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Gauging *The Enemy in the Blanket* Through the Paradigm of Malayness

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Abstract

Anthony Burgess (1917 - 1993) has written a trilogy of novels on the Malay World, namely *The Malayan Trilogy* (1964). It has been suggested that the trilogy, which consists of the novels *Time for a Tiger* (1956), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) and *Beds in the East* (1959), depicts the Islamic practices through its Muslim Malay characters, displaying their hypocrisy and their wayward Islamic practices as stated by Zawiyah Yahya (2003). In contrast, the trilogy has rarely been studied based on elements of the paradigm of Malayness in literature, consisting of six elements, namely the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity, and identity. Therefore, we aim to analyse one of the novels in the trilogy, *The Enemy in the Blanket*, in light of Islam as one of the elements under the paradigm of Malayness in literature as stated by Ida as our primary conceptual framework in this study. To achieve these objectives, we employ a close textual reading on the novel by analysing the Muslim Malay characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket*. The findings show that the Muslim Malay characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket* could be considered as wayward Muslims in their practices and beliefs. Therefore, we would like to reconfirm that the paradigm of Malayness in fact, an everyday-defined social reality, as experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life as opposed to it as an authority-defined social reality, as defined by people of the dominant power structure. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the on-going discourse on Islam as the paradigm of Malayness as well as English literature on the Malay World.

Keywords: the enemy in the blanket, the paradigm of Malayness, Islam, English literature on the Malay World

Introduction

This paper will explore the importance of Islam as one of the elements among the six elements of the paradigm of Malayness in literature as suggested by Ida Baizura Bahar, in her doctoral thesis, *The Paradigm of Malayness in Literature* (2010). Ida has also suggested that the paradigm of Malayness in literature is an everyday-defined social reality, rather than as an authority-defined social reality as conceptualised by Professor Datuk Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharudin, or also known as Shamsul A. B., a distinguished Malaysian social anthropologist (2001). Also according to Ida (2010), there are six elements within the paradigm of Malayness in literature, namely the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity. These elements suggest that there are more than only the three pillars of Malayness as suggested by Shamsul A. B., which are *agama* (Muslim religion), *bahasa* (the Malay language) and *raja* (the aristocrat government of the sultans) (Shamsul, 2001).

Therefore, we employ a close textual reading of a novel by Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) to explore how Burgess portrays the Muslim Malay characters in the novel, *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) in terms of their Islamic practices and whether they are wayward in their practices. Thus, we will analyse in this study, Burgess' understanding and views on Malayan Islam before its Independence in August 1957, as represented by the Malay characters. Based on Ida's study, we apply the six elements which constitute the paradigm of Malayness and to determine that it is in fact an everyday-defined social reality rather than an authority-defined social reality as conceptualised by Shamsul.

According to Shamsul A. B. there are two types of social realities where the first is the authority-defined social reality, authoritatively defined by people of the dominant power structure and the second is everyday-defined social reality, experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life. To Shamsul, the social category of Malay falls in the authority-defined social reality and he has conceptualised three pillars of Malayness, which are language (Malay), religion (Islam) and monarchy (the Malay rulers) (Ida, 2010).

However, Ida (2010), in her comparative study on selected works in English and Malay literature on the Malay World, has found that the paradigm of Malayness requires an identification of the yardstick from which and where they measure and she found that the paradigm of Malayness is in fact an everyday-defined social reality consisting of six elements, namely the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity.

Ida (2010) focuses on exploring the paradigm of Malayness in selected English and Malay literary texts on the Malay and proposes in her study that the three pillars of Malayness as suggested by Shamsul (2001) which consist of *agama* (Muslim religion), *bahasa* (the Malay language) and *raja* (the aristocratic government of the sultans) are only a fraction of what constitutes Malayness (Shamsul, 2001). She proposes instead that the paradigm of Malayness in literature should also include the three pillars of *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity, also known as elements which constitute the paradigm of Malayness (Ida, 2010). Ida (2010) also found that the paradigm of Malayness in literature is not an authority-defined social reality, defined authoritatively by people of the dominant social power, but is in fact an everyday-defined social reality, experienced by the people in their everyday life.

