

**Complete Citation:** Wicks, Peter (1998). Politics and loss in Philip Jeyaretnam's Singaporean fiction. *Asian Profile*, 26 (5), 357-365. ISSN 0304-8675.

Accessed from USQ ePrints <http://eprints.usq.edu.au>

## **POLITICS AND LOSS IN PHILIP JEYARETNAM'S SINGAPOREAN FICTION**

**Peter Wicks**

University of Southern Queensland

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Singapore's Philip Jeyaretnam has now published two well-reviewed novels, a linked collection of short stories, as well as individual stories and reflective essays. This substantial literary achievement is more remarkable, given his relative youth, the controversial political circumstances of his paternal family, and his full-time career as a lawyer at the Singaporean Bar. Moreover, for Singaporeans, creative writing in the English language is, as pointed out in an editorial in the *Straits Times* newspaper, "a young flowering, struggling in new soil."<sup>(1)</sup> In contemporary Singapore, politics and livelihood impinge on creative artists and their output as much, if not more than, other developed countries.

It is the purpose of this paper to consider each of Philip Jeyaretnam's major published works in turn for their insights into their author's world view, and the social milieu in which he functions, the place where he chooses to live and work. The analysis draws on the key basic assumptions set out by Altick and Fenstermaker in *The Art of Literary Research* (1993), firstly, that to understand the meaning of a text, it is necessary to know as much as possible about its creator, the author; and secondly, that authors and texts are products of particular social and historical contexts.<sup>(2)</sup> In the case of Philip Jeyaretnam's work, it is argued that the triumph of managerialism, the sheer economic progress, and the monopolistic political process in Singapore have prompted the author to convey a profound awareness of cost to individual human lives, in terms of loss of intellectual diversity and

even destruction of spiritual values. He is especially disturbed with the “very shallow form of materialism” that holds full sway, with what even the officially-oriented *Straits Times* has acknowledged as “a kind of national ideology that is expressed in a relentless efficiency to ensure material well-being.” (3) Whilst uneasy with the label of “political writer”, Philip Jeyaretnam nonetheless recognises that it is impossible to avoid political themes if the subject is the people of Singapore and how they think and feel, because of the formative and pervasive role of government in Singaporean society. (4) In a plea for *civil* rather than official society, he suggests that there can be legitimate commitments to, and passionate visions of, Singapore which are other than those espoused by the incumbent government, and which involve participation by a broad range of the population. Indeed, for the literary critic, Dudley de Souza, Philip Jeyaretnam’s creative work heralds the ‘emergence of a kind of Singaporean consciousness...’(5)

### ***ABOUT THE CONTEXT***

Once a British colony and then briefly a constituent state of the Federation of Malaysia, Singapore became an independent republic on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1965. Thanks in large part to the ambitious, determined plans for socio-economic development of its People’s Action Party government since then, Singapore is now noted for its dynamism, efficiency and prosperity. With average gross national product per head of over US\$26, 000 per annum, with growth in GDP hovering around 6 to 7% per annum, and with no foreign debt, Singaporeans enjoy the highest living standards in Southeast Asia. It is a remarkable and hard-earned achievement, especially when the tight physical constraints upon the island are taken into account. Though Singapore’s population is multi-racial and cosmopolitan, its ethos derives from the industry and enterprise of the majority of the population who are overseas Chinese, as well as their eye for the main material chance. For modern Singapore is an exercise in calculated audaciousness. With three million people crammed onto 620 square kilometres (some of it newly reclaimed from the seas and swamp), Singapore’s only significant resource is in its people and their qualities of intelligence, industry, and invention. With some 85% of its people accommodated in high-rise, government-built flats, and no land to spare, Singapore can grow only through trade, manufacturing, services, and investment, by making themselves

economically indispensable to their neighbours, and to the rest of the world at large. Not only have Singaporeans created the world's premier city-state out of a flat, tropical island, but they are in the process of shaping a technological, urban metropolis of global significance. In 1995, the influential, US-based *Fortune* magazine ranked Singapore as the best place in the world for doing business. In 1996, the World Economic Forum (WEF), based in Switzerland, ranked Singapore first on a global competitiveness index, having assessed it as having the best prospects of any country in the world for economic growth over the next 5-10 years. Even the savage economic crisis that permeated Southeast Asia during the latter half of 1997 seemed unlikely to damage well-managed Singapore in particular in any fundamental way.

