

## An Endless Identity Dilemma: The Liminal Westernised Muslim Malays in *The Enemy in the Blanket* by Anthony Burgess

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### ABSTRACT

The second installment of *The Malayan Trilogy* (1964), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958), an English literary text by Anthony Burgess (1917-1993), is written with the colliding of cultures and clashes of religions as the central themes. Set in pre-independence Malaya, Burgess is part of a group of Western writers who had actually lived in their fictional settings where the literary continuation of this group of writers has been ignored for a long time and has not appeared in anthologies in the academic context. As scholarship on the Muslim Malay characters in Burgess' novel is still overlooked in terms of scholarly value as well as its Islamic and Malay ethnicity discourses, we argue that Burgess has addressed a conundrum still faced by current Muslim Malay society: the pre-independence Muslim Malay characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket* are conflicted; trapped in a state of betwixt and between being a Muslim, and of a Westernised lifestyle which, more often than not, oppose each other. Thus, we examine Burgess' portrayals of the Muslim Malay characters that adopt a Westernised lifestyle and appear to be in a quandary with regards to their Islamic beliefs and practices. As methodology, we utilised Victor Turner's concept of liminality (1967) to analyse scenes in the novels which depict such binary opposition. Findings demonstrate that the Muslim Malay characters have to negotiate their identity issues in order to either feel more socially acceptable through the preference of a Westernised lifestyle or struggle to become ethically and morally truthful to their religious faith.

**Key words:** Anthony Burgess, Liminality, Malaya, Malaysia, *The Enemy in the Blanket*, Westernised Muslim Malay Characters

### INTRODUCTION

*The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) was written by Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) as the second instalment of *The Malayan Trilogy* (1964) which consists also of *Time for a Tiger* (1956) as the first instalment and also the third instalment, *Beds in the East* (1959). Burgess weaves the central theme of the first novel of the trilogy, *Time for a Tiger* (1956), with the colliding of cultures and clashes of religion, and this theme remains consistent throughout the first until the third novel which binds the trilogy as a whole (Biswell 168). The trilogy was crafted by Burgess as a satire that centralises around the lives of the Malayan characters during the pre-independence period, and a British teacher at the Mansor School, Victor Crabbe, in a town called "Lanchap". One of the focal points in Burgess' trilogy is the narrative on the way of life of the Muslim Malay characters portrayed as living in contradict-

ing values, based on their religion Islam, as Muslims, and also the Westernised lifestyle.

#### Anthony Burgess (1917 – 1993)

John Anthony Burgess Wilson, or also known through his pseudonym as Anthony Burgess, was born in Harpurhey, Manchester, where he later graduated in 1940 from the University of Manchester with a degree in English Literature (Burgess... a Brief Life). Between the years of 1954-1959, Burgess devoted his life to live and work as an educator in Malaya and Brunei, and his first-hand encounters and experiences during his stay in both countries shaped his views particularly on the Malays and Islam, the prime source of inspiration for his literary works. Islam, as suggested by Harrington (3), inspired Burgess to explore "the characteristic themes of good and evil, right and wrong, the limits and

nature of human free will, and the relationship between the individual and authority”.

Throughout his career as an educator, Burgess is primarily remembered for his teaching post at an elite school, the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), in a state situated on the western coast of then Peninsular Malaya, Perak. MCKK, an all boys’ school, was originally built for the children of Malay aristocrats, before it opened its admission to the public. This elite school, which is also known as the ‘Eton of the East’, was the source of inspiration for one of the main settings in *Time for a Tiger*, the Mansor School (Azmi and Shamsul A. B. 348).

Burgess not only socialised with the local people during his service in Malaya, but also learned how to both read and write in the Arabic script, known as *jawi*. His fluency in *jawi* assisted him to read and understand the *Qur’an*, the Muslim holy book (Harrington 3). However, Burgess’ socialisation with the Malaysians, particularly the Muslim Malays, exposed him to what he considered as flawed individuals, who live un-Islamic lifestyles, which his fictional characters in the trilogy are largely based on (Coale 438).

Burgess’ own disenchantment with the Muslim Malays can be found reflected in his fictional narrative of the society then, more so on the complex issue of ethnic identity. Although the selected text, *The Enemy in the Blanket*, is set in pre-independence Malaya, through a hermeneutic textual analysis, we, however, argue there are there are, in fact, depictions of a challenge still faced by current Muslim Malay society in Malaysia: the pre-independence Muslim Malay characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket* are portrayed as being in a conflict; trapped in a situation of betwixt and between being a Muslim, and of a Westernised lifestyle which oppose each other more often than not. Since this binary opposition of religious versus ethnic concerns need to be addressed in contemporary Malaysian society as it is still a prominent research problem in the discourse of literary, religious and ethnic studies, we have chosen, as our research objective, to examine how Burgess depicts the practice of Islam (religion) by Malay characters who are Muslims and their practices of the Westernised culture as part of a liminal aspect of their identity. This research objective acts as our problem statement as we have also determined that the scholarly value of Burgess’ *The Enemy in the Blanket* is still undermined, especially on the identity and cultural discourse; thus, the new knowledge discovered in this study is fundamental in filling this research gap.

### **BURGESS, THE MALAYAN TRILOGY AND THE ENEMY IN THE BLANKET**

Although *The Malayan Trilogy* is set in Malaya, there have been limited studies conducted so far on this text, especially in the Malaysian academic context and discourse, namely by Zawiyah Yahya (2003), Ida Baizura Bahar (2010), Whittle (2013), Farahanna Abd Razak et. al (2014; 2016), and Ida Baizura and Farahanna Abd Razak (2017). A diverse range of issues have been examined in these studies, namely Burgess’ ideological projection through his portrayal of his characters (Zawiyah 2003), the hypothesised paradigm

of Malayness as an everyday-social reality (Ida B.B. 2010), the link between Britain’s national identity and the post-war period of decolonisation (Whittle 2013), the fusions of animistic and Islamic practices (Farahanna Abd Razak et. al, 2014), the emerging patterns of *Bangsa Malaysia* in Anthony Burgess’ first installment *Time For A Tiger* (Farahanna Abd Razak et. al, 2016) and reflections of *Bangsa Malaysia* as liminal and liminoid identities in Burgess’ final installment, *Beds in The East* (Ida Baizura and Farahanna Abd Razak, 2017). Although the focal objective of Whittle’s study is on British identity and decolonisation, he, however, explores the issue of ethnic tension and the potential harmonious life that could be attained by the Malayan characters.