The novel selected for this study, *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) is the second novel of the trilogy of novels by Anthony Burgess, *The Malayan Trilogy*, first published as a volume in 1964. *The Enemy in the Blanket* was published individually in 1958 and the story centres on the protagonist Victor Crabbe, and his infidelity to his wife Fenella, with the wife of his superior, Anne Talbot. The novel's underlying theme is the Malayanisation of Malaya, to free it from colonial rule. There are also evidence of Islam and the Muslim Malay community in Malaya in the novel. The Muslim Malay characters in the second novel include Haji Zainal Abidin, Abdul Kadir and 'Che Normah. We will utilise Ida's understanding of Islam as one of the six elements of the paradigm of Malayness in literature as the conceptual framework of our study to examine the Muslim Malay characters in the novel and the portrayal of their Islamic practices.

The Paradigm of Malayness in Literature

As we discussed earlier, in her unpublished doctoral thesis entitled *The Paradigm of Malayness in Literature*, Ida (2010) focuses on exploring the paradigm of Malayness in selected English and Malay literary texts on the Malay World by hypothesising six elements, namely the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity.

Ida (2010) examined the six pillars of the paradigm of Malayness, the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity in selected works of English literature on the Malay World and selected works in traditional and modern Malay literature. The works in English literature on the Malay World that were chosen to be analysed for the paradigm of Malayness are Joseph Conrad's trilogy of novels, which include *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) and *The Rescue* (1920), Somerset Maugham's *Malayan Short Stories* which include short stories, 'The

Force of Circumstance' (1924), 'The Outstation' (1924) and 'The Yellow Streak' (1925) and Anthony Burgess' *The Malayan Trilogy* (1964). On the other hand, traditional and modern Malay literature analysed in her thesis are *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, believed to have been written in 1700, Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi's *Hikayat Abdullah* (1849), Ishak Haji Muhammad's *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937) and *Anak Mat Lela Gila* (1941), Shahnnon Ahmad's *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (1966), Muhammad Haji Salleh's *Sajak-sajak Sejarah Melayu* (1981) and Usman Awang's *Melayu* (1963).

Ida (2010) has elucidated on various works of English literature, with focus on the Malay characters and their views, practices and beliefs of Islam to explain her views.

There is a focus on the five Tenets of Islam in the study and the first to be explicated is the fifth Tenet of Islam, to perform the *Haj* pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca (Ida, 2010, p.93). Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* is analysed to show the fifth Tenet of Islam being described. Following an extract in the work, Ida states:

The Holy City ... refers to the Muslim holy city of Mecca where the fifth Tenet of Islam is to perform the *Haj* pilgrimage. One of the stages of the pilgrimage includes touching the **Sacred Stone** believed to have been touched by the Prophet Muhammad himself, hence the phrase **struggled in a pious throng for the privilege of touching with his lips**. (Ida, 2010: 93-94).

Also according to Ida, the first evidence of Islam as one of the paradigm of Malayness in Burgess' *The Malayan Trilogy* is the call to prayers by the muezzin at the beginning of the first novel, *Time for a Tiger* (Ida, 2010). It can be seen through the vivid description of the muezzin's calls to prayers as quoted in Ida (2010):

Time for a Tiger opens with a chapter which contains an explicit reference to Islam in a scene depicting a call to prayers by the muezzin. This particular scene includes the first part of *Syhadah*, **La ilaha illa'lah** (There is no God only Allah), the first Tenet of Islam where one proclaims belief in the mono-deity of Allah as God. A mention of **a trip to Mecca** refers to the fifth Tenet of Islam, to perform the *Haj* pilgrimage in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. (Ida, 2010: 97-98)

Another example of the Muslim Malay community is in the description of the town Kenching ('urinate' in Malay) which is filled with Islamic images such as mosques and the muezzins' calls to prayers (Ida, 2010).

Another significant depiction of the Islamic beliefs and practices of the Muslim Malay characters in the trilogy is the description of the ancient belief of Hinduism and primitive magic as practised in villages and suburbs (Ida, 2010). In the trilogy, the villagers are portrayed seeking help from the *bomoh* or magician to cure pox and fever. These *bomohs* grew rich on the fees they charge the villagers who trusted them for being the messenger of God even to the extent of bringing in good fortune. According to Ida (2010), the villagers in the trilogy can be said to have committed *syirik* as they have worshipped another entity other than Allah.

These images of Burgess' portrayal of the Muslim Malay characters in *The Malayan Trilogy* will be analysed with focus on the second novel, *The Enemy in the Blanket* to examine the role of Islam as one of the elements under the paradigm of Malayness in literature.

Utilisations of the Paradigm of Malayness in Literature

In an article by Ida (2012), she explores the understandings of Islam based on the proposed paradigm in her study. She has found in her study that the depictions of Islamic practices in the novel through the Malay characters show their hypocrisy and the fact that the Malays in the novel are wayward Muslims.

