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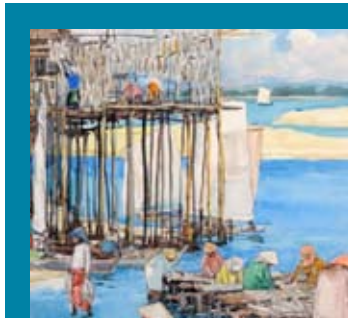
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DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Art is hard to capture or isolate, because it is as difficult to place as it is to make. We try to put a name to it, to elucidate the formula for a muse that will draw it out, but it remains ever elusive, ungraspable, secret. But what is certain is that art is elemental, dispensing with the need for speech and crystallising into worlds that one may enter on the condition of a willingness to see. To its mysteries and multiplicities, its forms and factions, we honour all things Art in BiblioAsia April 2011.

Drying Fish in Singapore Art, Yeo Wei Wei's Spotlight, explores the resonance of cultural nostalgia which brought about the longing for rural village life that characterised Nanyang-style art during the 1960 and 1970s. These iconic works of the Nanyang art movement based on the humble way of life of fisherfolk were signifiers of a romantic, idealised model of self-sufficiency — a poultice for the physical and psychic upheaval of industrialisation, and for the uncertainty felt in those years.

Joanna Tan traces this selfsame period of social and political reform in *Popular Music in 1960s Singapore*, instead examining a converse artistic response to the dissatisfaction of vexing times. Where artists of the Nanyang style chose to look to the village — an icon of the past — as a harbor of solace from the frustratingly transient, young musicians shifted their gaze to the new worlds. Discovering the familiar in the foreign, Singaporean bands of that era such as The Quests, The Crescendos and The New Faces found their voice in the Western idiom of rock 'n' roll.

Our curiosity toward the currents which affect whole generations often surface when we view art; the question on the tip of one's tongue often is: What are the sources of inspiration for the artistic vocabulary? This is also posed in our interview with filmmaker Boo Junfeng. Wending through the facets of the filmmaking process behind the critically-acclaimed *Sandcastle*, Boo discusses the constant negotiation required in mediating the dynamics within and between history and how these relationships and their fluctuations inform works of self-expression.

Finally, we turn our attention to the art of writing in asking: How do we, and can we, look to the future in a culture of artmaking? In his survey of *The Growth of Imagination in Singapore Children's Literature in English (1965–2005)*, Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow Noel Chia takes a critical look at the progress made in this particular literary field over a 4-decade period and finds a contradiction impeding the pace of developments.

In addition to harvesting creativity and imagination, a taste for perspective needs to be cultivated as well. The latest instalment of *Women's Perspectives on Malaya* by regular contributor Bonny Tan offers a view of late 19th century Malaya as was seen through the eyes of Emily Innes in her book, *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*. In this publication, we find a voice by turns dryly humorous, vulnerable and indignant about the grievous conditions of her life at that time. Though Innes documented her account for reasons other than art, hers is an example of how the unique voice warrants preservation in a world increasingly automated and globalised, sometimes depersonalised.

The National Library wants to contribute to a future of creative possibilities, one that celebrates the work of individuals and their efforts to define themselves and the culture in which they live and breathe. So whether it's by highlighting local works, organising collaborative workshops, or setting up digital resources on all things Singapore, we hope to play a part in your creative life — our creative life.

Happy Reading!

Ms Ngian Lek Choh
Director, National Library

“Art is elemental, dispensing with the need for speech and crystallising into worlds that one may enter on the condition of a willingness to see.”

Drying Fish In Singapore Art : Making Sense of The Nanyang Style

By Yeo Wei Wei
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“Nanyang”: Nostalgia and Longing

The subject of drying fish appears with remarkable frequency in the works of modern Singapore artists in the 1960s and 1970s. During that time, artists such as Chen Chong Swee, Cheong Soo Pieng, Lim Tze Peng and other members of the Ten Men Art Group, travelled to fishing villages in Trengganu, Kelantan, and Kukup. These outdoor sketching trips and the works produced in their course form part of the evolution of the Nanyang style. Finding themselves surrounded by attractive and fresh subject matter, these artists spent their days fruitfully; many sketches were the basis for full-fledged works in oil, watercolour, Chinese ink and colour, and even wood carving.

“Nanyang” literally means “south seas”, yet the term’s significance goes beyond mere geographical denotation. From the time of the earliest *huaqiao* (华侨; emigrants who came largely from southern China), “Nanyang” served as a potent signifier for a certain projected way of life in the tropics, a more rewarding life with less hardship. It was a word loaded with hopes and aspirations, but interestingly, by the early 1950s, it also seemed to evoke longing for an idyllic pastoral paradise in the tropics. The passion for tropical beauty had clearly grown since the 1920s. Back then, the writer Chen Lianqing lamented the absence of “local colour” in the literature of that time: “Look where you will in

these magazines, you will find scarcely anything that conveys in any satisfactory way the colour of the South Seas.” (Fang, 1977). It was a search for “local colour” that spurred the four major first-generation artists Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi, and Liu Kang to embark on their now famous field trip to Bali in 1952. They stayed in Bali for more than three weeks, travelling extensively across the island. The works from that Bali trip became emblematic of the Nanyang style. The four artists were aware of Bali’s special place in the hearts of artists like Le



Chen Chong Swee, *Southern Islanders*. 1970. Chinese ink and colour on paper. 70 x 94 cm. Private collection.



Chen Chong Swee, *Fishing Village*. 1981. Chinese ink and colour on paper. 102 x 70 cm. Private collection.

Mayeur; Chen Chong Swee wrote about Le Mayeur's exhibition in Singapore in 1938. The spotlight on Bali as a Holy Grail of sorts in the quest for the "Nanyang" in art, shifted to Malaysia in the 1960s. Bali was sought after, but it was also costly to travel there; second-generations artists who aspired towards the Nanyang style found it more economical to travel to Malaysia.

In a way, the "Nanyang" art of the sixties and seventies acts as a mirror, catching reflections of the responses by artists and the community to dramatic political changes on both sides of the Strait. Singapore's relationship with Malaysia was being dramatically reconfigured. In Singaporean artists' representations of Malaysian fishing village life during that time, there is no shadow of separation; "Nanyang" continues to encompass the nations of Singapore and Malaysia, uniting them through nostalgia and new works of art. On their visits to fishing villages on the east coast of Malaysia and other nearby places in the 1960s and 1970s, the artists were attracted by sights that no longer existed in Singapore due to its rapid industrialisation. Chen Chong Swee had painted the fishing villages in the west coast of Singapore in the 1960s, for example in *Singapore West Coast* (1962). However, the development of the west coast led to the disappearance of these scenes and the artist began to travel to the east coast of Malaysia, often accompanied by his students such as Tan Teo Kwang (personal communication in Mandarin with Chen Chi Sing, 21 January 2011). In the colophon of his painting, *South Islanders* (1970), Chen Chong Swee celebrates the peace and harmony of village life in the Southern Islands:

The fisher folk live in simple joy and harmony
 No cars, no dust, no noise
 One might ask if civilisation brings any good
 The question persists, and this picture was made
 (Chen, 2010/Trans. Yeo, 2011)

In another painting, *Fishing Village* (1981), the title in Chinese literally translates as "Happy Fishing Picture"; the first two characters "渔乐" (*yule*) have the same sound as the characters for recreation "娱乐", a pun expressing Chen Chong Swee's appreciation of the leisurely and relaxed pace of life in Kota Bahru. In the foreground fishes are laid out to dry.



Cheong Soo Pieng, *Drying Salted Fish*. 1978. Chinese ink and watercolour on cloth. 55.5 x 88.5 cm. Collection of National Heritage Board, Singapore.

Born in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s, these artists grew up knowing Singapore as part of Malaya. Scenes of drying fish were common in Malaysia, a familiar familiar country, a place that was as homely as Singapore during the artists' childhood. By the mid eighties, the appeal of the subject had begun to fade. However, the selection of Cheong Soo Pieng's painting *Drying Salted Fish* (1978), featuring a scene from Trengganu, as part of the re-design of the Singapore fifty-dollar note in 1999 seemed to be a silent acknowledgement that Singapore had once been part of Malaya.

"Nanyang": Phenomenology

The "south" (南, *nan*) in "Nanyang" refers to coordinates taken from the perspective of China. The term gestures towards an Elsewhere situated south from the mainland, serving as a catch-all for a region made up of diverse cultures and communities. The artists who pursued the Nanyang style were not unaware of the cultural richness and diversity of their region. The genesis of the Nanyang style is seeded upon awareness and openness to difference: the different light in the tropics; the different colours of other races in their skin tones and dress; the different hues, forms, and textures of tropical plants and fruits. As first-generation artist Liu Kang put it:

We live at the equator where there is strong sunlight, lush vegetation, and varied and exciting ways of living. Such materials are suited for portrayal in forceful colours and with robust lines. In addition, the work of some artists is permeated with the stylised shapes of modern art, enabling their styles to be completely transformed. The batik artists' elevation of a craft into fine art, thus giving it a new lease of life, is a contribution that we should be proud of. (Liu, 1969/ Trans. Tan, 2011).

Even as the artists appreciated the simple pleasures of the villagers' lives, they were acutely conscious of their differences from the fisher folk. Tay Boon Pin recalls that the villagers lived in huts without tiled flooring and that their meals were very basic (personal communication in Mandarin with Tay Boon Pin, 28 December 2010). The world of simple fishing folk, the tough conditions of their lives, scenes of physical labour — these landscapes retain their visibility in works by artists who were themselves employed in white-collar professions and lived in the urban city-state of Singapore.



Singapore banknote in fifty-dollar denomination from the Portrait Series (reverse). Note inset of Cheong Soo Pieng's *Drying Salted Fish*.



Lim Tze Peng, *Morning by the Beach*. 1973. Ink and colour pigments on paper. 67.6 x 67.6 cm. Collection of National Heritage Board, Singapore.

Standing in front of the pictures set in fishing villages, the spectator is confronted by this other world that is deemed characteristically “Nanyang” despite its distance and disparity from the artists’ everyday life. “Nanyang” connotes an aesthetic sensibility and sensory impressions that are tied to the artists’ sense of a particular type of society and culture in the tropics. An openness to natural, cultural, and social environments that were at a remove from the alienation and pollution of modern city life — in other words, the embracing of another possible way of life in the tropics — underpinned the artists’ commitment to the Nanyang style. They opened not only their eyes, but also their hearts and minds to transporting the world of “Nanyang” into art.

The sense of sight is, of course, primary in the spectator’s encounter with a painting. Yet the artist’s encounter with his or her subject cannot be exclusively visual: there are also the other senses, shaping and informing the artist’s experience. Of course there was a fundamentally visual impact in many

key aspects of the environment found in the Malaysian fishing villages. The artists were enthralled by the striking design and structure of the fishing boats. Another popular subject was that of the fishermen mending or drying their nets. The wooden *kelong* structures on which fishermen and their families lived as well as worked lent themselves to renderings of “beautiful lines” (personal communication with Lim Tze Peng in Mandarin, 5 January 2011).

When the artists travelled out of Singapore, they went in search of new inspiration, for fresh air, as it were. As Chen Cheng Mei (also known as Tan Seah Boey) put it, “We were looking for new subject matter ... artists have to see the world and learn from the world.” (personal communication with Chen Cheng Mei, 21 January 2011). The artists paid attention to every aspect of village life by the sea, spending days and nights in this environment; this is recounted in interviews and also evident from their sketches. Yet it has to be said that the attraction of the drying fish subject is curious: not only were the artists not deterred by the terrible odour emanating from the fish, they



Chen Cheng Mei (Tan Seah Boey), *Drying Fishes*, Kota Bahru. 1977. Oil on canvas. 76 x 117 cm. Collection of family of Chen Cheng Mei.

were also not put off by the negative association — in idiomatic Cantonese — of salted fish with death and misfortune. While the artists can be said to have responded with enthusiasm to the pictorial opportunities availed by the spectacle of many fish hung up or laid on the ground, the etymology of inspiration as something that is breathed in (from the Latin *spirare*) also comes into play. The drying of salted fish provided the artists with an intense olfactory experience.

It was not a pleasant smell. Lim Tze Peng remembers the unbearable odour emanating from the huts used for the cleaning of the fish:

[In the huts] where they killed the fish, the next day the fish would have started to decompose, and the discarded fish heads and organs, the fishy water, all these would be all over the floor. I did not dare to enter those huts. The smell was horrible. (personal communication in Mandarin with Lim Tze Peng, 5 January 2011)

Yeh Chi Wei wrote about the nauseating odour of drying salted



Tay Boon Pin, untitled sketch. 1967. Ink and oil pastel on paper. 34 x 23 cm. Artist’s collection.



Thomas Yeo, *Gathering Dry Fishes*, 1960. Watercolour on paper. 49 x 54 cm. Collection of National Heritage Board, Singapore.

fish that permeated the air during the Ten Men Art Group's first sketching trip to the east coast of Malaya in 1961. The artists spent their days sketching outdoors in the fishing villages, undeterred by the relentless heat and glare of the sun, and the stench:

Every morning, before it was light, the ten of us — hearts fired up with sincerity, bodies refreshed and energised for the day ahead and the sights around us — we would set to work on our sketches. The piercing and unforgiving rays of the afternoon sun burnt our skin; the stench of salted fish permeated the air, making us feel nauseous. Yet out of pure love and passion for painting, all of us pressed on, working ceaselessly, immersed in our drawings until the light dimmed at dusk. Only then did our work stop, and we went back to rest, dragging our spent bodies. (Yeh, 1961/Trans. Yeo, 2010a).

Tay Boon Pin recounts that before the fish were dried, they had to be cleaned, their heads and organs removed. The fish would then be soaked in salted water for a few days before they were hung or laid out for drying under the sun. Apart from the stench, there were many flies buzzing around the fish (personal communication in Mandarin with Tay Boon Pin, 28 December 2010).

The point that is being made here is not that an awful, nauseating odour inspired all these works. Rather, there is an implicit reminder of the nature of transport that art-making affords and entails; a transcending of harsh or uncomfortable conditions in which the artists worked. As Thomas Yeo put it, "The appeal is not the smell. Your brain is not thinking of the smell. Your brain is concentrating on the subject matter. That is the priority." (personal communication with Thomas Yeo, 24 January 2011).

To transcend the physical conditions of art-making is not to detach oneself from the object, but to be immersed deeply within it and to thus express what is "seen" from that position. For Lim Tze Peng, the representation of smell can be an indication of an artist's deep understanding of his or her subject — phenomenological understanding. Mr Lim praised the still life paintings of Georgette Chen, Singapore's most renowned first generation woman artist, in these terms; he also drew a parallel

with his own paintings of salted fish:

To paint well, an artist has to do more than make the subject look like the object that inspired it; he also has to paint its smell. Take Georgette Chen, for instance. Her paintings of waxed meats, waxed sausages and waxed ducks ... from her paintings one can almost catch a whiff of their aroma ... When I drew salted fish, I also had this sensation. (personal communication with Lim Tze Peng in Mandarin, 5 January 2011).

Speaking of Cezanne's achievement in his still-life paintings of apples, Lim referred to the French artist's ability to render smell through these works:

I read in a book about [Cezanne's] drawing of apples. He drew the same apples over and over again; only when the apples started to go off, did he replace them with new ones. He worked hard at drawing apples, until his apples not only looked like apples, they smelled like apples too. This is impressive. This is why his works are not superficial; there is profound meaning in them, there is deep inner beauty. This is why his works have an enduring appeal, calling you to look at them again and again. I have a lot of respect for him, among Western painters." (personal communication with Lim Tze Peng in Mandarin, 18 January 2011).

