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<td>Head, Chinese</td>
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<td>Director, Chinese Heritage Centre</td>
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<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Constructing a Nanyang Cultural Tower in the Shade of Palm Trees and Coconut Groves: The Circuit of Romanticism through the Tropics (Shuang SHEN, Penn State University)</td>
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<td>Sinology and the Malayan Project: Hsu Yun-tsiao’s Popular Journals and Radio Writing (Nicholas Y. H. WONG, University of Chicago)</td>
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<td>10:40</td>
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<td><strong>Keynote Address: The Tropics as Trope (English; HSS 05-57)</strong></td>
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<td>一个香港人看星洲：力匡和他的作品 (郑政恒, 香港岭南大学)</td>
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<td>新加坡故事, 好莱坞版本：冷战时期美国政府在新马制作的反共电影 (许维贤, 南洋理工大学)</td>
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Moderator: Jessica Bridgette HINCHY |
| 16:15 | Overlapping Scriptworlds and (Literary) Language Ecology in Singapore (Wai-chew SIM, NTU) |
| 16:35 | Root/less: The Construction of Home in Romesh Gunesekera’s Reef (LONG Chao, NTU) |
| 16:55 | The Lure of Space: Legendary Psychasthenia in the Films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Man-Fung YIP, University of Oklahoma) |
| 17:15 | Questions and Answers |
| 17:35 | END OF DAY ONE |

**SATURDAY, 24 JUNE 2017**

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| 09:30 | Tropicopolitans in Space or Place? Southeast Asia in Defoe’s Cartography (Samara CAHILL, NTU) |
| 09:50 | From Seashells to Savages: Orientalist Constructions of Maritime Southeast Asia in the Scientific Writings of Albert Bickmore (1869) (Farish Ahmad-NOOR, RSIS) |
| 10:10 | Tropical South as a Contact Zone in 20th Century Chinese Culture (Donghui HE, Whitman College) |
| 10:30 | Orientalist Narratives of Indianness in Singapore’s Sinophone Writings (WONG Chee Meng, NTU) |
| 10:50 | Questions and Answers |
| 11:15 – 11:30 | BREAK (HSS 05-57) |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | Panel 5: Japanese Imperial Discourses and the Tropics (English, HSS 05-57)  
Moderator: Shirley CHEW |
<p>| 11:30 | Japanese Robinson Crusoe in the South Island: The Adventure of Dankichi (Hyo Kyung WOO, NTU) |
| 11:50 | The Position of the Native in the Bilingual Edition of Tropical Ethnography in Colonial Korea (KWON Myoung A, Dong-A University) |</p>
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<td>12:10</td>
<td>“Taste” of the Tropics: Consuming Taiwan Banana in Japan, 1900-1950 (Mike Shi Chi LAN, National Chengchi University)</td>
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<td>12:30</td>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
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<td>Panel 6-1: Trans-Tropical: Reflections on a Philippine Possibility (English; HSS 05-57) Moderator: Chun Chun TING</td>
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<td>14:00</td>
<td>A Gift Without Time: Tropics of Eroticism in Hiligaynon Folk Poetics (Timothy F. ONG, University of the Philippines)</td>
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<td>Tropical Navigation: Dwelling on the Sea in the Geopoetics of Sama Dilaut Orature (Maria Natividad I. KARAAN, Ateneo de Manila University)</td>
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<td>14:40</td>
<td>The Eyes and Horizons of the Storm: On the Limits and Possibilities of Tropic Catastrophe in Tagalog Folk Poetics (Isa LACUNA, Ateneo de Manila University)</td>
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<td>Song of Venom: The Tropics as Pharmakon in Two Lowland Languages of Colonial Nineteenth Century Philippines (J. Pilapil JACOBO, Ateneo de Manila University)</td>
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<td>Panel 6-2: Negotiating Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration (Chinese &amp; English; Seminar Room 6: HSS 01-04) Moderator: Wai-chew SIM</td>
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<td>14:00</td>
<td>从国体到身体：大马男同志华文小说中的热带忧郁 (谢静国, 台湾东吴大学)</td>
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<td>14:20</td>
<td>留守与出走：论孙爱玲与张曦娜小说中对南洋女性形象的型构与迷思 (谢征达, 香港中文大学)</td>
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<td>15:00</td>
<td>Big Mole the Beautifully Blemished Singaporean Female of Yesteryear (Eunice LIM Ying Ci, NTU)</td>
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<td>15:20</td>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
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<td>15:45 – 16:15</td>
<td>AFTERNOON TEA BREAK (HSS 05-57)</td>
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<td>16:15</td>
<td>西欧的东亚探险和沟通的方法：以乔治·福雷斯特(1873-1932)引进英国的西藏植物和空间的他者化为例 Exploring East Asia: Otherization of Tibetan Plants and</td>
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<td>16:35</td>
<td>Practical and Picturesque: The Rhetoric of Botany and Landscape in Johannes Nieuhof’s 17th Century Travel Account of China (Melinda SUSANTO, National Gallery Singapore)</td>
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<td>Beauty out of Strangeness: Revisiting 18th-Century Collections of South East Asian Natural History (Shirley CHEW, NTU)</td>
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<td>热带棕榈树图书馆 - 东方文化的象征: 德国浪漫主义作家霍夫曼小说《金罐》中的现代审美 (Chien-chun LIN, National Taiwan University)</td>
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<td>17:55</td>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
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<td>18:30</td>
<td>Bus transfer to BLUE GINGER Restaurant (Meeting Point: foyer of HSS Building)</td>
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<td>19:00 – 21:00</td>
<td>CONFERENCE DINNER (All speakers are invited)</td>
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<td>21:00</td>
<td>Bus transfer to NEC</td>
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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Tropics as Trope

David DAMROSCH (Harvard University)

For centuries, tropical locales have been sites of utopian or dystopian projection by outsiders, while the local inhabitants have often struggled to respond to their visitors – or invaders’ – projections and to formulate their own tropical aesthetics. This talk will begin with tropes of tropical abundance, magic, and danger already prominent in the accounts of the Venetian merchant Marco Polo and the Moroccan jurist Ibn Battuta, and will then compare the aesthetic responses developed in the twentieth century by Derek Walcott in the Caribbean and by Kukrit Pramoj in Thailand and Pramoedya Ananta Toer in Indonesia.

Constructing a *Nanyang* Cultural Tower in the Shade of Palm Trees and Coconut Groves: The Circuit of Romanticism through the Tropics

Shuang SHEN (Penn State University)

This talk engages with the fascinating itinerant career of Zeng Shengti (1901-1979), who as a native of Guangdong Province of China, came to Singapore and worked as a Chinese school teacher and literary editor for a Sinophone newspaper in the mid-1920's, before traveling to India where he visited Tagore’s Shantinekitan and stayed in the Satyagraha Ashram of Gandhi for an extended period of time. Focusing on the short stories and polemical treatises published in the *Nanyang Daily* and his memoir *By the Side of Bapu* (first published in Shanghai in the 1920s, then in Singapore early 1940s, translated into English and published in India in the late 1970s), this paper delves into the intersection of British romanticism, modern Chinese lyricism, Buddhism, and Hinduism in the writer's treatment of key issues of the self, the society, and language.

This paper's theoretical core is derived from Adorno's discussion of the aesthetics of lyric poetry, where he argues that the principle of “unrestrained individuation” of the lyric poetry does not necessarily guarantee that “something binding and authentic” will be produced, and that “[l]anguage mediates lyric poetry and society in their innermost core.” Situated at the confluence of Byron and Shelley, Tagore and Gandhi, as well as the modern Chinese Buddhist writer Su Manshu, romantic individuation in Zeng’s writings encompasses a great deal of creativity and potentiality that promise connections and articulations across the divides of the East and the West, the center vs. the periphery, while bridging the distinct British colonial localities of Singapore and India. How does the universality of Zeng’s cosmopolitan “poetics of interiority” engage with the *Nanyang* localities? How do we critically assess Zeng’s literary agenda hinged upon the phrase “*Nanyang color*” (*Nanyang secai* – *Nanyang* refers to the “South Seas”) and the place of this literary agenda in Sinophone Singapore/Malaysia literary history? Would we agree with Adorno’s assessment that the dialect refers to “a condition that is not yet fully individuated,” a “prebourgeois” “state of affairs” in light of Zeng’s colorful depictions of coolie laborers in his stories? This paper reads Zeng with an aim to explore East-West, Sinophone, and China-India connections.

Shuang Shen is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Asian Studies at Penn State University. She is the author of *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semicolonial*
Shanghai (Rutgers, 2009) and co-editor of a special issue of Social Text on “China and the Human” (2011 and 2012) and a special issue of Verge on “Asian Urbanisms” (2015). She has published articles and essays in Comparative Literature, MLQ, Modern China, MCLC, PMLA, Xinmin Weekly (in Chinese) and Wanxiang (in Chinese). She was the recipient of a Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant and a Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation Scholar Grant in 2015-2016. She also a Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute in the National University of Singapore in 2015. She is currently working on a book project that studies trans-Pacific circulation of Sinophone literature during the Cold War period.