Ida utilised two of the elements of the paradigm of Malayness in another study (2013) and found that '*Sajak-sajak Sejarah Melayu*' has challenged the paradigm of Malayness as an authority-defined social reality where it is not limited only to the Malay language, Islam and the Malay rulers as an authority-defined social reality (Ida, 20). Such results are caused by the growing roles of *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity.

Another example where the paradigm of Malayness has been utilised as a conceptual framework for the study of literature is a study on Malayan Muslims in Anthony Burgess' *Time for a Tiger* by Nurhanis Sahiddan, "Malayan Muslims as a Reflection of Malayness in Anthony Burgess' *Time for a Tiger*" (2013). The findings of the study show that the paradigm of Malayness in literature is not an authority-defined but an everyday-defined social reality. The study also shows and supports the view that the Malays depicted in the novel are wayward Muslims in their beliefs and practices as Malayan Muslims (Nurhanis, 2013).

Analysis of *The Enemy in the Blanket*

In the novel *The Enemy in the Blanket*, there is textual evidence of a character performing the *Haj*, the pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca according to the Islamic principles. *Haj* is the fifth Tenet of Islam, one of the obligations for Muslims to believe and perform during his or her lifetime. However, there are evidences of non-adherence to this tenet in Islam as well as misleading practices of the same tenet. In the novel, performing the *Haj* can be seen in a scene that when a non-Malay character Talbot, says he is the 'occasional pirate to *Haji*', that a Malay character called Haji Ali is not a respectable person before he became a man carrying a pious status and is never proven to be a true *Haji* (Burgess, 2000). This foreshadows how Haji Ali, an example of a Muslim Malay character is a wayward Muslim who has not followed a true Islamic way of living and neither has proven that he befits the pious stature of a *Haji* after his pilgrimage. Talbot then continues:

He reformed and determined that his last theft should enable him to make the pilgrimage. By God, he did it. He went to Mecca and came back with a turban. Then he became town magician and I gather he was pretty good. (Burgess, 2000: 226)

A Muslim Malay character in the novel who disobeys the Islamic ruling of drinking alcohol is Abdul Kadir (Burgess, 2000). This occurs when 'Che Normah binte Abdul Aziz is clearing up the party and Abdul Kadir swipes all the leftover alcohol clean. Not only does Abdul Kadir drink alcohol, he is known by his acquaintances to be a heavy drinker of alcohol. This can be seen in the following:

Abdul Kadir had tried to make things go, as he always did. He had emptied most of the bottled beer, a quart of stout, a flask of Beehive Brandy, half a bottle of Wincarnis and the remains of the whiskey into a kitchen pail. He had seasoned this foaming broth with red peppers and invited all to drink deep. (Burgess, 2000: 230).

Abdul Kadir's friends are also embarrassed of him (2000). In the novel, Abdul Kadir's acquaintances are aware of his drinking habits and his ability to drink more than a normal person. This scene is as follows:

His friends were, in a distracted way, ashamed of him, but the shame was of such long standing that it had transmuted itself into a kind of special affection. His penury was looked upon as a sort of holy idiocy, and he was granted such privileges as swigging a whole bottle of Benedictine at a sitting, being sick in the ash-trays, using vile English obscenities he had learned in the Navy. (Burgess, 2000: 230)

His friends had described him as a ‘holy idiocy’ to mean that he is a good example of a Muslim who does many prohibited things in Islam, which in turn, revealing his idiocy in his futile attempts to challenge his religion.

When Che Normah is cleaning her house after a party, she feels disgusted but never prohibits the consumption of alcohol at her party. She thinks that the white man could control their drinking, but the Malays could not, and drink heavily without control. This shows that the Muslim Malays who are never shy of expressing their love for liquor also behave worse than the white men who are used to the drinks. This view can be seen here:

Give a little alcohol, however, to men like Mat bin Hussein, Din, Ariffin, Haji Zainal Abidin, and you could always expect the worst. Here was the pretty Chinese table whose top had been greased smearly by the flat feet of Ariffin doing his little dance. There was the Persian carpet on which Din had allowed clumsily-opened beer to froth freely. (Burgess, 2000: 231)

As we can see, Haji Zainal Abidin in *The Enemy in the Blanket* can be seen admitting that he is of the Faith (Islam) but his action (drinking gin) proves otherwise.

