



Dutch Crossing

Journal of Low Countries Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/ydct20

Translation, Memory, and Ongoing Coloniality: Reading *Gentayangan* for a More Worldly Dutch Studies

Lucelle Pardoe & Arnoud Arps

To cite this article: Lucelle Pardoe & Arnoud Arps (2023) Translation, Memory, and Ongoing Coloniality: Reading *Gentayangan* for a More Worldly Dutch Studies, *Dutch Crossing*, 47:1, 49-62, DOI: [10.1080/03096564.2022.2144598](https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2022.2144598)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2022.2144598>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 24 Nov 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 922



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Translation, Memory, and Ongoing Coloniality: Reading *Gentayangan* for a More Worldly Dutch Studies

Lucelle Pardoe^a and Arnoud Arps^b

^aTranslation Studies, University College London, London, UK; ^bMedia Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Responding to *De postkoloniale spiegel* and *De nieuwe koloniale leeslijst*, this article exposes how few Indonesian voices are heard in conversations on colonial history in the Netherlands today. Representations of the Dutch East Indies as colony prevail over conceptions of Indonesia as independent nation. Through a reading of *Gentayangan* by Intan Paramaditha, we decentre readings of colonial literature in Dutch Studies by turning to Indonesian literature in translation. Like colonial indies literature preoccupied with nostalgia, this book is also haunted by memory, but of a different anti-colonial character. As Paramaditha's character journeys around the world she is discomfited by Dutch nostalgia for *tempo doeloe* in the Netherlands, but finds solidarity in encounters with other wanderers who have faced colonization and racialized oppression in different contexts. In our reading of this text in translation, we lean on theories in memory studies to consider: How might *Gentayangan* as a demonstration of ongoing coloniality support the shift towards a more worldly approach in Dutch Studies? Are postcolonial re-readings from Western loci of meaning-making enough – as found in *Spiegel* and *Leeslijst* – or are there more innovative ways to decolonize Dutch Studies by implicating oneself in the power dynamics of ongoing coloniality?

KEYWORDS

Indonesia; dutch east indies; postcolonial; decoloniality; translation; tempo doeloe; memory studies; positionality

Reflecting upon colonialism in the former Dutch East Indies through literature, the Netherlands has traditionally focused on 'indies literature' – a highly ambivalent genre comprised of texts either written in the Dutch East Indies during the colonial era, or texts written during the post-colonial period (in the temporal sense) that reflect back upon the colonial era and its ongoing reverberations in Dutch society. The genre is ambivalent because texts generally fall into two distinct categories: those written from the perspective of white Europeans within a colonial paradigm, and those written from the perspective of Indo-Europeans with mixed Dutch and Indonesian parentage within a postcolonial paradigm. While the former generally uphold colonial power dynamics and reflect with nostalgia upon an idealized *tempo doeloe* in which 'imagination of colonial Indonesia centre on white colonial classes',¹ the latter are more likely to criticize coloniality or contend with the experience of racialization and interstitiality in postcolonial Dutch society. Two recent publications grapple with this ambivalence: *De nieuwe koloniale*

CONTACT Lucelle Pardoe  lucelle.pardoe.18@ucl.ac.uk  University College London, London, United Kingdom

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*leeslijst*² and *De postkoloniale spiegel*³ offer revisions of the traditional canon by re-reading celebrated colonial texts from a more critical perspective and by spotlighting radical postcolonial texts that were long shunted in favour of more palatable white and western perspectives. For the first time, they have also included Indonesian authors in their collections.⁴ Following on from these developments, this article considers how we can further decentre our readings of colonial literature by turning to a more diverse array of voices from Indonesia in translation. Translated literature is of particular importance to Dutch reflections on coloniality in Indonesia because contemporary Indonesians do not ‘write back’ to the colonizer in the language of the colonizer as theorized by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) in their foundational text on postcolonial literary theory.⁵ Rather, they write critically about coloniality in a more transnational sense in languages that are indigenous to the archipelago. To most researchers in Dutch Studies, these perspectives only become available through foreign language learning or through translation.

First, we discuss the Indonesian perspectives featured in the *Spiegel* and the *Leeslijst*, drawing out areas for further research. As we then go on to consider how literature travels from the Indonesian language, we turn to the book *Gentayangan* (2017) by Intan Paramaditha, translated into English as *The Wandering* (2020) by Stephen J. Epstein. Like colonial Indies literature that is preoccupied with nostalgia, this book is also haunted by memory, but of a very different anti-colonial character. As Paramaditha’s character journeys around the world she is confronted and dis comforted by Dutch nostalgia for *tempo doeloe* in the Netherlands, but also finds solidarity in encounters with other wanderers who have faced colonization and racialized oppression in different contexts. In our reading of this text in translation, we lean on theories in memory studies to help answer the following questions: How might a reading of *Gentayangan* as a demonstration of ongoing coloniality support the shift towards a more worldly approach in Dutch Studies? Are postcolonial re-readings from within Western loci of meaning-making enough – as found in *Spiegel* and *Leeslijst* – or are there more innovative ways to decolonize Dutch Studies by implicating oneself as researcher or reader in the power dynamics of ongoing coloniality?