Panel 1: The Tropics in Sinophone Articulations

Sinology and the Malayan Project: Hsu Yun-tsiao’s Popular Journals and Radio Writing

Nicholas Y. H. WONG (University of Chicago)

Hsu Yun-tsiao (1905–1981), Sinologist and historian of ancient Southeast Asia, founded the influential Nanyang Society (1940–), devoted to academic scholarship about the region in Singapore. Besides editing South Seas Journal (Nanyang xuebao), the popular South Seas Miscellany (Nanyang zazhi), and the children’s magazine Malayan Youth (Malaiya shaonian), Hsu led his students on ethnographic trips, translated from the Burmese, Thai, and Vietnamese, annotated a play about Zheng He, wrote classical Chinese poems, compiled volumes on the anti-Japanese war effort by Nanyang Chinese (1938–45) and the war crimes trial (1946), produced Southern dialect and Malay-Chinese dictionaries. Something about this Sinologist’s broad interest in languages, plants, trade, medicine, ceramics, religion, phonology, and world literature inspires a polyphonic view of Mahua, or Malaysian Chinese, literary history. I develop Hsu’s Nanyang-oriented historical anthropology as an alternative mode of writing Mahua literary history, a project made famous by Fang Xiu’s social-realist, Hegelian accounts of Mahua literature’s development within a new nation-state. Hsu’s Chinese-language work has been obscured by the anti-communist, nation-building politics of Singapore during the Cold War, even when it advocated Malayанизation (Malaiya hua) or becoming local. I examine Hsu’s Wenxin diaochong (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Insects, 1973) and his radio lectures, later compiled into Malaiya congtn (Collected Writings on Malaya, 1961), and their complex blend of “discursive histories” (shihua) and evidential scholarship (kaozheng xue)—a discipline stemming from the eighteenth-century reaction against overly metaphysical interpretations of history and philosophy. Hsu persuaded the post-war generation of diasporic Chinese who neither went to school nor “returned” to New China to anchor their
national belonging, paradoxically, through learning about Southeast Asian history and geography. Hsu’s historicist argument for localization presents an alternative vision to the Malayan project. It also reformulates earlier Chinese genres of knowing the South Seas tropics.

Nicholas Y. H. Wong is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. He is currently completing his dissertation, titled “Genealogies of Cold War Mahua Literary History,” which considers various literary, philological, political, and institutional forms that shape the writing of histories of Chinese-language literatures in Malaysia after the 1950s. His research and teaching interests include global Chinese literature, philosophical aesthetics, East-West comparative poetics, media and modernity in China and Southeast Asia. His article, “The Imaginative Materialism of Wen in Ng Kim Chew’s Malayan Communist Writing” is forthcoming from *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*.

**Panel 1: The Tropics in Sinophone Articulations**

**Tropical Ecology and Revolutionary Imagination: Reading Ng Kim Chew and Wang Anyi**

Chun Chun TING (NTU)

This paper reads Wang Anyi’s "Sadness for the Pacific" with Ng Kim Chew's narratives on Malaysian Communists. While both novelists approach the revolutionary past of Malaysian Peninsula as imagined histories--family genealogy for Wang, and historical archeology for Ng--their fictionalization of this obscure history is brought to bear on the larger themes of passion and futility, diaspora and belonging, and for Ng, an ambitious project to reconstruct Sinophone Malaysian literature. This paper focuses on the depiction of tropical ecology in these narratives to examine how they collaborate with the novelists’ detective, imaginative, archaeological works to take the marginalized history to a new direction. Privileging the view of the tropical island from a distance, Wang's writing takes the floating island and its brutal heat as a symbol for an unanchored destiny and unsettled melancholy commonly shared by humanity. Dwelling in the rain forest with all its humidity and full range of creatures from ants to pheasants, tortoise, monkeys, and tigers, Ng's short stories depict not only the field of life and death of the besieged communists, his fascination for the decay of dead bodies and writings (books, papers, words) also turns the stories about a failed revolution into a metaphor of the existential condition of overseas Chinese as well as Sinophone writing.
Chun Chun TING is an Assistant Professor at the School of Humanities in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She teaches Chinese literature, cinema, and cultural studies. Graduated from the University of Chicago in 2015, she is currently working on a manuscript on artistic activism in post-Handover Hong Kong, focusing on the politicization of urban planning and place-making to address the Hong Kong people’s re-imagination and reclaiming of the city through political actions as well as cultural representations.
Panel 2: Diasporic Imaginations of Nanyang

“族群”与“国族”的变奏：重探鲁白野的文化-政治论述
张松建 (南洋理工大学)

马华作家鲁白野 (1923-1961)，属于典型的“离散华人”(Chinese Diaspora)和“跨国弱裔”(transnational minority)，在其身上交织着多重身份：孺慕中华文化的峇峇，穷困潦倒的流浪汉，浪漫颓废的作家，孜孜不倦的记者、翻译家和业余学者。在其短暂的一生中，鲁氏跨越地理、语言与文化的疆界，辗转漂泊于马来亚、印度尼西亚、新加坡、印度的广袤空间。他的文化-政治论述，打破新诗、散文、小说、论著的文类界限，展示一己之流动世和海外华人的离散经验，见证现代民族-国家的崛起，以及“亚洲觉醒”浪潮中的国际主义。本文挪借历史学成果和文化批评理论，整合鲁白野的（非）虚构作品以展开“跨文类阅读”，观察他的文化-政治论述，如何再现族群景观、重塑历史主体、召唤国族认同，并且针对其洞见与盲视的所在，展开繁复的辩难，做出初步的评判。

Between Ethnicity and Nation: Revisiting the Cultural Politics in Lu Baiye’s (Non-) Fictional Works

Lu Baiye (1923-1961), a much neglected author and amateur historian in 1950’s Malaya, publishes a wide range of (non-)fictional writings with a primary concern on ethnicity or nation, which is worthy of further examination. Born in Ipoh, Lu exiled to Sumatera leading a poor life for twelve years, and in 1948 he relocated to Singapore where he worked as a journalist and a court interpreter until he died in 1961. Lu speculates on the fate of Chinese Diaspora from ancient to modern in the South Seas when he crossed the geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries. After Malaya achieved independence in 1957, Lu’s primary concern drastically shifted from ethnicity to nation, and he called attention to nation building, social justice and racial harmony.

With theoretical engagement, contextualization and textual analysis, this paper aims to illuminate Lu Baiye’s insight on cultural politics. In addition, the paper is a critical attempt to open a dialogue here, a new dimension for rethinking the issues of race, class and colonialism in Chinese Singaporean and Malaysian literature.

ZHANG Songjian earned his PhD in Chinese Studies from the National University of Singapore. Afterwards he worked as a post-doc research fellow at Tsinghua University and later as an associate professor at the Capital Normal University based in Beijing. Dr. Zhang joined the SOH faculty of NTU as an assistant professor in July 2013. His research areas
include modern Chinese literature and culture, overseas Chinese literature and culture, comparative literature and critical theory. Dr. Zhang solely authored four books which were published by Peking University Press (2009; 2012), China Social Sciences Press (2013) and Singapore Global Publishing (2017).

Panel 2: Diasporic Imaginations of Nanyang

一个香港人看星洲：力匡和他的作品
郑政恒 (香港岭南大学)

自1949年之后，香港文人与报人，跟新加坡与馬來西亞的華人文學有千絲萬縷的關係，黃崖、力匡、姚拓、楊際光、黃思騏、劉以鬯、李微塵等五六十年代活躍的詩人或作家，遊走於香港與馬來亞新加坡之間，而力匡是相當突出的一位，他追憶廣州、香港成名，定居星洲。

本文主要探討力匡的各類作品，包括刊登於馬華文學重要刊物《蕉風》上的散文與小說，以及他在新加坡所寫的詩作，尤其是運用了戲劇性獨白（Dramatic monologue）技巧的小說〈陋室〉、散文〈一個香港人看星洲〉、詩作〈十年〉，以及力匡的短篇小說集《長夜》。戲劇性獨白的運用，也許可以追溯到徐志摩引入的曼殊斐兒（Katherine Mansfield）小說，而且呼應翻譯引介、在地實踐、流通傳播的文學發展模式。

Matthew CHENG, Lingnan University
嶺南大學人文學科研究中心研究員，編有《長夜以後的故事：力匡短篇小說選》《五○年代香港詩選》《香港文學與電影》《香港文學的傳承與轉化》《金庸：從香港到世界》等。
Researcher of Centre for Humanities Research, Lingnan University, Editor of Stories After a Long Night: Selected Short Stories of Li Kuang, Anthology of Hong Kong Poetry of the 1950s, Hong Kong Literature and Cinema, Hong Kong Literature: Legacy and Transformation, Jin Yong: From Hong Kong to the World etc.

Panel 2: Diasporic Imaginations of Nanyang

熱帶燃烧的野火：林晃昇在马来西亚的离散话语
Wildfire in the Tropics: Lim Fong Seng and His Diasporic Discourse

Lim Fong Seng is an important figure in the history of Malaysia Chinese, with his remarkable roles as a poet, an entrepreneur, and a cultural activist. Born in Sembilan in Malaya in 1925, he adopted the pen name of Yehuo (literally Wildfire) to write new poetry, ventured in 1946 into tin mining, and starting from 1970 involved in Chinese education organisations and campaigns. After he passed away in 2002, he continued to be remembered and revered by the Malaysian Chinese communities as a Chinese cultural icon. Drawing on diasporic concepts, this paper examines Lim Fong Seng's life and writings in the hope of uncovering the benchmark he had established. This article argues that Lim's political marginalisation brought about his erasing Huaqiao sentiment, through peeling off Nanyang elements, and also his consolidating Chinese ethnicity, by localising the diasporic culture.

