### FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR 2019

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

By

Anjum Hasan

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SYNOPSIS

Like her poetry, Anjum Hasan’s new book ‘A Day in the Life’ gives us an insight into the world through a new prism. Her characters are diverse and the stories are about their daily lives. The 14 stories give us a sense of the world that resides inside us, within the confines of the skull. A glimpse into the psyche of these characters takes us through their insecurities, complexes and whims.

Even the setting of the stories gives us a sense of an era gone by. Take the first story for example. In ‘The Stranger’ the retired protagonist leaves his fast-paced metro life and shifts base to a quaint, small town to experience the life in a hilly place. Throughout the story one expects something to happen. But the drudgery of the small town existence sails through till the end of the story. Life goes on.

Anjum Hasan explores the complexities of relationships in her second story ‘Sisters’. Female bonding is the underlying theme of the story, which also stands out for the enigmatic and aesthetic portrayal of friendship between Janaki and Jaan.

My favourite story in the collection is ‘A Short History of Eating’. Hasan beautifully describes how liberalisation has fuelled consumerism, thus creating desire and the urge to eat more. Liberalisation has affected each one of us – from what we eat to what we read. This is also reflected in ‘The Question of Style’ which deals with the desire of the two young protagonists to “become stylish”.

In fact, each of the stories has an undercurrent of intimacy in the treatment of the characters, and the dynamics between them. The protagonists are introverts, with volumes of vulnerability in them. The innate
desire of these men and woman to carve a leave a mark in the mundaneness of existence, is the driving force for you to read on.

Anjum Hasan’s wizardry of words is exemplified in the prose. Not only do the written words make an impact, the things left unsaid make the reading experience even more pleasurable. One can only wait in anticipation for her next work, to be transported into a world of fantasy that exists well within the humdrum of daily life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anjum Hasan is the author of the novels ‘The Cosmopolitans’, ‘Neti, Neti’ and ‘Lunatic in my Head’, the short story collection ‘Difficult Pleasures’, and ‘Street on the Hill’, a book of poems. Her books have been nominated for various awards including the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, the Hindu Best Fiction Award and the Crossword Fiction Award. Her new collection of stories, ‘A Day in the Life’, is forthcoming from Penguin India.

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Beauty Queens of Bishan

By

Akshita Nanda

SYNOPSIS

On the one hand is Instagram sensation and multi-beauty pageant winner Candy Kang. On the other is Tara Chopra, corporate lawyer whose coach is none other than Michelle Obama look-alike Alison Brown, she of the Hillary Clinton campaign fame. Who is going to win this year’s Grand Slam Singapore, the ultimate beauty pageant?

When April Chua, beauty consultant to Singapore’s darling Candy Kang, opens D’Asthetique (Beauty is Skin Deep!) a state of the art parlour in Bishan, she rattles the owners of the thirteen already existing parlours in the area. With her uber groomed ways and her ‘no towel drying on the roadside’ diktats, she plans to lord over the others through Nailso, the Neighbourhood Alliance of Lifestyle Service Operators. No one is more miffed than the bordering on obese Gurpreet Kaur, who runs the popular Monty Beauty Spa (Beauty from Within, Fourth Wax Free!) With the other members of Nailso caught in the cross-fire, things come to a head when April and Gurpreet’s respective clients – Candy and Tara – also face off at Grand Slam Singapore.

Candy, erstwhile television sensation and beauty queen and now a yummy mummy and wife of a Thai pharmaceuticals Mogul, is desperate to win the crown for more reasons than one. What’s more, she is keen that the news she has been keeping under wraps remains a secret till the contest ends. There’s a lot at stake for Tara too. Her twin teenagers worship Candy and their grandmother, herself a former beauty queen, but refuse to take her seriously. For them she is the dull and not so attractive mom, not a yummy mummy. Can
Tara win the contest and earn the respect of her Punjabi mother-in-law and her Candy-crazed daughters? Will Candy weave her magic once more to topple Ashlee Lim, her rival, from the numero uno spot to show everyone that the crown still sits easy on her head?

After the success of ‘Nimita’s Place’, comes the hilarious ‘Beauty Queens of Bishan’, a book which will prove that Akshita Nanda is a champion observer of human nature. Set in Singapore, the book takes an insightful yet entertaining look at the multi-million dollar beauty industry, its hidden secrets and its pitfalls compelling readers to wonder: is beauty really skin deep? As the Grand Slam Singapore contest comes to a nail biting finish, readers will be enthralled not only by the unexpected twists and turns in the tale, but also by Nanda’s ability to make even a beauty contest read like a thriller.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Akshita Nanda works as an art correspondent for the Strait Times in Singapore. Erudite and urbane, Nanda is well-known in Singapore’s journalistic and literary circles. Her first book, Nimita’s Place won the Epigram Fiction Award for 2017.

She writes about the arts and cultural scene in Singapore. She also reviews theatre, books, concerts, films and visual arts presentations.

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BEAST

By

Krishna Udayasankar

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SYNOPSIS

“It was always the same dream, a dream that began with darkness and blood.”

When Assistant Commissioner of Police Aditi Kashyap is called upon to solve a gruesome triple-homicide in a Mumbai suburb, she is dragged into terrifying world of the Saimhas – werelions - who have lived alongside humans, hiding amongst them since ancient times.

As it becomes increasingly clear that the murders are the work of something that is more animal than human, ACP Kashyap has no choice but join hands with Prithvi – an Enforcer who claims that he is tasked with hunting down this monstrous creature before any more lives are lost.

But can Prithvi overcome the burdens of his past - particularly the violent deaths of his best friend and of the woman he loved – for both of which, he holds himself responsible? For if he is to face the larger dangers and solve the bigger mystery that lies behind this seemingly-straightforward assignment, he must find it in himself to confront his own dark past – including the traumatic childhood he has spent as an outcast orphan, as well as his struggles with his own identity during a turbulent, precarious youth.

And when the time comes, can Prithvi be trusted to save human lives, or will he choose to serve a different, more powerful master - one who promises to fulfil the ancient destiny of the Saimhas and raise their kind to great glory?

When the fate of the world may be at stake, who can be depended upon – human or beast?
CONCEPT

‘Beast’ is a thrilling action-adventure that draws on ancient lore and familiar cultural themes and myths to create a new urban myth that stands on par with glamorous werewolves and vampires, but remains distinctly Indian in flavour.

SETTING

‘Beast’ evokes images of a distinct and powerful contemporary fantasy-world right in the dark underbelly of today’s Mumbai – from the quiet, upscale suburbs to crowded brothels and dusty warehouse districts, from the forgotten network of tunnels in the colonial Fort area to the bustling central business district of Nariman Point.

Moving in a non-linear fashion, the story touches on the faded brown world of 1980s slums and juvenile homes, the bright electro-pop/metal world in transition of the late 1990s, and varies in location and pace from bustling city to the quietness of deep forests, where the protagonist trains, and so comes to understand the creatures he must hunt.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krishna Udayasankar is the author of ‘The Aryavarta Chronicles’ (Govinda, Kaurava and ‘Kurukshetra’), a bestselling series of mytho-historical novels that has been optioned by Ms. Sonam Kapoor. Her novel, ‘Immortal’, has also been optioned by Phantom Productions. Krishna is the author of ‘3’ - a novel on the founding of Singapore, ‘Objects of Affection’, a collection of poetry, and an editor of ‘Body Boundaries: The Etiquette Anthology of Women’s Writing’. Her next book Beast, an urban fantasy fiction, is forthcoming from Penguin-Random House.

A graduate of National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore, Krishna holds a PhD in Strategic Management from Nanyang Business School, Singapore and has many peer-reviewed journal articles and two textbooks to her credit.

She lives in Singapore with her family, which includes three bookish canine-children, Boozo, Zana and Maya, who are often to be found at her laptop, trying in vain to make her writing better.

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CRYING MOUNTAIN

By

Criselda Yabes

Winner of the UP Centennial Prize 2008

Long listed for the Man Asia Literary Prize 2010

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SYNOPSIS

In *Below the Crying Mountain*, the Moro rebellion that broke out in Sulu in the 1970s and that continues to wound the nation is seen vividly thought the lives of the *mestiza* Rosy Wright, the Tausug girl Nahla, the rebel leader Prof. Hassan, the soldier Captain Rodolfo as well as in the quest of the book’s anonymous narrator. The personal is political as war fuels the clash of emotions, histories, and cultures.

The Crying Mountain is the name given to the mist-shrouded mountain that overlooks Jolo and is likened to a lover’s embrace by a number of the characters. The story traces the lives of Jolo residents Rosy France Wright, a half-American girl who elopes with a Muslim professor from Christian Zamboanga to Muslim Jolo, leaving behind her husband-without-ceremony, Omar Hassan.; Omar Hassan, her best friend, Nahla, a Tausug girl and Jolo local, Captain Rodolfo, who becomes Nahla’s lover. The events take place against the backdrop of the escalation of communal and other tensions during the 70’s and 80’s. Through the eyes of the narrator the
reader is able to follow the transformation of Jolo from its former glory days of prestigious parties to the ushering in of a new era of more zealous religious observance.

