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## Shakespeare Comes to Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the circumstances of Shakespeare's arrival in Indonesia via the translations of Trisno Sumardjo, published in the early 1950's. Biographical material about the translator will be presented, and there will be a discussion of the characteristics the Indonesian language and of Indonesian verse which would determine the expectations of his readers, such as rhyme, meter and style, that would influence his renderings of the poetic passages in the Bard's plays. These are illustrated in a sampling of passages from *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The Dutch translation of L. A. J. Burgersdijk was an indirect influence on the translations, and not always for the good. The paper concludes with a lengthy discussion of the extremely difficult problems that Sumardjo encountered in his translation of *King Lear*. This *Lear* was not published during the translator's lifetime, Sumardjo's prestige notwithstanding because he was not satisfied with the solutions he proposed.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare, Sumardjo, Indonesian literature, translation, *King Lear*.

I knew nothing of Shakespeare's entry into the world of shadow-puppets until I came across an article from *The Malay Mail* dated November 13, 2000, which began with an account of a puppeteer who, having mastered the medium's traditional themes, those of the great epics of India, was now working *Hamlet* into his repertory. The *Mail* reporter included the observation that the translation of *Hamlet* that the puppeteer was following was the one by Trisno Sumardjo (1916-1969).

That name (also spelled Soemardjo and Sumarjo) is an honorable one in Indonesian arts: in addition to being a man of letters, he was a talented painter and an articulate art critic. He would eventually be given his due, but for most

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of his life he would be an honest tortoise in a world of brazen, self-promoting hares. The fifth of his “Little Poems about Life [*Sjair-Sjair Ketjil Tentang Hidup*]” [1951]<sup>2</sup> can speak for itself:

„Djalan raja lempang ini untukmu bersenang-senang!”  
 „Tidak! Aku menjimpang! Aku perambah djalan!”  
 Dia terperosok dan djatuh kedalam djurang.  
 Pekiknja terachir: „Aku bahagia! Aku orang kenamaan!”

[“The highway is straight for you to enjoy.” “No! I’ll swerve! I’m a pioneer!” He missteps and falls into a ravine. His final cry: “I’m happy! I’m a famous man!”]

### Sumardjo Comes to Shakespeare

The biographical sketch in H. B. Jassin’s *Gema Tanah Air* [echoes of the homeland] (236), an anthology of writings from Indonesia’s independence era) states that after finishing his education in 1937, Sumardjo had been a private teacher (1938-1942), then an employee of a railroad (1942-1946), then (beginning in 1947) he undertook a series of editorships, and in 1950 became secretary of the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Jakarta. We may infer that his duties during the previous decade were not too onerous, since between 1950 and 1953 no fewer than six Shakespeare translations appeared, not only the *Hamlet Pangeran Denmark* (HPD) already referred to, but also *Saudagar Venezia* (SV) (*The Merchant of Venice*), *Macbeth*, *Mana Suka* (MS) (*As You Like It*), *Prahara* (*The Tempest*) and *Impian ditengah musim* (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*). In the notes to these works Sumardjo makes it clear that he consulted the excellent Dutch translation of L.A.J. Burgersdijk (1828-1900), but comparison of the two versions shows that there was nothing slavish about his use of his great predecessor. Sumardjo translates Shakespeare, not Burgersdijk.

Sumardjo’s subsequent career, varied and interesting as it would be, does not concern us here; nor does the subsequent (and probably unimagined by him) integration of his translations into shadow-puppet theater. What is relevant to this essay is what he left us on the page, so I begin with a sampler of interesting passages from Sumardjo’s ground-breaking achievement.

We immediately note that the translator respects Shakespeare’s distinction between prose passages and poetic ones; both are noteworthy for their naturalness, although it is sometimes an Indonesian naturalness. In *Macbeth*,

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<sup>2</sup> In Jassin 239. I will use the spelling of the period throughout this essay. The English translations are mine.

Ross's opening "God save the king" (1.2.51) becomes<sup>3</sup> *Allah melindungi radja!* (14).

Although the English is translated word for word, to a western reader this may seem to be a jarring Arabic-Polynesian-Sanskrit etymological tangle; it is idiomatic in Indonesian, however, because Indonesian draws freely on all three languages for nuances of vocabulary. It also draws on Dutch, which enables Sumardjo to echo the exoticness of the title "thane" by an equally exotic title, *hertog* (19), the Dutch for "duke," which would have been intelligible to any of Sumardjo's readers, since during their formative years they would have learned Dutch as the language of advantage in pre-independence Indonesia.

The language's eclecticism aside, however, the reader will see that Sumardjo's prose renderings, always accurate, sometimes match the tone of the original and sometimes err on the side of caution. An instance of both is found in his translation of Orlando's opening speech in *As You Like It* (1.1.4):

My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit: for my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept: for call you that 'keeping' for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox?

Sumardjo begins cautiously, almost prosily:

*Abangku Jaques dimasukkannja sekolah, dan menurut laporan-laporan ia madju dengan bagus sekali. (MS 9)*

[He got my older brother Jaques admitted to school, and, according to the reports, he is making excellent progress.]

This is as tame as a report card, but the next sentence is lively: "rustically" is rendered by *seperti anak desa* [like a country boy], *desa* [village] being a commonly-used pejorative). "Kept" becomes *dibiarkan* [left alone to wander around (like an animal in a fenced field)].

*Tapi aku dididiknja dirumah seperti anak desa, atau lebih tepat dikatakan, aku dibiarkannja dirumah dengan tidak berpendidikan. Adakah ini pendidikan jang lajak bagi bangsawan seperti aku ini, jang tak beda dengan mengandangkan seekor sapi? (MS 9)*

[But I am educated around the house, like a bumpkin, or to say it more correctly, I am left on my own around the house without any education. Is this a fitting education for a nobleman like me, which is no different from stalling a cow?]

