

Colonialism and Malay Masculinity: Malay Satire as Observed in the Novel *Kawin-Kawin*

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ABSTRAK

Makalah ini menilai Kawin-Kawin sebagai sebuah satira, dan suatu cara membentuk kritikan sosial terhadap masyarakat Melayu. Penilaian terhadap kesesuaian genre seperti ini harus mengambilkira sasaran dan juga kedudukan konteks budaya novel tersebut, iaitu ugama Islam. Perbincangan ini dibentuk dalam kerangka feminis pascakolonial untuk mengenalpasti dominasi budaya dengan lelaki diberi kelebihan dari segi kuasa dan kawalan perjanjian undang-undang seperti dalam kontrak mut'ah, manakala perempuan hanya menjadi objek keseronokan seksual lelaki. Pembacaan dominasi budaya ini merangkumi analisis aspek hegemoni maskuliniti dan kolonialisme dalam penulisan sastera Melayu yang boleh dianggap pascakolonial. Kedua-dua aspek ini mempunyai persamaan dari segi fungsi dan kesan ke atas kumpulan yang terpinggir. Ugama Islam dan wanita adalah dua kategori yang diliputi dalam perbincangan operasi kolonialisme dan maskuliniti Melayu. Perbincangan ini ditutup dengan isu yang berkait dengan penilaian semula aspek kesusasteraan dalam penulisan Melayu dan tentang perlunya penulis Melayu merenggangkan penulisan mereka daripada kerangka sastera Barat agar dapat keluar daripada pengaruh kolonialisme.

Kata kunci: Maskuliniti Melayu, Kolonialisme, Hegemoni, Satira, Seksualiti, Feminisme

ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the novel Kawin-Kawin as a satire, and as a mode for forming social criticism on Malay society. An assessment of such a genre must consider the target audience and the Islamic cultural context of the novel. The discussion seeks to identify male domination that through legal frameworks such as the mut'ah, and reduces women to objects of male sexual pleasure. The reading of cultural domination includes what may perhaps be considered a postcolonial analysis of notions of hegemonic masculinity, and of colonialism pertaining to Malay writings. Both notions share similarities in their functions and effects on marginalized groups and are debated under the categories of Islam and women. The discussion concludes with an evaluation of the literariness of Malay writings and the need for their detachment from Western

literary frameworks if they are to break away from lingering aspects of colonialism.

Key words: Malay Masculinity, Colonialism, Hegemony, Satire, Sexuality, Feminism

INTRODUCTION

Azizi Haji Abdullah's novel received different reactions in terms of its worth and quality from Malay literary readers when it won the *Hadiah Sako II* in 2001. The *Hadiah Sako II* is a prestigious national prize named after Ishak Haji Muhammad, better known by his pen name Pak Sako, the author of the novels *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937) and *Anak Mat Lela Gila* (1941), and awarded by *Utusan Publications and Distributions* to Malay writers. The Malay works selected for this award are mainly satires. The importance of satire as a genre to Pak Sako is in its "many valuable moral lessons," and [that it] intended to provide its readers with "a greater awareness of [one's] various obligations towards [one's] nation and its people" (Aveling 1993).

Seen from a Western perspective, a satire is "a literary work that seeks to criticize and correct the behaviour of human beings and their institutions by means of humour, wit and ridicule" (Barton & Hudson 2004: 199). The award was established to commemorate Pak Sako's literary spirit. Thus, the award itself may be read as recognition of the importance of satire as a genre in Malay literature that produces valuable social criticisms on Malay society.

In winning the *Hadiah Sako II*, Azizi's *Kawin-Kawin* became accepted as a serious social criticism of Malay society. The novel is said to be worthy of the award by Faisal Tehrani (2002) for its "wittiness" and for its cynicism in describing Malay politicians' power struggle and deception, buried in the central theme of the novel—the Islamic marriage contract (*mut'ah*)— which, according to Faisal, should be easily identified by Azizi's readers.

Faisal's appraisal of the novel is contested by Mohd Affandi Hassan with respect to the notion of wit. Mohd. Affandi argues that the author fails in his application of "wit" and that the failure is complicated by the vague delineation of the definition of humour, wit and comic/ridicule and by the contextual usage of these elements in Malay satire (2002: 2-3).