Leeslijst and Spiegel

De postkoloniale spiegel and *De nieuwe koloniale leeslijst* were both published in 2021 as edited volumes, the former by Leiden University Press and the latter by Das Mag. We recognize that the *Leeslijst* and *Spiegel* differ in format – whereas the *Spiegel* is published in a traditional academic outlet, the more journalistic *Leeslijst* can be considered an ‘Eksperimen’ as defined by Paramaditha: a project with ‘the aspiration to start new – to create new initiatives, ideas, collective, affiliations – in order to make cultural intervention’, by scholars, journalists and writers.⁶ Experimental projects are essential, she argues, to challenging hegemonic epistemologies upheld in Eurocentric academia with its stringent publishing norms, and so in this article we discuss both projects together.

In *Spiegel*, efforts to highlight Indonesian perspectives are highly tentative. The editors dedicate just one of its twenty-six chapters to ‘Indonesian voices’,⁷ offering a close reading of Suwarsih Djopuspito’s *Buiten het Gareel* (1940) and Arti Purbani’s *Widijawati* (1948). Both novels were written and published in Dutch, although it is

worth noting Djojopuspito's Sundanese original was rejected by the colonial publishing institute Balai Pustaka, forcing her to rewrite her novel in the language of her colonizers. Co-authors Suprihatin and van 't Veer explain that little Dutch-language literature has been written by Indonesians – not only had Dutch been kept as a language for the elite, but the colonial government also feared revolutionary ideas from Europe inciting notions of self-determination amongst Indonesian nationalists. Djojopuspito and Purbani, however, received a Dutch education because they were born into the more privileged upper classes local to Java. Djojopuspito spoke Sundanese, a language and ethnicity local to West Java, while Purbani hailed from Solo, the heart of Javanese language and culture. Java was the colonial and is the current economic and political hub of the nation, and Javanese the ethnic majority group. Still today, their hegemonic positioning across the archipelago is criticized for its role in the ongoing domestic colonization of outer regions like West Papua and Timor, and its conflation for quintessential Indonesianness despite the hyper-diversity of the nation. Indeed, in her alternative reading of *Buiten het Gareel* for the *Leeslijst*, Lara Nuberg points out evidence of Djojopuspito's overt racism towards Papuan people and situates the author as having been influenced by colonial rhetoric in her Dutch education and position in society,⁸ an influence that the *Spiegel* editors also acknowledge.⁹

These two women, therefore, cannot be considered broadly representative of an Indonesian perspective, yet they stand alone in a book that hopes to act as a postcolonial mirror for a Dutch readership. Even as the editors argue that 'it is crucial to also pay attention to how Indonesians experienced the colonization of their country',¹⁰ they determine that literary texts written in Indonesian, Javanese, or other indigenous languages are beyond the scope of the *Postkoloniale Spiegel*. While the inclusion of Djojopuspito and Purbani in the discussion of Dutch East Indies literature reflects how the perspectives of previously underexposed writers – female, non-canonical, Indonesian – are now being taken into account by Dutch scholars, the editing decision to limit the book to Dutch-language literature leaves something to be desired. The collection thus takes a shot at representing Indonesian voices, but is unable to achieve the kaleidoscopic view of postcolonialism away from the Dutch metropole that, in our view, the most critical use of the term necessitates. This compartmentalization of perspectives on colonial experiences continues to result in an interpretation of the past that is demarcated rather than inclusive, as theorized by Bijl¹¹ and Snelders.¹²

In this regard, the *Leeslijst* edited by Rasit Elibol compiles critical essays on colonial and postcolonial texts with a greater openness to multilingualism. Alongside Djojopuspito on the *Leeslijst* one also finds the Indonesian *Buru Quartet* (1980–1988) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer in Dutch translation. Although Pramoedya spoke Dutch fluently, he wrote this widely translated tetralogy in his national language: Bahasa Indonesia. Set between the Netherlands and the archipelago as Indonesian nationalists fight to establish independence, Pramoedya depicts the racialized brutality of Dutch colonial occupation more vividly and in greater volumes than his lauded predecessor Multatuli did in the colonial novel *Max Havelaar* (1860). In including Pramoedya, the *Leeslijst* acknowledges his work's intense relevance to a revision of colonial history from the Dutch perspective. That being said, the editors of both *Leeslijst* and *Spiegel* limit their inclusion of Indonesian perspectives to stories that take place during the colonial era – that is, when Indonesia was still claimed by the Dutch as the Dutch East Indies. 'The

participation structure of cultural memory' writes Jan Assmann, 'has an inherent tendency to elitism; it is never strictly egalitarian'.¹³ Canon contains and perpetuates cultural memory; its formation is inherently unequal and linked to power as dominant groups in society determine what is included. The editors responsible for compiling the essays in the *Spiegel* and the *Leeslijst* have thus denied participation to literature that narrates post-colonial (in the temporal sense) stories from Indonesia, many of which are also post-colonial in the critical sense. As our discussion of *Gentayangan* will illustrate, this is an artificial distinction. Readings of post-colonial Indonesian stories are just as relevant to Dutch cultural memory as stories that narrate the East Indies. They illuminate the ways that coloniality is still ongoing.

