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Reading Malay Femininity in Singaporean Speculative Fiction: Ecofeminist Agency and Transformation

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Abstract

In recent years, several Singaporean Malay women writers have written speculative fiction works in English which contain important representations that speak to their racial and gender identities as minority and subordinated Other in Singapore's contemporary society. By choosing the speculative genre to explore the socially sensitive issues faced by Malay women, including racism, sexism, and classism, the writers cleverly evade censorship apparatuses, or out-of-bounds (OB) markers, which have come to define Singapore's culture of caution. Reading two speculative texts by Singaporean Malay women writers, this paper employs an ecofeminist lens to examine how the representations of Malay femininity are used to explore female agency and transformation, which are related closely to nature and the environment as sources of feminist power. At the same time, this paper also considers how the representations of Malay femininity help interrogate and criticize anthropocentrism by revealing the systemic biases hidden within Singapore's materialist-capitalistic culture as well as local Malay patriarchy.

Keywords: Ecofeminism; Gender; Literature; Race; Singapore