WELCOME
to the all-new version of The Hawker!

Ever since the launch of its first issue in 2016, The Hawker has showcased student, faculty, and staff writing to the Yale-NUS community. Like misplacing your Yale-NUS card or never finding a free spot at the library, change is inevitable, and you’ll find that this issue of The Hawker is much different from past editions. Besides its new look, there are new sections to reflect the Writers’ Centre’s recent shift in focus towards academic writing.

The aim is to produce a publication that appeals to creative writers, academic writers, and creative academic writers (because who says you can’t be both?).

Whether you’re new to The Hawker or a diehard fan, I hope you find something in this issue that fascinates you, challenges you, and/or inspires you.

Happy reading!

ISABELLA PERALTA
Editor-in-Chief
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As Director of the Writers’ Centre, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of *The Hawker* for this academic year! As you browse, you will notice a few things that are new: a new cover, new sections on academic writing, and a new editor (special thanks to Isa Peralta). But there is much that stays the same too, including the coveted ‘Dear Larry’ section.

As with *The Hawker*, so with the Writers’ Centre. Carissa, Judith and Larry - who know a lot - and Jenika - who knows everything - are joined by Ila, Isa, and our Yale consultant Karin, who will be visiting us at regular points during the year. Our Peer Writing Tutors have grown in number to 15, spanning a greater range of disciplinary writing styles, and tutors old and new are available for one-to-one consultations on any aspect of your writing, at any stage, in whatever year of study you are. For all that writing between and including your first CSI paper and the capstone project - we are here to help! Some of our Peer Writing Tutors are also initiating collaborative projects with Faculty to develop writing aids specific to your needs in the Yale-NUS curriculum. And in terms of Resources, you should certainly check out the Resources tab on the Writers’ Centre website, as there is a series of documents, many created by Yale-NUS Faculty, expressly designed to assist you in your assignments.

As most of the writing that all of you do here is related to your courses, it is appropriate that the Writers’ Centre focuses on academic writing. But we are here for all kinds of writing - academic, creative, extra-curricular, vocational - and we look forward to running events that span the entire range of our students’ writing endeavours. The Writers’ Centre Facebook page - overseen by the all-knowing Jenika - is the best place to go to learn about our weekly schedule of workshops and events.

Enjoy *The Hawker*, and we look forward to welcoming you to the Writers’ Centre this year!

Steven James Green
Director of the Writers’ Centre
Academic Writing Blues

AN ACCOUNT OF MY OWN HISTORY WITH ACADEMIC WRITING

By Ila Tyagi
Writing Lecturer

When I cast my mind back over my experiences with academic writing during my college years, two memories stand out. The first is getting my first graded essay back in the early weeks of my very first semester. The paper was for an English Literature course, and the grade — shock, horror! — was a C+. I locked myself in the nearest bathroom, threw my bag on the floor, and bawled. English Literature had been my best subject in high school, and I had always been told that I was academically gifted: to receive a C+ in any subject was unthinkable. Stinging from this slap in the face, my pride in shambles, I grimly hunted down the teaching assistant who had marked the paper. I asked her to tell me everything she knew about writing essays in American higher education — if I was going to succeed at a U.S. research university, I would need to overhaul whatever I had learned about writing while attending my British high school in Kuwait. She patiently talked me through the elements of a typical five-paragraph, American-style college paper. I rewrote the paper and got a B+, which was still not quite good enough, but certainly better than a C+.
The other memory dates from sometime in my second or third year of college. A professor had asked us to leave hardcopies of our papers in her mailbox to be graded. I found myself standing in front of the mailbox, gazing longingly at the stack of papers to which I had just added mine, wishing I could take even one classmate’s paper out to read and compare against my own. I had achieved a reasonably good grasp of the five-paragraph format by that point, but was still frustrated by the way I was always writing in a vacuum, sending my papers off into the void of a professor’s mailbox with no sense of where the quality of my writing and ideas stood in relation to that of my peers.

In other words, I yearned for models of excellent undergraduate writing that I could use to mold my own into better shape, but had none. Hence the strong temptation to steal a fistful of my classmates’ essays, scurry away to read them somewhere quickly in private, and then sneakily return them to the mailbox before anybody noticed they were gone. I did not, ultimately, succumb to this temptation. I left my classmates’ papers alone. For the rest of my college career, though, I remained in the dark about the context surrounding the hermetically sealed silo I was producing my own work in. Happily, students at Yale-NUS don’t have to suffer as I did: the Resources page on the Writers’ Centre website has a sample paper on it.