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<sup>3</sup> The lines are not numbered in the Indonesian translations, so they will be cited by page number.

When the brothers come to blows, Shakespeare simplifies the dialogue:

Oliver. What, boy!

Orlando. Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this.

Sumardjo, on the other hand, is colloquial, even vivid:

OLIVER: *Apa katamu, bujung!* (*Ia hendak memegang Orlando.*)

ORLANDO: *Awas, awas, kakak, kamu terlalu hidjau untuk itu!* (*Digenggamnja kerongkongan kakaknja.*) (MS 11)

[Oliver. What did you say, kid? [He tries to manhandle Orlando.]

Orlando. Watch out, watch out, big brother, you're too green for that!

[Grabs his brother by the throat]

*Bujung* is a clever touch: it is literally a round earthenware jug, but can be an unflattering way to refer to a child.

When old Adam tries to break up the fight, Shakespeare gives him dialogue with just the right touch of wordy franticness: "Sweet masters, be patient: for your father's remembrance, be at accord" (1.1.53). We can almost see him wringing his hands. Sumardjo matches the Bard's tone:

ADAM: *Tuan-tuan, sabarlah. Demi almarhum ajahanda, berdamaianlah.* (MS 11)

[My lords, be patient. For your sainted, reverend father's sake, calm down]

The reader will recall that *tuan* is the "lord" in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. *Almarhum* is the Moslem word for "deceased, the late," and the *-anda* suffix denotes venerability.

Sumardjo's rendering of Shakespeare's poetic passages does sound like poetry, but it is not iambic pentameter. Indonesian has long syllables and short syllables, but also micro-syllables, with the semivowel that phoneticians call the schwa. The *dramatis personae* of Sumardjo's *Midsummer Night's Dream* translates the name Snug by the clearly-understood *Ketam* [squeeze], but gives his trade as *prabot*, which is not clear at all – until the reader takes it as an alternative spelling of *perabot* [tool man], where the vowel of the first syllable is a schwa. To my ear *prabot* and *perabot* are pronounced very nearly the same, but to Sumardjo's ear the distinction was evidently important, as can be seen in the first exchange between Macbeth and Banquo (1.3.39).

Macbeth. So fair and foul a day I have not seen.

Banquo. How far is't called to Forres?

MACBETH: *Tak pernah kualami hari sial namun bertuah S'perti ini.*  
 BANQUO: *B'rapa djauhnya ke Forres? (Macbeth 16)*  
 [I have never experienced a day so ominous yet fortunate as this."  
 "How far is it to Forres?"]

The underlined words are normally written *seperti* and *berapa*, with the first vowel being a schwa. The fact that the translator makes a point of omitting these vowels suggests that he had something metrical in mind, but it is hard to say exactly what. It is even harder to establish Sumardjo's intention when he has a *s'perti* and four written schwas (which I underline) in the same passage, translating *Hamlet* 1.2.214.

Horatio. I knew your father.  
 These hands are not more like.  
 HORATIO: *Hamba kenal ajah tuanku. Serupa benar*  
*S'perti tangan kiri dengan tangan kanan. (HPD 50)*  
 [Your servant [I] knew your lordship's father. The appearance truly  
 [was] the same as the left hand and the right.]

Syllable-counting leads nowhere that I can see: some lines are pentameters, some hexameters, some even heptameters, but almost all are made ambiguous by the micro-syllables, the schwas in which the Indonesian language abounds. Sumardjo's method of rendering blank verse seems to be, instead of producing a series of iambic pentameter lines, to proceed line by line and let the language sort out all the schwas by itself.

As to the matter of rhyme, Sumardjo had a broad technical palette to work with. Indonesian poetry is rhyme-rich, with end-rhymes frequently being reinforced by internal rhymes, a degree of musicality that is un-Shakespearean. The heroic couplets that close Act I, scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* must have presented the translator with an aesthetic crux: eighty lines with heavy end rhyme! Sumardjo opts for half-rhymes. Looking at the end of Helena's closing speech (1.1.250-5) we contrast the Bard's strong rhymes (flight/night, intelligence/expense, pain/again) with Sumardjo's "pastel" half-rhymes (*itu/tentu* [that/certain], *tanggung-djawabku/harapanku* [my responsibility/my hope], *kembali/hati* [return/heart]).<sup>4</sup>

Just before Macbeth's first entrance, the weyward sisters dance to poetry (1.3.33) that is even more percussive than Helena's heroic couplets, but again Sumardjo avails himself of a "softer" option from the Indonesian poetic palette: vowel-rhyme. The vowels in *tangan* [hand] are a:a, and so it rhymes with *lautan* (sea) and *lingkaran* [circle], regardless of the consonants; the same principle

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<sup>4</sup> *Impian Ditengah Musim* 26

applies to *bagiku* [for me] and *djitu* [exact]. Sumardjo's rendering of the witches' dance does not have the obsessive rhythmic thumping of Shakespeare's original, but it does have a persuasive musicality, especially in the first three lines, which contain other a:a words, which set up internal rhyme.

All. The weyard sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about.  
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,  
And thrice again, to make up nine.  
Peace, the charm's wound up.

BERTIGA: *Tiga sekawan bergandeng tangan,  
Penguasa darat dan lautan,  
Menari berputaran dalam lingkaran.  
Tiga kali bagimu, tiga bagiku,  
Tiga lagi, sembilan djumlah jang djitu.*

*Henti: lingkaran sihir selesai kini. (Macbeth 16)*

[All three. Three allies join hands, controllers of land and sea, dancing, turning in a circle. Three times for you, three for me, another three [makes] nine, a number which is just right. Stop! The magic circle's done now.]

As if to show that he can do more than half-rhymes, however, Sumardjo prefaces the dance with a window-rattling rendition of "A drum, a drum; / Macbeth doth come."

