Jafar Suryomenggolo (ed.), *At a Moment's Notice: Indonesian Maids Write on Their Lives Abroad*. NIAS Press [collected and translated by Jafar Suryomenggolo] 2019, x + 219 pp. ISBN: 9788776942717, price: USD 19,99 (paperback).

This book is a collection of fictional short stories written by Indonesian maids drawn from their experiences in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Malaysia. These women write about events that are most meaningful for them, which is why each story is rich with emotion and the authentic textures of their daily lives.

The book is organized into four parts: employer-worker relationships, love and sexualities, moonlighting, and home. It is not a light read. Some stories are sweet, heartfelt, and about the struggles of coming of age. But some others, especially increasingly towards the end of the book, are heavy with violence, oppression, and are often tinged with the psychological pain that comes from their low income and status in society. Many start their stories with putting on clothes and make-up in an effort to look like a local and not a migrant housemaid. Sadly, in their effort to avoid being looked down on for being domestic servants, they often wear red lipstick and clothes such as tank tops with miniskirts, that make them resemble sex workers in the eyes of locals, and many men in their stories see them and treat them like prostitutes.

The book sheds light on what these women consider important, and offers valuable insight for future research. Hard work is never a problem for them, as long as they are treated as human beings. The editor is absolutely correct when he states in the back of the book that these women really can write. These authors supply compelling detail that open their daily lives to the reader, and they are thoughtful and reflective. Their relationship with their employers and 'home' are the most crucial aspects of their lives.

A story titled *The Bird Painting* is engrained in my mind. It was foreboding and suspenseful, and as I turned the pages I felt grateful it was a short story so that the tragic denouement would not be long or belabored. The bravery and honesty in the stories also captured me. Some stories describe lonely women looking for love and comfort in a foreign land they perceived to be richer than their own, others convey the harsh reality of domestic violence and unemployed husbands who drove them away from Indonesia. They often face similar circumstances and familiar dilemmas abroad. In their search for intimacy and male companionship, they are often targeted by playboys and men who want cheap sex, and they are also mothers and providers who send remittances back home. But more than exploring romantic ideas of love, the stories explore their views on marriage and being wives, as well as their relationships with children, religion, and home. Many stories describe the exploitative behavior of

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the “local” ethnic Chinese and Indian men seeking only cheap sex and who leave the women pregnant and alone (if they are lucky, with some money for abortion). However, one story is especially worth noting entitled *I’m Not Yem*. It highlights the fact that in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia many employers and “local” men treat these women migrant workers badly, but only in Indonesia do they suffer from the infrastructure of blackmail and extortion, sometimes with the involvement—or the willing knowledge—of the state.

I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the thoughts of Indonesian housemaids and their reasons for doing such work abroad, and it is a great addition of empirical data for scholars in the field of labor migrants, migration, and gender studies.

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