Mohd Affandi's exploration of the Western definition of wit sheds light on the Malay writers' use of the device. To Mohd Affandi, wit can be translated as "intellectual humour" that reveals a writer's literary skills in conceptualizing and inserting messages in their works. The term "humour" (*jenaka*) in Malay is a more general term, which subordinate words that reflect actions, and writing that indicates funniness through jokes and curses. Most of these are dependent on the regional dialect (Mohd Affandi 2003: 2-3) and the effect of such jokes and

courses is in the creation of a general sense of triviality. Interestingly, Mohd. Affandi's elaboration of the word "humour" to include the act of "cursing" highlights the importance of understanding Malay cultural contexts in the making of jokes.

In Malay society, cursing or mocking can be accepted within appropriate cultural contexts—as long as it does not become offensive. When culturally inappropriate, it can reflect impoliteness (Mohd. Affandi 2003: 2-3). Within these defining parameters of humour in relation to the cultural contexts given by Mohd Affandi, I read Azizi's novel as a text that possibly transgresses Malay civility. This transgression is made possible by the roguishness of Azizi's characters when they practise the Islamic marriage contract (*mut'ah*).

This paper uses a postcolonial feminist framework to analyse Azizi's construction of satire on sexuality. *Kawin-Kawin* asserts hegemonic Malay masculinity as part of the colonial discourse in subjugating women as sexual objects within the Islamic marriage contract. It tells the story of a community in which the practice of *mut'ah* is prevalent, and marriage is treated as a contract (that will end, or that can be broken after a period of time). The protagonist, Malang, is depicted as a man who is willing to do anything to achieve his aim. He is, at the beginning of the novel, obsessed with marrying Mas Umm, a much coveted prize within the community's practice of *mut'ah* due to her wealth and beauty, but later in the novel, he becomes obsessed with Siti Menurra, a pious woman whom he had earlier slandered, which had then led to the break-up of her marriage to Pak Qum, also Mas Umm's contract husband at that time. The novel ends with Malang's hypocrisy as a religious man being exposed and his credibility being lost. This leads to him losing his sanity as Siti Menurra, whom he had managed to convince to marry him (properly, not through *mut'ah*) with the help of her religious teacher Lebai Yazan, leaves him.

TOWARD CONSTRUCTING A MALAY SATIRE

Is there such thing as Malay satire? Azizi's work is dependent on his application of the Western conception of satire as a device formed by humour and wit. However, a satire can also be identified as "an attitude or stance" adopted by the author towards a subject. The following discussion of Malay satire relates to Robert Harris's analysis (<http://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm>). The exploration of Malay satire is situated between the strict Malay Islamic cultural contexts as mentioned in my introduction and the Western literary notion of satire. This section highlights the design of the novel *Kawin-Kawin* as a satire and the suitability of situating this form of writing in the Malay cultural context.

One of the major characteristics of satire lies in the ironic tone that marks the work and that reveals the hypocrisy of society. In taking on such a tone, the author usually applies hyperbole or irony. Azizi's ironic manifestations of Malay

politics and sexuality may be seen in his explicit description of intimate bodily functions and desires. His satire as indicated in my introduction is formed through his comical rendition of the sexual behaviours, desires and bodies of the characters. Mohd Affandi asserts that such yarns (presumably funny) are not suitable in delivering the seriousness of Malay politics. As such, readers are only exposed to grotesque intimate bodily functions that are rather offensive:

Kita disogok dengan perbuatan watak yang tidak senonoh seperti mencabut bulu ketiak bila menghadapi masalah, mengorek telinga dan mencium tahi telinga, mencolek gigi, berkontut memanjang, menggaru-garu hidung, mengorek lubang hidung, melondeh kain dan bertelanjang dan lain-lain yang ditaburkan dengan sewenang-wenangnya dalam novel ini untuk kononnya menimbulkan kesan jenaka (Mohd Affandi 2003:13).

From a Western perspective, the exaggeration of Azizi's characters' attitudes and actions is a means to pointing out the hypocrisy in the Malay moral code of conduct. Contemporary Malay society may be seen to be journeying through a transitional period from tradition to modernity. This transitional stage puts Malay society in a state of moral denigration and deteriorating civility. A satirist usually attempts to create this moral realization in society and a satire can be considered a suitable means to deliver criticism of a society that is known to value subtlety and implicitness in communication.

