her subject matter fairly fully.

The Netherlandic Press volume should be read first. (Its themes were outlined in Dr. Hellwig's article in this Journal, "The Asian and Eurasian woman of the Dutch East Indies in Dutch and Malay literature," XIV ii (Fall 1993), 20-26). Its first chapter describes with admirable brevity and clarity the history of Dutch colonisation of the East Indies from 1600 to 1870, by which time the prize was no longer spices but cash crops like coffee and sugar. The second chapter covers the period 1870-1900, when the colonies' economy stagnated, the cost of wars with rebel tribes soared, and Western values produced a rigidly stratified society.

There follows a picture of the status of women in the society thus created. It is not pretty to modern eyes. Whereas in earlier years the East India Company encouraged marriage between the European employees and local women, to keep them from going home, now employees went home and brought out a Dutch bride. Local women became mere *nyais* (mistresses) to be discarded when the European bride came. How the women involved in these arrangements reacted to them, Dr. Hellwig traces through eleven texts, five by Dutch authors — Couperus' *De stille kracht* (1900), Daum's *Nummer elf* (1893), and three women writers of their period — four by men of Chinese descent, and two by Indo (partly European) authors.

The Dutch works uniformly portray tension and jealousy between the two women (commonly the *nyai* poisons the man with something unknown to Western pharmacology, the revenge of the helpless); Javanese people are inferior, and mixed-race women and their offspring are stupid, oversexed and ugly. In the stories in Malay (which is the lingua franca of Indonesia), the European man is often drunken, filthy and brutal. Of the women, the Indos, feeling at home with neither the colonisers nor the local people, are uncertain of themselves, but others are more flexible: a Dutch woman becomes a model Chinese wife, a local woman whose engagement is broken off marries her adoptive father. European women married to European men, made to play the part of a civil servant's wife, are perhaps no better off than their discarded predecessors. They are also expected to love their husband's children by the *nyai* (the *voorkinderen*). They mostly succeed, but is this the triumph of humane feelings or acceptance of the man's double sexual standard? They have to choose solidarity with their sex or their race, and the latter is easier.

Clearly, in Couperus, Daum *et al.* we have always heard the white male point of view about East Indies society. Dr. Hellwig offers us, on the contrary, the viewpoint of the Indonesian and the woman. This also is true of the second book, which looks for the image of women in works of Indonesian literature, more recent than those discussed above. The basis for the book is her doctoral thesis done at Leiden, and accordingly chapter one is about the topic and the critical methods. She starts from the hypothesis that "patriarchal norms dominate Indonesian literature" (1) and therefore women are seen as inferior. To test this belief, she analyses the Indonesian novel from 1937

to 1987, i.e. almost the whole of the period for which this imported, urban, largely Javan genre has existed. Not much critical work has yet been done on it. She adopts three connected critical methods (but uses them all sparingly), the first being feminism. She reminds us that she is a white North American woman writing in the 1990's, and that her viewpoint is no more privileged than any other. (Such an admirable relativism is not always practised by other feminist critics, in the opinion of this reviewer, a white male getting long in the tooth). The second method is deconstruction, or reading against the grain, to see whether the presentation of characters makes even women readers accept a misogynist viewpoint. And the third is narratology, as one might expect since Dr. Hellwig chose Mieke Bal as her thesis director. This method distinguishes among the fabula (the events), the story (the events as they are related), and the text (the structure of language signs used to tell the events, including focalisation, the question of which character gets to tell the story and therefore determines what we believe about it). The novels Dr. Hellwig discusses may not be predominantly about the women characters, but her discussion of them is.

Chapter two deals with three novels, dating from before the second world war, all by men, all from Sumatra and all about triangles (one man and two women). Hamka's *Merantau ke Deli* (Going abroad to Deli, 1939) is about a West Sumatran man who takes a second wife, but has to divorce his first (non-local) wife to restore domestic peace, then is bankrupted because according to custom he must keep all his second wife's family. The first wife is sympathised with, but so is he, being the victim of local custom. Takdir's *Layar Terkembang* (With sails unfurled, 1937) portrays an urban woman who seeks emancipation but wants marriage and children. Her sister, who is a devoted wife but doesn't think for herself, dies, the emancipated woman takes her place and only then feels complete (however, the novel ends before this marriage begins). Men give women a social role as a favour, not as of right; women have to be wives and mothers as well; the husbands don't offer help or support. In Dr. Hellwig's opinion, the novel doesn't promote women's liberation as much as male critics have said it does.

