

**Ethnicity and Trans-Nation: Hybridizing the  
Malaysian Nation in Karim Raslan's *Heroes and  
Other Stories* and Marie Gerrina Louis'  
*The Road to Chandibole***

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I became acutely aware of my ethnicity when I filled out an immigration card at Changi International Airport on my first trip to Singapore. Beside the box labelled "nationality" was one labelled "race." I did not have any problem filling out the former but the latter made me dig into my stock of knowledge regarding racial identity. According to my fourth grade teacher, Filipinos come from the Malay stock so I confidently wrote down "Malay." Narrating the incident later to my friends in Singapore, I was asked if I were Muslim. No, I was Roman Catholic. Then, they said, I could not be Malay (Tope 207).

That confusing but certainly defining moment with my friends is one reason why I have chosen to embark on this project of ethnicity. Coming from a relatively homogenous society, I was not conscious of my ethnicity. That was the first time I had been told that I was not who I thought I was. My Singaporean friends were comfortable with their idea of who a Malay is; this, however, would be discomfiting to a Filipino who is really a Roman Catholic Malay.

Another reason is my observation that ethnicity is a way of life in Singapore and Malaysia and yet it is a topic confined mostly to the private sphere. The anxiety attached to the topic may have been caused by state injunctions but as breathing is a sure sign of life, articulations of ethnicity are surely the breath of identity; and yet they only reticently surface in quotidian encounters.

The final reason is that recent events in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Indonesia seem to suggest that ethnicity is becoming the most contentious issue in contemporary nationhood. Michael Ignatieff (1999) explains that mono-ethnic nation-states are now the exception than the rule and that national cohesion ["governability of these societies, the willingness of individuals and interest groups to compromise with each other, to abide by the rule of law, to participate in political and social life, and an occasion to respond to calls by the elite for restraint and sacrifice" (146)], has become unattainable.

*Ethnicity* as a concept is very difficult to define because of its elusive nature. In his book *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, Marcus Banks (1996) lists a number of theories on and definitions of ethnicity. Thus, I shall be selective here and maybe arbitrary as I pull together some theories and definitions that illuminate my project. The idea of ethnicity is quite old. The term "ethno," meaning "company, people or tribe" (Volkan 21) is attributed to the ancient Greeks, and the term "ethnie" used by Anthony Smith (1986), even to earlier peoples. Quite recent, however, is the ideology of ethnicity which arose from the great colonial and capitalist movements in the West as well as the science and technology that resulted from these. The first ideological use of ethnicity was evident among nineteenth century scientists who tried to classify human beings as they would the animal and plant kingdoms (Banton Chapter 2). Biology is destiny and an individual's fate is resolutely linked with his color, size, facial features, speech, and later, dress, religion, customs, etc. This early version of ethnicity is called "race" and has up to now ruled popular perceptions of difference. It has become so powerful that despite scientific findings that disprove the superiority/inferiority of peoples according to race, it has remained an invincible frame with which to judge people.

Still, it came as a surprise to me to encounter this nineteenth century theory today in the proposition that Malays are less intelligent than other races because his genes are recessive. Applying Mendel's law, this proponent hazards the hypothesis that even if everything appears normal, the offsprings cannot get away from the recessive brown factor (of course, he is referring to mice here) which he suggests affects "intelligence, diligence, resourcefulness" (Mahathir 18). The proponent is Dr. Mahathir Mohammed who in 1970 expressed these thoughts in his book, *The Malay Dilemma*. The book constructs the racial identity of the Malay through an alleged set of genes from which s/he cannot escape.

Of course, the author includes environment and other factors as the causes of Malay backwardness but the fact that those crucial paragraphs still stand out today when genetic science has declared that race does not dictate intelligence proves the persuasive power of racial perception and humanity's unwillingness to discard comfortable beliefs.

Progress in the social sciences soon gave birth to other theories of ethnicity, each one both supporting and contradicting the other. What is common, however, is the veering away from the physical aspect of ethnicity; in short, the separation of race from ethnicity. Frederik Barth (1969), for instance, tried to show that ethnic groups are socially constructed (subject to environmental constraints) and that the physical and ideological contents of a group cannot be seen in isolation. Neither are they stable or coherent. What Barth emphasizes is the boundaries that define the group. Ethnicity is what one finds within the boundaries that do not bound "something" from nothing, but rather distinguishes between two or more "somethings."