Harris posits the original idea of morality that relates to "the basic ethical viewpoint of Christianity—both satire and Christianity believe strongly in the fallen nature of man, believe that right conduct is not possible for a man without a guide" (<http://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm>). Perhaps, it is possible to see Azizi's satire as taking an ethical stance in guarding Malay society's moral code, even in its deterioration, as exemplified by the code of ethics, corruption and sexual behaviour of Malay politicians.

The irony of Azizi's implicit moral stance lies in his use of hyperbole in describing male sexual desires and behaviour. However, there exists contestation about his application of the Westernised concept of hyperbole, which has transformed the novel into a corporal and vulgar literary text. This simultaneously reduces the satire's intellectual potential. Further, this hyperbole sits rather uncomfortably within the Islamic literary landscape.

The religious piety of the Malays and their strict observation of Islamic laws is captured through Azizi's characterization of Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan, and Siti Menurra, who resist the mainstream acceptance of the *mut'ah*. The following descriptions demonstrate the piety of both characters:

Lebai Yazan tidak pernah gopoh memberi pandangan apabila diminta. Dia hanya tunduk mengurut-urut janggutnya yang sejempit itu... "Kita tidak boleh buruk sangka terhadap orang yang menyertai kuliah kita. Tak baik," kata Lebai Yazan dengan penuh sopan, lembut dan tenang (126)

Betapa pun bertukar laki, malah pernah berlakikan laki Mass Umm satu ketika dulu dan menjadi madu, Siti Menurra tidak sedikit pun berubah sikap. Taat kepada Allah seperti kelakuan Rabiatal Adawiah, seorang perempuan warak lagi sufi (117)

Mohd Affandi finds that the resemblance made between Siti Menurra and Rabiatal Adawiah is quite coarse and is a disparagement of historical Islamic figures (2003:13). The comparison between Siti Menurra and Rabiatal Adawiah may also be read as an attack on the hypocrisy of contemporary Malay society's religious conduct rather than a mockery of the Islamic figure. Clearly, reader's disapproval of such a comparison shows the need for adopting a serious tone as a show of reverence for historical Islamic figures.

Other than applying satire through its humour or wittiness, the use of literary techniques such as distortion, understatement, zeugma, ambiguity, simile, metaphor, oxymoron, parable and allegory may also be applied (Harris 1990 <http://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm>). Distortion is read as a parallel to exaggeration in which the author changes his perspective on certain matters by isolating an ordinary surrounding or "by stressing some aspects and deemphasizing others" (Harris 1990). The distortion is mostly done by Azizi through descriptions of sexual attitudes. The grotesqueness of his characters' physicality and desires is depicted, and distorted, within religious discourse.

Another useful literary technique is ambiguity that sharpens the distinction between "the target and the object to which it is compared" (Harris 1990). The most popular target is human madness. The depiction of madness of one person may refer to some form of madness in society at large. In the case of Malang's madness, Azizi, however, has transgressed the logic of the cause and effect of madness—in the case of Malang, the husband oddly becomes insane because his wife Mas Umm treats him with kindness. Another instance of Azizi's transgression of logic is in the depiction of Lebai Yazan (a religious teacher) preferring to see the downfall of his enemy to guiding him (Mohd Affandi 2003:16). This comes unexpectedly, since the reader had earlier been led to think of Lebai Yazan as the moral anchor in the story.

Another literary technique that delivers Azizi's intended moral lesson is in the zeugma: "Zeugma (or, as in the following example, syllepsis) has satiric worth because of its structural equating of things of greatly differing value" (Harris 1990). There is an equation of the vulgar disclosure of body parts with Islamic *mut'ah* as a possible historical marriage institution. This reflects modern society's understanding of betrayal in marriage. Aziz's location of his satire within an Islamic landscape shows contemporary Malay-Muslims' attitudes towards the institution of marriage, especially where their understanding of Islamic laws is concerned. By ridiculing Islamic legalities concerning contract marriage, the author manages to reduce the significance of such contracts in Islam to a level where it simply becomes a convenient arrangement for the changing of sexual partners.

The use of metaphors and similes draws out contrasts in the ugliness of illegal sexual conduct reflecting target readers's disapproval of them in their lives. According to Robert Harris, the use of oxymoron in satire may also emphasize...