One of the earliest notable studies on the text is *Resisting Colonial Discourse* (2003) by Zawiyah Yahya, where she analyses the trilogy for the purpose of identifying the lines between conflicting discourses and what is assumed as the author’s ideological projection of his text (24). Besides analysing Burgess’ trilogy, Zawiyah also analyses selected texts from two other authors whose texts are set in Malaya, namely *Almayer’s Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Island* (1896) and *Lord Jim* (1900) by the British author Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), and a short story “The Force of Circumstance” (1924) by another British author, Somerset Maugham (1874-1965). In *The Malayan Trilogy*, Zawiyah analyses the prominent characters, namely Victor Crabbe, Fenella Crabbe, Rahimah, Ibrahim, Nabby Adams, Boothby, Rupert Hardman, Syed Omar, Jaganathan, Vythilingam and Inche Kamaruddin, and examines the reality of the Malay society envisioned by Burgess himself where she suggests that Burgess is the opposite of typical writers who are far removed from the realities of the Malay society (Zawiyah 168).

Despite acknowledging his awareness of the Malay society, Zawiyah also notes that Burgess applies his heavily Western influenced philosophy as the mean to portray native landscape as reflected through Burgess’ way of viewing both the Malay society and their practices from his European eyes (Ibid). As stated by Zawiyah, Burgess “see[s] the incongruity of mixing animistic and Islamic practices...”, and further explains that, if Burgess actually sees through a Malayan perspective, he would not be too absorbed with what has already been understood as an accepted part of the lives of the Malays (168). In addition, Zawiyah also discusses how Burgess depicts the characters using stereotypical images that are often associated with colonialist writing, namely laziness, the lack of logic, the use of witchcraft and also savagery, as the marker of the natives (174).

More importantly, the Muslim Malay characters in *The Malayan Trilogy* are, according to Zawiyah, portrayed as religious hypocrites and offenders, who include the sultans, the *imam* and *bilal* (men of religion) and other Muslim Malay characters, who are shaped by Burgess in an attempt to mock what is actually highly respected by Muslim Malays in the real world (Zawiyah 74). Based on her findings, Zawiyah states that a female character named Rahimah, Crabbe’s Muslim Malay mistress of *Time for a Tiger*; is portrayed as challenging the stereotypical belief of the submissive Oriental woman. Instead of conforming to the stereotypical trait of

a helplessly romantic Malay woman who keeps everything to herself, Rahimah actually plans a vendetta against Crabbe by using black magic, a practice forbidden in Islam (Zawiyah 176).

Apart from Zawiyah, another notable study on the trilogy has been conducted by Ida Baizura Bahar (Ida B. B.) in *The Paradigm of Malayness in Literature* (2010). In her study, Ida B.B. analyses selected English literary texts on the Malay world, namely *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896) and *The Rescue* (1920) by Conrad; "The Force of Circumstance" (1924), "The Outstation" (1924), and "The Yellow Streak" (1925) by Maugham; and *The Malayan Trilogy* (1964) by Burgess, in order to explore her hypothesised paradigm of Malayness in literature as a conceptual framework. Unlike Zawiyah, in the trilogy, Ida B. B. analyses only the Muslim Malay characters, namely Rahimah of *Time for a Tiger*, 'Che Normah Abdul Aziz and the Abang of *The Enemy in the Blanket* and Syed Omar, Syed Omar's son, Syed Hassan, and Nik Hassan of *Beds in the East*. One of the main thematic issues discussed by Ida B. B. is the practice of animistic beliefs together with their faith as Muslims where, although the town and community of *Lanchap* is described by Burgess with references to Islam, it is also ironically filled with depictions of a lifestyle and system of belief that contradict the philosophies and teachings of Islam. In the trilogy, Ida B. B. exemplifies how it contains characters, such as Muslim Malay divorcee prostitutes who willingly offer their trades on the streets, while characters from the village and suburbs still cling to the ancient Hinduism belief and practice primitive magic (110).

In her study, Ida B. B. also suggests that Burgess depicts in the trilogy how the teachings of Islam and modernisation work side by side. This is especially true in the last chapter of the last novel in the trilogy, *Beds in the East*, where the Muslim Malay villagers are portrayed as still clinging to the inherited beliefs of their ancestors due to the fact that they reside near the forest, which is a sharp contrast to the urban residents. Ida B. B. argues that both the teachings of Islam and modernisation can work philosophically in tandem as what Burgess ironically depicts in the trilogy is the antithesis of the stereotypical idea that towns are the place where the corruption of Islam and its followers begin (111-112). As Ida B. B. views it, in contrast with the towns, the villagers live closer to the jungles, thus triggering the beliefs in animism to become stronger there (112).

While the previous studies discussed earlier (Zawiyah 2003; Ida B. B. 2010) focus mainly on the religious and also cultural values of the Muslim Malay characters, Matthew J. Whittle in *National Identity, Culture and Imperialism: Post-war Responses to the End of Empire, 1955-61* (2013) examines the link between the post-war period of decolonisation and national identity through texts written by British writers during the period of 1955 to 1961 using the cultural materialist approach (5). In Whittle's study, Burgess' trilogy is examined through the conceptual frameworks of exoticism and savagery, where Whittle focuses mainly on Crabbe's wife, Fenella and also Hardman. While Fenella constantly views Malaya through an unfavourable lens, Hardman, on the oth-

er hand, views Malaya as exotic, although this perception slowly dismantles after his marriage to a Muslim Malay character, 'Che Normah, and also his conversion to Islam (Whittle 78-79). The trilogy, as Whittle sees it, is centred on the theme of ethnic conflicts and, interestingly, the protagonist, Crabbe, the history teacher, represents both the potentials and failures of the British Empire due to his portrayal as a 'cultural referee,' not only at his school, but also outside, hosting parties and meetings in a bid to solve their differences although these efforts usually end up exaggerating the problems even more (Whittle 87).

