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REVISITING THE PAST: THE WOUND AND THE VOICE IN RAMLI IBRAHIM'S IN THE NAME OF LOVE

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Abstract

The West has homogenised the East as "a single cultural formation" (Aijaz Ahmad 1992: 9) and in contrast to the assumption made, Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* epitomizes the "plurality of experience" (McRae 1993: xv) faced by three women in a sequence of three plays. Indigenous women who were barely made visible in the colonialist discourse are now given a voice in the play. There are three characters in the play; namely Mak Su, an aged *Makyong* actress, Sarasa, "the dance-mother", and Deena, "the food-lover" who exemplify the socio-cultural diversity of the Malaysian context. These women are the "forgotten cast-offs" in the modern world as they struggle to maintain their own heritage, cultures and traditions. The relentless tension between an array of binaries leads to a constant recapturing of their wounds in the past that further articulate their frustration and loneliness in the present. Through the narratives of their past, women's collective wounds are amplified ironically under the theme of "love" that eventually allows these women to relive their wounding experiences. Therefore, through the examination of the gaps in memory, the present study argues that their reminiscences transport these women back to their personal past and trigger their sense of helplessness and loss of direction in their present life.

Keywords: Wound, Memory, Women's Narratives, Love

Introduction

Due to modernisation, women in the East are influenced by the "capitalist culture, which is identified discretely with the West" (McRae 1993: xv). Acceptance and rejection of the western capitalist culture are common in post-modern Malaysian society. Rohana Ariffin argues, "such massive economic changes have resulted in social transformation" (1997: 70). The western capitalist development in the East creates fundamental change in the economic, political, and socio-cultural settings of Malaysia. The effects of modernisation and globalisation have affected the lives of the local community in Malaysia. Hence, the present study explores women's struggles in maintaining their own heritage, cultures and traditions in a modernised Malaysian society. As a result, relentless tension between arrays of binaries leads to a constant recapturing of their wounds in the past that further articulate their frustration and loneliness in the present.

The present study explores the women's narratives, which is traditionally silenced in the postcolonial context. These women's narratives in Ramli *Ibrahim's In the Name of Love* (1993) explicate the underrepresented "women's voices" in the modernised Malaysian society. The category "women" itself is regulated under other discourses such

as power, class, culture, race, and gender that further enriches the socio-cultural diversity in Malaysia. Hence, the definition of being a woman differs according to their race and class. According to Gillian Howie, "It is intuitively obvious that there are connections between social, religious, and cultural norms, values, and stereotypes that establish, maintain, and justify a sex-based hierarchy" (2010: 1). This study further delves into the women's narratives of memory and history, focusing on their voices and wounds that shape women's sense of Self. As mentioned earlier, women's narratives are silenced in patriarchal societies. Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* includes three women characters- Mak Su, an aged Mak Yong actress, Sarasa, "the dance-mother", and Deena, "the food-lover" who represent the dilapidation of traditional culture in the modern world. Their wounds and voices help in building up a "matrix of polyphonic narratives" (Nanda, 2008) that is inexplicably linked to the theme of "love". Marginalized in society, their memories provide a critique on the effects of modernization and present a new perspective for society to redefine identities. In addition, in their narrations, which the West has homogenised as the East in "a single cultural formation" (Aijaz Ahmad 1992: 9), indigenous women who were barely visible in the colonialist discourses are given a voice in Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love*. The play further provides alternative readings to women's narrations where their stories provide resistance and critique to the transformations experienced in their lives.

In Ramli Ibrahim's play, women's narratives unveil the constant recapturing of their wounds in the past and further articulate their frustration and loneliness in the present. According to Patrick Colm Hogan (2003: 1), "stories in every culture both depict and inspire emotion." To be precise, Hogan further argues, "narrative is intimately bound up with emotion" (2003: 5). *In the Name of Love* induces the wounds of these three women in three flushes that eventually provide a platform for them to voice their wounds via their past memories. The play characterizes the different socio-cultural roots in present day Malaysia and at the same time situating the challenges of coping with the modern world.

