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Volume 8: Interviews II

Editor: Ronald D. Klein

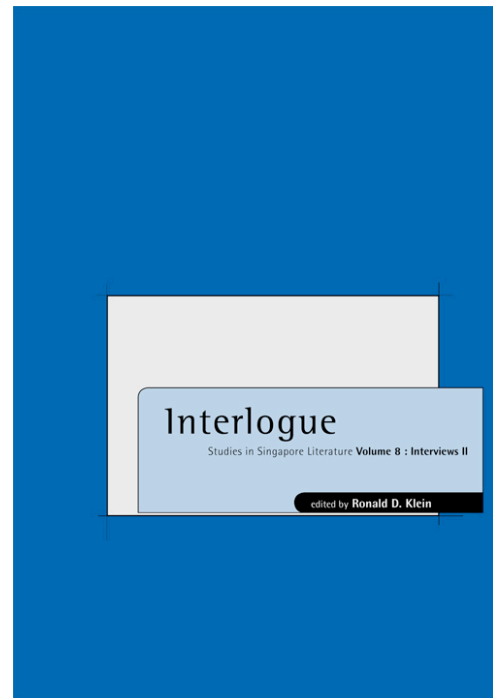
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Synopsis of Book

INTERLOGUE is a Series which brings into critical focus the works of Singapore writers in English. The Series aims for stimulating insights presented in a refreshing manner through sustained engagements with a variety of approaches, themes and perspectives. The first 3 volumes concentrate on fiction, poetry and drama. Volumes 5, 6 and 7 focus on individual authors.

Professor Ronald D. Klein delves into the background and works of Singapore writers, poets and playwrights in Volumes 4 and 8.

In this volume of 12 interviews, he includes the insights of critic **Ong Sor Fern**, the background and thoughts of poets like **Felix Cheong**, **Madeleine Lee** and **Yong Shu Hoong**, playwright **Ovidia Yu**, short story writer **Jeffrey Lim** and filmmaker **Eric Khoo**. **David Leo** and **Alfian Sa'at**, who write in several genres, are also included. Interviews with **Ng Yi-Sheng**, **Daren Shiau** and **Cyril Wong** complete this volume.

This is an important book for readers who wish to know more about contemporary Singapore writing.

About the Editor



Professor Ronald D. Klein was awarded a doctorate in creativity by the University of Massachusetts. In the United States, he has worked in all aspects of education—as a high school English teacher, private school director, college administrator and coordinator, textbook author and teacher trainer.

He is presently Professor in the Department of English Studies at Hiroshima Jogakuin University, Japan where he has been teaching language, literature and creative writing for 20 years. His research field is Asian English Literature, with particular emphasis on Asian literary views of Japan.

Professor Klein has also organised symposia on peace and humanity in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Florence, New Delhi and Hiroshima and conducted creativity workshops in numerous universities and businesses.

About the Interviewees

Alfian Sa'at burst on the literary scene with *One Fierce Hour* (1998), published when he was 21 and *Corridor and Other Stories* (1999), which won the Singapore Literature Prize Commendation Award. His second collection of poems, *A History of Amnesia* (2001) was shortlisted for the Kiriyaama Asia-Pacific Book Prize. He mentored in the theatre with Haresh Sharma of The Necessary Stage and has had more than 30 plays produced for both the English and Malay stage. He is also known for his *Asian Boys* trilogy (2000, 2004, 2007).

Felix Seng Fei Cheong began his career as a television director and producer. He left that glamour for a Masters degree in creative writing at the University of Queensland and returned to publish his first collection of poems, *Temptation and Other Poems* in 1998. He followed this with *I Watch the Stars Go Out* (1999) and *Broken by the Rain* (2003), variously with Firstfruits and Ethos Books. He won the National Arts Council Young Artist Award for literature in 2000. His poems are widely anthologised, and he has led contingents of Singapore writers to perform their works at international festivals.

Eric Khoo began making silent Super 8 films while a child. He studied film in Australia. and when he returned he began to make short films. His first feature film *Mee Pok Man* (1995) is credited with beginning the resurgence of Singapore filmmaking. *Seven Storeys* (1997) and *Be Like Me* (2005) have appeared in international film festivals. His most recent film, *My Magic* (2008), was a featured entry at the Cannes Film Festival.

