



SINGAPORE UNBOUND

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL.

Singapore beyond Singapore. Beyond territorial sovereignty and legal fictions. Beyond political controls and cultural straitjackets. Singapore Unbound is an invitation to dream new possibilities for the idea of Singapore.

Starting in the USA, Singapore Unbound builds people-to-people understanding by facilitating cultural exchange, publishing literary works of merit, and presenting insightful events.

Our flagship activity is the biennial Singapore Literature Festival in New York. Started in 2014, the festival brings together Singaporean and American authors and audiences for in-depth conversations about literature and society. Between festivals, we extend the dialogue by running the Second Saturdays Reading Series, a regular platform for the reading of Singaporean and American literatures in various intimate venues around New York City. Our boutique press, Bench Press, puts out works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction by authors from both countries. We are especially interested in publishing new and non-mainstream voices. Finally, Singapore Poetry is our on-line arts and news magazine focusing on all things poetic about Singapore and beyond.

Our activities are guided by three core values. We aim to be independent, innovative, and inspiring. A

staunch proponent of the freedom of expression, Singapore Unbound upholds the creative autonomy of the committed writer. We challenge censorship of the arts and support fair opportunities for all artists. Motivated by a spirit of innovation, we create opportunities and collaborations where none exists before. In our audience outreach, we seek always to inspire a love for literature. The arts, for us, are not a hobby or a tool, but a way of life.

Singaporeans and Americans have been living in one another's country for a long time. The history of this two-way expatriation is yet to be written. More recently, with the growth in arts education, creative industries, and academic ties between both countries, more writers and artists are making their home abroad. Singapore Unbound is born of this movement of people and ideas. We invite you to dream with us and shape the course of this migration.

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Welcome to the 3rd Singapore Literature Festival in NYC, organized by Singapore Unbound

Political and social discourse has become so fraught and divisive everywhere that it is hard to say anything without attracting opprobrium and immediate contradiction unless it is said in the narrowest of terms. The passion for righting historical and current injustices has resulted in a certain intolerance for intelligent dissent and playful irony. When every word uttered and published is taken to be an existential threat, every word must be scrutinized for its social harm.

If there was ever a place for free expression, that place must be sought in literature. We look to writers and artists not so much as to preserve the purity of the dialect of the tribe as to create new ways of thinking and speaking in order to insist on the irreducibly individual and to reach across tribal lines. That is the first, though not the only, social function of writers, and it is what makes them worth paying attention to.

The festival theme “Say It Differently” challenges all of us, artists and audience, to reconsider what we know to be true and believe to be good. We all support the abstract notion that literature subverts conventional pieties until the pieties challenged are our own. It is immensely difficult to put one’s long-held and hard-won beliefs on the table; in fact, it may well be impossible. The best we can do may be to give a steady and open hearing to the different voices of the festival, to refrain from asking rhetorical questions, to reserve our verdict until the end. In other words, not to be a prosecutor, but to be a judge.

The festival provides much for your consideration. On Opening Night, a part of Asia Society’s ‘Season of India,’ novelists Balli Kaur Jaswal and Hari Kunzru discuss the role of the writer in the diaspora. In a New York premiere, Singapore’s Cake Theatrical Productions present their innovative re-envisioning of the myth of Medea, another way of saying it differently. The three-performance run is held at Harlem’s historic National Black Theatre, another first for the festival. Other events—author readings, panel

discussions, and storytelling—shed light on the arts of fiction, poetry, and drama, and their relation to passion, play, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, and race. Enriching the conversation are three events co-presented with different colleges around New York City, focusing on the topics of bilingualism, anthologies, and geo-politics.

In an educational initiative, the festival is reaching out to high-school students. Once more, we bring a festival author to The Brearley School. And for the first time, our Community Engagement volunteers invite students and teachers from Harlem and the Bronx to the festival. Understanding that this is only a start, we hope to forge strong ties between the festival and the community.

We cannot do all this without you. We are enormously grateful to our co-presenters and sponsors, many of whom have supported us since our beginning in 2014. You enable us to keep this festival independent and thriving. We cannot thank you enough for believing in the value of this cross-cultural and international exchange. Because of your generosity, all festival events have remained free of charge. This year, we start the practice of collecting door donations. All our donations go towards the Singapore Unbound Fellowship to bring an emerging Singaporean writer to New York next year.

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to some VIPs. To the festival organizing team, you have volunteered so much of your time and thought to this venture. I am deeply thankful for your innovative, collaborative, and can-do spirit. This festival prides itself on its grassroots approach to arts organizing. You make that ideal a reality.

And to you, our audience, thank you for spending your time with us. You inspire us in your belief that literature matters.

Jee Leong Koh
Founder and Organizer, Singapore Unbound


 OPENING
NIGHT
**THE
ANTHOLOGIST'S
DREAM**

Ng Yi-Sheng

Danielle Barnhart

Martha Cooley

Moderated by Rachel Dean

Thursday, October 04, 2018

2:30–4:00 pm

Adelphi University,

University Center 313,

Garden City, NY

Co-presented by Adelphi University
as a part of the Soapbox Series roundtable
discussions.