What Can We Close-Read?

By Jolene Lum, Peer Tutor

Everything, is the short answer I would dole out. Not just because I am a Literature major, but perhaps it makes up part of the reason why I switched from being a Physical Scientist at the end of junior year to become one. Close-reading is a big buzzword we encounter here at Yale-NUS — beginning from Common Curriculum and most likely from our Literature & Humanities professors — and perhaps it bogs us down most to try to figure out what it means at the eleventh hour of churning out our first essays. In my over two years of being a writing tutor, it perhaps perplexes me most when I have to teach somebody how to close-read. The conversation often begins with the question: So what is so interesting about these words on the page, what else does it tell us?
After several rounds of looking at first drafts that do not go beyond recapitulating the text, many students look back to me and respond to my further probing with a frustrated claim: That’s all! No?

Even discussions with fellow writing tutors may lead to the scratching of heads as to how we could help show another how close-reading is done. While I do not attempt to make an end-all statement about what we can close-read and how it is done, allow me to present my case of what it means.

Close-reading is engaging in a rather intimate relationship with the object of our thoughts in order to make meaning. It is always a process directed at a certain object, and we relearn how to think and have a dialogue with ourselves about the object before we address the object or engage someone else on the topic. In my time as a chemistry researcher, I mostly stood in the laboratory facing a spectroscopic apparatus that only gave me spikes and waves against a white background, supposedly telling me about how well I have performed an organic synthesis to create a particular molecule. I began thinking about how having done all the math and derivations that taught me the principles of spectroscopy, I was imbued with the skills to then engage and close-read spectra that made any sense at all. For as much as we like the word ‘analytical’ to appear in describing our thinking as scholars, analysis requires knowledge of what we are looking out for and having the skills to understand our object. Why do we think that students who have never taken a literature course before have the skills to begin writing a Literature essay, then?

There is no singularity in how any particular discipline prioritizes this intimacy with the object of study more than another. Literature (and philosophy), however, provides the commonality of a working language (native or not) that engages most facets of our concerns given that we are animals functioning with it. When approaching text, we interpret in the most immediate form — it is making meaning of an immediate input in whose language we function. We merely ask further questions about how we could draw out the relationships and associations in a text to other thoughts we have. Through the object of analysis, our own capacities are redirected to the thoughts that it evokes, connecting dots from something in front of us to something outside the page. All else merely requires intelligent reflection on what is relevant.

This is true of many phenomena — having learnt the meaning of a rule to deal with a mathematical problem, the theoretical framework of analysing political situations or migration patterns, using principles to make sense of data from psychological surveys. We close-read when we overthink a conversation over lunch, we close-read when we pay attention to any detail that would give us a clue to a larger situation. It is, however, in writing and in words where I found the most ambiguity, and the most fun. With everything said about an object we close-read, it is the manifestation of an intimate relationship we had with the object — something that resists essentialization and closure because someone else would engage differently — it is an invitation to share in intimacy we once had.
Meet Your PEER TUTORS

- **Helena Auerswald** is a Global Affairs major in Cendana College. Academically, she is most interested in security studies and U.S.-China relations. Outside the classroom, Helena enjoys listening to podcasts and writing as a process of reflecting on experiences. She most strongly identifies as a sister, a student, and an American.

- **Chrystal Ho** is a Literature major and Arts and Humanities minor from Saga College. She is interested in the retelling of old stories, narratives of place and displacement, and the intersections between form, culture, and content. As a writer, she is both inspired and humbled by the written word as a means of self-expression, and spends her time writing poetry, immersing in theatre, continuing unfinished crochet projects, and drinking lots of tea.

- **Ernest Tan** is an Urban Studies major, keenly fascinated with city planning yet increasingly interested in rural development. He probably spends too much of his time editing Instagram photos (that don’t feature him), playing strategy and car-racing virtual games, and deciding when to have that next cup of coffee. Personally, Ernest takes reading and writing seriously because he thinks words are incredibly powerful.