Barth's theory is significant in that it points to the basic foundation of ethnicity: the setting of difference. A group only acquires an identity when seen by another group outside the boundaries. The theory does imply that an individual not aware of boundaries or of other groups existing outside his/her own, will not have an ethnicity. Ethnicity is found only upon the discovery of boundaries, especially when an individual sees himself/herself in the eyes of someone from the other group. Thus, one's ethnicity is constructed by the "other" and not by oneself. It goes without saying that such boundaries may be territorial and political, but in many cases, just customary, perceived or imagined.

Yulian Bromley (1975) and his Russian colleagues contribute the idea that it is activity that sets people apart as; to quote from Lenin: "all history is made up of the actions of the individuals." Bromley defines the ethnos as a group of people with distinctive cultural similarities reacting to common socio political realities. Ethnicity then is performance and this performativity defines the individual not according to how he looks but according to what he does.

Corroborating the performativity theory is the instrumentalist view of ethnicity by the Manchester School. One of its more influential theoreticians, Abner Cohen (1969), proposes the notion of "political ethnicity,"

that is, ethnicity not so much as a form of identity but ethnicity as a strategy for corporate action. "It is a goal-directed ethnicity, formed by internal organization and stimulated by external pressures and held, not for its own sake, but to defend an economic and political interest" (cited in Banks 35).

This instrumentalist form finds fruition in modern Malaysia and this political reality informs the discursive paths taken by the Malaysian writers in English. Marginalized by a cultural policy that privileges the Malay language and culture, Malaysian writers in English have had to go through a survival challenge, determined to salvage their art and their ethnic selves.

The other term that needs to be defined is *nation* but the term is even more difficult to define than ethnicity. For the sake of discussion, I would like to offer some definitions that will be relevant to my project. According to Karl Deutsch, the nation is usually regarded as a community with common customs, manners, social ideals, "a body of individuals who could communicate quickly and effectively with each other long distances and about a variety of themes and matters, presupposing a common language, religion and culture, a heritage of meanings and memories" (quoted in Alter 10). The most popular in recent times is Benedict Anderson's definition of nation as an imagined political community, imagined because members of even "the smallest nation would never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lived the image of their communion" (15).

In Southeast Asia, the modern concept of nation is closely linked to Western colonial experience (Suryadinata 314). Boundaries have been defined in colonial drawing boards rather than through the natural aggragation of people. Also, the development of modern nations in Southeast Asia is usually in accordance with the imaginings of the state so that when we talk of nation in Southeast Asia, we are actually referring to the state-defined nation rather than the popularly defined nation (Suryadinata 317). Among nations with many ethnicities, the state becomes the national arbiter of ethnic privilege and power. Malaysia is a good example of a hegemonic social immigrant nation, terms Leo Suryadinata used to describe a social nation with a dominant ethnic group and a multi ethnic nation based on immigrants (309). Malaysia has two prominent immigrant races—the Chinese and the Indians—who have shared its recent history and nation building memories. But it also has other smaller im-

migrant communities, for instance, Southeast Asians such as the Indonesians and the Filipinos, who have come to share with Malaysia's bright national prospects.

Malaysia's international image is that of a nation with well-managed ethnicities and where communal elites are supposed to share power. This image, of course, is sometimes criticized by some scholars who examine the finer points of Malaysian political life. Eugene Tan (2000), for example, argues that ethnic domination is the basis of ethnic conflict regulation. Beneath the veneer of multiculturalism and integration, the central identity encouraged is that of the bumi "imagined community" from which the Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic groups are excluded.

To a country with many ethnicities, constructing a nation is a Sisyphean task. Establishing a homogenous set of Malaysian values is even more problematic in that on the local level, these values can be seen to be fragmented and contested (Kahn 13). "People do not blithely accept identities given to them, as it were, by either tradition or the blandishments of those in power, but that they often struggle against their interpellation by dominant discourses, or rework identities to make them fit their own circumstances" (Kahn 14). As identities are in eternal flux, the creation of nation remains an unfinished state.

The prefix "trans-" in the term *trans-nation* therefore suggests the liminality of communities despite instrumentalist policies regarding ethnicity. While denoting the transiting of people in the geographical sense, the prefix also suggests a transiency of identities resulting from the immigrant communities' interaction with local realities.