Throughout this period of spectacular economic growth, Singapore has been governed continuously by the same political organisation, the People's Action Party, albeit endorsed by regular, popular, electoral mandate. The PAP is noted for its depth of talent, for its intense, efficient style, for its elitism, and its passion for political control. In human terms, there has been a flipside to prosperity. From his solitary room in an HDB flat, on the 10th floor of a tower-block in the new-town (or suburb) of Toa Payoh, Abraham Isaac, the focus of Philip Jeyaretnam's *Abraham's Promise*, asks himself questions such as:

“What happened to the old neighbourhoods, the houses, streets and fields that hugged the curves and folds of the earth ?”(6)

and:

“Must security and comfort always be preferred to the rigour, the pain, of thinking for oneself ?” (7)

### ***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

Born in Singapore in 1964, Philip Jeyaretnam is the son of prominent Singaporean Opposition politician and former magistrate, J B Jeyaretnam, and an Englishwoman, Margaret (nee Walker), who was also a lawyer and former legal partner to her husband. His paternal background is Jaffna Tamil

and Christian. “I’m an unusual Singaporean to start with,” he wryly observes (8), though not so unusual if the essential cultural hybridity of contemporary Singapore is acknowledged (9). Philip was educated outside the local public system to avoid possible complications arising from his father’s intense political involvement, and because of his mother’s English nationality.(10) His primary schooling took place at Raeburn Park, and he attended secondary school at the United World College of Southeast Asia. For pre-university classes, he went to England, taking his A-Levels at Charterhouse School. Philip Jeyaretnam’s father sponsored him to study Law at Cambridge University, from which he was an outstanding graduate and professional person in his own right. His national service in Singapore was then accomplished with a distinguished record.

In 1988, and against international competition, he received the prestigious annual Airey Neave Scholarship to undertake a postgraduate thesis at Cambridge on “Singapore: A Retreat from the Rule of Law.” The thesis was accepted by the Airey Neave Trust, but has not yet been published.

In October of 1988, Philip Jeyaretnam married a Chinese Singaporean school-teacher and actress, Cindy Sim. They have two children, a Filipino maid, and four cats. Currently, he practises both commercial and criminal law as a barrister in Singapore.

His literary success may be attributed both to what the *Far Eastern Economic Review* termed his “undoubted talent” and to his familial relationship to the indefatigable J B Jeyaretnam which “has served to heighten public curiosity about his work.” (11) Yet there is also no doubt that Philip Jeyaretnam “emerged from the shadow of his father a long time ago.” (12) His gentle, charming, articulate and precise manner conveys a man who is very much his own person. For instance, Philip Jeyaretnam has denied that *Abraham’s Promise* is about his father in particular, although both the shadow and the tribute are perceptible in the text.

Philip Jeyaretnam may well practise law in Singapore, but he has also been writing for publication for more than a decade, and as he told *Asiaweek* in 1990:

“I always felt that I was going to be a writer of books ...I had a respect, an admiration for words. I was taken by the idea of a world of ideas that could be communicated through books.” (13)

Jeyaretnam has, in fact, been self-consciously passionate about reading, writing and literature from a very early age. In interview, he conveys a quiet, modest reserve, and a sense that cultural and political responsibilities must be taken seriously.(14)

In recent years, this passion and talent for writing have taken Philip Jeyaretnam on a Fulbright Fellowship to the University of Iowa International Writers’ Program and Harvard Law School in the United States, to a guest-spot at the Melbourne Writers’ Festival in Australia, to the Cambridge Seminar on a grant from the British Council, to Germany courtesy of Interlit3, and back to Australia in March, 1996, when he was writer-in-residence at Adelaide’s Flinders University.