"Nanyang": Mythologies

Nostalgia and phenomenological fullness have been explored above as layers of significance in the Nanyang style. Yet the common ground yielded not a single result but much variety. The monolithic univocality of the "Nanyang Style" is specious; it is more appropriate to speak of Nanyang styles. Surveying the drying fish works reveals the singularity of each artist's approach toward a shared subject matter. Cheong Soo Pieng's *Drying Salted Fish* (1978) reflects the influence of Song dynasty painting



Lim Tze Peng, *Untitled, Women Drying Squid*, 1960. Watercolour on paper. 49 x 54 cm. Collection of National Heritage Board, Singapore.



the “Nanyang”. The title is poignant. The sun had already set for Malaya, an obsolete referent in 1968 when this work was made. The dominant hue in the backdrop is a warm orange, like the light of a setting sun at dusk. It gestures, perhaps, to an analogy: the ending of a day with the ending of an era.

The phenomenological fullness of experience that is captured in art is also exemplified by the images Seah has depicted, images that relate the ways in which life captivates through much more than the sense of sight. Smell, touch, hearing — all these are evoked. The scene of drying fish stretches across the background of three of the five panels, making it

on the artist in his later years; the foliage in the foreground bears a striking resemblance to the Song painter Ma Hezhi’s depiction of leaves (Yeo, 2010b). With their elongated arms and rounded eyebrows, the female figures are also characteristic of Cheong’s decorative phase in the late seventies and early eighties.

These works by Chen Chong Swee and Shui Tit Sing were the result of a group trip to Trengganu in 1961. Their distinct ways of handling the same subject resulted in distinctive art works. There are two different representations of time or chronology in these two works. In Shui Tit Sing’s oil painting, four different stages of preparing salted fish are assembled in the four sections. The figures are flat, rendered in a naive manner; coupled with the use of colours in the painting, it bears a resemblance to folk art. Life passes in repeated cycles, represented by the clockwise sequence of tableaux — the fishermen return, the women clean the fish, the fish are laid out or hung to dry; there is nothing new under the sun. The Chen Chong Swee watercolour, on the other hand, is a representation of an impression, of a scene of communal labour witnessed with sympathy and portrayed as such. Although the features of their faces are not clear, the figures are not depicted as anonymous or homogenous; each bent back is laden with the weight of each person’s individual consciousness, personal hopes and worries, and memories both happy and sad. Time passes in daily routines, mundane activities and chores, yet it passes differently for each of us, in the minutiae of inner thoughts and feelings, in the vagaries and vicissitudes of every individual life. Chen’s works carry this signature sense of storytelling, of narratives coursing through a scene; his is a way of seeing that delves beyond observations of surface scenic attractions to suggest the pulse and eventfulness of life.

A shared nostalgia, a shared longing, the phenomenological experience of life and art, the individual artistic will and vision: all these layers of the Nanyang style come together in Seah Kim Joo’s *Malayan Life* (1968). Almost seven metres long and over two and a half metres tall, the entire work consists of five panels of batik painting, offering a visual feast of aspects of

probably the largest rendering of the subject around. On the second and third panels, villagers with upturned faces toward the hanging fishes seem to be inhaling deeply; three of them reach out their hands to hold or touch the fish. It is also curious that the artist includes the durian in the work, a fruit known for its overwhelming fragrance or pungent odour, the perception of which dependent on one’s preference. In the right bottom corner of the second panel, a small Malay boy has his head bent over a durian held between his palms, with an expression that resembles that of durian sellers who hold the fruit in exactly this manner and smell it to see if it is ripe.



Chen Chong Swee, *Drying Fish*. 1961. Oil on canvas. 60 x 96 cm. Private collection.



Seah Kim Joo, *Malayan Life*. 1968. Batik on cloth. 5 panels. 694 x 256 cm. Collection of LASALLE College of the Arts.

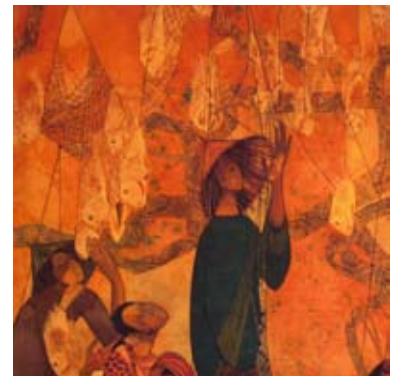
The work is a phantasmagorical amalgamation of various aspects of life in different parts of rural Malaysia. Dayaks, an indigenous people from Borneo, are represented on the fourth and fifth panels in a riverside setting. One of them plays a musical instrument while the others stalk prey with their hunting implements at the ready. Birds are found on every panel: fluttering pigeons, flying canards, egrets, a rooster, an owl. Other animals include an ox and deer. The effect is of enchantment: recognisable ordinary features of the simple rural life are transformed into jigsaw pieces that fit together

in a magical narrative, a picture of humankind and nature in harmony, the teeming tuneful life when all senses are awakened, unjaded. Everything is connected, even as they maintain their distinct form and function. Culture and nature are merged. The lines on which the fish are hung extend from the fishing net lines, but they are also the lines of string that bind flying birds to villagers; they are also

among her many proponents as well as their shared values and concerns. The mythologies of “Nanyang” that emerge from these artworks have become historical: the works themselves are a chronicle of a past time and past sentiments. As a chapter in Singapore art history, they demonstrate the surprise element that is characteristic of creativity, when something new is born out of the known. Who would have imagined that the scene of drying fish in humble fishing villages, the making of salted fish, a common and humble foodstuff, could be a source of inspiration for so many artists? Sometimes, art does not require the sublime for its subject, nor are its expressions confined to the lofty. The artworks have outlasted, and continue to outlive, the fish they portray. ■



Detail from the second panel. Seah Kim Joo, *Malayan Life*. 1968. Batik on cloth. Collection of LASALLE College of the Arts.



Detail from the third panel. Seah Kim Joo, *Malayan Life*. 1968. Batik on cloth. Collection of LASALLE College of the Arts.

the lines of string that make the solitary wayang kulit figure on the first panel dance.

Studying the representations of drying fish leads to a re-examination of the Nanyang style, to a reminder of the difference

The writer wishes to thank Chen Cheng Mei, Chen Chi Sing, Tan Wee Lee, Cheong Leng Guat, Huang Kaiquan, Koh Nguang How, LASALLE College of the Arts, Bryan Law, Lim Tze Peng, Charmaine Oon, Sara Siew, Tay Boon Pin, Rofan Teo, Xu Qingzhao, Wang Zineng and Thomas Yeo, for their assistance.

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Popular Music in 1960s Singapore

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From the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Singapore experienced a period of significant political and social change. The year 1959 marked the start of self-government for Singapore and the formation of the People's Action Party government. These political developments coincided with a flourishing English music scene that had developed with the introduction of popular music influences from abroad such as American rock 'n' roll and British pop. This article traces the growth of English popular music in 1960s Singapore and the formation of local bands that became famous for their versions of British and American songs as well as original compositions that featured a unique blend of Western and Asian influences. The article also outlines the impact of nation building on the music scene, and the eventual decline of the music scene by the early 1970s.

Influences from the West

The early 1950s ushered in a marked change in the sound of English popular music. Les Paul invented the first solid-body electric guitar for the Gibson Guitar Company in 1952, while Leo Fender invented the Stratocaster guitar the following year. Both inventions produced the distinctive electric guitar sound that marked popular music in the decades that followed. In 1953, "Crazy Man Crazy" by Bill Haley became the first rock 'n' roll single to enter the Billboard charts, taking America by storm. Subsequent years saw the emergence of music stars like Chuck Berry, the Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Cliff Richard (who was seen as the British version of Presley).

Radio was crucial in introducing these new musical influences to Singapore. By the mid-1950s, Radio Malaya programmes such as *Music of Les Paul*, *Radio Dance Club* and *Music Shop Review* were bringing the sounds of jazz, swing and rhythm 'n' blues from the USA to Singapore. The Rediffusion radio service began playing the occasional rock 'n' roll single on its *Platter Parade* programme.¹ However, it was only when *Rock Around the Clock* — the film featuring Bill Haley and the Comets' signature tune of the same title — premiered at the Rex Theatre on 16 September 1956 that local audiences took notice. The film was enthusiastically received by an audience of 1,400, many of whom were British servicemen already familiar with the sounds of rock 'n' roll.²

1959 brought historic changes for Singapore. On 5 January, Radio Singapore replaced the Pan-Malayan Broadcasting Department. Several months later,

the People's Action Party (PAP) swept to power in the 30 May general election. Convinced that Singapore's survival depended on Malaya, the new government began a push for Singapore to merge with Malaya.³ As part of the creation of a Malayan nation, the need to create a unified "Malayan culture" quickly became a priority for the new government.⁴ Believing that this nascent Malayan identity was threatened by degenerate cultural influences from the West, the government introduced prohibitions to eliminate

Image not available

agents of “yellow culture” (a term referring to delinquent and decadent behaviour commonly found in the West).⁵ Within barely a fortnight of the PAP’s electoral victory, Minister for Culture S. Rajaratnam announced that Radio Singapore programming would eschew rock ‘n’ roll and sentimental music in favour of “serious programmes with a Malayan emphasis”.⁶ Jukeboxes, which city councillors had banned from coffeeshops were now banned island-wide, and pin-table saloons were outlawed soon after. The following year, the government ordered Rediffusion to stop broadcasting all rock ‘n’ roll music.⁷

A Turning Point

Against this backdrop of official disapproval of popular forms of culture, Cliff Richard and The Shadows performed in Singapore in November 1961. Enthusiastic audiences of up to 20,000 turned up for the performances on 16, 19 and 20 November.

Prior to this, youths in Singapore had listened to British and American music only on the radio and on records. Watching their idols perform in person excited these young fans in a way that radio had been unable to do. Other foreign acts performed in Singapore in the 1960s, but the Cliff Richard performances were considered a turning point, spawning a host of imitators as these youths began forming bands in the early 1960s.⁸ As Reggie Verghese of The Quests (arguably the most successful Singapore band of that decade) put it, “I was hooked. All I wanted to do was play like them, and nothing was going to stop me from playing music.”⁹ One of the most striking traits of these new bands was the young age of their members, often of school-going age and still in their teens. Bands were usually formed by classmates or friends with musical interest or knowledge. Initially neighbours, the four members of The Quests were between 13 and 14 years of age when the band formed in 1961. Two of the members, Jap Chong and Raymond Leong, were schoolmates at Queenstown Secondary Technical School.¹⁰ Susan Lim was 14 years old and attending the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus when she began singing with The Crescendos in 1963. She was a friend of one of



Cover of 45 RPM EP *I'm the Loser* (1966) by Naomi and The Boys. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

the band members’ sisters.¹¹ Siva Choy, a pioneer blues musician, began performing with his brother James in 1957 when he was just 10 years old. They were performing as The Cyclones by the time Choy was 15.¹² As Jerry Fernandez of The New Faces noted, “Bands came and went like moths. You [were] invited to join in a group by a classmate, friend or neighbour and you enjoyed the ride while it lasted.”¹³ Likewise, Vernon Cornelius, former frontman of The Trailers and The Quests, said, “We were all young and we had nothing to lose.”¹⁴

These bands formed on the basis of their mutual attraction to popular music rather than any notion of fame or fortune. The excitement of playing in a band was a reward in itself, even if they were not paid for the effort. Said Choy, “We were given only \$50 for transport, which we didn’t always receive, but we didn’t mind. Money didn’t matter then.”¹⁵ Henry Chua, bassist of The Quests, recalled the thrill of the band’s first paid gig: “We were rewarded with the princely sum of \$20 to be shared among us. We felt rich. I never had more than 20 cents in my pocket in those lean days. That was the first time in my life that I really got paid for something I did.”¹⁶

Many aspiring musicians of that era did not have formal training in reading music or playing instruments; many were self-taught and picked up music skills through trial and error, imitation, practice, and experience. Chris Vadham of the Western Union Band remembered learning to play the guitar from a music book.¹⁷ Henry Chua recalled the hours that band members spent listening to records, trying to work out the individual parts of songs. He had no musical training and learned his first two guitar chords from Jap Chong. Through regular practice, he taught himself to count bars, write chord charts



Artefacts from *Retrospin: Sounds of Singapore, 1950s– 1990s*, a 1996 exhibition. Left to right: picture of Cliff Richard, programme from Cliff Richard and The Shadows’ concert, and a flyer for *Take Me High*, playing at the Rex Theatre. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



programmes such as *Pop Inn*, which featured good local bands and singers as well as visiting acts, accelerated the popularity of these local bands. The Quests were one of the acts that appeared regularly on *Pop Inn*, which helped them to establish visibility in the public eye.

The recording industry in Singapore, which had been growing steadily for some years, registered significant growth during this period. A number of local bands signed contracts with recording companies and went on to release albums that did very well on the local music charts. While many albums contained cover versions of British and American songs, in some cases the cover versions outsold the original versions by foreign acts. In 1961, Susan Lim and The Crescendos signed on with Philips International, becoming the first Singapore group to sign a contract with an international record label, paving the way for other local bands. They released their first single in 1963, a cover version of “Mr Twister” that sold more than 10,000 copies on the local market, outstripping even the original version of the song by Connie Francis.²⁴

and, eventually, to play the bass guitar.¹⁸

Initially unable to afford musical instruments and other equipment, these young musicians had to improvise. While practising for their first paid performance, The Quests created drumsticks from oversized pencils and a guitar from a biscuit tin strung with rubber bands.¹⁹ Equipment such as amplifiers was either homemade or borrowed. Siva Choy noted, “[In] those days, if you had a good amplifier, the chances of being asked to join a band were very good.”²⁰

The frequent movement of members between bands meant that bands were occasionally short of someone to play a particular instrument. In keeping with the improvisational spirit of the time, many musicians were versatile and could play more than one instrument, which enabled band members to fill in for each other. When The Trailers thought to add a brass sound to their music in 1967, guitarists Victor Woo and Eric Tan did not have to spend much time learning to play the saxophone before introducing it in the song “Peter Gunn”, with Woo and Tan on saxophones while rhythm guitarist Edmund Tan filled in on the bass.²¹ Jerry Fernandez also recalled that members of The New Faces could “double up for one another ... This versatility came in handy as it added to the quality of our show. We used to wow the audience when we suddenly switched from one instrument to the next.”²²

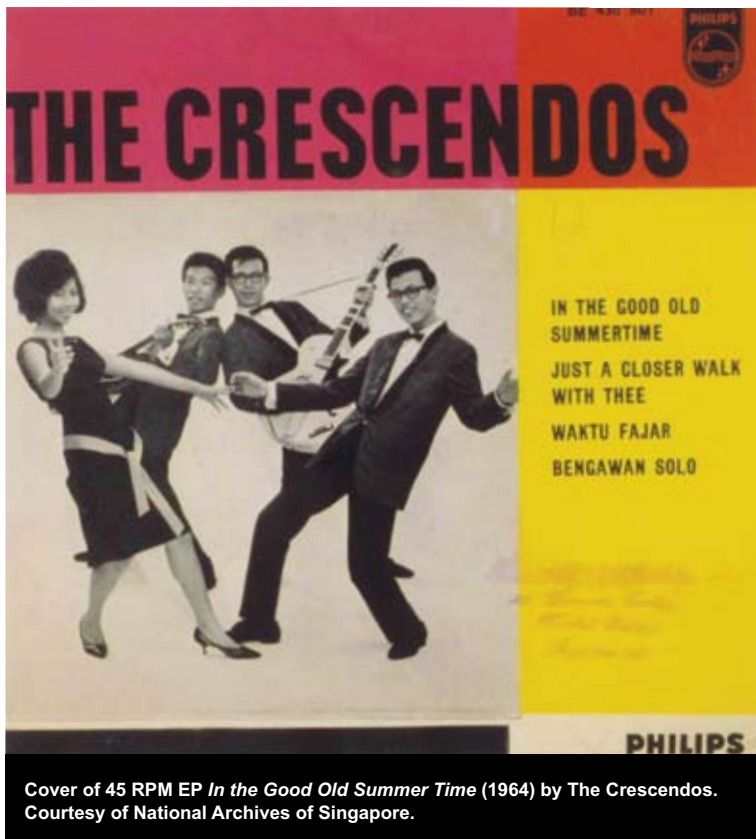
Television and the Recording Industry

In 1963, The Beatles burst onto the music scene, marking the start of what was dubbed the British Invasion, and the phenomenon of fan hysteria known as Beatlemania. Television entered Singapore homes and from the start played a significant role in promoting local music talent. By 1966, Economic Development Board chairman Hon Sui Sen estimated that one in every six households in Singapore owned a television set.²³ People also had access to televisions at community centres. Television and

Local bands, however, recognised that in order to differentiate themselves from foreign acts, they had to satisfy fans’ demands for the latest hit songs from abroad as well as come up with original material. In what seemed to be a triumph for the development of Malayan culture in Singapore, many albums containing original



The Trailers Postcard. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



Cover of 45 RPM EP *In the Good Old Summer Time* (1964) by The Crescendos. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

material were commercial successes, and it was not uncommon for albums to sell thousands of copies. The Crescendos' 1963 release *The Boy Next Door* sold more than 10,000 copies, entered the Philips World Top Ten list, and is considered one of the band's signature tunes.²⁵ In 1964, *Shanty*, the song for which The Quests are still remembered, became the first song by a local band to top the Singapore charts, where it stayed for 12 weeks — displacing The Beatles who had been at No. 1.²⁶ The Trailers replicated this feat in 1966 when their first single, "Do It Right", knocked The Beatles off the top of the local charts, and spent seven weeks at No. 1. The song stayed on the charts for a record-breaking total of 14 consecutive weeks and sold 15,000 copies.²⁷

A number of these songs were a unique blend of Western and Asian influences. While many bands sang in English, they also recorded songs in Mandarin or Malay and introduced Asian musical instruments in their song arrangements. Susan Lim and The Crescendos recorded Malay songs such as "Lenggang Kangkong" and "Waktu Fajar", and the traditional Indonesian favourite "Bengawan Solo". One of The Trailers' biggest hits was "Phoenix Theme", an instrumental rendition of a popular Chinese New Year tune, from their 1967 Chinese album that also included Taiwanese folk song "Alisan".²⁸

At the height of their popularity, and in the absence of appearances by bands from the West, local bands were in demand to perform at dance halls and private parties, on radio and television, and at large venues such as the Singapore Badminton Hall and the National Theatre. Due to the presence of British servicemen in Singapore, they were also asked to perform at military camps, mess halls and servicemen's clubs. Nightclubs such as the Golden Venus at Orchard Hotel began hiring well-known bands on contract because

such resident bands were able to draw large crowds due to their fan base, especially on weekends.

