

Sexual Identities Of The Malay Male In Karim Raslan's *Go East* And *Neighbours*

Collin Jerome
jcollin@cls.unimas.my
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Abstract

This paper explores the construction of sexual identities of fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short stories *Go East* and *Neighbours*. It begins with a discussion on the complexity and fluidity of male sexuality and how it is mediated through the absence and presence of homosexuality, men's articulation of sexuality in the public and private realms and men's fear and insecurity in developing intimate relationship with each other. The paper then presents a brief overview of the depictions of male sexuality in Malaysian literature in English, which is followed by discussions on the absence and presence of homosexuality in *Go East* and the transgression of male sexuality in *Neighbours*. The paper concludes that fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives not only transgress the concept of male sexuality but also the socio-cultural and religious norms and boundaries, offering alternative insights into mainstream ideas about sexuality and sexual identity in the contemporary Malaysian society.

Keywords: male sexuality, homosexuality, gay male sexuality, transgenderism

Introduction

This paper explores the construction of sexual identities of Malay men in Karim Raslan's short stories *Go East* and *Neighbours*. It examines fictional Malay male sexual identities in relation to the complex and fluid concept of male sexuality and sexual identity. The depiction of male sexual identities in the short narratives will be closely examined in terms of the absence and presence of male homosexuality, how male characters articulate their sexuality in the public and private realms, the fear and insecurity when they intimately relate with each other.

The changing sexual behaviours of men and women in contemporary times have been documented in literary works by Malaysian writers in English. However, discussions on male sexualities in these works are relatively inadequate compared to those that focus on fictional representation of female identity and sexuality.¹ Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the sexual identities of fictional Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives with an aim to provide alternative insights into the mainstream views about male sexuality and sexual identity in the contemporary Malay(sian) society.

¹ See Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf and M.A. Quayum (2001), for an insightful analysis of Malaysian women's writings in English

Male sexualities

Male sexuality is arguably a complex biological and social construct. It involves varied sexual behaviour, sexual object choice and desire, sexual orientation and preference depending on individual males (Beasley, 2005; Ellis and Mitchell, 2000). Men experience and identify with their sexualities through the intersections with class, age, ethnicities, peers and personalities as well as social and cultural beliefs (Ellis and Mitchell, 2000; Plummer, 2005).

Malay male (and female) sexuality, on the other hand, is mediated through the instigation of traditional socio-cultural and religious values. This is informed by what Shamsul and Fauzi discern (2006) as the “right” and “wrong”, “the external control” and “internal form of moral-self-control” (p.140) that seem to embody relations between men and women (and presumably gender roles and sexuality). More specifically, there are acceptable and appropriate behaviours and codes of conducts for both men and women and it is important for them to avoid deviant ones.

But the changing sexual behaviour among local men and women in recent years offers new understanding to the mainstream views about sexuality and sexual identity. For instance, the social problems such as child abuse, incest, and *Bohsia* that were mostly coerced by Malay youths during the 1990s did not only reflect their failure to apply the teachings of Islam in their daily lives (Hooker, 2004) but also their incapacity to hold on to traditional values relating to social and sexual relations. It is through moral values as the former premier, Tun Mahathir once discerned that the Malays could become “good citizens” and that traditional Malay customs (*adat Melayu*) and religion were vital to the formation of Malay identity (Hooker, 2004).

Yet sexuality in Malay (and more generally Malaysian) society still remains a taboo. This explains why current discussions on the formation of Malay identity and the concept of Malayness in Malaysia often make direct references to political history, race, ethnicity and nationality (Vickers, 2004), which further inform concepts of nation, ruler and religion (*Bangsa, Raja dan Negara*) (Shamsul, 2004). But Malays’ changing views about sexuality may provide further insights into the construction of a “complex and ambiguous ‘Malay’ identity” (Vickers, 2004, p. 26). Furthermore, the documentation of these changing views particularly in local literary texts may offer alternative views on the ways in which Malay men (and women) define their identities in relation to sexuality.