The rise of literary anthologies in Singapore and in the USA is an exciting phenomenon. The genre questions the limits of single-author works, and is in turn questioned with regard to format and inclusivity. How are anthologies conceived, developed, and edited? Who chooses—or is chosen—to develop and edit an anthology? How, and why?

The panelists are in a unique position to answer these questions. Ng Yi-Sheng is a poet, playwright, and fictionist, as well as the editor of two groundbreaking anthologies of queer stories and a collection of subverted Asian fairy tales. Danielle Barnhart and her co-editor Iris Mahan conceived and edited an anthology with a feminist ethos that cuts across race, gender identity, and sexuality. Martha Cooley is developing a multi-genre anthology of responses to Italian author Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.

Free and open to the public. Book signing after the event. Light refreshment sponsored by Adelphi University's MFA program.

**PASSION AND THE
ART OF FICTION**

Hari Kunzru

Balli Kaur Jaswal

Moderated by Tanya Agathocleous

Thursday, October 4, 2018

7:00–9:00 pm

Asia Society

725 Park Avenue, at 70th Street

New York, NY

Co-presented by Asia Society.

We live in a time of political and environmental crisis when passions run high on all sides. The contemporary novelist must take into account public as well as private emotions and their creative and destructive potential. This imaginative task can be complicated when the author is an immigrant, divided between their birthplace and their country of residence. Is this divide conducive or inhibitive of writing about a force so atavistic yet urgent as passion? Two writers of the Indian diaspora, Hari Kunzru (*White Tears*) and Balli Kaur Jaswal (*Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows*) read from their latest work and discuss their imaginative relation to passion, vocation, and obsession with postcolonial and transnational literature scholar Tanya Agathocleous.

Free and open to the public. Registration highly recommended. Wine reception and book signing after the event.

**BALLI KAUR JASWAL AT THE
BREARLEY SCHOOL**

Friday, October 5, 2018
9.50–10.20 am
The Brearley School
610 E 83rd Street, NY, NY

Co-presented by Brearley's Upper School
Creative Writing Club and Asian Awareness
Committee.

Singaporean author Balli Kaur Jaswal will read from her novel *Sugarbread* about a young Punjabi girl growing up in Singapore. After the reading she will talk about her writing process and the place of her racial and ethnic identity in it.

Free admission. Open to Brearley faculty, staff, and students only.

**SINGAPORE: FROM
NON-ALIGNMENT TO
NEUTRALITY**

Ng Yi-Sheng
Manish Melwani
Joanna Phua
Moderated by Saronik Bosu and Heba Jahama

Friday, October 5, 2018
4:00–5:30 pm
New York University
The Event Space
244 Greene Street, 1st Floor
New York, NY

Co-presented by NYU's Postcolonial,
Race & Diaspora Colloquium.

During the Cold War, Singapore was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, which sought to form a counterbalance against the Western and Communist blocs. Nowadays, Singapore is regularly perceived as a “neutral territory” for the meetings of world leaders, including the Trump-Kim summit. Its critics, both local and abroad, charge that the country has never been neutral. It is, instead, a space of political contest, both within and without. How do the country's writers respond to the various forms of state control without falling in with a Eurocentric view of the world? How do they negotiate with American cultural dominance without reiterating the politics of Singaporean exceptionalism? Is there a place, in literature and politics, for neutrality? If not, what is the alternative?

Free and open to the public. Registration highly recommended. Book signing after the event.

Reception sponsored by Professor Jini Kim Watson, English Department, NYU.



Friday, October 5, 2018
 7:00-10:00 pm
 National Black Theater
 2031 5th Avenue, at 125th Street
 Harlem, NY

1. PLAY AND THE ART OF POETRY

Vijay Seshadri
 Stephanie Burt
 Ng Yi-Sheng
 Moderated by Jenny Xie

Jokes, irony, allusions, doing something for its own sake—play courts misunderstanding, sidelining and, even, contempt. It seems too light, too trivial, for the serious problems of the world. Yet, because of its close attention to form and language, poetry is necessarily playful. Like a child, it is delighted by a rhyme. Like a comedian, it works hard at just the right timing. To explore how poetry and play may rejuvenate the prevailing social and political discourse, three poets, Vijay Seshadri (*3 Sections*), Stephanie Burt (*Advice from the Lights*), and Ng Yi-Sheng (*A Book of Hims*) read from their work and discuss the uses, and the limits, of play with poet Jenny Xie.

2. "MEDEA" BY CAKE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS (SINGAPORE)

Directed by Natalie Henedige
 Starring Noorlinah Mohd
 Talkback moderated by Ruth Tang

A foreigner from an ancient civilization, Medea becomes the perpetual outsider in a city defined by self-proclaimed civility and rule of law. When her husband deserts her to marry the daughter of the city's Premier, she is left utterly displaced. Facing imminent exile with nothing save the skin on her back, she redirects her anguish into vengeance, punishes her enemies and horrifies the populace by spilling the blood of her own children on their very ground.

