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Abstracts, Notes of Contributors, Editorial Board

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Abstract

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ABSTRACTS

SOHAIMI ABDUL AZIZ

‘The Development of the Popular Malay Cult Novel’

The cult novel has attracted a large following of loyal and fanatical fans and supporters. Malay authors of the cult novel write in a variety of popular sub-genres such as action-venture, crime, detective, fantasy, horror, mystery, romance and science fiction. A shift towards popular culture in Malaysian society and increased digital literacy among young readers has had a tremendous impact on the growth of the Malay cult novel. The new media is an important contributing factor in this growth. This article discusses the development and impact of this phenomenon in Malaysia, taking the popular writer, Ramlee Awang Mursyid, as a case study.

MERLINDA BOBIS & DOLORES HERRERO

‘Sensing and Sensibility: The Late Ripple of Colonisation?’

The Philippines was colonised by Spain for nearly four hundred years (1521–1898), then by America for forty years (1901–1945). As a writer primarily in English, Merlinda Bobis has always ‘sensed’ that her sensibility has greater affinity with literatures of Hispanic/Latin-American rather than of English/American origins. Is this literary affinity a late ripple of colonisation? On reading Bobis’s short stories for the first time, Herrero sensed them as ‘so familiar’, evoking Spanish writers. This recognition may well reinforce that late ripple, now a liminal space for productive-subversive cultural production, where the creative arc is both disruptive and expansive. Bobis and Herrero explore this liminal space by collaboratively examining and translating (from English to Spanish) Bobis’s short story ‘Fish-Hair Woman’, while referencing its writing as, in fact, the earlier process of ‘translation’ of a Philippine story of militarism into an English text. They argue that these processes not only employ decolonising strategies, but also extend beyond the postcolonial into a transnational enterprise.

DOLORES HERRERO

‘Merlinda Bobis’s *Banana Heart Summer*: Recipes to Work Through Trauma and Appease the Human Heart’s Everlasting Hunger’

Banana Heart Summer (2005) is a truly original novel. What at first seems to be a collection of exotic recipes turns out to be a touching, funny and elegiac story. The myth of the banana heart inspires twelve-year-old Nenita, who will try to find the perfect balance between love and anger, to appease her family’s hunger and, which is even more important, to win her violent mother’s love. As she cooks and eats, or dreams of cooking and eating, other love stories unravel in Remedios Street, the street she lives in, significantly placed between an active volcano and

a Catholic church. In this paper I analyse the way in which the different symbols that the novel uses, food being one of the most important, contribute to giving it a most original and coherent structure, and also to draw the reader's attention towards some of the most outstanding messages that the novel seems to put forward, namely, the need for love and dialogue between different individuals and cultures, and for a multicultural and rather more cohesive model to be advocated in contemporary societies.

RUZY SULIZA HASHIM AND SHAHIZAH ISMAIL HAMDAN

'Facets of Women in Malay Romance Fiction'

In this essay, we compare two kinds of Malay fiction to show facets of women in selected Malay romance fiction. On the one hand, we analyse 'serious' Malay novels and their depictions of gender and sexuality. On the other hand, we also scrutinise popular Malay novels which seem to enjoy a wide reading audience. These works, however, share a common feature. They portray Malaysian women juggling the demands of their careers with personal relationships. While the closure is almost always the successful union of the heroine with the man of her choice, the events leading to this happy state are often tortuous, providing some insights into issues related to gender stereotypes. Malaysian women have been shown to outperform men in tertiary education generally, and they have also benefited from access to a wide range of professions, even those which have been perceived as dominated by men. Yet, women in these novels are still caught between the competing demands to be strong and independent while retaining their femininity. To what extent they negotiate these demands and whether or not they are shown to be successful in balancing the professional domain and the home front will be highlighted in the course of this article.

BOITRAN HUYNH-BEATTIE

'Less Seen Art, Made by Vietnamese-Australian Artists'

The fall of Saigon in 1975 witnessed an exodus that scattered Vietnamese refugees throughout the globe. Australia has a thriving Vietnamese community that contributes diversely to the national social fabric. However, on the subject of art (and other cultural forms), the community's leadership tends to adopt a political perspective of polarity and in some cases with emotional fascism. This article sheds some light onto art made by five Vietnamese Australian artists, whose visions are democratic, humanitarian, socially responsible and often satirical. These characteristics can be defined as shared Australian values as observed and portrayed by: My Le Thi, Mai Nguyen-Long, Hoang Tran Nguyen, Garry Trinh and Khue Nguyen. Vietnamese-Australian artists do not have a supportive network of commercial and national galleries promoting their cause, as seen in some other Asian Australian communities. One is left to ponder whether the sensitive politics within the Vietnamese-Australian community curb progress in this area.

