



Scenes from a walking tour with author Rosemary Lim of scenes from Singapore's literary history. (JG Photo/Elizabeth Sinclair)

Crossing over the historic Cavenagh Bridge (the oldest suspension bridge in the city, Lim tells me) we stop in front of the Joseph Conrad Memorial just outside the Fullerton Hotel.

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"Many of the writers we'll meet on the tour have strolled across this bridge once," Lim says.

In Conrad's day, the Fullerton was still the main post office, and Conrad would have come here often. Lim imagines him carrying a walking stick and descending the granite steps, walking with a rolling gait from his years at sea.

Conrad visited Singapore often during his 19-year career as a merchant marine.

In his years at sea, Conrad recorded many stories from people he met which later inspired his own novels and short stories about the human spirit being tested in an uncaring world. Henry James once eulogized Conrad as "always, at heart, a writer who sailed, rather than a sailor who wrote."

In Conrad's day, boats moored along the Singapore River, with people living aboard. Now financial towers reach for the sky and the river is quiet. Lim says she feels that the city's efforts to clean up the area in the 1890s caused the river to lose its character: "Once this river inspired writers from all over the world, but no longer."

"Conrad's Singapore has completely disappeared now," Lim said. "The hills, the geography, the topography, have all been drastically altered."

As we strolled the riverbank, we came upon a Starbucks where once stood the harbor master's office, where Conrad likely spent time registering his ships' comings and goings. Some parts of the riverbank still evince Singapore's wild and tangled past, albeit in the form of overgrown shrubs and trees -- one of the last small corners of Singapore left that Conrad would have recognized. This is the exact spot where readers first meet Lord Jim, one of Conrad's most famous characters.

Lim also told us about Singaporean-born writers like Lesley Charteris. Born to a Chinese father and English mother, Charteris is best known for creating the character Simon Templar, or The Saint, a Robin Hood-like criminal known and forerunner to Ian Fleming's James Bond.

Other native notables include Phillip Jay Rettenham: "He should be a towering literary talent, but in Singapore, we all have to work at other jobs," Lim laments.

Lim also spoke of Meira Chand, a Singapore writer of mixed Indian-Swiss heritage whose novels explore themes of identity, cultural conflict, belonging and exile.

We wandered over another bridge to a park skirting the edge of the bay. Lim told us that the current Esplanade, which runs along the water, is sitting on reclaimed land. St. Andrew's Road, about 500 meters from the river, was the Esplanade in the late 19th and early 20th century. At the time, Lim says, there were four principal hotels in Singapore for foreigners: The Adelphi, Hotel L'Europe, Raffles and Hotel de la Paix.

The Adelphi once stood on the old Esplanade, where it hosted English writers Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward; Coward wrote "Pretty Polly" while staying there. The hotel boasted 100 luxurious rooms with marble bathrooms, a dining room that could seat 400, a tennis court, a billiards room and a library.

Raffles Hotel was immortalized in print by Somerset Maugham, Rudyard Kipling, Ernest Hemingway and Murakami Ryu. Ryu set an entire novel in the hotel. Maugham set a short story in the dance hall of the Hotel de L'Europe.

Hotel de la Paix is where Captain William Lingard and Joseph Conrad often met in the bar, Lim says. Lingard was supposedly the source of many of Conrad's stories, the man he called "Rajah Laut."

During World War II, the Japanese occupied all the big hotels in Singapore. The Adelphi was the setting for a meeting between Gen. Yamashita, who was in charge of the occupying forces, and 400 Singaporean community leaders, to establish the conditions of occupation.


"If you can imagine," Lim said where the Adelphi once stood, gesturing across an expanse of park, "crowds of people summoned here by the Japanese occupiers during the war, to have a census done." Singaporean writer Rex Shelley imagined this scene in a novel: A Eurasian character, turned away from the line of Europeans destined for Japanese internment camps, says "This is the first time I've been glad to be half-Chinese."

At one end of the park, the Singapore Recreation Club, Lim says, was open to Singaporeans who had at least one European parent; at the other end of the green, Singapore Cricket Club membership was restricted to Europeans.

"There was a strict hierarchy at the time," Lim said. Your social circle and what clubs would accept you relied on your race, not your character or even your wealth.

We end the tour back at Cavenagh Bridge. Lim's stories having now ignited my imagination, I can almost see a character, born in this city, educated in England, crossing over the bridge: from old, colonial buildings to soaring, financial towers, past at his back, walking towards the future.

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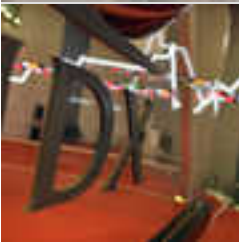


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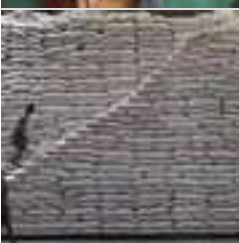