Cake's creation of *Medea* materializes at the intersection of myth and contemporary turbulence. One of the most fascinating mythological figures of all time, Medea has come to be a symbol for the marginalized in almost every religious and cultural context. Ever resonant, Medea's myth reverberates from the fringes where the alarming cries of the oppressed warn of the shattering consequences of their defiance.

Friday Night Double Bill is free and open to the public. Patrons are encouraged to attend both parts of the evening. Book signing during the intermission. Registration is highly recommended. Door donations go towards the Singapore Unbound Fellowship to bring an emerging Singaporean writer to New York.

Reception sponsored by Graywolf Press.



Saturday, October 6, 2018
 2:00-5:00 pm
 National Black Theater
 2031 5th Avenue, at 125th Street
 Harlem, NY

1. DEFIANT LOVE: FROM NIGERIA AND SINGAPORE

Balli Kaur Jaswal
 Chinelo Okparanta
 Moderated by Naomi Jackson

Tired of Romeo and Juliet? From Nigeria and Singapore come two fighting love stories. In their very different ways, both novels *Under the Udala Trees* by Chinelo Okparanta and *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows* by Balli Kaur Jaswal defy the common expectations placed on love and literature. In conversation with novelist Naomi Jackson, the two authors discuss the relationship between fiction, fantasy, and fact, and the challenges of being a woman writer.

2. "MEDEA" BY CAKE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS (SINGAPORE)

Directed by Natalie Hennedige
 Starring Noorlinah Mohd
 Talkback moderated by Ruth Tang

A foreigner from an ancient civilization, Medea becomes the perpetual outsider in a city defined by self-proclaimed civility and rule of law. When her husband deserts her to marry the daughter of the city's Premier, she is left utterly displaced. Facing imminent exile with nothing save the skin on her back, she redirects her anguish into vengeance, punishes her enemies and horrifies the populace by spilling the blood of her own children on their very ground.

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Saturday Matinee Double Bill is free and open to the public. Patrons are encouraged to attend both parts of the evening. Book signing during the intermission. Registration is highly recommended. Door donations go towards the Singapore Unbound Fellowship to bring an emerging Singaporean writer to New York.

Reception sponsored by Benety Goh and Shirley Fang.



Saturday, October 6, 2018
 7:00-10:00 pm
 National Black Theater
 2031 5th Avenue, at 125th Street
 Harlem, NY

1. STORIES FROM ALFIAN SA'AT'S "MALAY SKETCHES"

Directed by Zizi Azah Abdul Majid
 Talkback moderated by Kai Sundermann

Precise yet universal, grounded yet probing, *Malay Sketches* opens a prismatic window into the doubly minoritized Malay-Muslim community in Singapore. Alternating between flash fiction and longer ruminative stories, Alfian Sa'at adopts the role of compassionate and creative demographer, tracing the inner lives of his fictional characters as they navigate individual and collective nostalgias, religious piety and doubt, and issues of class and race. In this dramatic reading of selected stories from the collection, director Zizi Azah Abdul Majid and her actors will bring to life these narrative gems.

2. "MEDEA" BY CAKE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS (SINGAPORE)

Directed by Natalie Henedige
 Starring Noorlinah Mohd
 Talkback moderated by Kai Sundermann

A foreigner from an ancient civilization, Medea becomes the perpetual outsider in a city defined by self-proclaimed civility and rule of law. When her husband deserts her to marry the daughter of the city's Premier, she is left utterly displaced. Facing imminent exile with nothing save the skin on her back, she redirects her anguish into vengeance, punishes her enemies and horrifies the populace by spilling the blood of her own children on their very ground.

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Reception sponsored by Patsey Yeo-Ramaker.

Pre-Festival Events

TWO-TONGUED: BILINGUALISM IN LITERATURE

Ng Yi-Sheng
E.K. Tan

Wednesday, October 3, 2018
1:00-2:30 pm
Stony Brook University, NY

This event brings together a writer and a scholar from Singapore to discuss the role of bilingualism in literature. Writer Ng Yi-Sheng and Professor E.K. Tan will address the following issues related to the topic: What is bilingual literature? What are some themes that are common in bilingual writings? Does bilingualism in literature undermine or reproduce language hierarchy? Do most postcolonial literatures comprise bilingual or multilingual characteristics? Please join us in this special occasion to participate in a dialogue in which the practice of bilingualism in literature meets its theorization.

Free admission. Open to Stony Brook faculty, staff, and students only. Book signing after the event.

Reception sponsored by Stony Brook University, Department of English and Department of Asian and Asian American Studies.

OPENING PARTY

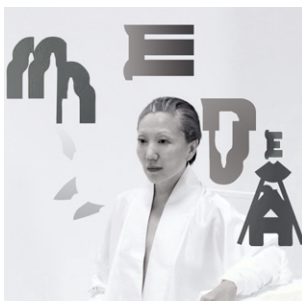
Wednesday, October 3, 2018
7:00-9:00 pm
A home in Harlem

Madeleine Thien reads from her latest novel, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, which won the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Governor-General's Literary Award for Fiction, and was shortlisted for the 2016 Man Booker Prize.