...some contradiction in the target's philosophy, such as a Modern Author's joy at leaving the idealism of the past behind: "No silly perfect visions plague us now" seems to indicate that the writer is a fool, since visions (ideals) cannot be silly and perfect at the same time. (Harris 1999 <http://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm>)

The use of oxymoron highlights the contradictory emotions as represented by Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan, who is portrayed as religious, but malicious. An unkind depiction of such a religious character is obviously a criticism warranted by Azizi to expose a social body that represents religious hypocrisy. Other characters are Abul Hakam, who wants to test his faith through witnessing nudity, and Siti Menurra, who is said to be both religiously sincere and deceitful. It is the use of oxymoron that enables Azizi to free himself from his social obligation to defend such contradictory Islamic characters.

The satirical message of Azizi's novel is mostly obvious in his ease with everyday language, which highlights the ugliness of his characters' sexuality and physicality. The presence of physical reality forms an obscure comparison intended to function as a parable. This is read through Azizi's operationalizing of a religious teacher for the purpose of guiding the community in their everyday life, particularly in relation to the marriage institution. The analogy of spirituality is carried through by Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan as the vehicle for the parable.

The religious allegory in the satire is fabricated in the vulgar construction of the sexual. The assertion that Robert Harris made in terms of the offensiveness of satire is observed through Jonathan Swift's depiction of religious people who make religious ceremony the centre of their faith. For Azizi, the foolishness of religious people is highlighted in order to achieve Western satirical effect. One of the acts of foolishness is demonstrated by Malang who has been required by Lebai Yazan to copy the entire al-Quran before he can sleep with Siti Menurra.

Azizi's ironic method of satire is delivered quite convincingly, but his decision to expose social corruption and the state of local politics through negative comparison of Islamic characters may also be unfitting in the cultural contexts of his time. The vulgar plainness of his images used to reflect a serious moral lesson undermines the intellectualism of his readers. Although Azizi does emphasize the moral lesson of a satire, he does not employ subtle and intellectual images that could have brought out the sense of wit and humour that he wants to achieve. There is no variation in his rhetoric which merely centres on the vulgarity of the sexual. According to Harris,

[t]he essential meaning of a satire is seldom if ever consistent with a literal interpretation, yet the *literal interpretation* [my emphasis] is extremely important for what it says *about* the essential meaning, and about the target or audience which can be reached only in an indirect way. (Harris 1990 <http://www.virtualsalt.com/satire.htm>)

Azizi may have realized the importance of Western satirical elements, but obviously he underestimates the resistance of the majority of his Malay-Muslim readers to his novel as a satire. He runs the risk of his readers not taking him

seriously, especially with respect to his moral lesson on social corruption and the political abuse of power when manifested within the realms of Islam. The copying of the Western art of satire may not only be a sign of the modernisation of a Malay mind, but it can also be read as Malay Muslim writers' ignorance of their Islamic responsibilities in their craft. A contention made by Mohd Affandi Hassan about the obligatory presence of Islamic stylization is worthy of further investigation.

HEGEMONIC MALAY MASCULINITY

In theorising types of masculinity, Connell (1987:183) asserts that "[h]egemonic' masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities [homosexuals] as well as in relation to women." In *Kawin-Kawin*, a strong sense of hegemonic masculinity is felt in the very beginning of the novel when the covetousness of the immodest male character, Malang, is exposed and made the centrepiece for the narrative. The presence of hegemonic masculinity is greatly felt when a transvestite enters the scene, leading Malang to reconsider the attractiveness of his physicality as well as to dismiss the ugliness of his own body, and instead to accept that ugliness as a sign of his masculinity. Thus, the transvestite can be read as a contrast to Malang's sense of machismo. The presence of Malay masculinity is set at the intersection of complicit male power through temporary Islamic contract, and the willing subordination of Malay women through the religious bond and dominant Malay cultural values. Malay culture recognizes physical strength and financial capability as signs of masculinity while Malay femininity is seen in symbols of subordination. Another show of hegemonic masculinity is achieved through the presence of Mona, the transvestite, as a form of subordinated masculinity:

It is a way of being masculine which marginalizes and subordinates not only women's activities but also alternative forms of masculinity such as 'camp' or effeminate masculinity. Typically, it also involves the brutal repression of the activities of gay men and their construction as a despised 'Other' (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 336).