- **Zhu Fangchen** is a senior in Life Sciences who is passionate about neurobiology - he wants to one day explain the basis of consciousness to his pet turtle. He likes writing about science and has written for *The Cosmoscience* and *The Yale Scientific Magazine*. In his free time, he plays basketball, sings karaoke poorly and screens Wednesday midnight movies to a small group of dedicated followers.
Anthea Chua is an Anthropology major considering a minor in Arts and Humanities. She enjoys Anthropology’s interdisciplinary approach, and hopes to help her peers develop writing skills in the humanities and social sciences. She is also interested in creative non-fiction and unconventional approaches to academic writing. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys theatre, singing, one-on-one conversations and baking. She is also an avid nap enthusiast, and can often be found dozing off on the sofas at the Shiner’s Diner patio.

Syafiqah Nabilah is an Arts and Humanities major and collector of animal figurines. She is also the vice president of the baking club. Sya likes writing letters and going to the post office, and she also sometimes writes plays. She loves stories and ideas in all forms, and has benefited greatly from learning how to write as a way to express herself. She hopes to help others do the same.

Kelvin Fung is a prospective MCS major from Cendana College. At Yale-NUS, he is the co-captain of the volleyball team and he is also involved in Barbershop Chorus. As a result of the common curriculum, Kelvin has developed an interest in philosophy, a field that he had never studied before college. Kelvin continues to take modules in philosophy despite intending to major in a science field. In his free time, he cooks, games and studies Japanese.

Kan Ren Jie is a Literature Major from Saga College. The Writers’ Centre is a place close to his heart, as it was through its various workshops and programmes that his first discovered a love for creative and academic writing. As a peer tutor, he hopes that he can help to instill a similar love for writing in others. Within the College, Ren Jie is part of the Literary Collective and the Christian Fellowship, and enjoys reading novels by Marilynne Robinson and Virginia Woolf.

Syafiqah Nabilah is an Arts and Humanities major and collector of animal figurines. She is also the vice president of the baking club. Sya likes writing letters and going to the post office, and she also sometimes writes plays. She loves stories and ideas in all forms, and has benefited greatly from learning how to write as a way to express herself. She hopes to help others do the same.

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The Sociological Explanation of Why I Got into Yale-NUS

BY SOPHIA GOH, CLASS OF 2022

The prompt of the Class of 2022's first CSI paper was What is Peter Berger’s central argument in Chapter 4 of “An Invitation to Sociology”? How does it connect to your own experience “getting into” Yale-NUS College? The following two samples are considered by the authors' professors as exemplary.

“Why did you choose Yale-NUS?” There’s a flaw in this question: I did not choose Yale-NUS. Peter Berger’s central claim in Chapter 4 of his book, An Invitation to Sociology, is that our choices have been mapped by society and history’s forcing (Berger 1963). From choosing which colleges to apply to, to college decision day, these seemingly free choices have been mapped into our lives because of our societal standing. If I did not choose Yale-NUS, I must consider why I was admitted into Yale-NUS instead - what patterns I followed toward my current status and whether I had any choice in the matter.

Berger argues that social constraints are inherent to a functioning society, and that methods of constraint vary from physical violence to ridicule from family (Berger 1963). I was never physically threatened into attending college, but it was a fact because I was not socialised to consider other options. I was never aware that my decision to go to college was a product of internalised conventions.

Berger’s arguments also explain why I was accepted into Yale-NUS. He writes that some social “pressures are more conducive than others toward success” (Berger 1963). I am likely to be accepted into college because of the influences of the social groups I was brought up in, social circumstances which influenced the skills I have. I can play instruments, have worked on service projects, and received an education because of my economic status and culture that recognizes academic accomplishment and frowns upon mediocrity. If my social circumstances had different expectations of girls, these accomplishments would not be on my college application.

This selection effect, especially in relation to college admissions, was brought up by Malcolm Gladwell (2005). This is the idea that a college accepts students who can succeed according to their definition of success, and it is not the college itself which creates successful students. Yale-NUS chooses students who can graduate as passionate and driven as when they wrote their zealous personal statements, and consciously or not, I highlighted aspects of myself in my application which would feed into what I believed Yale-NUS was looking for. I talked about my passion for teaching, diverse academic interests, and leadership experience over other achievements that were of greater personal importance. It worked, and I avoided social punishment: being rejected from a college.