By invitation only. Reception sponsored by Ethos Books (Singapore).

**BALLI KAUR
JASWAL**

Balli Kaur Jaswal is the author of *Inheritance*, which won the Sydney Morning Herald's Best Young Australian Novelist Award in 2014, and *Sugarbread*, a finalist for the 2015 inaugural Epigram Books Fiction Prize. She has been a writer-in-residence at the University of East Anglia and Nanyang Technological University. Her third novel *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows* (Harper Collins/William Morrow) was released internationally in March 2017, with film rights sold to Ridley Scott's production company, Scott Free Productions, and Film Four in the UK. Jaswal lives in Singapore, where she is currently working on her PhD in English and Creative Writing.

**CAKE
THEATRICAL
PRODUCTIONS**

Led by Natalie Hennedige, Cake Theatrical Productions is a contemporary performance company based in Singapore. Cake's works are staged in conventional theaters as well as outdoor public spaces. From intimate theater experiments to lush outdoor spectacles, Cake is committed to exploring the possibilities of performance, offering pieces that are varied, multidisciplinary, and artistically adventurous.

**CHINELO
OKPARANTA**

Chinelo Okparanta is the author of *Happiness*, *Like Water* and *Under the Udala Trees*. Her honors include two Lambda Literary Awards, an O. Henry Prize, and finalist selections for the NYPL Young Lions Fiction Award, the International DUBLIN Literary Award, and the Etisalat Prize for Literature. She has been nominated for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award and the NAACP Image Award in Fiction. In 2017, she was named a Granta's Best of Young American Novelist and a Distinguished Immigrant by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

**DANIELLE
BARNHART**

Along with Iris Mahan, Danielle Barnhart is a founding editor of Village of Crickets, a literary website. She is the recipient of Adelphi University's 2015 Donald Everett Axinn Award in Poetry, and coordinates literary programming for Adelphi's MFA Program in Creative Writing.

**HARI
KUNZRU**

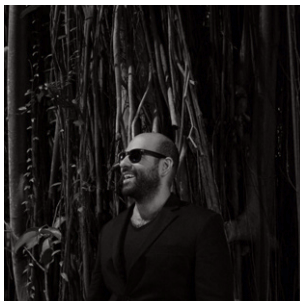
Hari Kunzru is the author of five novels, including *Gods Without Men* (2011) and *White Tears* (2017). His short stories and essays have appeared in diverse publications including *The New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Guardian*, *London Review of Books*, *Granta*, *Book Forum*, and *Frieze*. He was a 2008 Cullman Fellow at the New York Public Library, a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and a 2015 Fellow of the American Academy in Berlin. In 2014 he was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Born in London, he lives in New York City.

**JOANNA
PHUA**

Joanna Phua is Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at The Graduate Center, City University of New York. Trained as an inter-disciplinary scholar in both international relations and urban theory, she works on the politics of foreign assistance, especially technological aid for infrastructure building and urban development. Using her concept of “techno-power,” she analyzes how states like China, India, and Singapore leverage their technological capabilities for political gain in international politics and urban society.

**MADELEINE
THIEN**

Madeleine Thien was born in Vancouver, the daughter of Malaysian-Chinese immigrants to Canada. Her most recent novel, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, about art, music and revolution in 20th century China, won the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Governor-General’s Literary Award for Fiction, and was shortlisted for the 2016 Man Booker Prize, the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction, and The Folio Prize. Her books and stories have been translated into 25 languages and her essays have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Granta*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. She is professor of English at Brooklyn College.

**MANISH
MELWANI**

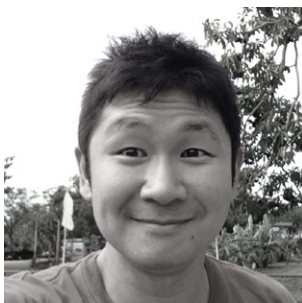
Manish Melwani is a Singaporean writer. He attended the Clarion Writers’ Workshop in 2014, and recently completed his MA at NYU’s Gallatin School, where he studied science fiction and fantasy, postcolonial studies, and the maritime history of Singapore. His academic research traced the British Empire’s persistent influence on English-language science fiction and fantasy. He also wrote a collection of supernatural stories set over 700 years of Singaporean history. Manish’s fiction has been published in *Lontar: The Journal of Southeast Asian Speculative Fiction* and in the Shirley Jackson Award-winning anthology *Shadows and Tall Trees*.

**MARTHA
COOLEY**

Martha Cooley is the author of two novels, *The Archivist* (a national bestseller also published in a dozen foreign markets) and *Thirty-Three Swoons*, as well as a memoir, *Guesswork*. She is the co-translator of Antonio Tabucchi's story collection *Time Ages in a Hurry*. Her essays, short fiction, and translations have appeared in numerous literary journals.