Speaking about the UP Centennial Award author Charlson Ong said:

"This award is given in recognition of the novel, Below the Crying Mountain, which represents a new voice in Philippine fiction in English. The conflict in Mindanao, and the price paid for it by the people who live through it, does not often find its way unto the pages of fiction. Criselda Yabes does not flinch in the portrayal of the dismal situation, presenting it in a manner both intelligent and moving. At the same time, its vision does not exclude hope and triumph of human courage and love."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Criselda Yabes is a seasoned journalist and award winning author. She has worked as an international Correspondent for the Associated Press, Newsweek, Reuters, The Washington Post and The Economist covering political insurgencies, rebellion and coup d’etats in the Philippines as well as war and crises across the globe.

She was born in Quezon City, she spent her early years growing up in Zamboanga and there developed an affection for the Muslim Region which is a favourite subject for her literary works. She graduated from the University of the Philippines. She is the author of five published books, the most recent of which, ‘Peace Warriors’ is about literary journalism regarding military affairs in the Muslim Mindanao Region which won the National Book Award for non-fiction in 2012.

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CLARENCE’S WHEELBARROW

By

Jen Waldo

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SYNOPSIS

In her gentle comedy, Clarence’s Wheelbarrow, Jen Waldo tells the story of Grace Archer, a special needs teacher who, because of anxiety attacks brought on by violence in the schools, decides to take the summer to consider whether or not she should continue in her vocation. Surrounded by a circle of wise older neighbors, she analyzes, and is sometimes consumed by, the dramas of her family and friends as she decides what it is she wants in life and how to go about getting it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen Waldo has lived in Holland, Egypt, the UK, Scotland, Kuwait and Singapore, but now lives in her home Texas, where her novels are set.

She first began writing twenty five years ago and shortly afterwards she had a story picked up by The European and was shortlisted in a competition by Traveler. Her novel Disappearing Otis won an honourable mention in the Indy Book Awards.


FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Helen Mangham: helen.mangham@hotmail.com
CURSED AND OTHER STORIES - A Short Story Collection

By

Noelle Q. de Jesus

SYNOPSIS

In Cursed & Other Stories, readers will encounter the pain, the love, and the hope that resides in every Filipino...all these people all over the globe who are making lives easier for strangers in other countries, all the people who wear their country with simultaneous pride and shame. Because while they might wish to leave their home to seek greener pastures for those they love, they will never be able to quit it completely. Such desperation may be recognizable to many readers, however if it is isn't, they will come away with a better understanding of it, at least vis-a-vis this archipelago that has more in common with the West than is evident on the surface.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Noelle Q. de Jesus is a Filipino American writer whose first book, BLOOD Collected Stories (Ethos Books) won the US-based 2016 Next Generation Indie Book Award for the Short Story.
A Palanca Award winner and a University of the Philippines’ Writers Workshop fellow, she has published short stories in Southeast Asia and the United States, including Puerto del Sol and Mud Season Review. She is currently finishing a second collection of short fiction, and beginning her first novel, Dome of Another Sky. She lives with her husband in Singapore and they have two children.

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The Kristang Club

By

Melissa D’ silva

SYNOPSIS

British colonial Singapore, 1906. EMMA CAMPBELL, a 23-year-old Eurasian woman from Malacca in Malaya, is married to ambitious English police officer GEORGE PETERS. Emma has to pretend to be fully European so her husband will accept her as a wife. Emma starts attending secret meetings in an opium den in Chinatown, where the creole language of the Eurasians of Portuguese descent, Kristang, is spoken. She attends these meetings because she wants to decipher an anonymous letter she has received, written in Kristang.

During one meeting, they are interrupted by American anti-opium activist, MYRTLE PRITCHARD. Myrtle is writing an expose for a New York newspaper on the immoral British opium trade. Myrtle later turns up at Emma’s home as George’s dinner guest. George has been tasked by his superiors to accompany Myrtle on her investigations. It is an attempt by the government to contain the incriminating truth she is determined to report. Myrtle tells Emma that she knows Emma is of mixed race. She threatens to tell George the truth unless Emma gets George to provide Myrtle with access to the information she wants for her newspaper.

Meanwhile, Alphonso Blackwood, Emma’s Anglo-Indian friend from Malacca, moves to Singapore. They rekindle their close friendship. Emma feels guilty when she realizes she has feelings for Alphonso. Despite her tepid marriage, she vows not to see Alphonso again.
As Myrtle intensifies her threats, Emma gets desperate. If her husband finds out, she will be divorced and become a social pariah. After one of their secret Kristang meetings, Emma tries opium, in an attempt to get an inspired solution to Myrtle’s blackmail. Emma returns home in an opium haze. With terrible timing, Myrtle pays her a visit and realizes Emma is under the influence of opium. Myrtle tries to drag Emma out of her house, to the police station where George works. The two women get into a violent struggle. Emma blacks out. When she regains consciousness, she is lying next to Myrtle’s dead body.

Emma is arrested and put on trial for murder. At the trail, Emma’s worst nightmares come true. The prosecution produces evidence which reveals her secret mixed racial heritage. Her friendship with Alphonso is also brought to light and given a tawdry cast, presenting her as an adulteress. Emma’s moral character is utterly destroyed. Everything points to Emma facing the gallows. Then, her lawyer succeeds in uncovering the true murderer—George. When her husband returned and found both women lying unconscious, he finished Myrtle off, because his failure to contain her investigations would cost him his career. George is arrested and awaits trial.

After her release, Emma visits Alphonso’s lodgings. She is shocked to hear from his landlady that Alphonso has returned to India, to be married. Emma’s father dies shortly after she returns and Emma resigns herself to a life of loneliness as an outcast. In Malacca, Emma meets a relation who is able to translate the letter from Kristang. It turns out the letter is from Alphonso, revealing his own scandalous past. He is an illegitimate child of mixed race. His mother is Indian and his father British, and he was conceived under dishonourable circumstances. He confesses that while he loves Emma, his background would mar her reputation.

Emma is shocked at the revelation of his love, because she realizes now, she has loved him since they first met years ago. Sometime later, Emma overhears from Alphonso’s aunt in Malacca that he sailed to India, but never turned up at his mother’s house. Emma is overcome with worry about what might have happened to him, and makes an audacious decision. She will go to India herself to search for him. In Bombay, Emma finds Alphonso at his fiancée’s home with his mother. He arranges to meet Emma later that day. When they meet, Alphonso explains that he went off on his own after disembarking at Bombay because he realized he couldn’t bring himself to marry a woman he didn’t know. Earlier, he was breaking this news to the young lady and her family. Emma professes her love to Alphonso, assuring him she doesn’t care about his background. Alphonso proposes to Emma on the public street in Bombay and Emma of course, knows she will accept.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melissa De Silva is the award-winning author of ‘Others’ is Not a Race, which won the Singapore Literature Prize 2018 in the Creative Nonfiction category. Her writing explores issues of identity and culture in Eurasian communities in Southeast Asia and interrogates the dynamics and effects of colonialism. Her fiction has been published in Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Best New Singaporean Short Stories Vol. 3, Singapore Quarterly Literary Review and LONTAR: The Journal of Southeast Asian Speculative Fiction.

Professionally, she comes from a background in journalism with Singapore’s major media companies. Melissa read English Literature at the National University of Singapore. When she is not writing, she loves eating chocolate, sitting in parks and watching squirrels chase each other, preferably all at the same time.

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LIONHEART : THE DIARIES OF RICHARD I

By Chris Manson

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SYNOPSIS

Richard the Lionheart is the greatest heroic figure in the history of the Christian world.

Born as the third son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, he became King of England and ruler of the Angevin Empire at the age of thirty-two, following the deaths of his two older brothers.

Already established as Europe's finest soldier, he undertook the Third Crusade to come to the aid of Jerusalem, which had recently fallen to Saladin.

Richard's epic military and strategic achievements in confronting Saladin's vast armies on his home soil were repeatedly punctuated by the acts of extraordinary personal courage, which made him a legend.

From the age of fifteen, at his father's instruction, Richard had kept a series of journals recording all of the personal aspects of his daily life.

The diaries open with the struggle of a boy emerging from the shadow of his father's reputation. The violence, sex, jealousy, ignorance and naked ambition, which were so commonplace in everyday mediaeval life, are brought vividly to life in Richard's own words.

The story of Richard and his family is a story of bloodshed and blood spilt, of warring knights, power, greed, jealousy, lust and revenge, and a twenty-five year family feud that threatened to tear Europe apart.

Brother was pitted against brother, son against father, wife against husband. No quarter was asked or given, whether on the battlefield itself, or in the bedrooms and banqueting halls which provided the backdrop for legendary feuding.
The diaries see Richard navigate this feud and evolve into the man who would become the most famous warrior for centuries. They also graphically describe the brutal reality of royal life at the apex of mediaeval society. The diaries have seen significant interest from several networks and production companies.

**THE CHARACTERS**

**Henry II:** Henry has made it his life’s work to win back the land and power of his grandfather, Henry I. He is a ruthless ruler, whose greatest strength lies in his relentless brutality and his willingness to take on any phone, but he has to watch the kingdom he built up over his lifetime torn apart by his own sons. Hounded to death by their rebellions, he curses Richard on his deathbed.