Another current study, "Emerging Patterns of *Bangsa Malaysia* in Anthony Burgess' *Time for a Tiger*", on the other hand, has been conducted by Farahanna et. al (2016) focusing on the emerging patterns of a national identity called *Bangsa Malaysia*. Conceptualised as part of Vision 2020 by the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1991), it is argued in the study that the elements of unity among the rich mixture of multi-ethnic characters in the novel reflect an emerging pattern of *Bangsa Malaysia*, which was initially launched to create a unified atmosphere among the ethnic groups to minimise and eventually erase the tension among them. It is in the course of the implementation of government policies, education, a change of mindset and personal judgement, patriotism and the unifying role of the monarchy as depicted through a mixture of characters from various ethnicities, namely the Malays (Sultan Aladdin and Sultan Mansor), the Chinese (Toong Cheong), the Indian (an unnamed student from the Mansor School) and also an anonymous group (Fair Play), that the patterns emerge. More importantly, the formation of *Bangsa Malaysia* is founded by the need to encompass tolerance and it is primarily through education as depicted by the ethnically diverse students at the Mansor School that unity is achieved (Farahanna et. al, 270).

A more relevant and notable study on the text is "Anthony Burgess and Reflections of *Bangsa Malaysia: The Liminal and Liminoid Identities in Beds in the East*" by Ida B. B. and Farahanna (2017), in which the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is explored through Burgess' portrayal of a Malay character, Syed Hassan, using the socio-anthropological approach of liminality comprising the liminal and liminoid phenomena as conceptualised by the British cultural anthropologist, Victor Witter Turner (1920-1989). Centralising on an identity of being betwixt and between, the study demonstrates the liminal and liminoid conditions experienced by Syed Hassan to construct a balanced Malay identity. According to Ida B. B. and Farahanna, Syed Hassan's main source of struggle is his filial piety towards his father and it has been identified as the initial element which separates him from first understanding and then socialising with the other multi-ethnic Malayan characters (856). He is only able to overcome that challenge by experiencing self-reflection which eventually leads to a deeper appreciation and tolerance of the other Malayan characters. Ida B. B. and Farahanna also found that there is a deliberate transition from "being just conflicted between the states that Syed Hassan was born into, namely the Malay ethnicity as projected through his filial piety towards his bigoted father, to the ones by choice or association, or what is also known

as the emerging patterns of *Bangsa Malaysia*" (856). They view this shift, "from just being liminal to a mixture of both liminal and liminoid phenomena", as being in line with the transitioning process of Malaya towards achieving its own independence, and that a blossoming nation needs unity in order to prosper (Ida B. B. and Farahanna 856-857).

## ISLAM, ISLAMISATION AND WESTERNISATION

As the element of religion is one of the core research problems in this study, where the Muslim Malay characters have to face conflicting decisions regarding their own identities from two perspectives, religious and cultural practice, it is imperative that a discussion on the Muslim practice of the Tenets of Islam and the Tenets of *Iman* (Faith) is presented.

### Tenets of Islam and Tenets of *Iman* (Faith)

It is obligatory for Muslims to observe the five pillars of Islam which are constituted in the most basic tenets of the religion, namely the Tenets of Islam. The Tenets of Islam have been outlined clearly in the prophetic tradition of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, known also as *hadith*, which were collected by the Persian Muslim scholar Imam al-Bukhari, called the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, after being transmitted orally for generations. As Narrated by Ibn 'Umar, a friend of the Prophet Muhammad, the Tenets of Islam are based on the following five principles:

1. To testify the *Syhadah* that *La ilāha illallah wa anna Muhammad-ar-Rasul Allah* (to orally proclaim that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah);
2. *Iqamat-as-Salat* (to perform the compulsory congregational *Salat* prayers);
3. To pay *Zakat* (to pay tithe);
4. To perform the *Hajj* (the pilgrimage to Makkah);
5. To observe *Saum* (to fast according to Islamic teachings during the month of *Ramadan*).

(Mukhsin Khan, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 1: 58)

The Tenets of *Iman* (Faith), on the other hand, comprise six basic tenets which have been outlined clearly in the *Sahih Muslim* compiled by the Persian Muslim scholar, Imam Abul Hussain Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaj. As narrated by Abu Hurairah, a friend of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, the Tenets of *Iman* are based on the six principles as follows:

1. Belief in Allah;
2. Belief in His angels;
3. Belief in the *Al-Kitab* (holy books);
4. Belief in His prophets;
5. Belief in the resurrection and the events of *Qiyamah* (the afterlife);
6. Belief in *Qada* and *Qadar* (the Divine will and decree).

(Al-Khattab, *Sahih Muslim*, 1: 96)

From the Islamic perspective, the practice of believing or worshipping powers or entities other than Allah is termed in Arabic as *syirik* and this act clearly contradicts the first principle of the Tenets of Islam and Tenets of *Iman*. This Islamic ruling is stated in the second chapter, the *Sura al-Baqarah* (The Cow), in the Muslim holy book, the *Qur'an*:

Yet among the people are those who take other than God as equals to Him. They love them as the love of God. But those who believe have greater love for God. If only the wrongdoers would realise, when they see the torment; that all power is God's, and that God is severe in punishment. (Itani, *al-Qur'an* 2:165)

Besides that, the act of *syirik* is also discussed in the *Sahih Muslim* as narrated on the authority of Zaid bin Khalid al-Juhani, a friend of the Prophet Muhammad:

The Messenger of Allah; led us in Salat As-Subh at Al-Hudaybiyah, after it had rained during the night. When he finished, he turned to the people and said: 'Do you know what your Lord said?' They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'He said, "This morning some of My slaves believe in Me and some disbelieve. As for the one who said: 'We got rain by the bounty and mercy of Allah,' he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars. But as for the one who said, 'We got rain by virtue of such and such a star,' he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars.'" (Al-Khattab, *Sahih Muslim*, 1: 164)

The *hadith* above demonstrates an act equating other entities with Allah, where the stars (creation of Allah) are attributed as the sole reasoning for the fall of rain, and this again entails *syirik*.