PENENUNG III: *Genderang, genderang!  
Macbeth jang datang. (6)*  
[Big drum, big drum!  
[It's] Macbeth that's coming!]

Sumardjo does not call the sisters by any of the Indonesian words for witch, but identifies them merely as *penenung* [soothsayers]; and yet the term cannot be entirely neutral, since Caliban is described as *anak* [child of a] *penenung* (*Prahara* 34), which must refer to Sycorax.

Sumardjo follows Shakespeare's use of "local color" Italian words in his translation of *The Merchant of Venice*: it is *sinjor* Antonio, *tigaribu* [three thousand] *dukat*, and "Apa kabar di [what news on the] *Rialto*?" (*SV* 30ff *passim*). On the other hand, the duke of Venice is another *hertog*, and Portia's suitors (1.2), apart from the *pangeran* (a native word for "prince," as with *Hamlet*) of Naples (and later Morocco and Aragon), are called by a string of foreign titles: *graf*

(Dutch for “count” [in *Macbeth* the word is used for the Earl of Northumberland]), *Monsieur*, baron and one more *hertog*. Sumardjo is following Burgersdijk here.<sup>5</sup> I take this to be the translator’s harmless indulgence in exoticism.

I wish that Sumardjo had tried a little harder on the word “satyr” (*Hamlet* 1.2.140), though, instead of merely repeating the word with an explanatory note.<sup>6</sup> Anything ugly would have done. The same goes for the untranslated and glossed “Niobe” and “Hercules” (*HPD* 47). Sumardjo is in fact successful in Indonesianizing “Hyperion.” *Sang Hjang Surja* [the revered sun-god] is hard to improve on. Before leaving the subject of faults, there is a misunderstood “well” at 3.1.92: “Hamlet. I humbly thank you, well, well, well.”

I had always imagined that the sentence trailed off, as Burgersdijk evidently did with his almost word-for-word: “Hamlet. *Ik denk u needirg, wel, wel, wel*” (*HPD* 80). As proof that one cannot blame Burgersdijk for everything, Sumardjo saw the line differently. *Wah* is “well,” but as an exclamation of surprise.

HAMLET: *T’rima kasih, banjak, wah, wah, wah!* (*HPD* 107)

[“Many thanks, hey, hey, hey!”]

Sumardjo uses the interjection equally energetically, but more accurately, at 2.2.402.

Hamlet. Buzz, buzz.

HAMLET: *Wah, wah!* (95)

Burgersdijk has an energetic interjection of his own.

Hamlet. *Lala! Lala!*<sup>7</sup>

There is another “well” problem with *The Merchant of Venice* at 1.3.1.

Shylock. Three thousand ducats – well.

SHYLOCK: *Tigaribu dukat – bagus.* (*SV* 30)

[Three thousand ducats – excellent.]

We have already seen *bagus* in the “report card” of Orlando’s brother. Sumardjo misses the ambiguity of the word “well,” its function as a hesitation word. He may have been led astray here not by Burgersdijk’s choice of words, but by his punctuation: *Drieduizend dukaten, – goed!* (2:258). *Goed* [good] repeated three times and with an exclamation point each time may have persuaded Sumardjo that “well” was a very strong word indeed. Whatever the reason, instead of Shylock’s playing cat-and-mouse with Bassanio, we have him

<sup>5</sup> See Burgersdijk 2:26

<sup>6</sup> Sumardjo’s notes are actually part of his preface, but I don’t find “forenote” in the dictionary.

<sup>7</sup> Burgersdijk 67.

saying “excellent...excellent...excellent,” and then being asked an incongruous *Djawabanmu? (SV 10)* [your answer?].

Let me state clearly that Sumardjo’s translation is exemplary – I would even call it *bagus*. I mention these minor blemishes to illustrate just how minor – I would even say endearing – Sumardjo’s blemishes are. The best illustration of his excellence as a translator, however, will be seen in discussing a virtuoso effort that led to a dead end.

### Sumardjo’s *Lear*: A Silk Purse

I hope that these lines from *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* have piqued the reader’s curiosity. They are, after all, skillful renderings of Shakespeare at his best.

For the remainder of this essay I propose to veer away from the theme of Sumardjo’s dealing with Shakespeare at his best, and focus instead on his translation of *King Lear*.<sup>8</sup>

We recall that the six “hits” that I have referred to were published in rapid succession in the early 1950s. Perhaps the flurry of activity was caused by reader demand, since in newly-independent Indonesia there was considerable interest in the non-Dutch West;<sup>9</sup> perhaps the decisive factor was Sumardjo’s “pull” as secretary of the Institute of the Arts. *Raja Lear* (*raja* is the Indonesian word for “king”), on the other hand, was not published until 1976. “Pull” could not have been the reason for *Raja Lear*’s publication; Sumardjo had died in 1969, which means that *Raja Lear* remained unpublished for the twenty years when Sumardjo had influence and name-recognition. Lack of reader interest is not likely as a reason for the delay; although 1976 was a good twenty years before the onset of the “*Lear* fever” that seems so ubiquitous these days, *King Lear*, although not performed as often as now, had been required reading for centuries, so there must have been at least as much curiosity about *Lear* as about the six “hits” mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Why, then, did *Raja Lear* remain unpublished for so long? The remainder of this essay will focus not only on Sumardjo’s craftsmanship and ingenuity in solving the problems that he found in *King Lear*, but on the problems themselves, problems that are ignored or explained away by today’s “*Lear* fever” skills, but which have been evident to theatergoers for centuries.

A translator is supposed to translate. A good translator resists the temptation to intrude, to interject his personality between the original and the

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<sup>8</sup> I used the spelling of the period in the quotations from his work. The discussion of his translation of *King Lear* is based on the 1976 edition of his translation of *Lear*, after the spelling change of the early 70’s, so from here on, modern spelling will be used.