### ***A STORY COLLECTION: FIRST LOVES (1987)***

*First Loves* was composed soon after the author was released from two years of compulsory National Service in Singapore, an experience which he, on balance, enjoyed. On release by the publishers, it stayed on the best-seller lists in Singapore for eighteen months, and was welcomed for its relatively frank exploration of sexual matters, for the expression it gave to the values and experiences of a younger, English-educated generation of Singaporeans, and for its theme of innocence lost, or, the getting of wisdom, Singapore-style. Through a series of linked narrative episodes, the two main characters, Ah Leong and Rajiv, engage in a quest for maturity and identity, both at individual and social levels. On initial publication of *First Loves*, reviewers also noted Jeyaretnam’s “gleeful way with language” and “splendid vignettes.”(15) For his part, the author has acknowledged that he sympathised with his main characters and was “..very much on their side as they faced up to a very hostile system.” (16)

Ah Leong is certainly one of the more familiar and popular personalities in recent Singaporean fiction, and it is Ah Leong and his adolescent escapades which best capture the author's youthful perceptions of his country. Like 85% of Singaporeans, Ah Leong lives with his family in a high-rise, government-built flat. Neither economically privileged nor academically brilliant, as readers first encounter this wide-eyed young flat-dweller, he is over-awed by the physical shape and size of his environment. "Ah Leong," it is said, "stood at the window and looked out, trying to fix all Singapore in his gaze. He could not actually see much." (17) for the built environment is just too dense. In fact, the word "concrete" occurs four times on the first page of *First Loves* alone. But flat-dwelling allows Ah Leong the opportunity for some creative thought on nation-building, both horizontal and vertical. In Dudley de Souza's words, "the unmistakable atmosphere of an HDB estate had, at last, been captured in print." (18) While Ah Leong may feel a little hemmed in, there is plenty to keep him occupied. As story follows story, he absorbs the embraces and suffers the shackles of family, he survives sibling rivalry with his brother (as well as a bowel upset from green mangoes), he learns from his father's earthy insights, he manipulates his male friends, he falls in and out of relationships with women, he loses an office-job when he day-dreams on the boss's time, and eventually he is absorbed into National Service, an obligation upon all young Singaporean male citizens.

*First Loves* is a lively, sometimes hilarious romp, with plenty of telling phrases, not all of which are entirely plausible. For one so young, Ah Leong has some remarkably advanced opinions about life and society as, for example, when he questions his fellow soccer-players: "What's going on? You guys look more dead than the average session of Parliament." (19) Certainly, Ah Leong reveals a sophisticated grasp of political theory and cultural traditions. Then there are the rather explicit, interwoven, erotic interludes involving Ah Leong's Indian friend, Rajiv, which consciously transcend ethnic boundaries, and raise crucial questions about relations between Singapore's minority and majority groups and the official doctrines and limitations of multiracialism, which nowadays go as far as cosmopolitanism, but hardly to hybridity. In fact, both Rajiv and Ah Leong are notably critical of their parents for conservatism on ethnic, political and social issues, Ah Leong actively works against his parents' opposition to the relationship between his sister, Mei Li, and Rajiv. For his part, Rajiv

challenges his family's firmly-held belief that politics (that is, power) in Singapore is the preserve of the majority Chinese community.

Overall, Ah Leong is an infectiously optimistic, good-natured sort of fellow who had "soaked in his country, and now he felt hope that there was more to his city than the effervescence of consumption." (20) At the end of the volume. Ah Leong is even said to have a "new vision for his country," (21) though the vision is hinted at rather than spelt out, but grounded in the efforts and contribution of ordinary folk.

### ***THE FIRST NOVEL: RAFFLES PLACE RAGTIME (1988)***

Vincent Tan and Connie Lim, the protagonists of Philip Jeyaretnam's first short novel, are quintessential Singaporean 'yuppies', energetic, graduate, ambitious, and upwardly mobile. With their designer clothes, mobile phones, luxury cars, and offices right in the heart of Singapore's central business district at Raffles Place, they are amongst their country's officially prescribed 'best, brittle, and brightest'. In short, they are on the make and on the rise. As the author himself reflects, characters like Vincent and Connie "can sacrifice anything to get to certain desirable career goals." (22) Young, middle class Singaporeans have manifestly abandoned moral purpose for material obsession. At the start of the novel, Vincent and Connie are engaged to be married, but there is precious little than status-seeking to keep them together, and through a series of farcical episodes, the arrangement inexorably disintegrates. Although Connie tries to assuage her grief in an orgy of shopping, Vincent is afforded the chance for a more substantial relationship with a former secretary, Veronica.