**Eleanor of Aquitaine:** a noted beauty, Eleanor has grown up with power and politics in her blood to become a wise but manipulative Queen. Eleanor encourages her sons’ rebellions against her estranged husband the king. Always maintaining a supreme air of dignity, her influence shapes her favourite son Richard’s ambitions the most.

**Rosamunde Clifford:** the royal mistress who was the love of Henry II’s life, the woman known as “fair Rosamunde”, she causes a rift between Henry and his wife that will never be healed.

**Richard the Lionheart:** Henry’s second son is a giant of a man, handsome, trained in chivalry, war and double-crossing diplomacy since birth. He is his mother’s favourite son and cannot shake his bonds to her. His teenage years were spent fighting his own brothers and father. He is every inch the macho hero, and yet the diaries reveal the depth of the man.

**Henry “the Young King”:** the oldest of Richard’s brothers. Good looking, hugely ambitious and a famous and daring tournament jouster, Henry leads his younger brothers into their first feud with their father. He dies whilst engaged in a later rebellion, leaving the way clear for his siblings.

**Geoffrey:** third son of Henry II, Geoffrey is initially Richard’s most trusted confidant, but their relationship is undermined when Geoffrey starts to rival Richard for power and his father’s favour. He sides with Henry, the Young King against Richard, but then dies at a jousting tournament.

**King Philip II of France:** Richard and Philip have a tempestuous public relationship, shifting constantly between allies and enemies. Initially a great friend and ally of Richard’s, their relationship becomes toxic after Richard abandons his engagement to Philip’s sister.
**Mercadier:** chief of Richard's mercenaries, his right hand man and ruthlessly loyal to him. He fights alongside Richard in Europe and on the Third Crusade, and defends his lands in his absence. He is not bound by any chivalric code and brutally and unflinchingly puts down opposition to his king.

**Berengaria, Princess of Navarre:** the beautiful and articulate daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre, Berengaria captivates and then marries Richard in recently captured Cyprus.

**Saladin:** the larger than life opponent beyond Europe's frontiers who (temporarily) unites the warring factions within it when Richard I and Philip II go on the Third Crusade together. Sultan of Egypt and Syria, leader of the Muslim world’s opposition to the Crusaders, Saladin is a formidable military opponent and enters into a brutal, tactical war with Richard and the Crusaders.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Chris Manson was educated on a Senior Foundation Scholarship at St Paul’s School, London and at St John’s College in the University of Oxford where he read history, with the Crusades as a special subject.

He then developed a successful business career firstly at PricewaterhouseCoopers, then at Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Really Useful Group, where he looked after overseas shows such as The Phantom of the Opera, Cats, Starlight Express, Joseph and Sunset Boulevard. He subsequently moved to Chelsea Football Club, where he ran all commercial activities, including the building of Stamford Bridge.

He has also run three businesses for his own account. In 1999, he co-founded sit-up television, which was sold to Virgin Media six years later for £194 million. He was elected an Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2005.

Chris is now Chief Executive Officer of Newable, originally a Government agency, which, over the last three years he has repositioned as a private business as the leading provider of advice, finance and homes for the small and medium-sized businesses at the heart of the UK economy. Newable works extensively for the UK Government in the field of International Trade, is the UK’s leading provider of Responsible Finance, is a leading developer of business parks and industrial estates and is the largest network provider of Angel and Start-Up Finance in the UK.

Throughout his business career, Chris’s private passion has been for the study of History, and in particular for the stories of everyday life which describe the motivation of why people acted as they did, rather than purely for the facts of what they did. Bringing The Diaries of Richard the Lionheart to a wider public has been an
enriching and rewarding experience. He describes the process in a fascinating interview with the BBC’s Will Gompertz, which is available at Soundcloud (Lionheart Diaries).

**The Plantagenets – A 5 Book Series**

In approaching a series about the Plantagenets, using the Diaries of Richard the Lionheart as the initial book, the plan is to continue to use first-person diary entries to help the reader to immerse themselves in a world very different from ours.

This approach also allows for an episodic interpretation of lives and events, allowing the story to focus on those events of most interest and speculation.

The family of Richard the Lionheart is a particularly rich seam to mine - a story of intrigue, of ambition, of realpolitik and religious fervour, sex and blood, honour and deceit, of ever-shifting alliances and rivalries in an age when chivalry and brutality were never far apart.

The plan is that the second book in the sequence would revolve around Richard’s mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was originally married to the King of France, and who was also a powerful ruler in her own right as the Duchess of Aquitaine.

Rumours and scandal swirled around Eleanor, representing as she did the notions of Courtly Love, Romance and the Chivalric Order. Highly unusually for a woman of the Middle Ages, she personally led armies on a number of occasions, including on the Second Crusade.

Her second marriage to Henry II in 1152 scandalised Europe but secured him a greater slice of it. In marriage, she gave him the male heirs every ruler sought: five sons, four of whom survived. Yet, here began the Plantagenet problems. Henry, Richard, Geoffrey and John grew into very different men but each was as ambitious and ruthless as their parents. In siding with her children, Eleanor became involved in open, armed rebellion against her own husband. This was unprecedented in mediaeval times.

The third book would relate the story of Richard’s father, Henry II, who, through a judicious mix of luck, intrigue and military prowess forged a powerful empire early in his twenties, and spent the rest of his life trying to meld his territories into a manageable realm. In this, he battled not only recalcitrant barons, but also his own sons, and the Church after, innocently or not, calling for the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket.

Richard’s brother, John, has always suffered in the shadow of his brother’s heroic reputation. He would be the subject of the fourth book. Most famously, John’s notoriety arises out of his depiction in the legend that grew up around Robin Hood and his excommunication. The mutinous barons who had so troubled his father eventually caused John to capitulate in conceding Magna Carta. On his watch, the hard-won and much contested Plantagenet Empire crumbled.
The fifth book would tell the story of a royal servant, Eloise, who serves initially at the side of Eleanor, but is taken into the household of Henry and subsequently, on his death, into Richard’s household. Eloise sees life from a very different perspective to that of her royal masters.

This character-based approach enables the author to interweave events in the Lionheart Diaries, viewed from different perspectives, but also to explore other aspects of the story that fascinated people for generations to come.

Note: The author anticipates being able to produce a volume in the series every 9 months.

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Mughalistan

By

Trisha Das

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SYNOPSIS

Jang-e-Samugarh, the Battle of Samugarh, was fought in 1658 between Shah Jahan’s sons, Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb won, became Emperor of Hindustan, and set off a chain of events that defined the history of the Indian subcontinent for centuries. Even today, we are still dealing with the decisions Aurangzeb made during his forty-nine-year reign. But what if there was no Emperor Aurangzeb? What if he was just a footnote in our history books? Like his brothers. What if, on that fateful day in 1658, there was one, extra gust of wind over the Samugarh battlefield? A serendipitous rush of air that would change the outcome of the battle. And of history. The question is, what would have been different for India if Dara Shikoh had sat on the Peacock Throne instead of Aurangzeb? The answer is, everything.

The Setting

The year is 1947 CE. The empire is Hindustan – a swath across the northern half of the Hindu subcontinent, from Qandahar in the west to Dhaka in the east. Ruled by the Gurkanis, descendants of Timur, from Babar to Humayun to Jahangir to Akbar to Shah Jahan to Dara Shikoh to Suleiman Shikoh and his sons. An unbroken male line has ensured a stable royal dynasty so far and the maturing of an inclusive culture that is unique to this part of the world. All communities live in habitual discontent, under imperial laws that are old-fashioned and out of sync with world events. Despite many conversions to the dominant religion of Islam over hundreds of years, the majority population still follows the Sanatani gods of their forefathers. Hindustanis of all religions
live in provinces ruled by Nawabs and Rajas appointed by the Padishah, Bahadur Shah IV and overseen by the Prime Minister, Raja Himmat Singh. Most of the populace supports the administration despite an urgent need for reform, but there is also an underground separatist movement that is rallying for the creation of an independent Sanatani state.

The southern half of the subcontinent is the nation of Dravida Nadu, established with the help of English trading giant, the East India Company during the civil revolt of 1857. The revolt began in Madras and ended when all the royal families of the southern peninsula were unseated and stripped of their titles and properties. Dravida Nadu signed a peace treaty with Hindustan a few years after their independence and have since had an uncomfortable truce with their imperial neighbour. The East India Company, having restored civil relations with the Padishah in 1690 after its unsuccessful bid to invade Bengal, was given permission to operate its trading posts in Hindustan if it adhered to strict codes of conduct. More than two centuries later, after establishing regional dominance over its French, Dutch and Portuguese counterparts, it is now a major conglomerate in both Hindustan and Dravida Nadu with informal ‘spheres of influence’ in both countries. The Company runs Bombay, or ‘little-England’ as it’s popularly known, a thriving port city-state on the western coast that is owned by the English King, George VI. Bombay is a worldwide trading hub, given its strategic location between two wealthy nations and The Company is under immense pressure to restore profits after suffering heavy losses during the recent war. Audh is one of the provinces of Hindustan, run by the Nawab of Audh, Saadat Ali Khan III. The Nawab is unpopular among his peers and citizens for his extreme religious views, substance abuse problem and strong sexual preference for virgins. He routinely acquires them via Nikah-mut’ah, temporary marriage, and virtually imprisons them in his congested zenana after he’s done with the wedding night. Naturally, the people around him take pains to hide young women and girls from his gaze.