I got into Yale-NUS because I fit its mould. Berger and Gladwell both write that my social location and societal institutions shape my choices and opportunities. So where does my free choice come into this process? I question if free will even exists, in a society that fools me into believing that their expectations are really my own. Perhaps this free will is truly only expressed in the awareness that I am in this system and the questions that spring from that awareness. I am limited by social constraints, but also by my own adherence to the rules, and being conscious of this is the first step to truly being free.
The Influence of Social Location on Autonomous Choice in the Context of University Application; a Personal Response to Berger’s An Invitation to Sociology

BY GABRIEL NG SWEE KHIANG, CLASS OF 2022

The ideas raised by Peter Berger are relevant to the entire gamut of social experiences but vis-à-vis my application and subsequent enrolment in Yale-NUS, they were most pertinent in deconstructing my personal decision making process. At the center of An Invitation to Sociology is the concept of “social location” (Berger 1963), the awareness of the wider social contexts that individual identities exist within. In a world defined by a mélange of expectations, it becomes easy to question the extent to which our decisions reflect autonomous will versus social conditioning.

Within “concentric circles... of social control” (Berger 1963), one’s choices become heavily affected by politico-legal frameworks and social mores at varying levels of intimacy and localization. In the context of entering Yale-NUS, the latter pressure would be more pertinent. Within intimate familial circles, there is a strong expectation for someone to pursue higher education whenever possible because of the perceived prestige and economic benefits. The primacy of education is heavily emphasized and woven into our minds from young such that when in a position to do so, pursuing a university education becomes an obligation rather than an opportunity.

The decision to choose Yale-NUS specifically, presents other interactions with social controls. As a relatively young and untested institution, providing a liberal arts education (contrasting the prestigious staples of law and medicine), there was noticeable opposition to my decision from relatives. This showcases a reaction to deviancy albeit at an extremely minor level, where an expressed desire to detour off the desired track is met with a countering force. For some, these expectations are more rigid and not following familial expectations could engender severe rifts in response to this perceived deviancy.

The argument thus far has taken some liberties in discussing university education, where the choice rather than the opportunity to pursue it has taken center stage. This assumption that university education is accessible can exemplify the concept of class stratification (Weber 1978). The wealth that comes with a higher class translates into more opportunities including for education. My “class milieu” (Berger 1963) makes my choice to join Yale-NUS something very natural and expected due to more interactions with people who have attained higher education thus ingraining its normalcy in my mind; especially since education can often operate as a status symbol.

Any experience can be couched in the perspective of one’s social location, every force in any direction can be framed by similar parameters. To what extent are our personal inclinations natural, untainted instinct? What is our capacity to oppose the institutional pressures of social control? These two questions loom large at the juncture of applying for universities. The decision about where, when, or even whether to apply, what to do with multiple acceptances or none at all. How does one balance the collective will of the society he/she lives in with his/her individual resolve? From a purely sociological perspective no one can exist independent of societal forces, but as a humanist one has to trust in the significance of our limited agency in spite of those overbearing influences.

Sources for Both CSI Papers


ARGUING WITH MYSELF ON THASOS

BY XIANDA WEN, CLASS OF 2021

Every year, five students from Yale-NUS receive support from CIPE and the Writers’ Centre to attend a writing programme overseas during the summer. In this issue, read pieces from two summer writing fellows, Xianda and Yan.

1. I didn’t have an imaginary friend as a child, or maybe I did. I called him Sebastian. He was a small, talking housecat that would follow me wherever I went, either walking alongside my tiny self, or riding on my shoulder, weightless. He would meow whenever he didn’t feel like talking, but he always paid full attention when I stood facing a corner of the room, in my cot, and launched into long, extensive speeches in languages neither of us understood. My mother told me it was a little creepy at first, but kind of cute, in a way, seeing me hold an imaginary audience enraptured with my eloquence. Sebastian, though, hardly spoke himself.

When he did, he talked about his friend who had no name. She was an old friend of his, way before me. He would tell me about her antics. “One time, she would ask me to watch, as she climbed on cabinet handles to reach for the cookie jar on top of the fridge...” His stories always started that way: him watching at the side, while she got into trouble. It wasn’t long before she stopped asking him to watch. He told me he liked how quiet I was, and how I never got into trouble. Then he would purr and rub himself on my legs.
2. Stepping out from an airport feels like stepping into a novel, starring me as the main character. I walk as I normally do, one leg after the other, towards my hotel/hostel/guesthouse. My words feel the same as I roll them around my tongue before sending them out to greet people I have never met and never will again, and to my surprise they understand me perfectly. I sit down on my rear, in the rear of the car, as one does. Good to know cars and car seats work the same way here too. The doors to my room open as they usually do, swinging inwards or outwards from hinges on either side of the door. I use my hands to push them open, just like at home. I step in with my shoes on, when I should have left them outside.

