



~~Und~~ Co- or Collaboration [www.ignition.ie](http://www.ignition.ie)

~~Und~~ Co- or Collaboration presents an arresting and unusual idea. It opens with a series of questions in thick bold print that have been taken from the game version of 'Where have you been', the last page directing the reader to [www.ignition.ie](http://www.ignition.ie) for a practical application of this game. These questions stretch across the first double page, paying no heed to page or word boundaries, and run on, mid-word, to the last double page of the book. The timing of this reappearance is perfect, giving this reader, at any rate, a pleasing thrill of recognition as she reaches the end of the book. These questions embrace and provide a good introduction to a middle section in which print, images and handwritten text are juxtaposed in curious and occasionally witty and apt combinations. The printed question "what does language approximate" overlaps with the image of a speeding car on a motorway and a traffic sign warning of pedestrians crossing at a run. This image in turn overlaps with a handwritten answer to the question, as follows:

~~Und~~  
Communication.

This deleted "~~Und~~" follows the image of a potential hazard, where two objects moving at different speeds, the car and the pedestrian, threaten to collide. The effect is to emphasise the approximate quality of communication. Attempts at communication so often misfire. In a similar way, these images, printed questions and handwritten answers jostle and collide with each other. However, most of the other juxtaposed images and text in this book are not so sharp in their effect. Some are simply dull and others too obscure. The execution of the exciting idea on which the book is based is therefore at times a little thin, and the presentation is also somewhat amateurish. This is particularly, and horrifyingly, evident in the poetic statement that concludes the book and directs the reader to the website. This statement is replete with mistaken uses of the apostrophe, and, much in the manner of many artistic statements, is very clumsily written. Lacking support from elsewhere in the book, it is not possible to read these weaknesses as ironic and intentional.

Judy Kendall

*Kill The Radio* by Dorothea Roasa Herliany, translated by Harry Aveling  
(Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2007) paperback £9.99

This book is in Arc's 'Visible Poets' series of translated poetry. A note from the series editor Joan Boase-Beier declares the focus: 'not to hide but to reveal the original, to make it visible', 'strange' and 'foreign'. The translator's preface to this volume provides a useful political background to the poems, and Linda France's introduction investigates the poems themselves more deeply, highlighting the slippery yet rough language of Herliany's verse.

The poems, wonderfully, are printed in both target and source languages. Without any knowledge of Indonesian, however, this review of necessity has to focus on the English translations. The poems are sharp, angry and strong. Feminist declarations, they record abuse, retaliation, independence and release. Herliany's directness is refreshing, striking and liberating, as in the opening to her sharp 'Episode from a Pop Serial':

I talk of love with one breast exposed,  
wearing a micro-miniskirt slit up the front,

and in her wonderful and unforgettable line "rest in my crotch, little man" in 'Secret Sex Telegrams'.

She lashes out at her reader with the harsh contrast contained in her lyric 'A Letter for Nadia'. This poem opens with

the woman has full breasts, white as alabaster.  
she gazes at the sea and allows her body to be touched  
by the sun. her flat belly is exposed to the wealth of the world  
poured out on her through the sand and the foam.  
her hair spreads like a field of rice and golden grass.  
fish hide between her wild kisses.

The concluding lines present a rough reversal:

but I can see  
the man who raped you  
writing  
on the sharp tip of your knife.

She looks on death and decay squarely. Her flock of men in 'The Woman Who Sinned' "spew out thousands of maggots and caterpillars." Insects frequently creep to the surface of her verse, and in 'Talking Trash', she sees herself as

a snail with no trail to follow.  
searching for the home  
it carries on its back.

Another “restless” lost snail slinks across ‘Uncoloured Symphony’, and in the beautifully moving ‘The Woman I call “Ibu, Mother”’ Herliany recalls past identities in both celebration and mourning:

I have called her “ibu” one century after another  
ibu is alone, ibu never weeps.

waiting for the eternal empty seeds to grow into life.  
wild grass and dry hills  
covered with weeds. I call her ‘ibu’,  
ibu serves her family common spinach,  
cooks yams for a hundred hungry children  
and relieves their thirst with the perfume of her sweat

‘Wedding Diary’ is another great poem. The translator, in his preface, offers a simple reading of this poem as a reflection on marriage, but the opening lines also suggest a meditation on the writer’s relationship to her country, or, indeed, to her vocation as writer. It does the translations, and translator, credit, therefore, that they rise above superficial, intended or conscious interpretations to point the way to a larger world that, one hopes and believes, is also indicated in the Indonesian originals:

when I married you, I never promised to be faithful.  
in fact, you agreed to be my slave.  
I built my world on hills of rock  
and broad plains covered with weeds

530 words  
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