



SEPTEMBER 2023

RESEARCH PULSE

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WELCOME TO RESEARCH PULSE

Hello everyone.

For this issue of Research Pulse, we take the opportunity to share highlights of recent months. Dr Tien Nguyen shares about her contributions to discussion on women on corporate boards. We are also delighted to share about the conference paper presentation experiences of Mr Felix Cheong and Dr Adrian Tan.

Thank you for staying connected with us.

Best Wishes,

Dr Adrian Tan
Research Director
Curtin Singapore



First Paper Jitters, But Not Intimidating

Contributed by Mr Felix Cheong

The biennial Singapore Literature Conference, now into its fourth edition, took place on July 29 at the National Library. Organised by Poetry Festival Singapore as part of its two-week-long festival, this year's conference revolved around the theme of sojourners and featured a strong line-up of speakers, including Professor CJ Wee Wan-ling, Professor of English from the Nanyang Technological University, and Professor Dinah Roma, from De La Salle University in the Philippines. A total of 22 papers were delivered and some of the concurrent events were livestreamed on the festival's Facebook page.

What was noteworthy was not only the range of topics covered – from the works of Culture Medallion recipients like playwright Kuo Pao Kun and poet Edwin Thumboo, to younger writers like Alfian Sa'at and Akshita Nanda – but also that some of the speakers spoke in Mandarin. Ms Yang Yi, for instance, analysed the films of Taiwanese director Edward Yang mostly in her native tongue, with a smattering of English phrases. Although a simultaneous translation flashed on the screen would have enabled non-Chinese members of the audience to understand her, it was all in the festival's inclusive ethos of welcoming every language into its fold.

My session was scheduled in the last hour of the conference, between 5pm to 6pm, alongside Dr Pallavi Narayan and Dr Eric Tinsay Valles, the festival's director. It was not my first time giving a talk about my work, having previously participated in international writers' festivals in Edinburgh, Austin, Christchurch and Singapore, but it was my first time delivering a paper at an academic conference. To say I was intimidated by the occasion is an understatement!



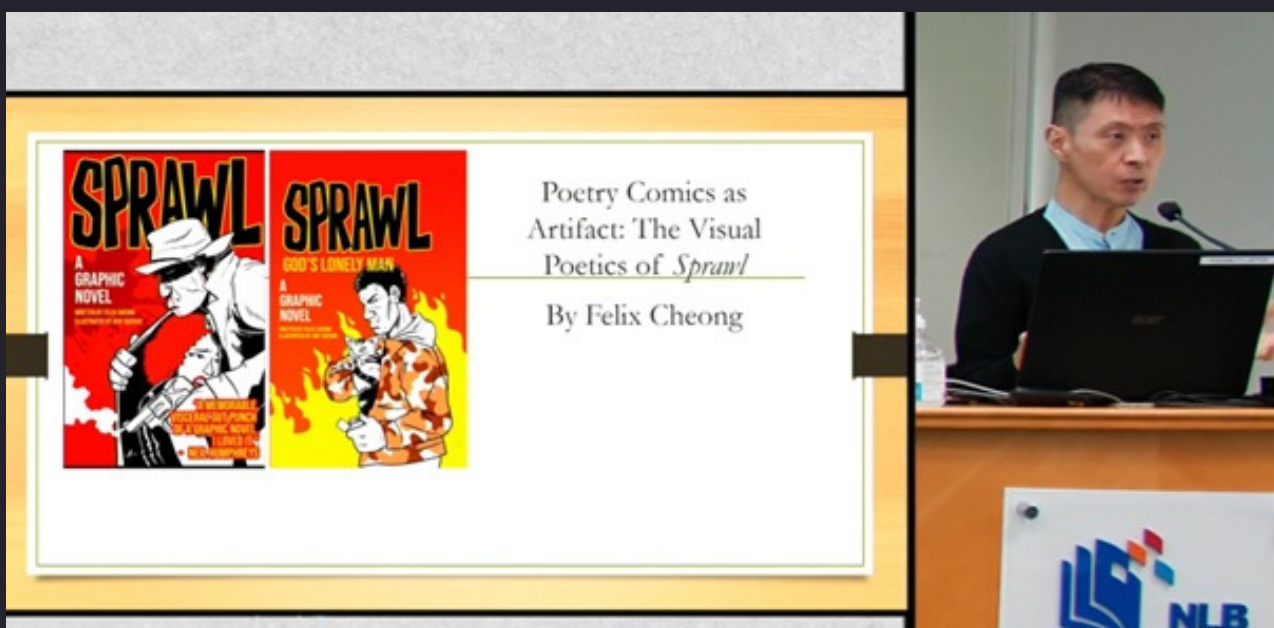
First Paper Jitters, But Not Intimidating