At their chapter's conclusion, Suprihatin and van 't Veer introduce a strand of thinking that this article now picks up: that to learn more about the Indonesian view on Dutch colonialism, one must either know the Indonesian language, or read the available books in Dutch translation by 'Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya, or Eka Kurniawan'.¹⁴ To that list should also be added novelists who reckon with ongoing coloniality: Ayu Utami, Laksmi Pamuntjak, Mochtar Lubis, Sitor Situmorang, Ahmad Tohari, Nukila Amal, Andrea Hirata, and Leila Chudori,¹⁵ all available in Dutch. But in recent years Indonesian works have increasingly become available to readers of English where they are not (yet) available in Dutch. In the wake of the 2015 Frankfurt Book Fair and 2019 London Book Fair at which Indonesian literature was the guest of honour, translations into Dutch have been fewer whereas translations into English have been many. If there are scholars of Dutch Studies who do speak English and do otherwise engage with English-language scholarship and literature in their work, why not also access Indonesian perspectives through these channels (or through any other languages that they might read)? Scholars who do not read Indonesian can in English read literature by Intan Paramaditha, Norman Erikson Pasaribu, Dee Lestari, Goenawan Mohamad, Iksaka Banu,¹⁶ and Budi Darma, alongside additional texts by aforementioned authors that have not yet made it into Dutch. And Indonesian authors like Mikael Johani, Khairani Barokka, and Lala Bohang have, among many others, chosen to write in English. These authors are critical of Dutch colonialism to varying degrees, but amidst colonial critiques also highlight the multitude of other cultural and socio-political reckonings that impact what it means to be Indonesian for them today. This broader range of texts can decentre the Netherlands and East Indies in our understanding of Indonesian literature and identity while still underscoring the ongoing impact of colonization, termed coloniality. They display what Ann Stoler discusses when she writes about duress: colonialism not as legacies of a dead past, but rather as active and violating forces in the world today. There is thus no clear break between the (colonial) past and present.¹⁷ These perspectives can fundamentally impact the depth and impact of post-colonial lines of inquiry within Dutch Studies.

We are careful, however, not to replicate colonial patterns of co-option in suggesting that Indonesian literature be adopted into a national Dutch literary canon. As we have shown, the Dutch canon still centres the Dutch East Indies even as scholars move towards a postcolonial paradigm. With this study, we endeavour to move away from notions of national literature and canon altogether to work towards a more decolonial framework. Our hope is to promote a transnational approach to understanding the Dutch colonial legacy in which translated texts and non-canonical texts occupy a crucial position.

Through them, we move away from the Dutch perspective. In the following discussion of *Gentayangan* by Intan Paramaditha, our goal has been to allow for the text to leverage its critiques upon us as we write. We ‘let the object speak back’,¹⁸ so to speak, meaning that we let the novel enrich both our own interpretations and the theories that we use. In one passage that invokes the eugenicist racialization of black and brown bodies by European colonial powers, Paramaditha’s protagonist meets a white American man: ‘He behaves like a nineteenth-century researcher investigating how you speak, how you eat, and how you move, all for the advancement of science. He almost seems to be estimating your height and head circumference¹⁹’ (248). We are reminded, as Western-educated researchers writing for a Western journal, to tread carefully. As the following discussion of Paramaditha’s work will make clear, reckoning with one’s own positionality is crucial when working within a decolonial framework. We hope those reckonings might inspire and impact future research within our field.

Gentayangan or the Wandering by Intan Paramaditha

In Intan Paramaditha’s debut novel, a young working-class Indonesian woman sells her soul to the devil in exchange for red shoes with which to go ‘wandering’ – in Indonesian ‘gentayangan’, a word that means to roam not just the earth but also otherworldly plains as ghosts and spirits do. Her travel wish is granted, but she is also doomed to wander spiritual borderlands through collective memories of transnational histories. This retelling of Hans Christian Anderson’s *Red Shoes* fairy tale²⁰ subverts a European narrative from an Indonesian perspective, metamorphosing into a travel tale in the shoes of a ‘third world woman’ (as the author self-describes). In book clubs and interviews, Paramaditha has emphasized that this is not an opulent *Eat, Pray, Love* journey of cosmopolitan discovery. Even though the character has sold her soul to the devil in exchange for the world, she is still cursed with the little green booklet of her Indonesian passport, and faces the red tape of visa applications, border controls, and the financial challenges of working as an immigrant in a Western country. On crossing borders, she cautions: ‘If you’re from the Third World, or a country identified with terrorism, expect the hassles to increase. A visa application is a mirror, reflecting back at you the distortions of international relations.’²¹ (262). For Indonesian readers, many might relate to the ‘you’ character at the heart of the storyline – the book is written in the second person. And for good reason: Paramaditha has written a choose-your-own-adventure story, a didactic model normally reserved for young children.

While her choice of children’s literary forms may seem unusual, it stands, in fact, as a masterful subversion of colonial translation policies: In the Dutch East Indies, translated fairy tales were sites of manipulation. Under the so-called Ethical Policy of the early 20th century, a colonial Bureau of Literature (Balai Pustaka) controlled the production of rhetoric and knowledge through written materials across the archipelago. Rather than draw upon indigenous forms of knowledge, Balai Pustaka explicitly selected texts from Europe for translation into Malay or other indigenous languages, predominantly those spoken on Java.²² Fitzpatrick also notes that ‘most Balai Pustaka translations are children’s fiction’,²³ whether malleable fairy tales so easily subjected to cultural context adaptation, or adventure stories like *Gulliver’s Travel* that uphold colonial narratives of Western superiority in supposedly undiscovered lands. The notion of faithfulness to an

original text was far from relevant to Balai Pustaka translation policies. Rather, the intention was always to depict ‘the law-abiding and grateful role model of the colonized envisioned by the Dutch’,²⁴ often resulting in a drastic alteration to the content of the tales. Not only do these observed shifts in content lay bare the efforts by the Balai Pustaka to manipulate and oppress the native population through translated texts, these translational norms also match closely those so often observed in the translation of children’s texts for didactic purposes,²⁵ and reinforce the racist custom common in the colonial era of regarding the native population as children with inferior intellectual abilities. Paramaditha’s reclamation of the children’s genre, then, in an intentionally adult context is both playful and powerful. As Balai Pustaka had also banned popular books that ‘feature horrifying stories for the sake of sensation’,²⁶ she melds fairy tales, horror, sex, and pulp fiction in a book that rejects the influence of Balai Pustaka on modern Indonesian literature. This is in stark contrast to the perspective originally upheld by Dutch scholar Andries Teeuw that saw Balai Pustaka as a more benevolent colonial influence, one that laid the groundwork for innovations in modern Indonesian literature.²⁷ While colonial adaptations of fairy tales left only one interpretation open to the reader, Paramaditha blasts that essentialism open through the form of the choose-your-own-adventure story: the reader now has the agency.