Elleke Boehmer further indicates that literary texts written by postcolonial writers sought to overturn preconceptions of Third World women's experiences as uniformly degraded, passively oppressed, or lacking in powers of self-determination (2005: 218). The western feminist discourse believes that "women are characterized as a singular group" (Mohanty 1984: 337). However, Chandra Talpade Mohanty disagrees with such assumptions where women of colour are generally homogenized under the category of "others". Mohanty argues that:

> The assumption that all of us [women of colour] of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis…Thus, the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'women' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women (1984: 338)

Despite written by a male Malaysian writer, *In the Name of Love* epitomizes the "plurality of experiences" (McRae 1993: xv) and it creates a space for Malaysian women in voicing out their struggles of maintaining their own heritage, cultures and traditions. These three women are the pivots of the study although they are Ramli Ibrahim's fictional creations. They, nonetheless represent the diversified experiences of women in Malaysia. Due to aging, and seen as outcasts in the modern society, they were generally being degraded, oppressed and marginalized by the modern world but their narratives helps them to recollect their sense of Self through their past memories. Likewise, Boehmer states that it "allowed them to mould and voice an identity grounded in these diverse experiences of endurance and overcoming, of both typicality and singularity" (2005: 217). Similarly, Judith Lewis Herman (1994) claims that "narrative [serves] as an empowering and effective therapeutic method" as its "organized, detailed and verbal account, oriented in time and historical content" contribute significantly to the aspects of healing and recovery.

According to Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow (1994: xii), the voice of women was suppressed and it continues to be devalued, marginalized and silenced. However, Evelyne Enders argues, "our ability to create a record of past experiences provides the foundations of human individuality" (2005: 3). The consciousness of these women in the complex socio-cultural setting accentuates their sense of agency that underscores the challenges of being a woman. In Ramli Ibrahim's play, it is through the narratives of their past that these women's collective wounds are amplified ironically under the theme of love, which also serves as the title of the play. By revisiting the past, the three women protagonists' memories expose their wounds in which Juliet Mitchell asserts that "memory is an essential part of the

process of humanization; psychoanalysis is concerned with the workings of, and the formation of, unconscious memory" (2000: 282). Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (2000: 5) argue that "Memory, too, then is intersubjective and dialogical, a function of personal identifications and social commitments". Therefore, through the examination of gaps in memory, the present study argues, "the past means nothing until it comes into being in the present" (Mitchell 2000: 283).

Joseph E. LeDoux and Valérie Doyère (2011: 153) argue, "Most of the objects and events that elicit emotions do so based on memories formed through life experiences". Narrative from these women is closely acquainted to the notion of emotion. Hence, the reenactment with the past has poignantly triggered these women's consciousness and thus permeated the boundary between joy and sorrow. The narratives allow them to relive their past via their memories and further prompts their repressed wounds. Hence, their reminiscences of past memories trigger their sense of helplessness and loss of direction in their present life. The relentless tension between arrays of binaries also lead to a constant recollecting of their wounds in the past that further articulate their frustration and loneliness in the present.

The women protagonists in Ramli Ibrahim's play are suffering from complex defenses known as regression, where Carl Jung defines as a form of "retrograde mode of application a reversion to earlier stages" (1985: 230). Lois Tyson (2006: 15) simply put is as a "temporary return to a former psychological state, which is not just imagined but relived". In addition, Tyson further claims, "regression can involve a return either to a painful or a pleasant experience" (2006: 15). The return to their past experiences further establishes their sense of *Self*, reaffirms their authority in order to serve as a therapeutic tool to heal their wounds. Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* provides an in-depth understanding of the heterogeneous identity of women in Malaysia. In other words, it substantiates the subjectivity of the female representations and foregrounds the diverse women's experiences in Malaysia.