Contributed by Mr Felix Cheong

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My paper, "Poetry Comics as Artifact: The Visual Poetics of *Sprawl*", is an autoethnographic analysis of my writing process, in particular how I had devised a way of creating a narrative in poetry that could be accommodated in the graphic novel form. (I was the only presenter taking such an autoethnographic approach.) It was first published in the spring/summer 2022 issue of *International Journal of Comic Art (IJOCA)*.

Poetry comics (also known as comics poetry) is an esoteric subgenre that marries poetry with comics. Although it is not very much practised by writers and comics illustrators, rarely researched by academics or critiqued by reviewers, it has become my de facto mode of writing over the past three years. I had become interested in this form during the pandemic when I was experimenting with a new entry point into creating poetry. To date, I have published four graphic novels – *In the Year of the Virus* (2020), *Sprawl* (2021), *Eve and the Lost Ghost Family* (2022) and *Sprawl: God's Lonely Man* (2022), with two more titles in the pipeline. In fact, I can lay claim to be the only writer in Singapore to have published in this literary form.



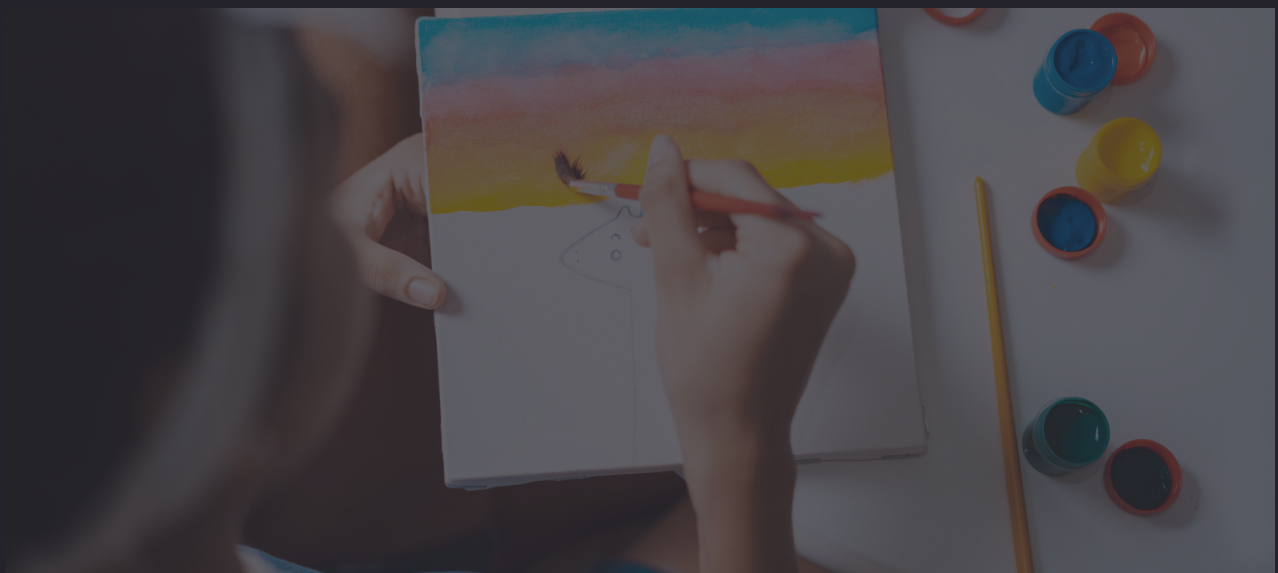
First Paper Jitters, But Not Intimidating

Contributed by Mr Felix Cheong

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My paper examines the reasons why poetry comics, by its borderline artistic nature, poses a problem to readers and writers; it requires a multimodal engagement with the text at two levels: a sensitivity to language, and a sensibility to visuals. In other words, a book of poetry comics is an artifact that is both autographic (in which meaning is embedded in the medium itself) and allographic (in which meaning exists as ideas in the viewer's imagination). This is thus a rather demanding ask of the reader (and the writer): to glean nuances not only between the lines, but also within and between comics panels.