Gentayangan is also a damning indictment of the contemporary borders faced by third world people and products (in this case, literature) in attempts to cross over into the cosmopolitan world of the West. ‘Does this book travel well?’ Tiffany Tsao describes this question as ‘maddeningly familiar to those operating in international writing and publishing networks’. She continues:

Publishers don’t mean they are looking for “un-foreign” foreign work. Rather, foreign work needs to be foreign in familiar ways – exotic enough to give the reader satisfaction about foraying into another country or culture without overwhelming or alienating them. It’s like crafting the perfect tourist experience.²⁸

Tsao describes the publishing industry in the West, where the perceived target audience (the hegemonic English-reader assumed to be white and educated) becomes a universal standard and ‘arbiter of taste’.²⁹ The curation of a ‘perfect tourist experience’, then, reflects the publishers’ assumption that this universal reader reads translated literature for travel and discovery – an obsession that traces back to the romanticization of colonial conquests. Travel narratives once dominated in texts written by colonizers on their journeys to colonized lands, always from the Western perspective and usually from a masculine perspective. And like they did with children’s stories and fairy tales, Balai Pustaka also prioritized translations of travel or adventure stories from the West into indigenous languages under colonial publishing policy.³⁰

But in the case of *Gentayangan*, the translation as *The Wandering* does not function as a tailored tourist experience for the universal reader. Described in *The Guardian* as ‘fiction at its most untethered, where readers can hurl themselves across time zones, selves and situations’,³¹ it is indeed the hurling oneself across other ‘selves’ that markedly impacts the reading of the text for readers who do not identify with the ‘you’ character whose wanderings we follow. The universal reader as understood by the hegemonic Western publishing industry is not the ‘third world woman’ who faces so many borders on her wanderings. If the reader is a privileged white westerner, then they are placed ‘in

the subjectivity of a brown woman', as described by reviewer Lara Norgaard,³² and forced to make decisions quite literally in the (red) shoes of another. Through their discomfort, some readers might find themselves addressed as an implicated subject to the oppressive experiences of the 'you' character, 'occupy[ing] positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes'.³³ Through the novel, the universal reader as privileged white westerner is addressed as such, thus implicating them in the colonial histories that made this position possible. Of course, other readers whose identities align with the universal reader might not feel implicated at all, and could instead disregard the book as bad literature for failing to conform to the norm of translated literature as the perfect tourist experience. And many more English-language readers will not feel so jarred in the subjectivity of a brown woman at all, even if their backgrounds are not Indonesian. The untethered nature of the 'you', then, gives rise to contrasting readings of the tale by the reader, and all at once, pointing always to the possibility of myriad epistemologies, the interpretations of which are dependent entirely on the positionality of the reader. But there is space, too, to step into the positionality of another. As transnational solidarity among *all* people who face borders in their lives – people formerly colonized, continuously racialized, and migrants and refugees – is at the heart of Paramaditha's novel, it is the universal reader who is made to feel decidedly uncomfortable in this translation. Whether they embrace that discomfort or disregard it is a personal choice, and one that is open to (self-)interrogation. For readers who identify with hegemonic white Dutch culture, however, the specifics of that discomfort are only magnified when the 'you' character travels to the Netherlands and encounters nostalgia for *tempo doeloe*.

Memory Studies and Transnational Solidarity

In the *Leeslijst*, Lara Nuberg writes that she first encountered Djojopuspito's *Buiten het Gareel* beside Pramoedya Ananta Toer on a shelf labelled *Indische Boeken* – only two Indonesian titles amongst many written by white Dutch authors, with titles like *Wat ik op mijn Indische reis zag* and *Indië roept*: white authors, travel stories. She wonders why she had never encountered Djojopuspito before: could it be because 'in the collective memory of the Indies, sentiments like nostalgia and home-sickness continue to reign supreme?'³⁴ Nuberg suggests that the nostalgia narrative has traditionally supplanted the critical postcolonial narrative in Dutch literary polysystems and cultural memory. For some, nostalgia as a 'longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed' remains a dominant sentiment.³⁵ That nostalgia manifests in *Gentayangan* as uncritical nostalgia for empire, in which past and present are conflated. In one of the many storylines available to the reader, you (an Indonesian woman) find yourself in the Netherlands, boarding with an older Dutch woman:

When you tell her that you're from Indonesia, she exclaims "Ah, the Indies!"
 'Indonesia'
 "all the same, *toch*? The former Dutch East Indies."
 "Yes, but –"
 "Are you from Java?"