The intricate relationship between ethnicity and nation in Malaysia can be traced to its colonial policy of importing labor. Chinese workers were brought in to work in the tin mines and Indian laborers were imported for the rubber plantations and the railroads. These immigrants soon acquired prosperity through business and the professional fields, and thus the Malays felt disenfranchised and unjustly marginalized in their own country. In May 13, 1969, racial riots broke out, leaving Malaysia with a gaping national wound which its leaders decided to cure with radical political surgery. The event also marked the founding moment of contemporary Malaysian ethnicity whose instrumentalist nature was a product of the political exigencies at the time.

I am not implying here that ethnic consciousness did not exist before 1969. There must have been stirrings when the British played one race against the other, when the Japanese committed atrocities against the Chinese, when the Communist threat during the Emergency created abnormal living conditions. But until the time just before 1969, there was a semblance of harmony and peaceful co-existence which made Tunjku Abdul Rahman exclaim that "he was the happiest premier on the face of the earth because he governed a happy harmonious people and nation" (Sabapathy 107). In fact, the general impression was that non-Malays found very little resistance to their assimilation.

It was relatively easy to become a Malay until 1969. Both the Constitution and custom required only behavioral conformity. Anyone who was a Muslim, who habitually spoke the Malay language and followed Malay customary law, was defined as Malay. This made it possible for Indians and Chinese to be assimilated into Malay identity through marriage (Provencher 1987:108-109 cited in Vethnamani 124-125).

Beneath the mantle of harmony, however, something seemed amiss. Prime Minister Mahathir (1970) himself wrote: "Looking back through the years, one of the startling facts which must be admitted was there was never true racial harmony. There was a lack of interracial strife. There was tolerance. There was accommodation. But there was no harmony" (4-5). What transpired was a kind of co-existence with only a minimum of cross-overs. It may seem to the outside observer that though the doors were open, opportunities for intermingling in a social sense were not taken as often as they should be.

May 13, 1969 was an important historical epiphany because it shattered the illusion of harmonious co-existence. The revelations of the days of violence created a national trauma that formed mental representations which would consolidate shared feelings, perceptions, fantasies and interpretations of the events. When the mental representations become so burdensome, according to Volkan, that "the group is unable to initiate or resolve the mourning of their losses, or reverse the feelings of humiliation, their traumatized self-images are passed down later to generations in the

hope that others may be able to mourn and resolve what prior generations could not. Because the traumatized self-images that are passed down by members of the group all refer to the same calamity, they become part of the group identity, an ethnic marker on the canvas of the ethnic tent" (45).

In a way, many Malaysians today cannot think of their ethnicity without reference to May 13. Not only were all political and cultural decisions in the following years based on the fears generated by May 13; the boundaries between ethnicities also became firmer, altering social attitudes and establishing a greater consciousness of ethnic difference.

...after 1969, there was a dramatic shift, when there was an interest in biological conformity. There was a need to have "pure" Malay parents. There was a sharp change from the earlier days when a person could convert to Islam and thereby "join the Malays" or masuk Melayu (Nagata 1984: 12-13, cited in Vethnamani 124-125).

The aftermath of the May 13 riots resulted in a process of nation-building that is highly state controlled. Nation building took a very ethnic path during which instrumentalist policies were executed. The New Economic Policy, for instance, privileged the Malays by supplying them various means of support so that they can catch up with their more affluent non-Malay compatriots. It also meant that the other races were required to sacrifice their academic, social and economic advantages. According to Rao (1977) non-Malays were encouraged to shift ethnic identities but without the assurance that they will even be considered Malay or bumiputera. Another example is the policy that governed the formation of culture and the promotion of the arts, the National Cultural Policy. Briefly, it promoted the Malay language and culture as the foundation of all artistic endeavors which resulted in the Malaynization and Islamization of literature. Because of this, the first generation of writers in English after 1969 were deterritorialized, taken out of their literary landscape and reminded of their ethnic difference. Two prominent ones from this generation, Ee Tiang Hong and Wong Phui Nam, went into external and internal exile, respectively. Ee's assertiveness made it necessary for him to move to

Australia, Wong retreated into his poetic world, and focused his artistic energies on an exploration of his internal universe and the intricacies of Chinese poetry.