The Wound and the Voice: Women's Narrations

Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield argue that the current focus has shifted from "women's experience as a given, to the complex construction of gendered subjectivities," (2000: 2). Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* propels the boundary in women's narrations. Nana Wilson Tagoe disputes the notion of homogeneity of women in her works. She claims:

> The emerging voices and writings of women outside the Euro-American zone presented a diversity of contexts and women's experiences, revealing the heterogeneity that feminism had subsumed under the single category, 'woman'. Second, the emergence of these alternative voices and works coincided with the destabilizing discourses of post-structuralism and the challenges they posed to the very idea of a stable subject (Wilson-Tagoe 2010: 124).

The first person monologue sustains the female Self that accentuates the agency and subjectivity of female representation in the play. The women in Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* were caught in the peripheral state, trapped in between the traditional and modern culture. According to Raihanah Mohd Mydin and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2012: 582), "story telling is a medium that allows individuals to express their hopes and concerns". The western cultures and ideas seeped into Eastern cultures and traditions, which have created tension within and among the peoples in Malaysia. Hence, this intersection problematises the genre of oral narration as it creates the state of in-betweeness for these women where they are struggling in coping with the past and present changes.

Being an outcast in their own contexts, these women sustain their state of being via their memories, which is channeled through their narrations. As such, these women were given a voice to relive their wounds and tell their side of the stories. Cathy Caruth (1995: 4) argues, "It is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available". The wounding experiences faced by these women echoed several issues in the play, such as their fear and anxiety in coping in the modern world, and their inability to face their past. Their wounds, while concealed but their narratives helped in channeling it out from their

memories to the present. Thus, their narrations exposed the "gaps in [their] memories" and revealed their concerns in the modern material world.

The Wound and the Voice of a Makyong Prima Donna

In the first flush of the play, the narration is told from Mak Su, who is an elderly woman in her late sixties. She was once a former Makyong performer, which is a form of ancient traditional theatre in Kelantan. Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof defines Makyong as "an ancient Malay dance-theatre form incorporating the elements of ritual, stylized dance and acting, vocal and instrumental music, story, song, formal as well as improvised spoken text" (1982: 108). Mak Su was also a leader of her troupe with a stage name *Mariam Titisan Airmata*, Mariam of the Teardrops. In the first flush, Mak Su constantly recaps her glorious days as a Makyong actress. Her passion in the art and culture of Makyong has shone via her collected past memories, where Makyong is still a popular form of entertainment. Mak Su's sense of *Self* is shattered when she stopped performing due to several reasons.

Firstly, the fast vanishing tradition of Makyong theatre performance in Kelantan was partly due to modernity and Islamic revisionist policies. At the beginning of the first flush, the narrator, Li depicts Mak Su in a disheveled state. Her usual aura as a Makyong prima donna has vanished when she stopped performing Makyong and settled down in a village due to the decline in its popularity among the local community. She realises that and says:

> Urgh! How I stink of sotong! Ala, just look at me. How not to do anything? Better for me to do something useful…Hai, what to do? As it is, there's nothing much else I can do round here. *Tak main* Makyong for months! (Ramli Ibrahim 1993: 9)

She was devastated with the fact that society perceived Makyong as a form of violation to Islamic teachings and claimed "Nowadays people don't really care about us [Makyong performers] anymore" (1993: 17). She further argues, "the old Makyong is not what the Makyong is now. In the old days, it was alive. *Segar*. Now, you yourself can see what it has become – not dead or alive" (1993: 17). Ghulam Sarwar-Yousof states, "Mak Yong, like many other theatre genres of the region, had divine origination or inspiration" (1982: 108). Through her conversation with Li, Mak Su relives her glamorous life as a Makyong actress through her memory. She indicates that "Those days our society don't look down on Makyong artists. Not like now" (1993: 19). The once highly popular and cultured dance is now linked to the decline in morality and deemed inappropriate.