The author's concern at Singapore's lack of a distinctive, coherent, local cultural and spiritual tradition emerges clearly throughout the text. Vincent is initially hostile to Connie's brother, the flamboyantly Anglophile Ian Lim, but as one of his friends reminds him:

'So who does he look to? The rich men of Singapore's past, or China's past for that matter, have left no heritage, no cloak for young energetic rich boys to put on. Ian has been smart enough to take on English standards of taste and conduct, although I can see that the cloak may be somewhat ill-fitting. What's the

alternative? Flash clothes and fast cars?' (23)

For the author, Singaporean society is grounded on contradictions, especially between silent past and obsessive present, and between individual fulfilment and material success. In the interests of sanity, he indicates it may well be necessary to give priority to the former over the latter.

### ***THE SECOND NOVEL: ABRAHAM'S PROMISE (1995)***

*Abraham's Promise* is Philip Jeyaretnam's second novel and his most significant published book of fiction to date. The title of the work itself suggests a profound awareness of the Judeo-Christian tradition, whilst Philip Jeyaretnam's name conveys a dual heritage that is both Tamil and Christian. The fact that the work was published in Singapore in 1995, and that its author is himself a Singaporean citizen, adds to its pervasive hybridity. In the background of the text, Singapore moves from British colony to Japanese base to independent state with all the popular excitement of nation-building. The central character of the novel, Abraham Isaac, a Tamil Christian teacher and unionist, lives through all these dynamic years and endures a series of experiences, both personal and political, that can fairly be described as traumatic and transformational. Singapore gains prodigious prosperity and stability, and Abraham gains a measure of wisdom, but somehow that fundamental human quality of justice escapes him. In fact, the character of Abraham Isaac recalls Ah Leong in his essential innocence and capacity to dream. The politics of newly independent Singapore is shown to have both winners and losers. Abraham Isaac is most definitely cast among the latter.

*Abraham's Promise* is an elegaic tale of missed opportunities, of melancholic loss, of what was, what might have been, of what is, and even what could still be. The narrator and central character is an old teacher of Latin, living in a flat somewhere in contemporary Singapore. Abraham Isaac is Tamil Indian, Christian, mission-educated, widowed, "old and grey" (24), and full of regrets after a long and eventful life of almost seven decades. His consciousness slips readily but effectively in and out of past and present episodes over this time. Abraham narrates in stately, refined language of a formal English kind, verging occasionally on the ponderous, but quite



superb for the author's partial purpose of evoking the Anglo-Indian colonial world of Singapore just before the outbreak of the Pacific War. Abraham's own preferential style is reflective, contemplative, even philosophical. Glad to have a fee-paying private pupil at last, the elderly teacher nevertheless observes to himself that

“Old men always frighten young boys,  
perhaps for good reason: we are  
what they must become.” (25)

Abraham can also mock himself, a quality that helps lighten an otherwise sombre account. When the boy-pupil stares pointedly at his teacher's lips, Abraham notes, again to himself:

“Either he's impressed, or he's noticed  
that I forgot, in my rush not to be  
late for this first lesson, to put in my  
dentures.” (26)

For his part, Abraham is not impressed by the younger generation of young Singaporean males like his only son, Victor, and the pupil before him, regarding them as spoilt, overprotected, self-indulgent, yet also worldly, practical, and confident. In his aging mind, Abraham prefers to recapture the letters and photographs of fifty years ago that he has treasured as though they were gold bullion - letters from his first girl-friend, Rose, whom he met at mission school and church choir, two years Abraham's senior and completely oblivious to his ardour. Rose marries an Englishman, Charles, and leaves wartime Singapore to live in Britain, but Abraham never really gets over her. Then there is the photograph of his beloved, deceased spouse, Rani, who entered an adulterous relationship with Abraham's alleged friend, Krishna, the slippery politician who ends up in detention. There is the picture of Abraham's sister, the sweet, spirited Mercy, whom Abraham and the rest of the family cajoled into an unhappy marriage that resulted in her suicide.

In the first flush of national independence for Singapore, Abraham becomes a school teacher and active trade unionist, and joins the governing party. However, when he chooses publicly to express a viewpoint in a letter with which the new government does not agree, Abraham loses both his teaching job and his party membership. On principle, he refuses to recant. In turn,

then, he loses his income, his wife, and his best friend. To his ultimate horror, he finds that his beloved son is homosexual, a situation he finds he must accept if his battered life is to have any meaning at all. Abraham Isaac's life, in sum, has been a progressive shattering of illusions, both personal and political.