Mona's presence as a transvestite and Mona's unconscious desire for Malang are contrasted with Malang's macho masculinity. Compared to Mona, Malang's desire for *mut'ah* represents a desire for a marriage partner and indirectly for multiple partners (since the marriage contract allows for termination of the marriage according to the length of time agreed to by the man and the woman). However, the presence of *mut'ah* in Malay culture is contestable. This heightens Malang's degree of masculinity. However, Wetherell and Edley (1999:351) suggest that hegemonic masculinity should not only refer to one type of masculinity. What is important in the study of hegemonic masculinity is to understand how complicit male power operates in society through forms of legally binding contracts such as the marriage institution.

The operation of covert male power in this (imagined) Malay community of Azizi's is suggested through the temporary marriage contract endorsed by religious gurus. Such legal binding allows sexual desire to operate within the culture and simultaneously identifies male sexual desire in its hegemonic position. Judith Butler (cited in Hearn 2004:55) posits that

[the] concept of hegemony ... 'emphasizes the ways in which power operates to form our everyday understanding of social relations, and to orchestrate the ways in which we consent to (and reproduce) those tacit and covert relations of power.'

When female characters such as Mas Umm and Siti Menurra submit their trust to the religious gurus, they unconsciously consent to their subordination. Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan and Abul Ahkam Al-Syaikh Hajjul Fatawa give consent to those who want to legalize their marriage through *mut'ah*. In other words, the operation of hegemonic masculinity in social relations between man and woman through cultural contexts is further emphasized by the consenting presence of religious characters such as Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan and Abul Ahkam Al-Syaikh Hajjul Fatawa. The Gramscian concept of hegemony is applicable here as an elaboration on Malay society's ideas and values.

The concept of hegemony is generally:

... about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of the process (Mike Donaldson cited in Hearn 2004:54).

Kordvani (2002) suggests that ambiguity in Islamic judgement has always guaranteed a dominating position for men. Azizi's (imagined) community manipulates the state of ambiguity by legalizing *mut'ah* as an institution of marriage in order to allow men to facilitate their sexual desire. The discourse on Gramscian hegemony relates to the Marxist discussion on ideology, which studies how the values and beliefs of the ruling class (which gradually are recognised as the dominant culture) shape society and how they dominate other classes through consent rather than force. This leads to the unconsciously given consent of the masses to accept a social order constructed by the dominant culture.

The text exposes an (imagined) Malay community that pontificates the goodness of *mut'ah*. This accepted religious ideology appropriates male desire and proclaims that men and women of this (imagined) community have consented to its promotion. The Malay ideology read in this text centres on masculine sexual innuendoes, showing how men compete to get married and change partners. Donaldson asserts that "competition [over women] and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity" (cited in Kordvani 2002). Further, Azizi exposes the idea of multiple marriages as a locale for asserting hegemonic masculinity in which women consent to being, and allow themselves to become, objects of male sexual pleasure.

Although Mas Umm, the popular object of competition of many of the village men, has the right to extend her marriage contract, she is still seen as an object for men's sexual pleasure by the nature of competition as defined by *mut'ah*. The unpredictability of the moment of separation or divorce naturalises women as property to be transferred to another male owner at any time, as demonstrated by Azizi in the story:

Betapa pun Mas Umm seronok dan berasa bahagia, tetapi jodoh tidak panjang. Seluruh kampung terkejut apabila Awang Dod tiba tiba melafazkan cerai talaq raj'i. Satu keanehan apabila perceraian itu tanpa ada perselisihan atau pergaduhan (17)

By and large, Malay men are seen as those who possess the privilege to terminate a marriage. Nevertheless, Awang Dod's decision to divorce Mas Umm comes as a surprise to many since he is seen to be giving up the winning prize of a competition amongst the village men. Awang Dod's assertion of maleness is in essence read in the unpredictability of his decision to divorce Mas Umm. The degree of masculinity of Malay men may be quantified according to their ownership of multiple wives. In the context of *mut'ah*, the acceptable practice of keeping a marriage for a short period may also be seen as a measure of masculinity.