**NATALIE
HENNEDIGE**

Natalie Hennedige is the Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions, a contemporary performance company based in Singapore. A recipient of the National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2007 and the JCCI Singapore Foundation Culture Award in 2010, Natalie conceptualises, writes, and directs works in theatre and other media. Constantly collaborating with artists from across disciplines such as visual arts, film and video, performance art, and dance, Natalie engineers contemporary works that are artistically adventurous, playing at conventional theatrical venues and unusual public spaces to create performance-based experiences.

NG YI-SHENG

Ng Yi-Sheng is a Singaporean poet, playwright, fictionist, critic, journalist and LGBT+ activist. His books include the poetry collections *last boy* (winner of the Singapore Literature Prize 2008), *Loud Poems for a Very Obliging Audience*, and *A Book of Hims*, as well as the film novelization *Eating Air*. Additionally, he translated Wong Yoon Wah's Chinese poetry collection *The New Village* and has co-edited anthologies such as *GASPP: a Gay Anthology of Singaporean Poetry and Prose and Eastern Heathens: Asian Folklore Subverted*. Winner of the first Singapore Poetry Slam in 2003, he co-organizes the annual cultural and activist festival IndigNation.

**NOORLINAH
MOHD**

Noorlinah Mohd is an award-winning actress of stage, television, and film. As an actress, she has worked in Singapore as well as Asia, Europe and the US. She is also a teaching artist, and a consultant in arts pedagogy with a PhD in Arts Education from the University of Warwick. She was the Director of The O.P.E.N., the pre-festival of ideas and public engagement initiative of the Singapore International Festival of Arts (2014-2017). Noorlinah is a recipient of the JCCI Cultural Award (2008) and the Women's Weekly Women of our Time Award (2005) for her contributions to the arts.

**STEPHANIE
BURT**

Stephanie (also Stephen and Steph) Burt is the author of three poetry collections, *Belmont*, *Parallel Play*, and *Popular Music*, and several collections of critical works. Her essay collection *Close Calls with Nonsense* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her other works include *Advice from the Lights*; *The Poem is You: 60 Contemporary American Poems and How to Read Them*; *The Art of the Sonnet*; *Something Understood: Essays and Poetry for Helen Vendler*; *The Forms of Youth: Adolescence and 20th Century Poetry*; *Parallel Play: Poems*; *Randall Jarrell on W. H. Auden*; and *Randall Jarrell and His Age*. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *London Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Believer*, and the *Boston Review*.

**VIJAY
SESHADRI**

Vijay Seshadri is the author of *Wild Kingdom* (1996); *The Long Meadow* (2003), which won the James Laughlin Award; and *3 Sections* (2013), which won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry. He has received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the NEA, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He has worked as an editor at the *New Yorker* and has taught at Sarah Lawrence College, where he currently directs the graduate non-fiction writing program.

**ZIZI AZAH
ABDUL MAJID**

Zizi Azah Abdul Majid is a playwright-director whose plays advocate for a shared humanity through a feminist lens. Her plays have been staged in Singapore, Malaysia and China. Productions she had directed include performances that were part of the Singapore Arts Festival, the Journey Beijing Festival, the M1 Fringe Festival as well as the Singapore Theatre Festival. For five years, Zizi served as Artistic Director of Teater Ekamatra (Singapore), the only woman ever to helm the theater company in its 29-year history. Her work has been nominated for multiple awards at the Life! Theatre Awards (Singapore) and in 2012, she was conferred the Young Artist Award in recognition of her significant contributions to Singapore theater. She is currently pursuing her MFA in Playwriting at Columbia University.

E.K. TAN

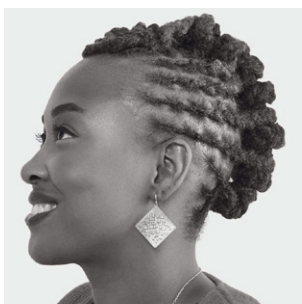
E.K. Tan is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of English and the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies. He is the author of *Rethinking Chineseness: Translational Sinophone Identities in the Nanyang Literary World* (2013) and articles published in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *Journal of Modern Chinese Literature*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Journal of World Chinese Literature*, and others. His current projects include two manuscripts tentatively titled *Queer Homecoming in Sinophone Cultures: Translocal Remapping of Kinship* and *Mandarinization and Its Impact on Sinophone Cultural Production: A Transcolonial Comparison of Ethnic China, Singapore and Taiwan*.

HEBA JAHAMA

Heba Jahama received her BA at The College of New Jersey and is currently pursuing a PhD in English at New York University. Her interests include postcolonial studies, queer theory, and literature of Africa and the Middle East.

JENNY XIE

Jenny Xie is the author of *Eye Level* (Graywolf Press), recipient of the 2017 Walt Whitman Award of the Academy of American Poets, and *Nowhere to Arrive* (Northwestern University Press), recipient of the Drinking Gourd Chapbook Prize. She has received fellowships and support from Kundiman, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Elizabeth George Foundation, and Poets & Writers. She teaches at New York University.