Throughout her conversation with Li, Mak Su stresses on the difficulties in mastering the art of Makyong. It takes years of hardship to master such an art form before they start to perform for the audiences. Essentially, Mak Su feels the sense of contentment as she is attached spiritually and emotionally to the traditional art of Makyong. She mentions:

> Hoi, Makyong was difficult Li! O difficult. Those were challenging days. But in spite of the suffering, the hard work, we were in high spirits. Of course – because we're doing what we wanted to do! When we give life to our art, the audience were responsive*lah*. We could be proud of our good name. Worth the effort. (1993: 23).

Mak Su radiates her excitement when she delves deeper into her memory and relives her glorious days as a Makyong dancer. Moreover, according to Mak Su, this sense of satisfaction transforms these Makyong dancers into *goddesses* whenever they are on the stage:

> In those days, I was always made-up. Even when I wasn't performing, powder and lipstick were a must. Not like now. Those days even when we're not on the stage we'd make sure that we looked good. Just doesn't seem right if we didn't (1993: 27).

When I've put on my make-up. My hair in place. And wearing my Pakyong costume. My voice lilting, melodious…Moving with such grace. We're no longer ordinary people. We're kings. *Dewas*. We radiate magic. (1993: 29)

Mak Su used to be a prima donna of Makyong in her bygone days in Kelantan and Terengganu. She reiterates, "Makyong is in my flesh and blood" (1993: 15) and she further asserts, "the art has become me. How to separate the nail from the flesh? Impossible*kan*? I am Makyong. And Makyong is me. That's how it is*lah*" (1993: 15). Spiritually, the culture of Makyong is embedded deep in Mak Su and it has affected her in many ways. Then, she spoke about her enthusiasm and passion in Makyong since her younger days. She indicates that:

> Right from the beginning, I was crazy about Makyong. Long before the performance start, I'd be the first to sit on the floor, right in front. So that I can see detail of every movement and gesture of the performers, I'd soak in the melody and the way they dance, I would crane my neck to study every aspect of their stylized manners. Later, on my own, I would imitate them (1993: 19).

Since young, Mak Su motivated herself to learn and imitate other Makyong actresses during their performances. To be a successful Makyong actress in Malaysia has always been her passion and ambition. The art and culture of Makyong have shaped and constructed her identity in the community. Secondly, she voices her ill-fated feeling when she missed the chance to perform Makyong overseas. In the later part, Mak Su is furious when she got to know that Jah went to America for Makyong performances. Mak Su further clarifies the reasons she missed the chance of performing in America:

> Actually, Li, they wanted me to come too. But that time, I was very, very ill. They called for rehearsal. But what to do? I was flat on my back! Bedridden Li! Can't even get up! Some even thought I might not make it!...Also, if I'd gone – who'd look after my grandson, Abang? He's still at school! And your Pak Soh. Who's going to take care of those two? They told me I can't bring them. How can Li! And come on! What's the fuss about rehearsals! (1993: 13)

The interference from the socio-cultural and political agenda has led to the decay of the Makyong theatrical traditions in Kelantan and Terengganu. "They [community] don't ask for us [Makyong theatrical troupe] anymore." (1993: 9) According to Mak Su, the other Makyong troupes face a similar fate. "Even Ku Ismail got no interest to *main* Makyong nowadays" (1993: 9) Due to the decline in the number of performances, Mak Su was forced to discontinue living her passion and ended up drying *sotong*, residing near a fishing village in Terengganu:

> I'm old. My memory is poor. I forget many lines. Forgotten! Of course, I've forgotten them. Well! If you don't do things quite often enough, if you only perform once or twice a year – naturally you start to be out of practice. You get rusty. You forget your songs. You would too! Any artist needs to perform always Li! (1993: 37).

Mak Su, being an artist, to be able to perform in front of others satisfies her and sustains her sense of being. Based on Mak Su's context, the sudden alterations to the political and cultural stance have wounded Mak Su. In addition, due to aging, Mak Su also feels distress when she mentions that her present memory is poor and her physical condition continues to devastate her.