Human sexuality is “socially variable, contingent, and ambiguous” (Edwards, 2004, p. 52). More specifically, heterosexual male sexuality is not only mediated through the absence but also presence of homosexuality. This is contrary to the views on Western hegemonic masculinity where anything unmanly and feminine are staved off and homosexuality should be absent in men’s articulation of their (hetero)sexuality. This explains why homosexuality is seen as a threat to heterosexual Malay (and non-Malay) male identity. Homosexual conducts and lifestyles are generally perceived as a form of social deviance and there are consequences when values, norms and boundaries relating to Malay male (hetero)sexuality are violated, a reminder of Anwar Ibrahim’s

incarceration due to sexual misconduct and sodomy (Hooker, 2004). However, this is in contrast to the younger generation's sexual desires and identification, particularly in the age of information technology. Today, many young and urban Malay (and non-Malay) men use various mediums to express their diverse sexual choice and desire in cyberspace and thus the creation of cybersexualities via chat rooms, online profiles, dating services and blogs.

But Malay male characters in Karim Raslan's short narratives maintain their (hetero)sexuality but tolerate and/or resist with homosexuality and homoeroticism. It can be said that homosexuality helps maintain and regulate the men's sexuality where male power and pleasure that operate in heterosexual intimate relationship can also be found in sexually intimate relationships between men. This explains how gay male sexuality could be "the key to heterosexual male sexuality...routes that most men would take if they were not shaped by relations with women" (Plummer, 2005, p. 186).

The formation of male sexualities and sexual identities are also subject to men's divided lives in the public and private realms (Seidler, 1992). In other words, men can still maintain their masculine persona in the public and yet identify their homosexual selves in the private. This is especially evident in the divided lives of Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives, that is, between the need to maintain their masculine identity in the public and conceal their true selves in secrecy due to the fear for homophobia and social stigma. This in turn contributes to their anxiety in developing intimacy with other men and the insecurity in articulating their sexuality and sexual identity. But their divided lives between maintaining a public persona and concealing the real self shows how socially endorsed male roles and bodily desires are negotiated (and even transgressed). This not only informs the contestation and violation of rigid and repressed views on male heterosexuality (Plummer, 2005) but also supports the idea that there are diverse sexualities among men (and women) (Gagnon quoted in Ellis and Mitchell, 2000).

The Depictions of Male Sexuality in Malaysian Literature in English

It is clear that male sexuality is mediated through the interplay of the public and private, fear and insecurity, as well as the absence and presence of homosexuality and these are evident in how Malay men in Karim Raslan's selected narratives articulate their sexual identities. It is, however, important to present a brief overview of the depictions of male sexuality in Malaysian literature in English.

Malaysian literature in English documents the changing sexual behaviours in the contemporary Malaysian society (Quayum, 1998). Issues discussed are not only confined to westernisation, modernisation and nation-building but also sexual related themes through a rather shocking and disturbing manner (McRae, 1994).

Local literary works in English also document the changing identities of fictional male subjects: from postcolonial male subjects² who try to make sense of their own place and space as they search for a local and national identity to men who navigate through socio-cultural and political trajectories in search for an identity or identities that transcend the common definition of a Malaysian identity. More generally, the identities of fictional male characters are constructed based on diverse male experiences that are informed by socio-political and historical contexts and how they are placed in diverse physical and emotional landscapes that are further elaborated by multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious backgrounds. However, these identities are somewhat homogenised where the men sustain socially endorsed images in the public, for instance, through their traditionally assigned heterosexual male roles.³

But none of these men have been depicted in sexually dissent identities (e.g. gay, transsexuals). This may explain why writers *distance* themselves from exploring the various forms of male sexuality. Since sexuality remains a taboo, the complex and ambiguous nature of male sexuality is rarely portrayed but often associated with heterosexual sexual conducts and violence against women. However, literary works that were published during the 1990s *broke the taboo* by documenting sexually dissent identities through fictional representation of male prostitutes, gay men and couples, and male-to-female transsexuals.⁴

