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[NOTE: TAI KAYPOH'S NOVEL DOES NOT EXIST]

EN3263: Singapore Literature in Context

Project Proposal

21/2/2001

Prepared For: Philip Holden

Recycling History and Myth: Tai Kaypoh's *Heartware*

Dear Dr. Holden:

While reading *Heartware* for EN3263 I was interested to note that while the novel is set in modern Singapore, the author inserts passages drawn from both myth and history into it. For instance, on page 35-37, there is an account of the arrival in Singapore of Sang Nila Utama, while on page 133-137 there is an extended account of Raffles's dispute with Farquhar. Tai's including these passages seems strange to me because they contrast with the main plot of the ongoing relationship between the protagonist, Siti and her boyfriend Prem. Indeed, when I first read the novel I found them very irritating because I wanted to get on with the main plot and did not want to be distracted.

After reading the novel carefully, I think that the myths and the historical passages in some way reflect the actions of the modern characters in the novel. I also think that they may be related to some of the larger issues in the novel--for instance, the feeling of rootlessness that many of the characters express, although for now I'm not clear exactly how. Because Tai is a young writer, there is not much information on her, but I've located an interview in which she talks about learning history at school in the *Straits Times*, and an article on her use of metaphor by using PERIND. I also plan to read

more about the historical and mythical events themselves, to see how Tai changes them, and will therefore read the relevant parts of the *Sejarah Melayu* and a biography of Raffles

I would be grateful for help you could give me in two areas. First, how can I extend my search to see if there are any articles about or by Tai that I have missed, especially ones which deal with the way her novels are constructed? Second, do you know of any articles or books about the use of history or myth intercut into a modern novel in the way I describe?

Regards

Ibrahim

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