You may as well be back in the colonial era. You nod awkwardly at the word ‘Java’. Jakarta is on Java, of course, but you’ve never identified as Javanese.³⁶ (345)

This short interaction underscores two misconceptions held in Dutch cultural memory about Indonesia that this article has already discussed. First, that in the minds and memories of some Dutch people, the time when the archipelago was claimed by the Dutch as the East Indies continues to dominate over conceptions of independent Indonesia. And second, that Indonesians are often presumed to collectively identify with an imagined monoculture informed by Javanese stereotypes. The character feels that her identity is trivialized, so when her host goes on to address her with the diminutive ‘-tje’, it makes her ‘feel as though [she] is being treated like a child’³⁷ (346). While the Dutch woman perceives her behaviour to be innocent and harmless, for the Indonesian character the use of diminutives is offensive, recalling the violent and racialized history of the Dutch manipulating indigenous subjects by representing them as children.³⁸ As her time in the Netherlands stretches on, the Dutch memory of the former East Indies continues to dominate:

You see an LP spinning on a turntable in the living room. Beside it is a record sleeve, showing a Dutchwoman in a *kebaya*. You read the singer’s name and the album title: Wieteke van Dort, *Weerzien met Indië*. There is a list of songs in Indonesian, or a mix of Dutch and Indonesian: ‘Tlaga Biroe’, ‘Hallo Bandoeng’, ‘Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng’.³⁹ (346)

In both song and dress, Wieteke van Dort (her persona ‘Tante Lien’) was the pre-eminent example of *tempo doeloe* imagery in Dutch popular culture from the late 1970s and early 1980s. These songs selectively evoke the delights of the tropics. Tlaga Biroe in the Dutch spelling, or telaga biru in the updated Indonesian spelling, was a popular vacation destination outside Bandoeng (now Bandung), while nasi goreng means fried rice, an Indonesian recipe found anywhere in Indonesia and highly popular in the Netherlands. But this episode quickly escalates into a scene out of a horror film, culminating in one of the grizzlier endings. Here, well-loved tropes of Indonesianness in Dutch culture alienate and horrify rather than comfort the Indonesian traveller.

In *Gentayangan* food is also infused with greater meaning because of the colonial spice trade. One morning before heading to the Rijksmuseum, ‘you open the cupboards wide and study the jars of coffee, tea and sugar, and the row of spice containers. A bottle labelled *sate saus* catches your attention. The details are in Dutch.’⁴⁰ (206) It is no accident that this *sate saus* is found beside infamous colonial exports: coffee and tea. But the character does not go on to lament the labour abuses committed during the colonial era. Rather, novels like *Gentayangan* are so important in understanding continuing coloniality precisely because they do not need to explicitly do so. They explicate how the colonial past continues in the present as a form of duress. Violence wrought upon indigenous bodies and indigenous land by the Dutch spice trade was only the beginning of a capitalist world system in which the Dutch have access to wealth, power, and mobility whereas Indonesians do not. This link between the violent colonial past and the present is thinly masked by the existence of this appropriated Indonesian seasoning, described here now, innocently, in the language of the colonizer. Such a long and violent history contained in such a small household object gives rise to a pained and shaken reaction from the protagonist, but the full extent of the violence hides behind the object’s normalization. An emblem of *tempo doeloe* nostalgia, it sickens her:

The thought of satay sauce mixed with mayonnaise makes you grimace. The combination sounds disgusting, and the term satay ‘sauce’ rather than satay ‘seasoning’ sets your teeth on edge. You feel obliged to explain that satay sauce is more like a peanut-based topping to accompany grilled chicken, beef or goat meat. To imagine French fries with satay sauce offends you⁴¹ (207).

Whereas *tempo doeloe* nostalgia is often associated with comfort for Dutch citizens who enjoy Indonesian cuisine today, for the Indonesian protagonist these feelings underscore the loneliness she experiences in the Netherlands. She does not find friends or even acquaintances with whom she can share these uncanny encounters. But in New York City, in an alternate and contrasting storyline, she establishes a friendship with a South-Asian woman, Meena. Meena reminds her ‘that nutmeg marks your place in the world as well: the Dutch bartered with the Brits – Manhattan for Run, an island in the Moluccas, and that gives your footprints the foundation to run far and wide’⁴² (198). It is in these instances of transnational comradeship that *Gentayangan* displays a form of multidirectional memory. Different memories of violent pasts (colonization, racism, forced migration) are ‘subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing’.⁴³ The result is a productive, intercultural, dynamic interaction between historical moments. Their memory of foodstuffs bypasses the yoke of colonialism and becomes the characters’ point of recognition and their base for solidarity. Whereas in the Netherlands the character has the hollow experience of purchasing emping melindjo from any old Albert Heijn (212), in New York she and Meena make regular trips to local Asian Supermarkets where they both feel equally at home. There, Meena refuses to buy pre-packaged satay seasoning, insisting they make their own from scratch. Connecting these bonds to the history of decolonization, Meena’s partner jokes that ‘spices are con artists’, they may ‘sit sweetly in the cabinet, but while we’re asleep they visit their brethren in Asia or Africa.’ Meena retorts ‘and what are they up to in Asia and Africa, then? Holding Non-Aligned Condiment Conferences?’ Vijay jokes back that ‘they oppose the hegemony of salt and pepper’⁴⁴ (225). Through the subtleties of such tongue-in-cheek interactions, we see that the young Indonesian traveller finds more in common with migrant friends in New York City than she does with Dutch people, even though her trip to the Netherlands is haunted with linguistic and culinary overlap between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