### Islamisation Versus Westernisation

This sub-section on the aforementioned topic is imperative as it is needed to frame the research objective of the study as a binarist concept to the overall discourse. We begin our discussion by focussing on the term 'Islamisation' which is defined by Al-Attas in *Islam and Secularism* (2010) as carrying the meaning of "[L]iberation on man first from magical, mythological, animistic, national-secular tradition opposed to Islam, and then from secular control over his reason and his language" (44). Being liberated from secular control over one's judgement means:

Liberation from subservience to his physical demands which incline toward the secular and injustice to his true self or soul, for man as physical being inclines towards forgetfulness of his true nature, becoming ignorant of his true purpose and unjust to it. (Al-Attas 45)

In particular, the West started to slowly spread its wings to the Muslim world, which covered, among others, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, the Mughal Empire including Spain, and Southeast Asia including Indonesia and Malaysia, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century through their trade in the Indian Ocean, injuring the overall economic status of the Muslim world (Al-Attas 104). As the economic weakening progresses, by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the West was able to take control over a large area of the Muslim world and with the control over the most crucial element of a civilisation comes the huge impact over other elements, namely culture, providing the West with a strong platform to dominate the minds and intellectuality of the Muslims through the indoctrination of the projection of their own worldview (Al-Attas 104-105). The opposing values and principles of the West and Islam have, as Al-Attas suggests, triggered a

crisis inside the Muslims, or what he termed as the 'loss of *adab*' (manners) (Al-Attas 105).

With regards to the main issue reflected in the text in question as well as its historical concerns, the source of crisis for the Muslims in pre-independence Malaya include their choice of attire, on whether they should preserve their more modestly traditional fashioned attire to the more modern ones, brought and imitated from the West. Clothes are not only seen as a necessity or fashion statements, but also as a reflection of their identities and cultural values (Nazirah 70). This symbol of identity, as Suriani Suratman sees it, affects mostly the Muslim Malay women, especially in their choice of wearing a piece of clothing that represents their religious identity, namely the veil (*hijab*). Not only that, the choice of attire also affects their lifestyle and socialisation with others, where it represents one's acceptance inside a particular group or community (Suriani 180). While Muslim Malay women's attire tend to be a hotly debated issue among scholars, however, the Westernisation of men's clothing style are seldom discussed, as they are rarely connected with religiously sensitive issues namely *aurat* (private parts and parts of the body that cannot be exposed or should be covered according to Islam) and *adab* (Nazirah 74-75).

## LIMINALITY

At this point in our discussion, it is vital that we present the current debates on our chosen conceptual framework, liminality. The first interpretation of liminality by the British cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, can be found in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (1979) that comprises his ritual study based on the Ndembu Tribe of Zambia in Central Africa. The Rites of Passage, as first introduced by the Dutch-German-French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957) into the field of anthropology in 1908, includes three phases, namely separation, margin (*limen*/liminality) and aggregation (94). Specifically, individuals or groups going through the separation phase will be detached from their social and cultural norms, which then pushes them to the second phase, the liminal period, where they are regarded as ambiguous, representing little to none of their former social positions and, finally, the third phase, the aggregation, where the crisis and conflicts are resolved and they finally form a new self or social structure (Turner 94). For the purpose of addressing the objective of our paper, we will only focus on Turner's conceptual framework of liminality or the margin phase.

In his works, Turner focuses mainly on the middle stage of the rites of passage where the ritualised transitional or liminal stage lies in (Shure 1-2; Schneider 2). Turner suggests that liminality is a state where a person is in a way being neither here nor there, betwixt and between (socially and structurally ambiguous) in their process of transition, as he explains; "the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (95). In *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience* (1985), Turner further explains his view on liminality as the medium or phase where the subjects are excluded from the restrictions of the norms, giving the opportunity to deconstruct

the dry and rigid customs and reconstruct them into a new form, which can even at times produce unusual results (160). Despite the exclusion from the norms, liminality, as Turner views it, is not entirely without any form of restrictions, as the phase represents two definite points in a traditional ritual/system (from one status to another), which must at least display traces of their own forbearers (Turner 160). Due to the ambiguous nature associated with liminality, the individuals are often equated with death, living in the womb, in the state of being invisible and caught in the darkness, bisexuality, the wilderness and also to the sun's or moon's eclipse (Turner 160).

Contemporary scholars, for example, Bjørn Thomassen, in "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality" (2009), notes that Turner's concept of liminality can be experienced by a vast range of subjects, namely individuals, a group, whole society or population and might also extend to the entire civilisations (16). The time frame of liminality (temporal) can range from 'moments', referring to quick and unexpected events such as deaths or plagues, 'periods', taking from weeks to months or even expands to years, which can be closely related to wars, teenagers and puberty, and 'epochs', a liminal period that would expand to decades, generations to even centuries and, in some cases, seen as a permanent liminality, as example, modernity, transgender, groups trapped between old and new culture and prolonged intellectual confusion (Thomassen 16-17). Liminality can take place at a precise location, which covers areas, such as doorways, particular object and human bodies, areas or zones, as example, country borders and airports, and also countries or larger areas (Thomassen 16-17). It is not uncommon after an extended amount of time for a liminal experience in a society to develop into the norms, and this is referred by Turner as being marginalised (Thomassen, "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality" 17; Oropeza 45). Marginalisation then happens when a liminal period is not followed with the reintegration (aggregation) phase which is needed to create a new social order and personality of the individuals or groups involved.

Here, Turner suggests the possibility of the older customs to be evolved into something that could be more relatable to the newer generations, or in other words, creating a fusion of the old and new customs. The individuals who have gone through the liminal period, according to Turner, can also unconsciously affect the ones who have not experienced the process yet (Turner 98). He also suggests that the liminal period strips the individuals from their society, as they have no status, worldly materials, family relations, or anything that would separate them structurally from each other (Turner 98).

In *Frame, Flow, Reflection* (1979), Turner explains that liminality is "a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status" (466). The term 'state' here refers to a fixed situation or condition which ranges from statuses, ranks or degree obtained from professions or other institutions/societies (Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* 93). Turner further elaborates 'state' as a term that also includes

the conditions of biological, physical, emotional and mental of a particular individual or group, as example, the health state of the individual (good and bad), or the state of a particular society (peace and war) (93-94).