Madeleine Lee is an investment manager with an Honours BA from NUS in Economics and Accounting and an MBA in Finance in England. She has been writing poetry most of her life, but only at the urging of her mentor Suchen Lim did she attempt to have them published. Her first collection was *a single headlamp* (2003) followed by *fifty three/zero three* (2004). Her most recent work is *Y Grec* (2005), a poetry collaboration with playwright Eleanor Wong, the result of a trip to Greece with several friends.

David Leo is a prolific writer working in both fiction and poetry. He had four volumes published in 1993, two collections of stories, one volume of poetry and a novel. His novel *Different Strokes* (1993) was about Singapore's reaction to two AIDS victims. *Wives, Lovers and Other Women* (1995) won the Singapore Writers Prize Commendation Award. *Shakespeare Can Wait* (2001) was based on his experiences as a teacher. He has also written for the stage and television and has published two books of humour based on Singlish. His most recent work is *Identity* (2008), a collection of poetry.

Jeffrey Sui Yin Lim was one a group of five young poets who contributed to *In Search of Words* while still in school. He went on to study law and is a practising lawyer. His first collection of short stories, *Faith and Lies* was published in 1999. His second collection of stories, *The Coffin That Wouldn't Bury*, came out in 2008. Both collections push the boundaries of speculative fiction and alternative realities.

Ng Yi-sheng spent part of his childhood in Hong Kong and majored in comparative literature and writing at Columbia University in New York. He participated in the Mentorship Access Programme with Lee Tzu Pheng and Angeline Yap. His collection of poetry, *Last Boy* was published in 2006. He has written several works for the stage, *251* (2007) and *The Temptation of Sir Stamford Raffles* (2008), as well as the libretto to a musical based on the life of artist Georgette Chen. He has also participated in several multi-media collaborations with VISTA Lab, including *Reservoir* (2008).

Ong Sor Fern was an Honours graduate of NUS. She directly went to work for *The Straits Times* and began to cover the local literature scene. As book editor from 1993-2005, she played a major role in both discovering and documenting the rise of Singapore poets during that time. She accompanied them to international festivals and provided an inside look at their reception on the world stage.

Daren Shiau was part of the fabled Class of '95, writers shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize, many of whom have gone on to publish their works. *Heartland* (1999), Shiau's novel about characters living in the heartland of the country won the Singapore Literature Prize Commendation award in 1998 and has since been reprinted in an academic edition. Following *Heartland*, he published a book of poems, *Peninsular: Archipelagos and Other Islands* (2000). His most recent book, *Velouria* (2008) is a collection of micro fiction. He was the National Arts Council's Young Artist of the Year in 2002.

Cyril Wong is probably one of Singapore's more prolific younger poets. His first volume of poems, *Squatting Quietly*, was published in 2000, followed by five additional collections, all published by Firstfruits. In 2007, he co-authored *Excess Baggage and Claim* with Australian poet Terry Jaensch. He won the Singapore Arts Council's Young Artist Award in 2005 and the Singapore Literature Prize in 2006.

Yong Shu Hoong is another member of the Singapore Literature Prize's Class of '95. Trained in computer science at NUS, he took an MBA at Texas A. & M. University. His first work was *Isaac* (1997), which has since been reprinted as *Isaac Revisited* (2001), a different arrangement of the original poems with some additional ones. His second collection of poems, *dowhile* (2002) used a computer metaphor and incorporated photographs. His third collection, *Frottage* (2005), won the 2006 Singapore Literature Prize.

Ovidia Yu first won the Asiaweek Short Story competition in 1987 and wrote a mystery novel, *Miss Moorthy Investigates* in 1989, but is best known for her plays. *Dead on Cue* was included in Prize Winning Plays of 1987 and *Flying High* was including in Prize Winning Plays of 1991. Her best known plays include *Three Fat Virgins* (1992) and *The Woman in the Tree on a Hill*, which won first prize in the Edinburgh Arts Festival in 1993.

INTERLOGUE Volume 8 is available at Books Actually, Select Books, Kinokuniya Bookstores of Singapore, and at www.ethosbooks.com.sg

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