The foregrounding of multidirectional memory becomes most prevalent when the author questions the supposedly special relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia, finding more meaning in the blurring of borders for all people displaced by colonization, marginalization, and war. In the relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia, implication historically lies with the former, yet by provincializing the Netherlands in these transcultural encounters, the author points to other emerging dialogues in the postcolonial present and the solidarity it creates through those collective memories.⁴⁵ In *Gentayangan* two seemingly unrelated violent *lieux de mémoire*,⁴⁶ or sites of memory, are brought together in ‘museums of dark history’⁴⁷: the Sacred Pancasila Monument at Lubang Buaya and the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin (109). The former is connected to the Indonesian mass killings of 1965–1966, the latter to memories of the Holocaust. The visit to the Holocaust Memorial triggers traumatic memories of the protagonist’s youth: visiting the horrific 1965–1966 monument with school, viewing violent scenes from the propagandistic film *Treason of the September 30 Movement*, and falling out with her childhood friend Dian over political disagreements. The

travelling of memory,⁴⁸ both transculturally and between the collective and individual level, illustrates that mobility can unfold new perspectives and reminds us there is still much to learn about the past and its durability: 'How strange are journeys that prise open memories, events so distant you never think about them, items stored in a museum of ignorance. The journey makes you nervous. Perhaps the line between past and present is never clear. You're as unenlightened as ever'⁴⁹ (114). Readers of *Gentayangan* face these same journeys through memory and doubt, feelings always inflected by their own positionality. The episodes in the Netherlands build a particular image of the Dutch memory of colonization. What feelings and memories will that raise in the reader, and what will they do with them? Initially they may lead to more questions than answers, but such considerations hold weight for every reader: the 'you' does not stick with a particular position, it does not ground. And so, much like the protagonist, the reader experiences a wandering.

Concluding Remarks

There are far more ways to read *Gentayangan* than we have had the space for here, and indeed other readers will have different reactions, interpretations, and stories that arise in their own minds and memories to add to Paramaditha's. That is entirely the goal behind the choose-your-own-adventure model: it allows for the possibility of myriad epistemologies. Paramaditha's work points to the need for Dutch readers to read Indonesian texts as they stand, rather than always alongside or as a footnote to studies of Dutch-language texts. Postcolonial research does not end at revisions of the relationship between the former East Indies and of the Netherlands today, but must go on to understand coloniality as ongoing and Indonesian knowledge production as crucially important to the limitless decolonial project. But no one book will fundamentally enact that shift either. In one of the more meta storylines, the protagonist begins to write a novel – a red shoes adventure – and her white boyfriend, an orientalist and Sinologist professor, begins to dominate a conversation about elevating Indonesian voices in Western publishing:

Bob is jabbering about how important it is for Westerners to discover the treasures of Indonesian literature. Representation is critical, he says. 'Chinese writers are already well known, Hong Kong writers are well known, Indian writers too. We don't hear anything from Indonesia, Indonesia needs to be given a voice.' You ask, 250 million people are supposed to be represented by *me*?⁵⁰ (251-2).

We, your authors, could just as well represent the orientalist in this scathing critique: our hope with this article is indeed that Indonesian literature become more widely read by Dutch readers and researchers. But perhaps the most problematic phrasing in this quote above is the idea that Indonesia needs to be 'given' a voice. Authors like Paramaditha are not passively being given anything. Rather, they are intentionally taking up space with a vigour and amplifying their own voices, writing stories for Indonesian readers, not for the assumed universal reader in the West who might now read that story through translation. So what role might the Indonesian voice have in Dutch Studies? Can we step outside our positionalities in readings of Indonesian voices or engagement with their critique? Can we ever escape colonial power dynamics of co-option? And as recently quoted by Paramaditha in a new article on decolonial

feminism, West Papuan activist Rode Wanimbo asks us to question: are we even ready to listen?⁵¹ For now, we conclude that our role cannot be understood as one that amplifies or elevates because this connotes a dynamic in which recognition and appreciation by the West is imposed as a fundamental metric of success. But as Dutch society grapples with colonial history and calls to understand decolonization in a literal sense grow louder, Dutch readers should begin to consider what it means to listen, and assume the role of the listener if they are to develop viewpoints with sensitivity for their own positionality and those of others – viewpoints that may lead to activism. Listen and learn from the Indonesian voices that are, through power of their own, amplifying themselves around the world. More creative ways to listen more closely remain untapped, and only when we understand myriad perspectives on Indonesia from Indonesians of varied backgrounds themselves, can we begin to speak of a more worldly field that decentres the Dutch in Dutch Studies.