Extending the logic from this line of thought, my writing process thus leaves gaps for the illustrator to fill, a collaborative way of opening a dialogue between words and visuals. In the process, even as each poem is in the service of an overarching story that takes the main character through his emotional arc, the poems, collectively – and unselfishly – give the artwork the space to express itself. So, instead of layering words, as I was wont to do if I were just writing poetry without the accompaniment of illustrations, I subtract words to give the artwork breathing space – playing a game of poetic *jenga*, as if it were. This is the method I have named “visual poetics”.

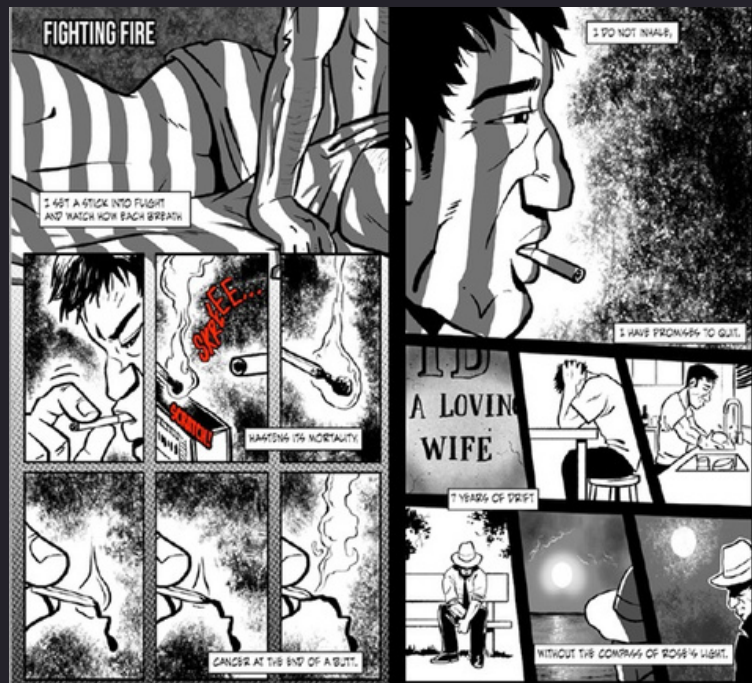


First Paper Jitters, But Not Intimidating

Contributed by Mr Felix Cheong

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Below is an example from *Sprawl*:



Following my 20-minute presentation, I received positive feedback from members of the audience, most of whom – as expected – had never heard of poetry comics, but said they are now keen to pick up books in this genre. I was also thrilled that Dr Valles asked if the festival could publish my paper next year as a monograph (selected proceedings from the conference are typically published in a book in the following year). But since my paper had already been published in *IJOCA*, he asked me if I could write another paper, to which I readily agreed.