Although Turner's concept of liminality mainly focuses on how the liminars are stripped of their ranks and become equals or having reversed roles, we, however, will be focusing on how the characters in *The Enemy in the Blanket* negotiate between the conflicting elements in their identities. We will also view these identities as states where each state represents the end of each spectrum, namely *Westernised lifestyle* at one end with *Islam* (being a Muslim), at the other, which is best understood through the following diagram:



Before we proceed to the analysis of the text, it is best to present a synopsis of the *The Enemy in the Blanket* to assist in our discussion of the study. The title of the novel can be directly translated into the Malay idiom as *musuh dalam selimut*, carrying the meaning of traitor, and the title fits the closing scene in the first instalment, *Time for a Tiger*, where Crabbe describes a Chinese character named Shiu Hung who sports a black eye in a class picture as *musuh dalam selimut* or in the English idiom “sleeping with the enemy” to the Caucasian character, Nabby Adams. It starts with Crabbe and his wife, Fenella, arguing while they are on a flight to a state called Dahaga, about a letter that accuses Crabbe of impregnating a Malay woman. Due to the false accusations and a heated argument with the headmaster of the Mansor School, Crabbe is transferred to Haji Ali College, situated in Dahaga. While trying to find their way to the house of a white male character named Talbot, who works as the State Education Officer, Crabbe and Fenella bump into a white albino character, Rupert Hardman, who shares the same alma mater with Crabbe and is good friends with other Malay characters called Haji Zainal Abidin and Abdul Kadir. Hardman is a lawyer who is facing financial difficulties, where later, in the novel, marries a Muslim Malay woman named 'Che Normah for money, and converts to Islam. Due to the controlling nature of 'Che Normah and his new status as a Muslim, Hardman struggles emotionally and physically throughout the novel and, in the end, decides to leave his pregnant wife while pretending to be on a trip to Mecca to perform the *haj* pilgrimage.

#### **BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: OF WESTERNISED CULTURE AND ISLAMIC PRACTICES IN ANTHONY BURGESS' *THE ENEMY IN THE BLANKET***

Our discussion of our analysis is driven by the following research question: how does Burgess depict the practice of Islam (religion) by Malay characters who are Muslims and their practices of the Westernised culture as part of a liminal

aspect of their identity? This theme of identity issue throughout the novel provides a solid ground to examine the Muslim Malay characters through Turner's concept of liminality, where they have to negotiate their identity issues in order to either feel more socially acceptable or become ethically and morally truthful to their religious faith. Our chosen conceptual framework, liminality, should be able to assist us in elucidating the processes the characters have to go through in constructing their dual identities. This process in negotiating the contradicting identities will be able to facilitate in providing a better understanding of the spiritual and emotional struggles faced by the characters in defining themselves, as either putting their religion first or triggering the dilemma among the Muslim Malay characters due to their preference of a Westernised lifestyle.

#### **Haji Zainal Abidin: The Houlier-Thou Alcoholic Drinker**

We open our analysis in this section with a Muslim Malay character, Haji Zainal Abidin, who is first introduced as a character who is highly religious, where he expresses his disagreement with Hardman over Hardman's act of what he sees as mocking Islam:

‘Hardman, the bastard,’ he announced, ‘who threw the Koran on the floor and put his heels on it. The man with no respect for another man's religion.’ ‘No respect for another man's religion,’ said Haji Zainal Abidin. ‘He has seen the light. I have shown him the light [...]’ (Burgess 214)

Haji Zainal Abidin later, however, expresses his delight, announcing Hardman's moment of enlightenment, claiming that he has played a part in Hardman's conversion to Islam. Performing the *haj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, is the fourth element under the Tenets of Islam; thus, the title *haji* he is carrying also symbolises a person who is highly revered by the Muslims.

Despite his earlier display of disgust regarding Hardman's antics, Haji Zainal Abidin, is later portrayed as going against what he preaches as he himself is fond of drinking beer, an alcoholic drink, which is an act that is against the teachings of Islam:

Haji Zainal Abidin did not proclaim, either in dress or demeanour, the pentecostal grace that traditionally descends on one who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He wore no turban, a natty cravat with a horse-head pin was tucked inside his nylon shirt, his flannel trousers were well-creased and his shoes highly polished. He exhaled a heartening smell of hops, hardly concealed by the breath of garlic. He was in his late forties and depressingly vigorous. He called for beer. (Burgess 215)

Besides his drinking habit, Haji Zainal Abidin also intriguingly does not carry the conservative image usually associated with a person who has performed the *haj*, instead preferring a Western-styled outfit. His choice of beverage, together with his way of presenting himself to the public, signals how he has consciously chosen a Westernised lifestyle rather than his religious belief, as a Muslim. Haji Zainal Abidin, who carries the respectable title as a *Haji* is the antithesis of a view that, for one to be truly submitting one-

self to God, the person must abstain from any act considered *haram* or against the Islamic law (Nazirah and Zanariah 44).

Haji Zainal Abidin again, in the scene below, contradicts his own personal actions by airing his prejudiced views of other female Muslim Malay characters with his own self, who loves to drink beer, by labelling them as un-Islamic, being influenced by the West, drinking beers, wearing make-up and high heels. Indeed, Burgess' portrayal of the Muslim Malay female characters mirror the real-life scenario then where adoption of makeup, namely powder and lipstick, and high heels, among other Western importation styles, such as revealing gowns, became increasingly widespread among Muslim Malay women during pre-independence Malaya (*Saudara* 16 August 1930 qtd. in Nazirah 45):

"[...] A lady, yes. More of a lady than these Malay women, who are no true Muslims. They walk about in their powder and high heels, drinking beer publicly. They have no shame." "There's no way out, is there?" said Hardman. "If I marry her, I'll have to enter Islam." "And why should you not?" stormed Haji Zainal Abidin. "It is the true religion, you Christian bastard. It is the only one. The rest are mere imitations." "Oh, you just don't understand." Hardman felt hopeless again. Soon he said, "You'll have to help me find a name. A Muslim name." (Burgess 217)

In the scene above, we can see Haji Zainal Abidin and Hardman discussing Hardman's conversion to Islam in order to marry another female Muslim Malay character, named 'Che Normah. Hardman, who is facing financial difficulties due to his crumbling career as a lawyer, is forced to marry 'Che Normah, a rich widow, for money. Here, Haji Zainal Abidin asserts his strong belief of Islam and is portrayed by Burgess as feeling agitated when Hardman questions the need for his religion conversion.

Haji Zainal Abidin is portrayed as very supportive of Hardman's marriage to 'Che Normah and conversion to Islam and, rather than feeling obliged to set a good example to Hardman, he ironically calls for beer to celebrate Hardman's conversion:

"I shall go round to her house after dinner," said Hardman with gloom. "We shall all go," cried Haji Zainal Abidin. "We shall have a party. We shall go round and collect the others. We shall buy beer. We shall call for Kadir first. He has a motor-cycle and sidecar [...]" "This is a great occasion. An infidel has been called home to the true way. Allah be praised." He drained his beer standing, sighed with satisfaction, banged down the tall glass. He led the way out, singing in a thin muezzin's wail. (Burgess 217-218)

Here, we argue that Haji Zainal Abidin in fact embodies the Muslim Malay characters that he earlier dismissed as 'no true Muslims' by drinking beer while singing praises to God for Hardman's conversion as a Muslim. After finishing the celebration with the alcoholic beverage, Haji Zainal Abidin bizarrely sings the *muezzin's* wail, the Muslim call for prayers.