As a satire that is believed to implicate Malay politicians' ethics and struggle for power, the novel may be considered to be speculative (Mohd Affandi Hassan 2003), but if this insinuation is to be taken seriously, then given the cultural context of the text, the author may be suggesting how Malay politics can be sexualized through the depiction of sexual desire, intimate bodily acts and language. Indirectly, politics may be read as a form of hegemonic Malay masculinity—politics for power/control and wealth/material. Azizi's satire accentuates the possible dichotomous correspondence of textual and sexual politics in Malay society. A textual-sexual politics that is insensitive to or disrespectful of Islam may illustrate Malay hegemonic masculinity, centering more on Malay culture than on Islamic influences. However, the assumption of Malays representing Islam has created a more complex and competing discourse on masculinity as asserted by Connell (1995:76):

'Hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.

Perhaps, one important argument is that the notion of hegemonic masculinity exposes the persistent cultural domination exercised by men in their social contexts, and the unwitting consent by women in the construction of cultural hegemony that risks their rights and positions. A literary text that ridicules Islam and women's position through its gross sexual language may indeed be charged with the offence of putting on a colonial mask.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALAY MASCULINITY AND COLONIALISM

The major argument on the notion of Malay masculinity described in the earlier section suggests a cultural domination by men and a domination that operates in the discourse surrounding sexuality. This section continues with the argument on cultural domination through an analysis of the correlation between Malay masculinity and colonialism. This is examined through the nuances of images depicted in Azizi's novel—his portrayal of Malay behaviour resembles a colonial writer's or orientalist's negative portrayal of Malays, in that the latter tend to be stereotyped as ugly, backward, uncivilized, savage, uneducated, and in love with entertainment. The satire is therefore read as privileging Western colonial authority. The focus of the novel on frequent changing of partners and desire for women as wives in such a marriage contract enables the writer to politicise an Islamic marriage institution and simultaneously to sexualise Malay politics.

The continuation of colonialism is observed in the phase of neo-colonialism inherent in the ideological control exercised over the colonized (Young 1990:122). A new form of colonialism persists in the writing of some postcolonial Malay writers. The premise of my argument that Azizi's use of sexuality is part of colonialism starts with Edward Said's contention that sexuality may be read as a metaphor for male imperial relations and that the use of elements of nature/land is inherently a show of imperial power (McClintock 1995:14).

Said's work is mostly based on Foucault's definition and operation of power and Antonio Gramsci's "cultural (re)production" through consent of the subordinate social class of people through their cultural practices (Moore-Gilbert 1997:36). In view of Foucault's work, an analysis is made of the connections between imperial power and sexuality:

Foucault sees power as an 'impersonal' force operating through a multiplicity of sites and channels, constructing what he calls a 'pastoral' regime, through which it seeks to control its subjects by 're (-) forming them, in so doing, making them conform to their place in the social system as objects of power. In a series of studies, he has demonstrated this proposition in relation to the psycho-sexual domain, the regime of punishment and the discourses surrounding madness and reason (Moore-Gilbert 1997:36).

Both Foucault's and Gramsci's propositions formulate Said's discourse on the "Orient" (Moore-Gilbert 1997:36-37). The discourse on the "Orient" to Said is something which is strategically planned either by individuals or 'institutional imperatives' (37). In demonstrating inherent colonial power, Azizi uses an institutional imperative (represented by the Islamic marriage contract) to control women. The female subordination interestingly produces a dominant male culture that highlights hierarchical relations between men and women. Azizi's female characters are located at the margins of Malay society. The discursive

nature of the discourse on Orientalism is developed by incorporating Gramsci's view on consenting subordination. The discursive nature of the colonialist discourse is inherent in the exoticizing of the subjects (Islam and woman) as well as in the text being a space for outsiders (those outside of Malay culture context) to construct some form of knowledge about Malay society.

The presence of culturally biased representations of Malays is characteristic of imperialist discourse of the "Other". What is interesting to observe is the Malay writer's practice of copying such narrative style to promote a kind of social criticism and self-reflection of his own society. The mimicking of the colonizer's narration is explored by Homi Bhabha in the notion of cultural in-betweenness or ambivalence. Perhaps, it can be argued here that by categorically fitting in their narrative in the colonizer's literary framework, the Malay writer puts his work in the spatial and cultural tension of the colonizer and colonized. As a postcolonial writer, Azizi applies the Western gaze onto two colonized subjects—Islam and women. Bhabha, relying on psychoanalysis as part of his interpretation of Said's work, posits that

[t]he construction of colonial discourse is...complex articulation of tropes of fetishism – metaphor and metonymy – and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the Imaginary (Young 1990: 144).