One of the functions of emotion leads to the "elicitation of autonomic and endocrine responses" (Rolls 2011: 176). Edmund Rolls further explains, "by eliciting a rise in the heart rate and the release of adrenaline, and thus, emotion prepares the body for action". Towards the end of the first flush, Mak Su feels excited when Li told her that he brought a cassette tape of her performance with him. Mak Su asks Li to play the cassette tape in order to re-experience the celebrated moment. Suzanne Nalbantian indicates, "If memory is viewed as a form of inebriation, it sets the subjects not on metaphysical heights but in a kind of stupor as they re-experience a past event" (2003: 44). Mak Su is exhilarated

and started to relive her Makyong chants and performances in front of her guest. As a castoff in modern society, Mak Su only depends on her memories in order to re-enact her glorious days of being a Makyong actress.

The Bollywood Mother and Her Unconscious Desire

The second flush in Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* portrays the life of an Indian housewife, Sarasa who devoted her whole life to her family. Due to Komala's (Sarasa's daughter) elopement with her enemy's son, Sarasa went berserk and acted in an exaggerated manner. Being a conventional Indian woman, Sarasa devoted herself predominantly to the domestic sphere where her main concerns are solely dedicated to husband and children's well-being, and house chores. Sarasa's narrations exemplifies her constant whining and blaming, which represent a form displacement for her lack of consideration for the other people around her. In one of the scenes in the second flush, she is blaming her husband, Siva for not being at home to solve the problem:

> Siva! Your fault. All your fault. Useless fader! Always never, home! Always work! Work! Office! Meeting! I'm just a woman! All alone to run dis big house. I go to market. I wash. I cook. I bring up children. Send to school. Send to class. All problems I am solving. I am scolding everybody. Fight everybody. De dance teachers. Music teachers. Parents. Tailors. Even judges! (1993: 48)

Throughout the entire flush, Sarasa appears to be impatient and nervous. The second flush provides a glimpse into the life of a dominant traditional Indian housewife who is unable to understand the modern-mentality of the younger generation. Her exertion of power and control over her daughter has created tension in the mother-daughter relationship.

The in-depth analysis of her characteristics reveals both her defense mechanism as well as her state of unconscious. Sarasa's unconscious desire was exposed towards the end of the flush. When her defense mechanism broke down, as Lois Tyson indicates that when that happens, the person will experience anxiety (2006: 16). A combination of "fear of abandonment" and "insecure sense of Self" exemplifies Sarasa's conditions in the second flush:

> I [Sarasa] will kill myself. Den they'll be sorry. But first, I will kill the boy. No, I will kill the pariah fader first. Komala! To run away with a common tailor's son. My Number One enemy! I am sure dat rotten Ravi knew dis all along. (1993: 48)

Komala's elopement initiates all the problems embedded in the simple yet complicated Indian household. Rebellion against the conventions is highly intolerable in the Indian community. The tradition/modernity binary builds up the generation gap between Sarasa and Komala. Elopement is a taboo among the traditional Indian community. Hence, Komala's action has tarnished the family reputation. Instead of blaming herself, Sarasa blames others as accountable for Komala's infidelity and she constantly puts the blames on her husband. Being the matriarch in the family, she is a typical and traditional Indian mother who is overprotective of her daughter.

Daniel Schacter (2012: 7) claims, "human memory is not a literal reproduction of the past, but instead relies on constructive processes that are sometimes prone to error and distortion." Sarasa's constant imagination stimulates the possible future events as portrayed throughout the second flush. Her collected memories have distorted her consciousness to the extent that she sometimes failed to distinguish between imagination and her personal memories. In addition, Sarasa always victimize herself in order to veil her selfishness. She says:

> I plan to go to India…I will take her with me. She will dance in Madras. I've saved enough money. Only God knows what sacrifice I go through, to save for that child. Look at me! Do you see a nice sari for myself? (1993: 51-2)