The representations of gay Malay men in Karim Raslan's short narratives question the traditional views on male sexuality in contemporary Malay Muslim society. He is one of the younger generation of writers in English that "probes into the secrets and quirky silences of the pillars of society" through his "fictional manifestations of old and new maladies that plague contemporary Malaysia and the new Malaysia" (Fadillah et. al, 2004, p. 214). There are also published works that explore the formation of male (and female) sexuality (see Abdul Aziz, 2002; Dina Zaman, 1997; Jerome Kugan, 2001). The fictional male (and female) characters in these recent works transgress traditional values, norms and boundaries in relation to social and sexual relations between men and women, which offer further insights into the changing views about the mainstream sexuality and sexual identity. The following sections will discuss the absence and presence of homosexuality in *Go East* and the transgression of male sexuality in *Neighbours*.

The Absence and Presence of Homosexuality in *Go East*

Heterosexual male sexuality in Karim Raslan's *Go East* operates within the absence and presence of homosexuality. The story tells a young planter's journey to self-discovery where he identifies his (hetero)sexuality by negotiating and resisting the homosexual and homoerotic. Mahmud's intimate relationships with women (e.g. Frida, his fiancée; Suriya, his Javanese maid; Tia; a girl prostitut) helped sustain his heterosexual identity.

² See *Twenty two Malaysian Short Stories* by Lloyd Fernando (1968).

³ See Zawiah (1994), for her analysis on Malay characters in Malaysian novels in English.

⁴ See the works of Abdul Aziz (2003), Dina Zaman (1997), Jerome Kugan (2001), and Karim Raslan (1996).

But he further questioned this due to his anxiety over vaginal intercourse and thus his impotence.

Suriya seemed to understand without me having to explain anything. She wasn't upset. She held me and patted me as I cried. I think she thought I was miserable. But I wasn't. I was angry, angry with myself for my uselessness and my inability to give her good and proper; to have her moaning on the floor like Abdul and Jimmy would've done to her (p.108).

Through self-loath and constant comparison to more sexually-abled men at the plantation estate, Karim Raslan presents Mahmud's sexual identity that is readily defined by fear and insecurity: fear for sexual rejection by the opposite sex, fear for disintegrating masculinity and (hetero)sexuality, and thus the insecurity to develop sexual intimacy with women; "I was afraid that she'd (Suriya) tell the workers, that they'd laugh and make fun of me" (p.109).

Mahmud's sexual identity also operates within the presence of homosexuality. Karim Raslan makes this clear through Mahmud's relationship with Anton, his young Filipino male servant. Bound up in employer-employee and master-servant relationships, Mahmud developed an intimate relationship with Anton but concealed his homoerotic desires for fear of public exposure and homophobia; the homophobia of self and others. He was obviously drawn to Anton's lean and toned physique, virile youth and servile obedience but had to conceal these desires in order to maintain heterosexuality, at least in the public realm: the plantation estate, his residence, his female servants and work colleagues. He further sustained his heterosexuality by having a sexual intercourse with Tia, a girl prostitute. But it was Anton all along.

Closing my eyes and lying back on my bed, I imagined the hands were not hers but Anton's. It was all Anton; his smell, his body and his cries. I dreamt so hard that even when she started moaning and pushed her tiny breasts into my face, the charade continued in my mind (p.118).

In this monologue, Karim Raslan uses Mahmud's heterosexual act as a visible mechanism that externalises the internal homoerotic desires. Mahmud imagined having an intercourse with Anton but subverted the homoerotic through his sexual triumph over Tia that he hoped would consolidate his heterosexuality: "All it was, was the right woman; it was so simple, so clear" (p.118). The complexity of Mahmud's sexual identity seems to support Sedgwick's (1985) view on the unbroken continuum between heterosexuality and homosexuality. In other words, Mahmud manoeuvred between the heterosexual and homosexual where he tolerated but resisted the latter. He seems to fit Sedgwick's (1985) description of the heterosexual male with a closet of imagining a homosexual secret in terms of his concealed homoerotic desires for Anton. However, his desires were no longer 'secret' to Anton and the rest of the planters at the plantation estate; a case in point that is worthy of discussion.