<sup>9</sup> Lindsay and Liem 171ff.



reader. In the case of a good original, he must remind himself of the translator's Eleventh Commandment: Thou shalt not be clever. In the case of a bad original, he must simply hold his nose and translate whatever is on the page before him, warts and all.

*King Lear*, however, is both good and bad: it is bad as drama, because after a strong start – a Shakespearean start – the play becomes a sub-Shakespearean throwback to the gratuitous sadism and disjointed rant of earlier Elizabethan theater. As poetry, *King Lear* is, well, Shakespearean, except for when it is sub-Shakespearean, as at 4.6.128: “Lear. fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!”<sup>10</sup>

It must have been as obvious to the mid-twentieth century Indonesian translator as it is to the twenty-first century English-speaking reader, that Shakespeare commits two amateurish sins here, the minor literary one of padding, and the major theatrical one of asking the actor to do the playwright's work for him with low-content or no-content interjections. The sin is aggravated when these interjections undercut the actor's efforts. In 4.6.128 the interjections spoil the tone: instead of being moved to pity, we are moved to waggery by their phony precision. Why is “fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!” inherently superior to “pah, pah! fie, fie, fie!” or even “fie, pah, fie, pah, fie!” or, on the analogy of the obviously padded 4.6.170 (“Now, now, now, now”), “fie, fie, fie, fie!” or, on the analogy of the even more obviously padded 4.6.185 (“kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill”), “pah, pah, pah, pah, pah, pah!”

Time and again Sumardjo smooths over infelicities in the original. Why? I do not know. I can make an educated guess, however, if I am allowed to resurrect the old German term *Sitz im Leben* [place in life]. Sometimes it is useful to ask not only who wrote a work and why, but also who read it and why. What else was being published at the time? What ideas were in the air? When I read the literature of Indonesia's independence era, what strikes me is the confidence of its authors. Sumardjo's boldness in “taking on” Shakespeare – one cannot say “temerity,” since he succeeded so well – is not unique for the period. Besides translations of major Occidental literary talents, there was a willingness on the part of Indonesian writers to challenge their Western counterparts head-on: Did X write a sonnet? I'll write a better one. Did Y write a ghost story? I'll write a better one. There is no glory, however, in being serious about Z if Z writes fie, fie, fie! pah, pah! Since Sumardjo knew firsthand the magic of Shakespeare at his best, and since his readers did not, it would have been in his interest as translator of the aforementioned six “hits” to shield his readers from those parts of *Lear* that seem to be the product of a tired brain.

Sumardjo even sacrifices his own credibility to do so. Take Kent's declaration at 1.4.17 that he will “eat no fish.” Sumardjo translates it word for

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<sup>10</sup> I refer to the Arden Shakespeare, 1950 edition, because it resembles the conflation that Sumardjo must have used for *Raja Lear*. In the rest of the essay, I use the shortened form *RL* for *Raja Lear*.

word: *tidak makan ikan* (RL 32). Now, either *tidak makan ikan* is meaningful or it is meaningless, and we must not exclude the possibility that it is meaningless, that Shakespeare, for good or ill, has given Kent a speech that builds up to a nonsensical let-down, as if Kent had closed his “bio” by saying “and eat no apples,” or “bake no bread.” In support of this possibility is the fact that the Fool’s speech “This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time” (3.2.95) ends with just this sort of a let-down that is even more nonsensical, because it is so obviously anachronistic.

Sumardjo appends an endnote to this line that introduces his Indonesian readers to Merlin (RL 176), although it is unsatisfactory as regards the anachronism. We will observe an equally unsatisfactory endnote for *tidak makan ikan*. Sumardjo’s translation of the Fool’s line is matter-of-fact, but it does “shade” the word “prophecy” in an interesting way.

BADUT: *Ini akan dinujumkan Si Merlin, sebab hidupku sebelum dia.*  
(RL 89)

[“Fool. This will be foretold by the man Merlin, because my life is before him.”]

Sumardjo uses the Indonesian word for “foretell by astrology;” there is another word for religious prophecy, and Sumardjo resolves the ambiguity correctly.

Whether *tidak makan ikan* is effective onstage or not is beyond the scope of this article, because that is not a question for the translator: Sumardjo had done his duty with *tidak makan ikan*. Instead of leaving well enough alone, however, perhaps because he felt that a meaningless phrase would be irksome or puzzling to Indonesian readers, he inserts a lengthy endnote (172) containing two possible interpretations, both of which, examined carefully, show Shakespeare in a bad light. The first, an interpretation repeated uncritically and non-judgmentally by modern editors, is that it means “I am not a Catholic.” I can be neither uncritical nor non-judgmental: how can *Lear* be set in a world where one swears by Apollo, Jupiter, Juno, the sacred radiance of the sun and the mysteries of Hecate, in a pre-Christian world, that is, and have it populated, presumably, by at least one pre-Christian non-Catholic and (we infer) pre-Christian Catholics? The “Merlin” joke is an unambiguous anachronism with shock value, a big rhetorical gesture that ends the scene; a “fish/Catholic” joke, if that is what it is, would be an ambiguous quibble buried in dialogue, perhaps interrupting the dialogue, or else a careless anachronism which would indicate either incompetence (which could not be true of Shakespeare) or the sort of muddle caused by temporary distractions like ill health or a tight deadline. The other straw that Sumardjo chooses to grasp at, however, is also Elizabethan-Catholic in its *Sitz im Leben*, although this time it is supposed to mean “I will be content with ordinary food” (173). If Kent is not, in fact, claiming to be either a

pre-Christian Protestant, or a non-gourmet, and if the reader is determined to have the phrase mean something, then he must play it deuces wild, since many other explanations have been put forward. Sumardjo may have thought that he was doing the Bard a favor by assuring his Indonesian readers that *tidak makan ikan* is not meaningless, but in fact the endnote only draws attention to dialogue that would appear to be the product of the Swan of Avon on a bad day.

