

“These personal essays create a diverse kinship network of voices rooted in women’s experiences and routed through Singapore. This deeply resonant anthology is an invaluable contribution to ecofeminist literatures and the global environmental humanities.”

—**Craig Santos Perez**

University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

“Step into the intimacies, earth-cherishing, and forms of kinship in this book. The voices of these Singaporean women pose questions and reveal landscapes that resonate and invoke deep reflection. Commendably, creating kin here means spotlighting the vital perspectives of disabled people, transpeople, and indigenous genders, with attunement to age, class, race, and glorious varieties of bodyminds. These women’s lives, choices, and challenges shape how they experience Singapore and life, with ‘nature’ as never having been separate from communities. Their experiences form a resistance to dominant, steamrolling narratives of ‘development’. As contributor nor says, ‘The semangat of the tanahair and Bumi will always find its way to you.’”

—**Dr Khairani Barokka (Okka)**

University of the Arts London, author of *Ultimatum Orangutan*

“These intimate, lovingly crafted, eloquent essays demonstrate the centrality of women in Nature, Nurture and Literature and the crucial role women have in reimagining, reconnecting, restoring and thereby strengthening these myriad complex links.”

—**Geh Min**

Immediate Past President, Nature Society Singapore and  
former Nominated Member of Parliament

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**Making Kin:  
Ecofeminist Essays from Singapore**

**Edited by  
Esther Vincent and Angelia Poon**





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# Land Acknowledgement

THE EDITORS OF *Making Kin* would like to acknowledge the land we rest and reside on, the land that inspires our work and pervades our dreams.

Many of us are descendants of immigrants, who left their ancestral homes from across the seas to make this land their home. We give thanks to this land for caring for our ancestors, which has allowed us to now call this land our home.

We acknowledge that this land was built by violence towards the environment, and traditional and indigenous communities from within and beyond our shores. Land reclamation has expanded Singapore's land mass, but this has come at a heavy price to our neighbours<sup>1</sup>—for instance, the loss of traditional mangrove communities in Cambodia,<sup>2</sup> and entire islands disappearing in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

To further our economic prowess, indigenous communities, the descendants of the Orang Laut,<sup>4</sup> were forcibly removed from their island homes between the 1960s–1990s,<sup>5</sup> which are now Big Oil refineries, a

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1 Low Youjin, “Explainer: Why sand is so highly valued and the controversy surrounding cross-border trade,” *Today*, <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/explainer-why-sand-so-highly-valued-and-consequences-overmining>

2 Kalyanee Mam, *Lost World*, <https://emergencemagazine.org/film/lost-world/>

3 “Indonesia’s Islands Are Buried Treasure For Gravel Pirates,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/weekinreview/28grist.html>

4 “Orang laut,” *Singapore Infopedia*, [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_551\\_2005-01-09.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_551_2005-01-09.html)

5 Lea Wee, “Lives of residents of Singapore’s southern islands captured in documentary,” *The Straits Times*, <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/travel/lives-of-residents-of-singapores-southern-islands-captured-in-documentary>

massive landfill for the mainland's waste disposal, entertainment hubs, military bases, expensive residences for expatriate communities.

We give thanks to the land for sustaining us in the face of deforestation and urban redevelopment, which began in colonial times and persist today.

We recognise that we inhabit this land along with our more-than-human kin: the lesser mousedeer, the civet cat, the Oriental pied hornbill, the pangolin, the Oriental whip snake, the Brahminy kite, the Sambar deer, the leopard cat, the Malayan colugo, the dugong, the Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphin, the migrating whimbrel, the egret, the fish, corals and marine life in the sea, the birds of the air, the insects, animals, trees and plants that inhabit the earth, and the beings beneath.

We give thanks too, to the lands of our imaginations and travels, to expanded notions of home and belonging, and to kinships and entanglements with places that continue to nurture us from afar.

Here we raise our hands and give thanks.