These bands also became well known outside of Singapore and received invitations to perform abroad. Some bands went on tour to Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Hysterical fans greeted the bands, and their appearances in some places caused near riots. When The Quests toured East Malaysia in 1966, for instance, they were the biggest act to have appeared in that part of the country at the time and they received an overwhelming reception. The band was mobbed by fans, and during their performances, the music could barely be heard above the screams from the audience.²⁹

The Decline of Popular Music

The close of the 1960s saw the decline of the local music scene for several reasons. Self-governance in 1959 eventually led to the phased withdrawal of British forces from Singapore, beginning in the late 1960s. With the decrease in British troops, there was a corresponding decline in demand for local bands to perform at British military bases.

In anticipation of the British withdrawal, the Singapore government began to pursue foreign investment and develop new industries in the early 1960s. The unexpected separation from Malaysia and independence in 1965 accelerated this political and socio-economic transition. By the late 1960s, economic survival and the needs of the developing economy had become the imperatives that drove much of the government's agenda, and citizens were called upon to support these national priorities through their contribution to economic growth. This drive to build a new economy extended to areas such as education; Education Minister Ong Pang Boon, for instance, urged



Cover of 45 RPM Single *Tea Break/Pop Inn Theme (Watch Your Step)* (1965) by the Quests. Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.

parents to put their children into secondary education with a vocational emphasis in order to support Singapore's drive to industrialise by creating skilled workers.³⁰

The creation of a new economy was accompanied by the moulding of a new society. While anti-yellow culture measures in the early 1960s had reduced external influences and enabled the number of bands producing original music with local influences to grow, the anti-yellow campaign began to have a negative impact by the late 1960s. The government regarded local music as being heavily influenced by the West and, by this time, associated it with a culture of drug use and disorderliness. Men were banned from sporting long hair, and police patrols scoured clubs on Orchard Road, issuing warnings to musicians whose hair was considered too long. The ruling also applied to foreign acts performing in Singapore — Cliff Richard, slated to perform in Singapore in 1972, refused to cut his hair and was therefore not allowed to enter the country. In 1973, the government closed down six discos, including popular ones such as the Boilerroom, Pink Pussycat and Barbarella, and instituted restrictions on all remaining discos. These included a ban on alcohol and the denial of entry to men with long hair.³¹

In this new era of industrialisation, musicians who had established successful bands in their teens were also reaching a new stage in life. They had spent much of the 1960s juggling school and music and then jobs and music, but they were now in their twenties and in search of a more stable and financially secure future. With the dwindling of the expatriate audience that had made the music scene economically viable as well as the rising number of social restrictions and the pressure to be useful members of society, these young musicians found themselves at a crossroads. They began to regard their situation as increasingly untenable, and most eventually bowed to the pressure. Henry Chua documents The Quests' fatigue by the

late 1960s, and the feeling that they had reached a pinnacle where there was nothing more to be achieved.³² At the same time, he was concerned about the long-term prospects of a musician's life and chose to leave the band in 1967 to pursue an engineering career. Reggie Verghese, for his part, "knew that music alone wasn't enough ... I had a fear that it wasn't going to last".³³ Victor Woo of The Trailers completed his computer science examinations in 1967 and later became a company executive, leaving the band in 1970. The Trailers gave up recording albums by 1972 and were defunct by the mid-1970s.³⁴ The early 1970s saw the disbanding of other groups such as the Bee Jays, Mandarins, Flybaits and Fried Ice.³⁵

Some of these pioneers of Singapore popular music continued to make their livelihoods in the music industry. Other 1960s musicians took up day jobs outside the industry and stayed in touch with music by taking on alternate night jobs playing music in hotel lounges and bars. Some even attempted a comeback. Vernon Cornelius, one-time frontman of The Quests, Eric Tan, former bassist of The Trailers, and several other musicians formed The Overheads in 1989 and released an album that gained modest but short-lived success.

Unlike these stalwarts, however, most other musicians simply grew older, lost touch with music and faded into history. While it is difficult to say whether the once-lively music industry would have been sustainable beyond the 1960s, it is certainly true that since then, local musicians have found it difficult to achieve the same level of popularity, support and commercial success that came so readily during those golden years. ■

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Dr Mark Emmanuel, Department of History, National University of Singapore in reviewing this article.

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Undiscovered Spaces

An Interview With Boo Junfeng

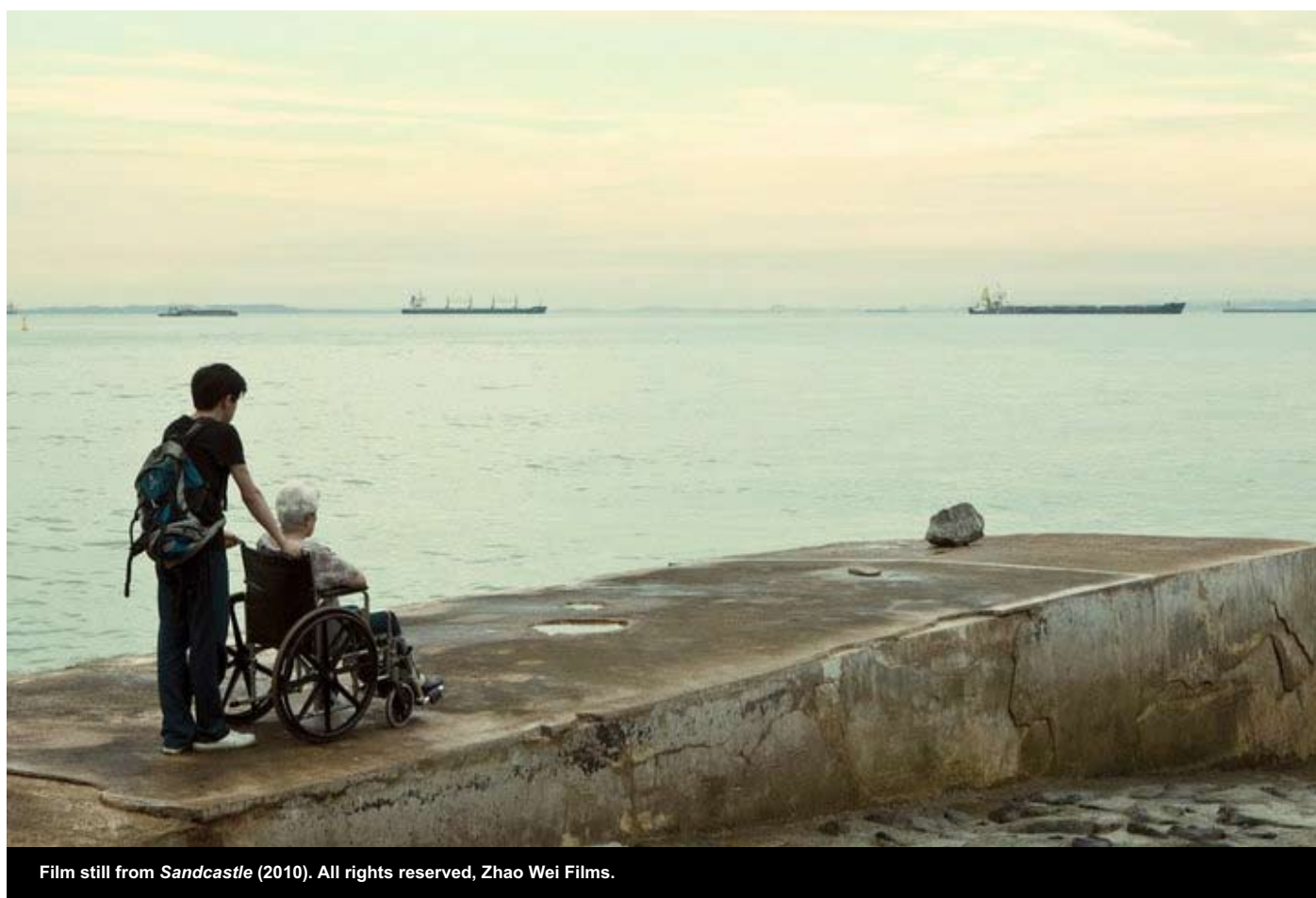
By Jennifer Lew
Research Associate
Government & Business
Information Services
National Library



His debut feature film *Sandcastle* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival's 49th International Critics' Week — a first for Singapore cinema and was the landslide winner of Best Feature Film, Best Director and the NETPAC Jury Prize at the inaugural Vietnam International Film Festival. The film was shown in Pusan, London, Chicago, Vancouver, Toronto, Hong Kong and Paris at some of the world's most prestigious international film festivals. A retrospective of his short film works resulted in five sold-out screenings at a commercial cineplex. And that is just what filmmaker Boo Junfeng has achieved last year alone.

On 26 August 2010, *Sandcastle*, his highly anticipated first feature opened in Singapore to a warm reception from public and critics alike. The subsequent media coverage dubbed Boo as the face of a new generation of auteurs, traced the swath he cut through the film festival circuit, and paused on occasion to muse on his rare sensitivity, prolific body of work in the short film medium, and his youth.

Lesser known, however, is the period of quiet study that marked the research that went into this history-rich cinematic work. We caught up with Boo during a brief window of time between festivals in Toronto and London, where we talked about history, the National Library and the research process behind the making of *Sandcastle*.



Film still from *Sandcastle* (2010). All rights reserved, Zhao Wei Films.

In your own words, tell us what *Sandcastle* is about.

Sandcastle is a coming-of-age story about a boy who witnesses his grandmother slipping into dementia and has to take care of her. At the same time, he discovers that his late father used to be a student activist in the 50s and 60s and that shakes his sense of identity. So [the character] starts to question his family background and who he is.

Tell us about the kind of research you did for *Sandcastle*.

I had three main sources for research: the National Library, the National Archives and some personal interviews that I came across. I realised that many of the facts were readily available, but I was more interested in testimonials that would give me a hint of the things that went through the minds of the students and activists of the past.

When I made cold calls to some of these former activists, they didn't want to talk to me because they didn't know who I was, and it was still a very sensitive subject for them. Eventually, I managed to speak with the son of a former leader and he told me what his childhood was like, what he had to go through, the people he got to know and things like that. That gave me an idea of what the activist community was like. Another former activist whom I spoke with said, "All I have to say about that period is already documented *Tangent*, and you can find it in the library."

So I went to look for it and I found a periodical with articles and interviews relating to issues that the Chinese-educated encountered, and what was great about this publication is that it was bilingual. It was written in Chinese but was accompanied by an English translation. As someone who takes a whole week to read one article [in mandarin], it was very, very helpful. I understood a comprehensive interview in just a three-minute-read, and I took away something insightful: how this activist felt about the past.

What was the difference between what you intended to study and what you discovered?

I had to understand where most academics are coming from and what kinds of views there are with regard to this subject. We understand the official narrative of history, but there is this alternative version that most of us don't know of. So through some of this academic research I could see where the academic community and historians stand, and from there I found a perspective that reflected a wider spectrum of truth. Because the film is about questioning, and because it questions, it needs to offer these other various perspectives.

To probe further in that direction, would you say that in questioning history you are commemorating memory?



Director Boo Junfeng and actors Bobbi Chen and Joshua Tan at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. Courtesy of Cannes Film Festival, International Critics' Week.

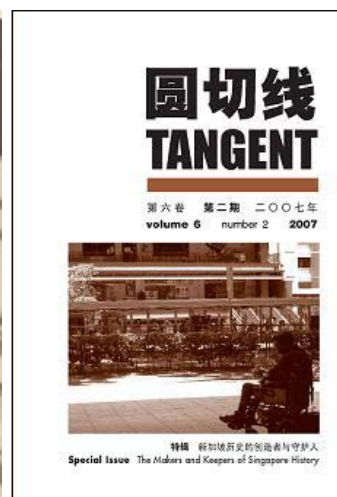
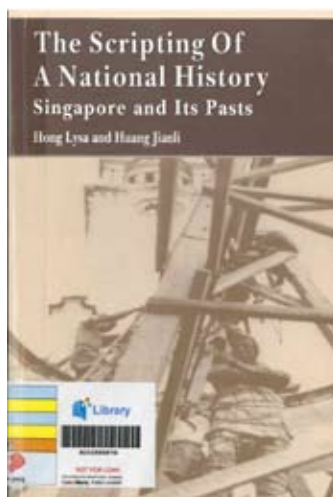
I think this show *is* about memory. There's a reason why I parallel a woman's involuntary loss of memory with her daughter-in-law's voluntary loss of memory, and through these personal memories I present a larger collective memory and social memory. The film is about memory and how transient and mutable it can be.

Do you see your film as a documentation of memories, especially given the strong historical context that is quite specific to Singapore?

Sandcastle is a work of fiction, and what fiction can do is not simply document, but also evoke. If the film is successful, what I hope it evokes are these questions about memory and history. Through the story of one family's memories and a boy's desire to find out more about these histories and memories, we ourselves question this bigger idea of identity. We have been glorifying one side of the truth — what about the other side? It's all about questions.

How did the National Library assist you in contextualising the historical element of the fictional works you create?

I really like working on Level 11 because of the amount of space that is there. I am someone who cannot be bound when



Left: All rights reserved, Hong Kong University Press. 2008
Right: All rights reserved, The Tangent. 2007



Boo plans a scene with cinematographer Sharon Loh on the set of *Sandcastle*. Courtesy of Boo Junfeng.



Film still from *Sandcastle* (2010). All rights reserved, Zhao Wei Films.

I am thinking; I need to be in a big open space. So it was always a suitable environment for me to work in, especially when I was working on *Tanjong Rhu* [an earlier short film] and my accompanying thesis about the representation of gay characters in Singapore film. It so happened that the Singapore and Southeast Asian collections were on Level 11. I wrote much of the script for *Sandcastle* at Level 11, basing my research mainly on some of the publications in the Singapore and Southeast Asian collections, such as *Tangent* and *The Scripting of A National History* by Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli. These allowed me to understand the

issues that the academic community and local historians have been writing and thinking about.