### Abdul Kadir: The Intellectual Drunkard

Similar to Haji Zainal Abidin, another Muslim Malay character, Abdul Kadir, a staff from Haji Ali College, is portrayed

as being fond of alcoholic drinks as seen in the following scene at 'Che Normah's house:

Abdul Kadir has 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 whisky into a kitchen pail. He had seasoned this foaming broth with red peppers and invited all to drink deep. This had been his sole contribution to the victualling of the party. (Burgess 230)

As can be seen above, Abdul Kadir is well known by the other characters through his love for the forbidden drink despite showing his identity as a Muslim Malay as indicated by his name. He is also portrayed as a person who is well-versed with the types of alcoholic drink served at the party.

Although Abdul Kadir is very open about his fondness for alcoholic beverages, he, however, is also vocal in voicing his thoughts on Islamic related topics and ethnically sensitive issues that offend the hosts of the parties he attend. These provocative questions are ironically asked when he himself is being in an extreme state of intoxication:

He regularly apologised for the fact, calling at friends' houses to express regret for his inability to return past hospitality, continuing the apologies over the hastily-laid extra dinner-place, the beer that had to be sent for, forgetting the apologies over the final nightcap, when he would ask such provocative questions as: "What is religion?" "Why do we allow the white man to stay?" "Why cannot Islam develop a more progressive outlook?" It was such questions as these that slammed the cork in his host's bottle. (Burgess 230)

Interestingly, other characters see Abdul Kadir's mixed parentage background as a reason for him to act recklessly:

Much could be excused him anyway, for he was no true Malay. He was a mixture of Arab, Chinese and Dutch, with a mere formal sprinkling of Malay floating, like those red peppers, on the surface. His friends, complacently pitying this eccentric product of miscegenation, would forget the foreign bodies in their own blood. Haji Zainal Abidin would cease to be mainly Afghan; 'Che Abdullah no longer spoke the Siamese he had sucked from his mother; little Hussein forgot that his father was a Bugis. When they talked about Malay self-determination, they really meant that Islam should frighten the Chinese with visions of hell; but perhaps they did not even mean that. They themselves were too fond of the bottle to be good Muslims; they even kissed women and eat doubtful meat. They did not really know what they wanted. (Burgess 230-231)

The description above shows that, for one to be a 'true Malay', one needs to come from a pure Malay parentage and, as Abdul Kadir is portrayed as a character who does not fulfil this criteria, it is only understandable that he lives a binarist way of life, incorporating a more Westernised lifestyle through his love of alcoholic drinks while still ironically voicing out his distaste of the West, through his religious belief, as a Muslim. Abdul Kadir, and his friends, Haji Zainal Abidin, Hussein and 'Che Abdullah, are further described as not being quite sure of what they really want in their lives, committing religious of-

fences through their adoption of the Westernised lifestyle, while still maintaining their identities as Muslims, signalling their own in-between identities, supporting earlier similar views as posited by Ida B. B. (2010) and Farahanna et. al (2014).

### 'Che Normah: The Self-righteous Drinking Party Organiser

Another Muslim Malay character, 'Che Normah, is first portrayed by Burgess in a scene at her house as a person who incorporates a Westernised lifestyle through her love for parties:

'Che Normah wrinkled her flat splay nose in disgust as the servant swabbed the doorstep. She liked a party, but did not like a party to get out of hand. When she had been mistress of two rubber estates the parties had been more decorous; much whisky had been taken, ribald songs sung, but the white man usually knew when he had gone too far, he could usually be controlled [...] Give a little alcohol, however, to men like Mat bin Hussein, Din, Ariffin, Haji Zainal Abidin, and you could always expect the worst [...] And to think that that fool of a *haji* had proposed naming him after the drunken improvident lout Kadir. Normah had put her foot down. He was to be called Abdullah. That was to be his mosque-name and his burial-name. In the house he was still to be called Ruperet. (Burgess 231- 232)

'Che Normah, a twice widowed character after both of her white husbands were shot dead by the communists, is portrayed by Burgess as a Malay character who, despite being a Muslim, regularly hosts alcohol-laden parties. Despite this, 'Che Normah always expresses her disgust over other Muslim Malay characters who drink at her parties, due to their lack of self-control and antics after getting highly intoxicated with their beloved beverage. In spite of her love for alcohol-laden parties, 'Che Normah is ironically against Haji Zainal Abidin's idea of naming Hardman (whom she refers to as "Ruperet"), her future husband, after Kadir, being well aware of his drunken antics. Her refusal demonstrates how, despite being well associated with what is regarded as a more Westernised lifestyle, 'Che Normah is fully aware of and is concerned with the negative connotation that Abdul Kadir's name might bring to Hardman when he converts to Islam.

'Che Normah is interestingly portrayed as a good Malay and a good Muslim, although Burgess' further description of her is a paradox of what is truly regarded as a good Malay and a good Muslim:

'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 like to wear European dress occasionally, to drink stout and pink gin and to express ignorance about the content of the Koran. (Burgess 232)

The portrayal of 'Che Normah, whose family originally came from Aceh, an Islamic state situated in Northern Sumatra, as being both a good Malay and a good Muslim, are not manifested through her fondness of dressing herself in European styled clothing, the occasional drink of alcoholic beverages, namely stout and pink gin, which is considered

*haram* in Islam, and also her ignorance of other Islamic teachings from the Muslim holy book of *Qur'an*. Here, 'Che Normah's love for European attire echoes a view by Lewis, Nazirah and Suriani that Western attire was a common sight especially among the wealthier Muslim Malays from pre-independence Malaya due to the impact of socialising with the Westerners and the admiration of Western movies, and was perceived as a symbol of advancement (72-73; 1397; 180).

