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These journals, as they gradually reach a wider public, will contribute most effectively to the universal world literature we hope for; we repeat however that there can be no question of the nations thinking alike, the aim is simply that they shall grow aware of one another, understand each other, and even where they may not be able to love, may at least tolerate one another.

GOETHE

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CELJ

whose native tongue is English, since a basis for understanding is discernible.

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Malaysia

Sonorités pour adoucir le souci: Poésie traditionnelle de l'archipel malais. Georges Voisset, ed. & tr. Paris. Callimard/UNESCO. 1996. 242 pages. 120 F. ISBN 2-07-074665-8.

The title of this florilegium of traditional poetry of the Malay archipelago adapts *penglipur lara*, Malay for "singer of tales." The lyricism of the French title is equaled by Georges Voisset's translations of sixty-four selections of a wide range of forms, from a classical epitaph (dated 1308) to a modern poem by Firdaus Abdullah (published 1965). Voisset divides the poetry into four sections: "Rythme," highlighting tales of the *penglipur lara*; "Chants," consisting of enumerations (*perbilang*), epigrams, and pious recollections (*dhikir*); "Poèmes"; and "Gestes," primarily charms and invocations. Voisset's translations are of a very high standard and do justice to *karang*, Malay for both "literary composition" and "floral arrangement."

The translations are flanked on one side by a useful introduction, and on the other by comprehensive notes and a bibliography. (To the bibliography should be added: *Southeast Asian Languages and Literatures*, ed. E. Ulrich Kratz, London, 1996, pp. 122–32, 241–308; and the works of V. I. Braginskii, especially *The System of Classical Malay Literature*, Leiden, 1993.) The introduction uses the works of earlier *malayologues* as a springboard for a more nuanced appreciation of the material. Voisset laments the paucity of French scholarship on the region but notes exceptions in Chambert-Loir and Lombard.

In analyzing the poetry, Voisset notes the confluence of three civilizations: Nusantara (Malay for "archipelago"), India (Hindu, Buddhist, Indo-Iranian, Javanese), and Islam (Arabic, Persian, Indian). Thus, the "Ken Tambuhan Epic," for example, is a rewriting of the *Ramayana*. The fact of competing models did not, however, lead to dilution or alienation in the literature. Instead—assimilating the influences epitomized for Winstedt by the figures of the Shaman, the Brahman, and the Sufi—Malay literature reworked *outré-mer* myths into a new mythopoesis. This is how the *garuda*, for instance, is—and simultaneously is not—both Vishnu's mount and the roc of the *Arabian Nights*. With the arrival of the latest in a series of Indian-Oceanic visitors, the Dutch, new myths developed (e.g., the *Hang Tuah* cycle).

Malay mythopoesis depended largely, for Lombard, on Travel and Journey. This is to be expected from a language eighteenth-century Europeans called the Latin of the Orient, and which the Malays themselves called *bahasa pesisir*, "coastal language." But Voisset notes several other important characteristics: Malay literature is deeply suffused with Sufi-mystical imagery; it emerges both from the court (literate) and the coast (oral); it reflects and sustains an all-pervasive feudalism; and it exhibits "a remarkable absence of the poetic I."

No one extract is, or can be, typical of either the original or the translator, but—following Voisset's criteria, "le plaisir des textes" and "promenade-découverte"—here is a verse from the fairy-tale-like *Syair Bidasari*: "Un chanteur entame *La fleur qui me tient* / A la douce harmonie et aux accents anciens, / Les nobles mains frappent les tambourins. / Les trompettes apportent leur plaintes."

Sonorités's handsome cover, featuring an exquisite ivory-handled silver kris, is the foretaste of a delightful (and laudably affordable) collection.

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New Zealand

Allen Curnow. *Early Days Yet: New and Collected Poems 1941–1997*. Manchester, Eng. Carcanet. 1997. xii + 258 pages. £14.95. ISBN 1-85754-297-5.

Allen Curnow is internationally the best known and most respected New Zealand poet, as evidenced by the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and Peter Porter's praise cited on the book cover of *Early Days Yet*. Curnow's poetry was first published in the 1930s. So what we have here is a selection by a still-active writer from poetry spanning sixty years. The book is made additionally interesting by starting with pieces from the author's 1997 collection and working backward to the roots of his poetry as shown in his first collection in 1941.

Early Days Yet reveals a poet who found quite quickly his central theme and his voice. His central technical search has been for ways to adapt to both his native New Zealand version of the English language. New Zealand habits of language are strongly meiotic, avoiding hyperbole, romanticism, rhetoric, the sustained "shout" of dispute, or archaism (though obviously Curnow uses any of these at need). Similarly, topics may be down-to-earth, even mundane. Many New Zealand poets (outside the academic schools of verse) earn international respect for their work in such Japanese genres as haiku and haibun, which seem to have left traces in some of Curnow's most succinct, imagistic lines: "Seven thigh-thick / hamstring-high posts, // embedded two / metres and cemented / in" ("The Game of Tag").

Curnow's focusing interest is in fact poetry itself. His is Wordsworthian in impulse, concerned with the experiencing of perceiving, responding, remembering, re-creating. It is a poetry whose pleasure—and this is an eminently readable collection—is not usually in the parading of sound or word or image but more often in the sheer unexpectedness of detail. Within a syllable a poem can move from the intricately physical to the supernatural to the metaphysical without ever losing grip on the tangible world we inhabit and on the oddities of memory's particularity.

There is a continuing interest in the peopling of New Zealand. Curnow has the notion that whereas the indigenous Polynesians were adaptable island hoppers, the British immigrants and their descendants right up to his generation (he was born in 1911; British immigrants began to arrive in numbers in 1840) were maladapted to this originally wild, rugged antipodean landscape. He sees