MICHAEL JACKLIN

‘Southeast Asian Writing in Australia: The Case of Vietnamese Writing’

In recent years, Vietnamese-Australian experiences and stories have had greater opportunity to reach Australian readers and viewers, with a growing number of works in English now circulating, including autobiographies, films, anthologies and exhibitions. Literary work in Vietnamese produced by writers in Australia, however, rarely has the chance to move beyond the Vietnamese-reading community. As the most populous of all the Southeast Asian diasporic or migrant groups in Australia, it is not surprising that novels, short stories, essays, poetry and autobiographies are written in Vietnamese and circulate amongst readers of Vietnamese across Australia. Yet this literary activity has gone almost unrecognised by Australian literary scholars writing in English. In this article, I draw on research for the AustLit database conducted by myself and Boitran Huynh-Beattie to bring a part of Australia’s Vietnamese writing into focus. In particular, the poetry of Uyên Nguyên and Trần Đình Lương provide a basis for commentary upon experiences of displacement and loss experienced by Vietnamese-Australians, as well as raising questions regarding the relationship between diasporic writing and the literature of the host nation.

RODNEY C. JUBILADO

‘On Cultural Fluidity: The Sama-Bajau of the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas’

The Sama-Bajau is an indigenous group of Austronesians residing in the stretches of Sulu-Sulawesi Seas and beyond. Their community is comprised of a diverse group of people connected by the sea and the myths, rituals and dances which they carry beyond their ancestral homeland. For the Sama-Bajau, their point of reference is the sea, the sea current, and the other seas beyond the horizon. Although scholars have argued that these groups of people are basically one from an historical perspective, a growing consciousness of political and economic boundaries is giving rise to a sense of separateness among the groups themselves that belies the evidence of a shared culture. This essay presents some aspects of the cultural fabric that binds and unifies these diverse peoples, focussing on those who reside in the Sulu Archipelago, The Philippines and in Sabah, Malaysia.

SHAKILA ABDUL MANAN

‘Going against the Grain: Postcolonial Writings and Creative Performance in Malaysia’

In Malaysia, freedom of expression is curtailed by a number of draconian and repressive laws. However, this does not deter some of Malaysia’s foremost postcolonial writers from boldly utilising whatever limited space is given to them to dismantle accepted notions of gender, ethnicity and nation in order to articulate

alternative views and visions through their creative writings. These are also the endeavours of particular local Arts groups such as Ombak-Ombak ARTStudio that have explored the hybrid identities, linguistic and cultural syncretism — a legacy of colonialism — through staging children's street performances. With this in mind, it is the aim of this article to show how postcolonial literature and the creative arts have attempted to question the above-mentioned notions in order to reveal the complexities assailing a postcolonial multicultural country such as Malaysia and its attempts to achieve its own sense of national and cultural identity. To realise this objective, this article examines Che Husna Azhari's 'Ustazah Inayah', Lloyd Fernando's *Green is the Colour* and two children's street performances titled *Hen or Rooster* and *Ronggeng Merdeka*.

ROBYN MORRIS

'Relations of Difference: Asianness, Indigeneity and Whiteness in Simone Lazaroo's Fiction'

Simone Lazaroo's fiction is important in discussions of Australian identity formation for its exploration of acculturated representations of both Asianness and Indigeneity. Her body of work brings to visibility issues of representation, especially the way race and gender are intertwined as artificial constructions of difference within Australian cultural and historical discourse. This article examines how Lazaroo's novels engage in a triangulated contemporary representational politics through an articulation of 'relations of difference' in which characters of Asian, Indigenous and Anglo ancestry interact and react to racialised and gendered inscriptions of otherness. This article explores how Lazaroo critiques the hyper-visibility and sexualising of the Asian female body by the dominant white, Anglo Australian society and the concomitant erasure of the Indigenous body and culture in stories of nation in *The World Waiting to Be Made* (1994), *The Australian Fiancé* (2000), and *The Travel Writer* (2006). These works signal Lazaroo's ongoing interrogation of the politics of both relations of difference and looking relations.

