(RE)BRANDING THE 'OTHER': AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS' NAMINGS IN DINA ZAMAN'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to study how the aspects of naming, i.e., direct naming and nicknames of the Malay women characters in Dina Zaman's selected short stories are constructed and/or contested, thus illuminating that names are not arbitrary, but are consciously chosen and important in the story-telling process. The corpus for this study is selected from Zaman's anthology of short stories, Night & Day. The chosen short stories are "The Kacang Puteh and Assam Lady", "Ani" and "The Fat Woman". These stories were chosen because they deal specifically with Malay women characters. Meanings related to English language will be sought in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (hereinafter OED) while the Malay language in Kamus Dewan. Such choices of namings employed by Zaman show that the author does not subscribe to the stereotypical namings of the protagonists, which simultaneously suggest her non-judgmental attitude towards the characters. Thus, as an author, Zaman has challenged the stereotypical naming assigned to these characters.

Keywords: Malay women; Feminist Stylistics; naming; stereotypes; patriarchy.

1. INTRODUCTION

A word is "the smallest unit of grammar which can stand alone as a complete utterance (Crystal, 1992)". There are various ways in which words are used to depict women. Feminist stylistics investigates the usage of some words, which consequently projects sexism or bias towards women. Among these are the use of pronouns, nouns and adjectives as terms of naming, endearments and diminutives, which are often employed to derogate women (Mills, 1998).

For the purpose of this study, the aspects of naming, i.e., direct naming and nicknames of the Malay women characters in Zaman's selected short stories will be analysed to see how their namings are constructed and/or contested. The operation of naming, context and relationship create a complex series of meanings (Reah, 2003). Therefore, when analysing naming, I will make visible the strategies used by the text producer to create specific effects.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study hopes to create awareness among readers that text is the product of ideology and ideology is established through the linguistic choices made by the author. It is through the analysis of language and linguistic devices that readers will be made to understand whether the author has challenged or reinforced the stereotypical representations of Malay women in her writings. As Fairclough (1989) puts it, by foregrounding the linguistic code employed in such texts, readers can demystify and denaturalise ideologies that are ingrained in everyday discourse.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms explained in this section are those that will be operationalised within the course of this study. The defined terms are Malay, gender, patriarchy and stereotype.

3.1 Malay

The definition of what constitutes Malayness in the Malaysian context is based on the constitution of Malaysia. Article 160 of the Federal Constitution of 1957 defined Malay as "people of Malay race who are citizens of Malaysia who profess Islam, speak the national language and practise Malay culture (Sheridan & Groves, 1987)".

3.2 Gender

In common usage, 'sex' and 'gender' tend to be used interchangeably. They are however, different. 'Sex' is defined as the biologically determined physical characteristics of human beings. The assignment of one's sex that is 'male' and 'female' is based on a person's genitalia. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that are given by the society.

3.3 Patriarchy

The word patriarchy is derived from the word 'patriarch' meaning father, a ruler of the family and tribe. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a "system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women".

3.4 Stereotypes

The OED (2005) defines stereotypes as "a fixed image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is not true in reality". The predetermined ideas are often based on general characteristics of an individual, group or object and are made to overgeneralise the others. As a result, the categorised individual is treated routinely based on this idea. Stereotypes can be either positive or negative, but they are all unfair and misleading and often confused with 'reality'. Women, for instance are constructed in the binary form or homogenized as meek, weak and passive while men, assertive, strong and active.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main thrust of this study is based on Sara Mill's Feminist Stylistics Analysis. Feminists stylistics derives from the combination of the term 'feminist' and 'stylistics' by Mills (1998) to mean "an analysis which identifies itself as feminist and which use linguistic or language to examine the texts". By using reading techniques that are derived from linguistic (stylistics) and literary (feminist) background, readers are made aware of ideologies of gender that are sexist and oppressive. The advantage of using this technique is it raises a reader to become "an active participant, negotiating with the meanings which are being foisted on to him/her, and resisting or questioning some of those meanings". In addition, it enables readers to expose sexism, political correctness and gender biasness in both literary and non-literary texts. In other words, it is used to reveal distorted images and oppressive ideologies of the representations of women in texts which "often take the guise of common-sense (Verdonk, 2002)".

5. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method of analysis is employed in this study. Meanings related to English language will be sought in the OED (2005) while the Malay language in Kamus Dewan (2005). Reference is also made to meanings as documented in social history.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Naming is the process of identification. According to Spender (1990), the choice of naming is pivotal because from it we "describe the universe" and "order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass". Miller and Swift (1991) reiterated this point by stating that naming are powerful symbols of identity in society.

