

HL1005 Singapore Literature and Culture I

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Lecture: Mondays 1030-1230 (LT 6)

Singapura, which means “Lion City” in Sanskrit, is a misnomer. Lions are not native to the region, so Sang Nila Utama, if he was indeed the one who named the city after the magnificent beast, probably made a mistake when he thought he sighted one here. Or perhaps we were simply “Singgah,” a Malay word which could mean ‘sojourn’, as in “Would you like to stay and have a rest for a while?” and ‘stopping by’, “I’ll stop by there before I leave.” Somewhere along the way, we lost a ‘g’ and a ‘h’, acquired a ‘pura’, then a ‘pore’. If this has all along been Singgah, if this is indeed a stopover, where do we go from here? How did this become an extended stay for some? How does a temporary place become a permanent home? *When are we ever home?* These are the questions we will explore through the texts in this course. Surveying literature of Singapore written in English between 1950 to the present, we will consider the meaning of nostalgia, of home and homelessness, of belonging and foreignness, and the individual’s place, both real and imagined, in an increasingly diverse world.

Required Texts

Balli Kaur Jaswal’s *Inheritance* (Epigram, 2016) ISBN: 9789814757362

Alfian Sa’at’s *Corridor: 12 Short Stories* (Ethos Books, 2015) ISBN: 978-981-07-7993-1

Nuraliah Norasid’s *The Gatekeeper* (Epigram, 2017) ISBN: 9789811700903

All other texts will be made available in NTULearn’s Course Content Folder

Assessment

Presentation: 20%

Coursework Essay (1200 words) 30%

Final Exam 50%

Reading Schedule

Week 1 9 Jan	Introduction to SingLit	
Week 2 16 Jan	Multiple Perspectives	“Three Faces of Night” by Wang Gungwu, from <i>Pulse</i> (1950) “Point of View” by Wong May, from <i>A Bad Girl’s Book of Animals</i> (1969) “location” by Arthur Yap, from <i>only lines</i> (1971)
Week 3 23 Jan	Communal (Recorded lecture uploaded to NTULearn; tutorials as usual)	“May 1954” by Edwin Thumboo, from <i>Ulysses by the Merlion</i>

<i>Public holiday</i>		"Renovation" by Edwin Thumboo, from <i>A Third Map: New and Selected Poems</i> (1993)
Week 4 30 Jan	Alienation	Kuo Pao Kun's <i>Mama looking for her cat</i> from <i>The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun</i> (1988)
Week 5 6 Feb	Marginality	"Video" and "Orphans" from Alfian Sa'at's <i>Corridor: 12 Short Stories</i> (1999)
Week 6 13 Feb	Gender and Sexuality [Essay questions released]	Balli Kaur Jaswal's <i>Inheritance</i> (2013)
Week 7 20 Feb	Mental Health	Balli Kaur Jaswal's <i>Inheritance</i> (2013)
27 Feb	Recess	
Week 8 6 Mar	Nostalgia I [Essay due]	Mohamed Latiff Mohamed's "Lost", from <i>Living in Babel</i> (2017), translated by Nur-El-Hudaa Binte Jaffar Mohamed Latiff Mohamed's "Vanished", from <i>Lost Nostalgia: Stories</i> (2017), translated by Nazry Bahrawi
Week 9 13 Mar	Nostalgia II	Boey Kim Cheng's "Clear Brightness" from <i>Clear Brightness: New Poems</i> (2012) "There is no future in Nostalgia" by Arthur Yap, from <i>The Collected Poems of Arthur Yap</i> (2013)
Week 10 20 Mar	Reimagining a world I	Nuraliah Norasid's <i>The Gatekeeper</i>
Week 11 27 Mar	Reimagining a world II	Nuraliah Norasid's <i>The Gatekeeper</i>
Week 12 3 Apr	Reimagining a world III	Yeo Siew Hua's <i>A Land Imagined</i> (2018) (Non-examinable)
Week 13 10 Apr	Review and Exam Preparations Return of essays during tutorials.	