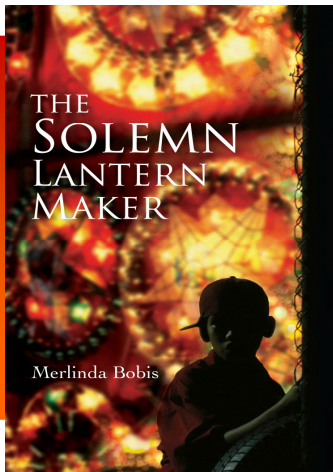


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MURDOCH BOOKS



The Solemn Lantern Maker

By Merlinda Bobis
Publishing March 2008, RRP \$26.95

Media Release

Merlinda Bobis will be a guest at the 2008 Sydney Writer's Festival

At this intersection, star lanterns made of translucent capiz shells outshine each other, desperate to be sold. Red, green, gold and pearly white blink and whirl with electric lights, like stained glass on speed. The shoppers' faces catch the glow. So does Noland's. It is a solemn face, like those of plaster saints who endure years of silent watching.

Ten-year-old Noland, a mute lantern maker, imagines that he sees an angel falling from the sky to the slums where he lives. But it's only an American tourist who is caught in a drive-by shooting of a political journalist.

At a busy intersection in Manila, the magical and the seedy collide: shimmering lanterns and poverty, Christmas carols and child prostitution, dreams of friendship and the global 'war on terror'. A hut in the slums becomes a cathedral and silence is an exchange of breaths.

This raw and hard-hitting novel captures issues of our times and is delicately spare in its prose, with room for silences. Reading it is like walking into the lantern maker's hut where 'life must be squeezed to pocket-size, breath must be kept spare ... be frugal where life is fragile'.

Merlinda Bobis has received various awards, prizes and fellowships for her fiction, poetry and plays, among them the Prix Italia for *Rita's Lullaby*, the Steele Rudd Award for the Best Published Collection of Australian Short Stories, the Judges' Choice Award (Bumbershoot Bookfair, Seattle Arts Festival) and the Philippine National Book Award for *White Turtle* or *The Kissing*, and more recently the Philippine Balagtas Award, a lifetime award for her fiction and poetry in English, Pilipino and Bicol. Her poetry book *Summer was a Fast Train Without Terminals* was shortlisted for *The Age Poetry Book Award*. Her plays have been performed in Australia, Philippines, France, China, Thailand and the Slovak Republic. *Banana Heart Summer* was her first novel and was shortlisted for the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. *The Solemn Lantern Maker* is her second novel. As a performer for stage and radio, Merlinda works with artists from various genres and she lectures in Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong.

"Thoroughly engaging and enjoyable with fascinating characters" – Bookseller & Publisher for *Banana Heart Summer*.

Merlinda Bobis is available for interview. For more information please contact Kate Mayor at Murdoch Books on (02) 8220 2346 or email katem@murdochbooks.com.au