But the works I want to examine are those written by younger Malaysians at least one generation removed from the bitterness of May 13. They grew up with the reality of the ethnic internal boundaries and a consciousness of where they are in the ethnic mosaic. While the older writers seem locked-in by the requirements and limitations of their ethnicities, the younger writers seem more ready to resist, to question, to create. They are not daunted by the internal boundaries that petrified others and have found ways to skirt around these boundaries or weaken their hold. More than ever, there is greater performativity in their practice of ethnicity, abiding by what they do instead of what they are, confident in their ability to choose what they are going to be. Despite state and cultural restrictions, they astutely combine self-expression and a savvy pragmatism in regard to cultural and political conditions. Even while they test their freedoms to the limit, they also find other ways of being Malaysian.

Karim Raslan and Marie Gerrina Louis, two young Malaysian writers, make ethnic identities fluid, at least in Malaysian literature in English. They depict a nation in transition and speak of identities that are dynamic and unpredictable. The prefix *trans-* denotes a crossing, a change. In the works of these two, there is nothing static and fixed about the Malaysian nation and its ethnic identities.

The publication of Karim Raslan's *Heroes and Other Stories* (1996) can be considered an important development in Malaysian literature in English. Sporting a Malay name, Karim surprises with the daring with which he writes his stories. The sexual scenes I am sure, have offended sensibilities in Malaysia so much so that M. Bakri Musa (1999) in *The Malay Dilemma Revisited* called him a soft porn writer. Of course his Eurasian blood would be blamed for his "misbehavior" but that would be a facetious explanation of his work.

Worth noting in this collection of stories is the author's effort to add more dimensions to the depiction of the Malay individual. For instance, there is in Karim's stories a tendency to disturb ethnic formulas. There is the Malay woman in the story "The Beloved" who is a company executive and has the upper hand in her sexual involvement with a writer.



Encik Kasim, a handsome cultured man in the story "Neighbours" is a practising homosexual. Then there is deconstruction of the Malay's generosity and filial piety. The family members in "The Inheritance" are filial on the outside but grasping on the inside. Karim makes heretical suggestions that Malays can be greedy, that they can feel sexual desire and not only for the opposite sex. He dislodges stereotyped notions that Malays will put family above all else, that women equals virtue, men cannot like men, that decent people do not give in to greed or lust. Such an unIslamic view puts Karim in a precarious position in relation to his readership and critics but I view this simply as the humanization of a community whose struggle to live up to moral expectations is often extremely difficult because such expectations counter basic human impulses.

I would like to discuss in detail one story from the collection, the story entitled "Go East!" It narrates the life of Mahmud, a young planter in Sabah who becomes fascinated by the wild East. Originally from the capital Kuala Lumpur, Mahmud sees in Sabah a Malaysia that is different, not only because it is geographically and culturally far from Kuala Lumpur but also because the restrictions and certainties of the capital do not seem to apply. Here, farmers' wives and daughters get raped by pirates, the life of a man is worth ten ringgit and prostitutes can be had for a song. It is a Malaysia transformed and transmogrified.

Interestingly, for Mahmud, it is also a place where one can be oneself.

I like Sabah. I liked it from the day I arrived. I think I liked it even before I arrived. I knew it was going to be different and it was. It was noisy, Dirty, rough and un-Malay. ...you're not expected to be one thing or Another. You don't have to attend endless bloody kenduris of relatives You hardly know. ...There's something nice about not having too Many Melayu about; they're always so disapproving—all that tak boleh, Tak halus, tak manis—it makes me sick. We're not an Istana any more And we carry on as if we're all courtiers or something (104-105).

Mahmud's chafing against his ethnicity brings him out of his ethnic certainty which finds him both frightened and exhilarated. Frightened by the freedom allowed him in the town of Lahad Datu, Sabah, he cringes initially at the excesses of his fellow planters. At first, he seeks the company of Khalid Apong, whose retention of Malay refinement and religiosity brings Mahmud the comfort of the familiar.