PAUL SHARRAD

'Sang Kanchil Meets Sime Darby: Drawing New Postcolonial Boundaries in the Asia-Pacific'

This article sketches shifts from postcolonial to diaspora/transnational frameworks and then considers some interactions with ecocriticism. Postcolonial analysis inspects relations between Asia and the Pacific hidden in labels such as 'the Asia Pacific region'. Malaysia's investment in oil palm and logging is one key component, and colonial attitudes to nature and natives in Hugh Clifford's writing are compared to the environmentalist theme in Sharmini Flint's detective fiction.

CHI VU

‘The 1.5 Generation Vietnamese-American Writer as Post-Colonial Translator’

This article explores contemporary transnationalism through the creative texts written by Vietnamese-American 1.5 Generation authors, in order to define the generational impact on this emerging literature. Using post-colonial translation theory, this article examines how these authors’ literary production occurs across a cultural and linguistic gap, which increases the risk of invisibility, stereotyping and linguistic colonisation. In-between two cultures, cognitive systems and languages, authors of the 1.5 Generation are required to perform as ‘translators’ between the mainstream and minority reading cultures. In this role, 1.5 Generation authors such as Lan Cao and Linh Dinh employ creative strategies of resistance; their creative texts engage with the question of ‘who is translating whom and for what purpose?’ This essay examines how these authors’ creative texts perform their interstitial identity in the content as well as the poetics of their works.

MD. SALLEH YAAPAR

‘The Empire Strikes Back: Re-writing Malay History and Identity in Faisal Tehrani’s Novel *1515*’

1515 by Faisal Tehrani is a unique text within contemporary Malay literature. Among recent novels in Malaysia it is one of the most multifaceted narratives, with elements of romance, postcolonial discourse, postmodernism, socio-political criticism, feminism, history, legend, and even fantasy. This essay will discuss *1515* by combining several approaches, namely the postcolonial, postmodern and feminist approaches, with an emphasis on revisionism and alter-native perspectives. The focus is on the discourse of power within the text and the author’s reinterpretation of Malay identity and history. The novel is examined within the context of the author’s utilisation of history, legend, ideology and fantasy, and comparison is made to texts from the traditional Malay literary corpus.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

SOHAIMI ABDUL AZIZ is an Associate Professor at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. Currently Deputy Dean of Post-graduate Studies and Research in the School of Humanities, he joined the Literature Section of the School of Humanities in 1995 after completing his PhD in Literature from Universiti Sains Malaysia and Temple University of Philadelphia in the US. Sohaimi is an authority on Malaysian literature and culture, specialising in comparative literature, literary theory and criticism, children's literature and cultural studies. He has published nine books on literary criticism and comparative literature and has edited seven books on cultural studies published by Universiti Sains Malaysia.

MERLINDA BOBIS is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong, Australia, and an award-winning writer who has published novels, short stories, poetry books, and plays. Seven of her plays have been performed/produced in Australia, the Philippines, France, Spain, USA, China, Thailand, and the Slovak Republic. Merlinda has also used creative writing as an inroad to theorising. She is currently researching the trans-national imaginary with a partner researcher in Vigo, Spain, and story-making teams in Vigo and Wollongong, Australia. For more information on publications and awards, see <http://www.austlit.edu.au> and the author's website, <http://www.merlindabobis.com.au>

TRẦN LỘC BÌNH is a poet and essayist. He has been a contributor to the literary journals *Viet* and *Tiền Vê*. His poems have been included in the *Tiền Vê Anthology No.1* (2007). A political refugee from Vietnam, he is now living and working in Melbourne.

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DOLORES HERRERO is a Senior Lecturer in English and Postcolonial Literatures in the Department of English and German at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. Her research interests are in Cultural, Film and Postcolonial Studies, and Australian and Indian culture in particular. She belongs to a research team headed by Professor Susana Onega, working on trauma and the ethical component in contemporary fiction in English. Dolores has published widely in this area, and co-edited, with Marita Nadal, *Margins in English and American Literature, Film and Culture* (1997). She was the Editor of *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* from 1998 till 2006.

NGUYỄN TÔN HIỆT is a poet, essayist and literary commentator. His writings regularly appear in *Tiền Vê* and *Talawas*, and have been included in the *Tiền Vê Anthology No.1* (2007) and others. He is also a political polemicist who fiercely criticises the Vietnamese Communist government for its serious violation of human rights. A political refugee from Vietnam, he is now living and working in Sydney.