YOW Cheun Hoe is associate professor at Nanyang Technological University, where he is Head of the Division of Chinese, Director of the Chinese Heritage Centre, and Director of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture. He is the executive editor for Huaren Yanjiu Guoji Xuebao (International Journal of Diasporic Chinese Studies). His academic interests and areas include Chinese migrants and diaspora, qiaoxiang (Overseas Chinese homelands) ties, and diasporic Chinese literature. His recent books are Yimin guiji he lisan lunshu: Xin Ma huaren zuqun de chongceng mailuo (Migration Trajectories and Diasporic Discourses: Multiples Contexts of Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia)(Shanghai Sanlian Shudia, 2014); Guangdong and Chinese Diaspora: The Changing Landscape of Qiaoxiang (London & New York: Routledge, 2013). His articles appear in journals such as Journal of Contemporary China, Modern Asian Studies, Asian Ethnicity, Cross-Cultural Studies, Changjiang Xueshu, and Waiguo Wenxue Yanjiu.
Panel 2: Diasporic Imaginations of Nanyang

新加坡故事, 好莱坞版本: 冷战时期美国政府在新马制作的反共电影
许维贤 (南洋理工大学)

本文探讨冷战时期好莱坞在新马制作的反共电影。1950 年代上半旬美国国务院属下的新闻总署曾秘密特约和赞助纽约声马达影片公司拉队来新马制作和拍摄数部反共电影。这些反共电影大量聘请新马本地的华人演员和马来演员在片中饰演各角，由邵氏机构负责电影的发行和放映。电影市场主要针对东南亚华族和马来族，尤其是那些不太识字的大众群体。1951 年美国杜鲁门政府在全球发动反共的“真理运动”，策划针对苏联与中国、以及东南亚国家等等的一系列心理战计划和项目。1953 年在全马和新加坡各地戏院上映的《星嘉坡故事》和《小村烽火》正是“真理运动”的冷战产物。本研究要从“真理运动”的冷战语境探讨好莱坞在新马制作的反共电影，除了分析这些反共电影的运镜与意识形态，也结合英美国家档案馆和新加坡国家档案馆的解密档案，以及冷战时期英美和新马旧报刊的第一手数据，探讨这些反共电影如何以粤语和马来语讲述好莱坞版本的新加坡故事？由于上述反共电影长期至今在中外学界不被关注，有关影片和档案也不易获取，导致有关这些电影的记载还是至今在美国电影史和电视史缺席，更不要说更是被新马电影史选择性的遗忘。本文有意弥补这片空白。


This paper examines anti-Communist films made by Hollywood in Cantonese and Malay in Singapore and Malaya in the Cold War context of the “Campaign for Truth.” In the early 1950s, the United State Information Agency secretly commissioned and funded New York Sound Masters Inc. to produce several anti-Communist films in Singapore and Malaya. Local Chinese and Malay actors were hired to play the various roles, and the Shaw Organization was responsible for distribution and screening. In 1953, cinemas across Malaya and Singapore screened Singapore Story and Kampong Sentosa, two Cold War products of the “Campaign for Truth”. This article also combines declassified archive material from the UK, US, and Singaporean National Archives with primary materials from UK, US, Singaporean, and Malayan periodicals from the Cold War era in order to explore how these two films use Malay and Cantonese to narrate a Hollywood’s version of the Singaporean story. As these two films have been largely passed over in scholarship and the films and archives have not been regularly accessible, records
of these films are absent from histories of film and television in the US, Singapore, and Malaya. This article aims to remedy this absence.

Wai Siam HEE is Assistant Professor of Chinese at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has written extensively on cinematic and gender issues, with articles in the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Journal of Chinese Cinemas, Frontiers of Literary Studies in China and Queer Sinophone Cultures. He is the author of From Amorous Histories to Sexual Histories: Tongzhi Writings and the Construction of Masculinities in Late Qing and Modern China. He has co-edited two books, including Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Corporeality, Desire and The Ethics of Failure and Memorandum: A Reader of Singapore Chinese Short Stories.
Panel 3: Tropical Dwelling: Forms, Processes, and Strategies

Overlapping Scriptworlds and (Literary) Language Ecology in Singapore

Wai-chew SIM (NTU)

This presentation applies the notion of “scriptworlds” (Damrosch) to the local and regional geo-cultural context. Contesting a social imaginary dominated by communitarian ideology, Singapore writers have in recent years deployed “border aesthetics” to interrogate the antinomy between cultural self-maintenance and adaptation/elective affinities. Such moves index a complex language ecology that resists the post-independence insistence on ethnolinguistic difference. Beginning with recent developments in Singapore Sinophone writing and criticism, I trace the rhizomatic connections between the creolisation processes that they valorise and two novels: Mohamed Latiff Mohamed’s *Confrontation: A Novel* (originally published as *Batas Langit*) and Kwee Tek Hoay’s *The Rose of Cikembang* (originally published as *Boenga Roos dari Tjikembang*). As an analytic domain, “scriptworlds” has been posed as a mediating category between the notions of world literature and various bounded “national” literatures. My use of the term expands the usage by focusing on the micro-poetics of texts that seek to produce social space amenable to the needs and demands of “super-diversity” (Vertovec).

Wai Chew SIM is an Associate Professor in the English programme, School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University. He has authored two books on British-Asian author Kazuo Ishiguro, has an edited collection of essays on British-Asian literature, and is also the editor of *Island Voices: A Collection of Short Stories from Singapore*. Apart from academic criticism he also publishes creatively. He has research interests in Postcolonial Literature and Theory and is currently writing a book on Singapore English- and Chinese-language fiction.

Panel 3: Tropical Dwelling: Forms, Processes, and Strategies

Root/less: The Construction of Home in Romesh Gunesekera’s Reef

LONG Chao (NTU)

Sri Lanka has always imprinted on people either with its beautiful natural landscape or its horrific history of war and violence. Such discourse conveniently ignores the diverse life experiences of the local people on the island. At the same time, to “see” the real indigenous culture and
traditions is not equivalent to studying it as an exoticized other. In the turbulent second half of the 20th century, Sri Lanka was caught in the complex political, economic, socio-cultural changes in the region. As such, the movement and flow of people and capital ensued add multiple layers of meaning to the life there on the island. Romesh Gunesekera’s *Reef* is an attempt to present the complicated power dynamics and web of social relations in which local people are embedded in that era. Through the protagonist Triton’s eye, Gunesekera invites us to experience some of the deep-rooted problems within the nation, such as class conflict, the corrosion of the sea, and forced migration out of domestic wars. Yet these issues are not directly discussed in the novel. They are gradually unfolded along the line of Triton’s formation of self. In this essay, I will focus on Triton’s contemplation of home to map out the trajectory of Triton’s changing knowledge of self. Specifically, I will investigate the multiple layers of meaning that Triton infuses with the house. By doing that, the power relations between Triton and his master Salgado are exposed. The house thus becomes a miniature of the broad political and cultural conflicts in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, as Triton attains more autonomy and independence, the house transforms into a nurturing ground to prepare him to stand in the world. In the end, his memory of the house offers him a way of claiming back his lost home when he moves abroad.

Long Chao is currently a PhD student in the Division of English at NTU, Singapore. His research interests include gender, cultural identity, post-colonial studies, and Sinophone studies. His dissertation focuses on the representation of Hong Kong in both Hong Kong Sinophone and Anglophone fictions. I explore this issue through the lens of Chineseness and family specifically by examining the expression of gender and cultural identity in those works.

*Panel 3: Tropical Dwelling: Forms, Processes, and Strategies*

**The Lure of Space: Legendary Psychasthenia in the Films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul**

Man-Fung YIP (University of Oklahoma)

This paper approaches the films of Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul through the lens of Roger Caillois’ idiosyncratic take on mimicry—i.e., the fascinating phenomenon in which certain organisms (mainly insects) turn themselves into a copy of, and thus vanish into, their environment. Conceiving it as a form of sympathetic magic, Caillois argues that the true significance of this mimetic act lies not so much in its presumed protective function as in the way it brings about the dissolution of the distinction between the organism and its milieu, and
ultimately the dissolution of the organism as a distinct entity. This state of indistinction, of slackened bodily “boundedness” and sense of self, resonates with Apichatpong’s interest in what may be called the experience of liminality: an ambiguous and even disorienting experience hovering between the realms of the living and the dead, of the human and the non-human, and of the real and the imaginary. The affinity is especially evident in the numerous jungle scenes where the protagonists of the films, possessed by a wild, sprawling environment replete with spirits and mysterious beings, transition to death or to another life form. Representationally, this process of transition or transformation is signaled in the way the characters, engulfed by darkness and by a sensescape defined not so much by sight as by diffuse, indefinable ambient sound, succumb to the “lure of space” and are eventually “assimilated” into it—in other words, the same doubling of the milieu and the corresponding effacement of figure and self as in the case with the mimicking insects. More generally, I seek to bring Caillois’ ideas to bear on the experience of watching Apichatpong’s films; it is not just the characters but we as viewers who, drawn viscerally to the sedate but hypnotically sensual experience of space and time, “dissolve” into the films’ audio-visual representations in a darkened theater, that is, an artificial jungle.