3. On the peninsula the other day, I found a small backpack lying abandoned in the ruins of an ancient temple, leaning on a broken pillar. I wondered if the backpack belonged to the temple. Was it going to leave the island, and go on a trip around the world? The backpack was too small for that; I reckoned it would fit no more than a laptop and maybe a small water bottle. I opened it gingerly and found so many shoes. When I held it upside down and shook the shoes out, the resulting pile resembled a small mountain reaching up to my chin. There were shoes for hiking, shoes for trekking, shoes for mountain climbing; shoes for going on fancy dates at expensive restaurants, shoes for going to the opera, shoes for kissing under the moonlight; shoes for running, shoes for walking, shoes for swimming in the open seas; shoes only for use indoors, shoes for the bathroom, shoes for after a hot shower; high heels, flats, boots, sandals, slippers, and everything in-between.

The shoes were all in different sizes, all singles without their pair. The temple must have hundreds of left feet, or maybe just one single left foot. I wanted to ask the temple about them.
Orbs.

by Myle Yan Tay, Class of 2019

There is a man trapped inside the eye of a giant squid. He was a diver, once, before he was the captive of the giant globe, looking through its pupil at ocean blue.

When he was a diver, he would sink to the bottom of the sea to find oysters. He would gather them in his arms, kick his feet, and toss them into his creaky rowboat. He ventured far, for the coast was swarmed with intrepid tourists, searching for their souvenir pearl.

Far became further when the tourists rented boats and scuba equipment, equipment he did not trust. He held his breath, plugged his ears and nose with cork and dove. He only wore goggles for the sea water irritated his eyes.

How he missed those days, when he would emerge from their pool, the white of his eyes inflamed. How each blink felt like a new life born for his sore eyes.

His wife had taken the pool in the divorce and the diver moved to the other coast. The country was not wide, but the move was symbolic.

You can take our home but you can never take my water.
He met his wife on the shore. He was there with a friend, drinking lemonade with a special kick. His wife was there walking her dog. The dog peed in the lemonade. She apologized, he said it is okay, the colour won’t change. Neither would the flavour, with the amount of alcohol inside. She laughed.

They got married a year later.

They returned to that shore, often. They would walk the dog to the beach, dip into the water, find an oyster, sip on what was barely lemonade, and pry the oyster open with their knife, hoping to find a golden pearl.

It was never found.

The diver would dive as much as he needed to find it.

He was sitting with the water as it rocked his rowboat. The shore was barely distinguishable in the horizon. His fingers and toes, pruned permanently. But he knew it was out there, within reach.

The further he rowed, the hotter the sun beat against his back, the cooler the water when he submerged.

His ankles chafed, rocks strung together by thick rope grazing his skin. It was the only way to ensure he sank fast enough. At the bottom, he would slice the ropes, and float back up with whatever potential he could carry.

He looked up, the sun’s rays striking his eyes. He blinked sharply, as if emerging from a pool.

A crash of horns and shouts. A cruise-liner had come alongside, tourists waving from the railings. They were adorned in stretched rubber, beach balls bouncing above their heads, screaming their greetings.

He stared at the sun, hoping its brightness could blur out their presence.

A beach ball glanced his cheek, landing tepidly in his rowboat.

The tourists laughed. The diver unsheathed his knife and stabbed the ball. Pop, and their laughter stopped.

Their cruise-ship sailed on, into deeper waters.

Even this coast was being taken from him.

He pulled on his goggles. Splash. He sank into the depths.

The light faded, then disappeared. He blew out a bubble and it drifted away from him. But it was too dark to even see its direction.

But, he thought, once he loses the rocks, his body will naturally float upward.

His feet touched the seafloor, gently. The diver began to pick at the seabed, his palms pushing against the seabed, feeling for any oysters.

His palm felt a slight protrusion. He clasped it and brought it close. A narrow crack at its side, rough texture. A gap.

His finger slid into the gap. The shell cracked open, and a gleaming light shone out. He averted his eyes, accustomed to the pitch black. Tentatively, he looked back, and saw a tiny yellow globe. A golden pearl.

He reached for his knife, to cut the ropes at his ankles. The knife was gone. The knife was sitting on the boat, resting on a beach ball’s carcass.