In the Indian community, daughters will generally take care of their aging mother by providing them a home. After so many years of nurturing Komala, Sarasa expects her daughter to take care of her. Therefore, she dedicated her entire life to concentrate on Komala's upbringing in order to secure a place or home for herself when she grows

old. Based on Daniel Schacter's explanation, Sarasa illuminates "the nature of an adaptive cognitive process that has been linked to constructive memory, where she starts to imagine or simulate possible future events" (2012: 8). She claims that "Not with my Komala. She must come back. Then I will find her de right husband. She will let me look after de house. Look after de babies. I will have a place when I am old" (1993: 51). The notions of memory and imagination can be easily confused as they "share common neural and cognitive underpinnings" (Schacter 2012: 10). Being a selfish mother, Sarasa never considers Komala's feelings. In addition, Sarasa also mentions that she has devoted all her time, energy and money on Komala in order to unearth her talents to be the successful dancer and actress. Sarasa says:

> My daughter, she is all I got. She is everything to me. I live for her…My other two sons can do anything dey want. I don't care. Dey are men – dey will always survive, anyhow. Besides, they will all marry one day. Den dey leave de house, dey have family – I no place: noting in deir lives. What do I do when I'm old with them? De wife will choose her mader to look after her childrun. (1993: 51)

Conversely, in the latter part of the play, Sarasa finally exposes her selfish intention, burdening her unfulfilled dream of becoming a famous dancer upon her daughter. She reveals that "First I want her to be famous. She must dance first. She must be on stage. Dance! Do everything I no chance to do" (1993: 51). Through her narration, the reenactment with her past failures resurfaces in the present. Sarasa exclaims, "You [Sarasa's daughter] can do everything I had no chance to do" (1993: 55) and "Everything I cannot do…wanted to do…" (1993: 55) affirm her unfulfilled dream. She indicates that "I used to watch the stars when they act, when dey dance. I only get small parts. Maids' parts. Sakis' parts…" (1993: 55). Sarasa's incompetence of getting the main role previously acts as her repressed wound. Her unfulfilled wish has weighed on her daughter's shoulder and hence created tension in the mother-daughter relationship. The domineering "I" has created a mould or expectations for Komala in order to fulfill her repressed desire of becoming an actress herself.

Hence, Sarasa's state of unconscious was revealed when she started to dance and act melodramatically while playing with Komala's dance costume. Then, she started to put on Komala's tiara, earrings and shawl. Sarasa indicates at the earlier part of the play, "Each of your [Komala] costume has a story to tell. Each jewellery reminds me of something" (1993: 50). Ultimately, Sarasa is reliving her unfulfilled dream of becoming a dancer by wearing the costume and jewellery. This scene projects her inner aspiration to be a successful dancer rather than being a submissive traditional housewife. Similarly, McRae also indicates, "the falsity of Sarasa's vicarious ambitions, as she pushed her daughter Komala through endless singing and dancing lessons, is in poignant contrast to the selflessness and dedication" (1993: xiii). Sarasa's sense of incompetence in the past has formed the wound in the present.

The mother-daughter relationship triggers Sarasa's unconscious to rematerialize and illustrates her sense of incompleteness. She feels incomplete, as her wish to become a successful dancer is not fulfilled. Hence, this initiates other depraved experiences that she endured along years of hardship raising Komala to fulfill her dream. Sarasa fails to see that she is "a parody to herself" (McRae 1993: xiii) and due to her self-centered behavior has caused Komala to ran away with the enemy's son. Her constructive memories are filled with errors and distortions as she imagines or simulates the possible future to replace her unfulfilled desire. Towards the end of the second flush, she acted as a rape victim, where the rape scene ambiguously represents her shattered dream and failure as a mother.

The Food Lover's Traumatic Wound

In the third flush, the rapid growing of multinational fast-food chains due to globalisation has affected the authenticity of preparing food in the multicultural community in Malaysia. Deena, who is very passionate in the art of cooking, is feeling repelled against the modern, and inauthentic fast-food culture. In the third flush, Ramli Ibrahim focusses on the life of a Eurasian, Deena who has lost her husband during the early Emergency days. Feeling devastated and traumatised by the tragic death of her husband, she begins to be obsessed with food.