Notes

1. De Mul, “Nostalgia for Empire”, 415.
2. Elibol, *De nieuwe koloniale leeslijst*.
3. Honings et al., *De postkoloniale spiegel*.
4. *De postkoloniale spiegel* directly reacts to Rob Nieuwenhuys’ *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (1972). In his work, Nieuwenhuys did mention several Indonesian authors, but only in relation to Indies Dutch authors, underscoring the compartmentalization of their work in the Dutch literary canon. See, for instance, a discussion of Suwarsih Djojopuspito’s *Buiten het gareel* in relation to Edgar du Perron from page 399 in the *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (1978 edition).
5. Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back*.
6. Paramaditha, “Film Studies in Indonesia”, 364.
7. Honings et al., *De postkoloniale spiegel*, 277. Translated by the authors from the Dutch: “Indonesische stemmen”.
8. Nuberg, “Een idealistisch testament”, 96.
9. Honings et al., *De postkoloniale spiegel*, 25.
10. *Ibid.*, 20–22. Translated by the authors from the Dutch: “het [is] cruciaal om ook aandacht te besteden aan hoe de Indonesiërs de kolonisatie van hun land hebben ervaren.”
11. Bijl, *Emerging memory*.
12. Snelders, *Hoe nederland Indië leest*.
13. Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory”, 116.
14. Suprihatin et al., “Twee Indonesische stemmen”, 292.
15. With thanks to Indonesian-Dutch translator Maya Sutedja-Liem for helping to compile this list.
16. *Semua untuk Hindia* (2014) is partly translated in English and as theorized by Arps (2020), exemplifies how focalization through non-Indonesian characters allows for a “writing back” via perspectives rather than through language. Its engagement with both Dutch and Indonesian memory discourses and postcolonial discourse in Indonesia offers valuable viewpoints on Dutch colonialism.
17. Stoler, *Duress*, 7.
18. Bal, *Travelling Concepts in Humanities*, 45.
19. Ia bersikap seperti ilmuwan abad 19 yang mempelajari caramu bicara, makan, maupun bergerak demi kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan. Ia barangkali tengah mengira-ngira tinggi badanmu dan lingkaran kepalamu. (279).
20. This tale is well known to any Dutch child who has encountered the disembodied red shoes in *De Efteling’s Sprookjesbos*.

21. Jika Anda berasal dari negara dunia ketiga, atau negara yang identik dengan terorisme, kerepotan akan bertambah. Visa adalah cermin ketidaksetaraan hubungan internasional. (295).
22. Jedamski, "Translation in the Malay World".
23. Fitzpatrick, "Balai Pustaka", 121.
24. Jedamski, "Translation in the Malay World", 225.
25. Leonardi, *Ideological Manipulation of Children's Literature*.
26. See note 24 above 224.
27. Teeuw, "Impact of Balai Pustaka".
28. Tsao, "Why Are Indonesians Being Erased".
29. Tsao echoes translation studies scholars on the world system of translation like Casanova (2004) and Watts (2005), but her perspectives on this topic have also more recently been referenced in *Violent Phenomena: 21 Essays on Translation* (2022), edited by Kavita Bhanot and Jeremy Tiang and published by Tilted Axis Press. This book, another "Eksperimen", represents a movement in translation publishing towards abolishing what Anton Hur scathingly terms the "Mythical English Reader" (pp. 77–82).
30. See note above 22.
31. Elkin, "The Wandering review".
32. Norgaard, "(Re)Write the Story".
33. Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*, 1.
34. Nuberg, "Een idealistisch testament", 90. Translated by the authors from the Dutch: "in de collectieve herinnering aan Indië sentimenten als nostalgie en heimwee nog altijd overheersen?".
35. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii.
36. Ketika kau mengatakan padanya bahwa kau berasal dari Indonesia, ia berseru, "Ah, Hindia!" "Indonesia." "Sama saja, *toch?* Dulu Hindia Belanda." "Ya, tapi—" "Dari Jawa?" Kau seperti dibawa ke zaman kolonial. Kau mengangguk rikuh mendengar kata "Jawa." Tentu saja Jakarta ada di Pulau Jawa, tapi kau tidak pernah mengidentifikasi dirimu sebagai orang Jawa." (392).
37. Yang membuatmu merasa diperlakukan seperti anak kecil. (393).
38. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 75–6 and Arps, "Sterrentintelingen van het verleden", 171.
39. Di ruang keluarga kau melihat piringan hitam berputar. Di sebelahnya kau lihat sampul piringan hitam yang menampilkan perempuan Belanda dengan baju kebaya. Kau membaca nama penyanyi dan judul albumnya: Wieteke van Dort, *Weerzien met Indië*. Kau membaca deretan lagu dalam bahasa Indonesia, atau campuran Belanda dan Indonesia: Tlaga Biroe. Hallo Bandoeng. Geef Mij Maar Nasi Goreng." (396).
40. Kau membuka lemari dapur lebar-lebar dan mengamati toples kopi, teh, gula, serta sederetan botol bumbu. Ada botol bumbu yang menarik perhatianmu. Satésaus, demikian tulisannya. Keterangan selengkapnya berbahasa Belanda. (229).
41. Ide tentang rasa sate bercampur mayonaise sudah membuatmu meringis. Betapa tak senonoh kombinasi keduanya, dan kau merasa jengah mendengar kata "saus" dan bukan "bumbu" sate. Kau merasa berkewajiban menjelaskan bahwa saus sate adalah bumbu kacang pelengkap daging ayam, sapi, atau kambing yang dibakar. Gagasan makan kentang goreng dengan saus sate terdengar seperti sebuah pelanggaran. (230).
42. Ia meningkatkan bahwa tempatmu telah digariskan oleh pala. New York ditukar dengan Pulau Run di Banda oleh Belanda, dan karenanya sah sudah jejakmu di dunia. (219).
43. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.
44. Kau tahu bumbu-bumbu itu penipu? Vijay bertanya padamu. Mereka duduk manis di lemari, tapi saat kita terlelap mereka mengunjungi saudara-saudara mereka di Asia, atau Afrika. [. . .] lalu apa yang mereka lakukan di Asia dan Afrika? Bikin konferensi bumbu? Bisa jadi, kata Vijay. Mereka menentang hegemoni garam dan merica. (251).
45. See note 33 above 20.
46. Nora et al., *Realms of Memory*.
47. Museum sejarah gelap (118).