However, at the time of Singaporean internal self-government in the late 1950s, Abraham Isaac was an idealist and a dreamer. He shared a general public excitement and expectation that "all seemed possible", for it was, he recalled, an "age of new directions, of limitless possibilities." (27) Unlike his parents, who believed that the majority of the population who were Chinese must run the show, he truly believed that, as a member of an ethnic and religious minority, namely a Tamil and a Christian, he could make an unfettered contribution to the future shape of Singapore. In principle, his logic was impeccable. The colonial British had taught Singaporeans about human equality and freedom of expression; Singaporean independence merely meant that these political truths could be implemented. The new nation of Singapore offered the significant possibility of rational, disinterested decision-making for the public good. In political terms, however, Abraham found that there were profound limits to these British ideals in independent Singapore, and the novel includes quite chilling episodes of censorship, betrayal, arbitrariness, and sheer thuggery.

In the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, the great prophet and patriarch, Abraham, makes a two-fold promise: to honour the great God, Jehovah, and to be loyal to the country in which he lives. The Jewish prophet, Abraham, is sufficiently brave to be willing to sacrifice his beloved only son, Isaac, in fulfilment of this promise. Philip Jeyaretnam evokes this epic theme in his second novel. In human relationships, Abraham Isaac, the Singaporean teacher, was destined to care, even to care too much, but never to succeed in worldly terms. From his earliest years, he was brave enough, but wisdom came only after long, heartbreaking experience. In particular, justice proved elusive.

## ***CONCLUSION***

In his published work to date, Philip Jeyaretnam has written comfortably and confidently about cross-cultural relationships, about sexual awakening, about material obsession, about social contradiction, and about arbitrary power and betrayal. His written thoughts on inter-ethnic union go even beyond official sanction of cosmopolitanism towards encouraging and valuing hybridity. Likewise, his concern for ordinary, individual self-expression is transparent. Singapore, for Philip Jeyaretnam, is demonstrably no political utopia, and equally no site for gentle, innocent dreamers. In his three substantial works of fiction published to date, Jeyaretnam has emphasised the hazards for those who, like his character, Ah Leong, would seek to join the system, those who, like Vincent Tan, would work the system, and those who, like Abraham Isaac, would flaunt the system. Yet there is no doubt that Jeyaretnam, also like Ah Leong, remains “soaked in his country” in quite fundamental and impressive ways.

---

#### **NOTES**

1. *Straits Times*, 5 October, 1992.
2. Altick, R.D. & Fenstermaker, J.J. *The Art of Literary Research*, 4th ed. New York: Norton, 1993, p. 3.
3. *Straits Times*, 5 October, 1992.
4. Jeyaretnam, P. “My Sunday.” *Asia Magazine*, 7 August, 1988, p. 46.
5. de Souza, D. “Singapore.” *Traveller’s Literary Companion to Southeast Asia*, ed. A. Dingwell, London: In Print, 1994, p. 255.
6. Jeyaretnam, P. *Abraham’s Promise*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1995, p. 95.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
8. *Asiaweek*, 21-28 December, 1990, p. 33.
9. see Ang, Ien, & Stratton, J. “The Singapore Way of Multiculturalism: Western Concepts/Asian Culture.” *Sojourn*, 10, 1 (1995), pp. 65-89.

10. Personal communication with Philip Jeyaretnam, 23 February, 1997.
  11. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 March, 1988, p. 91.
  12. *Asiaweek*, 21-28 December, 1990, p. 33.
  13. Ibid.
  14. Personal interview with Philip Jeyaretnam, Singapore, December, 1996.
  15. Holmes, C. in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 February, 1989, p. 47; also see Sharp, I. in *FEER*, 24 March, 1988, p. 81.
  16. "Siding with the Underdog." *Asiaweek*, 21-28 December, 1990, p. 33.
  17. Jeyaretnam, P. *First Loves*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1987, p. 7.
  18. de Souza, "Singapore," p. 255.
  19. Jeyaretnam, *First Loves*, p. 31.
  20. Ibid., p. 156.
  21. Ibid., p. 155.
  22. "Siding with the Underdog," p. 33.
  24. Jeyaretnam, *Abraham's Promise*, p. 11.
  25. Ibid., p. 12.
  26. Ibid.
  27. Ibid., p. 80.
-

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **MAJOR WORKS BY PHILIP JEYARETNAM**

#### *Novels*

*Raffles Place Ragtime*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1988.