The Story

Mira Shrivastava, a young woman of twenty, lives in a conservative Kayastha household in Lakhnau, the capital city of Audh. Her ailing father, Munshi Gangadin Shrivastava, is a minor zamindar who is also an honorary historian and dastango, storyteller, in the Nawab’s court. Mira is a strong, outspoken girl who often gets into trouble with her extended family and community. They attribute her unconventional behaviour to the fact that she grew up without a mother and with very little supervision from her scholarly father.

She had a beloved older brother who died in a riding accident a few years earlier and now, she’s the only child. It’s a big, lonely house and her ailing father is dying, slowly and painfully. Next door, on a larger and grander estate, live the Khan family. Muzaffar Khan is a high-ranking courtier in the Nawab’s court and his wife is a close friend of the Nawab’s sister. Their son, Akbar, is a few years older than Mira and was her brother’s childhood friend. Mira and Akbar grew close after his death until Akbar left to pursue a career with the East India Company. Against the wishes of his family, who were appalled at the idea of him becoming a working man.
Akbar is understated on the outside but has strong principles and is heavily influenced by western thought. He’s also been secretly in love with Mira for years. From a distance, of course – his family would never allow a marriage between them. Then he comes home for his leave, as a full-fledged Foreign Service Officer in the Company, and she falls into his arms from a tree. He’d expected Mira to be married by now, but she’s got no intention of shackling herself to any of the uptight fools she’s regularly paraded in front of by her maternal relatives. Akbar and Mira spend time together and sparks fly. He begins to hope and talks to his parents about a potential marriage proposal. They emphatically refuse and Akbar decides to bide his time.

Akbar’s younger sister Zarqa is Mira’s closest friend. They decide to sneak into the Mina Bazar, a temporary marketplace set up in the palace compound for rich Audhi women. Normally, the two young women wouldn’t be allowed to attend because the Nawab might see them, but this year Zarqa overheard her mother say that he’s sick and hasn’t left his bedchamber for three days so he likely won’t be in attendance. Unfortunately, the Nawab does show up at the Mina Bazar and spots Mira, whose beauty and unrestrained exuberance draw his attention. He wants her. To Munshi Gangadin’s utter horror, a doli with the Nawab’s crest and a solitaire diamond ring are brought to his doorstep the next day by the Nawab’s headhenchman Abdul Lodi. He tells them the Nawab has decided that Mira will be his next bride. Refusal would mean certain death for both of them. Mira’s elderly maid suggests that the only honourable way out would be for Mira to commit suicide, perhaps swallow the diamond that the Nawab sent her. But Munshi Gangadin begs her not to – he cannot bear to lose another child.

Akbar finds out about the situation, rushes over and offers to help them escape. In secret, of course. The Nawab’s authority extends only to the borders of Audh. If they ran away to the neighbouring province of Akbarabad, where Munshi Gangadin’s younger brother and his family live, the Nawab wouldn’t be able to find them. Akbar also offers to accompany the pair, since Munshi Gangadin is an invalid and they have to leave his servants behind. In the middle of the night, the three of them steal away, Akbar astride his horse and Mira and her father in a tanga driven by Kareem, Akbar’s trusted manservant. They take whatever valuables they can carry inconspicuously on their person and stay off the main roads to avoid being noticed. It’s a long, difficult journey for Munshi Gangadin, but a life-changing one for Mira and Akbar. She falls in love with him and they decide to marry.

Munshi Gangadin is apprised of this development when they reach the house of Dayanand Shrivastava, his younger brother. They’ve never really gotten along – Dayanand is a harsh man with a confrontational personality. He’s also a local leader of the Sanatani Sena, an underground but increasingly influential separatist group that wants to break away from Mughal rule and establish an independent Sanatani State. Dayanand’s two adult sons are also active members.

Akbar and Mira earnestly break down Munshi Gangadin’s resistance to their marriage and he reluctantly agrees. However, before he can inform his relatives of the impending nuptials, he dies from a massive heart-attack. Now, Dayanand is Mira’s guardian and he not only refuses to let the young couple marry, he forcibly throws Akbar out of the house and locks Mira into her room. What follows is a daring escape, a desperate
chase and a tumultuous journey across the landscape of Hindustan, across the borders of Dravida Nadu and finally, into Bombay. On the way the young lovers face everything from danger to delight, contempt to compassion, ardour to adventure in a quest not only to discover each other, but also themselves. Against an epic backdrop that is as varied and unforgiving as any that exists today.

Author’s note

This story is inspired by events that happened in my own family. Munshi Gangadin was actually my great-great-great grandfather, and his younger, very beautiful sister committed suicide because the Nawab of Audh wanted to make her his Nikah-mut’ah bride. She rather poetically swallowed the diamond the Nawab had sent her and my ancestor, Munshi Gangadin, escaped in the middle of the night with his family and a few belongings. When I read about this in a booklet of family history written by my relative, I thought to myself, “ Wouldn’t it have been far better if she had also escaped and lived an amazing and interesting life?”

That’s when the rest of the story came to me. I’ve always been a fan of alternate history. Books like Fatherland, The Man in the High Castle, The Years of Rice and Salt and so many more have shaped the way I think. Imagine my delight when The Man in the High Castle was adapted into a TV series on Amazon Prime! I think the Alternate History genre has become far more mainstream now as more and more fantastical novels are being made into TV shows. I also think it’s a great time for an Indian alternate history novel. As a nation, we’ve spent a lot of time hating Aurangzeb. We’ve also cast his brother, Dara Shikoh, as the liberal, secular hero to Aurangzeb’s bigoted villain.

There have been films and books and TV shows and plays and endless discussions about these two men in popular culture. The ‘what if Dara Shikoh had won?’ question has been asked too many times to count. This novel is my attempt to answer that question. Any alternate history novel looks at the facts up to a certain point in history, changes one big or small thing and then attempts to make educated guesses about how history would go down after that. Mughalistan is no different. It takes into account historical facts, world events and world structure, cultural/political/social/economic influences, religious considerations, human psychology as well as historical parallels and antecedents to construct a world that is as complex as the one we actually live in. The details of how I arrived at my conclusions are too many to write here, but I’m happy to discuss them. Book details: Language: English Length: Approximately 85,000 words Time needed to complete manuscript: 9-12 months

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trisha Das is the author of Kama’s Last Sutra (HarperCollins India, 2018), Ms Draupadi Kuru, Pandavas: After the Pandavas (HarperCollins India, 2016), The Mahabharata Re-imagined (Rupa & Co, 2009), The Art of the Television Interview (UNESCO, 2007) and the internationally acclaimed How to write a Documentary Script (UNESCO, 2006).
Trisha has written and directed over 40 documentaries in her filmmaking career. She’s also won an Indian National Film Award (2005) and was UGA’s ‘International Artist of the year’ (2003). Her films have been broadcast and screened on The Discovery Channel, the STAR Network, NDTV, Doordarshan, in Indian and international film festivals, university campuses and conferences all over the world.

**Reviews for Kama’s Last Sutra:**

“Vidyadhara is my new Mr Darcy.” – iDiva

“This one’s a page turner and quite raunchy in bits.” – Grazia magazine

“Quirky and engrossing narrative” – Indian Express

“The plot and characters are full of twists and turns that keep the reader engaged.” – Sakal Times

“One of the key features of Kama’s Last Sutra, a feminist and historic book, is the bold narrative.” – The Asian Age

“Trisha Das’s Kama’s Last Sutra is a feminist fantasy that travels across time, foregrounds women’s sexual agency, challenges gender roles, sexual taboos and caste divisions.” – SheThePeople Tv

“Author Trisha Das’s book Kama’s Last Sutra redefines the Indian erotica genre.” – My Good Times

“Like many books in this sub-genre, Kama’s Last Sutra combines wide-eyed humour with a poignant sense of history, the awareness that the land one stands on has been the setting for countless dramas over the centuries involving countless types of people. It is about being, at one and the same time, a progressive who is proud of the freedoms available in the present day, and a nostalgist who feels a restless curiosity, even a yearning for, a bygone time. The tension between these two things flow through and enrich this novel, even when it is essentially concerned with telling an engrossing, fast-paced story.” – Scroll

‘Her unapologetic writing makes this book a real page-turner.’ - Elle

‘If you’re looking for a fun and frothy book that will take you back to the time of the Chandelas and Khajuraho Temples, while teaching you a thing or two about sex, pick it up. It won’t disappoint.’ - Books on Toast

‘Sharp and entertaining’- Jai Arjun Singh

**Reviews for Ms Draupadi Kuru:**

“The idea could have easily floundered in execution, but the book more than lives up to its promising blurb. Das writes with great wit and imagination and the adventures of the feisty bunch will make you laugh out loud.” – Hindustan Times
“The book, though a lively romp, is also a commentary on how we perceive our role models in mythology. Draupadi serves as her own, and every diverse woman’s inner monologue.” – India Today

“A fun deviation from the serious for fans of mythology, Ms Draupadi Kuru is a refreshing take on the feisty queen.” – The Telegraph

"An electrifying, fast-paced narrative that truly entertains." HELLO! Magazine

“Trisha Das’ Draupadi is a defiant, courageous woman fully in control of her body and mind.” – DailyO

“A delightful read! Draupadi reincarnates from the Mahabharata with many of its cast of characters in a playful narrative with a serious sub-text. Trisha is a creative talent of many parts.” – Rajiv Mehrotra

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The Oddfits Trilogy

By

Tiffany Tsao

SYNOPSIS

THE ODDFITS

Eight-year-old Murgatroyd Floyd doesn’t fit in—not as a blue-eyed blonde living in Singapore, not in school, and certainly not with his aloof expatriate parents, who seem determined to make his life even harder. Unbeknownst to him, there’s a reason why he’s always the odd boy out: he is an Oddfit, a rare type of human with access to the More Known World, a land invisible to most people. Yet unfortunate circumstances keep Murgatroyd stranded in the Known World, bumbling through life with the feeling that an extraordinary something is waiting for him just beyond reach.