NAOMI JACKSON

Naomi Jackson is author of *The Star Side of Bird Hill*. *Star Side* was nominated for an NAACP Image Award, longlisted for the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize and the International Dublin Literary Award, and named an Honor Book for Fiction by the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Jackson studied fiction at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

**RACHEL
DEAN**

Rachel Dean is an MFA candidate at Adelphi University. She writes fiction and nonfiction.

**RUTH
TANG**

Ruth Tang (she/they) is a playwright and poet. Her short play "Bad Chinese" was selected for the 2018 Samuel French Off-Off-Broadway Festival. She is working on an MFA in Playwriting at the New School for Drama and lives, depending on the time of year, in Singapore and New York City.

**SARONIK
BOSU**

Saronik Bosu is a doctoral student in the Department of English, New York University. Focusing on India between independence in 1947 and economic liberalization in 1991, his purpose is to subject political economic thought to literary criticism and to investigate how such thought, in its turn, has occasioned the production of literatures. Saronik received his B.A. degree from Presidency College, Kolkata, and his M.A. and M.Phil. degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**TANYA
AGATHO-
CLEOUS**

Tanya Agathocleous is Associate Professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, where she teaches classes on Victorian literature and on colonial and postcolonial studies. She is the author of *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (Cambridge, 2011), a Broadview edition of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, a Penguin enhanced edition of *Great Expectations*, a YA biography of George Orwell, and several academic articles on nineteenth-century literature in global, transnational and imperial contexts. She has also written for Public Books and LARB.

**FROM "EROTIC STORIES FOR PUNJABI WIDOWS"
BY BALLI KAUR JASWAL**

At dinner, Jason asked Nikki how her job at the temple was going. ‘Good,’ Nikki said, ‘There’s not much to say about it, really,’ she shrugged. ‘I’m just teaching old ladies to read and write.’

‘It sounds quite rewarding.’

‘It is,’ Nikki said.

‘Is it something you’ve always wanted to do?’

‘Sure,’ Nikki said, and now she could not help breaking out into a smile. ‘I’ve always wanted to do some sort of community service, and this involves writing, so it combines my two passions.’ The word passion made her giggle.

‘Your mum and sister must be proud at the very least that you’re helping women in the community.’

Nikki burst out laughing. It was the sort of uncontrollable, gasping laughter that made her belly ache. She shook her head and shut her eyes, shaking with laughter and when she opened them, Jason was peering curiously at her.

‘Oh my goodness,’ Nikki said. Tears streamed down her face. ‘I have to tell you, don’t I?’

‘Tell me what?’

‘I’m not a teacher.’

‘What do you do then?’

‘I’m running an erotic storytelling workshop for Punjabi widows.’

Jason blinked. ‘What do you mean?’

‘Exactly that. Twice a week, we meet in the temple community centre on the pretence of learning English but the women come up with these sexual stories instead.’

‘You’re kidding,’ Jason said. ‘You have to be.’

Nikki found herself at the very beginning, telling Jason about how she had been fooled into thinking she’d be teaching a literacy class.

‘Are these proper widows? Like my grandmother?’

‘I don’t know. Does your grandmother harbour any fantasies of kneading dough for your grandfather’s roti with her bare bottom? Because that’s a story we did recently.’ It had been Arvinder’s idea. Both members of the couple had been aroused by this act—the half-naked woman grinding her bum over the gooey raw dough and the man eating the roti later which he claimed was velvety soft because of this secret method.

‘I can’t imagine her being savvy enough to come up with a story like that.’

‘Not to you maybe. But perhaps she talks about these things with her friends.’

‘She can’t even write her own name. There’s no way someone with that little exposure to the world could come up with such detailed sex stories.’

‘But sex and pleasure are instinctive, right?’

Good, satisfying sex makes perfect sense to even the most illiterate person. You and me, we’re just used to seeing it as an advanced invention because we learned about it after we learned the other basics—reading, writing, learning how to use a computer, all of that. To the widows, sex comes before all of that knowledge.’

‘I didn’t hear a word of that because I’m thinking about my grandmother making sex-roti,’ Jason said with a grimace.

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**REREADING
BY VIJAY SESHADRI**

Remember that family who lived in a boat
run aground and capsized
by the creamy dunes where the plovers nest?
Sea, sun, storm, and firmament
kept their minds occupied.
David Copperfield came and went,
and their sympathy for him was such
that they pitied him almost as much
as he pitied himself. But their story
is not like the easy one
where you return to me and
lift my scarred eyes to the sun
and stroke my withered hand
and marry me, distorted as I am.
He was destined to dismantle their lives,
David Copperfield, with his
treacherous friend and insipid wives,
his well-thought-out position
on the Corn Laws and the constitution.
They were stillness and
he was all motion.
They lived in a boat upside down on the strand,
but he was of the kind who couldn't understand
that land was not just land
or ocean ocean.