How do you think research as a whole contributes to the creative process, which is thought of as more intuitive, and how does it mesh together for you?

We may take creative license when certain facts may not fit our creative agenda, but I always feel safer when I have enough knowledge of the subject matter. There are

Two awards for Singapore film

Best Actress prize went to Nhật Kim Anh of Việt Nam and Fiona Sit of Hongkong

HÀ NỘI — The Singaporean film, *Sand Castle*, won Best Feature Film and Best Director at the Việt Nam International Film Festival in Hà Nội which concluded last night.

Sand Castle tells the story of a family in Singapore which head of the jury board Australian director Phillip Noyce says represented many families and described a period in the country's history.

Ten films in the "In Competition Programme", with various styles and genres, from eight countries in East and Southeast Asia, created a portrait of special and modern societies and helped draw international filmmakers to the region, Noyce says.

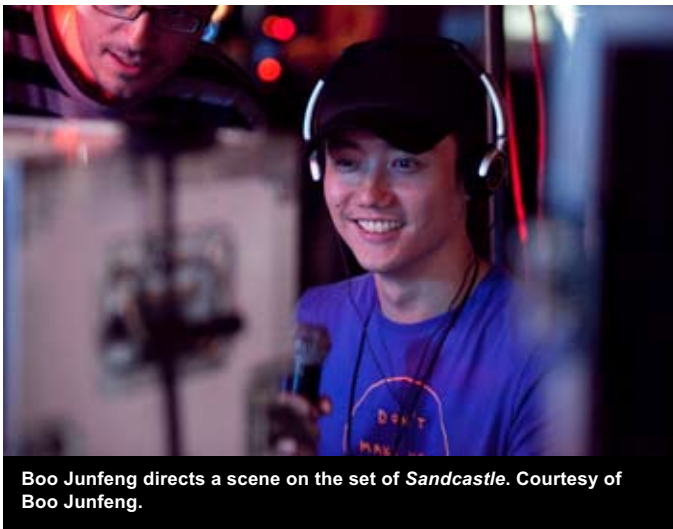
"Five days of screenings allowed us to view the finest of new Asian, Vietnamese and French films, while also affording an overview of independent contemporary cinema."

The jury for feature films gathered filmmakers, including Francoise Catonne from France, Marco Mueller from Italy, Kang Soo-yeon from South Korea and



All smiles: Singaporean film *Sand Castle* won prizes for Best Feature Film and Best Director at the Việt Nam International Film Festival last night in Hà Nội.

Source: Việt Nam News, 22 Oct 2010



Boo Junfeng directs a scene on the set of *Sandcastle*. Courtesy of Boo Junfeng.

Can libraries better serve the art or filmmaking community?

I have nothing to complain about since most of my needs for the purpose of research were met. It really is the researcher's job [to seek resources]. I feel that what the library is doing is really good. I have friends from Korea who were very impressed that they could return a library book at any library across the island. I hope for Level 11 to be kept quiet and conducive. It will always be a place I know I can go to if I need that quiet space to think.

I think what the library provides is not only knowledge and information but a space. Not everyone can have a quiet apartment with a beautiful view, so what a library provides is this space. This is why people were so attached to and emotional about the old Stamford library. Every city needs a library, because every city is noisy and distracting. The library is an oasis. ■

subjects that are quite close to my heart, and I still have to research on them to get a better understanding, and to be able to reflect on something that is larger than my own experiences. That is why research has always been very important to me. I'm also lucky to have friends who are just a phone call away, and they are very knowledgeable about a lot of these issues that I am interested in.

What is intuitive, eventually, is what I take away from all the information that I come across, and how I build characters, their lives, their relationships, the dynamics within these relationships and then the story flows from there. But the space in which this occurs in has always been factual. After *Sandcastle* was released, it sparked a lot of interest from many people in the academic communities and amongst historians. This is the first time something like that is represented in a fictional film, and one of these interested parties happened to be Hong Lysa, whose book I read while working on the film.

Obviously, it is quite intimidating to meet and have a historian interview you about something you built based on your imagination of the past, but because of the research I had done, I was actually able to have a conversation with her. Much of this research lends to my credibility as a filmmaker and also to the credibility of the work, and gives it something to anchor itself onto, which is quite important.

IN-COMPETITION
CANNES
FILM FESTIVAL
INTERNATIONAL CRITICS WEEK

OFFICIAL SELECTION
TORONTO
FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
BEST FILM
BEST DIRECTOR
VIETNAM FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER
SPECIAL MENTION
HONG KONG ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

"A thoughtful debut feature that tackles a silenced chapter in Singaporean history."
MAGGIE LEE, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

★ ★ ★ ★
"Pure, poignant storytelling... the best home-grown film in a long time."
JOHN LEE, THE STRAITS TIMES LIFE!

"这是我这些年来，最爱的本地电影"
林德培 (E-周刊)

沙城
巫俊鋒作品 a film by Boo Junfeng

SANDCASTLE

FORTISSIMO FILMS ZHAO WEI FILMS SINGAPORE FILM COMMISSION AND PEANUT PICTURES PRESENT
A ZHAO WEI FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH AKANGA FILM ASIA AND INFINITE FRAMEWORKS JOSHEA TAN ELENA CHIA BOBBI CHEN NG JING JING SAMUEL CHONG
MUSIC DARREN NG SOUND LIM TING LI EDITOR NATALIE SON PRODUCTION DESIGNER JAMES PAGE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SHARON LIEW
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS TAN FANG CHENG ESTHER YEUNG RAYMOND PHATHANAVRANGDOON CO-PRODUCERS MIKE WILGAN FREDDIE YEO BOO JUNFENG TAN RU DA
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ERIC CHOO MICHAEL J WERNER JAMES TAN NELLEKE DRIESEN PRODUCED BY FRAN BORGIA GARY SON WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY BOO JUNFENG

ZHAO WEI FILMS INFINITE FRAMEWORKS AKANGA if tv

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The Growth Of Imagination in Singapore Children's Literature In English (1965 - 2005)

By Noel Chia Kok Hwee
Lee Kong Chian
Research Fellow (2010)



My research is on imaginative Singapore Children's Literature in English (SCLE) with an emphasis on children's prose fiction, which can be divided into fantasy and realism (see Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2008; Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2010). Both fantasy and realism involve two literary processing channels¹ — imagination and verisimilitude, which provide a link between the world grounded in reality and the meta-world in our minds. Through this meta-cognitive link, readers are able to experience the episodes as described in the stories and through the characters.

The term *imagination* is defined as that literary process of the mind to generate mental images of objects, states or actions not felt or experienced by the senses. Imagination is usually synonymous with "fancy, and commonly opposed to the faculty of reason, either as complementary to it or as contrary to it".² According to Sewall (1999) and Roth (2004), imagination helps bridge readers and their environment to create meaningful experiences and understanding of knowledge. It is a fundamental facility through which readers make sense of the world (Norman, 2000; Sutton-Smith, 1988) and also plays an important role in the learning process (Egan, 1992; Norman, 2000).

The other term *verisimilitude* (also known as *truth-likeness*) is the semblance of truth or reality in literary works or the literary principle that requires a consistent illusion of truth to life. It encompasses both the exclusion of improbabilities (as in realism) and the careful disguising of improbabilities in non-realistic works.³ Verisimilitude also refers to the other literary process that is "often invoked in fantasy and science fiction inviting readers to pretend such stories are true by referring to objects of the mind such as fictional books or years that do not exist apart from an imaginary world" (Roth, 2004, p. 10). This imaginary world is also known as *meta-world* (Chia, 1991).

By seeing the world around them in new ways and by considering ways of living other than their own, children increase their ability to think divergently. Stories often map the divergent paths that our ancestors might have taken or that our descendants might someday take. "Through the vicarious experience of entering a world different from the present one, children develop their imaginations. In addition, stories about people, both real and imaginary, can inspire children to overcome obstacles, accept different perspectives, and formulate personal goals." (Lynch-

Brown & Tomlinson, 2008, p. 5)

Moreover, children's books with a high degree of *imaginativity*⁴ provide the highest level of *reader enchantment*, which is an endogenous process that stimulates a reader's mind. This process throws readers into that meta-world where they can take part in any adventure, journey or exploration (Chia, 2004). It makes readers want to go on and not stop reading. In this sense, they have gone beyond automaticity. They are now a part of that story and have become either like *avatars* participating in the fantasy world, or like *morpheus* watching the events gradually unfolding. The final outcome is a sensitive awareness of imaginativity in children's literature.

Promoting SCLE by encouraging reading for pleasure among our children demands special effort in translating written language or print into *meta-worlds* (or realms of fantasy) — "worlds within worlds whose reality is primarily in the mind" (Roloff, 1973). Though a meta-world is a reality only within the mental boundaries of the mind, the existence of such realms can be readily accepted by most readers (Chia, 1991, 1996). Regardless of how peculiar or remote it may seem, readers should be sufficiently convinced that the *meta-world* really exists — they must believe in it and need to suspend their disbelief (just as if they were role-playing). This is the power of imagination that good children's literature can help promote.

The Changing Landscape (1965 – 2005)

SCLE evolved as ideas surrounding it and perspectives changed. In the past, SCLE "was largely concentrated on reading materials rather than fiction proper, [whereas] the current trend shows a

move towards better fiction though it is largely folktales and picture book fiction" (National Library Board, 2005, p. 3). For SCLE to attract a wider readership there is a need for our writers, illustrators and/or publishers to expand the scope of imagination.

My original research surveyed the changing landscape of SCLE from 1965 to 2005, using the Imaginativity Rating Scale (IRS) to measure changing levels of imaginativity. However, my focus in this article is the descriptive findings of the study; I reserve its quantitative findings for another paper. I examine the development of SCLE over time, looking for that which "would ideally represent the authentic voice of the Singapore child" (Hassan, 2006, p. 16), and the various significant historical events that affected it. I have divided the 40 years into five periods: the Didactic Period (1960s), the Pioneering Period (1970s), the Emergent Period (1980s), the Progressive Period (1990s), and the New Millennium (2000s).

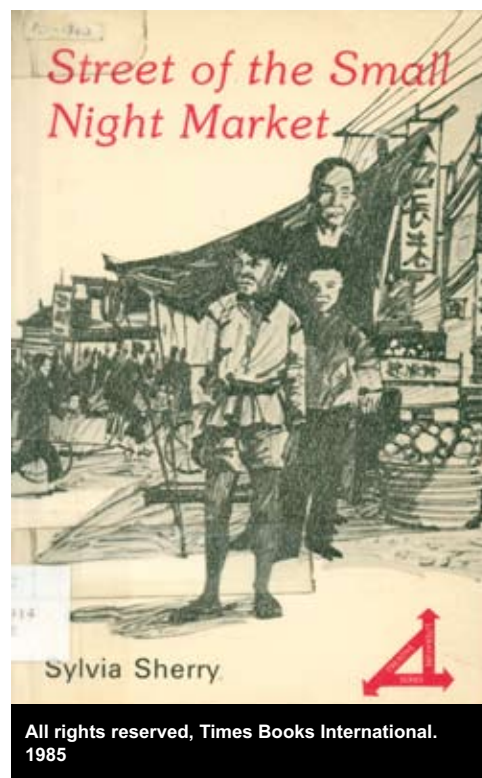
The Didactic Period (1960s)

One of the early roadblocks to the growth of Singapore children's literature has been its poor commercial viability, due to the small local market. As early as 1966, the then Minister for Education Mr Ong Pang Boon said,

It is not only desirable but essential to have local authors write the books we need, especially authors who understand the role of authorship in relation to the new political status and urgent social needs of our country. It is only local authors who could have a sense of social awareness, a real understanding of the various aspects of the local environment and above all a true appreciation of the national aspirations and strivings of our people, and contribute by making appropriate references and allusions to local conditions and factors, and by consciously emphasising points of view more in conformity with the spirit of the times, and with our national needs and aspirations. (as cited in Girvin, 1976, p. 7)

A scan of the SCLE available during the 1960s at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library reveals that basal readers were used in many English-medium schools and outnumbered quality children's fiction on all counts. This reflected the Singapore government's policy during this period "to get the general populace to put a premium on education, and the habit of reading began to be developed as part and parcel of the learning process" (Kong & Tay, 1998, p. 8). Besides, the parents, being very pragmatic, "look only for books 'useful' in boosting their children's school performance" (Khoo, 1992, p. 101).

I was able to identify only one trade book published during this period: Sylvia Sherry's *Street of the Small Night Market* (1966). Others were merely basal readers such as the *Federal Supplementary Readers Third Year (Book 3)* (1961), the *Federal Readers Book 1* (1963), and *Structural English Course Reader 4* (1968). It was in a third course reader that I found an interesting story, *The King of Fishes* (1968) by Chia Meng Ann and Chia Hearn Chek. "Although the literature addressed reading discovery, it was positioned to address

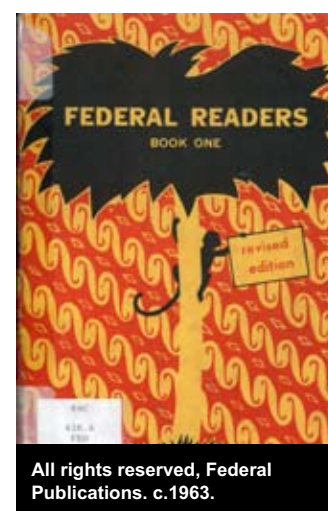


reading needs first and often the tone of the materials was didactic if not dull." (National Library Board, 2005, p. 2)

The Pioneering Period (1970s)

A serious effort to promote the writing of children's books began with the Workshop on Children's Books "organised by the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) to coincide with a week's visit of Ivan Southall, an Australian children's writer, at its invitation from 8–15 October, 1971" (Anuar, 1972, p. 3). In the opening speech, the late principal of the Teachers' Training College, Dr Ruth Wong stressed the role of books for children:

... if the individual himself has rich experience, he can through print 'feel' in his being as he reads, and be just as depth conscious as through the more instantly tactile medium of TV. Furthermore, where [electronic] media make for uniformity, print still enables the individual to withdraw into his private sanctum where he can meet himself. (Wong, 1972, p. 5)



In other words, books can provide a glimpse of imagination experienced by avid readers if they immerse themselves into that fictive world.