*Abraham's Promise*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1995.

#### *Short Stories*

*First Loves*. Singapore: Times Books International, 1987.

"Making Coffee." *Skoob Pacifica Anthology No. 1: S E Asia Writes Back!*  
London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1993, pp. 79-83.

#### *Essays, Articles, and Chapters*

"My Sunday." *Asia Magazine*, 7 August, 1988, p. 46.

"The Writer and his Audience: 1. Every piece of literature is a collaborative enterprise between the reader and the writer." *Solidarity*, 125 (Jan-Mar, 1990), pp. 65-71.

"Sex, Art and Singapore." *Commentary*, 11, 1 (1993), pp. 41-44.

"A Room of One's Own: Ground-breaking Singaporean drama." *Asiaweek Online*, 29 September, 1996, pp. 1-2.

### **SECONDARY SOURCES**

-----"Siding with the Underdog." *Asiaweek*, 21-28 December, 1990, p. 33.

-----"Singapore: Artistic licence." *The Economist*, 29 October, 1994, p. 38.

Altick, R.D. & Fenstermaker, J.J. *The Art of Literary Research*, 4th ed. New York: Norton, 1993.

Brewster, Anne. *Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism*. Melbourne: MUP, 1995.

Briffa, Charles. Review of *Abraham's Promise*, by Philip Jeyaretnam. *World Literature Today*, 70, 3 (Summer, 1996), p. 765.

- Chopard, Kelly. Review of *First Loves*, by Philip Jeyaretnam. *Singapore Book World*, 19 (1988/89), pp. 65-66.
- de Souza, Dudley. "Singapore." *Traveller's Literary Companion to Southeast Asia*, ed. Alistair Dingwell. London: InPrint, 1994, pp. 252-291.
- Hiebert, Murray. "Family Resemblance." *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 January, 1996, p. 62.
- Holmes, Christopher. "Vignettes of Singapore, Inc.: review of *Raffles Place Ragtime*, by Philip Jeyaretnam." *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 February, 1989, p. 47.
- Koh Tai Ann. Review of *Raffles Place Ragtime*, by Philip Jeyaretnam. *Singapore Book World*, 19 (1989/90), pp. 273-274.
- Koh Tai Ann. "Telling Stories, Expressing Values: The Singapore Novel in English." *Tenggara*, 25 (1990), p. 96.
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Malaysia and Singapore." *The Commonwealth Novel since 1960*, ed. B King. London: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 87-103.
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Social Protest and the Success Motif in Singapore Novels in English." *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial*, ed. A. Rutherford. Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1993, pp. 292-299.
- Means, Laurel. "The Role of the Writer in Today's Singapore." *Asian Survey*, 34, 11 (November, 1994), pp. 962-973.
- Means, Laurel. "Singaporean Literature Races Ahead of the Past." *Solidarity*, 147-148 (1995-96), pp. 27-32.
- Pang, Duanna. "Philip Jeyaretnam: Enquiring Mind." *Asia Online* (August, 1996), pp. 1-5.
- Quick, Barbara. Review of *Abraham's Promise*, by Philip Jeyaretnam, *The New York Times Book Review*, 25 February, 1996, p. 21.
- Seno, A. & Oorjitham. "Gaining Cultural Capital." *Asiaweek Online*, 12 September, 1997, pp. 1-3.
- Sharp, Ilsa. "A sexual awakening: review of *First Loves*, by Philip Jeyaretnam." *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 March, 1988, p. 91.
- Singh, Kirpal. "Staying Close but Breaking Free: Indian Writers in Singapore." *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, ed. E.S. Nelson. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992, pp. 99-104.

Tesoro, J M and Oorjitham, Santha. "Singapore: Keeping Up the Pace." *Asiaweek Online*, 3 May, 1996, pp. 1-4.

Wicks, Peter. "Images of Singapore in Recent Singaporean Fiction." *Singapore Book World*, 23 (1993/94), pp. 9-20.

Wicks, Peter. "Literary Perspectives on Singaporean Community." *Globalisation and Regional Communities: Papers from the Internationalising Communities Conference*, ed. D H McMillen. Toowoomba: USQ Press, 1997, pp. 262-267.

Yeo, Robert. "The Singapore Short Story." *Tenggara*, 25 (1990), pp. 114-119.

---