

## Singapore

Plato's modern Republic dream  
Safe sticky and clean  
I'm eating fried carrot cake  
Though the carrots must be in short supply  
Just across Bencoolen Street is my Hotel  
It's where the wealthy feast  
But I cross the road to eat  
And now sit entwined in dark and heat  
I've avoided Orchard Road this time  
That critical mass of Bourgeois consumption  
But still lured by the siren's call of 'best price'  
To the [Mustafa Centre](#) that is never closed

*In Singapore (rpt)*

Is it glamour or tacky, you take your pick  
It's in the eye of the beholder I guess  
A couple argue viciously underneath Tang's Christmas Store  
As the neon's announce a time to say 'thank you'  
Tang's also admonish us to 'love your neighbour as yourself'  
Here it only costs \$150  
To love your neighbour for an hour  
Or a discounted Chinese girl for \$130  
We all have something to sell

*In Singapore (rpt)*

The Lucky Plaza looms ominously above me  
Occupying the dominant street level space is McDonalds  
They're closed, so I guess it is the Lucky Plaza after all  
A gorgeous woman in a silk black dress stares at me with curious eyes  
Her lithe figure and long plastic limbs  
Create illusions of mystique in the shop front window  
I bet she cost more than \$150

*In Singapore (rpt)*

Singapore boasts low crime  
And it's a crime to oppose the Government  
A single party democracy  
It's the Asian way, said Lee Kuan Yew  
So who am I to quibble when all its citizens are well fed and housed  
And economic growth continues unabated

This once vice-ridden seaport of pirates, traders and prostitutes  
Has been tamed, impressively  
Ordered, structured, prosperous, predictable  
There's racial integration  
And everyone one has a cell phone  
But I just can't find the passion  
In this tropical nation

Simon Kerr © 20<sup>th</sup> December 2003 (Singapore)

*I like and admire Singapore, but I have mixed emotions about it. In 2004 I was teaching part of course that my New Zealand University was running there. The topic was an introduction to and comparison of the Singaporean and New Zealand Political Systems. Reading up on Singapore gave me time to reflect on the relationship between political control and artistic and creative freedom. The Singaporean Government wanted to reposition Singapore as a high value creative economy (in the entrepreneurial sense). To do that they will need to allow dissent and criticism, and loosen the strict control they exert over the population. To be creative requires a willingness to open up to chaos, to the unpredictable, to take risks, a lesson for all of us perhaps.*