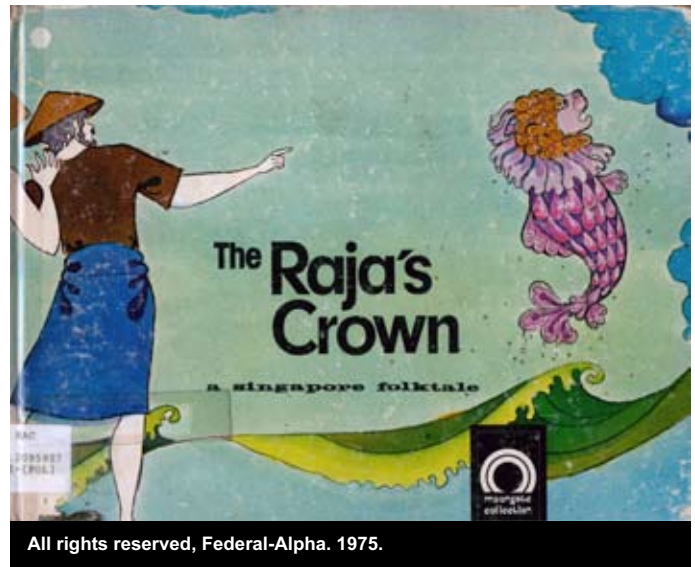
Folktales, fables and basal readers dominated SCLE in the 1970s. Didacticism from the previous period was also carried over into this period. According to Nair et al. (1977), a survey study done by the National Library covering three age groups showed their reading preference in the following order of appreciation (p. 11):

8–10 years:	(1) Adventure/Myths
	(2) Animals
11–12 years:	(1) Adventure
	(2) Myths and legends
	(3) Animal stories
	(4) Classics/School stories
	(5) Family stories
	(6) Historical fiction/Westerns
12+ years:	(1) Adventure
	(2) Myths/School stories
	(3) Animals
	(4) Classics
	(5) Historical fiction/Westerns

The adventure story was the hot favourite for all three age groups during that time, followed by myths and legends. According to Nair,

Adventure stories are favoured way and away from myths and legends, in the above 12 age group but [the latter] share the first place with adventure where younger readers of the 8–10 age group are concerned. What is surprising is the prominence given to the classics by the older children, being fourth favoured by both groups. School stories are second favourite for the older children but are not important to the youngest readers and are only as important as the classics to readers in the 11–12 group. Family stories and western and historical fiction are not well favoured, though animal stories do appeal to all three groups, but especially the youngest readers. (Nair et al., 1977, p. 11)

In the 1970s, children's books tended to adopt the themes of national campaigns; some of these included the ban on firecrackers during the Lunar New Year, keep Singapore clean, bilingualism in schools, multiracial and multicultural identity and so on (Lim, 2009). Hence, it is not surprising to find many basal readers such as the *Active Reader* series (Federal Publications, 1970) and *New Way Readers* series (Pan Pacific, 1978) propagating these national agendas. Examples of such books include *Ah Lee the Road Sweeper* (1979), *The Singapore Youth Festival* (1975), and *Courtesy is John's Way of Life* (1979). There are other books devoted to the interests and culture of Singapore as an independent



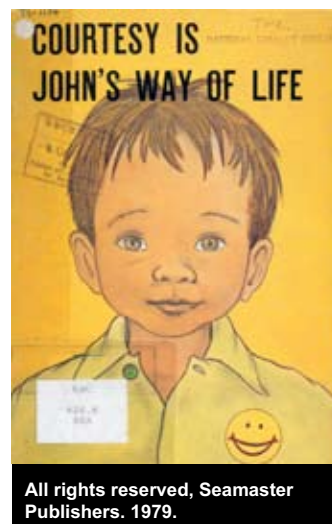
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nation that date back to Sri Vijayan times in the early 14th century, such as Chia Hearn Chek's *The Redhill* (1974) and *The Raja's Crown* (1975).

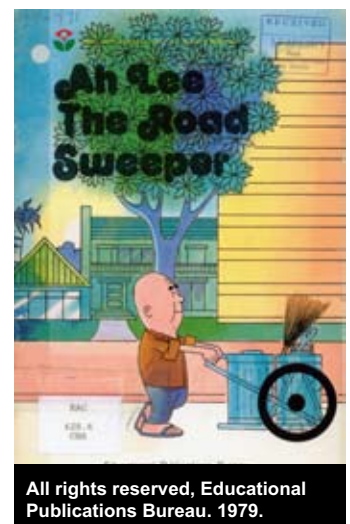
One reason why SCLE during this period lacked imaginativity was also partly due to children's reading abilities and power of imagination. Mature or sophisticated readers were few. Literary genres such as fantasy, suspense and science fiction (FSSF for short) that appeal to creative imagination, curiosity or wonder had limited appeal to our young readers then (Nair et al., 1977). From the reading survey done by the Children's Services of the National Library in 1976, the youngest group of readers in Singapore did not read books in the FSSF category at all while the other two groups showed the following preferences (Nair et al., 1977, p. 11):

11–12 years:	(1) Science fiction
	(2) Suspense
	(3) Fantasy
12+ years:	(1) Science fiction
	(2) Suspense

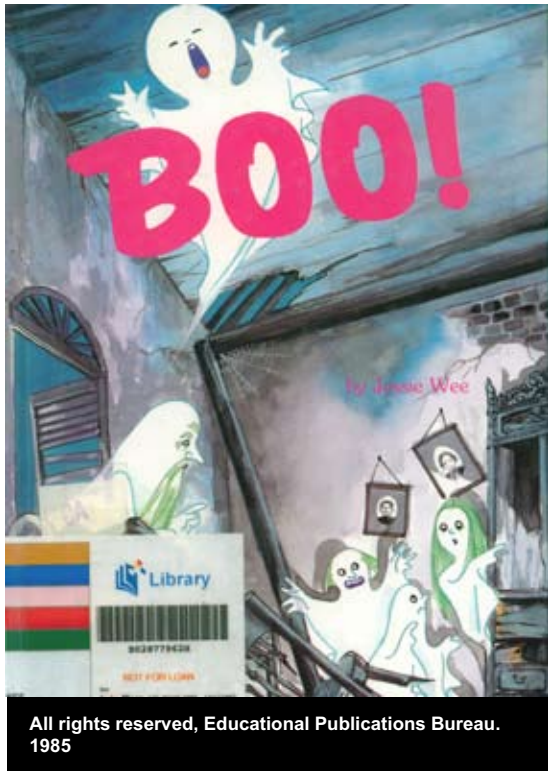
It should be noted that titles in the science fiction category were of limited availability compared to adventure stories and myths and legends (in the ratio of 9:99). Nair et al. (1977) explained why



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The Emergent Period (1980s)

Strictly speaking, SCLE only emerged in the 1980s, as evidenced by two national reading surveys, one conducted in 1980 and the other in 1988. The survey findings showed an increase in readership over that period as well as changing reading habits and tastes. However, few were reading books written by Singapore writers and many simply responded with “don’t know” to the questions asked about local writers and their writings (National Book Development Council of Singapore, 1981). The *Report of the Committee on Literacy Arts* (Ministry of Community Development, 1988) pointed out that Singaporeans tended to have a utilitarian attitude towards reading. They read to increase general knowledge and to keep abreast of current affairs as well as to pass tests and examinations, not for pleasure.

Despite the publication of books in the genre of imaginative children’s fiction such as *The Friendly Malcinds* (Blair, 1982) and *The Little People of Malcindia* (Blair, 1985), these works often read as forced and artificial in their attempts “to create a Singaporean multi-ethnic identity by incorporating qualities from each of the three main races in Singapore” (Khoo, 1990/91, p. 21). They were still lacking the kind of real imagination (also known as imagining or fantasising), which J. S. Mill (as cited in Leavis, 1950), describes as that which enables us to voluntarily conceive the absent as if it were present, the imaginary as if it were real, and to clothe it in the feelings which, if it were indeed real, it would bring along with it. “This is the power by which one human being enters into the mind and circumstances of another” (Chia, 1991, p. 22) in somewhat a similar fashion like the main protagonist, Jake Scully, who entered into the body of an avatar in order to be in close contact with the Na’vi tribe, shown in the recent Oscar award-winning blockbuster movie *Avatar* and described in James Cameron’s book entitled *Avatar: The Na’vi Quest* (2009).

However, books published in the 1980s showed marked improvements in visual presentation. Publishers explored the use of quality colours and illustrations for children’s books, such as Jessie Wee’s *Boo!* (1984), which has an attractive cover illustration. Jessie Wee, undeniably a forerunner in writing for children in Singapore, is a significant contributor to SCLE. Her series, *The Adventures of Mooty* (1980,) has been popular from

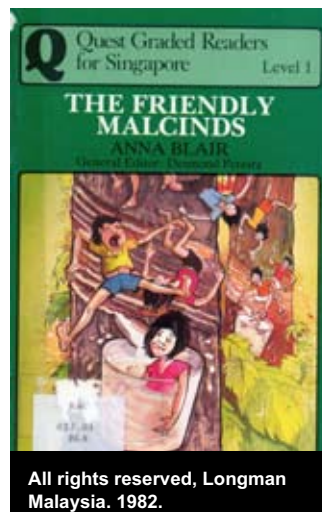
FSSF had such poor appeal:

... both science fiction and sometimes fantasy demands of the reader a certain amount of sophisticated knowledge of science and the jargon of space science, and this may be lacking in most areas where there is no tradition of Western type education, in children of these ages. (p. 13)

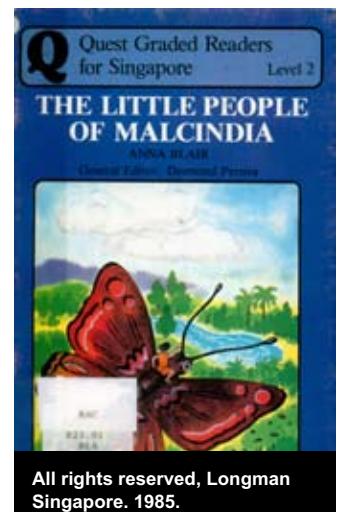
Another important contributing factor during the 1970s was that not all children were attending English-medium schools. This might explain why Singapore writers rarely ventured into fantasy, suspense and science fiction, and the publishers were not keen to publish books of this category.

During the 1970s, important changes had been made to the primary school curriculum. The emphasis in the English syllabus was on language enrichment through storytelling, poetry, creative writing and educational drama. The new enrichment programme created excellent opportunities for the publishing of children’s literature in Singapore (Girvin, 1976).

At a seminar on the role of educational materials in Singapore schools, held in 1973, the late Marie Bong, principal of Katong Convent, emphasised the urgent need for a variety of interesting books that would appeal to children so as to expose them “to the rich resources of language and stimulate them to read and write stories of their own” (as cited in Girvin, 1976, p. 6). This exposure was seen as vital and schools began to break away from the rigid textbook course of study, but success of the system, as Girvin (1976) argued, “will depend on there being sufficient supply of general literature for children to meet the demands at each level of the child’s understanding. Publishers must answer these needs.” (pp. 6–7)



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the time it was released and set a milestone in creative Singapore children's literature. Jessie Wee's focused attempt to write children's stories in the context of Singapore is characteristic of her inimitable writing style.

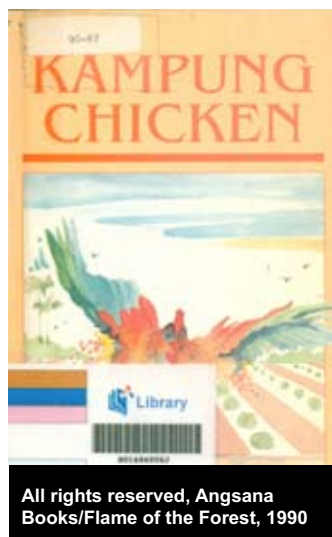
During this period, publishers would generally publish according to perceived market demand, such as catering "to the buying preference of parents for 'useful' reading by producing (1) folktales because these help children to learn about their culture, (2) stories with a moral so that children learn good values, and (3) supplementary readers with comprehension exercises so that children can improve their reading skills" (Khoo, 1990/91, p. 20).

The Progressive Period (1990s)

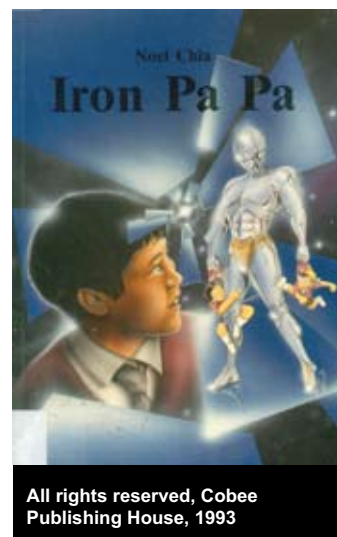
Although still very much in its infancy, the 1990s witnessed a relative boom in locally authored SCLE. According to Wee (1990/91), "it is the passionate belief that our children in Singapore need stories they can identify with, stories they can call their own" (p. 38). This is the driving force for many of the Singapore writers of children's fiction. SCLE took on a contemporary edge with an increasing public interest and acceptance, and publishing output improved as more writers entered the scene in the 1990s.

At the beginning of the 1990s there was a seminar, *In Search of a Singapore Children's Literature*, September 6–7, 1990, organised by the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) to create "public awareness of the need for good children's books" (Anuar, 1990/91, p. 1). Anuar (1990/91) argued for the need to take writing for children as seriously as writing for adults, adding that "... children are part of the human race, not a separate species. And children's literature is or should be part of a country's literature" (Anuar, 1990/91, p. 1).

A new crop of writers and publications appeared on the literary scene during this period, such as Ravi Veloo with *Kampung Chicken* (1990), Noel Chia with *Iron Pa Pa* (1993) and Ramanathan Chandran with *I Have Touched the Moon!* (1997). It is also during this period that Singapore witnessed a boom in publications of SCLE. Singh (1993/94) reported that "[t]he situation ... seems remarkably different in terms of the quantitative progress our fiction



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has witnessed in the passing years. Almost every bookshop, even the mama stalls which usually stock only magazines, carries [sic] Singapore titles" (p. 21). There were also a number of new authors who paid out of their own pockets to publish their books rather than go through a publisher. However, the quality of these children's fiction books (e.g., editing and illustrations) was poor and mostly in the genre of ghost and horror stories.

In 1993, a reading survey conducted by the National Library found that "the percentage of literate persons who had read just one book in the last 12 months had decreased by 7% from 57% down to 50% over the last 13 years" (Butterworth, 1994, p. 5). Despite a drop in library membership, Koh (1994) reported that the fostering of the reading habit among children was being given a higher priority and had achieved some success. Figures from the National Library showed that loans of children's books increased from 1.63 million in 1980 to 4.79 million in 1993, and "the expansion of the scheme to set up neighbourhood children's libraries in the void decks of HDB flats ... will give greater access to quality collections" (Koh, 1994, p. 4).

In other words, Singapore writers had to work even harder, tapping into their inspiration, imagination and creativity to produce higher, if not superb, quality children's books like that of Michael Ende's *Die Unendliche Geschichte* [Translated from German: *The Neverending Story*] (1979) and Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2008) series. Good SCLE should be able to enchant young readers into wanting more of such books; establishing quality SCLE begins the creation of the sense of one's own literary landscape in our children (Lee, 1990/91).

This is also echoed by Singh (1993/94), who argued that "the years of following [from 1993 onwards] should see an increase in the output of 'popular' fiction; e.g., ghost stories, sensational stories of one description or another" (p. 21). He cautioned:

... should the trend carry on for more than four or five years then we would have to rethink seriously the direction our writers were



Left: All rights reserved, Marshall Cavendish Children. c.2009.

taking. In reading some of the recent fiction published I am not assured that the direction we are taking is altogether wholesome or qualitatively better. There are areas in which it would behoove us to be critical if our literature is going to make the kind of international impact it deserves to make. (Singh, 1993/94, p. 21)

The New Millennium (2000s)

Since the beginning of the 21st century, SCLE has taken a more international perspective as more discerning and creative writers and illustrators enter the writing and publishing industry. The biennial Singapore Writers Festival, a major literary event in Singapore since the turn of the 21st century, has gained prominence in both domestic and regional literary landscapes. The writers' festival is now be restructured into an annual affair, attracting not only local published and aspiring writers of children's fiction as well as adult fiction but also writers from overseas.

According to Ng (2010a), "judging by sales, children's books are a lucrative field and more Singapore writers are making their mark in it" (p. 6). Today, children's storybooks are selling better than Singapore adult novels. For instance, James Lee's *Mr Midnight* series of illustrated horror stories has sold more than two million copies in Asia alone, and is now on its 67th book. Other children's storybook successes, although on a smaller scale, are by writers such as Adeline Foo, whose book *Diary of Amos Lee* (2007) is not included in this study, but has sold about forty thousand copies here.

One reason for the success of local children's literature is that parents today are more willing to spend on their children's education and "the young ones are also more willing to give new and unknown writers a chance" (Ng, 2010a, p. 6). Besides, parents have also found an increased attraction to the Asian context of Singapore writers' stories. Another reason is that first-time writers of children's fiction can now seek financial assistance through the First Time Writers and Illustrators Publishing Initiative. Launched in 2005, this initiative is jointly organised by the Media Development Authority and the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) (Media Development Authority, 2005). SCLE is still evolving slowly

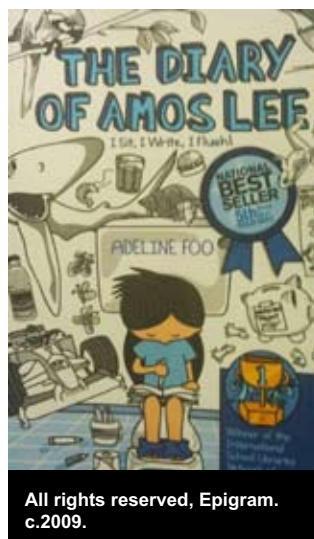


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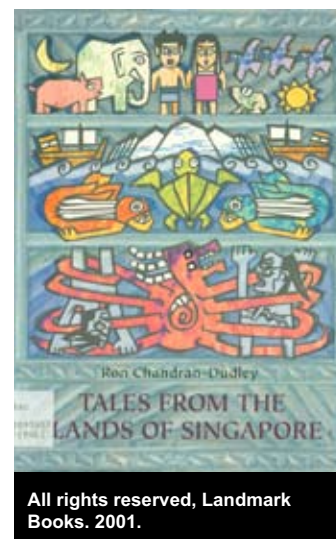
and gradually in terms of its quality and reader ownership. To quote Jessie Wee (1990/91), "children in Singapore need stories they can identify with, stories they can call their own" (p. 39).