To understand Deena's traumatic wound, Freud's definition of trauma is adopted and is understood as "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth, 1996: 3). The displacement of trauma experienced by Deena, also known as the "food-lover" in Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love* is revealed via the gaps in her memory. At the beginning of the play, she displays her passion in food, from choosing the ingredients to cooking them. For Deena, "the presentation of good food is like getting the right stage effects in a good play" (1993: 67). She enjoys the cooking process so much and she mentions, "When I'm in the dumps I aim straight for the kitchen. It's like a magnetic chamber" (1993: 75). John McRae states, "her obsession with food is a consolation, substitute and displacement of grief and guilt, and self-devouring creativity, all at the same time" (1993: xiii). Her passion in cooking, however has served as her defense mechanism and it poignantly reminded her of her husband's death.

In the present, the old Deena is lazing around at her living room parlor while watching a cooking show. "O fo! Masak Ayam Percek à la Kelantan! Aku punya speciality ini! Let's see how they do it! Heh! apa ni! Ini bukan authentic! Ini recipe short-cut! Not in my time Miss" (1993: 62-3). She is very meticulous about the "authentic" and conventional ways of preparing and cooking traditional food. Deena perceives the process of cooking as "[a form of] real art, knowing how to invest the table with the aura of anticipation, the teasing and whetting one more taste bud and the mollifying of the palate, and only then – the reward" (1993: 67). The mushrooming of fast food chain restaurants and the usage of inauthentic cooking ingredients (i.e. chicken cube etc.) on modern cooking shows anguishes her. Deena always believe that cooking is a form of art and that has made her a food connoisseur. She emphasises that knowing the cultures of different places will add some "local flavours" into the food. She says, "Call me old-fashioned but I always say that you should live in a place before you try to meddle with the culture. Especially an art as intimate as cooking" (1993: 63). Due to aging, Deena continues to voice her loneliness in the third flush. She says:

> When you get to my age. When your husband has passed over and your children have grown up and have their own lives to worry about. When there're only a few more of your genuine friends around that haven't dropped off the twig. When there's a senseless war on one side and cancer on the other – a woman my age, and size (she pops in a chocolate) appreciates God's little mercies. (1993: 64)

Deena's sense of existence when she mentions "Life is tragic, let's face it! Nothing, I say, is equal to the pleasure of good food" (1993: 65). She further bewails that "Let's face it! The whole human existence is sad. There is a lot of truth in the Buddhist view that life equals suffering" (1993: 65) and "I've learnt to appreciate food more than I could ever appreciate Opera…It [food] brings me right back to my own life" (1993: 65). For example, Deena reveals that baking bread is one of her specialties. She claims that baking bread will lead her into trance, channeling all her energy in baking the bread:

> Everybody knows that Deena's bread is unsurpassable. Nobody bakes bread the way I do. By George, when I prepare my bread, I go into trance. It's like the whole force wells up in me. All my energy and being goes into that bread! (1993: 75-6)

Deena could still remember the details of the tragic incident when she told the amah to prepare the yeast-blend. The reenactment of her past memories reminds her of the pleasure of baking as well as her husband's death. At first, she claims, "I always like to do the kneading myself. It gives me an Earth Goddess-like sense of well-being, of giving life I suppose" (1993: 76). However, the later part of her narration unveils the traumatic nightmare, where the memory of baking the "unfinished bread" seem to be distorted and turned into the symbol of death. The "unfinished bread" directly transports her to the traumatic communist attack that killed her husband. Deena indicates that "I was in the kitchen when James was murdered…I was baking my poor darling James his favourite whole meal loaf when the Communists stormed the house" (1993: 75).