There is more to be said about *tidak makan ikan*. I grant that comic anachronism is a Shakespearean “shtick,” as with the gravedigger’s “Go get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor,” assuming that Yaughan (or Vaughan) was a person or establishment known to the audience of *Hamlet* (5.1.67). One anachronism may wake the audience up, but in *Lear* the Bard overdoes it: by the time Act II, scene 2 is underway the device is already tiresome. “Lipsbury pinfeld” (2.2.8) is only the beginning. When Kent insults Oswald (2.2.13), there is a flood of Elizabethan-Jacobeanisms: three-suited, worsted-stocking, action-taking, and on and on. When Edgar for some unfathomable reason abruptly adopts the Devonshire dialect and then just as abruptly drops it (4.6.232), it is, as they say in Spanish, *una raya más al tigre* [one more stripe on the tiger]. Even more annoying is “Tom o’ Bedlam.” A pre-Christian Bedlam? In *King Lear* Shakespeare spends more time undercutting his setting than establishing it.

Sumardjo, however, is tactful: “Lipsbury pinfeld” loses its gratuitous “Lipsbury” and is softened to the vaguer *kandangku* (RL59) [“my stable” or “my kennel”]; “Tom o’ Bedlam” becomes *Tom dari rumah gila* (28) [Tom from the madhouse]; and he gives Kent’s tirade the fig leaf of another exculpatory endnote (174). *Air keramat* [holy water] would seem to be another Elizabethan-Catholic anachronism, but this comes from one of Sumardjo’s rare inaccuracies, not from Shakespeare. For *Lear* 3.2.10, *Raja Lear* has

BADUT: *O paman, lebih baik air keramat dalam rumah kering daripada air hujan begini.* (86)

[Fool. O uncle, better holy water in a dry house than rain water like this.]

What Shakespeare wrote, however, was “court holy-water,” which is not the consecrated variety at all; “court holy-water” meant “flattery.” He may have led astray by Burgersdijk’s *O vadertjen, wijwatersprenging in een droog huis is beter dan deze overstrooming buitenshuis* (8:364) [O daddy, holy water in a dry house is better than a drenching outside the house]. There is another “holy water” in Gentleman’s speech (4.3.29): “There she shook / The holy water from her heavenly eyes” (4.3.29). Sumardjo is literal this time, and the context makes the *air keramat* ambiguous.

SATRIA: *Tercurahlah air keramat Dari mata bidadari itu,*

[Holy water poured out from the fairy eyes]

We cannot blame Burgersdijk here; he has *Het heilig nat* (8:4010 [the holy moisture]). Sumardjo's inaccuracies are few and far between. More often than not, they involve nothing more than taking a Shakespearean word in a modern sense. Although "fop" as Shakespeare used the word is understood nowadays to have meant "fool," Sumardjo would seem to have had the word's Restoration (and modern) meaning in mind, since he translates it (1.2.14) as *pesolek* (RL 23) [dandy] and "foppery" (1.2.115) as *kegilaan* (27) [craziness]. The same anachronism would seem to be the case for "last" (1.1.304), which Shakespeare used in the sense of the modern English "most recent," but is translated by Sumardjo as *akibatnya* (22) [final].

More frequently he is undeceived. In the Fool's song at 1.4.115 "foppish" is used in its original sense.

Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;  
For wise men are grown foppish,  
And know not how their wits to wear,  
Their manners are so apish.

*Tahun ini badut-badut paling celaka,  
Sebab orang bijaksana jadi bocah  
Hingga pikirannya kacau belaka*

*Dan berbuat seperti monyet bertingkah. (RL 40)*

[This year was especially bad for fools, because wise men have become adolescent to the point that their thoughts are mixed-up, and they behave like capricious monkeys.]

"Practice" at 2.4.112 is correctly rendered by *siasat* (72) [tactics, ruse], although Edmund's "My practices ride easy!" is quite free: *Hingga melicinkan jalanku* [so that (Edgar's trusting nature) smooths my way"]. Similarly, "You taking airs" (2.4.161) is correctly rendered as *hawa penyakit* (75) [disease-causing weather]. "Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated" (3.4.104) becomes *Wah! Ada tiga manusia palsu di sini* [Oh! There are three fake humans here], since Shakespeare uses "sophisticated" to mean "watered-down" (95) "Fond" is correctly translated as *dungu* [foolish].

To finish the thought begun with 4.6.128, Sumardjo heeds his aesthetic misgivings and softens these sub-Shakespearean lines: "fie, fie fie! pah pah!" (135) is toned down to a mere *cih! cih! hih! hih!*<sup>11</sup> The six "kill"s of 4.6.185 are trimmed to four, and their monotony is alleviated by a pronominal prefix on the first one that makes the other three sound like an echo: *kubunuh, bunuh, bunuh*,

<sup>11</sup> The Indonesian c is similar to the ch in child. The h's are pronounced.

*bunuh!* (137) [I-kill, kill, kill, kill]. The four “now”s of 4.6.170 simply disappear. Does this mean that Sumardjo was not a good translator? It means that Sumardjo was a compassionate translator.

Compassion has its limits, however. Sumardjo does not try very hard to put a good face on Cordelia’s flower speech (4.4.3), which is understandable when we consider that he had already translated the unforgettable flower-lists in *Hamlet*. The *Lear* speech is so obviously an uninspired knock-off, so lacking in the subjective touches that make Ophelia’s (4.5.174) and Gertrude’s (4.7.168) recitations so touching, that Sumardjo’s lack of enthusiasm is obvious. I do not know if Sumardjo knew *Henry V* well enough to recognize the rehash of 5.2.45 from that history: “Burgundy. The darnel, hemlock and rank fumitory.”