## A personal note by Esther Vincent

THE IDEA FOR *Making Kin* came as I was finishing up my Master's thesis chapter on ecofeminism and poetry. In some ways, that chapter allowed me to engage theoretically with the themes of ecofeminism and intersectionality, ecofeminism as a relational praxis, and ecospirituality, in relation to the poetry of Eavan Boland and Grace Nichols. Upon formally submitting my critical exegesis however, I felt an urge to breathe life into what I felt could be the birth of something revolutionary (in the context of Singapore at least): making connections between academic research in literature and the private lives of women in Singapore. As this desire grew, I looked around and I found a barren landscape, but also an opportunity to birth something new.

Even as the climate crisis gained greater attention around the world, where were the women writers in Singapore, and what did they have to say about their role and place on earth? What did this silence mean? Did women writers in Singapore not care about the climate crisis? Did they need some encouragement, or were they waiting for a platform? How could we re-centre the woman and the personal within what is often a political domain when it comes to environmental discourse? How could the voices of disparate women sing to the earth and chart a new cartography for our daughters to find their way? I wanted to make space for the voices of women in Singapore. I wanted to know what they had to say, I wanted to hear their personal struggles and victories, and most importantly, I wanted them to realise that they were already participating in intersectional ecofeminist praxis (even if they might not be eco activists in the traditional sense of the word), and that their personal lives and choices held symbolic meanings within larger environmental discourse. I wanted to rouse and provoke what I felt was a lethargy towards ecofeminism within the Singapore

literary ecosystem and amongst the women themselves.

Having read *Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene*, edited by Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, in which the essayists take on the role of “cultural critics and environmental thinkers” to examine Singapore from an “ecocultural lens,” I was inspired to edit a book of similar imperative. However, unlike *Chilli Crab*, I envisioned a book that would be intentionally narrow and broad, consciously intimate and expansive, one where the personal voice of the woman would find her place in the larger environmental context of her home, country and earth. To foreground the personal voice while allowing space for wandering, the personal essay seemed like the most obvious choice.

In the course of my Graduate studies, I had begun reading a number of personal essays, which influenced my own foray into writing them. Of all the essays I devoured, I remember these few especially—the essays of Virginia Woolf and Adrienne Rich which drew me into matters deeply personal and particular, yet held space for broader social, cultural and political conversations on gender, art and politics; the essays of Ben Okri and Jane Hirshfield, whose narrative voice offered me insight into the craft and mind of poetry, poetics and storytelling in a way that I can only describe as spellbinding and delightful; the essays of Irish writers Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland which nurtured my sensibilities to sound, language, nature, poetry and the politics of being a woman poet in time and place; the essays of Boey Kim Cheng bringing me on a journey with the narrator across distant lands and through memory, to leave and return home after a time of self-exile. As a poet, the personal essay was new terrain to me, but one I grew to appreciate in meditating on themes of home, belonging, memory and place. I found the personal essay expansive in its ability to hold my longings, wanderings and travels across temporalities and in space.

If I were to characterise the personal essay, I would describe her as generous, patient, contemplative and surprising; she has allowed me to take my time to get to the heart of the matter, and I have learnt from her that the journey and its meanderings, its descents and ascents, its unpredictabilities,

surprises and series of departures and returnings are what I love about her. The personal essay also teaches patience because there is no rushing or hurrying through her body of work, as both reader and writer. The personal essay insists you stay with yourself and remain open as you write, and as a reader, in this state of staying and openness, you make kin with another voice, another body, another woman whose patience has birthed this essay you now journey in.