Seventeen years later, that something finally arrives when a secret organization dedicated to exploring the More Known World invites Murgatroyd on a mission. But as the consummate loser begins to grow into the Oddfit he was meant to be, the Known World becomes bent on exterminating him. For once in his
underachieving life, will Murgatroyd Floyd exceed expectations and outsmart those trying to thwart his stupendous destiny?

SYNOPSIS

THE MORE KNOWN WORLD

Two years after Murgatroyd Floyd joined the Quest to understand and catalogue the wonders of the More Known World, the rash-prone, blue-eyed Oddfit starts having doubts about his exploratory skill. And while that’s enough to give his mentor, Ann Hsu, pause, it’s not what’s bringing the Quest to a grinding halt. Blame that on a series of murders that sends Ann and Murgatroyd to a strange new Territory to investigate.

Cambodia-Abscond, awash in shades of red, can drive outsiders crazy. With its vermillion foliage, crimson trees, and garnet soil, it screams carnage. Fitting, considering that its settlers are a shady bunch with catastrophic histories who live in a society where no questions are asked, and the official language is silence.

Fitting, too, that Cambodia-Abscond is where Ann’s recollections of her own nightmarish past seem to come crawling back out of the bloodwood. Apparently, there’s more to the More Known World than Ann and Murgatroyd expected. And if their Quest has a dark side, the two Oddfits have found it.

SYNOPSIS

THE SPRUNG HISTORIES  (In Progress)

When Murgatroyd Floyd joined the Quest to explore the wonders of the More Known World, he thought a stupendous destiny lay in wait for him. But ten years later, he’s more miserable than ever, separated from his true love, Nutmeg, and their 4-year-old daughter who suffers from a condition that keeps her stuck in the Known World.

Meanwhile, his best friend and fellow Oddfit Ann Hsu, as the Quest’s new leader, must contend with a ruthless Singapore-based corporation bent on bringing social order to the Territories and getting rid of the Quest. In an effort to help, the Quest’s sole surviving founder, the unhinged Hector, sets off to uncouple the worlds from each other—a process that will shatter the Known World into smithereens.

Aided by Nutmeg and two old friends, Murgatroyd and Ann attempt to stop Hector—but to do so they must confront the past. The full details of the Quest’s bloodstained history are unearthed; Murgatroyd’s hateful parents resurface, as does the man who once tried to kill him; and on a boundless frozen plain which converts painful memories into deadly flora and geological formations, Ann’s repressed childhood trauma puts the whole group in danger.

Join the endearing, quirky characters of the Oddfits trilogy’s final book on their rescue mission to save the Known World. And along the way, you’ll discover a startling secret about how the worlds work, and what miraculous creatures mosquitoes really are.
Book reviews for The Oddfits

“A quirky start to a wildly imaginative new series.” - The Straits Times (4 out of 5 stars)

“Tiffany Tsao’s style is very, very Neil Gaiman. She’s taken an ordinary life, mixed it with an alternate world, and added some quirky in too. And pulls it off. I’m now waiting for the next adventure.” - Amazon Reader Review (5 out of 5 stars)

“I understand Ms Tsao is married, so it is a good thing she lives so far away that I am unlikely to meet her where I live, or I might have given her an wholly inappropriate great big hug. I love it love it love it love it.” - Amazon Reader Review (5 out of 5 stars)

** Top Five Pick for Best Superhero Novels of 2016, Superhero Novels **

** Editor’s Kindle First Pick for January 2016 **

** Average Reader Rating on Amazon: 3.8 out of 5 stars **

Book review for The More Known World:

“Though she has a writing style that's entirely her own, Tsao’s characters and creative world-building definitely reminds me, in the best way, of some of my favorite sci-fi/fantasy authors who incorporate a grounded bittersweet reality into the idea of fantasy, e.g. Douglas Adams, Jasper Fforde, Diana Wynne Jones, Neil Gaiman.” - Amazon Reader Review (5 out of 5 stars)

“What a wonderfully inventive author. Many times, sequels are just less interesting rehashes of the first book. Book two carries the reader into a fascinating and believable world. I look forward to reading more novels by Tiffany Tsao.” - Amazon Reader Review (5 out of 5 stars)

“As literature becomes increasingly trite, Tsao has now created not just one but two books that push the envelope of fiction.” - Amazon Reader Review (4 out of 5 stars)

“2nd novel from a refreshing new face on the field of modern fantasy. I will be eagerly waiting book #3!” - Amazon Reader Review (5 out of 5 stars)
** December SFF Books to Keep an Eye Out For, Syfy Wire **

** Average Reader Rating on Amazon: 4.4 out of 5 stars **

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tiffany Tsao has written three novels. The Oddfits and The More Known World (Amazon Crossing, 2016 and 2017) constitute the first two books of the humorous and fantastic Oddfits trilogy. Her debut work of literary fiction, Under Your Wings (Viking, 2018), was longlisted for the Ned Kelly Award and selected as Fiction Pick of the Week by the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

The US edition of her third novel is forthcoming from Atria Books in January 2020 under the title The Majesties. In addition to writing, she translates Indonesian fiction and poetry. She holds a PhD in English literature from UC-Berkeley.

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SACRED WATERS

By

Meira Chand

Published by Marshall Cavendish Editions (2017). UK rights available

SYNOPSIS

Orphaned as a child and widowed at thirteen, Sita has always known the shame of being born female in Indian society. Her life constrained and shaped by the men around her, she could not be more different from her daughter Amita, a headstrong university professor determined to live life on her own terms. While trying to unravel the mysteries in her mother’s past, Amita encounters a traumatic event that leads her down the path of self-discovery.

Unfolding simultaneously, their stories are set against the dramatic sweep of India’s anti-colonial struggle in the 1940s. The narrative moves between present and past, from modern-day Singapore to pre-war rural India, and to the chaotic Burmese battlefront where Sita experiences life as a recruit in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, the women’s unit of the Indian National Army. Richly layered and beautifully evocative, the novel is a compelling exploration of two women’s struggles to assert themselves in the male-dominated societies of both the past and the present.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meira Chand is the author of eight critically acclaimed titles, including A Different Sky, the 2010 bestseller published by Random House UK. Her novels have been reviewed by Publishers Weekly, Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, The Guardian, The Daily Mail, The Times among others.
A Different Sky was a Book of the Month choice by the UK bookshop chain Waterstones; included on Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club recommended reading list in November 2011; and shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2012. Rated 4 stars over Goodreads, Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk. A Different Sky has sold close to 20,000 copies in print and 1,700 in ebook as of the end of 2016.

Meira Chand is of Indian-Swiss parentage. Born and educated in London, she has resided in Japan and India, and is now based in Singapore.

http://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/a-voice-for-women-soldiers

Other titles by Meira Chand:


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SYNOPSIS

Taking sly advantage of her tiny size and harmless demeanour, Fran Furlow often gets away with intrusive and controlling behavior. Dedicated to truth in all matters, she is relentless in her efforts to see that light finds every secret, and that every questionable situation is met with closure. Having been brutally raped several years before, Fran guards her privacy as she routinely invades the privacy of others. She avoids dealing with her ongoing personal trauma by immersing herself in other people’s business.

She attends various ineffectual support groups, passionately encouraging her friends to improve themselves. She also works as a receptionist in a dermatologist’s office. In her efforts to know all there is to know about what’s going on in Caprock, she has, over the years, slipped far outside the bounds of appropriate behaviour. She spies on her friends, bullies her fellow support group members, and intimidates the town’s leaders. When her efforts are greeted with resistance or criticism she takes to her bed for days, eating soup from the can and streaming movies.

Running alongside the plot is Fran’s humorous narrative concerning her friends and enemies. The people surrounding her form a charming community of characters with continuing stories. Their lives move forward as Fran evolves at a glacial pace.
Socially awkward and unwaveringly dedicated to following the rules, the character, Fran Furlow, is insensitive, meddlesome, and surprisingly endearing. Her ability to rationalize her behaviour is both entertaining and captivating.

Hers is an appealing and unique voice in the mystery genre.

