Like all great writers, Dostoevsky has been written about so much that no new approach seems possible. And yet, Joseph Frank's combination of a literary biography and analysis, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849,* does exactly that. The first of the projected four volumes, it offers many new insights while threading the old paths; it dares to suggest new views where the old seem immovably entrenched; and it sheds light on many aspects of Dostoevsky's writings which have been considered settled once and for all or fallen into oblivion. To do all this while writing an exceedingly lucid book, of interest not only to specialists in the Slavic field or Western literature, but also to those interested in general literature, is no mean accomplishment. It is no wonder that the book has met with praise and has already received awards.

The study follows Dostoevsky's life chronologically: from his humble beginnings and uncertainties of his childhood, through the fermenting years of adolescence and first literary efforts, to the ripening of artistic, cultural, and ideological views that would stamp his main works in his mature years. Literary influences—of Hoffmann, Schiller, Hugo, Balzac, and others—are discussed, although not at great length. Dostoevsky's early enamoration with both German and French Romanticism is well treated in a separate chapter, as is his attraction to a leading writer of his age, Gogol. By far the largest portion of the study is devoted to various literary and political circles, which shaped not only Dostoevsky's views but his future life as well. One often wonders what his fate, both as a man and as a writer, would have been had it not been for that tragic coincidence of being associated with the Petrashevsky circle at a very unstable point in Russian history. One of the greatest merits of Frank's study is his ability to interrelate the outside factors with Dostoevsky's inner world and growth. He does it without overemphasizing their significance yet searching for, and finding, relevant points.

The fact that the author is not a specialist in the Slavic field has contributed significantly to the value of the study, for he has brought into it a broader point of view, which is often lacking in narrow specialists. While there is a danger of overgeneralization—and there are signs of it in this book also—it is still a valuable contribution to the never-ending research of Dostoevsky. So much so that, when Frank's study of Dostoevsky's entire life and opus is completed, it may turn out to be one of the most refreshing books on this great Russian writer.

Vasa D. Mihailovich

LLOYD FERNANDO
Scorpion Orchid
Singapore: Heinemann, 1976. Pp. 147.

In spite of its unimpressive length, *Scorpion Orchid* is one of the most significant Singapore/Malaysian novels to have appeared in recent years. Set mostly in Singapore in the early 1950s, it vividly captures the spirits of that multiracial society during the stormy years shortly before both Malaya and Singapore became independent.

The novel, in the main, deals with the relationship of four young men, an Indian, a Chinese, a Malay, and an Eurasian. It traces their friendship from their carefree high school days through their youthful idealism as they entered university, where they "seemed in microcosm a presage of a new society, a world of new people who would utterly confound the old European racialist ways of thinking" (p. 67), to the breakup of their friendship in the final year of university. It shows the fragility of human bonds in the face of social and political pressures, and deals with the problems of identity, both individual and national, in a time of drastic change.

The texture of the story is enhanced by the four major characters' involvement with two enigmatic figures; the old medium Tok Said—apparently a symbol for man's fear and confusion in a time of social agitation and unrest—who is said to have predicted violence and bloodshed for the country, and whose identity is never clearly established in the novel, and Sally U, alias Salmah binte Yub, a character who is fully portrayed as a good natured woman who gives love freely;

"She's got the right spirit—a real multi-racial girl" (p. 113). She was raped by several unknown assailants in the riot, possibly a "multi-racial rape."

Although the novel ends on an optimistic note when the protagonist expresses his desire to return home after spending two years in England, it leaves the reader with a feeling of sadness. It is sad to see a beautiful friendship warmly cherished over many years come to an end. The narrative generates a strong feeling of nostalgia. The intense suffering Sally Yu has undergone also strikes the reader with awe and dismay. Is this brutal incident just a demonstration of the senselessness of violence or, by subjecting this "multi-racial girl" to such a cruel experience, a suggestion of the difficulties and hardship confronting an emerging multiracial, multicultural society? Perhaps these two elements are reflected in the title of the novel which implies a land of beauty and richness blended with potential violence and suffering.

One of the strengths of the novel lies in its skillful interpretation of the different perspectives of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian in a complex changing situation. In addition, the indulgent life of the two university lecturers from Britain and their colonial attitudes towards the local affairs are rendered with clarity and understanding. However, the depiction of the racial riot is thin and oblique, since no attempt has been made to portray the causes underlying the violence which is the major event in the novel.

An interesting literary device of the novel is the use of extracts taken from older texts on that region and placed at suitable points of the narrative for the purpose of contrast. This may irritate a reader eagerly after the story line as it disrupts the flow of the narrative. But to a patient reader, these excerpts greatly broaden the historical perspective and shed light on the racial tensions and the social issues of the novel.

In sum, *Scorpion Orchid* is a well-written novel. As his first work of fiction, the author, a professor of English at the University of Malaya, deserves our encouragement and admiration.

Swan P. Chong

SEEPERSAD NAIPAUL
The Adventures of Gurudeva and other Stories
London: Deutsch, 1976. Pp. 200.

The Adventures of Gurudeva is a collection of one novelette and nine short stories which represent the bequest of Seepersad Naipaul, father of the well-known Trinidad novelist, V. S. Naipaul, who provides the foreword for the book. These stories, written and in some cases rewritten over a period of ten years from 1943 to 1953, are the ones that the author wished to have published as the definitive legacy of his literary endeavors. It is indeed regrettable that it took the son twenty-three years to comply with his father's wish, but it was a worthwhile wait since one must concur with V. S. Naipaul who states that Gurudeva "is a unique record of the life of the Indian or Hindu community in Trinidad in the first fifty years of the century" (p. 19).

The main thrust of the book is what may be considered, on the author's part, to be a lament on the disintegration of the customs of the rural Indian community, transplanted from India to Trinidad. In "Gurudeva" one learns that fourteen is the ideal age for a boy to enter into the usual arranged marriage. In "The Engagement" however, which was written later, "Boys are seldom married at sixteen or seventeen nowadays. Times have changed. No doubt the youngster can safely go without a wife for another two or three years" (pp. 177-78). Further, the panchayat (community tribunal) in "Gurudeva" has more significance to Gurudeva, the principal character, who is afraid of an unfavorable decision, whereas in "Panchayat," again written later, the narrative voice asks who is concerned "about ostracism in these amazingly democratic times—especially in this polyglot island of many races and many creeds? Trinidad was not India" (p. 158). Twenty-three year old and single Daisy Seetoolal, "who spoke and read English, for she had attended Mr. Sohun's school" (p. 104), and who "used brassieres that jutted out her breasts" (p. 103), offers a sharp contrast to girls like Gurudeva's wife Ratni, Dookhani of "Dookhani and Mungal," or Leela of "The Wedding Came," who never went to school and whose father felt that after "her tenth year . . . everyday that passed leaving Leela unwed meant—apart from the