## **A personal note by Angelia Poon**

SOME OF THE most moving writing I've ever encountered has occurred in personal essays. And while I probably can't quite summon the exact words to mind, I usually remember the general sense of the line—its shape and contour—and what I felt when I first read it. The personal essay can range over expansive and varied terrain when it comes to subject matter but many of my favourite essays have been about travel and movement. Pico Iyer's essays about his peripatetic adventures and encounters with people of different cultures and from different lands show how the most profound of insights may be gained from the unforgettable encounter with the strange, or with the familiar in a strange setting. Virginia Woolf's lecture cum extended essay, *A Room of One's Own*, is to me a tour de force for its seemingly simple and artless embodying of writing as walking even as she delivers a powerful critique of the systemic patriarchal bias of English literary history and its canon. In "The Modern Essay", Woolf observes that a good essay "must draw its curtain around us, but it must be a curtain that shuts us in, not out."

The personal essay hinges on the uniqueness of the personal voice conveyed in writing. That voice may soar to convey intellectual abstractions when tracing a train of thought or zoom in on the minute and the mundane when teasing out a memory. In its capaciousness, the personal essay can encompass a range of emotions spanning humour and grief. I discovered

the side-splittingly funny essays of David Sedaris while I was a graduate student and remember fondly how they provided a welcome break from the rigid conventions of academic writing. On the other hand, the essays of Joan Didion about the deaths of her husband and daughter push the language in other ways altogether as she seeks to express the inarticulable starkness of loss. In Singapore, where the English language is commonly viewed in instrumentalist terms, we privilege it for its information-giving and documentary functions. But to write non-fiction well, I aver, matters.

The personal essay has an established presence in Singapore Sinophone literature. In Chinese, the essay is known as 散文 (san wen), the looseness or leisurely quality of the form captured by the meaning of the ideograph 散. Discovering the essays of Wong Yoon Wah when they were translated into English by Jeremy Tiang and published as *Durians Are Not the Only Fruit*, I found a writer who showed the form's especial suitability for personal reflection, rumination and commentary on our tropical environment. In one essay, Wong writes movingly about feeling nostalgic for rubber trees and the sound of "rubber fruit bursting apart explosively." Instead of that natural sound though, he finds that there is now only "the maddening commotion of humanity, invading [his] flat in waves."

Like my fellow essayist and co-editor Esther, I was curious to hear the voices of different women in Singapore, and to learn what they think and feel about the environment, family, community, and themselves. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused more suffering to women than men in many places, only brought this home more urgently. It seemed fitting then to capitalise on the democratising potential of the personal essay form to bring together a multiplicity of women's voices under the broad rubric of ecofeminism and to do so in the name of kinship and solidarity.

This book is the result.

## Editors' Introduction

ANNIE DILLARD writes of the essay:

“The essay is, and has been, all over the map. There’s nothing you cannot do with it; no subject matter is forbidden, no structure is proscribed. You get to make up your own structure every time, a structure that arises from the materials and best contains them. The material is the world itself, which, so far, keeps on keeping on. The thinking mind will analyze, and the creative imagination will link instances, and time itself will churn out scenes—scenes unnoticed and lost, or scenes remembered, written, and saved.”

The personal essay, with its conversational tone and autobiographical subject matter, creates a profound sense of intimacy between writer and reader. Personal truths are teased out from the thoughts and experiences of the writer, who takes on the role of narrator embarking on a journey through her memory. As a form with no prescribed structure, the personal essay may be viewed as a liberating and subversive genre with the propensity to continually surprise and reveal with each unfolding. *Making Kin* demonstrates our desire to revive the personal essay in the consciousness of Singapore literature.

Surveying Singapore literature in English for the personal essay, one finds patches of green rather than the rich and fecund flowering of home-grown poetry, for example. *Literature and Liberation: 5 Essays from Southeast Asia* published in 1988 is an early example of the form although the pieces are more academic and publicly political than personal in tone as they take stock of literature’s role in the national liberation movements and early nationalisms of specific Southeast Asian countries. Edited by Edwin Thumboo, the book includes essays by prominent writers and literary figures such as Ee Tiang Hong, F Sionil José, Mochtar Lubis, and Thumboo

himself. Amidst the more prolific publication of personal memoirs and histories in the last two decades, we may point to three notable personal essay collections informed by a keen literary sensibility.