Sumardjo’s rendering of Cordelia’s fumiter (Burgundy’s fumitory) is puzzling.

CORDELIA: *Dimahkotai bunga glechoma serta daun-daun*  
[Crowned with *glechoma* flowers along with their leaves]

*Glechoma* is a genus that includes several species of herbs, none of which look like fumitory. Besides, *glechoma* is scientific nomenclature; its use makes Cordelia sound like a botanist. There are oddities with the rest of the passage as well:

*Boldrik, kervel, duri-duri, bunga kukuk,*  
*Dorik dan segala tanaman tak berguna yang tumbuh*  
*Di ladang gandum yang subur. (125)*  
[burdocks, chervil, thorns, the cuckoo-flower, darnel and all useless  
vegetation that springs up in the fertile grain field.]

The passage seems carelessly written. *Boldrik* is usually spelled *bolderik* in Dutch, and *dorik* would seem to be the more common *dolik*. The passage sounds especially perfunctory because of the way Sumardjo renders “cuckoo.” He merely re-spells the Dutch word (*koekoek*) regardless of the fact that his Indonesian readers unfamiliar with this bird would have identified *kukuk* with *kokok* [to crow].

I have elsewhere<sup>12</sup> discussed how skillfully Sumardjo used Dutch for comic effect in *Hamlet*, to enhance Polonius’ pontificating. There is no such sparkle in the *Raja Lear* catalogue, however. The suspicion that Sumardjo is just going through the motions here is confirmed by a look at Burgersdijk:

Cordelia. *Gekranst met aardveil en met akkeronkruid,*

<sup>12</sup> “*Hamlet* Comes to Indonesia.” Presented at “Shakespeare across Media: 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the NTU Shakespeare Forum, Taipei, 6-9 June 2012.

*Met boldrik, kervel, netels, koekoeksbloemen,  
En dolik (8:804)*

[Crowned with ground-ivy, and with field-weeds, with burdocks,  
chervil, nettles, cuckoo-flowers and darnel]

This passage is a look over Sumardjo's shoulder when he is not trying very hard. I wrote earlier that Sumardjo translates Shakespeare, not Burgersdijk; this passage is an exception. Elsewhere Sumardjo respectfully and wittily dances around Burgersdijk, competes with Burgersdijk, and is sometimes misled by Burgersdijk, but here, with the exception of *aardveil*, he simply dumps the work on Burgersdijk. The spelling of *boldrik* is a Burgersdijk "fingerprint," as is *kukuk/koekoek*. I take the *dorik* for *dolik* to be a slip of the pen. *Aardveil* explains *glechoma*. This is a rare example of Sumardjo's breaking the translator's Eleventh Commandment: he tries to be clever by avoiding the common Dutch word for "ground ivy," *hondsdrif*, and goes Linnaean. *Glechoma hederacea* is the scientific name for *hondsdrif*, but when he lit on *glechoma*, he chose a name that must have been unfamiliar not only to his Dutch-educated Indonesian readers, but to the Dutchmen themselves. Ophelia's and Gertrude's flowers brought out the best in Sumardjo; Cordelia's recitation brought forth only a halfhearted effort.

Normally, though, Sumardjo goes the extra mile. *Penuh api (RL 76)* [full of fire] is how he renders "fierce" (3.4.170), but this is more than poetic license: by saying *penuh api* Sumardjo highlights the "burn" in the following line. "her eyes are fierce [full of fire], but thine / Do comfort and not burn." With Cornwall's "Fie, Sir, fie!" (2.4.162) the interjections are given content: *Wah, tuan tak malu? (75)* [Oh, sir, aren't you ashamed?]. He evidently felt the need to resolve the ambiguity of "my poor fool is hanged" (5.3.304), applied by Lear not to the Fool, but to Cordelia: *anakku yang malang digantung (170)* [my unfortunate child is hanged].

There has been much ado about the "nothings" in *Lear*, and *Raja Lear* contains some interesting contributions to the question. Indonesian has no good, all-purpose word for "nothing," and so Sumardjo must use his ingenuity; at 2.3.20 he even renders "nothing" by nothing.

Edg. Poor Turleygod! poor Tom!  
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.  
EDGAR: -- *Turleygood jembel!*  
*Tom jembel! Mendingan – lebih berarti dari pada Edgar.*  
[“Poor Turleygood [sic]! Poor Tom! At least that is more meaningful than Edgar.]

When Lear "prompts" Cordelia (1.1.86) Sumardjo translates the

“nothing” differently.

Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of nothing; speak again.

Sumardjo uses *tak* (“not”) and *ada* (“be”).

CORDELIA: *Tak ada, baginda.*

LEAR: *Tak ada?*

CORDELIA: *Tak ada.*

LEAR: *Dari tak ada lahir tiada, silakan lagi.* (13)

[“There isn’t, your majesty.” “There isn’t?” “There isn’t.” “From ‘there isn’t’ is born ‘nonexistence.’ Try again.”]

When Edmund begins his slanders against his brother (1.2.26), Sumardjo begins with *tak ada*, as above, but switches to *tak apa-apa* [not anything] and *bukan apa-apa*, *bukan* being a synonym for *tidak* or *tak*, but specific to nouns and adjectives.

Glou. Edmund, how now! What news?

Edm. So please your lordship, none.

Glou. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

Edm. I know no news, my lord.