Yip Man-Fung is associate professor of film and media studies at the University of Oklahoma. He is the author of Martial Arts Cinema and Hong Kong Modernity: Aesthetics, Representation, Circulation (2017) and co-editor of American and Chinese-Language Cinemas: Examining Cultural Flows (2015). His current research focuses on the Cold War and Asian cinema.
Panel 4: Mapping the South: Cartography and Race

Tropicopolitans in Space or Place? Southeast Asia in Defoe’s Cartography

Samara CAHILL (NTU)

As Srinivamas Aravamudan argued in his ground-breaking *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (Duke UP, 1999), the tropes of colonialism engendered the very terms of resistance. If Daniel Defoe is the father of the novel, as he has been conventionally considered to be since at least Ian Watt’s influential *Rise of the Novel* (1957) and if Defoe concentrated more on urban London’s global trade rather than on its relationship to the English countryside (as Aravamudan has elsewhere observed), then Defoe’s constructions of English nationalism depended very much on situating it in relation to spaces and places far distant from the London he inhabited. Using Peter Borschberg’s work on early modern cartography of the Southeast Asian region and Defoe’s *Atlas Maritimus* as a case study, I will argue that Defoe’s influential model of the British Empire (and of Robinson Crusoe as *homo economicus*) was always already dependent on the construction of tropicopolitans.

Samara Cahill is an Assistant Professor of eighteenth-century literature in the Division of English at Nanyang Technological University. She has written or co-written articles on sustainability pedagogy in a Southeast Asian context, feminist orientalism, British and Chinese attitudes to gardens, the influence of Chinese aesthetics on English gardens, and a variety of other topics. Her manuscript on feminist orientalism in eighteenth-century England is currently under review and she is working on a second manuscript on the intersection of ecological concerns in eighteenth-century England, the reception of Southeast Asian cultural encounters, and the “rise” of the realist novel. She is the Vice President of the Southeast Asia Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (SASECS) and the incoming Book Review editor of the journal *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era*.

Panel 4: Mapping the South: Cartography and Race

From Seashells to Savages: Orientalist Constructions of Maritime Southeast Asia in the Scientific Writings of Albert Bickmore (1869)

Farish A.NOOR (RSIS)
Albert Bickmore’s work ‘Travels in the East Indian Archipelago’ (1869) was one of the first scientific works by an American natural scientist writing on and about Southeast Asia in the 19th century. Though Bickmore’s domain of interest was Conchology – the study of seashells and molluscs – his work also included a commentary on the various ‘races’ of natives he met in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). This paper looks critically at Bickmore’s pseudo-scientific classification of native Southeast Asians and how he systematically classified them according to a typology of ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ races, and sets his work in the wider context of American Orientalist scholarship in the 19th century when America was addressing the realities of slavery as well as the relocation of native American communities back home. It draws a connection between American perceptions of slaves and native Americans in America and the manner in which Asians were seen as the ethnic-racial Other, while also foregrounding the Indonesian archipelago as a place that was rich in natural wonders, but culturally backward and in need of Western intervention and ‘civilisation’.

**Farish A. Noor** is presently Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University; where he is the Head of the Doctoral Studies Programme. He has also served as researcher at the Centre for Modern Orient Studies (ZMO), Berlin; taught at Freie University Berlin, the Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), Leiden; and Sciences-Po, Paris. Presently he is also a member of the United Nations’ Alliance of Civilisations’ Panel of Global Experts on Religion and Politics in Asia. He is the author of *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in 19th century Colonial-Capitalist Discourse*, Amsterdam University Press, 2016; *Islamism in a Mottled Nation: The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party 1951-2013*, Amsterdam University Press, 2014; *Moving Islam: The Tablighi Jama‘at Movement in Southeast Asia*, University of Amsterdam Press, 2012; *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*. (With Martin van Bruinessen and Yoginder Sikand (Eds.), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2008; and *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS: 1951-2003*, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), Kuala Lumpur, 2004.

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**Panel 4: Mapping the South: Cartography and Race**

**Tropical South as a Contact Zone in 20th Century Chinese Culture**

Donghui HE (Whitman College)

The term “New South” is borrowed from the history of the American South. It was used after 1877 by reformers to advocate for the
modernization of society and attitudes in order to integrate the South more fully into the United States. This entailed rejecting the economy and traditions of the "Old South" and the slavery-based plantation system of the antebellum period. Although the term is not officially adopted in China, the Chinese south, especially the tropical regions, is historically categorized as a new addition to the central empire in dynasty geography. This newness led to its negative conceptualization as the periphery of the Chinese empire, the end of Confucian civilization, the unruly and the exotic other. Although many of these perceptions persisted in some form well into the 20th century, my research calls attention to the fact that this north-south, center-periphery paradigm has been significantly redefined in Chinese public culture since the turn of the 20th century. I propose that geopolitical education at the turn of the 20th century encouraged college students and political reformers from tropical provinces to reconceive the marine tropics as a contact zone between the cosmopolitan West and rural China, potentially at the service of modern nation-building. This presentation traces the formation of this tropical legacy, and explores ways the cosmopolitan and/or traditional Chinese cultural reserve are re-accentuated in self-representations of overseas students from the tropical regions in the 1950s, 1980s and the 2000s. I argue geopolitical redefinition of the tropical south has been instrumental to visions of Chinese nation-state building since the turn of the 20th century. The selective reconstruction of the tropical connection substantially fueled and sustained the cultural and political reconstruction of the Chinese intellectual mainstream of the 20th century.

Donghui He is an associate professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures as well as a member of the Asian Studies Programme at Whitman College, USA. Her main research interest is comparative literature, and her publications cover regional fiction in modern and contemporary Chinese, English and American literature, eco-film and spoken drama.

Panel 4: Mapping the South: Cartography and Race

Orientalist Narratives of Indianness in Singapore’s Sinophone Writings

WONG Chee Meng (NTU)

While the construction of Indian culture by British orientalists such William Jones has been much discussed from a postcolonial perspective, the representation of Indianness in Sinophone writings is an area that would conceivably demand attention too, with the recent geopolitical shift that sees an East Asian centre rising as part of
globalization. This paper will focus on relevant writings in the Chinese language between the 1940s and 1960s, by various writers who settled in Singapore after World War II as journalists and educators. Among them were essayist Lien Shih Sheng and the poet and fiction writer Lu Bai Ye, each of whom visited India in the 1950s, the former proceeding to publish a biography in Chinese on Tagore as a mystical poet, alongside biographies on the personalities of Gandhi and Nehru, while the latter would publish a travelogue on India, alongside similar accounts of Malaya. How the encounter with Indianness was represented through the intertwining of personal and historical narratives in such writings will be examined against general trends of postwar Asian nationalism then, from which a multicultural identity of Singapore would emerge.

**Wong Chee Meng** is a researcher in cultural history, with a special interest in intercultural dialogue through traditional performing arts as part of Singapore’s cultural diversity. He first graduated with a bachelor’s degree in linguistics and Chinese studies from the National University of Singapore, and eventually obtained a Masters and a PhD degree in heritage studies from the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus in Germany. He has lectured in Chinese film studies and Chinese cultural history as a postdoctoral fellow in literary and cultural studies with the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and is currently at its Centre for Chinese Language and Culture, with a main research topic relating to the heritage values of Singapore’s Chinese schools as cultural spaces.
Panel 5: Japanese Imperial Discourses and the Tropics

Japanese Robinson Crusoe in the South Island: The Adventure of Dankichi

Hyo Kyung WOO (NTU)

This paper explores how the 1930s popular Japanese manga *The Adventure of Dankichi* [Boken Dankichi daiensei] illustrates the idea of the South Seas (Nan’yo) in relation to Japan’s imperialist project. Considering children’s literature historically has been served as an effective tool for empire building due to its educating role to reproduce future citizens of the empire, *The Adventure of Dankichi* belies the candid desire and anxiety of imperial Japan in its derogatory and condescending representations of the natives in the Southeast Asia. Throughout the 1930s, the “south” remains an important geographical location of anxiety and resolution for Japan's coloniality, especially in its relation to the “north.”

*The Adventure of Dankichi* is a story of a Japanese boy who happens to drift away from his hometown to an island where exotic animals and cannibal “savages” reside. Taking an advantage of his “civilization,” Dankichi becomes the king of the natives. From the protagonist’s accidental arrival to his return to his homeland, the story follows a typical boy’s adventure narrative. Yet it also diverges from Anglophone boy’s adventure stories in its depiction of Southeast Asia from the perspective of the “yellow” colonizer who attempts to compete with other western empires. For example, *The Adventure of Dankichi* illustrates that all the natives look black and exotic animals are from Africa rather than Southeast Asia. In this sense, by looking into the triangular relationship among local, regional, and international spheres in *The Adventure of Dankichi*, this essay demonstrates how the imagined Southeast Asia enabled Japan’s expansionism to go beyond local colonizer to a world-class empire.