The water pressed in close, the pressure building as his breath ran out. He clutched onto the pearl with all his might, so tight, that even when his mind went black, he still gripped the golden pearl in his hand.

The rest of his body was limp, suspended loosely from the seafloor.

A luminescence approached. A pink tentacle wrapped itself around him and he was swallowed whole.

He still sits in the squid’s eye. He watches as it glides across the sea depths, never emerging, perpetual darkness as its comfort.

The diver forgets what the sun looks like. But when he wants its warmth, the feeling of it baking his skin softly, he uncurls his fist and gazes at his golden pearl.
When *Crazy Rich Asians* hit theaters last month, I found myself caught between two worlds - broadly, Asian Americans celebrating the movie as a huge step for representation in Hollywood, and (very valid) critiques of the movie's misrepresentation of Singaporean culture and society. Of course, there was a whole host of other reasons people were either praising or criticizing the film, and as I encountered response after response, I unsurprisingly found myself floating around somewhere in the in-between.
Growing up Chinese-American, but having spent the greater part of the past four years living and studying in Singapore, I have been lucky enough to see and experience, to some degree, the realities that have made different identity groups react in such wildly different ways to this film. Singapore is a place so many of my friends call home, and that I have found myself growing into, but it is also a place most people back home in the U.S. know little to nothing about. At the same time, most of my (especially Chinese-) Singaporean friends would not be able to identify with the struggles of assimilation and cultural identity formation, as well as the experiences of growing up a in minority, or of growing up part of the Chinese-American diaspora, or of being the child of immigrants.

By now, there have been countless articles and thought pieces written on *Crazy Rich Asians* that would make any kind of deep analysis I could attempt redundant and shallow, so I write this piece not as an analysis but as a reflection of my experience watching the film as a Chinese-American, second-generation immigrant who read the book more than three years ago, during my first winter break home from college. While there are plenty of aspects of the movie that severely disappointed me (such as the stereotypical Hollywood depiction of the Sikh guards as frightening brown men who perpetuate the Singaporean reality of Chinese privilege by presenting Indians as poorly-educated, working in manual labor, and being predatory or threatening), one thing that bothered me quite deeply was the fact that I was meant to connect with the characters I saw onscreen simply because they looked like me.

Although it was refreshing to see East Asian characters with a wide(-ish) variety of personalities and angles throughout the movie, I had a hard time connecting with the socialite aunties, rich heiresses, prep boy partiers, and even American-educated (and -accented) Peik Lin; it all felt like a fairytale reality that I know some people in Singapore might live in real life, but that, despite having been surrounded by people of varying levels of privilege and fortune at Yale-NUS, felt a thousand miles away from my own upbringing.

The moment this feeling of distance changed for me, however, was the moment when Rachel’s mother, Kerry, appeared in Peik Lin’s house to find Rachel. As soon as she stepped through the door, I found myself sobbing uncontrollably, and in that moment, I saw my own mother onscreen.

Suddenly, all of this knowledge I knew about Kerry from reading *Crazy Rich Asians* came flooding back. There’s a scene from the book in which Kerry is giving Rachel suggestions for the kinds of gifts she should bring for Nick’s mother, such as gold powder compacts from Estée Lauder that are on special offer with a free gift at Macy’s. In another section, Rachel shares that her mother started out in the U.S. by working as a waitress in Chinese restaurants before being promoted, eventually putting herself through night school, earning a college degree, and becoming a successful real estate agent. When I reread the section of the book about Rachel’s relationship with her mother, I immediately knew why I couldn’t stop crying for ten minutes the moment I saw Kerry re-appear onscreen.
It has taken me years to realize the sacrifices and pain my mother had to go through to get me to where I am. My mother waitressed in Chinese restaurants while learning English and attending night school at Madison Area Technical College, eventually earning her bachelor’s degree. She worked full-time for most of my childhood, but still put aside so much time and care for my brother and me. She made tough decisions like giving me an Anglicized name and sending me to American preschool so that I could assimilate into American culture in a way that she couldn’t. More than two decades later, she is still seen as an outsider in the U.S., but I have no doubt that in Singapore she would be considered even more so, given the anti-PRC sentiment that is so common here, a fact that is alluded to multiple times in the book but that is noticeably absent in the film (other than Peik Lin’s father’s attempt at being funny by putting on a “Chinese” accent before assuring Rachel that he speaks without an accent).