Glou. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

Glou. No? What needed then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let’s see: come; if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

GLOUCESTER: – *Hai, Edmund, apa kabar?*

EDMUND: *Tak ada kabar, tuanku.*

GLOUCESTER: *Mengapa kausimpan surat itu dengan gugup?*

EDMUND: *Tak apa-apa, tuan.*

GLOUCESTER: *Kertas apa yang kaubaca tadi?*

EDMUND: *Bukan apa-apa, tuan.*

GLOUCESTER: *Bukan? Tapi mengapa terburu amat kaumasukkan dalam kantong? Kalau bukan apa-apa, tak usah buru-buru disembunyikan. Aku mau lihat, ayo, kalau bukan apa-apa tak kuperlukan kaca mata.*

[“Hey, Edmund, what news?” “There is no news, my lord.” “Why did you put that letter away nervously?” “It isn’t anything, lord.” “What

paper was it that you were reading earlier?" "It isn't anything, lord." "No? But why did you stuff it into a pocket exceedingly hastily? If it isn't anything, there is no hasty striving that it be put away. I want to read, oh, if it isn't anything, I don't need glasses."]

At 1.4.126 Sumardjo uses a different word.

Kent. This is nothing, Fool.  
 Fool. Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, Nuncle?  
 Lear. Why no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

This time, "nothing" is rendered by *kosong*, which means "empty." The springboard for the exchange is the common phrase *omong kosong* (literally "empty speech," but in fact meaning "nonsense").

KENT: *Itu omong kosong, badut.*  
 BADUT: *Kalau kosong, itulah seperti suara pengacara yang tak dibayar – sebab kaubayar dengan kekosongan – Tak dapat bikin apa-apa dari kekosongan, paman?*  
 LEAR: *Lear. Tentu tidak, buyung; dari kosong timbul kosong. (38)*  
 ["That is empty speech, fool." "If empty, it's like the voice of a lawyer that has not been paid – because you paid with emptiness. – Can't manage to produce anything from emptiness, uncle?" "Certainly not, kid. From empty emerges empty."]

There is another *omong kosong* that is worth noting, because it is problematic. The passage is 1.2.147.

Edg. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?  
 Edm. Come, come. When saw you my father last?  
 Edg. The night gone by.  
 Edm. Spake you with him?  
 EDGAR: *Sejak kapan kau jadi penganut ilmu falak?*  
 EDMUND: *Omong kosong. Kapan kau bertemu ayah akhir kali?*  
 EDGAR: *Semalam.*  
 EDMUND: *Kau omong dengan dia?*  
 ["Since when have you become an adherent of astronomy?" "Nonsense. When was the last time you met with Father?" "This night." "You spoke with him?"]

Edmund's "come, come" is not in the First Folio, although it is in the



Quarto version; this, however, is an editorial matter; evidently Sumardjo was following a conflation. The problem is acoustic: the *omong* of *omong kosong* creates an unpleasant echo with the following *omong*; the dramatic situation does not call for musicality, and the same is true of the repeated *kapan* [when].

Shakespeare does have an echo at 1.2.178 that Sumardjo cannot reproduce.

Edg. Arm'd, brother!

Edm. Brother, I advise you for the best.

EDGAR: *Senjata?*

EDMUND: *Nasihatku ini untuk kebaikan kanda. (29-30)*

[“A weapon?” “This advice of mine is for your good, respected older brother.”]

“Brother” cannot be echoed in Indonesian, because Indonesian uses different words for older and younger brothers. A less obvious example is the “Sir...sir” exchange at 1.2.36/39. Edmund’s “sir” is rendered by *tuan*, as above; Gloucester’s “Give me the letter, sir” becomes *Tunjukkan, bocah*. [show it, boy]. The only explanation I can offer for this inaccuracy is that Sumardjo misread the text, “sirrah” instead of “sir;” elsewhere in *Raja Lear bocah* or *buyung* (RL 26) [kid] to render “sirrah,” as at 1.2.74.

The *omong* of *Kau omong dengan dia?* sounds odd. Indonesia scholar Dr. Jennifer Lindsay<sup>13</sup> has pointed out to me that *omong* is perfectly acceptable in colloquial Indonesian, and I defer to her expertise on that point; indeed, when the Fool uses *omong*, as he frequently does, I am not bothered at all. I would respectfully maintain, however, that colloquialism is incompatible with the grand style, which Shakespeare uses when the major characters speak. Here I would expect the more formal *berkata* [talked with] or *bercakap-cakap* [chatted with], or at the outside *beromong* [had speech].

There are two other oddities in this scene. In Edmund’s opening monologue (1.2.35) Sumardjo renders “got ‘tween asleep and wake” as “between wake-up and sleep” (*dibenhkan / Antara bangun dan tidur*) (RL 20), following the natural Indonesian word order rather than the Shakespearean word order.<sup>14</sup> In Edmund’s second soliloquy (1.2.123) “An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!” is omitted. This omission is regrettable, since we will never know how Sumardjo would have translated “goatish disposition,” but the omission is probably accidental.

A final touch before we leave the scene. Edmund’s “I see the business”

<sup>13</sup> Lindsay, personal communication

<sup>14</sup> Lindsay, personal communication

(1.2.179) becomes *aku tak salah pukul!* (30) [“I won’t miss!” literally “I don’t strike wrong!"]. Sumardjo is not always literal, and this is frequently not a bad thing: it is no great loss to find that he makes no effort to differentiate between a sennet, a flourish and a tucket: all three are *bunyi nafiri* (RL 10.17.55.76) [trumpet sounds]. When the gauntlet is thrown down in the final act, however, the challenge is sounded on a *terompet* (159) [trumpet], which to my ear sounds too modern. Indonesian has a literary word, *sangkalala*, which would seem to fit a military-theatrical context better.

Another word that does double duty is *nakal* [naughty]. It is used in the Fool’s first entry (1.4.93).

Fool. Let me hire him too: here’s my coxcomb.

Lear. How now, my pretty knave! How dost thou?

BADUT: *Aku pun mau sewa dia. – Ini, ambil piciku.*

LEAR: *Hai, anak nakal, manis, apa kabar?* (37)

[“I myself want to hire him. Here, take my cap.” “Hey, naughty child, sweet, what news?”]