Hyo Kyung Woo is a postdoctoral fellow in Translation Studies at the Center for Liberal Arts and Social Science, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her current research examines Anglophone writings and translations of English literature produced by Korean cosmopolitan writers during the Japanese colonial period. Prior to undertaking her PhD studies, she contributed monthly columns at Hankyöre newspaper and published books about young feminist activism in Korea. She is currently translating Guerrilla Girls' *Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls’ Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes*, under the contract with Humanitas publishing house.
Part of the fantasy of empire that was concretely formed in the relationship with Nam bang during the Pacific War was the superior position of Koreans as indigenous peoples of Asia. Interest in the native populace of Nam bang and Korean's holdings and position in Nam bang were ultimately problems related to anxiety and expectations about Korean's long-term position within the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Through the experience of the Pacific War (more fundamentally, through the experience of the ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere), the concept of 'indigenous' arose as an important criteria for the formation of 'identity.' Identity was proposed as a form of unity in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere by being re-constituted as the basis for indigenousness, and it became possible to introduce the idea of Asia's indigenous or native residents as a representation of regional identity. Such a perception of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere played an important role in linking the ideas of the sphere as a regional alliance and the idea of nativeness. While disconnecting the idea of Korean-ness from the concept of a modern, nation-state subjectivity and an attendant notion of nationality(Korean), it appears that the concepts of ethnicity and locality as expressed in notions like 'resident of the land' or 'son of the land' were reconstructed. In particular, it is plausible that the idea of a homogenous people (Korean), the long-unchanged identity of the region, and the right of possession held by scholars within the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere were key causes of the Imperial fantasy of the superior position of Koreans as the proprietors and native residents of Asia, especially as an attack on the idea of the native residents of Nam bang as the 'original' inhabitants. Also, an identity formation which uses nativeness and indigenousness can lead to the problems of conflict, internal warfare, and border and internecine dispute in the postcolonial process of nation-state formation. The problems of nativeness in Asia lead to border and ethnic disputes in the process of establishing nation-states, and the issue of nativeness as the antithesis of communism was utilized. Not only in Southeast Asia, but in Korea as well, in the process of forming an identity as a nation-state in the postcolonial era, the fact that the notions of nativeness and indigenousness have become the issue of the justification of the construction of a 'Korean nation-state' requires serious consideration.

Kwon Myoung A is an Associate Professor of Korean literature in Dong-A University, South Korea. She received her PhD from Yonsei University, with her dissertation entitled Experience of the Korean War and

Panel 5: Japanese Imperial Discourses and the Tropics

“Taste” of the Tropics: Consuming Taiwan Banana in Japan, 1900-1950

Shichi Mike LAN (National Chengchi University)

Banana is ubiquitous in (super-)markets around the world today; in Japan, in terms of quantity consumed, it is the most popular fruit nowadays. However, back in the beginning of the 20th century, it was virtually unknown to most Japanese consumers. Based on the approach of social-cultural history, this paper will explore the process in which the Japanese public became familiarized with and subsequently developed the “taste” for banana, a foreign produce predominantly imported from Taiwan, from the 1900s onward. It will utilize school textbooks, marketing and publicity materials, literary works, reports in newspaper and magazines to delineate the construction of “taste” and the social/cultural meanings, as Pierre Bourdieu proposed, in the consumption of (Taiwan) banana in Japan throughout the first half of the 20th century. This paper finds that in the process of popularizing and consuming banana, “banana” and its derived image were simultaneously identified with and represented as “foreign and exotic (food)”, “(bounty from) the South”, and “(produce of) the savage”. Together, these “banana” became the embodiment of the “tropics”.

This paper further argues that these multiple “tropical” meanings constructed and given to (Taiwan) banana in the process of daily consumption were closely associated with Japan’s imperial expansion aiming toward the South (nanshin), starting from Japan’s conquest of Taiwan as its first overseas colony in 1895. As Taiwan became the object of imagining and physically extending into the “tropics” by the Japanese Empire, “banana” from Taiwan best represented and reinforced the imagination of the tropics. To most Japanese today, consumer goods such as mango (of Taiwan) and pineapples (of
Okinawa) may conjure up the image of the tropics; but for most part of the 20th century, “(Taiwan) banana” had been the most accessible and consumable object of the “tropics” to ordinary Japanese.

Si-chi Mike Lan (Ph.D., Chicago, 2004) teaches at the Department of History, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. His research interests include Modern East Asian History, empire and nation, the Second World War, and historical memory. His recent publications include “Crime’ of Interpreting: Taiwanese Interpreters as War Criminals of World War II”, in Kayoko Takeda and Jesús Baigorri, eds., New Insights in the History of Interpreting (2016), “(Re-)Writing History of the Second World War: Forgetting and Remembering the Taiwanese-native Japanese Soldiers in Postwar Taiwan”, Positions: Asia Critique, Vol.21, No.4 (Fall 2013).
Panel Description

This panel reflects on the Philippines as a tropical zone that turns questions of desire, inhabitation, catastrophe, and death into inquiries on compassion, migrancy, survival, and defiance. The archipelagic condition of our tropical experience engenders vernacular languages to stage folk residuum against all manner of imperial duress, to turn against its temperate insistence, through poetic forms which nominate the island, navigation, weather, and poison, as instances where Philippine tropicality may narrate and describe its discourse against but also beyond the Spanish colonial narrative on the erotic, the domiciliary, the calamitous, and the toxic. In these studies, there is a turn to the “turn” that tropology enables discourses to imagine movement within language, its time signature, and the heterotopias where one can become truly tropic along that passage, as trans-tropical: ever-turning, and ever-giving, to an earth that may have gone and is still yet to come.

Panel 6-1: The Trans-Tropical: Reflections on a Philippine Possibility

A Gift without Time: Tropics of Eroticism in Hiligaynon Folk Poetics

Timothy F. ONG (University of the Philippines)

This paper attempts to explore the intimacy between eroticism and the tropics to understand the very premise of their inextricability. That the tropical is erotic has already been assumed, albeit problematic, to be a given, in the pervasive western/colonial/temperate imaginary, but how eroticism can be tropical is yet to be theorized. The goal is to arrive at an axiomatic moment wherein it can be purported that Philippine Eros is also tropical, and independently so, from temperate givenness. This trajectory is where an aesthetic of the tropics beyond colonial discourse can be initiated. The paper traces a genealogy of tropical articulations in Philippine folk poetics, but I suggest that one of the ways by which this traversal can be made possible is to inhabit eroticism as a mode of knowing. The study looks at folk texts from Central Philippines, specifically the epic tradition of Panay and Negros, through the Hiligaynon oral narratives Hinilawod and Labaw Donggon; through close reading, I shall argue for the epic cycle as that residual discourse effaced by colonial notions of the tropics as always already erotic, but that which also emerges as a linguistic event where Eros becomes originary premise for tropicality. The epic, as a poetic form that grapples with civilizational discourse on the erotic, is framed with and against insular tropology, as nesology, to reveal moments where the tropical figure’s claim to Eros is simultaneously affirmed and denied. This paradox allows the revelation and mystification of the tropics, which finds a voice in the
epic heroine Nagmalitong Yawa, the polytropic figure of the dazzling
demon of Hiligaynon mythology. It is through this character that the
nomination of a tropical speciation of Eros becomes possible as
"langga," the Hiligaynon lexis that reworks the eroticism of the tropics as
that which denies the reciprocity of the gift and becomes predisposed
towards generosity that transcends temporality: a gift without time.

Timothy F. Ong is an Instructor at the Department of English and
Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines–Diliman. This 2017,
he graduates with the MA in Literary and Cultural Studies from Ateneo
de Manila University, where he also obtained his undergraduate degrees
in Chemistry, Materials Science and Engineering, and Philosophy. In
2014, he was awarded the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship from the
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore for his
research on the tropics of eroticism in travel literatures in Southeast Asia.
His research interests include postcolonial eroticism, tropical studies,
Philippine folk literatures, corporeality, and world poetry. He is co-
convenor of the Xocolat Sessions: Informal Conversations in the Critical
Humanities, a project of the Literary and Cultural Studies Graduate
Collective of the Ateneo de Manila University and will serve as
coordinator of the Bahaginan Lecture Series, the research arm of the
College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines–Diliman. He
also writes poetry in the English language.

Panel 6-1: The Trans-Tropical: Reflections on a Philippine Possibility

Tropical Navigation: Dwelling on the Sea in the Geopoetics of Sama
Dilaut Orature

Maria Natividad I. KARAAN (Ateneo de Manila University)

How does one navigate the tropics and move within its latitude in
Maritime Southeast Asia? Though the region reveals a geography that
refuses the strict erection of boundaries, its histories of encounter have
created geopolitical national territories that places primacy upon land
and its sedentary nature over a more fluid understanding of place that
would more appropriately characterize the archipelagic formation of the
region—its ruptures and connections. In this territorial and terrestrial
imaginary, the sea—pelagos—promises to be a counterpoint to the
land—terra—as a way of reimagining the notion of place. How then do
the tropical seas wash away the boundaries of these binaries and
emerge as dwelling? The seas of Southeast Asia serve as habitus for
communities of sea people, such as the Sama Dilaut, whose maritime
lifeways challenge the fixity of territory in the region. In this study, I
examine how the sea is manifested and, in turn, informs the orature,
particularly the kata-kata, of the Sama Dilaut who dwell in the islands
between the Sulu and Celebes seas in the Philippines. In this pursuit of a tropical navigation, I am guided by tropes that arise from the kata-kata. These tropic markers serve as panduga or reference points, a coordination of tropes that carry and reveal a tropography, which then undergoes a philological inquiry that slows down the movement of the trope to determine the specificity of the sea and islands of the Sulu archipelago in Sama Dilaut geopoetics. For instance, “laut,” which denotes the sea, is striated and becomes multiple; “tubig,” which is water in Tagalog and amniotic fluid in Sinama, allows the sea to become the nutritive womb of an archive; “bangka,” the boat, becomes a world and a universe; and the “kata-kata” becomes a trope for the navigation that enables the Sama Dilaut to resist militarization and persevere in their lifeways. Tropic navigation thus becomes a traversal of the spaces between writing and orality, vehicular and vernacular languages, and axes of tropography. It is the movement of movement—a navigational tekhné that emerges from ethnography, reveals itself in orature, and reorganizes the image of the world under its tropicality. In this tropic movement, the sea becomes a material realm that opens the possibility of dwelling as inhabitancy without territoriality.

