

Bookworm Bonanza:

The 2005 Singapore Writers' Festival

By Jacqueline Fisher

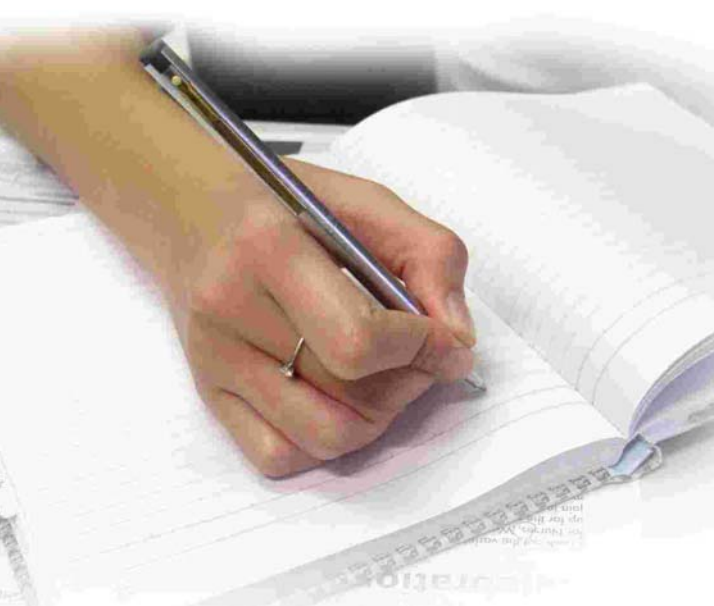
It's back. The biannual bookworm bliss-out that is the Singapore Writers' Festival returns from 26 August to 4 September 2005. But the text obsessed will have to tear their eyes from the page of their latest read, lest they miss out on a plethora of events featuring both local and international scribes. And fittingly, since it is libraries that ensure a writer's printed baby will always have a roof over its head, or at the very least, a shelf for its pages, NLB is supporting the fest and extending its hospitality to not only the books but also to many of the writers, who will speak right here at the National Library.

Whilst the eye-glazing total of 95 assorted talks, workshops and book readings may risk sending all but the intrepid book lover back to the safe embrace of their latest fiction find, never fear for I have bravely read ahead, with highlighter poised and can confidently recommend these festival offerings:



Voices from the Global City

Billed as an exploration of literary voices from the margins of society - those which usually can't be heard above the turgid drone of conformity - this series of talks mainly focuses on the experiences of ethnic minorities within seemingly cosmopolitan societies. One outstanding exception to this is author Jasmina Tesanovic whose book, *The Diary of a Political Idiot: Normal Life in Belgrade*, details the minutiae of living day by day in totally familiar surroundings whilst circumstances spin out of control, as recorded by the author during the bombing of her home town by NATO forces in 1999. Tesanovic's intimate chronicle is eerily effective in providing an alternative take on what for many is a faceless historical event which happened somewhere in Eastern Europe. And this is a rare chance to hear first hand from the diarist, who is also a filmmaker and artist.



Jasmina Tesanovic – Quotes

“ ...a political idiot. Idiot, in ancient Greece, denoted a common person without access to knowledge and information – all women, by definition, and most men... ”

“yesterday's fear [becomes] today's habit... ”

“I think that publicity is the main guardian angel of clean politics... ”

“ ...the weather, it is beautiful, we all enjoy and fear it: the better the weather, the heavier the bombings, but the better the weather, probably more precise bombings. I wish I only knew do we need good or bad weather to stay alive?... ”

Separated at Birth? Maybe not.... but who can deny these uncanny similarities ...?

Norman Spinrad

- Born in New York
- Lives in Paris
- Recently sang with a band called Heldon at a funeral
- Was once the President of the World Sci-Fi Council
- Is offering the rights to his next book for \$1 to anyone who will publish it properly
- In his book *The Druid King*, he made the transition to historical fiction



Juliet Marillier

- Born in New Zealand
- Lives in Perth
- Grew up surrounded by Celtic music and was a professional singer
- Has been called the High Priestess of Fantasy
- Offers space on her website for her fans to publish their short stories
- Her *Sevenwater Trilogy* features druids as the central characters



Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing

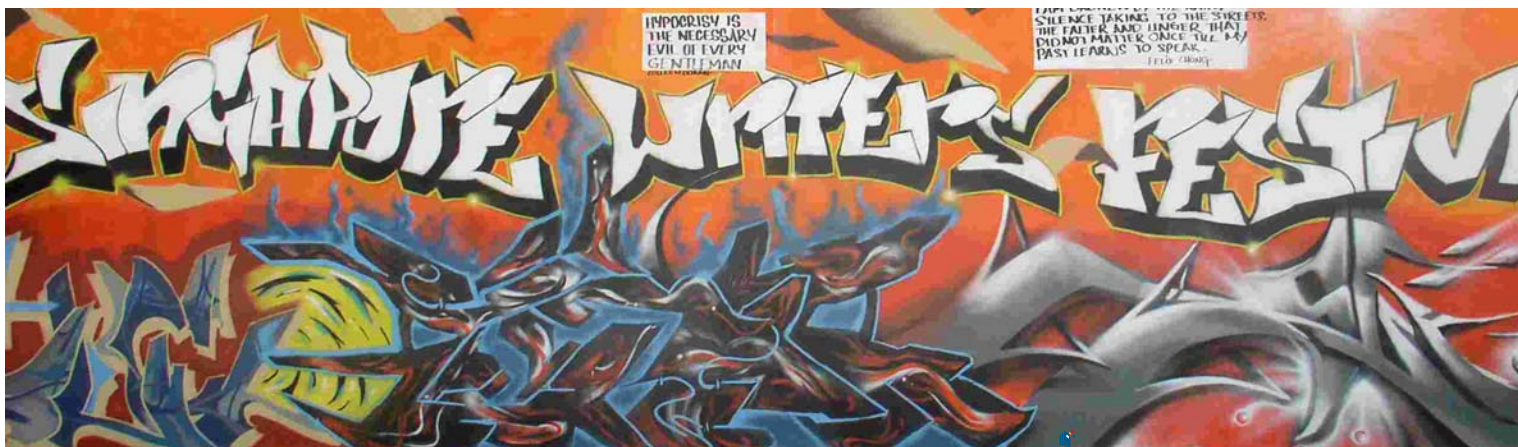
Although it still contains lingering vestiges of its less than glorious past as the domain of *Dungeons and Dragons* adoring dweebs, science fiction and fantasy have gained much in the "hip and edgy" stakes in the wake of a slew of sci-fi and fantasy movie blockbusters with *War of the Worlds* and Tom Cruise, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and lots of hobbits as its latest poster boys. In their literary form, these genres are also far from tired, as the 10 sci-fi events in the writers' festival will attest.

The National Library presents two of these featuring sci-fi/fantasy luminaries, New Zealand's Juliet Marillier and Norman Spinrad from the USA, who will discuss and read from their work. And even if neither cyborgs nor mythological beasts are page turners for you, the fact that these events will be held in the Library's futuristic, glass walled viewing pod perched on top of the new building and offering panoramic city views, might be enough to beam you up to this stationary starship enterprise.

Get that Book Away from Me...

Is your idea of a good read mulling over the song title displayed at the bottom corner of your favourite MTV? Then why not consider *Generation Txt*, a series of events delving into the multitudinous forms of text being born from music and fashion, from every imaginable hi-tech gadget (calling all of you who've succumbed to the call of the iPod) and of course via the fluorescent flash of colour from a graffitiist's

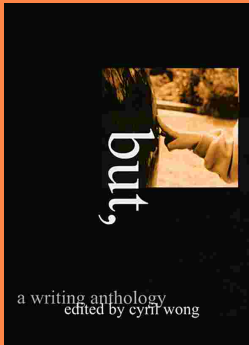
spray can. However, instead of risking arrest and a bad pun about our 'fine' city, you can be a perfectly legal deviant at the Library's Event Plaza on 27 August and revel in the underground literary art of spoken word artists (legit-speak for rappers) from the USA, accompanied by local graffiti crews giving the new National Library's walls an aerosol makeover (well, at least the walls' plywood cladding).



Last Page

Celebrate all aspects of life in Singapore with local literature from the Library's collection.

Singapore Poets



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But,: A Collaborative Writing Anthology

Edited by one of Singapore's most well-known writer and poet Cyril Wong, this anthology contains poetry and prose written by students from Hwa Chong Junior College, Victoria Junior College and Raffles Junior College.

Wong, Cyril (ed.). *But,: A Collaborative Writing Anthology*. Singapore: Hwa Chong ELDDS: VJC Writer's Circle, c2005.

Singapore Endings



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Money, Death and You; All You Need to Know About the Transfer of Assets Through Wills, Trusts...

This is a layman's guide that provides practical advice for putting together a plan for transferring and preserving wealth for the next generation through various means.

Ong, Shirley. *Money, Death and You; All You Need to Know About the Transfer of Assets Through Wills, Trusts...* Singapore: SNP Reference, 2005.

Singapore Stories



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Attack of the Swordfish and Other Singapore Tales

Singapore may be slammed as a place, which has forgotten its past, but this book illustrates that the ol' Lion City has her fair share of intriguing local legends from days of yore.

Lim, Charlotte. *Attack of the Swordfish and Other Singapore Tales*. Singapore: National Heritage Board, 2005

Singapore Shockers



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Real or Not?: Health Scams and Beauty Fallacies Exposed

Complete with a catchy Singlish title, this quirky book delves into dodgy salons and funky treatment centres to expose suspect health and beauty fads, including bizarre breast enlargement methods, baldness cures and slimming therapies.

Ho, Andy. *Real or Not?: Health Scams and Beauty Fallacies Exposed*. Singapore: World Scientific, 2005.