Despite the various depictions of 'Che Normah's preference of a more Westernised lifestyle, the following scene, however, demonstrates how 'Che Normah reverts back to her belief as a Muslim when she sees Hardman talking to another white character, a Catholic priest named Father Laforgue:

Then she saw him prepare to move off and then someone come on to the scene up left, and accost him gently. The storms began to stir in her eyes, for, despite everything, she was still a daughter of Islam, and the man that Rupert Hardman was talking to was just the man he should not be talking to. She banged her fist on the empty curry plate and it cracked in two. (Burgess 235)

As can be seen above, 'Che Normah is extremely upset over Hardman's meeting with his long-time friend, Father Laforgue, which she sees as inappropriate after his conversion to Islam, despite her own association with what is deemed as a more Westernised lifestyle. This scene echoes a view by Syed Husin where, when asked, a person will still proudly announce themselves as Muslims in spite of their detachment to their identity as Muslim Malays (58).

'Che Normah's disapproval of Hardman's friendship with Father Laforgue is further expressed in the scene below, where she attacks Hardman with her sharp words at her house:

There was a lot of reduplication, and from the swirling pot of her anger he picked out *chakap-chakap* and *orang-orang Nasrani* as the main ingredients. He was accused of chatting-chatting with the man-man Christian [...] "Christian men not good. Japanese Christian and Germans Christian and all bad men who come to Malaya Christian. Christians believe in three Gods, contrary to Muslim teaching." [...] "You must promise me that," said 'Che Normah. "Not to see that *padre* again." (Burgess 246)

Again, 'Che Normah adheres to her belief as a Muslim by comparing the number of Gods worshipped by the Christians with Islam, a monotheist religion, and instructs Hardman to cut all his ties with Father Laforgue, whom she sees as a possible threat to her religion. 'Che Normah even expresses her disapproval of everyone who conforms to Christianity by over-generalising them as bringing bad influences. What 'Che Normah has failed to realise is that both her former deceased husbands and also Hardman were of that belief before converting to Islam.

During a party, 'Che Normah demands her newly converted husband, Hardman, to wear a *songkok*, a Malay traditional headgear usually associated with religious related ceremonies, while she, herself, is clad in a tight European gown, mirroring her love for the West. Paradoxically, Haji

Zainal Abidin is also portrayed as wearing another headgear with strong religious association, the *haji* turban, bearing a strong trace of Arabic influence, usually worn by a person who has gone to *Mecca* to perform the *haj* (Nazirah 72):

Rupert Hardman slunk about self-consciously in his *songkok*. His wife, magnificent in a tight European gown, had insisted that he wear this token of his conversion [...] He felt foolish under the black oval cap and he sought strong drink from Abdul Kadir. Haji Zainal Abidin greeted Hardman with loud harsh laughter and a vista of red throat and many teeth. He cried: "Tonight they try to make us both bloody fools, me in my *haji's* turban and you in that stupid little cap. Still," he said, gulping the orange crush that was fat with gin, "we must proclaim to the world that we are of the Faith. Not like this bloody fool here who looks like a bloody tramp." Abdul Kadir had come straight from a party in one of the town *kedais*, and had had little time to change [...] He blinked nervously over his glasses, trying to hide in a huge hairy hand his flask of gin. Soon, Hardman foresaw, he would grow nautical, jolly jack in port for the night, cursing and blinding but, like a court jester, without rebuke. (Burgess 270)

Despite wearing the symbolic headgear, it, nonetheless, does not stop Haji Zainal Abidin from savouring alcohol spiked beverage, a contrast to the image he is supposed to be carrying, both through his *haji* turban and also through the religious title he is associated with, as a *Haji* himself. The headgear, as Haji Zainal Abidin sees it, acts more as a way to protect his image by projecting a more religious and desirable image, as opposed to Abdul Kadir, who is more open with his fondness for alcoholic drinks and the Westernised image. Haji Zainal Abidin's attitude towards the religious symbolic headgears also mirrors a view by Nazirah and Zanariah that Malays in pre-independence Malaya tend to view adopting a Western lifestyle brought by the colonisers as essential for one to thrive in their life (43). In addition, the more modest traditional Muslim Malay attire was also regarded as unfashionable and inappropriate for attending parties or even for work related purposes (Kemajuan Melayu April 1932: 7 qtd. in Nazirah 47)

'Che Normah's concern over the image Hardman is carrying in the public eyes is further explained in a scene at her house during a row with her husband:

"Ruperet, you must be very, very careful. I expected you to be different from the other two. But you have got drunk and you have been with other women and you have cursed the Prophet in the white man's club." "I haven't. I haven't looked at another woman." And that was true. Normah was a full-time job. "And I haven't said a word about the Prophet." "You have said that the Prophet could not read and write." "But he couldn't. Everybody knows that." "And the Kathi and the Mufti have been hearing about you and they are saying that you are not a good Moslem. How do you think this makes me appear in the eyes of the town?" (Burgess 347)

As demonstrated above, while she openly professes her own association with alcoholic drinks, 'Che Normah,

however, feels that Hardman's fondness for the beverage and act of commenting negatively on the Prophet will jeopardise her image as a Muslim in the eyes of her community.

In another scene, 'Che Normah again adheres to her belief as a Muslim, when Hardman airs questions regarding Islam:

"Look," said Hardman, getting up from his chair, "I'm going out." "Oh, no, you are not." She stood, arms folded, by the open door, backed by harsh daylight and coarse greenery. "Your office is closed today. I will not have you going off to see your debauched white friends and skulking behind their closed door and desecrating the fasting month with drinking. You will stay with me." "I have no white friends," he said angrily, "debauched or otherwise. You've seen to that. You got rid of my best friend, you had him thrown out of the State. Just because he was trying to help a dying man. And then you say that Islam is tolerant. Why, Islam is..." "You will not say bad things about religion," she said quietly, undulating a step or two towards him. (Burgess 348)

As seen above, Hardman, who tries to run away from the heated argument with 'Che Normah, is stopped by her over the fear that he will further damage the image she is fiercely protecting. These include banning Hardman from meeting his white friends, specifically implying it to Father Laforgue who has been thrown out of state after a misunderstanding with other Muslim characters, and performing other possible acts that are considered as insulting the holy month of *Ramadhan*, where Muslims are required to fast from dawn till dusk for the whole month. In addition, 'Che Normah, who herself does not conform to the Islamic teachings, is also seen as becoming increasingly irate when Hardman starts to question what he views as Islam's lack of leniency. This act is ironical as it, again, reflects a mainstream view that, despite not conforming to Islamic teachings, such as praying and fasting only on certain occasions, some Muslim Malays will still be deeply offended by any negative remarks made on Islam (Syed Husin 58).