Conclusion

Most books published in the 1960s were not trade books but basal readers whose aim was to improve the English proficiency of Singaporeans in both spoken and written forms.



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Hence, during the Pioneering Period (1970–79), it was an uphill task for writers of SCLE to be recognised, their creative works taken seriously by the publishers and appreciated by readers at large. SCLE only really emerged in the 1980s (Khoo, 1990/91) when more writers began to write for children. Although many of these books were badly written or poorly edited, it was a good sign that teachers and parents were beginning to take notice of locally published books for children. One big challenge during that period was that many teachers were reluctant to encourage their students to read local children's literature because of its poor quality of written English. In fact, this problem persisted into the 1990s.

Between the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Singapore book market witnessed a sudden increase in the number of new books published locally by new publishers such as VJ Times and Flame of the Forest. With more new writers trying their hand at writing for children, the local book scene saw a wider range of both new children's fiction and non-fiction titles. It was also during the period 1990–99 that more new writers had their works printed through established publishers such as Educational Publications Bureau (EPB) and Times Book International, although there were also a few others who chose to self-publish.

As we enter the new millennium (i.e., 2000s), better and more interesting books are published locally, such as Linda Gan's *A Treasury of Asian Folktales* (2000), Chandran Dudley's *Tales from the Islands of Singapore* (2001) and David Seow's *The Little Emperor* (2004). However, a new challenge has emerged — there are now more distractions (e.g. online and video gaming, and movies on video) than before. Claire Chiang, chairperson of the Asian Festival of Children's Content Advisory Board, highlighted a very real and challenging issue we are facing today: "Reading habits have decreased because of new social media platforms. We need relevant and interesting books to recapture the imagination of our children" (as cited in Ng, 2010b, p. C6). ■

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Dr Wong Meng Ee, Early Childhood and Special Needs Education, National Institute of Education, Singapore, in reviewing this article.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Literary processing channels, also known as *fantasising* (see Chia, 1991, 1996a), are unlike the literacy processing channels, which involve reading and writing processes.
- 2 See <http://www.answers.com/topic/imagination>
- 3 See <http://www.answers.com/topic/verisimilitude>
- 4 The term *imaginativity* is coined here to denote the ability to reproduce mental images as a result of apprehending the textual and/or non-textual experiences by means of the senses or of the mind, or to recombine previous experiences in producing new images directed at a specific goal or aiding in solving a problem

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Call Number: RAC 823.01 BLA
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Call Number: RAC 823.01 BLA
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Mooty and grandma.
Mooty and the satay-man.
Mooty falls in love.
Mooty goes to school.
Mooty has a son.
Mooty moves out.
Mooty plays hide-and-seek.
Mooty saves a life.
Mooty the space-mouse.
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Penerbitan Buku Melayu Singapura 2001-2010

By Mazelan bin Anuar
Librarian
Lee Kong Chian
Reference Librarian
National Library

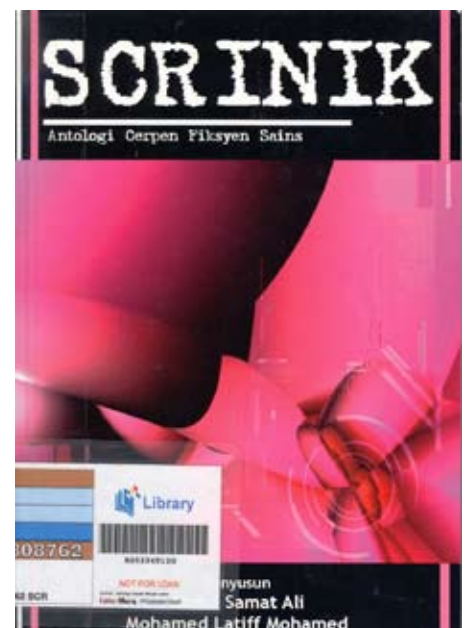


Selepas satu dekad ke dalam abad 21, bagaimanakah perkembangan penerbitan buku Melayu di Singapura? Singapura pernah menjadi pusat penerbitan buku Melayu di rantau ini tetapi rentetan sejarah menunjukkan peranan itu sudah diambil alih oleh Malaysia (dan juga Indonesia tetapi lebih kepada Bahasa Indonesia), lebih-lebih lagi selepas Singapura berpisah dengan Malaysia pada tahun 1965. Artikel ini merupakan peninjauan awal ke atas penerbitan buku Melayu di Singapura dari tahun 2001 hingga ke 2010 dengan melihat jumlah dan jenis karya yang telah dihasilkan serta juga mengenal pasti beberapa penerbit buku-buku tersebut.

Adalah amat sukar mendapatkan perangkaan nilai pasaran atau penjualan buku di Singapura. Badan-badan seperti Persatuan Penerbit Buku Singapura dan Majlis Pembangunan Buku Nasional Singapura sejauh ini tidak mengeluarkan sebarang perangkaan seumpama itu. Pangkalan data Euromonitor Global Market Information Database (GMID), menganggarkan sejumlah S\$896.8 juta telah dibelanjakan pada tahun 2010 oleh pengguna di Singapura, untuk akhbar, majalah, buku dan alat tulis. Namun tiada perincian lanjut yang diberikan bagi setiap kategori yang disebutkan itu. Tidak disebutkan juga jumlah yang dibelanjakan untuk akhbar, majalah dan buku dalam bahasa Inggeris, Melayu, Cina, Tamil dan sebagainya. Global Publishing Information telah menerbitkan laporan berjudul "Profil Pasaran Penerbitan Singapura" (*Singapore Publishing Market Profile*) pada tahun 2002 namun tiada laporan baru dikeluarkan selepas itu. Menurut laporan tersebut, nilai pasaran buku Singapura bagi tahun 2001 dianggarkan berjumlah S\$201.5 juta dan nilai penjualan buku Cina dan Melayu dianggarkan berjumlah S\$35 juta. Namun jumlah S\$35 juta ini tidak dikupas dengan lebih lanjut mengikut kategori sama ada buku Cina atau Melayu.

Mengkaji ulasan mengenai penerbitan buku Melayu di Malaysia dan Singapura, kita dapat mengesan tema yang konsisten sejak tahun 1980-an. Masalah dan cabaran penerbitan buku Melayu serta saranan untuk mengatasinya sering kali dibincangkan melalui makalah-makalah yang diterbitkan di dalam majalah-majalah seperti *Dewan*

Bahasa, Dewan Budaya dan *Dewan Masyarakat*. Antara isu yang sering ditimbulkan ialah kurangnya pembacaan dan pembelian buku-buku Melayu. Cadangan-cadangan yang dikemukakan termasuk mendisiplinkan industri penerbitan dan menjadikannya lebih profesional agar penerbitan yang bermutu dapat menarik minat pembaca. Akhir-akhir ini, kaedah pemasaran buku juga disentuh dan para penerbit disaran agar mengamalkan konsep pemasaran moden yang menekankan aspek produk, harga, pengedaran dan promosi (Hamed Mohd Adnan, 2002). Di Singapura, isu-isu penerbitan buku Melayu juga dibincangkan melalui akhbar-akhbar, terutamanya *Berita Harian*. Baru-baru ini terdapat satu rencana dalam *Berita Harian* (4 November 2010) yang berjudul "Jika hendak



Antara buku yang diterbitkan oleh Asas50. Hakipta terpelihara, Angkatan Sasterawan '50, 2008 [kanan] & 2009 [kiri].

sastera Melayu mekar” oleh Mohd Raman Daud yang meluahkan rasa sesal dengan suasana anak Melayu yang lebih selesa berbahasa Inggeris sehingga mendorong Angkatan Sasterawan '50 atau Asas50 (badan sastera dan persuratan Melayu) untuk menghasilkan warganya dalam bahasa Inggeris sepenuhnya sedangkan matlamat asal Asas50 ialah memperjuangkan bahasa dan sastera Melayu. Isu ini dapat dikaitkan dengan isu anak Melayu yang tidak berminat membaca buku Melayu yang diketengahkan oleh Anuar Othman dalam rencana yang berjudul “Usah abai buku Melayu setempat” yang disiarkan di dalam *Berita Harian* pada 7 Mac 2009. Anuar Othman juga mengusulkan agar Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura menukar kesemua buku teks bagi pengajaran sastera di peringkat GCE “O” kepada karya-karya penulis tempatan dalam masa lima tahun.

Apakah trend penerbitan buku Melayu di Singapura sejak sedekad lalu? Bersandarkan maklumat yang disediakan di dalam penerbitan Lembaga Perpustakaan Negara Singapura yang berjudul *Singapore National Bibliography*, kita dapat melihat jumlah dan jenis buku Melayu yang telah diterbitkan. Bagaimanapun, maklumat dalam terbitan terbaru *Singapore National Bibliography* ialah sehingga Jun 2009. Bagi tahun 2009 dan 2010, kita terpaksa menggunakan anggaran bagi jumlah penerbitan bagi tahun-tahun tersebut melalui maklumat yang disediakan oleh jabatan Bahan Penyerahan (Legal Deposit) Lembaga Perpustakaan Negara Singapura. Biasanya, para penerbit akan mendaftarkan buku-buku yang akan mereka terbitkan dengan jabatan ini. Bagi setiap buku yang diterbitkan, penerbit wajib menyerahkan dua salinan kepada Lembaga Perpustakaan Negara Singapura bersesuaian dengan Bab 157 Akta Lembaga Perpustakaan Negara. Bagaimanapun, atas sebab-sebab tertentu, adakalanya penerbit tidak dapat menerbitkan buku yang telah didaftarkan. Bagi buku Melayu di Singapura, peratusan buku yang telah didaftarkan oleh penerbit tetapi tidak diterbitkan

kemudiannya untuk sesuatu tahun boleh menjangkau antara 15 sehingga lebih 50 peratus (sila lihat Jadual 1).

Jadual 1: Jumlah buku yang didaftarkan dan diterbitkan (2001-2010)

Tahun	Jumlah buku yang didaftarkan	Jumlah buku yang diterbitkan
2001	132	94
2002	169	144
2003	227	110
2004	173	111
2005	156	108
2006	99	68
2007	138	83
2008	186	105
2009	151	*
2010	90	*
Jumlah keseluruhan	1521	1064

Sumber : *Singapore National Bibliography*, June 2009.

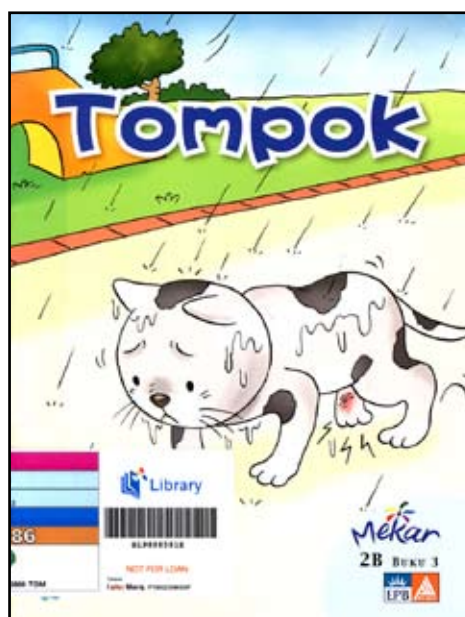
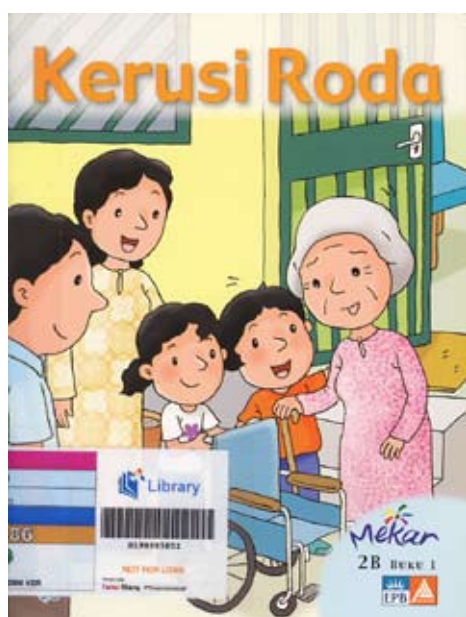
* Maklumat belum diterbitkan dalam *Singapore National Bibliography*.

Dengan menggunakan *Singapore National Bibliography* kita juga dapat mengesan jenis-jenis buku yang diterbitkan di Singapura. Antara 2001 dan 2008, buku untuk kegunaan pelajar di sekolah merupakan yang kedua paling banyak dihasilkan (147 judul). Buku-buku ini diterbitkan oleh atau untuk Bahagian Perancangan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura, menjadikan ia penerbit utama buku Melayu di Singapura.

Agensi-agensi pemerintah yang lain termasuk badan-badan berkanun seperti Lembaga Perpustakaan Negara Singapura juga menerbitkan buku-buku dalam bahasa

Melayu. Selalunya buku-buku sedemikian bertujuan sebagai penerangan kepada orang ramai terhadap sesuatu perkara. Sebagai contoh, isu kesihatan oleh Lembaga Penggalak Kesihatan atau panduan bagi ibu bapa oleh Kementerian Pembangunan Masyarakat, Belia dan Sukan.

Badan-badan Melayu seperti Mendaki, Majlis Pusat dan Majlis Bahasa juga menghasilkan buku-buku Melayu yang selalunya berbentuk bukan cereka. Bagi buku bukan cereka, subjek berkenaan Islam merupakan yang paling banyak diterbitkan. Selain daripada badan-badan Islam seperti Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, Persatuan



Antara buku yang diterbitkan oleh Bahagian Perancangan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura, dalam tahun 2008. Hakcipta terpelihara.



Pustaka Nasional pula menerbitkan buku-buku tentang Islam dan juga sastera (novel, cerpen dan puisi/sajak) sementara Andalus pula menumpukan penerbitannya kepada buku-buku tentang Islam terutamanya untuk kanak-kanak dan remaja.

Jadual 3: Penerbit di Singapura yang paling banyak menerbitkan buku

Penerbit	Jumlah judul yang diterbitkan (2001-2008)
Bahagian Perancangan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura	147
Pustaka Nasional	107
Times	92
Andalus	68

Sumber : *Singapore National Bibliography*, June 2009.

Ulama dan Guru-Guru Agama Islam Singapura (PERGAS) dan masjid-masjid, para penerbit komersil seperti Pustaka Nasional dan Andalus banyak mengeluarkan buku-buku yang menyentuh hal agama Islam. Secara keseluruhan, 239 judul buku sedemikian diterbitkan antara 2001 sehingga 2008, menjadikan buku-buku tentang Islam yang paling banyak diterbitkan di Singapura.