The Muslim Malay characters who drink alcohol can again be seen in the novel. As Hardman, a non-Malay and non-Muslim character escapes being found by the eyes of Islam by drinking beer in the Field Force mess, he meets a drinking partner, Inche Mat bin Anjing, (in which *anjing* is a Malay word for dog) who also drinks beer and cheerfully does so. This scene can be seen below:

He had spent part of the afternoon in the Field Force mess, hidden from the sharp eyes of Islam, drinking gloomy beer. There he had met Inche Mat bin Anjing, also hiding from the sharp eyes of Islam, drinking beer not so gloomy. (Burgess, 2000: 355)

Abdul Kadir’s fondness for drinking alcohol and being a drunk is well-known among the non-Malay characters in the novel. This can be seen when Talbot and Crabbe discusses promoting Abdul Kadir as the Head of Haji Ali College. Talbot thought that the service might sober Abdul Kadir up (2000, p.362):

“Who’s going to be Head of Haji Ali College?” asked Crabbe.
“Oh, yes, one in the eye for old Jaganathan. They want a Malay, you see, and the one with most service is Abdul Kadir. I daresay Kadir will be alright. Perhaps this promotion will sober him up a bit. (Burgess, 2000: 362)

Again, Abdul Kadir’s drunkard behaviour can be seen when Crabbe asks him to translate his *pantun* (Malay form of poetry) and Kadir is clearly drunk from drinking beer. In addition to this, Kadir also swears and is warned by his friends for using foul language. This shows how Kadir is not a practicing Muslim and openly reveals his un-Islamic behaviour to his Malay and European friends:

“Translate it for me, Kadir. Translate it for all the world.”
“If you go up the river,” translated Kadir, the glaze of drink in his eyes, “pluck me, pluck me... For fuck’s sake, I’ve forgotten the word.”
“Frangipani.”
“Frangipani. But if you die first, wait for me...”
“At the door of heaven.”
“At the door of heaven. For fuck’s sake, man, what are you crying for? Have another fucking beer.”
“Your language, Kadir.” (Burgess, 2000: 372)

In the novel, during the party at the Istana to celebrate the sixty-third birthday of Yang Maha Mulia Sultan Idris ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Yassin, there were alcoholic drinks being drunk in hidden view.

Although the party serves only orange crush in plain sight, behind the scenes, alcoholic drinks were being drunk unofficially despite most of the attendants being Muslim Malays. This is also a demonstration of the un-Islamic ways of the Malay rulers. This can be seen in the following scene:

At the flood-lighted end of the Great Hall, under high gilt beams, the Sultan sat on his throne, Yang Maha Mulia Sultan Idris ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Yassin, smiling somewhat foolishly as though drugged for the occasion, the occasion of his sixty-third birthday. Smoke rose high – cigarettes and golden table-lighters brought round by un-deferential white-coated flunkys – but there was nothing to drink except orange crush – officially. In the lavatory, behind the scenes, pillars, out among the bushes, flasks and bottles flashed amid giggles and guffaws, and improvident newcomers to the State grew sour in sight of the hilarity of the long-seasoned. (Burgess, 2000: 268)

These excerpts and analyses from the novel indeed support Ida's view on the drinking of alcohol among the Muslim Malay characters. According to Ida, in Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* the alcoholic drinks are described as strong water in the text (Ida, 2010). This shows the presence of the non-adherence to the Islamic teachings of avoiding alcoholic drinks and intoxicants in some English literary works on the Malay World.

Other prohibited acts in Islam committed by the Muslim Malay characters during a party other than drinking are engaging in same sex flirtation and overjoying in entertainment. This can be seen in the following:

Here was the pretty Chinese table whose top had been greased smearily by the flat feet of Ariffin doing his little dance. There was the Persian carpet on which Din had allowed clumsily-opened beer to froth freely. Bits of broken glass lay about, ready to ambush bare feet. Even 'Che Isa, the normally lady-like colleague of the accursed Abdul Kadir, had behaved sillily, making up to married men. (Burgess, 2000: 231)

There is a description about Che Normah where she is portrayed as a Muslim Malay character but has not practised a completely Islamic lifestyle. This can be seen as follows:

'Che Normah was a good Malay and a good Muslim. That is to say, her family was Achinese and came from Northern Sumatra and she herself liked to wear European dress occasionally, to drink stout and pink gin and to express ignorance about the content of the Koran. (Burgess, 2000: 232)