**SNOOP: ‘ADVANCING WOMEN’ & ‘ELDERLIES’ By Jen Waldo**

*World rights available*

**Synopsis**

The north Texas town of Caprock offers unlimited possibility for recurring and crossover characters. The protagonist, Fran Furlow, works in a dermatologist’s office and solves crimes; but her relationships are her passion, which means her friends hold a major place in the narrative. Because these friends’ situations change as the stories unfold, these books should be read in order:

**Advancing Women**

In Snoop: Advancing Women, Fran discovers a link between a dead body found in the wolf enclosure at the zoo and Caprock’s Vehicle Maintenance Facility. When she starts peering into the windows and tailing the women who work at the two city departments, she becomes a target. Her house is broken into, her tires are slashed, and her car is egged.

The vandalism soon escalates to violence, at which point an attempt is made on her life. At the last minute she’s saved by the detective, Joe Epps, whom she feels is lazy and lacks intellect and gumption. He takes credit for solving the case.

**Elderlies**

In Snoop: Elderlies, during an icy winter the frozen bodies of some of Caprock’s seniors turn up in odd places—the back seat of someone’s car, the gazebo in Dumas park, the women’s locker room at the Caprock sports facility. Not thinking highly of the Caprock police, Fran inserts herself into the investigation. She discovers two groups who routinely go into the homes of the elderly population—caregivers and an organization that delivers meals.

Soon she’s following suspects and looking through windows, which leads to her getting a backside full of buckshot and, later, carjacked at gunpoint. Once again the police department she routinely criticizes comes to the rescue, and, as before, Joe Epps claims the glory for closing the case.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen first started writing years ago when, living in Cairo where she had difficulty finding satisfactory reading material. If she wanted something interesting to read, she was going to have to write it herself. Finding pleasure and power in the process of creating, she’s been hooked ever since. She has earned an MFA, has had two novels published: *Old Buildings in North Texas* (Arcadia Books, 2016) and *Why Stuff Matters* (Arcadia Books, 2017).

Having lived in seven countries over a thirty-year period, she’s often asked why, with her knowledge of international cultures and locations, she places her novels in a stark dry town in North Texas. It’s because it’s the place she knows best—the dusty gusts, the flat earth, the square squat houses, the late-summer thunderstorms. The people are stocky, stubborn, religious, big-hearted, abhorrent toward change, and suspicious of success. She’s grateful to Amarillo for providing colourful characters and a background of relentless whistling wind.

Jen Waldo lives in Marble Falls, Texas, west of Austin, and south of the HWY 281 bridge that crosses the Colorado River. Her favourite things to do are write, make quilts, play Mahjong, and travel.

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SRIKANDI

By

Laksmi Pamuntjak

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SYNOPSIS

Srikandi tells of best friends turned foes, Siri and Dara. Siri is a visual artist with Indonesian roots and a wanderer between worlds. Shortly before her fiftieth birthday, she learns that the man she always believed to be her father is not her biological parent. To find her balance again, she moves to Berlin—a city of profound meaning to both her fathers. Just as she is starting to find her footing, unexpected family circumstances and a changing political landscape compel her to return to Jakarta. Not only does she get to confront the wounds of her past, but also the daily frustrations of navigating between cultures and her multiple selves.

Dara is a women’s rights activist from a more conservative Muslim background than Siri’s. Her political and personal loyalties are put to the test when she has to defend Siri against Islamic hardliners bent on censoring her latest art exhibition. Together they confront their country’s complex realities linking faith, art and politics and rediscover what it means to be part of a sisterhood of women.

Srikandi is a story of seeing and unseeing, of freedom and censorship. Of East and West, of memory and identity. Of mothers and daughters, of fathers and daughters. Of making peace with one’s parents’ and one’s own history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laksmi Pamuntjak is an award-winning Indonesian novelist, poet, food writer, and journalist. Her debut novel, Amba (The Question of Red), won Germany’s Libraturpreis, was short-listed for the 2012 Khatulistiwa Literary Award, and appeared on the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung’s Top 8 list of the best books of the...
Frankfurt Book Fair in 2015. She is also the author of two collections of poetry and five editions of the bestselling and award-winning *Jakarta Good Food Guide*, and she has served as translator for Indonesian poet and essayist Goenawan Mohamad.

Cofounder of Jakarta’s Aksara Bookstore, Pamuntjak was selected as the Indonesian representative for Poetry Parnassus at the 2012 London Olympics. She currently divides her time between Berlin and Jakarta.

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THE ADIVASI WILL NOT DANCE

By Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

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SYNOPSIS

In this collection of stories, set in the fecund, mineral-rich hinterland and the ever-expanding, squalid towns of Jharkhand, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar breathes life into a set of characters who are as robustly flesh and blood as the soil from which they spring, where they live, and into which they must sometimes bleed.

Troupe-master Mangal Murmu refuses to perform for the President of India and is beaten down; Suren and Gita, a love-blind couple, wait with quiet desperation outside a neonatal ward, hoping—for different reasons—that their blue baby will turn pink; Panmuni and Biren Soren move to Vadodara in the autumn of their lives, only to find that they must stop eating meat to be accepted as citizens; Baso-jhi is the life of the village of Sarjomdih but, when people begin to die for no apparent reason, a ghastly accusation from her past comes back to haunt her; and Talamai Kisku of the Santhal Pargana, migrating to West Bengal in search of work, must sleep with a policeman for fifty rupees and two cold bread pakoras.

“The Adivasi Will Not Dance” is a mature, passionate, intensely political book of stories, made up of the very stuff of life. It establishes Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar as one of India’s most important contemporary writers.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar (born 1983) is the author of two books: a novel, “The Mysterious Ailment Of Rupi Baskey”, which won the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2015 and the Muse India Young Writer Award 2015, was shortlisted for The Hindu Prize 2014 and a Crossword Book Award 2014, and longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award 2016; and a collection of short stories, “The Adivasi Will Not Dance”, which is receiving some positive reviews and has been recommended for a course at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Sowvendra lives and works in Jharkhand, India.

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The Alchemy of Secrets

By

Priya Balasubramanian

Indian Subcontinent Rights sold, UK and Translation Rights available

SYNOPSIS

The Alchemy of Secrets is a riveting family portrait set against a brilliant depiction of India’s recent history. Through the artful unfolding of three generations’ stories, narrated by Mira and her indelible grandmother Aiji, the author gives new meaning and resonance to Indian Independence, Gandhi’s death, Partition, the Emergency and the more recent epidemic of religious fundamentalism and violence against women.

When Mira is summoned from America to her childhood home by news of her grandmother Aiji’s impending death, it immediately propels her into conflict with all she left behind. Mira had left Bangalore eight years earlier after she and her greatest friend, Anisa, were targeted by a vigilante mob with tragic consequences. On the surface, the attack was provoked by Mira’s disgraceful behavior, but clearly, religious tensions and rumors about Mira’s dead mother were also responsible.

Mira’s return unearths the buried story of her dead mother’s disgrace; a story which, in a city ever more polarized by religion, erupts into the news and ultimately wins justice, liberating Mira and her late mother from guilt and shame.

The novel in progress was chosen for an honourable mention in the 2014 Wilkes University James Jones Fellowship contest, an award intended to honour the spirit of unblinking honesty, determination, and insight into cultural and social issues. A previous draft was shortlisted for finalist in the novel in progress category of the Faulkner Words and Music contest in 2012.
In sweep and structure, the book invites comparison with Toni Morrison’s BLUEST EYE or BELOVED and its prose and insight bring to mind Kiran Desai. While it might recall another physician novelist, Khaled Hosseini in its expansive span, it has the charm of characters one might find in works by Tarquin Hall or Farahad Zama, set against a darker, more gritty landscape.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Priya Balasubramanian, is a physician and novelist. She grew up in Bangalore, India, where the novel is set. She graduated from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, before moving to the US, where she completed a residency in Internal Medicine, a Fellowship in Gastroenterology and Hepatology, along with a Masters in Public Health, from the University of California, Davis. Her writing has won her admittance into workshops like Breadloaf, Sirenland and Tin House, where she has found mentors and early supporters of her work. The Alchemy of Secrets is Priya’s first work of fiction. Her non-fiction has appeared on NPR and ROAR.

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The Prince

By

Samhita Arni

SYNOPSIS

The famous dancer Madhavi is at the court of the Chera King for a grand performance. The King’s first son Shenguttuvan, the crown prince of the Cheras, is getting ready for his engagement to a Velir princess. There is celebration in the air.

But when an astrologer predicts that the second son Uthiyan is destined to be greater than his elder brother, the Chera court erupts in chaos. The courtiers begin to play the brothers against each other. Life becomes dangerous for Uthiyan and the prince is forced to flee his home in the garb of a monk.

In a perilous journey beset by assassins and conspirators, he is joined by others who seek refuge at the just court of the Pandya King. But darkness is descending on the ancient city of Madurai. Warriors from the west, the single-minded and ruthless Kalabhras, have set out to conquer the prosperous Pandya capital and change the face of Tamilaham. Tormented rage and lust, beset by betrayal and terror, Uthiyan is forced to choose a side in a conflict that is certain to end in bloody violence.

Set at the end of the Sangam era in south India, "The Prince" is a richly drawn work of historical fiction about a young royal’s journey through battlefields and boudoirs, monasteries and forests, palaces and scaffolds, as he seeks to carve out a new, unique destiny for himself - and his world.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

When she was eight, Samhita Arni started writing and illustrating her first book, *The Mahabharata - A Child's View* went on to be published in seven language editions and sell 50,000 copies worldwide, winning the Elsa Morante Literary Award, and receiving commendations from the German Academy for Youth Literature and Media and The Spanish Ministry of Culture.