Maria Natividad I. Karaan holds the MA in Literary and Cultural Studies from the Ateneo de Manila University, where she also teaches English Literature and Philippine Literature in English. Her research pursuits revolve around Philippine indigenous cosmology, memory, and geopoetics. Her thesis navigates the topography of the orature of the Sama Dilaut from the Sulu archipelago. She was a fellow for the University of Santo Tomas J. Elizalde Navarro Critical Writing Workshop in 2012 and the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship of the Asia Research Institute in 2014. She is founding convenor of the Xocolat Sessions: Informal Conversations in the Critical Humanities, a project of the Literary and Cultural Studies Graduate Collective of the Ateneo de Manila University.

Panel 6-1: The Trans-Tropical: Reflections on a Philippine Possibility

The Eyes and Horizons of the Storm: On the Limits and Possibilities of Tropic Catastrophe in Tagalog Folk Poetics

Isa LACUNA (Ateneo de Manila University)

Contemporary approaches to understanding the phenomenon known as the Tagalog storm often ground themselves in scientific or economic structures of comprehension; other knowledges, those that navigate the spaces occupied by the folk and the literary, are often treated as either ancillary or antiquated understandings of the meteorological event. The
history of this particular ideological maneuver, viewed through the specific lens of Tagalog experience, can be traced as far back as the Spanish occupation of the islands, for it is in this historic moment that the folk was first rendered insignificant in the face of a dominant western paradigm. However, this paper proposes that the foundations of this western hegemony, while considerably effective in its deployment in the islands during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, is nonetheless riddled with logical aporias that might be re-read and re-interpreted in the present in order to return, in a way, to some extent, back to the folk understanding of the storm which has been effaced by colonial experience. Through a deconstruction of terms for the storm in the *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala* (1860), this paper pinpoints aporias in the Spanish comprehension of Tagalog tropical weather (specifically by way of the Tagalog words “bagyo,” “unos,” and “sigua”), and argues how these logical gaps are aggravated and strained as they are further situated in Tagalog folk poetry. Tagalog folk poetics then becomes the shadow of Spanish colonial ambition, and it is contestation and constellation of these two different modes, both necessarily at the same time with and against the other, that a more productive comprehension of Tagalog catastrophe might be achieved.

**Isa Lacuna** graduates with a MA in Literary and Cultural Studies at the Ateneo de Manila University in 2017. Her research interests include geopoetics, historical meteorology, and Tagalog folk poetics. The groove of her intellectual investigations revolves around how the storm-trope, as a literary maneuver deployed in colonial texts, is able to obliquely access invisibilized autochthonous wisdoms in postcolonial societies. She was awarded the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship of the Asia Research Institute in 2016. She is co-convenor of the Xocolat Sessions: Informal Conversations in the Critical Humanities, a project of the Literary and Cultural Studies Graduate Collective of the Ateneo de Manila University.

*Panel 6-1: The Trans-Tropical: Reflections on a Philippine Possibility*

**Song of Venom: The Tropics as Pharmakon in Two Lowland Languages of Colonial Nineteenth Century Philippines**

J. Pilapil JACOBO (Ateneo de Manila University)

How might tropicality be understood through the terminus of its allure, death? And what if that finality can also be arrested from that very space? Would the allure be the same? Would the tropics still be regarded as alluring, from this cusp? What poetic possibility within tropical discourse can emerge from a rubric that resists the aesthetic as
ineluctable premise for the “torrid?” In this study, I seek to explore the predicament of the tropics as pharmakon, indeed as both poison and antidote, through a genealogy of how toxicity in the Philippines has been inscribed in the colonial apprehension of Tagalog and Bicol, two languages of lowland Luzon, the largest island of the archipelago, through the dissemination of the pharmakon from the imperial lexicon to the sacred and secular poetry of the Spanish colonial period of the nineteenth century. Through a philological analysis of how the Tagalog term “camandag” (venom) becomes the metonym of the toxicity that can be coordinated through various terms on poison (“lason,” “gabol,” “gapol,” “gahol”) and on its antidote (“lonas” and “gamot), the paper pursues the tropology of the serpentine as an originary rehearsal of the transfigurations of the deadly/deathly in the Vocabulario de la lengua Tagala (1860), while looking at “bolong” as a term that preserves the duplicity of the pharmakon in the contrapuntal vernacular discourse of the Vocabulario de la lengua Bicol (1865), through an allegory of serpentine sociality. With a recognition of the contradictory valences that charge the relay of the pharmakon, when autochthonous danger seduces as an interdiction within imperial vocabulary, I then proceed to a reading of how the serpent figures in colonial theology, through a comparison of the scenes of serpentine temptation in two poetic narratives depicting Christological sufferance, the Tagalog Casaysayan nang Pasiong Mahal (1814) and its Bicol translation Casaysayan can Mahal na Pasion (1866), in order to track the pharmakon along the remediations of tropology and translation under the sign of the diabolical. What becomes of the danger when it is finally troped as serpentine? What does tropology do to the pharmakon when the demonic becomes the instance of venom? How might daemonic remedy be sensed in spite of the metaphoric toxin? What does translation do to the trope of poison? Finally, I complicate the coordinates of comparison further by looking at two figurations of venom as enchanted bird in the Tagalog metrical romance Ibong Adarna (c. 1860) and as mellifluous serpent-woman in the Spanish translation of the Bicol epic fragment Ibalon (1895). It is in this third moment where the pharmakon is sounded as venomous song that I propose an aesthetic of the Philippine tropics as possibly intimating a discourse on how the feminine may disclose an archaeology of colonial violence through a tropology of turning itself, of the trans-tropical, if critique may will this species to figuration, where the earth hisses, to reticulate what is truly injurious, as the suffering of sirens knows no silence.

J Pilapil Jacobo is Assistant Professor at the Departments of Filipino and English of the School of Humanities of the Ateneo de Manila University, where they teaches literature, theory and criticism, and cultural studies. They graduated with the PhD in Comparative Literature from the State University of New York at Stony Brook through a J. William Fulbright Fellowship. They is an active member and former president of the Film Desk of the Young Critics Circle of the Philippines, and with B.B.P. Hosmillo, Pang Khee Teik, Hendri Yulius, and Cyril
Wong, a founding co-editor of *Queer Southeast Asia: A Journal of Transgressive Art*. As a critic and scholar invested in tropicality, they are currently working on manuscripts on metaphoric moods, catastrophic sentiment, toxic tropology, and with Maria Natividad I. Karaan, Isa Lacuna, and Timothy F. Ong, a monograph on ethnophilological approaches to tropical studies in the Philippines. They also write poetry in two Philippine languages. At the Department of English of the Ateneo de Manila, they regularly teach *Tropical Modernism*, a course that imagines a productive counterpoint between Euro-American literary modernism and the tropical discourses of the Global South.
Panel 6-2: Negotiating Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration

从国体到身体：大马男同志华文小说中的热带忧郁
谢静国 (台湾东吴大学)

1998 年 9 月，马哈迪（Mahathir Mohamad）片面以鸡奸（sodomy）等罪名，宣布解除安华（Anwar Ibrahim）所有职位，巫统也与之跟进而和安华划清界限。19 年来，安华始终深陷此循环中。敌对者的目的就是要褫夺安华的参政权，藉此消灭最大的政治对手，以实现其政治企图。大马同志文学早在 1968-1969 年间便已浮出历史地表，其中的性政治（sex politics）呈现的是国家机器如何恐同与趋同，抑或在大马多元种族和宗教文化并存或包装下，哪些必须和国家并置而微观检视的诸种压迫？

Ching Kuo Hsieh
Position: Assistant Professor
Institution: Department of Chinese Literature, Soochow University, Taiwan
Research Expertise: Sinophone literature, cultural studies, cinema studies

Panel 6-2: Negotiating Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration

留守与出走：论孙爱玲与张曦娜小说中对南洋女性形象的型构与迷思
谢征达 (香港中文大学)

战后的一九八〇年代，全球女性受教育的进度迅速，西方女性主义观点也渗入热带亚洲，深处热带的新加坡女性对于自我权利与社会意识达致高峰。八〇年代亦是新加坡华文文学女性创作大量涌现的时期。其中，两位小说家在展示南洋女性的美学表现突出，她们是孙爱玲（1949-）与张曦娜（1954-）。孙爱玲的小说重视女性的现代思维与传统价值观之间的张力，象征的是南洋女性的传统。纵然是身处现代社会的女性，却仍旧无法逃离周围“凝视”下的举步维艰。张曦娜小说中的女性叙述者都是现代社会中的女性形象，然而，却背着传统语言与文化的重担面对挑战。特别是在八〇年代后华校体制在新加坡的瓦解之后，小说不乏对该议题做出深度审思。新加坡女性在传统与现代
价值观之间的取舍，也难免受于意识形态的桎梏与限制。本文以出走与留守之间，从性别视角审视女性在现代与传统中对南洋女性形象的型构，反映出“热带的美学”。

SEAH Cheng Ta, Singaporean, BA and MA in Nanyang Technological University. Currently a Ph. D candidate in The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Award received includes: 2012 Fang Xiu Literary award (方修文学奖), 1st in literature criticism category. 2017 Taiwan Zhou Meng-die literature award (中华民国周梦蝶诗奖) · 3rd in literature criticism category. Area of interest includes: Malayan Chinese literature, Sarawak Literature and Hong Kong Literature.