The writer's fascination with Islamic marriage is a complicit strategy of a colonial discourse that can be related to masculinity. Robert Young posits that "colonial discourse would provide another example of group fantasy" (Gregory Castle 2001: 82). The desires of the male community in this novel may thus be read as a social production that forms a group fantasy. Although the discussion of colonialism relates to the control and operation of capitalist machine of territories (82), the argument on colonial ideological operations is relevant in mapping patriarchal power to sexuality. Robert Young's model of analysis based on Deleuze and Guattari's definition of colonialism as a "desiring machine" which "deterritorializes" and "reterritorializes" local landscapes and structure of power" (xviii) is applicable in reading the ideological operations of *mut'ah* as a marriage institution.

The view of colonialism as a "desiring machine" starts with an observation on the operation of capitalism—"...the demands for labour [involves] the commodification of bodies...." This observation is extended to the decoding of culture according to linguistic metaphor (Young 1995: 173). Metaphorically, the legal temporary marriage contract can be perceived as an agreed commodity exchange. The women in the story may be considered as merely bodies (goods) to be exchanged. The hegemonic masculinity existent in the story (control of women as goods) resembles the effect of colonialism based on patriarchal desire for commodification. Another effect of colonialism is to dehumanize its subjects (Young 1990: 120). An act of dehumanizing is most obvious in its representation of marriage in Islam and the sexualized view on Malay women.

In unpacking the relationship between hegemonic Malay masculinity and colonialism, woman and Islam form two important categories that always become the centre of a postcolonial feminist reading. The reading of both categories in this discussion is located in the marriage contract within the Malay Muslim patriarchal system depicted by the author of *Kawin-Kawin*. The author locates a patriarchal male discourse surrounding the controversial notion of *mut'ah* in the Islamic legal system. *Mut'ah*, defined as a temporary marriage contract, generates arguments between the Sunni and the Shi'a communities about its legitimacy in the Islamic legal system (<http://www.answering-ansar.org/answers/mutah/mutah.pdf>). One of the arguments made with regards to *mut'ah* is that it has nothing to do with marriage, but merely about sexual acts.

The temporary marriage institution provided by *mut'ah* may be considered a “desiring machine” that “deterritorializes” the Malay Muslim power structure and masculinity. The characters in the novel—Malang, Tuan Guru Lebai Yazan, Abul Ahkam, and Muallim—each represents an authoritative position in reading women as objects of desire.

CONCLUSION

To some critics, copying the Western genre in modern Malay literature may not be seen as problematic and Pak Sako's satire *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937) may be regarded as an example of quality social criticism because “...it foregrounds a tension with the imperial power and emphasizes the differences between the indigenous culture and the imperial power” (Aveling 1993), while Azizi's *Kawin-Kawin* (2002) foregrounds sexual desire as the centre of Malay society's social preoccupation. The notions of colonialism with respect to Malay hegemonic sexuality frame the understanding of Malay desire for material/wealth and power through politics. The tension that lies between sexuality and authority in Islam represents the problematic equation between colonialism and Malay masculinity. The equation manages the series of dualisms such as men versus women, mind versus body, and master versus slave. The “intellectual humour” intended for Western satire has been eliminated through a gross portrayal of sexuality and Islam.

What is more at stake in the evaluation of this satire is the issue of literariness of Malay writings in which the measurements made are incongruent with the cultural contexts of the Malay society. Ungku Maimunah (1993) suggests the need for a re-evaluation of Malay literary criticism. The author's accuracy in copying the Western genre risks the quality and status of Malay aesthetics. The contestation on writings by male authors that focus on sexuality has been widely challenged by readers. Anis Sabirin (1963) contests that much of the writings by Malay men have a slant toward pornography, which includes images of women as spoilt goods, prostitutes, and bad women.

Colonialism remains inherent in the writings of Malay writers who continue to work within the Western framework. The exploration of Malay texts through Western theoretical literary criticism may be seen to map the Malay application of Western literary conceptualizations. In this examination, I found that National Awards such as the *Hadiah Sako II* has given the status to the winning literary texts of being a reliable form of criticism that contributes to a socially hegemonic reading of Islamic relations between men and women.

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