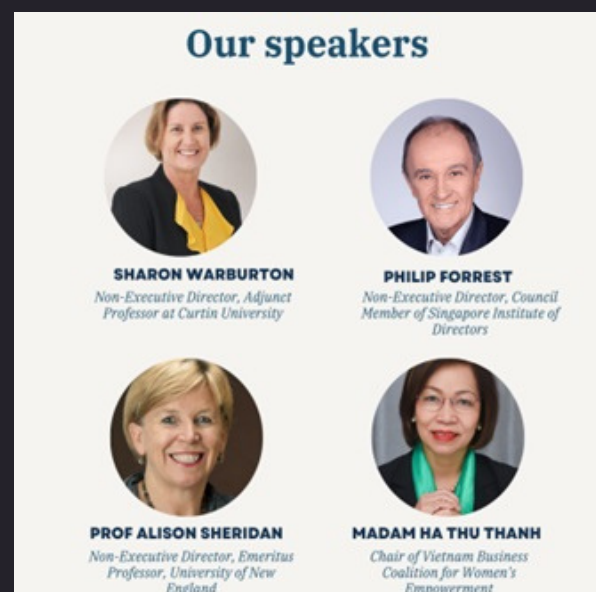
Presenting my first academic paper was not as intimidating as I had thought it would be. It was almost like delivering my lesson in class, albeit it was my own research (not slides already prepared by the Unit Coordinator) and to a room of academics (not students). If anything, the experience has emboldened me to look for other conferences to which I could pitch a paper. It has also encouraged me to research further into my methodology so that my creative process is not merely intuitive but grounded in intellectual rigour.

Women on Corporate Boards: Experience from Australia, Singapore, and Vietnam

Contributed by Dr. Tien Nguyen

The months of July and August were marked by energy and excitement as Curtin Singapore continued to contribute to the growth and development of 20 women leaders as they embarked on a transformative learning journey in Australia from 14 July to 12 August in the Women in Leadership Journey 5 program. This contribution was highlighted by the presence of Dr Tien Nguyen, Curtin Singapore's Co-lead in the Gender Research Network and co-lead of WILJ5, during the first week of the program in Perth, and Professor Linley Lord, Pro Vice-Chancellor and President of Curtin Singapore, during the final training week in Canberra and Sydney.

On the 27th of July, an engaging online panel discussion titled **"Women on Corporate Boards: Experience from Australia, Singapore, and Vietnam"** was facilitated by Prof Linley Lord and Dr Tien Nguyen with the support from Professor Vanessa Chang, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Business and Law and Dr Khuong Truong also from the Faculty of Business and Law in Perth, and the Curtin Singapore team in Singapore.



The panel brought together four esteemed panellists: Ms Sharon Warburton, Non-Executive Director of Wesfarmers; Mr Philip Forrest AM – Council member of Singapore Institute of Directors; Madam Ha Thu Thanh – Chair of Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment; and Emeritus Professor Alison Sheridan – a gender researcher and expert from University of New England.



Women on Corporate Boards: Experience from Australia, Singapore, and Vietnam

Contributed by Dr. Tien Nguyen

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The panel facilitated a cross-country dialogue on critical issues and best practices for promoting gender diversity on boards, fostering connections between the public and private sectors to create a comprehensive learning experience in gender equity in leadership.

The discussion began with Emeritus Professor Alison Sheridan highlighting the benefits of having more women on corporate boards. These benefits arise from both a social justice perspective (doing what is right) and a business perspective (doing what is beneficial). Professor Sheridan emphasised that while there is a growing emphasis on the business case for women on boards, it's crucial to recognise that this perspective can send mixed messages and may unfairly burden women directors with the expectation of creating value upon joining a board. Society needs to move beyond this and not underestimate *the politics of representation, which recognises the symbolic importance of the previously voiceless being present in decision making*.

The panel then delved into discussions of best practices in each country. In Vietnam, Madam Thanh explained that the use of the Corporate Governance Index and ranking as an assessment tool has effectively encouraged the adoption of good corporate governance practices, including the promotion of more women, especially those from different generations, to join boards.



Women on Corporate Boards: Experience from Australia, Singapore, and Vietnam

Contributed by Dr. Tien Nguyen

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In Singapore, Mr. Philip Forrest AM expressed concern about the country's relatively slow progress in promoting board gender diversity. However, he highlighted recent regulatory changes that are pushing Singapore in the right direction, including (i) enforcing a strict nine-year term limit for independent directors to open up opportunities for more women on boards; (ii) requiring diversity targets to be disclosed in company annual reports; and (iii) the proactive role of the Singapore Institute of Directors in providing training (Board Readiness Program) and mentoring for women candidates. Mr. Forrest AM also emphasised the importance of advertising board positions and utilising consultant firms to identify suitable directors rather than relying on *"the old boys' networks"*.