Unlike the kind of fear and insecurity that shaped his sexuality through relationships with women, his fear for public exposure was marked by the homophobia of self and others, and social stigmas if he were to develop sexual intimacy with Anton. This was evident in his decision to establish “ a formal relationship” with “ a barrier [in] between” as a reminder that Anton was only “a servant and a Filipino, and nothing more” (p.111). Ultimately, he was anxious about the planters’ discovery of his preference for Anton.

In retrospect, I don’t know what came over me but because of Anton, I forgot about the rest of the workers. They had noticed the preference I showed to Anton: nothing was private on an estate. They treated him differently, laughing and teasing him (p.113).

Karim Raslan seems to be suggesting that Mahmud had to stave off homosexual impulses in order to maintain and regulate his heterosexuality, and to sustain the heterosexual persona in the public. It can be assumed that his impotence, fear and insecurity while relating with women made him turn to men to compensate his failure, to make sure that he could sexually deliver. Although his desires for Anton could be read as the workings of curiosity, his sensual description of Anton’s lean physique and his longings for the young man’s company may hint at homoeroticism. But he could ultimately disregard himself as a homosexual person despite having those desires, which may explain the distinction between his sexual act and sexual identity. On the other hand, Mahmud may have observed Anton as another conquest that shows that (most) men would do anything to explore sexual possibilities (Seidler, 1992) and thus the pressure to (sexually) perform. Ultimately, Mahmud enjoyed Anton’s company. But when he stumbled upon the graffiti on the wall, he realized that it spelt out the homophobia of others, and eventually roused his own.

‘Tuan *sundal* Anton (‘Tuan is Anton’s bitch’). I was so shocked by the words that I scrubbed them off myself, spitting on the chalks as I tried to erase the letters. But the word ‘*sundal*’ remained, faint and readable despite my effort (pp. 113-114).

Karim Raslan presents the graffiti as a metonymy for the homophobia of others that intensified Mahmud’s fear for his closeted homosexual desire and which in turn crystallised his own homophobia. This mirrors what Chesler (1978) found out about men and homosexuality.

A lot of men are so afraid of homosexuality that we do tremendous things to stave that possibility off.’ Therefore, ‘it is understandable that most men shy away from vulnerable and open-ended intimacy with each other (p.210)” and that it is important for men to “deny their unrequited love for, and their fear of, other men (p.240).

Setting a barrier from Anton and resuming to what he used to do with the rest of the planters (e.g. drinking and fooling around with the prostitutes) clearly indicated Mahmud’s anxiety to risk disintegrating his heterosexuality. And since sexuality for men

is a means to work out various needs and desires (Seidler, 1992), Mahmud defined his heterosexual identity mainly through sexual intimacy with women but denied possibilities for an emotional and sexual intimacy with men.

Transgressing Male Sexuality in *Neighbours*

Traditional values in relation to male heterosexuality are visibly transgressed in *Neighbours*. The sexual identities of the male characters are shaped by the absence of homosexuality in the public and the strong presence of homosexual and homoerotic in the private realm. Through the lens of Sarina, a heterosexual female narrator, Karim Raslan portrays the changing sexual behaviour in contemporary Malay Muslim society through the 'divided' lives of Mr and Mrs Kassim.