In the closing chapter of *The Enemy in the Blanket*, Hardman and 'Che Normah are on their way to *Mecca* together to perform the *haj* pilgrimage. 'Che Normah, believing that her husband, Hardman has changed for the better, is overjoyed, singing praises for his newly formed religious identity:

She has great hopes for me now and says frankly she doubts if she will ever have to call the axe men in. It is enough that I have realised my wickedness and repented. God will forgive the repentant sinner. She sees the two of us entering heaven, hand in hand, both clad in shining costume of pilgrims. She then suggested that we repair to our cabin for a while but I said I did not feel very well. True enough. I played cards and drank secret gin with the chief engineer, the ship's doctor and the restaurateur in the chief cabin last night. Normah believed that I had gone to a reading of the Koran. (Burgess 366)

'Che Normah's newly found hope, however, is slowly dismantled by Hardman who is secretly plotting his way out of his marriage and indulging in gin behind her back. It is

also interesting to note that, while 'Che Normah states how all Hardman's sins will be forgiven by God when he repents, there is not a mention of 'Che Normah's own sins despite her preference for a Westernised lifestyle, seemingly more concerned with the image Hardman is carrying as her husband in the eyes of the Muslim Malay community.

## CONCLUSION

As discussed by Ida B. B. in an earlier study, The Muslim Malay characters in the *The Enemy in the Blanket*, despite professing themselves as Muslims, are frequently portrayed as carrying out acts that do not follow Islamic rulings, namely the consumption of alcoholic beverages, among other religious offences. This is exactly true with regards to the characters we have analysed in this study, namely Haji Zainal Abidin, Abdul Kadir and 'Che Normah, who, despite being Muslims, are portrayed as treating the consumption of alcoholic drinks as a norm in their daily lives. We have also found that, out of the three analysed Muslim Malay characters, only two of them, namely Haji Zainal Abidin and 'Che Normah, are indeed trapped in-between their identities; between their beliefs as a Muslim and also their choice of what is seen as a more Westernised lifestyle, represented mainly through the heavy consumption of alcoholic drinks and also the choice of attire.

However, despite their similarities, we have discovered that 'Che Normah's liminality is different from Haji Zainal Abidin and Abdul Kadir's as, rather than being personally conflicted between following the Islamic teachings and the Westernised lifestyle, her source of conflict is embodied through her concern over her husband's image (Hardman) as a Muslim, in the public eyes of the Muslim Malay society, and also her preference for a Westernised lifestyle. Her concern over Hardman's image is depicted through her various attempts of controlling his life, namely cutting his ties with his white friends, whom she sees as conveying negative influences, namely Father Laforgue, prohibiting him from consuming alcoholic drinks, controlling the way he dresses and ensuring that he follows or performs certain elements in the Tenets of Islam, such as performing the *haj* and also fasting during the month of *Ramadhan*. While she is deeply concerned with her husband's image, which exhibits 'Che Normah's awareness of the conflicting elements of her belief and also her preference for a Westernised lifestyle, she, nonetheless, does not seem to be concerned with her own life choices, namely the consumption of alcoholic drinks and choice of her attires, that are incompatible with the teachings of Islam.

The character Haji Zainal Abidin, on the other hand, is portrayed as a man of religious faith due to his title as a *Haji*, frequently boasting his sense of accomplishment in fulfilling the fourth element of the Tenets of Islam although his own acts are rarely translated to the image he is supposed to be carrying, especially due to his fondness of alcoholic drinks. Throughout the text, Haji Zainal Abidin has also been consistently portrayed as being at ease with the paradoxical combination between his image as a Muslim and also his Westernised lifestyle, going back and forth to the end of each spectrum of the two opposing states. It is safe to suggest

then that both 'Che Normah and Haji Zainal Abidin have maintained their state of liminality throughout the text without any aggregation, which in turn reflects Turner's view that the state of liminality may be prolonged and, in certain cases, might be regarded as a permanent state, namely modernity, trapped between the new and old culture (16-17).

On the other hand, the third Muslim Malay character we have analysed, Abdul Kadir, has been found to be the least liminal character as, other than being introduced as a Muslim by Burgess, and posing provocative questions on Islam while under the heavy influence of alcohol, he is rarely associated with other elements of Islam. We propose then that Abdul Kadir is not a character trapped between and between identities nor is he socially ambiguous, but has been shown to be fixed at the spectrum of a Westernised Muslim Malay due to the heavy influence of the British colonisation of Malaya.

With regards to our research objective as driven by our research question, we can safely conclude that our original contribution to scholarship on the research issue is this: while the element of Islam in the second instalment, *The Enemy in the Blanket*, still plays a large role in the analysed Muslim Malay characters' lives, namely Haji Zainal Abidin, Abdul Kadir and 'Che Normah, the second element, however, contributing to their dilemma has been found to be their preference for a Westernised lifestyle, mainly due to the heavy consumption of alcoholic drinks among them, and also their attitudes towards certain attires as they concurrently translate into a projection of image and thus identity. Haji Zainal Abidin, who carries the highly respected title in Islam as a *Haji*, is seen going back and forth with his preference for a Westernised lifestyle through his fondness of the alcoholic drinks, with his own religious belief as a Muslim through his wearing of the *haj* turban to represent his Muslim identity. 'Che Normah's dilemma, on the other hand, is triggered by her religion as a Muslim, and also the Westernised identity her husband adopts. Out of the three characters, Abdul Kadir is the sole character who is portrayed by Burgess as having little to no traces of any signs of dilemma. This could be partly due to his "mixed parentage".

Utilising the concept of liminality throughout the novel, we argue, has helped us to discover not only the common traits that they share but, most importantly, the vast different paths that the characters are portrayed ending up in towards the end of the novel. Our chosen conceptual framework, liminality, has also assisted us in elucidating the processes the characters have to go through in constructing their dual identities, thus proving to be a valuable instrument of this study. This process in negotiating the contradicting identities, as we see it, facilitates in providing a better understanding of the spiritual and emotional struggles faced by the characters in defining themselves through two states, as either putting their religion first or experiencing the endless dilemma among the Muslim Malay characters, the preference of a Westernised lifestyle.

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