His secret exhilaration, however, unhinges him from ethnic expectations as he finds himself surrounded by other ethnicities. In Malaysia, these are newly come diasporas, occupying peripheral spaces and living marginalized lives. The luckier among them are servants of planters such as Mahmud. Mahmud's Indonesian female servant and Filipino male servant are proof of transfusing ethnicities transhaping the Malaysian nation. They are an unnoticed, unrecorded, absent presence that alter Mahmud's transfixed certainties. Shorn of citizenship and unempowered by their unofficially recognized ethnicities, the two have to rely on the goodwill of their employer, who significantly represents the ethnic group that wields political power. And they serve Mahmud well, he being their only link to state and nation. Illegitimate children of nation that they are, they can only assert their presence through Mahmud, the relationship defined by their attachment to him. As we shall see later, their illegitimacy and Mahmud's legitimacy provides sites of indeterminacy that promote the emergence of hybrid self-perceptions.

Karim uses the trope of sexuality to intrude into acceptable notions of ethnicity and nation. Mahmud's romantic alliance with his Malay girlfriend in Kuala Lumpur follows conventions. They are initially circumspect, mindful of the dictates of tradition and religion. In one impulsive moment, the couple spends the weekend together. Strangely, Mahmud cannot perform sexually.

The incident is repeated when Mahmud, now back in Sabah, comes home drunk and tries to have sex with his willing Indonesian maid. Again he does not perform. Is it because heterosexual sex with decent women is not acceptable? Is it because the women are both Muslim and sex with them is prohibited? Mahmud's real object of desire is Anton, his Filipino servant. Neither a Malay Muslim or a woman, Anton is the locus of a sexuality that violates the ethnic definition of a Malay man. He is an unofficial ethnicity, possibly illegal. He also suggests an escape from rigid ethnic containment.

Mahmud fights the unfamiliar urges, succumbing almost. In a desperate attempt to resolve this question on his manhood, he seeks the services of a 13-year old Filipina prostitute, finally performing, but only while furiously fantasizing about Anton. Interestingly, he remembers only the heterosexuality of the act and not the pedophilia, prostitution, homosexuality and non-Malayness that laced his sexual performance or how this act is inimical to his Malay selfhood. He creates a secret self outside ethnic and cultural expectations, a self that is not acknowledged yet because of its strangeness and its power to destabilize or erase the self he knows.

In another light, Mahmud's sexual performance can also be seen as a performative ethnic gesture allowing him to disengage from conventions that limit self construction. With his groin and his mind, he uses the hybridizing space created by sexual indeterminacy. While a definite racial Malayness and masculine gender defined him in the past, he can now explore non-Malay ingredients in the formation of self, which may necessarily include a new sexuality. This he can do only in a neutral space such as Sabah where the ethnicity of peninsular Malaysia loses its containing power because of the presence of other ethnicities and consequently, the loosening of internal boundaries.

The liminality of Mahmud's selfhood in Sabah suggests a similar liminality of the Sabah nation space. Here the Malay is not the majority. The distance of Sabah from Kuala Lumpur provides a social flexibility not possible in peninsular Malaysia. In fact, the intractableness of Sabah's way of life as illustrated in the story keeps Sabah apart, its strangeness leaving it outside the boundaries of the imagined nation. Also, Sabah's 'separate' history creates a fissure in the hegemonic goal of the state. A Filipino would say that Sabah rightfully belongs to the Sultan of Sulu, and was only leased to the British. If we follow this logic, then Mahmud would be the immigrant and Anton the rightful claimant to the nation space. Thus we see members of the community trying to transact an inclusion in a transmutating nation. Mahmud performs a connectivity to the members of this nation, but as the closure shows, the manner of this connectivity is necessarily different in that it consists of the ethnically unfamiliar. Mahmud has to shed off his part of his Malayness to connect successfully.

Published two years earlier than Karim Raslan's *Heroes* is a novel entitled *The Road to Chandibole* by Marie Gerrina Louis (1994). Using

elements of popular literature such as those found in romance fiction and the bestseller, Marie Gerrina Louis strikes an innovative path in popularizing narratives on Malaysia. Her novel is important to my project because of her choice of setting and the community the novel represents.

She sets her novel during the Malayan Emergency when Malaysia is still reeling from the effects of the war and when its birth pangs as a nation is marked by a Communist insurgency. It is a period of political and economic instability, it is a time when nationhood is just a newly born concept, hardly defined and still not completely articulated. The writer also chooses to locate her narrative in an isolated estate called Chandibole somewhere in Kluang, creating a community where lives expectedly intertwine without much difficulty since there are hardly any new settlers.