Panel 6-2: Negotiating Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Migration

南洋华人离散论述的迷思: 以陈子谦《4:30》与许纹鸾《新新熊猫》为例

卢筱雯 (南洋理工大学)

在世界各地的移民历史中，新移民与本地人民因文化、民族、国家等综合性因素，经常出现意见分歧与冲突，他们的主体意识在建立的过程中受到各方的挑战，尤以南洋移民为最。新移民的移入为新加坡国家建设与认同带来相当大的挑战，多年来成为许多学者讨论的议题，甚至进行影视改编，然而其受到制作方成本、审查、卖座程度及意识型态的牵制而有差异，导致客观性不足，相关研究也因此出现缺口。

本文的研究范围锚定于一九九五年以后的新加坡，观察两代新移民群体如何在本地生活与融入环境的方式，并且从早期报刊中建构移民的历史脉络。探析离散经验下制作的《4:30》与《新新熊猫》虽然同样透过感性的认知在理性的社会中展现各自的美学观，但是却呈现差异极大的移民论述，当中的吊诡性为何？本文从离散理论中的身分建构突破意识形态的迷思，展现影视制作的二律背反及移民论述的新思维。

LU Siao-Wun, Ph.D Candidate in Nanyang Technological University of Singapore. Area of Interest: Diasporic Poetry of Overseas Chinese. Recent Publication: (Book Chapter) "The Maze of Sex, Female and the Politics: Li Ang's Writing strategy and its Limitation", (〈性、女性与政治的迷宫：论李昂的写作策略与困境〉) The multicultural studies in Asia : A Selection of the Young
Chinese dialects like Hokkien, Teochew, and Cantonese have had a difficult relationship with the Singapore government with various education policies and language policies demonising the use of dialects and positioning them as detriments to language-learning. Apart from using dialects during certain political campaigns and messages targeted at the dialect-speaking elderly population, dialects have largely not been condoned by the state and over the years, dialect speakers have diminished steadily, especially amongst younger generations of Singapore. Yet in recent years, in light of the ageing population in Singapore and the perceived pressing need to foster a stronger national and cultural identity, dialects appear to be making a comeback in Singapore with the rolling out of campaigns like “My Father Tongue” and the reappearance of dialect programmes and advertisements on mainstream entertainment platforms. Rather than focus on these state-supported efforts to reintroduce dialects into the community, this paper will instead focus on Big Mole, Ming Cher’s sequel to his controversial novel Spider Boys, specifically the portrayal of the eponymous female protagonist Big Mole and her negotiations of language, racial, and gender tensions in 1950s Singapore. I will argue that Big Mole, as a representation of the Singaporean female of yesteryear, embodies a versatility and adaptability of the body, tongue, and social role; and these traits are subsequently repressed in a bid to gain economic and political freedom, not unlike Singapore’s relationship with dialects. While some parts of the story emphasise Big Mole’s beauty, strength, and ambition, the subsequent fate of Big Mole and the language of the story, as transformed by the many editorial hands involved in its publication, reduce Big Mole to an apologetic monolingualist who has to rely on her appearances as a silent, exotic Singaporean female model rather than her tenacity to break free from her former life among violent gangs. Big Mole the protagonist and Big Mole the novel thus parallels Singapore’s ambivalent relationship with her former tongues and forgotten languages, enacting the various historical and present day struggles through its narrative and the publication itself.
Eunice Lim Yung Ci is pursuing her postgraduate degree at Nanyang Technological University, majoring in English. With an undergraduate background in Communication Studies, her research interests include translation studies and Asian popular culture and literature. She is currently focusing on translingual and vernacular literature, cyber-literature, as well as South Korean entertainment.
Panel 7: Of Plants, People, and Places: Visuality and Cultural Encounter

西欧的东亚探险和沟通的方法：以乔治·福雷斯特(1873-1932)引进英国的西藏植物和空间的他者化为例
沈赫周 (SIM Hyuk Joo Hallym University)

19 世纪西欧的植物学家汇集在中国的西藏，这是为了采集西欧所需的植物。当时欧洲在国家（政府）的积极支持下，为了寻找景观用植物和用于治疗疾病的树木以及能够强效抵抗病虫害的种子而对亚洲进行探索。尤其是美国因病虫害导致栗树处于几乎灭绝的状态，美国农业部获得消息称东南亚及其临近的中国西南部地区的花和树木适合作为景观用植物且存在能够强效抵抗病虫害的种子，于是派遣了植物采集家。当时他们派遣专家前往的地方正是中国西南部的四川、西藏、云南地区。当时植物学家乔治·福雷斯特 (George Forrest, 1873-1932) 数次进入西藏，引进了西欧没有的杜鹃花 (Rhododendron) 等数十种植物，并介绍了中国西南部的风土人情。从这点来看值得注意，本文在追踪乔治·福雷斯特进入中国西南部（云南和西藏）地区的背景和活动轨迹的同时，还探究了当时其引进英国的植物。同时将其所介绍的西藏的自然环境和当时西欧所认识的空间的特殊性进行观察，即分析当时福雷斯特介绍的西藏的空间和地形、风土和环境卫生在西欧社会中是以何种概念空间进行他者化的。

Exploring East Asia: Otherization of Tibetan Plants and Space by George Forrest

In the nineteenth-century, the Western botanists and collectors gathered in Tibet in China. It was to collect the necessary plants for the West. During then, Europe explored Asia in search of plants for landscaping, trees for treatment of disease, and seeds resistant to pests, with the active support from the nation (government). Particularly in the United States, chestnut trees were almost completely annihilate due to pest. The US Department of Agriculture was informed that flowers and trees in Southeast Asia and its neighboring southwestern China were suitable for landscaping and that there were seeds that were resistant to pests, thus, sent plant collectors. The areas where experts were dispatched are Szechuan, Tibet, and Yunnan in southwestern China. In such an atmosphere, it is noteworthy that the botanist George Forrest (1873-1932) brought dozens of plants, including Rhododendron, that were not in the West through several entry into Tibetan, and introduced the natural features of southwestern China. This study will trace George Forrest's entry background and footsteps in southwest China (Yunnan
and Tibet) and scrutinize the plants he brought to England then. Furthermore, the natural environment of Tibet introduced by him and the uniqueness of space recognized at that time by the West will be spotlighted. In other words, how the spatial, topography, natural features and environmental hygiene of Tibet introduced by Forest have turned into a conceptual space (otherization) in the Western society will be analyzed.

Sim Hyuk Joo has majored in ethnology of Tibet (anthropology) at the National Chengchi University in Taiwan. Currently, he is a professor at the Hallym Academy of Sciences in Hallym University, South Korea, leading research on the subject of 'Communication and Concealment between the East Asia and the Western world'. In Hallym University he is teaching students about “The Tropical nations of East Asia”.

Panel 7: Of Plants, People, and Places: Visuality and Cultural Encounter

Practical and Picturesque: The Rhetoric of Botany and Landscape in Johannes Nieuhof’s 17th century travel account of China

Melinda SUSANTO (National Gallery Singapore)

How did a consciousness of China and its “tropical” imagery emerge in European print culture? This paper is a case study of Johannes Nieuhof’s account of the first Dutch Embassy to China, Het Gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen Keizer van China [...] first published in Amsterdam in 1665. It was one of the first comprehensive illustrated accounts of China to circulate in Europe and inspire a public imagination of the Far East. A comparison between Nieuhof’s original manuscript and the published travel account reveals differences, suggesting the tropes of “tropical” imagination intersected with production of visual knowledge. This paper focuses on the botanical and landscape illustrations in Nieuhof’s publication, and suggests that these illustrations represent the encounter with China through established frameworks of understanding. The result, it is argued, is a rhetoric which invites the reader to approach China through the practical appeal of material goods and cultivation, while also enjoying the pleasing picturesque nature of its distant lands. This paper considers how such a study of “tropical” imagery may function as a conceptual framework to reflect on the narratives of cultural encounter with China.