First published in 2009, Boey Kim Cheng's *Between Stations* contains the contemplative essays of a traveller for whom the physical act of journeying into the unfamiliar is often coupled with memories of past trips to places that continue to haunt him. Unceasingly restless, the narrator speaks movingly of searching for that holy grail—"a sense of arrival." Koh Jee Leong's book, *Bite Harder: Open Letters and Close Readings*, published in 2017, mixes personal experience and literary criticism in syncretic, eclectic essays. He writes about coming out as gay in New York City and his desire to be a writer. In the essay "Excuse Me, Are You a Singapore Poet?: The Poetry of Justin Chin", he pays tribute to the late gay poet and writer Justin Chin—originally from Malaysia and Singapore before he settled in San Francisco—and for whom, "Home is both the place of love and the locus of repression." *Indelible City* by Chew Yiwei, published in 2018, is in many ways a pioneering work for being a single-authored collection focused on tracing, documenting, and expressing the less visible aspects of modern Singapore as it is experienced. Chew intertwines poignant memories of growing up with keen observations about place, observing how "an eternally lost but indelible place in this city [...] can only be justifiably remembered by writing it into re-existence, by prosaic confabulations."

*Making Kin* is inspired by Ilarion Merculieff's co-edited book *Perspectives on Indigenous Issues: Essays on Science, Spirituality, Partnerships, and the Power of Words*, which gathers indigenous knowledge, narratives and world views from Unangan (Aleut) peoples and communities, and their allies, and presents them in ten personal essays. Serving as a complementary knowledge system to more popular western scientific ways of knowing, *Perspectives* invites readers to unlearn dominant and often violent, colonising ways of relating to self and others (human, more-than-human). Readers relearn through language (as the gateway to culture), which contains spirit, to "connect intimately with the land they are from and therefore have a form



of communication with the land that allows them to understand what hurts or benefits the land.” In some ways, *Making Kin* reconnects the woman to the land through emotion and cognition, enabling readers to rethink their entanglements with others.

Other single-author ecofeminist books of essays that influence the ethos of *Making Kin* include Mary Oliver’s *Upstream*, Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass* and Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. These books centre the self within an ecocentric praxis of relations typified by kinships and entanglements with multiple diverse others and companion species, with the self existing in what Haraway describes as a thick “copresence,” of necessary “becoming-with.” A hyphenated word that itself reflects the feminist praxis of kin-making as symbiotic in nature, “becoming-with” refers to how “natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings.” Rather, kin-making acknowledges the coexistence, partnerships and knottings of companion species (human, animal, plant, place, habitat, etc.) in relational ways of being, living and dying on earth. Camille T Dungy’s *Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys into Race, Motherhood, and History* illustrates the personal essay’s ability to broach historically situated themes of race, womanhood and identity, while Lori Gruen’s *Entangled Empathy*, a book on philosophy, empathy and animal ethics, further contributes to *Making Kin*’s commitment to thinking in relational, cross-cultural, intersectional, multimodal, multispecies, responsive and responsible, or to quote Haraway, “response-able” ways.

As an antecedent of sorts in the context of Singapore, *Making Kin* wishes to devote itself to the crafts, minds, bodies and subjectivities of women writers in Singapore. Even the term woman is made slippery in our commitment to make kin and kind, and become-with various notions, models, definitions, understandings and praxis of womanness. The focus of the anthology is to present a community of voices from those who identify as women, who self-consciously respond to the critical theme of a woman’s place in her environment, natural or man-made, personal and political. At

this juncture, we want to pause and acknowledge the work of Geraldine Heng and Leong Liew Geok, who in their respective anthologies *The Sun in Her Eyes: Stories* (1976) and *More Than Half the Sky: Creative Writings by Thirty Singaporean Women* (1998), made space for women writers to reflect on their role and place in Singapore as women living in a man's world. *Making Kin* continues the good work of forerunners like Heng and Leong, and hopes to inspire more literary progeny in the generations of women to come.

