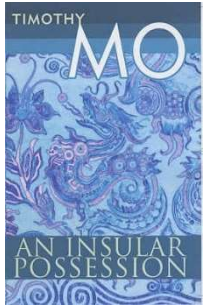


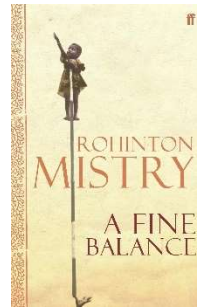
Summertime, Asia & Books

Are you an avid traveller AND reader? Here's a summer reading list of ten books (plus a bonus at the end) specially curated for you. Which novel will you pack in your suitcase?

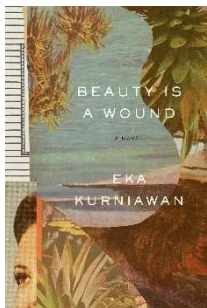
Read this if you travel to.....



Hong Kong:
'An Insular Possession' by **Timothy Mo**. A historical novel taking place before and during the Opium wars in Macau and Hong Kong, then just a hilly island covered with trees. The book includes true historical figures and imaginary characters, but they blend seamlessly. Recommended for lovers of big fat books.



India:
'A Fine Balance' by **Rohinton Mistry**. This fantastic read follows 4 protagonists (2 tailors, a widow and a student who have nothing in common but end up becoming the best of friends) as they take you through laughs and tears in this baroque novel set in urban India during the mid-1970's.

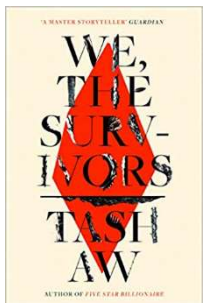


Indonesia:
'Beauty is a Wound' by **Eka Kurniawan**. This novel has been favourably compared to Garcia Marquez's 'One hundred Years of Solitude' and I fully agree. A touch of magic realism intertwined with the contemporary history of

Indonesia. Featuring strong female characters, fortunately a far-cry from your typical clichés. The author is a major figure in today's Indonesian literature.



Japan:
'The House of Sleeping Beauties' by **Kawabata Yasunari**. A classic novella by the Nobel-prize winning writer : a touch of mystery, poetry, eroticism, and nostalgia all in this tale told in under hundred pages. I won't say more but you can always count on a Japanese author to take you places you never thought existed.



Malaysia:
'We, the Survivors' by **Tash Aw**. The poignant confession of a poor, uneducated ethnic Chinese Malaysian man who thought he had the right to take the same share of economic success enjoyed by his countrymen but ended up falling on the dark side.

Can one escape the absurdity of fate? Fans of Camus's 'The Stranger' will understand.



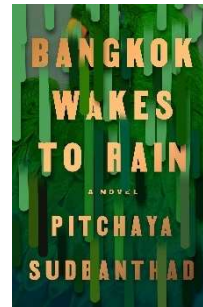
Philippines:
'Ilustrado' by **Miguel Syjuco**. What starts as an investigation of the suspicious death of a venerable Filipino writer turns into an epic story spanning 150 years. Among the polyphonic voices, I found that the true main character in this novel is really the city of Manila, including its full contradictions of heaven and gutters. Though he writes prolifically in the international press, this is Syjuco's only full-length novel and features his rich and evocative style.



South Korea:

'Please Look After Mom' by **Shin Kyung-Sook**. I remember reading this touching book a few years ago, and wandering along the streets of Seoul, together with the main character, an older woman from the countryside who is visiting her family and gets lost

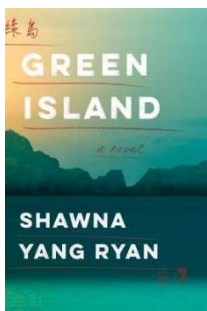
in the subway. A reflection on the generational divide and old age, family ties, and ultimately on love.



Thailand:

'Bangkok Wakes to Rain' by **Pitchaya Sudbanthad**. Just released, I admit I haven't read it yet but it's next on my TBR list. This novel has been has had glowing reviews. This book features a multitude of characters wading through time in one of

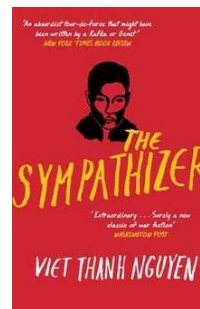
Asia's most intriguing metropolises. As Tash Aw (see above) writes in his review: "How can they reconcile their pasts, even as they struggle to comprehend their city's headlong rush into the future?". I can't wait to find out.



Taiwan:

'The Green Island' by **Shawna Yang Ryan**. The recent history of Taiwan has certainly been tumultuous, but all of it is not so well known. This novel helped me to understand it better, following the life of the Tsai family. This tale starts at the end

of the Japanese colonial rule and runs through the following decades under martial law and, finally, to Taiwan's transformation into a democracy.

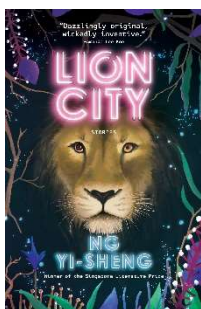


Vietnam:

'The Sympathizer' by **Viet Thanh Nguyen**. Is this a spy novel, an immigrant novel or a historical novel? This book features all of these genres and even more. Starting with the fall of Saigon, the narrator, a North Vietnamese spy, moves to Los

Angeles with other South Vietnamese exiles, hiding his game. A literary masterpiece of nuance and shadows; no wonder the author has been compared to John Le Carre, Joseph Conrad or Graham Greene.

.....And if you stay in Singapore?



I would recommend you read **Ng Yi-Sheng's** new collection of short stories **'Lion City'**. Though the setting is mostly based in Singapore, you will find yourself embarking on totally unexpected travels. Speculative fiction at its best.

By Cecile Collineau (FOM Asian Book Groups Coordinator)
June 2019