Samhita’s second book, *Sita’s Ramayana*, a graphic novel developed in collaboration with Patua artist Moyna Chitrakar, was on the New York Times Bestseller list for Graphic Novels. *Elle* Magazine named Arni as one of twenty young upcoming South Asian writers to watch out for.

Her third book, *The Missing Queen*, has been published by Penguin (Viking) and Zubaan. Samhita’s fourth book, *The Prince*, will be published by Juggernaut at the end of this year.

Samhita has written for publications such as *Nat Geo Traveller, The Caravan, Amica* (Italy), *Mint Lounge* and *The Indian Express*, in addition to being a regular columnist for *The Hindu* and the *Bangalore Mirror*. She worked on the screenplay for the feature film 'Good Morning Karachi' and was head scriptwriter for the first season of 'The Defenders', a TV series produced by Tolo TV in Kabul, Afghanistan.

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THE LAND OF FIVE TOWERS

by

Ahmad Fuadi

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SYNOPSIS

Ahmad Fuadi’s coming of age novel Negeri 5 Menara (The Land of Five Towers) took Indonesia by storm. The recent release of a film adaptation has brought even wider appeal to this charming story of young boys growing up in small town Indonesia and not giving up on their big dreams.

_The Land of 5 Towers_ is the first book in a trilogy. A Fulbright scholar and former reporter for Voice of America, Ahmad Fuadi went to George Washington University and Royal Holloway, University of London for his masters.

Alif had never set foot outside of West Sumatra. He passed his childhood days searching for fallen durian fruit in the jungle, playing soccer on rice paddies, and swimming in the blue waters of Lake Maninjau. His mother wants him to attend an Islamic boarding school, a pesantren, while he dreams of public high school. Halfheartedly, he follows his mother’s wishes. This 15-year old boy finds himself on a grueling three-day bus ride from Sumatra to Madani Pesantren (MP) in a remote village on Java.

On his first day at MP, Alif is captivated by the powerful phrase man jada wajada. He who gives his all will surely succeed. United by punishment, he quickly becomes friends with five boys from across the archipelago, and together they become known as the Fellowship of the Manara. Beneath the mosque’s minaret, the boys gaze at the clouds on the horizon, seeing in them their individual dreams of far-away lands, like America and Europe. Where would these dreams take them? They didn’t know. What they did know was: never underestimate dreams, no matter how high they may be. God truly is The Listener.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A Fulbright scholar, Ahmad Fuadi parlayed his formative years at an Islamic boarding school into his celebrated first novel, Negeri 5 Menara, which sold more than 100,000 copies in the first year of its release. Translated into English, The Land of Five Towers, the award-winning novel has also been adapted into a feature film. He was featured at Frankfurt Book Fair, Byron Bay Writers Festival in Australia, Ubud Writers Festival, Singapore Writers Festival, Melbourne Writers Festival, and Makassar Writers Festival. He is the founder of Komunitas Menara, an organization to help unfortunate children to get a free access to early childhood education. He was a resident writer in Bellagio Center, Italy and an artist-in-residence at University of California, Berkeley, UK Alumni Award winner 2016. Instagram @afuadi

More about his novels

The trilogy tells the journey of Alif and his quest to find his mission in life. As encouraged by his culture, Alif travels far to seek knowledge and widen his view of the world. His journey starts from his humble village by Lake Maninjau in West Sumatra, Indonesia, and takes him to lands as far as the United States and the United Kingdom.

The first novel, The Land of Five Towers (2009), is about his teenage years in an Islamic boarding school in Java; the second book, The Earth of Three Colors (2011), is about his university years in Indonesia and Canada; the third, The Bay of One Destiny (early 2012), is about his struggle to find love and the meaning of his life.

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"Times have moved on. Certain things no longer have a place with us."

"There's no room for animals in our modern world, is that it?"

"Not animals like lions"

SYNOPSIS

So what happens to eight unwanted circus lions once their act is cancelled? Emmanuel Gunter, or 'Manny' the lion tamer is determined to save his lions at all costs and as the stakes grow higher, his methods become increasingly unorthodox.

Manny's troubled assistant, José the anarchic Spaniard, is in love with Shelley, the teenage tightrope walker. Between him and his young love, stands the threatening figure of Shelley's psychotic father, the circus strongman, and her weird alcoholic Great Aunt Anna, a 'painted pensioner' who dresses like a child. Both father and daughter are hiding a terrifying secret.

Manny is shocked when he discovers that John Carter, his ex-lover, is now the British politician spearheading the anti-animal acts campaign. José's estranged partner, Rosanna, is threatening to block his access to his
beloved young daughter. The Chinese acrobats are using the circus as a cover for a major drug smuggling operation and just when he is needed most, Manny becomes seriously ill.

As the tension mounts and Manny prepares to take a final stand, José formulates a desperate plan to try and save both his teenage lover and Manny's lions. The resourceful John Carter is backing his idea, but even so, José's plan is so outrageous that even he doesn't actually believe it can possibly succeed.

Is there a chance though, however slim, that the lions can be saved? Will the lion tamer and his lovers win out in the end?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Heather Steed is an author and artist working in London and Extremadura, Spain. She trained at Central St Martins School of Art and Goldsmiths College UCL and has a background in fine art, education and theatre. She has performed as a Punch and Judy Professor and produced puppet plays for the London International Festival of Puppetry and the Royal Shakespeare Company Fringe Festival. She taught in Tower Hamlets and worked for many years for the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican Centre. She is currently a working artist and studio holder in a busy South London Artists' Co-operative, Lewisham Art House.

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The Majesties

By

Tiffany Tsao

SYNOPSIS

In this riveting tale about the secrets and betrayals that can accompany exorbitant wealth, two sisters from a Chinese-Indonesian family grapple with the past after one of them poisons their entire family.

Gwendolyn and Estella have always been as close as sisters can be. Growing up in a wealthy, eminent, and sometimes deceitful family, they’ve relied on each other for support and confidence. But now Gwendolyn is lying in a coma, the sole survivor of Estella’s poisoning of their whole clan.

As Gwendolyn struggles to regain consciousness, she desperately retraces her memories, trying to uncover the moment that led to this shocking and brutal act. Was it their aunt’s mysterious death at sea? Estella’s unhappy marriage to a dangerously brutish man? Or were the shifting loyalties and unspoken resentments at the heart of their opulent world too much to bear? Can Gwendolyn, at last, confront the carefully buried mysteries in their family’s past and the truth about who she and her sister really are?
Traveling from the luxurious world of the rich and powerful in Indonesia to the most spectacular shows at Paris Fashion Week, from the sunny coasts of California to the melting pot of Melbourne’s university scene, *The Majesties* is a haunting and deeply evocative novel about the dark secrets that can build a family empire—and also bring it crashing down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tiffany Tsao has written three novels. *The Oddfits* and *The More Known World* (Amazon Crossing, 2016 and 2017) constitute the first two books of the humorous and fantastic Oddfits trilogy. Her debut work of literary fiction, *Under Your Wings* (Viking, 2018), was longlisted for the Ned Kelly Award and selected as Fiction Pick of the Week by the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

The US edition of her third novel is forthcoming from Atria Books in January 2020 under the title *The Majesties*. In addition to writing, she translates Indonesian fiction and poetry. She holds a PhD in English literature from UC-Berkeley.

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THE ORDINARY CHAOS OF BEING HUMAN

Tales from Many Muslim Worlds

By

Marguerite Richards

SYNOPSIS

*The Ordinary Chaos of Being Human: Tales from Many Muslim Worlds* offers a counter narrative to the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims in the media, building empathy across cultures through storytelling. This is not a book about religion; it is a collection of personal stories revealing the multi-faceted and universal experiences of people living all over the world. Each first-person, nonfiction story follows the classic narrative arc on which the most successful fiction stories of our time have been based. In stories that reveal the heroes and villains of the writers’ lives, readers walk for a moment in the shoes of the “other,” during poignant, vulnerable life moments. These stories share the common language of love, truth, despair, revelation, humor, and hope—and in that language, these stories cease to be Muslim, but unequivocally human.

From the Editor: Why now?

“Does your country know that there are good Muslims in the world?” My skin still chills when I imagine the 15-year-old Iranian girl plying my American friend with questions like this one. Noni was visiting a mosque in Yazd, southwest of Tehran, when she met the girl and her family. What shook me more than the urgency of her inquiry was the fact that she was right to ask. But how could such a young girl, who had never met an American, be aware of our misconceptions? This was the first time I felt shaken by the global implications of our cultural ignorance. It was the first time I understood how our global politics and media had the potential to
misshape a young mind seeking valuable human-to-human connection across borders. What could this mean for her entire generation?

Today, Islam has become a much maligned and misunderstood subject, anti-Muslim sentiment is raging across a globe, and there is a palpable resurgence of wall-building nationalism everywhere. People are becoming uncomfortable, fearful of their neighbours. I believe cultural ignorance is to blame. In America, that ignorance has fuelled support for a ban that upsets the founding ethics of the nation. It goes against the principles that they hold most dear. According to ongoing Pew Research Centre studies, U.S. American views on Islam are mixed. Many feel Islam is “anti-American” or in conflict with democracy. Reports of hate crimes across the globe—even in countries predominately Muslim—prove that America is not alone in this ignorance.