Where *Making Kin* departs from *The Sun in Her Eyes* and *More Than Half the Sky* is in its aspirations to be ecofeminist in nature, in terms of acknowledging the intersectional mode of relations between gender (even then, our understanding of womanness is broad and inclusive) and other socially constructed markers of identity like race, class, species, culture and nation, and how these intersect with pertinent environmental issues. With a focus on a politics of relations, *Making Kin* contemplates the Singapore woman's place on earth from the perspective of the personal and private to re-centre the woman in the discourse of politics, environment, ecology and nation. It is our hope that with this anthology, women writers in Singapore may chart a new course on the map of Singapore's literary scene, writing urgently about gender, place, nature, climate change, caregiving, conservation and other critical environmental issues that they find themselves entangled in and empathetic towards.

As some readers might already have guessed, the title *Making Kin* is borrowed from Haraway's essay, "Making Kin: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene" from her book *Staying with the Trouble*, where she writes about the urgency of kin-making beyond anthropocentric notions of familial relationships, lineage and ancestry:

"My purpose is to make "kin" mean something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy... Kin-making is making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans. I was moved in college by Shakespeare's punning between kin and kind—the kindest were not necessarily kin as family; making kin and making kind (as category, care, relatives without ties by birth, lateral relatives, lots of other

echoes) stretch the imagination and can change the story.

...

I think that the stretch and recomposition of kin are allowed by the fact that all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense, and it is past time to practice better care of kinds-as-assemblages (not species one at a time). Kin is an assembling sort of word. All critters share a common “flesh,” laterally, semiotically, and genealogically.”

As an “assembling sort of word” then, kin-making reconnects us with other person-beings that share our planetary space as home, forcing us to rethink our place on earth along reciprocal, ecocentric rather than anthropocentric lines. *Making Kin* is our attempt at assembling kin and kind, at stretching the imagination and changing the story, from within the privacy of the home into pertinent, global conversations.

*Making Kin* opens with “The Field” by ecofeminist poet, educator and editor Esther Vincent, where the narrator finds herself standing in a field of her dreams, an imagined space that is uncanny in its strangeness and familiarity, a metaphor for the fields of our past that have been cleared for anthropocentric activities. The essay, which draws on the narrator’s dreams and memories, as well as re-imaginings, could be read as a field of sorts, one that returns to her changed each time, “an enabling psychological space” that resists control or domination of any kind, physical or symbolic. From contemplations of home and the meaning of indigeneity to the rewriting of myths for healing of maternal bonds in a time of dislocation, we move to “The Spell of the Forest” by writer and editor Prasanthi Ram. Here, our narrator reveals to us her fear of forests, otherwise known as hylophobia, in the beginning of her essay. What she initially perceives as a dangerous site of gendered violence becomes a place where she is soothed, the forest and trees offering healing when the burdens of caregiving threaten to overwhelm. We delve into father-daughter relationships and we feel the narrator’s poignant sense of loss and longing as she navigates her duties of caregiving, womanhood and spiritual respite in the natural world.

“The Seven-Year Cycle” by poet, teacher, vocal alchemist and womb

worker ArunDitha, which alludes to the astrological concept of time and human existence, offers readers a journey into the realm of ecospirituality. ArunDitha's essay holds up an alternative way of understanding the concept of death, so that death is seen as a thing to be embraced rather than feared. Drawing from her personal experiences and memories of dying and birthing, the narrator remembers and recreates moments for the reader to renew their understanding of our place within the cosmos. In "There Will Be Salvation Yet", writer and visual artist Tania De Rozario shares the pain of intergenerational relationships among the womenfolk in her family. The narrator confesses to a love of horror films, seeing herself mirrored in the female protagonists—"demonic daughters"—who are often Othered by society and depicted as needing exorcism. In the journey towards realising her queer self, our narrator evokes the wilderness as a space of danger but also of freedom, hope and promise—"You will conquer the wilderness and become it." In "Coming Home: Healing from Intergenerational Trauma", researcher Nurul Fadiyah Johari explores through her own experience how trauma is passed down within families. She shows how her healing process was facilitated by a collective rather than an individual effort and how it conjured an intense need for her childhood home and past. In our highly medicalised society, it is easy for us to take drugs for pain and look to science for cures. But as our narrator explains, healing comes from care, for "[t]he work of caring is mutual and recognises the interdependency of human societies."