Sarina (eventually) found out that Kassim was a gay man (although Karim Raslan does not specifically indicate his sexual orientation but his sexual object choice and desire suggest his homosexual preference) and a husband to his male-to-female transsexual 'wife' or *mak nyah*⁵ (although Sarina calls her *pondan*, her breasts and penis readily define his transsexual identity). There is however a problem (and another case in point worthy of investigation) in addressing Kassim as a gay man. This informs the idea of a distinction between sexual acts and sexual identities where "men who have sex with men do not have to regard themselves as 'gay'" (Edwards, 2004, p. 52).

Unlike Mahmud's closeted homoerotic desires for Anton, Kassim sustained his heterosexual persona in the public but identified his homosexual self in the privacy of his bedroom. And unlike Mahmud's resistance towards and subversion of the homosexual and homoerotic, Kassim concealed his homosexuality by sustaining the image of a young and educated Malay man in the public. While Mahmud's sexual identity operated in the absence and presence of homosexuality but eventually renounced homosexuality and repudiated the homoerotic by sacking Anton, Kassim's sexual identity was constructed based on heterosexuality and homosexuality. The former was maintained and regulated while the latter was concealed in the public (no longer public as Sarina witnessed his sexual bestiality and abnormality).

Furthermore, Malay men in this story not only exhibit a complex and fluid male sexuality but also a rather nonchalant or blasé attitude in terms of articulating their sexuality, revealing a transgression of traditional views endorsed by the Malay Muslim society. Kassim's sexuality was lived under the guise of the dominant heterosexual male identity. Kassim appropriated and sustained the image of the educated, middle class Malay male. Prior to her discovery, Sarina was excited to see Mahmud for the first time.

He was almost six feet tall. Somehow she had known he'd be tall. He was ramrod straight, smooth shaven, golf-tanned and smiling. Such a smile; she

⁵ See Teh (2007), for an insightful analysis of male-to-female transexuals (*Mak Nyah*) in Malaysia.

was disarmed. He couldn't have been more than thirty-five years old and was well-dressed...her new neighbour was so good looking (p.120).

But the manly appearance, behaviour and mannerism acted as a visible mechanism that concealed Kassim's gay male sexuality. Furthermore, his *marriage* to Mrs Kassim violated the norms for having a transsexual instead of a heterosexual woman as a wife. Teh (2007) found out that "Muslim *mak nyahs* are considered to violate the tenets of Islam, and consequently are non-entities in Malaysian Muslim society. They can be charged in the Syariah Court for violating the tenets of Islam" (p.103).

But Kassim spoke about religion to Sarina's husband and expressed his liberal views with regard his religious faith and how he translated it into his daily life.

Datuk, these people, they say that it's our duty to intervene and direct those who are transgressing the Koran. Well, I think that's wrong. Islam brings all men together under the guidance of Allah. We are beholden to Him to live closely as we can within the dictates of the Koran. That doesn't mean that we should force the unwilling (p.122).

Karim Raslan presents the complicated nature of male sexual identity through Kassim's liberal views on religion, which explains his blasé mentioning of his transsexual wife to Sarina and suggested the 'unthinkable' where the two *ladies* could meet up, and possibly get acquainted like any wives would or should. This can be read as the paradox of the homosexual closet: concealing the homosexual, and yet disclosing it. Perhaps there was not a need for a closet after all, at least for Kassim, which may explain his act of breaking free from negative consequences in coming out.

(*Sarina*) "Encik Kassim, I do hope that your wife will do me the pleasure of calling on me when the family has settled in. Please don't be afraid to ask for any help. I understand how very tiring it is to be moving house."

(*Kassim*) "I will tell her," he replied warmly and then added, "actually my mother says she is related to you, Datin; her mother is Datin's cousin (p.124).

The transgression of male sexuality is evident as Sarina indulged in voyeurism: she "pledged...not to look at the bedroom window of her neighbour's house" but "felt defeated by the surrounding circumstances" (pp.126-127). It is through this that Karim Raslan reveals the sexual act between Kassim and his wife in privacy, exposing their *true* selves.

The woman (*Mrs Kassim*) or at least what she thought was a woman, had a penis of her own, a penis that was also erect. It was a *pondan*. She mouthed the word silently, a *pondan*.