Melinda Susanto is an Assistant Curator at National Gallery Singapore. She is currently part of the curatorial team for the UOB Southeast Asia Gallery, a long-term exhibition space that surveys art of Southeast Asia
since the 19th century. Previous exhibition projects include *Artist and Empire: (En)countering Colonial Legacies* (2016) and the inaugural display of *Siapa Nama Kamu? Art in Singapore since the 19th century* (2015). Her research interests include artistic practices in Singapore and Indonesia from the 19th and early 20th century, as well as artistic and cultural exchanges between Europe and Asia.

Panel 7: Of Plants, People, and Places: Visuality and Cultural Encounter

**Beauty out of Strangeness: Revisiting 18th-Century Collections of South East Asian Natural History**

Shirley CHEW (NTU)

The departure point of this talk is *River of Smoke*, the second novel in Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis* trilogy. The year is 1838 and the First Opium War is round the corner. But trading in opium, we learn, is not the sole activity to be found in Canton. Many Chinese artists busy themselves in copying Chinese and European paintings to sell to foreign traders in the city. Others, ‘a new breed’, operate as ‘illustrators who make a speciality of botanical and zoological paintings … [and] are employed by visiting European botanists and collectors, who train them in the methods that are particular to their work … their pictures [being] usually shipped off to Europe along with the accompanying collections’.

This paper examines some of the drawings by these anonymous ‘illustrators’ at the turn of the eighteenth century, a time when Southeast Asia was a politically loose cluster of islands and peninsulas. Referring chiefly to William Marston’s *History of Sumatra* (1783) and the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings (1803-1818) at the National Museum of Singapore, it calls attention to the enthusiasm and dedication of the officials of the East India Company (EIC) behind the making of the natural history collections relating to the region; the development of the genre known as Company art; the distinctive contributions made by the Chinese and Indian artists employed by the EIC; and the remarkable, hybrid work produced out of a triangulation of artistic conventions.

**Shirley Chew** is Emeritus Professor at the University of Leeds, and, currently, Adjunct Professor at the School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She has published widely in the field of postcolonial literatures from Commonwealth countries, and has co-edited *Translating Life: Studies in Transpositional Aesthetics* (1999); *Re-constructing the Book: Literary Texts in Transmission* (2001); and *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature* (2010). She is the founding editor of *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings* (2001-present).
This paper traces the development of modern photography in Singapore alongside the crucial decades of socio-political and economic growth of the nation ever since attaining self-governance in 1959 till the 1980s. One of the core factors in shaping policy making in these three decades is the state's management of Chinese ethnicity across education, business and cultural fields. Given that most photographers active during that period were Chinese, this research would attempt to investigate how photographic representation or negotiation of Chinese ethnicity, against the backdrop of state policies and ideological control, contributed to the rise of modernism in Singapore photography.

Case studies were conducted on the seminal works and practices of five photographers who clinched the Cultural Medallion award: Yip Cheong Fun, Lee Lim, Chua Soo Bin, Foo Tee Jun and Tan Lip Seng. On one hand, Yip and Lee were Chinese émigré whose choice of subject matter, approaches and attitudes towards photography not only reflected a connection with their cultural motherland, but also a nascent sense of rootedness in Singapore. On the other, Chua, Tan and Foo are Singaporean-born Chinese whose expressions of ethnicity are inseparable from their Singaporean identity, embodying sense of multiculturalism and a connection to the world, though Chua would develop an enduring interest towards the Chinese cultural scene in the 1970s.

Comparison was subsequently conducted across all five photographers to understand how modernism is conveyed differently through varying approaches in expressing ethnic and national identity. A key finding is how the emphasis of traditional Chinese aesthetic values on visual harmony favoured a compatibility with the practice of pictorialism circulating in Euroamerican photo salons, which also revolved around the depiction of beauty and sentimentality. Adopting this pictorial language, Singaporean photographers hybridized it with their ethnic inflections and local iconographies while engaging with the experience of modernity. This cross fertilization of eastern and western influences, encouraged by the Chinese aesthetic values of openness, resulted in the derivation of unique modern photographic visions.
Kong Yen Lin is an art writer, educator and curator specializing in photography. She was formerly a photo sub-editor with Reuters Global Picture Desk and was involved in the Singapore International Photography Festival in 2012 and 2014 as an Education Programme Manager. She also participated as a guest curator in Brighton Photo Fringe’s Open 2011. Subsequently, she took on the role as Education Manager at DECK, a contemporary art space for photography in Singapore and Southeast Asia, and piloted the organization’s student and public education programmes. During then, she authored two student guides on conceptual photography. In 2016, she earned her Masters in Asian Art Histories at LASALLE College of the Arts, researching on Singapore’s modern photography history from the 1950s to 80s. She is currently a programme manager at The Arts House, curating photography, film and Chinese literary arts programmes.

Panel 7: Of Plants, People, and Places: Visuality and Cultural Encounter

热带棕榈树图书馆 - 东方文化的象征: 德国浪漫主义作家霍夫曼小说《金罐》中的现代审美
Chien-chun Lin (National Taiwan University)

霍夫曼小说《金罐》(Der goldne Topf, 1814)讲述的是主人公安泽穆斯(Anselmus), 一个生性单纯、拥有无限想像力但却与世俗社会格格不入的年轻人，经过在“热带植物园”中棕榈树图书馆的修炼而成长为一名诗人的故事。

小说的开篇即可感到安泽穆斯与大自然的亲近和相知。大自然的神奇与奥妙，能令原本心情抑郁的他顿时忘却先前所遭遇到的所有不快，亦让他很快地爱恋上自然界的小绿蛇赛珮缇娜(Serpentina)。怀有诗人气质的他，后被举荐至亦人亦仙的图书馆馆长林德霍斯特(Lindhorst)寓所处当文字缮写员。安泽穆斯以其快速且准确的工作赢得了林德霍斯特的信任，并被升级誊写收藏在棕榈树图书馆中的印度梵文文件。他对于被周围人视为“东方浮华不实之事”的林德霍斯特的家族史充满思慕与向往，加上他不追名逐利，于是成功地抵御了世俗利益的诱惑与巫婆所代表之“恶的原则”，成长为一名诗人。最终他获得了棕榈树图书馆馆长所赠予的金罐，并得以与赛珮缇娜一起前往世外桃源般的国度亚特兰提斯生活。

本论文借由小说里“热带植物园”中棕榈树图书馆作为特定地域文化标志的构建、作品主人公对于东方国度文字的临摹与接收的安排，以及他由
Chien-chun Lin is Assistant Professor, at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan. She received her PhD in German literature from the University of Heidelberg. Her research interests include German literature, comparative literature, and cross-cultural studies. Her monograph, entitled Der Künstler am Scheideweg – Das Bild des Künstlers in der deutschen Erzählkunst seit der Romantik (Iudicium, 2008), concerns artists’ novella since Romanticism in German literature. Since 2017, she is a member of ICLA (International Comparative Literature Association).
Conference Dinner Menu

THE BLUE GINGER

MENU

Nonya Archar
Duck Salad
Tossed with tangy plum sauce

Main Dishes

Ayam Panggang Blue Ginger
Deboned chicken thigh and drumstick flavoured with coconut milk, rich in exotic spices and grilled to perfection

Beef Rendang
Tender beef cubes prepared in rich coconut milk spiced with ginger, lemongrass, lime leaves and a dash of curry powder

Chap Chye Masak Titik
A typical peranakan vegetable dish specially prepared in a tasty prawn stock

Udang Goreng Tauyu Lada
Tiger prawns sauteed with black pepper and sweet dark soya sauce

Ikan Masak Assam Gulai
Mackerel fillets simmered in spicy tamarind gravy flavoured with lemongrass

 Tauhu Nonya Style
Deep fried beancurd with preserved bean paste sauce

Steamed rice and belachan

Desserts

Gula Melaka

$40++ per pax
Campus Map (HSS to NEC)
Keynote Speaker Public Lecture (22 June 2017)

The Arts House
(The Blue Room)

You are cordially invited to join the public lecture:

the Politics of Global English

Date: 22 Jun
2:00 PM – 4:30 PM

1 hour lecture, 30 minutes Q&A
To be followed by a tea reception.
Event Registration:
www.noh.ntu.edu.sg/esthetics

Organized by:
The Literary and Cultural Studies Cluster, and the Chinese Programme of the School of Humanities, NTU

David Damrosch is Ernest Bernbaum Professor and Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. A past president of the American Comparative Literature Association, he is the founder and director of Harvard’s Institute for World Literature.


Writers in England’s colonies and former colonies have long struggled with the advantages and disadvantages of employing the language of the colonizer, an issue that today reaches beyond the older imperial trade routes in the era of “global English.” Creative writers in widely disparate locations are now using English to their advantage, with what can be described as post-postcolonial strategies.

This talk will begin in colonial India with Rudyard Kipling, who became the world’s first truly global writer in the 1890s and developed a range of strategies for conveying local experience to a global audience. We will then look at the young Derek Walcott in Saint Lucia, as the future Nobel Prize winner sought to forge a poetic language, and an identity, for himself. The lecture will conclude with the Tibetan postmodernist Jamyang Norbu, who has reached a global audience by deploying “Babu English” to hilariously subversive effect.
The Aesthetics of the Tropics 2017

Organizing Committee

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Hyo Kyung Woo, Conference Secretary
Sim Wai-chew
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Student Helper
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NTU-NAC Chinese Creative Writing Programme
Centre for Chinese Language and Culture, NTU
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