Also in the novel, there is a completely different phenomenon in the suburbs. The *bomoh* or magicians are sought after to cure pox and fever, to bless weddings and they grew rich of the fee provided by fishermen who asked for prayers of a good catch for their fishing. The *bomoh* has conducted various prayers which seemed dubious in order to grant the Malays of their wishes. This can be seen as follows:

But ancient Hinduism and primitive magic prevailed in villages and suburbs. The *bomoh*, or magician, cured pox and fever, presided at weddings and grew rich on the fees of fishermen who begged prayers for a good catch. Gods of the sea and gods of the rice-grain were invoked, threatened, rewarded. (Burgess, 2000: 195)

A non-Malay character, Talbot, has also described the wayward beliefs of the Muslim Malays in *The Enemy in the Blanket* where they believe in Hindu gods. As seen in the following:

"Anyway, when he died there was a universal mourning. Drums going all night, black kids sacrificed to obscure Hindu gods. Then they started building this school.

At first the idea was to call it after the Abang, but Haji Ali's ghost appeared to the workmen and things began to go wrong..." (Burgess, 2000: 226)

Here, the wayward beliefs of the Muslim Malay characters in the novel can be seen in their belief that ghosts can affect one's luck and fate and that sacrifice has to be made to ancient gods, despite being Muslims in faith.

These extracts therefore show very significant practices and beliefs of the Muslim Malay characters which they are forbidden to do and believe, namely in the belief in animism and the practices which may represent such belief. This view is also present in Ida's study where the villagers worship other entities apart from Allah or has also ascribed partners to Allah as sharers of His Divinity and these are considered as *haram* or prohibited practices in Islam (Ida, 2010). These Muslim Malay characters could also be considered to have committed *syirik*, a grave sin where they have worshipped a deity other than Allah and, in Islam, these idol-worshippers are sinful because they have practised animism (Ida, 2010).

The evidences show how the Five Tenets of Islam is constantly broken by the Muslim Malay characters in the novel. This is when the Muslim Malay characters in the novel display negative traits in their actions and practices that in turn, produces negative impressions towards the Muslim Malay characters by the non-Muslim and non-Malay characters in the novel. In her study, Ida has explicated how the actions of some Muslim Malay characters who attract negative impression by others towards them; therefore, it is assumed by non-Muslim and non-Malays that Muslim Malays are not true believers of Islam and are hypocrites, merely using Islam as a source of power (Ida, 2010). It could be said that the hypocrisy of the Islamic ruling as can be seen in the novel, does not lie with the Islamic law itself but with its implementation by its own followers (Ida, 2010).

Conclusion

It could be concluded from our analysis that there are various portrayals of the Islamic practices of the Muslim Malay characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket*. However, our analysis found that the Islamic practices of these characters are vivid and numerous on the wayward Islamic practices and these characters do not adhere to the Islamic principles. These practices include drinking alcohol and believing in animism. We have also found in our analysis that the major Malay characters have been portrayed as practicing wayward Islamic beliefs and committing wayward Islamic practices. Such characters include Abdul Kadir, Haji Zainal Abidin, 'Inche Mat bin Anjing and Che Normah. These characters are portrayed as Crabbe's close acquaintances and have been vividly described to practise the mentioned wayward Islamic practices.

Burgess' portrayal of the Muslim Malay characters in the novel without doubt, are wayward Muslims, thus, showing that the practice of Islam has been depicted within the sociological perspective of the Malays in the novel as an everyday-defined social reality, and not shaped by colonial knowledge. The Malay characters portrayed by Burgess therefore, perceive themselves as Malays and this fact is known clearly to other Malay and non-Malay characters in the novel.

Both the conceptual framework of the paradigm of Malayness in literature explicated by Ida and from the novel, *The Enemy in the Blanket* are compatible in the study. The novel reflects the main ideas highlighted in the conceptual framework under the element of Islam as one of the six elements of the paradigm of Malayness in literature. The combination of the novel and the conceptual framework also led to the findings regarding the portrayal of the Islamic practices of the Muslim Malay characters in the novel. Also, our study has found that the Muslim Malay characters in the novel are wayward Muslims in their practices and that the paradigm of Malayness is found to have been shaped by everyday-defined social reality.

We would like to suggest that research on the paradigm of Malayness in literature is studied further to cover various genres of literature on the Malay World, such as short stories and poems. In addition, we

hope that our study would provide a basis for some studies on not only on English literature on the Malay World and Malayness, but also to the study on non-Muslim perspective towards Islam in literature.

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