While Sarina was in utter shock as a result of her discovery and self-realization, the male couple subverted the Western gay subculture that is characterised by top/bottom, active/passive and master/servant role-playing: the manly Kassim submitted himself to his dominant male-to-female transsexual partner and thus subverted common views about emotional and sexual intimacy between men as well as ‘popular’ views about gay male sexuality and transgenderism.

The woman positioned herself behind Encik Kassim...her handsome Encik Kassim.

She pulled herself out suddenly and slapped Encik Kassim hard across the buttocks as if he were a fat kerbau and sneered. And as she did, Sarina saw that he, her despicable Encik Kassim, moaned like a woman (pp.130-131).

Karim Raslan presents the complexity and fluidity of gay male and transgendered male sexuality by placing Kassim in a submissive role. On the other hand, Mrs Kassim did not renounce male heterosexuality like what most male-to-female transsexuals would do where she took on the masculine roles: the dominant, top, and penetrator. This is in contrast to Teh’s (2007) findings on Muslim *Mak Nyahs* in contemporary Malaysia as they are “clearly feminine in orientation”, “hate their penis” and “do not derive erotic pleasure” from their male genitalia⁶ (p.104-105). This further echoes Pat Califia’s (1994) views on the complexity and fluidity of transgendered individuals.

Why do transsexuals have to become ‘real women’ or ‘real men’ instead of just being transsexual?...Aren’t there some advantages to being a man with vagina or a woman with a penis? ...And why can’t people go back and forth if they want to? (quoted in Beasley, 2005, p. 155)

By ‘going back and forth’ (e.g. from being a top to bottom), Kassim could also become the insertive and receptive. Mrs Kassim, on the other hand, could easily maintain her masculinity and femininity despite taking on the dominant role. Ultimately, their sexualities are far from being simply defined or understood, which further implies the distinction between their sexual acts and sexual identities.

Conclusion

It is clear that Malay male sexual identity in Karim Raslan’s narratives is not only subject to the interplay of individual experiences, sexual object choice and desire, sexual orientation and preference, but also the interplay of socio-cultural and religious norms relating to male sexuality and sexual identity. It is also clear that Karim Raslan offers alternative views and ideas on the formation of the modern Malay male sexual identity in terms of how the Malay male characters transgress traditional values.

⁶ See Ekins and King (2005), and Sinnot (2004), for in-depth discussions on transsexualism

The fluidity of male sexuality and sexual identity is evident as the Malay male characters manoeuvre between the absence and presence of homosexuality. On one hand, they maintain and sustain the heterosexual male images in the public and on another negotiate and/or resist the homosexual and homoerotic due to their deep fear for public exposure and insecurity in developing emotionally and sexually intimate relationship with other men. This is evident in the case of Mahmud's construction of his sexual identity whose heterosexual male identity is partly constructed based on his closeted homoerotic desires for Anton.

And while male sexuality is often contested, negotiated and violated, the sexual identity of Malay men in the case of Kassim and Mrs Kassim offers further insights in terms of how the stereotypes of gay male and transgendered male sexuality are further contested through the inversion of the Western gay subculture: the dominant/submissive, top/bottom, and insertive/receptive. Interestingly, the formation of the Malay male sexuality in Karim Raslan's short narratives rethink the boundaries and norms of society, culture and the teachings of Islam where the men's liberal outlook challenges the mainstream sexuality in the Malay(sian) society.