The action of baking the bread, which is one of Deena's leisure pursuits, has paradoxically triggers the traumatic event. The scene of baking the "unfinished" bread reminded Deena of her husband's death as she expresses that she was "completely hypnotized! Struck dumb! Petrified. I couldn't even raise a finger! I couldn't even scream. My jaws were locked. The shock of it all!" (1993: 77) According to Cathy Caruth, "the flashback or traumatic reenactment

conveys, that is, both the truth of an event, and the truth of its incomprehensibility. But this creates a dilemma for historical understanding" (1995: 153).

Henceforth, the connotation of food, which once served as Deena's fuel of existence, has ironically turned into her nightmares. The recurring flashback of the heartbreaking incident will be forever carved in her memory. She indicates that she "will be forever born again to complete baking the unfinished bread!" (1993: 77) that has repetitively reminded her of her late husband. The "unfinished bread" also symbolizes the sense of regret, helpless and remorse for not being able to prevent her husband from being murdered by the Communist. She even thinks, "I would've been better off raped and killed with my James" (1993: 77). Deena further describes the situations during the attack:

> Somehow, I was completely spared! As if, the Food Goddess had changed me into a lump of dough during the commotion. In addition, that suspended limbo became the most unconsummated part of my life! (1993: 77)

Deena's present Self, besides her main preoccupation with food, has nothing to look forward to in her life. The pleasure of good food assembles her sense of being. Deena does not even care about her health, despite being diagnosed with high cholesterol, lung cancer, and hypertension. She even argues with the doctor, "But please don't tell me to stop drinking, smoking or eating. What has a woman to live for, may I ask?" (65) Her meaningless life has cultivated her obsession with food and in particular smoking cigars, which prompted her fond memories of her husband. At present, Deena claims, "Nothing, I say, is equal to the pleasure of good food" (1993: 65). She has been through "Pritikin, Scarsdale, Protein diets- you name it, I've been through it" (1993: 66). She feels more depressed for not being able to indulge in food that she likes. She confesses, "The guilt that I was letting myself down was making me sick even more than anything else! I was simply fighting against nature!" (1993: 66) Restrictions on the intake of food create the sense of guilt. She believes life is about preparing and cooking good food for your loved ones. For her, it should be considered as "a great celebration of the senses" (1993: 67).

Therefore, the suppression of traumatic memories has complicated the situation in Ramli Ibrahim's third flush. The death of Deena's husband has affected her physically and emotionally. Deena, being a victim in the modern political struggle, will be forever caught in the moment where her husband was killed during the Communists attack. The "unfinished bread" symbolizes guilt, remorse, and at the same time recaps her happiest moment with her late husband. Deena is neither indistinctly rejecting nor succumbing to the modern culture, which reflects her unstable sense of *Self* throughout the third flush.

Conclusion

The symbol of wounds is ironically represented through the theme of love in Ramli Ibrahim's *In the Name of Love*. These women revive their sense of existence through their narrations, where memories enact with their past. Although women's narrations are silenced, the voices of the indigenous women in Ibrahim's play are no longer being suppressed by the patriarchal ideology. The clash between traditional/modern binary shows these women are struggling to maintain their sense of being. All three women protagonists, Mak Su, Sarasa, and Deena suffered indirectly for being in the state flux. These women narrators relive their passion through their past memories, which highlight the plurality of women's experiences in multicultural Malaysia. Therefore, homogenization of the East is debunked in the present study, as these three women's distinctive narrations represent the different societal concerns in Malaysia. The present study explicates the past memories of these three Malaysian women that are triggered by their wounds in the past. Hence, the examples from the three flushes justify "the past means nothing until it comes into being in the present". Being caught in the state of in-betweenness, these three women protagonists struggle to maintain their sense of *Self* that seem to decay gradually due to the fast-paced modern lifestyle. Their narrations highlight the effects of modernization and the importance of preserving the different cultural identities. In addition, their reminiscences of past memories also trigger their sense of helplessness and loss of direction in the present life. All three of them have been living on their memories in order to sustain their sense of *Self* and 'value' in the fast-moving and changing modern world.

Endnotes

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