

Panel 3

Forming the Sinophone

Fragmented Fronts: Narrative Innovation and Cold War Structures in Postwar Sinophone Malaysian Literature

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This paper explores how postwar Sinophone literature from Malaysia and Singapore reconfigures narrative structures in response to Cold War ideologies and emergent national imaginaries. Focusing on the period between 1945 and 1965—a time of decolonization, ideological polarization, and state formation in Southeast Asia—it analyzes how writers such as Han Meng, Jin Zhimang, and Fang Beifang employ experimental narrative techniques to negotiate their positions within competing historical forces.

In addition to close readings of *The First Flight* and *Stories of the Red-Haired Building* by Han Meng, which deploy spatial fragmentation and internal monologue to represent diasporic identity, I discuss how Jin Zhimang's *Hunger* foregrounds corporeality and realism to depict the struggle of the marginalized under colonial capitalism. A notable work is Fang Beifang's *Malaya Trilogy*, which—though written in the 1980s—retrospectively reconstructs Cold War-era nation-building through polyphonic memory and narrative discontinuity. This paper reveals how these authors critically intervened in Cold War discourse through formal innovation.

By drawing on Fredric Jameson's national allegory, Rey Chow's theory of Sinophone Cold War subjectivity, and Edward Said's contrapuntal reading, this paper argues that narrative fragmentation becomes a strategy of intermedial resistance. Moreover, it contends that post-1980s re-narrations of Cold War history, such as Fang's, expose how the Cold War remains a structuring logic within the cultural field—long after its military climax. This study thus contributes to broader debates on postcolonial modernism, world literature from the periphery, and the aesthetics of ideological rupture in Cold War and post-Cold War Southeast Asia.

Biography

An Yiduo is a PhD candidate in Chinese at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research focuses on postwar Sinophone Malaysian and Singaporean literature, national imaginaries, and cultural Cold War discourse. She is particularly interested in narrative innovation and the articulation of diasporic subjectivity in minor Chinese-language literatures.