Educator and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) practitioner Andrea Yew takes the reader to the mats in "Grapppling", as our narrator wrestles with her selves to negotiate concepts of the body, femininity and fighting. In a bold statement, she proposes that "Fighting, and by extension, the pursuit of martial arts is an interrogation of the self and the world around you." Her essay expounds on this idea, of martial arts and self-knowledge as entry points to knowing the multitudes of the self. Multidisciplinary artist and researcher Dawn-joy Leong's essay "Scheherazade's Sea: Five Women and One" also explores a plural self inflected by and engaged with the womenfolk

around her. The narrator begins by proudly proclaiming that she is Autistic, embracing the creativity and neurodiversity accompanying that identity. Like Scheherazade of *One Thousand and One Nights*, the autistic woman must “spin and personify stories, hide her natural autistic traits and ‘perform’ neuronormativity as persuasively as possible.” In her own inimitable style, our narrator introduces the reader to significant relationships in her life including the fulfilling one she has with her autism sensory assistance dog, Lucy Like-a-Charm.

We continue our voyage across the strait with conservation scientist and environmental anthropologist Serina Rahman in “The Sirenia Has Found Her Home”, whose essay details her environmental work with the coastal fishing community in Mukim Tanjung Kupang. Narrating the struggles of gender and culture, she presents to readers a refreshing insight into the realities of working in conservation. The journey towards building trust and kinship amongst the villagers is precarious, and our narrator relates how she loses and forges connections with the people who have become her kin and kind. In “As Big as a House”, former journalist and literature academic Matilda Gabrielpillai reflects on the meaning of home and the physical environment in her life. Ruminating on the symbolic significance of a house in many works of literature, the narrator also recounts the various places she has lived in growing up, showing how these homes reflect the changing face of the nation as well. She writes of the “heartbreaking disjuncture between our sentimental and aesthetic attitudes towards houses and the way society insists we look at them now as purely money-making objects in this time of neoliberal capitalism.” Academic and educator, Angelia Poon, contemplates the meaning of travel, cultural encounters and home in her essay, “Travelling in Place”. She writes about how the journeys of others have led to her being at home in Katong, the neighbourhood she grew up in and one which is constantly changing. Possessing a kind of intuitive movement and flow like the leatherback turtle who swims into our consciousness, our narrator walks us through the streets of her memory and traces forgotten routes in a search for roots.

In “Marvels of Nature Just Outside My Window”, activist Constance Singam muses over the wildlife she has encountered in the different places she has lived in Singapore and Australia. Observing how the birds that have made a home in her Japanese Bamboo Bush outside her flat window bring her delight and joy, the narrator celebrates nature as a “spiritual balm,” lauding its nourishment for the mind, heart and soul. On a more collective level, she notes how tightly-knit communities can also spring up and grow around shared spaces of greenery and nature. In “The Bird Without a Name” by educator and keen birder Ann Ang, the narrator brings to mind the significance and the power of naming wildlife, introducing readers to greening policies and avian life in Singapore. Reading the essay is itself a birding experience in Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, as the narrator plays the role of nature guide, reminding us of our status on earth as visitors. By the end of the essay, she leaves us with this line: “And so, a bird takes you out of yourself, only to return you to an enlarged perspective of where you sit in the wider ecology of our green earth.” The idea of being part of a wider ecological system also informs the essay, “The Power of Small Actions”, by Kanwaljit Soin, surgeon and former NMP (Nominated Member of Parliament). Here, our narrator discloses to the reader how her life’s work of feminist activism and science is closely intertwined with a love of nature and the natural world. She writes of her belief in how the personal steps and individual decisions we make, like becoming vegetarian, can ultimately have profound and far-reaching effects for the world.