To battle this end, I’m gathering real stories, which demystify the Muslim other and add human truths to the common narrative, to dissipate abstract misconceptions, one story at a time. Authors like Azar Nafisi, Khaled Hosseini, and Leila Aboulela have based their careers on the principle that literature brings connection and cultural sensitivity through human empathy. Their works have topped best-seller lists for this very ability. I believe creative non-fiction can be even more powerful: real moments shared by real people.

No one book could attempt to cover the diversity of Muslim cultural heritage across the globe. Because diversity is key to this book, these writers do not all identify with Islam—but all come from Muslim worlds, the plurality of “worlds” being imperative to the conversation. Garnering the advice of Muslim publishers in Asia and America, I have also learned that it’s impossible to find one editor (Muslim or not) who might oversee all aspects of storytelling by people of Muslim heritage. In fact, that is the very point—these are not my stories to tell. It’s time to let the 1.6 billion Muslims of our world speak for themselves.

Sample Stories
In The Unbeliever, Abeer Hoque writes about challenging family dynamics during her migration from Bangladesh to Nigeria. She loses her religion, but discovers her faith. In the Sufi and the Architect, H. Masud Taj meets a Sufi who has a job for him. He must solve the problem of a re-appearing crack in his master’s tomb. Sudanese writer Leila Aboulela shares her meaning of home in Fork in the Road. In Summer’s Ruin, a mind trip rife with dark humor, Hisham Bustani writes from an Amman apartment about his summer ruined by loud, ignorant Saudis vacationing next door. Homebound during the Iraq-Iran war, Wasan Qasim describes her family’s confinement and resilience as they celebrate her 18th birthday.

Contributors
Mona Merhi
Abeer Hoque             Neyaz Farooque
Hanan al Shaykh         Ali Bader
Criselda Yabes         Youssef Rakha
Leila Aboulela  Saeida Rouass
Aleya Kassam  Kamin Mohammadi
Shole Wolpé  Hisham Bustani
Sepideh Zamani  Sheena Baharudin
                    Nashwa Nasreldon
Summi Siddiqui  Samina Hadi-Tabassum
Asma Elbadawi  H Masud Taj
Wasan Qasim  Shiraza Ibrahim Faiz
Ameena Hussein  Wardah Abbas
Salahdin Imam  Samina Najmi
Shirazuddin Siddiqi  Tharik Hussein

ABOUT THE EDITOR
Marguerite Richards is an American writer and editor focusing on world cultures with a background in literature and translation. She travels to understand the nuances that separate us, with the resolve to render it all palpable through her writing. She is currently based in Sri Lanka. Read more about her and her work at margueriterichards.com.

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THE HAVOC OF CHOICE

By

Wanjiru Koinange

SYNOPSIS

Based on events that took place following Kenya’s historic election of 2007, ‘The Havoc of Choice’ is a story about family, politics and journeying through a fractured country during a sensitive period in its history. The book follows the lives of Kavata, a politician’s daughter, her husband Ngugi who decides to run for office and their children at a time when their country is enduring one hundred days of violence, shortly after the announcement of the poll results. ‘The Havoc of Choice’ is a delicate and deeply personal attempt to understand the root of this spontaneous yet organised conflict and arrive at some form of healing.

A brief note from the author:

“The violence of 2008 has grown into something that Kenyans have collectively become afraid to speak about. We were so steeped in denial about it that we couldn’t bring ourselves to even refer to it as the thing that it actually was: A full-blown war.

I come from a political family. My grandfather served as Prime Minister in Kenya’s first independent government. As such, my father – his eldest son – was being groomed for take over from him. This never happened for many reasons, key among which were that he never felt that he was cut out for politics and that my mother, a fierce wonderful woman, wouldn’t let him. Despite his decision to stay away from politics, my
siblings and I still had access to the messy backend of politics. So in a sense, this story is modelled around what I imagine our lives might have been like had my father followed the political legacy that was set out for him.

I wrote this novel because I believe that we must never forget what happened in 2008. We can’t move on while there are still families who are still living as refugees in their own country. We can’t accept it as a series of spontaneous and unfortunate events. We must remain uncomfortable and keep asking these questions until we get the answers we need to begin to heal.”

About the Author

Wanjiru Koinange was born in Kenya and grew up on a coffee farm on the outskirts of Nairobi where she spent her days playing in the bushes and reading under the generous shade of oak trees. She obtained her undergraduate degree (with distinction) in journalism and literature from the United States International University, after which she worked as a Talent Manager for some of East Africa’s most renowned artists and musicians. During this time she was part of several teams that created a series of events and festivals that continue to shape Kenya’s cultural landscape to this day. In 2012 she moved to South Africa to pursue a Masters in Creative Writing from the University in Cape Town; the product of which is this, her debut novel based on the 2007-2008 post election violence in Kenya. She is now back in Nairobi setting up a project that aims to re-install libraries in primary schools and public spaces in Kenya. She also works as an administrator and researcher for the Cape Town based NGO, the Africa Centre.

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TOKYO TIME

By

Dawn Farnham

(WWII detective series)

SYNOPSIS

1942 Syonan: During the Japanese occupation of Singapore, a Eurasian and a Japanese homicide detective are thrown together in a ragtag civilian CID, under the power of a brutal and corrupt military regime.

Cynical and wary Eurasian homicide detective Martin Bach has survived the battles and the surrender, now all he has to do is survive the occupation. The Brits are locked up and his new boss at the CID is the ex-police chief of Nagasaki, widower DCI Kano Hayashi who despises fascism and the disastrous war his country is waging.

Kano’s personal demon is the violent murder of his loving and timid daughter at the hands of her brutal husband and the subsequent suicide of his wife. Martin seeks answers to the suspicious deaths of both his mother and his Australian lover, deaths which the British police refused to investigate. With the Brits out of the picture he has his chance.

Both men are alone. Both seek dignity, decency and love. Both want atonement for miseries and sins past both real and perceived. Both believe in natural as well as lawful justice. When Martin finds that he is not the son of his German father but his mother’s secret liaison, possibly with an Australian man, it throws his inner world into even greater turmoil and leaves him open, as an enemy alien, to death or imprisonment.

Kano strives, in this strange new world that has opened up to him, to put the past behind him and find happiness, not always with the wisest of choices. Both men detest crimes against women above all, so, despite
being complete strangers, they soon become deeply involved in the case of a young murdered widow found suffocated in a bombed-out Chinese shop

As they work through this case and the threats and dubious choices a brutal occupation throws at them, both men begin to find in each other a strange trust and a moral purpose in immoral times.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR


Her novel Finding Maria is set in post-war colonial Singapore (republished in 2017 by Monsoon Books) and was shortlisted for the Pengan Magazine Literary Prize, Malaysia (November 2018).

Dawn is also the author of a number of short stories, some of which have been featured in Crime Scene Singapore, The Best of Southeast Asian Erotica, Love and Lust in Singapore and Crime Scene Asia. She was the winner of the 2013 Melbourne Athenaeum Library Prize at the Scarlet Stiletto Awards for Short Crime Fiction (The Fifth Cut, Clandestine Press).

Dawn has written three screenplays and was a recipient of the Singapore Film Commission Script Development grant for LEASE ON LIFE and LITTLE INDIA. She was also an Inaugural member of the First Draft initiative of the Media Development Authority of Singapore and The British Council for THE WEDDING and a screenwriter and produce at Tempest Productions, Perth. Her short film The Wallpaper (screenplay), featured in Revelation Film Festival, Perth, Melbourne Women’s Film Festival, Female Filmmakers Film Festival and was shortlisted in Tropfest and winner of the best screenplay and best film at NextGen Short Film Festival 2018, Perth. She is also the author of a children’s picture book and a short play.

Dawn is currently a creative writing PhD student at Edith Cowan University in Perth researching and writing a novel about local women and their struggles under the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

TOKYO TIME is the first in a series of detective novels set during the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

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Voyager and Other Fictions: The Collected Stories of Jose Dalisay

SYNOPSIS

Hapless men year after unreachable women. Boys teeter on the edge of adolescence and taste the bitterness of disillusionment. A multitude of characters gamble with their fates in casinos.

Voyager and Other Fictions: The Collected Stories of Jose Dalisay explores the depths of the human psyche, exposing the follies and foibles of Filipinos going about their daily lives. This definitive compilation of forty-three stories from a master storyteller includes the classic stories “Penmanship” and “Oldtimer” and the title story “Voyager,” and shows the art and craft of one of the country’s most revered writers of short fiction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jose Dalisay has published more than thirty-five books of fiction and nonfiction; his second novel, Soledad’s Sister, was shortlisted for the inaugural Man Asian Literary Prize in 2007. His first short story earned him the praise of being “certainly the most gifted/skillful/crafty/artful writer.” In its citation, the Manila Critics’ Circle said that “it achieved for him what other writers simply dream about, and sometimes never achieve.” Dr. Dalisay is Professor Emeritus at the University of the Philippines, where he also chaired the English department and served as the Director of the UP Institute of Creative Writing and Vice President for Public Affairs.

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