Sebagai rumusan, artikel ini merupakan tinjauan awal, namun trend penerbitan buku Melayu di Singapura perlu dikaji dengan lebih lanjut dan teliti lagi. Badan-badan seperti Persatuan Penerbit Buku Singapura dan Majlis Pembangunan Buku Nasional Singapura perlu mengumpulkan data dan menyusun maklumat tentang nilai pasaran bagi buku-buku yang diterbitkan di Singapura agar analisa yang tepat dapat dijalankan. Ini penting bagi para penerbit tuntut melakar strategi peniagaan mereka. Kita juga harus merangkumkan maklumat bagi tahun 2009 dan 2010 sebaik sahaja ianya dapat diperolehi menerusi Singapore National Bibliography. Perbandingan juga boleh dibuat antara dekad ini dengan dekad-dekad sebelumnya untuk mendapatkan gambaran yang lebih jelas bagi industri ini. Akhir sekali, Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura sebagai institusi yang memelihara status bahasa Melayu dan mendukung pengembangannya mungkin perlu mengambil langkah untuk membangunkan semula penerbitan buku Melayu di Singapura melalui kerjasama dengan para penerbit, agensi pemerintah dan juga penulis setempat. ■

Selepas buku tentang Islam dan teks sekolah, buku cereka atau novel merupakan yang ketiga paling banyak diterbitkan. Terdapat 120 judul novel yang telah diterbitkan antara 2001 dan 2008. Pustaka Nasional merupakan penerbit yang paling prolifik bagi novel Melayu, menerbitkan 48 judul secara keseluruhannya. Angkatan Sasterawan 50 dan Anuar Othman & Associates Media Enterprise juga memainkan peranan menghidupkan sastera Melayu di Singapura dengan masing-masing menerbitkan 22 dan 23 judul buku antara 2001 sehingga 2008. Untuk memudahkan rujukan, sila lihat Jadual 2.

Jadual 2: Jenis buku yang paling banyak diterbitkan di Singapura

Jenis buku	Jumlah diterbitkan (2001-2008)
Islam	239
Teks sekolah	147
Cereka (novel)	120
Masakan	51

Sumber : *Singapore National Bibliography*, June 2009.

Jadual 3 pula menunjukkan kedudukan penerbit yang paling banyak menerbitkan buku di Singapura antara 2001 sehingga 2008. Walaupun Times merupakan penerbit ketiga terbanyak, ia tidak lagi mengeluarkan buku Melayu di Singapura sejak 2005. Sementara itu, Bahagian Perancangan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura, Pustaka Nasional dan Andalus terus konsisten menerbitkan buku setiap tahun sejak 2001. Bahagian Perancangan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Singapura menumpukan penerbitannya kepada buku teks sekolah.



Antara 20 buah novel yang diterbitkan oleh Pustaka Nasional sempena Sayembara Novel Watan 2001. Hakcipta terpelihara, Pustaka Nasional, 2002.

The Malay book publishing industry in Singapore has been plagued with declining readership and sales in the last decade. Preliminary research on the publication trends in Malay books in Singapore from 2001 to 2010 shows that the volume of new books published between 2001 to 2010 is low, at not more than 150 titles per year in the last 10 years. The lowest number published was 68 titles in 2006, while the highest was 144 in 2002. School textbooks, Islamic literature and fiction novels are the three most-published genres; and that the Curriculum Planning & Development Division of the Ministry of Education, and Pustaka Nasional are the publishers with the highest output of Malay books. The writer feels that action should be taken to revive the Malay book publishing industry and suggests that concerted efforts by key players such as publishers, government agencies and local writers will be necessary.

Penulis menghargai usahasama Mohd Raman Daud (Editor Meja Rencana, Berita Harian) yang mengulas makalah ini.

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Women's Perspectives On Malaya Emily Innes On The Malay States



By **Bonny Tan**
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"I think that in most of these tropical colonies the ladies exist only on the hope of going "home!" It is a dreary, aimless life for them — scarcely life, only existence."
(Bird, 1883, p. 110)

Emily Innes: Depicting the Chersonese

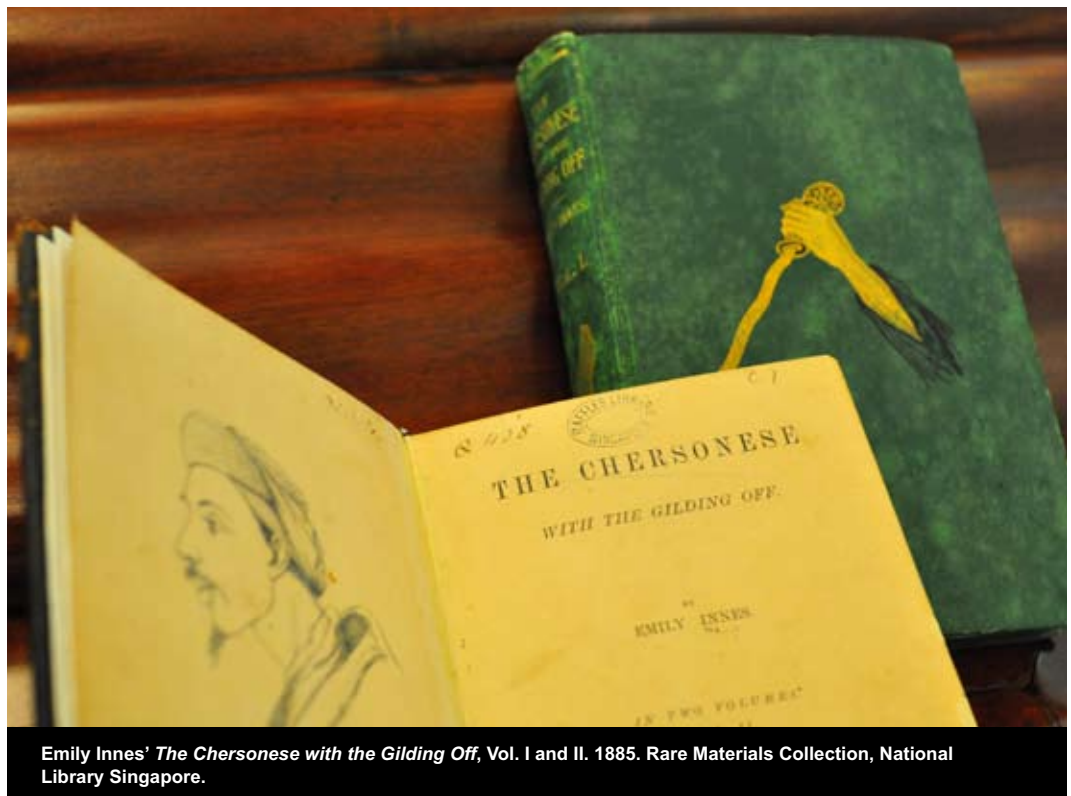
By the late 19th century, travelogues, surveys and government studies had covered much of Southeast Asia but most of these publications were written by men. The only women writers published were famed travel writers like Isabella Bird or wives of missionaries like Harriette McDougall. Emily Innes' publication, *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* (1883), thus stands apart from the work of her female compatriots because she wrote as the wife of a minor British official at a time when few colonial wives had their insights published.

James Innes had been appointed Collector and Magistrate at Kuala Langat in Selangor in 1877. He had earlier served in Sarawak and

had quickly risen to become Treasurer. Research showed that he had, unfortunately, faced problems with money throughout his career.¹ James also proved impractical², shortsighted³ and unable to relate with his superiors⁴. In a way, Emily's book was written as a defence for her husband who had resigned his post after six years; his conflict with the Resident, Captain Bloomfield Douglas, being the main reason, though Emily's stated reason is James' opposition to slavery in the Malay States.

The two-volume work however depicts more than the Inneses' dissatisfaction with the greater government and their acrimonious relationship with the Douglasses. Tin mining production in Perak and Selangor had risen spectacularly in the 1870s, with the introduction of innovative tin mining methods adapted from Chinese rice planting irrigation techniques.⁵ In fact, the lucrative tin mining business saw Chinese immigrants increasing by large numbers in the Malay States.⁶ The explosive mix of wealth, new immigrants and old Malay rulers led to wars and conflicts. The British mediated at the invitation of local rulers, profiting at the same time — a period known as the British intervention. As the Inneses had resided at the Protected Malay States just after British intervention in 1874, Emily's book gives a contemporaneous and vivid account from the unique perspective of the first British woman living in the interiors of the Peninsula. Self-taught in Malay, Emily's descriptions of the Malay rulers, their villages and villagers as well as their initial reaction to British presence during intervention have proved valuable to historians studying this period (Gullick, 1993, p. 170).

Her publication is also interesting for its obvious play against the more famous work of Isabella Bird's, *The Golden Chersonese* (1883).⁷ Giving the perspective of



Emily Innes' *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*, Vol. I and II. 1885. Rare Materials Collection, National Library Singapore.



Collector's bungalow at Bandar Langat (Innes, 1885, Vol. 1, frontispiece).

a resident instead of an acclaimed traveller, Innes wrote her piece "in contradistinction [to Bird's] but with no aim of contradiction" (Doran, 2008, p. 175). Bird's account of the Malay states was of five weeks between January and February 1879, while Emily's is of her five-year residency from 1876 until her husband's resignation in 1882.

Emily herself acknowledges the value and yet contrasting realities both authors portray in their writings:

To those who have read Miss Bird's most interesting book, the 'Golden Chersonese' — a book that was specially delightful to Mr Innes and myself, since we felt as if we had known personally every creature, every thing, and almost every mosquito she mentioned — it may seem curious that, notwithstanding the brilliancy and attractiveness of her descriptions, and the dullness and gloom of mine, I can honestly say that her account is perfectly and literally true. So is mine. The explanation is that she and I saw the Malayan country under totally different circumstances. (Innes, 1885, Vol. 2, p. 242)

Indeed where Isabella visited the Malay States under the protection and support of government officials, "Emily Innes was ... forced to endure — although with great bravado — the drudgery of swampy, lugubrious isolation, rickety atap-houses, a cretinous native society, deceitful servants and scarce food supply — not to mention a

traumatic, near-fatal experience involving revolting Chinese coolies" (Wong, 1999).

Surviving the Chersonese

Volume 1 describes the Inneses at Langat,⁸ their first lodgings and experiences in the Protected Malay States while Volume 2 is of their stay at Durian Sabatang. Neither posting was comfortable, with the latter worse than the former. So depressing were their circumstances that, having just arrived at their "Malay wigwam" in Langat and taken a short walk to survey their surroundings in what little civilisation there was, they "agreed aloud that if [they] had to remain six months in this fearful place [they] must either leave the service or commit suicide" (Innes, p. 19). However, the Inneses survived not just six months but six years in the Malay States.

Though some have said Emily's writings reflect "the mark of acute paranoia" (Heussler, 1981, p. 67), one must consider her dire circumstances. There was no ladies' club or any other foreign women to commiserate with — only the intrusive locals and the overbearing sounds and sights of village life. Without children and at times, even a husband at home to occupy her, boredom was her constant companion.

Though her life was painfully boring, she wrote of her experiences and encounters with the wry sense of humour peculiar to the British:



Elk horn fern (Bird, 1883, p. 177).

Some of the day was got rid of by bathing two or three times, and the consequent dressing and undressing ... some more time was disposed of in eating and drinking — or rather in sitting at the table and looking at food — for the debilitating effects of the climate and want of exercise did not leave us much appetite. There were still many hours during which we either had nothing to do, or could do nothing, from heat, ennui, and mosquitoes. (Innes, 1885, pp. 35–36)

For the well-read Emily, the only recourse to fighting the boredom was turning to books but unfortunately, her attempts at obtaining reading materials were unsuccessful:

We tried to get books from the Circulating Library in Singapore, but failed because there were only two Europeans in the districts and there was no regular communication at all between Langat

and the outside world Having failed in this direction, we sent home for books and newspapers. We ordered six of the latter, besides several magazines, to be constantly sent to us, but from various causes we did not reap the full benefit of this arrangement. Our papers, especially the illustrated ones, were more often than not stolen, or delayed for months ... (pp. 34–35)

Unable to escape into some form of leisure, Emily turned to studying the local habits and dispassionately describing her own struggles.

Much of Volume 1 thus documents mundane activities such as her attempts at cooking a decent meal with limited and poor quality resources, the native behaviour of her Malay neighbours and the level of hygiene in the village or rather the lack of it. This volume also provides details about James Innes' work and relationships with the locals and his colleagues, along with insights on personalities such as Bloomfield Douglas, Resident of Selangor and Tunku Dia Udin, the Viceroy of Selangor — a critical character in the history

of modern Selangor. The characters are rendered from a biased perspective because of the relationship she had with each of these personalities. Even so, they present unique angles for researchers, particularly as she wrote these descriptions from the perspective of a woman, and that of a wife of a British official.

Volume 2 describes the Inneses' reluctant transfer to Durian Sabatang, the "white man's grave"⁹ (Innes, p. 55), just as their more comfortable bungalow, designed by James Innes himself, was completed at Langat. A large part is devoted to an account of the tragic murder of Captain Lloyd,



The Tunku Muda (Innes, Frontispiece to Vol. II)



Malay youth and maiden (Bird, 1883, p. 328).

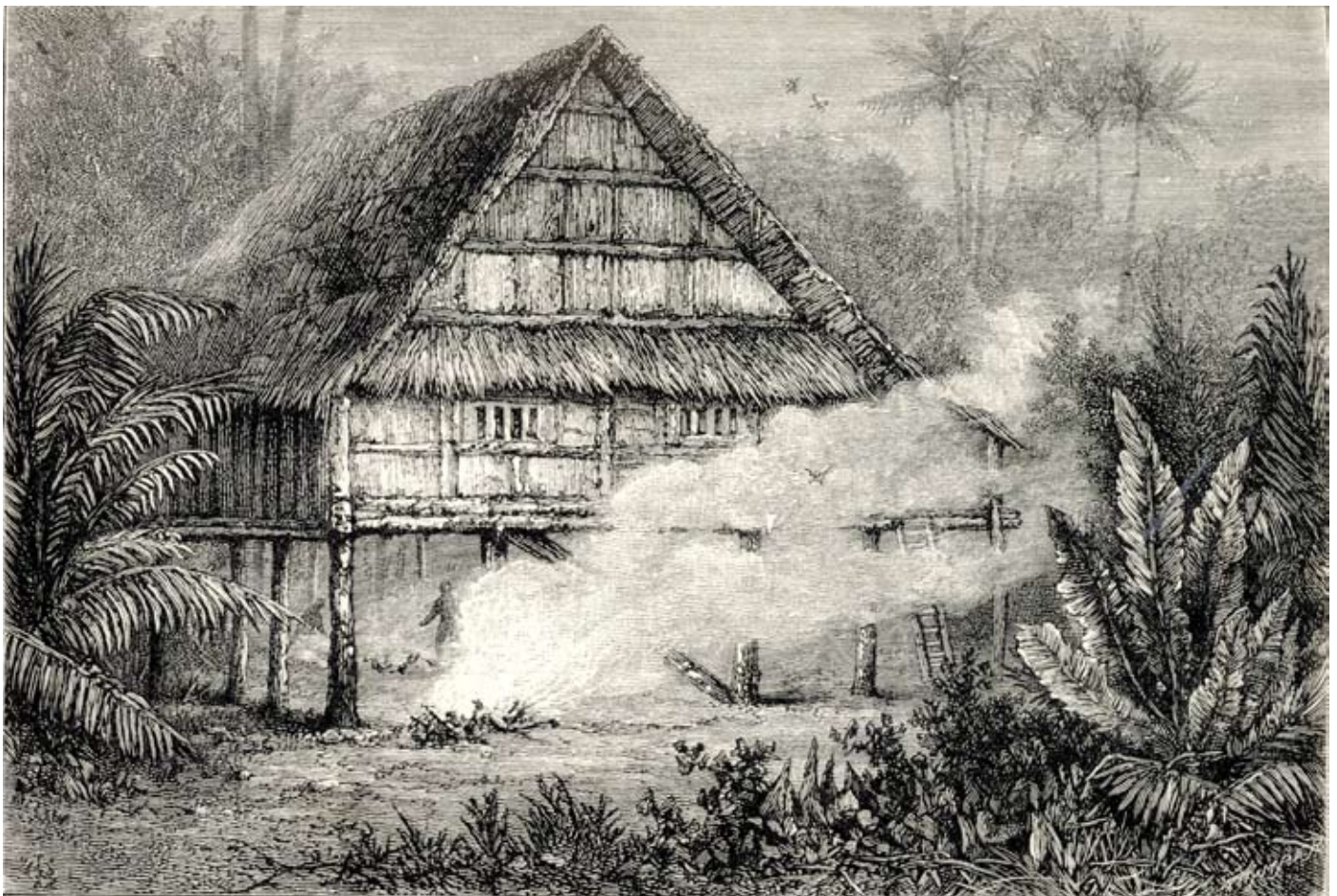
Superintendent of Dindings, at Pangkor and to the injuries sustained by Emily during the attack. Being new to the district and facing some discomfort, Emily had been invited to the Lloyds' home: "I had never seen either of them, but that was of no consequence in a country where English are so rare that all are to a certain extent brothers" (Vol. 2, p. 91). In fact, the day Emily arrived, the Lloyds' servants had not yet returned since receiving their pay and Mrs Lloyd, with

three young children on hand, was in a quandary. The Lloyds' troubles were only just beginning, as unemployed Chinese labourers in nearby Lumut saw the isolated Lloyds as a vulnerable and attractive target for a robbery. Unfortunately, Emily was a guest of the Lloyds on that fateful day such occurred. Mrs Lloyd and Emily were seriously injured in the attack on the family home but both survived the assault.