Armijn Pane's *Belenggu* (Shackles, 1940) tells events almost entirely from the viewpoint of a man with a wife and a mistress; the women seldom speak. Yet he is indecisive and self-doubting, whereas the women leave him. Indeed, both had other men in the past, and this solidarity in "unacceptable" behaviour leads them to act. Thus they cast off their shackles, and perhaps the man also can use his new freedom. The novel seems to have been written as a parody of the new Western monogamy which *Layar Terkembang* announces as the future norm: it suggests this change will do little for women. All three authors assume motherhood is part of marriage, but none of the wives are mothers.

Chapter three looks at five novels about the independence struggle, in order to discover the role of women in the militant organisations and their social status in those years of upheaval. Little else has been written about that role. The eponymous heroine of Rivai Marlaut's *Dokter Haslinda* (1950) hides the fact that she is a doctor and is content to be a nurse to the revolutionaries' babies; healing is nothing, she wishes she were a man and a fighter. She also hides her love for one fighter, lest it distract him from the cause. In *Lejatuhan dan Hati* (The fall and the heart, 1950) by Rukiah, even though the author is a woman and the heroine is the narrator, the story is the same: a woman ends her affair with a fighter because she does not want to distract him from his mission, gives up her attempt at liberation and returns to her mother's domination. Society condemns her affair and her child by the revolutionary. For her, being a woman means being emotional and weak. In this she is like her mother, who depends on others for her mental stability. This woman writer doesn't see femaleness, following one's emotions, as empowering.

The chapter concludes with an account of three novels by major (male) writers. Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Keluarga gerilya* (A guerilla family, 1949) revolves around a mother with seven children and many lovers. The narrator does not judge her for this. Her three guerilla sons killed her husband, who is probably not their father, for fighting on the Dutch side (read: they reject their official fatherland). Mochtar Lubis' *Jalan Tak Ada Ujung* (Road without end, 1952) portrays two men; one is impotent because of vague fears of life and is cuckolded by the other. Under torture, however, the impotent man overcomes fear and the weak one goes to pieces. Which proves that fear and weakness are not masculine. Again, the wife's adultery is not judged. The heroine of Pramoedya's *Midah* (1953) has a child by a husband

she hates and another by a lover who leaves her, and accepts that she is an outsider. Her family are supportive.

All five novels show that women are weak and dependent because society will not accept them any other way. Luckily they support each other, for without support they go mad. On the other hand, society no longer condemns women for having relations with two or more men.

Chapter four is a sort of intermission. It looks at two novels of a tetralogy which were written by Pramoedya in the 1980's (after he came back from imprisonment by the anti-communist regime that seized power in 1965) but which are set around 1900, when the Dutch began a more enlightened approach to the local people's interests, called the Ethical Policy. The first novel, *Buma manusia* (This earth of mankind, 1980) embeds the story of Nyai Ontosoroh in that of her son-in-law, a Javanese man cruelly aware of being rejected, even at school (his nickname, Minke, is a corruption of monkey). He in turn has to learn to respect Nyai Ontosoroh, whom her father sold at fourteen to his boss for a promotion. At first, like Javanese society, he rejects her as a prostitute, but when the white boss dies, he fights alongside her — in vain — for her right to keep her daughter (Minke's wife). We see whites' power over Javanese, men's over women, parents' over children, and in all cases the native and the woman are mere objects; for the victim, race is irrelevant. As we see in Pramoedya's other novel discussed in this chapter, *Gadis Pantai* (Girl from the coast, 1987), Javanese princes have always practised "woman stealing." This is the story of a fisherman's daughter taken at fourteen to be a prince's concubine; when she becomes pregnant, the prince divorces her but she must leave the baby behind. The court etiquette and intrigue are frightening to a child, especially one used to the informal and egalitarian life of the fishing village. The reader sees events through her eyes.