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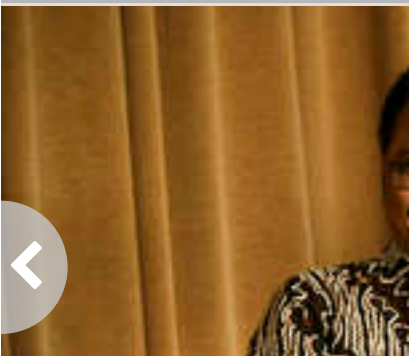
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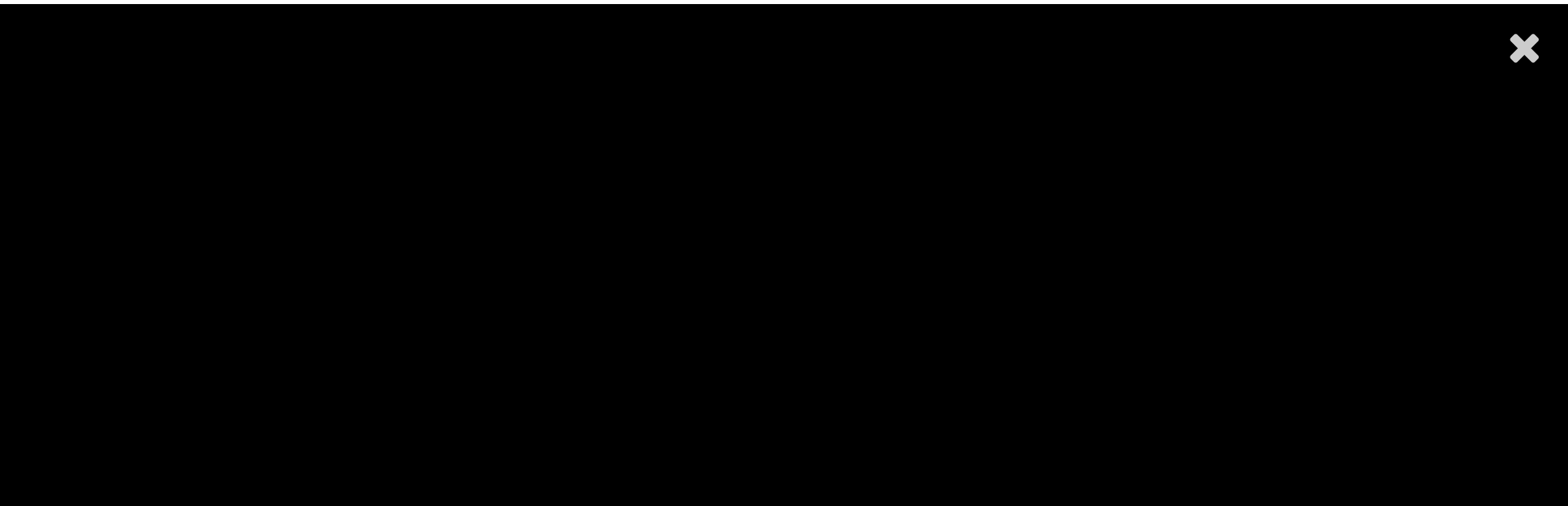
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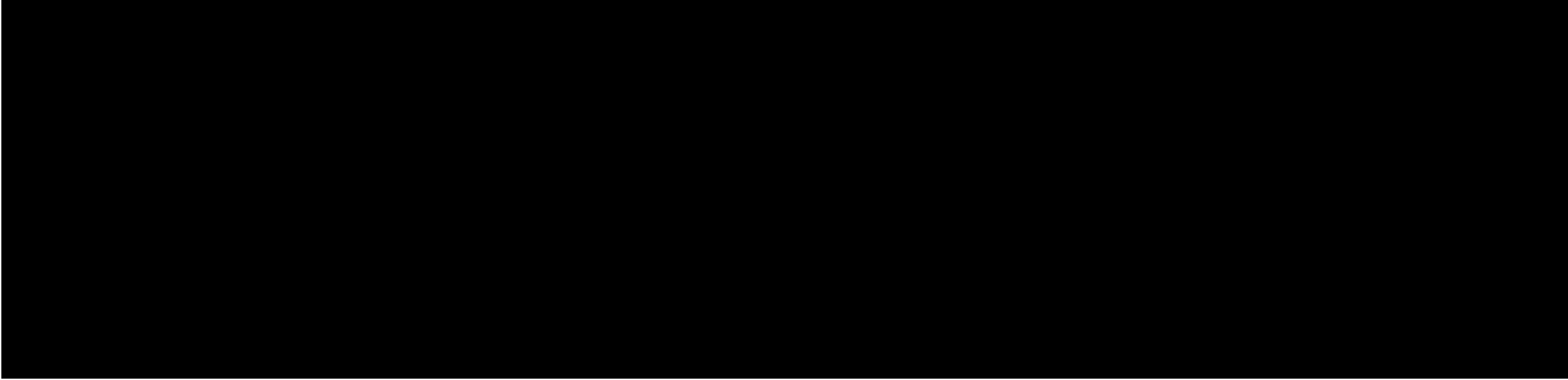


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Rizal Mantovani Releases Two Horror Movies on Idul Fitri

'Kuntilanak' by Rizal Mantovani. (Photo courtesy of MVP Pictures)

By : **Dhania Sarahtika** | on 1:52 PM June 15, 2018
Category : **Life & Style, Movies**

Jakarta. Indonesian film director Rizal Mantovani is releasing two horror movies,"Kuntilanak" and "Jailangkung 2" during the Idul Fitri holiday on Saturday (15/06).

Although the release date is accidental, it may increase viewership, as during the holiday many people seek entertainment.

Whether it is okay to screen horrors during the holiday, Rizal said it is not the first time that such films premiere on Idul Fitri. It is only entertainment based on fantasy.

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