BOITRAN HUYNH-BEATTIE obtained a PhD in 2005 in art history from the University of Sydney, specialising in Vietnamese art. She has worked with the Australian National University, Melbourne University, University of Wollongong and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney, on various projects and exhibitions related to Vietnam's Diaspora since 2005. Huynh-Beattie has been awarded a 2011 Asialink grant to carry out her research in Vietnam, 'From Saigon to Sydney: The 20th Century Modernist (1954–75) Saigonesse Art and Vietnamese Australian Heritage'. She is currently documenting Vietnamese literature in Australia for the Australian Literature Resources database.

MICHAEL JACKLIN is a Research Fellow in the School of English Literatures and Philosophy at the University of Wollongong. His research into multilingual Australian literatures contributes to the AustLit database. Other research interests include collaboration in life writing, Indigenous literatures, and literatures of exile and diaspora. His publications have appeared in journals including *Antipodes*, *ARIEL*, *Australian Canadian Studies*, *JASAL*, *Kunapipi*, *Life Writing* and *New Literatures Review*.

RODNEY C. JUBILADO is a Filipino who lectures in the Graduate School of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He holds a Ph.D. degree in Linguistics from the National University of Malaysia. Rodney teaches General Linguistics, Minimalist Syntax, and Historical Linguistics in the postgraduate programs. His research interests include Austronesian studies, indigenous cultures, endangered languages, typology, and morphosyntax.

SHAKILA ABDUL MANAN is an Associate Professor of English Language Studies in the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. Her main research interests are in the areas of Stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Studies. Shakila has presented papers at local and international conferences. Her recent publications include two co-edited books: *Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific: Emerging Trends in Teaching and Learning* (2008, USM Publishers) and *Exploring Space: Trends in Literature, Linguistics and Translation* (2008, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK).

ROBYN MORRIS lectures in the English Literatures Program at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her areas of research interest include race, whiteness, gender, surveillance and the politics of representation. Her focus is contemporary

Australian and Canadian women's writing. Robyn has published widely on the work of writers such as Larissa Lai, Joy Kogawa, Hiromi Goto, Evelyn Lau, Lillian Ng, Simone Lazaroo and Hsu-Ming Teo in articles, book chapters, interviews and reviews. She is the Editor of *Australasian Canadian Studies* and Vice-President of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (ACSANZ).

CHANDRAN NAIR (b. 1945) was educated at the Raffles Institution, Singapore and the University of Singapore in science but went into publishing on graduation and later worked as a book development expert with UNESCO, first in Karachi (1981–1985) and then in Paris (1985–2004). His first two books of poems, *Once the Horsemen and Other poems* (1972) and *after the hard hours, this rain* (1975) were well received and he has co-translated with Malcolm Koh Ho Ping the *Poems and Lyrics of the Last Lord Lee* (the last Emperor of the Southern Tang Dynasty). Chandran won The New Nation Singapore Short Story Writing contest in 1973 with *Leta* and has published his stories in a number of anthologies. His collected poems were published under the title, *reaching for stones*, by Ethos Books Singapore in September 2010. Chandran was founder President of the *Society of Singapore Writers*, and continued as its president from 1976 to 1981.

UYÊN NGUYÊN is a poet and songwriter. He was one of the founding members of *Tập Hạp*, the first Vietnamese-language literary journal in Australia. He has also been a contributor to many Vietnamese literary journals worldwide. His poems have been included in such anthologies as *Hai Mươi Năm Văn Học Việt Nam Hải Ngoại 1975—1995* [Twenty Years of Vietnamese Literature Overseas 1975–1995] (California, 1995); *Selected Works in Vietnamese from the Vietnamese-Australian Writers* (Sydney, 1997), *26 Nhà Thơ Việt Nam đương Đại* [26 Contemporary Vietnamese Poets] (California, 2002), and *Tiền Vệ Anthology No.1* (2007). A political refugee from Vietnam, he is now living and working in Sydney.