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**BUTTERFLY WITH PARACHUTE
BY STEPANIE BURT**

A real one wouldn't need one,
but the one Nathan draws surely does:
four oblongs the size and color of popsicles,
green apple, toasted coconut and grape,
flanked, two per side, by billowing valentine hearts,
in a frame of Scotch tape.
Alive, it could stay off the floor
for a few unaerodynamic minutes;
thrown as a paper airplane, for a few more.
Very sensibly, therefore,
our son gave it something, not to keep it apart
from the ground forever, but rather to make safe its descent.
When we ask that imagination discover the limits
of the real
world only slowly,
maybe this is what we meant.

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**FROM "WHITE TEARS"
BY HARI KUNZRU**

The light was failing as we found the cabin, which was set back from the road under a huge cottonwood. I switched off the engine and suddenly the night was full of information, the susurrus of insects closing over me in a great wave. On the porch burned a kerosene lamp. A little boy, maybe six or seven years old, scraped a bottleneck along a piece of wire nailed to one of the uprights. Up and down, a melancholy twang like a Jew's harp.

—Evening, son. My name's Bly. Is your mother home?

The boy just stared at us and carried on playing. Then I saw there was someone else on the porch, an ancient woman in a rocking chair. She was made of shadows. I can't tell you how I knew, because I do not understand, but shadows were woven into the flowers on her cotton dress, the scoop of her eye sockets, her toothless jaw. I saw her and I lost the power of speech. Chester did not seem to see what I saw, or hear what I heard. That terrible insect war cry, that scraping.

—Good evening ma'am. My name is Bly. We're buying up old gramophone records. I'll pay you a dime apiece for any we take.

—Ain't got nothing for sale.

Her voice was like rustling paper, fugitive, near to silence. Chester put a foot up on the porch and smiled.

—You sure you don't have anything just hidden away?

—Not interested.

—All right then. I won't take up more of your valuable time. Just one last question, please indulge me. Man down the road said you might know something about Charlie Shaw.

Her silence lasted forever.

—Charlie.

Chester seemed unsure of her meaning. He leaned in.

—Charlie Shaw, a guitar player, from somewhere round here. I heard he came from along the river, between Rosedale and Friars Point.

Above his head, insects battered themselves to death against the glass chimney of the kerosene lamp.

—Boy was a rounder. Always traveling here and there.

Insects like static. The crackle and hiss.

—You knew Charlie Shaw?

—Have mercy. He never came back from Jackson.

—Ma'am, I'm interested in all the blues players from round here. It sounds to me like you knew Charlie Shaw. Did you ever hear him play?

—Of course I heard him play.

—Where?

—Right here, on this porch. He was my only brother.

Chester's face in the firelight, transfixed. Chester's avaricious eyes.

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**FROM "UNDER THE UDALA TREES"
BY CHINELO OKPARANTA**

I acknowledge to myself that sometimes I am a snail. I move myself by gliding. I contract my muscles and produce a slime of tears. Sometimes you see the tears and sometimes you don't. It is my tears that allow me to glide. I glide slowly. But, slowly, I glide. It is a while before I am gone.

That first night of our marriage, I was a snail. We were all of us once snails.

In the beginning, we had stayed with Mama in Aba, and we had slept in my room, just for that first month of marriage, that one-month space before Chibundu got the Port Harcourt job. Mama had found a second twin bed and mattress, and pushed them together so that they appeared to be a double bed. She had spread new sheets that she had purchased as our wedding gift.

This is how our first night together went: Imagine a snail protected by its hard shell. Imagine a snail when it is alarmed. Imagine the snail retreating into its shell.

That first night, Chibundu called me to him. He was wearing remnants of his tuxedo—the tie, the white shirt, the trousers. He sat on the edge of the mattress.

I went to him, sat by his side. No alarm yet.

"You've made me a very happy man," he said, leaning over, wrapping his arm around me.

He leaned in further, began kissing me. I allowed him to do so.

"There is no more complete happiness than the one I'm feeling now," he said between kisses. "Look at me. I feel like I can fly."

A slight bit of alarm was rising in me now. "Go ahead and fly," I wanted to say. "Go ahead and fly, so long as you land far enough away from me."

Instead, I said, "We should try and get some sleep."

He laughed. Not disrespectfully. Almost appreciatively, for the sexual banter he perceived was going on. "Nawa o!" he said. "Women and their teasing! But of course, Ijeoma, you do know that sleep is the very last thing on my mind!" He made a sudden movement with his hands, and I watched as he began tugging at the front of his trousers. Then came that dreaded sound: just the sound of a man undoing his zipper, but it was as if a sharp object had somehow been jabbed into my ears.

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THE AUDIENCE BY NG YI-SHENG

One day they will come for us:
the foolish ones, the intellectuals.
One day we will burn
like scrolls in Alexandria.

One day they will break down the gates
of our black box operas and ateliers.
Rip the masks from our faces
and the angklungs from our hands.

Listen,
they've sacked a museum,
outlawed an Aztec epic.
They've dynamited an Afghan Buddha,
a Dutch Madonna,
censored a film.