What is interesting about Chandibole is its wild mix of ethnicities. While it is predominantly Indian, community life is marked by the presence of a British manager, a Eurasian mother and daughter, a Chinese-Indonesian shopowner whose children have Dutch blood. The only Malay couple, while dear to the neighbors, disappears early on in the novel. The small street called Jalan Nombor Ganjil is practically a cosmopolitan community in the yet unformed Malaysian nation.

This constituency suggests that the Malaysian ethnic mosaic even in the early years of nationhood is not limited to three races, and neither are the three races easily categorized. Saraswathy or Saras, the main character, looks like a Caucasian—fair, very tall and has straight hair—standing out in a sea of Tamil darkness. Yet she is without doubt an Indian.

The day-to-day lives of Saras and her neighbors are full of performative ethnicity. The community members, in their actions, show ethnicity's divorce from race. Like Mahmud, Saras chafes at ethnic expectations. She criticizes Indian practices openly and refuses to accept rituals that she considers unjust. Saras is a challenge to cultural fixity and essentialism. Consequently, she gains detractors. Mr. Maniam, a neighbor, discriminates against her and her grandmother physically abuses her. By cruelly reminding her that she is a bastard, an ethnic outsider, the two continue to cling to primordial Indianness. But the novel's closure does not privilege them. Mr. Maniam reforms, the grandmother dies. The survivors of the community's vicissitudes are those who develop at least two selves (e.g. Nancy, the Eurasian Malaysian, Tjun King, the Chinese-

Dutch Indonesian now Malaysian), managing the syncreticity of ethnicity and nationality.

Similar to the story "Go East!" *The Road to Chandibole* hinges on the community members' transaction with ethnicity and nation. The community negotiates with history and ideology in an effort to define its place in nation. Chandibole as a nation space is trans-shaped by the historical events during the Emergency. It is threatened with the same dangers the rest of the nation is experiencing. The novel humanizes these events to emphasize its quotidian nature. For instance, Chandibole is attacked by bandits twice, connecting local experience with the experiences of the rest of rural Malaysia. But Chandibole, although carrying some of the ethnic prejudices common to multi-ethnic communities, seems to be specially gifted with situations that also disprove these prejudices. For example, contrary to popular belief, not only the Chinese avidly follow the promises of Communism. Young Indian men find cause in Communism, leaving their homes for a harsh life in the jungles. Not all Chinese are Communist sympathizers. Tjun King, Saras' husband, is a police inspector responsible for controlling Communist incursions into Kluang. Despite the different ideological paths they have taken, these characters think of the betterment of Malaysia. In the end, the novel proves that different ethnicities can imagine the nation similarly. Performative ethnicity transcends the boundaries of race and ideology, blurs the lines that used to divide Malaysians.

The novel, therefore, posits an intriguing possibility of hybridity as a solution to Malaysia's strong internal boundaries. Saras, the bastard, the hybrid, becomes the leveling element in the novel. Strengthened by social censure, Saras develops a frankness that all ethnic groups find shocking, but more importantly, she develops a love for truth that knows no race or culture. She transfigures the community by offering herself to the bandit who is at the point of raping a pregnant woman. Uncontained by a fixed ethnicity and having an 'offensive' origin, Sara gives of herself unhindered by personal or ethnic doubts. In her defense of the women, she is Indian. In her defense of the community, she is Malaysian.

Thus the novel suggests that Chandibole creates what Homi Bhabha (1988) calls a liminal space where one can be neither one or the other and where one can also be many selves. It is where the constant transfigurations and transformations go against the formulation of a de-

finitive ethnic identity. As the characters live their everyday nationalism, as they transact with fellow members of the community, so are they transubstantiated from individuals into a nation, transiting from transfigured identities into self-constructed ones.

In conclusion, both the story "Go East!" and the novel *The Road to Chandibole* challenge the assumptions of ethnic hegemony and instrumentalist policies in Malaysia. The works demonstrate that nation need not depend on ethnic hegemony and that difference, while sometimes threatening, can also be progressively liberating. The works also challenge the notion of a nation that is formulated by the state. It is the community that shapes the nation and this community is often transfigured, transmuted, transfused by transgressive elements that prevent the nation from being transfigured. As the Malaysian nation recognizes its peripheral communities and the various revisionings of its history, so would Malaysian writers in English continue their noble mission of trans-ing the nation.

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