The first time Kerry directly interacts with Eleanor Young is at the end of the mahjong scene, when Kerry stands up from another table to join Rachel as she makes her exit. Kerry turns to look directly at Eleanor, locking eyes defiantly for several seconds before leaving. In that scene, I saw my mother looking straight into the eyes of those who have scorned her and people like her - her coworkers who view her as less educated because of the remnants of her Chinese accent, Singaporean Chinese people who would consider her to be just another PRC tourist whose behavior they can look down upon, anti-immigrant rhetoric that disdains all that she has worked for over the past twenty-plus years. Seeing Kerry stand strong against a rich, powerful Eleanor Young broke me down into tears again as I thought of my own independent, humble, hardworking, loving, fierce mother.

It was no surprise to me that in a movie about crazy rich Asians, the character who made me actually feel something deeply was the working-class, immigrant woman who would drop everything for her daughter. All in all, I didn’t enjoy watching *Crazy Rich Asians* for its rom-com quality nearly as much as I enjoyed reading the book version for the dramatic, trashy summer reading quality. But I would drop everything and watch a sequel featuring just Rachel and her mother - as long as I can handle nonstop crying for an hour and a half.
Dear Larry, what's your favourite place on campus for writing?

Dining halls before right before the mad rush of crowds during meals are splendid. The couch outside Shiner’s Diner ain’t too bad either. Ideally, what works best for me is being in a public space, with the right amount of chatter in the background, and without the urge to start a conversation. Hawker centres have worked magic to me: being surrounded by the comfortable anonymity of strangers—where there is no urge to intrude, and all the space to speculate. When I am lucky to wake before the sun rises, I stay in Starbucks, when it’s half-dark, half-light and there’s usually a pair of birds on the grass, and a cat somewhere hiding, before it spends the days on the stairs in the distance.

Dear Larry, I am addicted to email. I am comforted by the certainty that I am indeed saying something to someone. Scheduling office hours, for instance, is my favourite pastime. However, my PPT2 professor refuses to let me email her from across the table during office hours. What to do?

Ah, how to navigate that soft quicksand terrain between writing and speaking, between the safety of the page, its possibility of sentence, sentence, sentence, complete thought upon complete thought—and the reader, oh the reader, ever present in its ever absence, promising always that possibility of complete understanding: “I am here for you always, dear Writer. I am here rapt waiting for your every word.”

Meanwhile, the body’s mouth stammers, the eye blinks. There is silence, awkward. There are the travails of the face to face, which is the heart of the one-on-one consult, but which I suspect may be terrifying in a world dictated by that endless convenient stream of reply, forward, delete, or well, delay.

Maybe if we ripped our eyes from our screens, we might begin to understand that a particular moment of silence a stammer, completely undetected in email, may just be the best place to begin a question to end all office hour questions? Should I ask you if you have more questions. Should you close your laptop now. Should we speak.

Submit your ‘Dear Larry’ questions to writers.centres@yale-nus.edu.sg
DAYCAP

Capstone drop-in consultations & comradery, tea & toast, with Carissa Foo, a librarian and senior peer tutors
10 Oct, 24 Oct, 7 Nov
3:30 PM to 5:00 PM | Writers’ Centre
No RSVP required

READING SERIES

Featuring South Korean fiction writer Yujoo Han, Singaporean poet Boey Kim Cheng, and Yale-NUS student and multi-genre writer Paul Jerusalem | 17 Oct | 7:30 PM | Saga Rector’s Commons

SCI-FI FILMS

Tutor Judith Huang will screen and lead discussions of adaptations of stories by Philip K Dick | 7:00 PM | Writers’ Centre


PPT WORKSHOP

Workshop for first-years on analysis and evaluation | Led by Writers’ Centre Lecturer Ila Tyagi

Choose One:
11 Oct or 15 Oct
7:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Saga Lecture Theatre


Yale-NUS Annual Literary Awards 2018-19

Categories
fiction
non-fiction
poetry
playwriting/screenwriting

Prizes
SG$ 500 (1st)
SG$ 250 (2nd)
SG$ 100 (3rd)

Deadline: 6PM, Jan 18

To submit and for submission guidelines/formats, visit:
https://writerscentre.yale-nus.edu.sg/literary-awards/

Questions: writers.centre@yale-nus.edu.sg