48. Erll, “Travelling Memory”.
49. Betapa anehnya perjalanan mengungkit ingatan, termasuk hal-hal terjauh yang tidak pernah kau pikirkan lagi, hal-hal yang tersimpan dalam museum kebodohan. Perjalanan ini membuatmu gamang. Barangkali batas antara masa lalu dan masa sekarang tak pernah jelas; kau masih saja bodoh. (125).
50. Bob masih mengoceh soal pentingnya dunia Barat menemukan sastra Indonesia sebagai harta karun. Representasi adalah persoalan genting; penulis Cina sudah asa yang terkenal, Hong Kong sudah, India apalagi. Kita tak dengar apa-apa dari Indonesia, maka Indonesia harus diberi suara. Kau bertanya: lalu 250 juta orang itu direpresentasikan olehku? (ibid: 282–283).
51. Paramaditha, “Radicalizing “Learning from Other Resisters””.

Notes on contributors

Lucelle Pardoe is a PhD Researcher in Translation Studies at University College London. Her research explores the potential for literature in translation to act as a decolonizing force in European classrooms and curricula, with a particular focus on Indonesian literature.

Arnoud Arps is Lecturer in Modern Dutch Literature and Culture at Leiden University and Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on the position of media and popular culture (with a special interest in film and literature) within the fields of media studies, cultural memory studies, and postcolonial studies with the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia as his main research topics. He has been an editor for *Indische Letteren* since 2019.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Bibliography

- Arps, Arnoud. “Selamat Tinggal Hindia? Historische Sleutelmomenten in Iksaka Banu’s Korte Verhalen.” *Indische Letteren* 35, no. 3 (2020): 167–181.
- Arps, Arnoud. “Sterrentintelingen van het Verleden: Augusta de Wit.” In *De Postkoloniale Spiegel: De Nederlands-Indische Letteren Herlezen*, edited by Honings Rick, Coen Van ’t Veer, and Jacqueline Bel, 161–179. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Assmann, Jan. “Communicative and Cultural Memory.” In *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 109–118. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.
- Bal, Mieke. *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Bijl, Paul. *Emerging Memory: Photographs of Colonial Atrocity in Dutch Cultural Remembrance*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- de Mul, Sarah. “Nostalgia for Empire: ‘Tempo Doeloe’ in Contemporary Dutch Literature.” *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 413–428. doi:10.1177/1750698010374928.
- Elibol, Rasit. *De Nieuwe Koloniale Leeslijst*. Amsterdam: Das Mag, 2021.

- Elkin, Lauren. "The Wandering by Intan Paramaditha Review – Existential Journeys". *The Guardian*. March 6, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/mar/06/the-wandering-intan-paramaditha-review-indonesian-writer-debut-novel>
- Erl, Astrid. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 4–18. doi:10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.
- Fitzpatrick, Elizabeth B. "Balai Pustaka in the Dutch East Indies: Colonizing a Literature." In *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*, edited by Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre, 113–126. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000.
- Honings, Rick, Coen Van 't Veer, and Bel Jacqueline, eds. *De Postkoloniale Spiegel: De Nederlands-Indische Letteren Herlezen*. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021.
- Jedamski, Doris. "Translation in the Malay World: Different Communities, Different Agendas." In *Asian Translation Traditions*, edited by E. Hung and J. Wakabayashi, 211–245. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2005.
- Leonardi, Vanessa. *Ideological Manipulation of Children's Literature through Translation and Rewriting: Travelling across Times and Places*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Norgaard, Lara. "It's Your Turn to (Re)write the Story." *Public Books*. March 8, 2020. <https://www.publicbooks.org/its-your-turn-to-rewrite-the-story/>
- Nuberg, Lara. "Een Idealistisch Testament voor Indonesië." In *De Nieuwe Koloniale Leeslijst*, edited by Rasit Elibol, 89–97. Amsterdam: Das Mag, 2021.
- Paramaditha, Intan. "Film Studies in Indonesia." *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 173, no. 2–3 (2017a): 357–375. doi:10.1163/22134379-17302006.
- Paramaditha, Intan. *Gentayangan*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2017b.
- Paramaditha, Intan. *The Wandering*, Translated by Stephen J. Epstein. New York: Vintage, 2021.
- Paramaditha, Intan. "Radicalising 'Learning from Other Resisters' in Decolonial Feminism." *Feminist Review* 131, no. 1 (2022): 33–49. doi:10.1177/01417789221102509.
- Nora, Pierre, and Lawrence D. Krizman eds. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Volume 1 -conflicts and Divisions*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Rothberg, Michael. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.
- Snelders, Lisanne "Hoe Nederland Indië leest: Hella S. Haasse, Tjalie Robinson, Pramoedya Ananta Toer en de politiek van de herinnering." PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2018.
- Stoler, Ann. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Suprihatin, Christina, and Coen van 't Veer. "Twee Indonesische Stemmen: Suwarsih Djojopuspito En Arti Purbani." In *De Postkoloniale Spiegel: De Nederlands-Indische Letteren Herlezen*, edited by Honings Rick, Coen Van 't Veer, and Bel Jacqueline, 277–292. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021.
- Teeuw, Alfred. "The Impact of Balai Pustaka on Modern Indonesian Literature." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35, no. 1 (1972): 111–127. doi:10.1017/S0041977X00107396.
- Tsao, Tiffany. "Why are Indonesians Being Erased from Indonesian Literature?" *Electric Literature*. April 11, 2019. <https://electricliterature.com/indonesian-translation-colonialism/>
- Watts, Richard. *Packaging Post/Coloniality*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.