Women on Corporate Boards: Experience from Australia, Singapore, and Vietnam

Contributed by Dr. Tien Nguyen

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In Australia, Ms. Sharon Warburton endorsed similar practices and emphasised the critical role of board chair leadership in driving board gender diversity. She highlighted the instrumental role of institutions and gender advocate groups, such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Chief Executive Women, the 30% Club, the Friends Club, the CEOs for Gender Equity group, and the Chairman's Mentoring Program. She also underscored the significance of informal networks and the courageous leadership of women directors in driving further changes in the boardroom.

The panel concluded with each panelist offering a suggestion for how women can contribute to board gender diversity. Mr. Philip Forrest encouraged women to join organisations advocating for gender diversity on boards and work together to effect change. Professor Alison Sheridan reiterated the importance of courageous leadership, emphasising that women directors should voice up to pave the way for others. "Make sure you put your hands out for others to follow," she advised. Ms. Sharon Warburton echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need for women to support each other, be visible, offer help, mentor, and provide support. Madam Thanh inspired participants with her message of "Women stronger together" using the image of the Vietnamese women football team, and encouraged women to participate in gender advocacy groups, such as the Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment.

Disclaimer: ChatGPT is used for proof-reading and minor editing.



CURTIN SINGAPORE @ AOM 2023

Curtin Singapore was represented by Dr Adrian Tan for the first time at the 83rd edition of the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AOM) held in Boston, Massachusetts, USA from 4th to 8th August 2023. At the conference, Adrian presented his research entitled “Role of Future of Work for Sustainable Work Life and Well-being” for the work life harmony conference session of the Human Resource Division of AOM. The idea behind Adrian’s research is to develop insights to foretell the future of work by looking into existential literature on work and employment with a critical eye.



Adrian’s research highlighted the contradictions between deterministic views of work and a sustainable work life. Through bibliometric analysis of existential literature, the research conceptualised a proposed model which explains how a sustainable work life may be achieved in

the future of work. Interestingly, the future of work is a contentious concept which remains in a state of flux with divergent views on what it is even though a dominant stance about it revolves around industry 4.0 and technology-enabled work.



CURTIN SINGAPORE @ AOM 2023

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The abstract for Dr Adrian Tan's conference paper is reproduced here:

While research and practical interest in the future of work has been gaining momentum, there are concerns with deterministic views of work contradictions regarding what sustainable work life and well-being might be. This paper systematically reviews the literature to synthesize the role of the future of work for a sustainable work life and well-being of workers. Undertaking a bibliometric systematic review methodology, the review uncovered four major research themes which led to the development of a continuum model of the future of work, used as a lens to appraise the role of the future of work in decent work and employment, occupational health and safety, job performance and satisfaction, and gender, age and work ability issues. Despite varying perspectives there is rising inclination towards more humanistic perspectives in which sense-making of work is crucial to aid the development of a sustainable work life and wellbeing. Strong humanistic and ethical foundations are suggested for the role of the future of work.



CURTIN SINGAPORE @ AOM 2023

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Overall, AOM 2023 was a fruitful research outing for Curtin Singapore and Adrian. Here is what Adrian has to say about his experience at the conference:

"I must attest that the AOM Annual Meeting is a very good conference to attend for research capability building and networking with other management scholars from around the world. It was also good exposure and experience being able to present a paper to international attendees and getting engaged in discussions during the Q&A session. I must say (as all other attendees say too) that the AOM Annual Meeting is a worthwhile conference for our business school colleagues to attend. I learnt a lot more about my research space and myself, and about what I could further do to develop my research as a contribution to management practice, including how to engage an international audience with your research work. It was an inspiring experience to be in attendance at the AOM Annual Meeting and to appreciate the diversity of talent out there."



Upcoming Events

These are some of the events planned for the year. Full details of the events will be made known through official communication nearer the time.

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SEPTEMBER
2023

**Curtin Singapore Research
Symposium**

18
OCTOBER
2023

**Global Campuses Brown Bag
Seminar by Joelle Yap**

7
NOVEMBER
2023

SDG Symposium 2023

21-22
NOVEMBER
2023

**AI and Data for Business
Conference and Masterclasses**