MOHAMMAD A. QUAYAM, who has a PhD in English and American literature from Flinders University, South Australia, has been teaching at universities in Malaysia and Singapore since 1993. He has also taught at universities in Bangladesh and the US, and has published 21 books and numerous research articles in various areas of literature. His recent books include: *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories* (trans. and intro. Mohammad Quayum New Delhi: Macmillan, 2011), *A Rainbow Feast: New Asian Short Stories* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2010) and *Sharing Borders: Studies in Singaporean-Malaysian Literature* (Singapore: National Library Board and Singapore Arts Council, 2009).

PAUL SHARRAD is Associate Professor in English Literatures at the University of Wollongong, Australia. His specialisations are postcolonial writing and theory, in particular, work in English from India and the Pacific, although he has written as well on Australian, Caribbean, and Southeast Asian. He has books on Raja

Rao, Albert Wendt and on literary history and Indian English fiction and edited the *CRNLE Reviews Journal* and *New Literatures Review* for many years. He currently edits the 'New Literatures' section of *The Year's Work in English Literature* and is on editorial boards of the *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Postcolonial Text*, the *Journal of New Zealand Literature* and *Kunapipi*.

KIRPAL SINGH is a professor and currently director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre at the Singapore Management University where he teaches Creative Writing. Kirpal is a familiar face at numerous international Writers Festivals and Literary conferences and has been invited by some of the world's top universities to read, perform and discuss his work. In recent years he has been labeled a 'creativity guru', especially after the appearance of *Thinking Hats & Coloured Turbans: Creativity Across Cultures* (Prentice-Hall, 2004). Kirpal has two new collections of poems due out this year and in April becomes the first Singaporean to be invited to the famous Austin International Poetry Festival.

PHAN QUỲNH TRÂM is a poet, essayist and translator. Her works have been published regularly on *Tiền Vê* — the Vietnamese Online Centre for Literature and Arts. Having migrated from Vietnam, she is now living and working in Sydney.

HOÀNG NGỌC-TUẤN is a writer, essayist, poet and translator. He founded and edited the literary journal *Tập Hạp* (1987–1989) and, with Nguyen Hung Quoc, was the co-editor of *Việt*, an important journal that existed from 1998 to 2001. Since 2002, he has been the co-editor of the groundbreaking webzine *Tiền Vê*, the only Vietnamese literary journal that updates its contents daily. His critical essays, poems and stories have appeared in most overseas Vietnamese literary journals. He has published many books in Vietnamese and English. Besides literature, Hoang Ngoc-Tuan is actively involved in music and theatre as composer, guitarist, playwright and performer.

CHI VU was born in Vietnam and arrived in Australia in 1979 and completed her Master of Arts at the University of Melbourne. In 2000, Chi was awarded an Asialink writer's residency to Vietnam where she wrote *Vietnam: a Psychic Guide*. Her plays have been performed in Melbourne at the North Melbourne Arts House and Footscray Community Arts Centre, and in Sydney at the Sidetrack Theatre and the Sydney Opera House's Studio program. Chi's prose has appeared in anthologies by Random House, Picador, Black Inc as well as *Meanjin*, *The Age* and the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature*.

CYRIL WONG is the author of eight poetry collections, including *Unmarked Treasure* (Firstfruits 2004) and *Oneiros* (Firstfruits 2010). He has also published a volume of short stories, *Let Me Tell You Something About That Night* (Transit Lounge 2009). Cyril edits the online poetry journal, *Softblow*, and his most recent poetry-publication is *Satori Blues* (Softblow Press 2011).

MD. SALLEH YAAPAR is a Professor of Literature in the School of Humanities as well as Director of the USM Press, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. He was formerly holder of the European Chair of Malay Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands and is currently Vice-Chairman, Board of Directors, Malaysian Language and Literary Institution (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Malaysia) and member, Board of Recommendation, Netherlands-Malaysia Association, The Hague. Md. Salleh's area of specialisation is Comparative Literature, Literary Theory and Literature of the Malay World. He has published widely, including in international journals such as *The Muslim World*, *Asian Journal of Social Science*, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, and *Muslim Education Quarterly*. His books and monographs include *Mysticism and Poetry: A Hermeneutical Reading of the Poems of Amir Hamzah*, the award winning *Ziarah ke Timur* (English version: *Pilgrimage to the Orient*), *Kesusasteraan Bandingan dan Kesusasteraan Asia Tenggara Abad ke-21* (Comparative Literature and Southeast Asian Literature in the 21st Century) and *Cultural Encounter & Religious Engagement in Nurturing World Peace: Lessons from Selected Literary Works and Authors*.

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