The tragedy saw Emily return on home leave, followed soon after by James who had become ill due to the conditions at Durian Sabatang. Although James returned to Bandar, he resigned within two years because of continued poor relations with the Resident. James' departure from his position in the Malay

States and the resultant loss of his much desired pension gave Emily the impetus to write this explanatory autobiography commenting on the injustices the Inneses had suffered under the poor leadership of their British compatriots.¹⁰ ■

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Dr Ernest C.T. Chew, Visiting Professorial Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, in reviewing this article.



Smoking the mosquitoes (Bird, 1883, facing p. 138).

ENDNOTES

- 1 Gullick details some of James Innes' inadequacies in managing finances, a characteristic which likely led to problems with his superiors particularly in his role as Treasurer and Collector. Gullick, J. M. (1993). pp. 162–164, 167–169.
- 2 For example, Emily was made to trudge through the wilderness at her husband's whim, a supposedly short few miles to the main town. However, her flouncy and uncomfortable English dress, the muddy conditions, the failing light of twilight and James' forgetting his way meant the party was soon lost in the dark and Emily left in great discomfort.
- 3 James resigned his post in Malaya only to regret this much later as he forfeited a pension subsequently linked to his position.
- 4 Although initially the Inneses seemed to get along with the Resident at Selangor, Bloomfield Douglas, relations quickly deteriorated.
- 5 Sadka, 1968, pp. 20–21
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 The women had never met but Isabella was escorted through Selangor by James. Isabella notes that James was in "dejected spirits, as if the swamps of Durian Sabatang had been too much for him" (Bird, 1883, p. 276) though in her private letters, Isabella mentions that she found James "a man with a feeble, despairing manner and vague unfocussed eyes ... a very dreary and unintelligent companion" (Bird & Chubbuck, 2002, p. 273).
- 8 Today, the district is known as Kuala Langat. The Klang Wars of 1868 saw the royal town move from the ancient centre of Jugra to Bandar Temasya and the town became key to the development of Selangor during the reign of Sultan Abdul Samad Ibn Almarhum Raja Abdullah (Port Klang Integrated Coastal Management Project).
- 9 A name given for the "unhealthiness of its climate" (Innes, p. 55).
- 10 A note from Ernest Chew: "Captain Bloomfield Douglas was succeeded as British Resident of Selangor by the youthful and more efficient Frank Swettenham, who subsequently became Resident of Perak, Resident-General of the four Federated Malay States, and finally Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States."
- 11 The National Library has several sets of the original publication published by Richard Bentley in 1885. They can also be read on microfilm NL26023 (Vol. 1) and NL7462 (Vol. II). The Library also holds more recent Oxford University Press reprints with a useful introduction by Khoo Kay Kim, published in 1974 and again in 1993.

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The 3rd Taiwan-Singapore-Thailand Workshop On Library And Information Research

Embedded within the nexus of libraries and information science is a common commitment to creating accessibility to knowledge. Information science's substantive focus has always been the facilitation of knowledge discovery that has both influenced and been influenced by librarianship. Concomitantly, the third instalment of the Taiwan-Singapore-Thailand Workshop on Library and Information Research is a timely reminder of this symbiotic relationship between library professionals and information science researchers, and the need to work closely to improve information services in Southeast Asian countries.

Co-organised by the National Library Board, Singapore (NLB) and the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), this year's workshop saw sixty-five participants from Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand sharing insights and research findings on the emerging developments in Library and Information Science (LIS) in their respective countries. Unsurprisingly, the recurrent motif of the workshop proceedings was cross-national research collaboration. In the spirit of forging such

linkages, several breakout sessions were organised to facilitate regional dialogues on various research themes:

- Reading
- Developments in Information Science
- e-Learning and Education
- Informational Literacy
- Knowledge Management
- Publishing and Scholarly Communication
- Heritage Informatics
- Digital Libraries

As a public institution committed to fostering vibrant learning communities, NLB also extended *ideapolis*, an online research collaboratory to workshop participants as a platform for their projects. Altogether, 26 papers were presented with three collaborative projects germinated through the discussions. Here are some of the highlights of the two-day workshop.

Reading, e-Learning and Education

Notable presentations included three separate analyses of inter-generational reading habits by Sujin Butdisuwan (Mahasarakham University), and two other research teams from Nanyang Technological University and Khon Kaen University. The use of other knowledge transmission mechanisms such as e-learning and social media tools as engines for the knowledge economy, were also discussed. In particular, the papers by Christopher Khoo & Chang Yun-Ke (NTU) on digital repository of learning objects, as well as Cha-Fei Hung's (National Taiwan Normal University) evaluation of open courseware usage by the university's students. The world's most popular social networking website, Facebook, was also the subject of inquiry in two different papers — one by Tranakchit Mangkang (Mahasarakham University), and the other by Kung-Ying Lee (National Taiwan Normal University) — which discussed the evolution of pedagogy in Thai classrooms and the changing landscape of library services vis-à-vis social media respectively.

Knowledge Management and Scholarly Communication

With the growing emphasis on risk management in organisational development, the importance of knowledge management processes has also attracted substantial attention from scholars in recent times. Capturing the



Academics and librarians sharing their thoughts and experiences on initiatives to promote reading in Asia.



workshop participants to partake in the joint survey on scholarly communications system and creation of an Asian open access LIS journal respectively.

Heritage Informatics and Digital Libraries

The connectivity and interactivity afforded by information technologies are also changing the way in which knowledge, cultural traditions and histories are shared and transmitted. Pointing to cultural heritage information management and circulation techniques, Natalie Pang (NTU) highlighted emerging techniques in participatory curatorship and community-based archival

essence of these emerging issues was the presentation by Xue Zhang, who discussed information literacy as a knowledge enabler for workers performing horizon scanning and risk assessment. Such shifts in the informational landscape also suggest that knowledge facilitators are experiencing shifts in the conduct of their professions.

In the realm of scholarly communications, Wei-Ning Cheng (National Taiwan Normal University) illustrated how university libraries are becoming increasingly important nodes in the information network, not only as consumers of publications but also as publishers, with a distinct focus on scholarly electronic journals. Scholars are also acknowledging the intrinsic value of open access publications; papers by Rama Reddy and Laksana Thaotip (Mahasarakham University) separately highlighted how university faculty in Asia are embracing open access publishing and both called on

practices. This complemented the presentation by Soh Lin Li (NLB) on the Singapore Memory Project, a national effort piloted to document and preserve Singaporeans' stories and experiences.

Such information management techniques also point to the role automation plays in exponentially increasing data transfer speeds. Development of information systems to facilitate community management and institutional repositories for university research projects were the subjects of two case studies presented by Watcharee Phetwong, Phadet Jinda and Lampang Manmart (Khon Kaen University). The former described the potential improvements to the decision-making process for local government and policy planners working on development issues at the provincial level in Thailand. In the latter study, data on current needs was compiled and the design of

institutional repositories for the Rajamangala University of Technology, Thailand, was based on this.

Looking Ahead

The diversity of positions has traditionally been recognised as the hallmark of academic exchange. This was evident in the way the participants from the three countries added contextual richness, subject matter expertise and praxis to the research projects that would otherwise be limited to their specific contexts. Reaffirming the impression that the Taiwan-Singapore-Thailand workshop differs from typical scholarly conferences, participants with similar interests were urged to unite in research collaboration.

At the networking dinner following the first day's proceedings, the Pod at the National Library was transformed into a pastiche of song, dance and musical performances as some delegates and members of the academic community took to the stage, while others enjoyed dinner and the panoramic view of the Singapore cityscape. With new friendships forged and old ones strengthened, the 3rd Taiwan-Singapore-Thailand Workshop renewed my con-



Panellists discuss the impact of open access publishing on the scholarly communication process.

vidence that the next such event would yield even greater collaborative results in the burgeoning field of Southeast Asian LIS research. ■

To view paper abstracts and the workshop proceedings, Log on to ideapolis.sg

Yee Yeong Chong
Research Associate
Government & Business
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Beyond intellectual debate, intercultural exchange is also important in building collaborative capacities for the advancement of LIS research in the region.

NLB and IES Renew Partnership

National Library Board (NLB) and The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES) reaffirmed their commitment to collaboration at a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing during the official launch of National Engineers Day (NED) 2011 at the National Library Building. On 24 March, Ho Siong Hin (President, IES) and Ngian Lek Choh (Director, National Library), each representing their respective institutions, renewed IES and NLB's dedication to working together to promote knowledge and learning in the engineering field. This was formalised through a signing ceremony, witnessed by Minister of State, Trade and Industry, & Manpower, Lee Yi Shyan — himself a chemical engineer by training.

The MOU is symbolic of the agreement to work towards the enhancement of the Engineering collection at the National Library. As part of the MOU, a new Engineering Corner at Level 7 of the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library will showcase engineering-related displays and projects such as the Biosuit™ and the 'N' class oil rig model from Keppel FELS. New exhibitions will be featured on a regular basis in this space.

In turn, NLB's industry standards collection, relocated from SPRING Singapore to Level 7 of the National Library in December of last year, will be a vital resource to engineers.



Ho Siong Hin, President of IES, and Ngian Lek Choh, Director of the National Library, exchange the signed documents at the ceremony witnessed by Minister of State Lee Yi Shyan.

The single most comprehensive collection of standards in Singapore, this collection of International standards (such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) standards), national standards of major countries, key industry and consortia standards, and those from Singapore will be a boon to those working in the Engineering field.

Both organisations will work in tandem to provide access to information and services which promote engineering and in the process, develop greater understanding of the industry among practising and aspiring engineers, and the greater public. Some of these new offerings will be information services, codes of practice, standards and reference materials on the Engineering Sciences.

At the opening of NED 2011, Dava Newman — Professor of Aeronautics & Astronautics and Engineering Systems and Director of the Technology and Policy Program, MIT — was invited to speak about her invention, the Biosuit™, currently

on display at the Engineering Corner. Honoured as Aerospace Educator of the Year and one of Time Magazine's Best Inventors of 2007, Newman delivered an illuminating lecture on human spaceflight research and the BioSuit™.¹

The restrictive nature and burdensome 130 kg weight of the current Space Shuttle Extravehicular Mobility Unit (EMU), a two-piece, semi-rigid spacesuit worn by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronauts inspired Newman to create the BioSuit™ System, an invention which stands to



At the opening of the Engineering Corner, Minister Lee Yi Shyan discusses the Keppel FELS N-class oil rig (model pictured), one of the world's largest jackup rigs to be constructed for the North Sea.

revolutionise space exploration by improving astronaut mobility and flexibility in different planetary environments.

The BioSuit™ provides life support by applying mechanical counter-pressure to an astronaut's whole body through the tight-fitting suit with the helmet for their head. This design is based on the concept of a "second skin" capability, which makes use of skin replacement and materials from biomedical breakthroughs.

Additionally, the outer layer of the Bio-Suit is embedded with "wearable technologies", and is recyclable, while the inner layer of the Bio-Suit can be sprayed or disposed of after each EVA mission. This is yet another design advantage in the extreme dusty planetary environments in which the astronauts commonly work.

Newman concluded her keynote address by stating that "the world's space faring nations are at the threshold of a new era of human spaceflight" and brought up the larger issue: Why human space exploration? This timely question alludes to the considerations that engineering raises and the impact asking these big questions can have on the future as well as knowledge gathering as a whole. ■



Dava Newman gave a lecture on "A New Age of Exploration: Human Spaceflight Research and Future Directions" at launch of National Engineers Day 2011. Guests were also treated to a face-to-face viewing of her invention, the Biosuit™.

For more information on the Biosuit™, refer to mvl.mit.edu/EVA/biosuit/index.html

About the Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES)

Formally established in 1986, The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES) is the national society of engineers in Singapore. Well-represented by faculty members of the major engineering institutions of high learning in Singapore and in close collaboration with the local universities and polytechnics, IES organises courses, seminars and talks for engineers and IES members to advance and ensure the continual development of the engineering field. The institution also maintains close links with professional organisations of engineers regionally and throughout the world, including those in Australia, China, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States.

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Tune Into Singapore's Musical Heritage On MusicSG

Whether you are an avid fan of xinyao music (Singapore-Chinese ballads) or a researcher exploring the history of nostalgic Malay folk songs, the newly-minted online archive, MusicSG (musicsg.pl.sg), is a treasure trove of music related to Singapore that you will want to tap.

As the nation's first digital archive for music, MusicSG allows scholars or students doing research or individuals with a keen personal interest in Singapore music to access music-related works, both historical and contemporary, such as recordings, scores, articles, lyrics and album covers. With offerings from many genres ranging from classical, instrumental, jazz, pop, rock and metal, the website is a convenient one-stop portal that

showcases music written in Singapore's four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil.



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An Upbeat Tempo in Preserving Singapore Music Heritage

A collaborative effort by the National Library Board (NLB) and the Composers and Authors Society of

Singapore (COMPASS), MusicSG gathers a dazzling array of content on Singapore music in a bid to raise the awareness of local music, and provide resources for research and discovery.

This portal is also part of a nationwide drive to preserve Singapore's heritage. Explaining the need to capture crucial snapshots of our history, Dr Edmund Lam, Chief Executive and Director of COMPASS explained that "as time elapses, many significant moments in music history are in danger of deteriorating to the point where they would be lost forever. MusicSG aims to save these materials for the enjoyment and education of future generations."

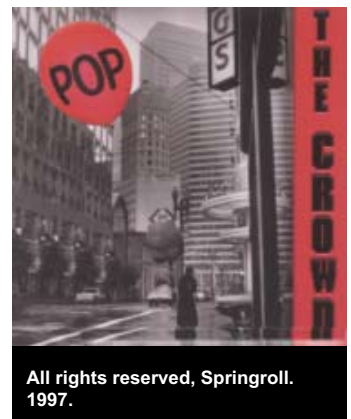


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The Singapore music portal also aims to attract COMPASS members, music industry players and members of the public to donate their published music works to its fast-growing collection.

Fuss-free Ways to Plug-and-Play

One key feature of MusicSG is its catalogue of music by recordings, albums, genres, instruments and scores. Anyone who is passionate about the local music scene can look up articles on the history and development of Singapore music, or specific music topics. Biographies of local composers, lyricists and musicians, including discographies, awards and commendations, and other related information can also be found on the site.



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Access to the digital depository is free-of-charge and no account registration is required. Music enthusiasts may search for the soundtracks of their choice from the multimedia stations at NLB's network of 23 public libraries and the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.



All rights reserved, Association of Composers (Singapore). 2009.

In addition, users may access MusicSG from the comfort of their homes, where copyrights granted by the owners permit.

The online music portal also provides a platform for NLB digital account users to wax lyrical over their favourite tunes.

NLB welcomes donations to MusicSG's growing archive of musical works. We accept music composed by Singaporeans, published by record companies based in Singapore or musical works and paraphenalia related to Singapore. All titles should be in good physical condition with clear sound quality to facilitate digitisation. ■



Michelle Heng
Reference Librarian
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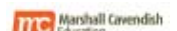
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