The novels discussed in chapter five are also about Javan ruling (*priyayi*) circles, but in modern Indonesia. Umar Kayam's *Sri Sumarah* (Sri the accepting, 1975) is about a woman who is widowed, becomes a masseuse (a social fall), and at the end is looking after her granddaughter. Her daughter joins the Communist insurrection, but Sri never understands politics. At the end she has a brief affair with a young male client, and Dr. Hellwig argues — against previous critics — that she thus satisfies her own sexual needs, a step forward. The same author's *Bawuk* (1975) concerns a mother of noble lineage who hides her emotion and obeys the *priyayi* code. Her daughter Bawuk, alone of her children, breaks with it and marries a Communist. When the daughter is widowed, mother helps raise the grandchild. The future is not unchanging or closed.

In her analysis of Arswendo Atmowiloto's *Canting* (The batik pen, 1986), Dr. Hellwig focuses our attention on the problems posed by the way the story is narrated: does the woman speak, or does the narrator presume to tell us what she thinks, or do we merely see what she does? The *priyayi* wife, Bu Bei, is entirely submissive at home, in sex, money and all other matters; but in the market place she runs a successful batik business. In the story the flashbacks have a certain parallelism: in the first, we see the wife is silent out of weakness; in the second, when she is pregnant by a young employee of hers, her husband is silent in order to keep her on tenterhooks till he declares it is his own child. For 23 years, however, it would seem (the narrator is silent about this long period) that the wife lived with guilt, for when her daughter announces that she wants to come into the batik business, the mother has a fatal heart attack. The husband believes his wife was not only a model wife and mother and career woman all in one, but always happy with her fate! His silence has in fact finally killed her. The daughter has a more equal marriage, but in another way she also fails to shake the Javanese class system: her attempt to run the business on more socialist egalitarian lines doesn't work.

Linus Suryadi's *Pengakuan Pariyem* (Pariyem's confession, 1981) has an unusual form. The narrator speaks in lyrical prose (or free verse), in the first person, and uses pronouns that indicate she is speaking to a superior, to whom she "confesses" her whole life. But she is unrepentant, glories in her sexuality and believes that by having an (illegitimate) child she has done her duty to ensure the continuation of the life cycle (she believes in Javan mysticism). She accepts the social order that denies her any status and has no time for Western innovations. A chief character in her story is recognisably Umar Kayam, and this novel with its old oral form seems to be the answer to his novels discussed above: no, the woman says, things should

not change, women should confine themselves to their traditional role. Add that she is lower-class and available to *priyayi* men who have denied their own women the right to sexual feelings. By speaking in the name of a conservative and happy woman, Suryadi "makes his work all the more convincing for non-resisting readers" (126); for resisting female readers it is painfully incredible.

Y. B. Mangunwijaya's *Burung-burung manyar* (The weaverbirds, 1981) is about Teto, a man whose mother was forcd by the Japanese to become a "comfort woman" (military prostitute) — though she is never allowed to tell this story herself. In revenge he fights for the Dutch against the nationalists, who had collaborated with the Japanese. (In time he sees the light.) Traumatised by his mother's defilement, he is at first immature and his early love, Atik, refuses to marry him. She becomes a nationalist intellectual and writes a doctoral thesis on weaverbirds. The female is mainly concerned with laying and hatching eggs; the male whose nest she rejects tears it apart and builds a new one. It is a question, she concludes, of having a balanced self-identity. (The symbolism is clear: Teto has to acquire one, and so does Indonesia now that it has separated from the mother country). Yet Teto survives and becomes the hero, while Atik and the other strong balanced women in the novel come to grief (Atik dies in an accident, and Teto brings up her children). He survives by accepting the old Javan (Hindu) belief that good and evil are intertwined and the one cannot and must not destroy the other — which is the message of the traditional wayang puppet theatre invoked in the novel's introduction. Indeed, the whole novel can be read as a modern version of the wayang story based on the *Mahabharata*, where good and evil end up in balance. That women are superior because they create life, but men are the heroes, in control of society, is the natural order of things. Human beings are not weaverbirds.