References

- Abdul Aziz. (2003). From the journals of Azlan Mohammad. In Dina Zaman and Mohammad A. Quayum (Ed.), *Silverfish new writings 3* (pp. 115-123). Kuala Lumpur: Silverfishbooks.
- Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender and sexuality: Critical theories, critical thinkers*. London: Sage.
- Chesler, P. (1978). *About men*. London: The Women's Press.
- Dina Zaman. (1997). *Night & day*. Petaling Jaya, Selangor: Rhino Press
- Edwards, T. (2004). Queering the pitch: Gay masculinities. In M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn, & R. W. Connell (Eds.), *Handbook of studies in men and masculinities* (pp. 51-68) London: Sage.
- Ekins, R. & King, D. (2004). Transgendering, men, and masculinities. In M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn & R. W. Connell (Eds.), *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities* (pp. 379-394). London: Sage.
- Ellis, A. L. & Robert. W. Mitchell. (2000). Sexual orientation. In L.T. Szuchman & F. Muscarella (Eds.), *Psychological perspective on human sexuality* (pp. 196-231). USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Fadillah Merican, Ruzy S. Hashim, Ganakumaran Subramaniam & Raihanah M. Mydin. (2004). *Voices of many worlds: Malaysian literature in English*. Selangor: Times Edition.
- Fernando, L. (1968). *Twenty two Malaysian short stories* (ed.). Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann.
- Hooker, V. M. (2004). Reconfiguring Malay and Islam in contemporary Malaysia. In T. P. Barnard (ed.), *Malay identity across boundaries* (pp. 149-167). Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Jerome, K. (2001). Love in the Post-Nicotine Age. In A. Muhammad (ed.), *Silverfish new writing 1* (pp. 23-31). Kuala Lumpur: Silverfishbooks.
- Karim Raslan. (1996). *Heroes and other stories*. Singapore: Times Private Limited.
- McRae, J. (1994). An introduction. In C. Y. Loh & I. K. Ong (Eds.), *Skoob pacifica anthology No. 2: The pen is mightier than the sword* (pp. 26-32). London: Skoob Books Publishing.
- Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf. (2001). Sexuality in post-independence anglophone writing by three Malaysian Muslim women writers. In M. A. Quayum & P. C. Wicks, (Eds.), *Malaysian literature in English: A critical reader* (pp. 144-151). Petaling Jaya, Selangor: Pearson Education.
- Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf & Mohammad A. Quayum. (2001). *Colonial to Global: Malaysian Women's Writing in English 1940s-1990s*. Malaysia: International Islamic University Press.
- Plummer, K. (2004). Male Sexualities. In M.S. Kimmel, J. Hearn & R.W. Connell (Eds.), *Handbook of studies in men and masculinities* (pp. 178-195). London: Sage.
- Quayum, M.A. (1998). *In blue silk girdle: Stories from Malaysia and Singapore*. Serdang: UPM Press.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1985). *Between men: English literature and male homosexual desire*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Seidler, V. J. (1992). *Men, sex and relationships: Writings from Achilles heel* (ed.). London and New York: Routledge.
- Shamsul A. B. (2004). A history of an identity, an Identity of a history: The idea and practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia reconsidered. In T.P. Barnard (ed.), *Malay identity across boundaries* (pp. 135-148). Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Shamsul A. B. & Fauzi, M. *Making sense of Malay sexuality*. SARI, 24, 140-160.

Sinnot, M.J. (2004). *Toms and Dees: Transgender identity and female same-sex relationship in Thailand*. USA: University of Hawai'i Press.

Teh, Y.K. (2007). Male to female transexuals (*Mak Nyah*) in Malaysia. In K. L Puah (ed.), *Malaysia public policy and marginalised group* (pp. 101-114). Kajang, Selangor: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia.

Vickers, A. (2004). Malay identity: Modernity, invented tradition and forms of Knowledge. In T. P. Barnard (ed.), *Malay identity across boundaries* (pp. 25-55). Singapore: Singapore University Press

Zawiah Yahya. *Malay Characters in Malaysian Novels in English*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, 1994.

About the author

Collin Jerome is a lecturer at the Centre for Language Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. His research interests include gender and sexuality in language, literature and the media. He is currently involved in a funded research project called "Gender Bias in Classroom Talk: An Examination on Language Use and Its Effects on the Learning Environment" (DG/05(08)/637/2006(68)).