*Nakal* is used in this sense in Sumardjo’s *Hamlet* (3.2.158), where it is used for Ophelia’s “You are naught, you are naught” (HPD 118). As for “knave” being rendered by *anak nakal*, we note that Sumardjo avoids the pitfall of mechanical translation in Gonerill’s “You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master” (1.4.314), where the word is clearly stronger; *Raja Lear* has *Buyung, bukan badut, tapi bangsat, ikut tuanmu!* (RL 46) [Kid, not a fool, but a scoundrel, follow your lord!]. Stronger still is “Beloved Regan / Thy sister’s naught.” (2.4.130), for which Sumardjo chooses the very strong word *judes* (73), a form of “Judas,” with overtones of bullying and viciousness. He does the same for Gloucester’s “Naughty lady” (3.7.37), which he renders *Nyonya durhaka*: *nyonya* is the ordinary form of address for married women in Indonesia, but *durhaka* has the idea of being rebellious, which can also include the idea of being sinful. Even stronger, since it refers to the forces of nature, is the Fool’s “Prithee, Nuncle, be contented; ’tis a naughty night to swim in.” (3.4.108) Sumardjo offers a nuanced *Kumohon paman supaya tenang; malam ini terlampau buruk untuk berenang* [I beg, uncle, that [you be] calm; this night is exceedingly rotten for swimming]. I say nuanced, because *buruk*, which means “evil, worthless, bottom-of-the-barrel,” is almost always specific to things (like the forces of nature), as opposed to *nakal*, which refers to people (like the Fool).

An omission that appears to be intentional is “mother” in the esoteric medical sense that Shakespeare uses it: “Lear. O! How this mother swells up to my heart (2.4.54).” Did anyone in the Globe’s first audience have any idea what the Bard was talking about? The passage gives more difficulty to translation in the term of “*Hysterica passio*.” Since no Indonesian reader could have been

expected to know what a “*hysterica passio*” was, Sumardjo was right to translate the abstruse term simply as *penyakit* [a disease].

LEAR: *O, betapa memar hatiku oleh penyakit  
Yang naik sampai kepala! Turunlah,  
Tempatmu dibawah! – Mana anakku?*  
[Oh, how my heart swells up from this disease that goes up to my head! Go down, your place is below! Where is my child?]

Translating these lines, Burgersdijk, even though no stranger to scientific Latin jargon (he was a biologist), evidently gave up on the idea of a literal translation, since he offers what amounts to a rewrite.

*Lear: O, welk een klopping in mijn hoofd! ik duizel!  
Waar ben ik? Hart, klopt mij niet daar; omlaag!  
Omlaag! Klop op uw plaats! Waar is die dochter?*  
[Oh, what a throbbing in my head! I’m dizzy! Where am I? Heart, don’t beat there; down, down! Beat in your place! Where is the daughter?]

Some of Sumardjo’s most polished passages in *Raja Lear* are the Fool’s lines, so it is well to conclude by considering three examples that are especially interesting. His rendering of 1.4.194 sounds effortless.

Fool. Mum, Mum;  
He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,  
Weary of all, shall want some.  
*“Sayang, sayang!  
Bila tiap milik telah hilang,  
Tak ada harga pada orang telanjang.”* (41)  
[Too bad, too bad! If every possession is lost, a naked man has no value.]

The strong rhymes at 1.4.116 recall the longer passage in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* mentioned earlier. Instead of what I have called “pastel” half-rhymes, Sumardjo meets the challenge head-on.

Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,  
Lend less than thou owest  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,

Set less than thou throwest;  
 Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
 And keep in-a-door,  
 And thou shalt have more  
 Than two tens to a score.  
 ”*Simpanlah kekayaan, jangan berlagak;  
 Omong sedikit dan tahu banyak;  
 Jangan pinjamkan segala milik;  
 Waspadalah ke mana membidik;  
 Dan timbanglah taruhanmu;  
 Jangan percaya sebelum tahu  
 Hindarkanlah si jalang dan anggur;  
 Tinggal di rumah dengan teratur;  
 Maka milikmu yang selaksa namanya,  
 Sepuluh ribu lebih rasanya.* (38)

[Stash your wealth, do not put on airs; talk little and know a lot; do not lend all your possessions; be careful where you aim; and hedge your bets; don't believe before you know; withdraw from wild [women] and liquor. Stay at home respectably, then your property which is called 10k will seem to be more than ten thousand.”]

The Fool's very first line (1.4.93) has one of Sumardjo's most fascinating inspirations. Let us take a second look.

Fool. Let me hire him too; here's my coxcomb.  
 BADUT: *Aku pun mau sewa dia. – Ini, ambil piciku.*  
 [I myself want to hire him. Here, take my cap.]

By translating “coxcomb” as *pici* Sumardjo has given the Fool an entry with a sting that is not in Shakespeare. *Pici* is the cap universally worn by Indonesian men, which meant that every man in the audience was wearing a coxcomb. This is a theatrical ambiguity worthy of Shakespeare himself.

### Conclusion

A translator is supposed to translate. It must have occurred to Sumardjo, however, that he was putting more effort into his translation than Shakespeare had put into the original. A labor of love had become a labor of tough love, so Sumardjo was right to put *Raja Lear* aside and rest on his laurels. His first six Shakespeare translations stand out as masterpieces of the translator's art, and are worth the same scrutiny that we have expended on *Raja Lear*; although with happier results.

The legitimacy of Sumardjo's translations is subject to the same test as any interpretation of the Bard's work, east or west: is it Shakespeare or fakespeare? Sumardjo's translations, because of their craftsmanship and creativity, are a legitimate part of the Shakespeare continuum, and deserve respectful analysis.

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