Listen,
the Khmer Rouge just called;
they want to take your photo.
The revolution must always devour
her brightest children.

Tonight you may sleep with them,
eat of their festivals, drink of their mooncake,
engineer their Moscow mausoleums—
but never forget:

One day, they will come,
a mighty parade, in a stadium built of our bones.
Open your mouth and sing:

it has always happened,

it has not happened, yet.

Credit: Ng Yi-Sheng, "The Audience" from *A Book of Hims* (Singapore: Math Paper Press, 2017). Copyright © 2017 by Ng Yi-Sheng. Reprinted with the author's permission.

BEDOK, 7PM BY ALFIAN SA'AT

Another loaded bus zooms past the bus stop, as the three women glance at their wristwatches, almost simultaneously. They are wearing their blue factory uniforms, which is an exact shade of the transitory twilight sky at that very moment, although this observation is lost to them.

The woman who is leaning against the railing has a mother who has had a stroke and is now confined to a wheelchair. The woman who stands near the road is thinking of what to cook for her daughter who had just returned home the day before after disappearing for three weeks. The woman on the bus stop seat has just been proposed to by a Malaysian Chinese co-worker who has promised to convert to Islam, although she wonders whether his conversation to another nationality will be as plausible, considering his income.

Another bus approaches, and the three women turn to look at it, as if at their respective futures, hoping this one will have space for them.

Credit: Alfian Sa'at, "Bedok, 7 PM" from *Malay Sketches*. Copyright © 2018 by Alfian Sa'at. Reprinted with the permission of Gaudy Boy, singaporeunbound.org/gaudyboy/.

Organizing Committee



JEE LEONG KOH

Founder and Organizer

Jee Leong Koh is a Singaporean poet, editor, publisher, and literary activist based in New York City. He is the author of *Steep Tea* (Carcenet), named a Best Book of the Year by UK's Financial Times, and a Finalist by Lambda Literary in the USA. He has published three other books of poems and a book of zuihitsu. The founder of the literary non-profit Singapore Unbound, Jee organizes the biennial Singapore Literature Festival in NYC and the monthly Second Saturdays Reading Series. He also edits SP Blog (formerly Singapore Poetry) and publishes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction under Gaudy Boy, an imprint of Singapore Unbound.



MAUREEN HOON-KATZ

Arts Consultant

Maureen Hoon-Katz is a Singapore-born visual artist based in New York. She is also a seasoned community organizer and arts administrator with a focus on cross-cultural collaborations and educational projects. Hoon-Katz has a Masters from Pratt Institute's School of Art & Design.



FLORA CHAN

Design Consultant

Flora Chan is a Singaporean designer based in New York City, and a graduate of the Communication Design program at Parsons School of Design. She works at the intersection of brand identity, systems design and product innovation. Her work has been recognized by the Art Directors Club, The One Club, the AIGA and the Society for News Design. (floramakestings.com)



MAGDALENE SIM

Community Engagement

Magdalene Sim manages communications and social media for clients in nonprofit, sustainability, and the arts. She also produces videos, independent shorts, and films as part of The Media Horde.



JIA SING CHU

Community Engagement

Jia Sing Chu is a student at New York University completing an undergraduate degree in Economics and Social and Cultural Analysis. She is particularly interested in the dislocation between Man and space.



KIMBERLEY LIM

Event Manager

Kimberley Lim is an assistant editor at Skyhorse Publishing, an independent publishing house in New York City; the managing editor at Gaudy Boy, an indie press that publishes writers of Asian heritage; and the founder and editor of the online literary magazine OfZoos.com.

Organizing Committee



**HONG-LING
WEE**

Event
Manager

Dr. Hong-Ling Wee is a scientist-turned-artist whose work straddles sculptural objects and functional art. Her creations are in numerous public collections including the National Gallery (Singapore). Besides art-making, Hong-Ling has also organized several citizen-initiated events including the first grassroots Singapore Arts Festival in New York to celebrate Singapore's Golden Jubilee.



**CHIA LYNN
KWA**

Video Producer

Chia Lynn Kwa is a Singaporean graphic designer and photographer based in NYC. In her free time, she production manages and performs with the cult immersive theatre performance, Whisperlodge. She most recently co-wrote and designed a Whisperlodge-branded sensory tunnel experience in collaboration with Refinery29's immersive art installation, 29rooms.



**CHARISSE
FOO**

Photographer

Charisse Foo is a Singaporean designer and digital artist working in New York City. She is a recent graduate of Cornell University's B. Arch program, and her interests span architecture, illustration, and game design. Her work can be found at www.charissefoo.me.



**ALEJANDRA
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Photographer

Alejandra Arevalo is a sophomore student at New York University studying journalism and sociology. Originally from Lima, Peru, she moved to the United States to pursue a career in photojournalism. She has worked as photographer for several academic and non-profit organizations including New York University and the Nepali NGO Adhikaar. She is currently a writer at College Magazine, an online publication about lifestyle and advice for college students.

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