Chapter six concerns novels set in a different milieu, namely Ahmad Tohari's trilogy *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (1982). A girl of fourteen is recognised as having been chosen by the ancestral spirit to be the *ronggeng* (sacred dancer and prostitute) of the village of Dukuh Paruk. The boy who loves her runs away and joins the army. The girl becomes so famous as a dancer that the Communists honour her, with the result that the anti-communist regime imprisons her and burns down her village, even though the inhabitants are completely apolitical. On her return, she wants only to marry and have children, but nobody will have her: to the villagers she is superhuman (it is believed that men who sleep with her briefly become superhuman themselves) and to others she is a prostitute. After being repeatedly rejected, she escapes from this male-dominated society by going mad.

Readers may have been surprised by the almost complete absence of women writers. It is a fact, as Dr. Hellwig explains at the beginning of chapter seven (and last) that until the change of regime in 1965 which allowed the growth of a moneyed and leisured class, there were few women writers and few readers for them. Their work is classified as "pop literature", but the assumption that it is inferior may be biased. And it is the obvious place to look for an expression of women's concerns.

Nh. Dini's *Pada Sebuah Kapal* (On a ship, 1973) tells its story through the eyes of Sri, who has married a Westerner, Charles Vincent, because she is pregnant by him, but he is coarse and obtuse and has no time for her Indonesian self, expressed in Javanese and Balinese dancing. She married him in a moment of shame in her otherwise steady movement toward personal liberation (between two affairs); it is a bad mistake and cannot be undone. The same author's *La Barka* (1975; it is a house in France, but its name also means a boat) is narrated by Rina, a Javanese woman staying in France with several Frenchwomen, all of whom have lovers, are awaiting divorces, or both. Closer friendships are possible among women than between men and women, it seems, but even in the West, where affairs are less frowned on, society has trained women to be dependent on men and expects them to clean house and raise the children. Rina alone goes back to her husband; perhaps the old ties are still stronger for a Javan woman.

For the rest of the chapter, Dr. Hellwig classifies the plots by topic: love and marriage (the marriage is delayed by obstacles, or is impossible and the woman kills herself, or she is divorced or widowed and therefore mistrusted by wives); pregnancy and divorce (a girl feels inferior because she was legitimated by a polygamous marriage; a marriage falls apart because the husband cannot stand the thought that he is sterile and his wife had a child by artificial insemination);

lesbianism (we see a purely emotional lesbian love). Indonesian society, however glamorous, rich and westernised, is shown as rejecting anything that does not conform to the strict norm: a woman marries a man and has his children. The women in the novels have been taught this and accept it, just as they accept that men can have several wives and mistresses. Even women with careers, who travel, are bound by these beliefs, this social code.

Concluding her study, Dr. Hellwig recalls that Indonesian society subordinates women. Various religious beliefs sanction this attitude. Islam allows men polygamy (more rightly, polygyny) and easy divorce, but requires women to be virgins until marriage and condemns illegitimate children. Christianity is equally strict on women; some sects forbid abortion and contraception. Hinduism, embodied in the wayang tradition, admires seductive men but devoted mothers and wives. Government policy may promote Western-style capitalism, but it stresses women's duties in the home and "prescribes the marital and sexual lives of government employees" (200). Such women as feel they have their own lives owe it, not to a career, but to the joys of motherhood and a religious joy at continuing the human race; but this joy does not always last.

It is remarkable that every woman, in the twenty-eight novels Dr. Hellwig has analysed, has a man in her life. To be a mother and a caring person is seen as biological and not "a gender-defined construct" (202), i.e. decided by society. But a social demand it certainly is, for hardly any of the women characters are happy just to be mothers: the child must have a father, must be legitimate. Men cannot control conception and childbirth biologically, so they control it socially. A minority of works question these values, or show women who form support groups (mother-daughter, friend-friend) and remain unbowed — but these works are not the most recent, so that we cannot speak of change. Women writers, whether because they know the market, or because the post-independence generation has yet to speak, or because they have internalised (accepted as their own view) the male values, say nothing different from men.

At the beginning of her study, Dr. Hellwig admitted to a "biased Western feminist perspective" (13). It seems an objective fact, however, that women are no freer in independent Indonesia than fifty years ago. In her preface, she comments on her title. Women took no part in the changes, they stood in the shadow, but she draws hope from the positive connotation of shadow in the wayang drama: "the spiritual essence, meaningful and alive" (*ibid.*) May this life, essential for a society's health, come to be recognised.

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