Written by eco activist, student and co-founder of Speak for Climate, Tim Min Jie’s “Care is Revolutionary” envisions movement work to be free of burnout, and to be built around an ethos of empathy, joy and care. Alluding to a number of ecofeminist thinkers and indigenous women activists, she advocates for movement work centred around care and joy as the antidote to patriarchy. The narrator argues for an ecocentric worldview, one that “empowers us to build a regenerative world without reproducing capitalistic violence.” Care in terms of maternal love and providing for her mixed-heritage family informs “Conquering Yeast” by poet and novelist

Grace Chia. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the narrator confesses how, like many all over the world, she took to breadmaking at home. The act of making bread—at once highly symbolic, therapeutic and creative—is the vehicle for the narrator’s meditation on the meaning of home when one’s world has shrunk to the space of one’s apartment. But she writes, “My world is that of the ones I love; my family’s world revolves around my love.” Motherhood and place-making also inform “Finding a Home for Sebastien, My Autistic Son: From Peucang Island to Bali” by autism advocate and educator Choo Kah Ying, who shares her story of moving her autistic son, Sebastien, away from highly urbanised Singapore to Bali in search of a more nurturing rural and rustic way of life. The narrator writes of the emotional heartache such a drastic move had caused her as a mother. And yet, by taking a chance to “make kin” with a Balinese family who have welcomed Sebastien into their lives, she reveals how her son is now able to enjoy a quality of life not possible in Singapore. With his “atypical family” in Bali often harnessing nature to help him develop “a sense of peace,” Sebastien continues to thrive.

How we have lost sight of the life-giving spirit and energy of a place is the focus of transgender artist nor’s essay, “Semangat in Practice”. The narrator shares how their artistic practice seeks to draw attention to the ways in which Singapore society has neglected the semangat of the land and sea in its quest for development and economic prosperity. They bring into focus their family’s mixed Orang Selat, Javanese and Buginese ancestry, revealing how family members are spread throughout the region on islands where life rhythms and realities do not always line up neatly with national narratives and borders. nor’s essay advocates a more complex view of the way our bodies, histories, memories and homes are all intertwined. Finally, we close the anthology with “Liquid Emerald” by editor, writer and visual artist Diana Rahim, whose essay meditates on minyak lam, a traditional Malay medicinal oil made by women and passed down the family matrilineally. The narrator recounts familial anecdotes as well as her interactions with the women responsible for this cultural heirloom.

Readers grow to appreciate the kinship between specific plants and the women who collect them to make their minyak lam. Likewise, with the onset of urbanisation in Singapore, we lament the loss of habitats, plants, indigenous practices, wisdoms and cultures. Just like Serina Rahman's work that continues across the Tebrau strait, or the field that lives on in Esther Vincent's dreams, Diana Rahim's minyak lam continues to mesmerise us even as its legacy persists across the border: "A liquid emerald, part leaf, part oil, part indigenous wisdom, part matrilineal magic, and as always, so much more than the sum of its parts."

The eighteen personal essays comprising *Making Kin* deal with the politics of living as a woman through personal experiences, autobiographical, familial, ancestral and imagined, engaging with Singapore and its environments. Our engagement with eco-conscious themes is broad, inclusive and not prescriptive. We hope that these personal essays will resonate across borders and boundaries, renegotiating the complex relationships women have with themselves, other fellow person-beings, and with ideological constructs of power and patriarchy. In doing so, we hope for these essays to make kin and kind, to create new and messy entanglements and to revise our ways of "becoming-with" other person-beings, companions, partners, subjects and objects, who like us, are bound to this one earth we all call home.

Esther & Angelia