Naming is not as neutral a process as one might think. Mcconell-Ginet (2003) affirmed that naming *characterises* and *categorises* people. Positive naming are those that carry greatness and honour while negative names are those that invite cumbersome or cruel comments (Miller & Swift, 1991). Clark (1992) contended that naming is "a powerful ideological tool… [that] represent[s] different ways of perceiving". Cameron (1990) asserted that it is a "culture's way of fixing what will actually count as reality in a universe of overwhelming chaotic sensations, all pregnant with a multitude of possible meanings". Both Spender (1990) and Shulz (1990) concurred that those with the power to decide, who at most times males, do not only control the language in general but also the language about women, thought and reality. In other words, naming is one of the ways society constructs perception of meanings including gender and gender roles. The danger of this attitude is that it marks how women and men are being differentiated and treated in society.

Sexist naming strategies in the English language are prevalent at the morphological and the lexical levels. The attachment of suffix 'ess' to the masculine form 'mister' results in the feminine 'mistress', which suggests a negative connotation altogether. 'Mister' is used to address a man while 'mistress' often refers to a woman who has a sexual relationship with a married man. At the lexical level, words that indicate an unmarried man and woman are 'bachelor' and 'spinster' which respectively contain widely polarised connotations. Bachelor refers to an unmarried man while spinster not only unmarried woman but also implies an (older) woman who is not likely to marry at all.

Sexist labels do not only exist between genders but also denote hierarchy. This can be seen in the form of address that is used in the English language such as 'Mr', 'Miss' and 'Mrs'. 'Mr' which is tagged to a male name most commonly to address an adult implies connotations of maturity or wisdom. On the contrary, the marked form 'Miss' and 'Mrs' is an identifier of a woman's unmarried or marital status respectively. In fact, the word 'Mrs' was contended to be a spell-out form from the word 'mistress' (Schulz, 1990). Those who are presumed inferiors such as wives, children, servant or employees are normally addressed in their given names or first names by adults, employers or someone older, richer, or superior (Fowler & Kress, 1979). In turn, the former are expected to address those in the latter by their surnames prefixed by an appropriate social or professional title (Miller & Swift, 1991).

Mills (1998) reported on how two different newspapers *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun* described women in relation to their marital status or motherhood. Women were either "Mrs Andrew Garner" or "mother of three". These forms marked their relationship with their husband and children. However, a man's name as in Mr Richard Steele did not mark his marital status. If it was marked at all, its form benefited him as it showed the man's position in a profession as in Lieutenant Colonel G. D. Bailey. Mills argued that a European woman is not free from the marked form, before marriage she carries her father's patriarchal surnames and upon marriage her husband's patriarchal family name.

Clark (1992) exhibited how a British tabloid, *The Sun* used positive and negative denotation of naming language to represent the attacker and the victim. Names such as 'fiend', 'beast', 'monster', 'maniac' and 'ripper' portrayed the sub-humanness of the attacker whereas attacker's details such as his name, address, age or occupation treated him in terms of normality. Victims were either labeled through their role assignments as 'mother of four' or negatively, 'blonde divorcee'.

Reah (2003) in her study of a random selection of newspaper articles on several well-known women in Britain highlighted that they were named in an informal or causal way or in relation to their families. Cherie Blair, an accomplished law practitioner herself was addressed in a casual Cherie or as the wife of Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of United Kingdom. Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist, was 'Yvvone', a 'mother' and 'three times married' and Kate Cawley, the prison governor of Wayland Prison was 'Kate' and 'single'. Ellie Barr, who won £135,000 in a singing competition was 'Ellie' and 'mother-of-two'. In another article, Kate Cawley, the woman prison governor of the prison where high profiled MP Jeffry Archer, was jailed, was just 'Kate' or the 'boss of Wayland Prison'. Cawley's former address trivialised her role as a prison governor whereas the latter suggested the domineering attitude of female bosses. Not only that, insignificant information on Cawley were purposely centre-staged, for instance information related to her attributes, how she resembled Archer's scientist wife, addressed only as Mary, Cawley's singlehood and the way she kept herself fit. These descriptions superseded her ability as a prison governor, thus, trivialising her post. In contrast, Jeffry Archer who was guilty as charged was addressed as 'Lord Archer' or 'Archer'.

It can thus be seen that the process of naming is essential because names provide persons or objects with identification (Harré, as cited in Valentine (1998)). In Malay society, a Malay individual is identified through his/her given name at birth (proper name), form of address, or nickname. The construction of the female Malay name consists of her birth name followed by "binti" before her father's given name. Therefore, the name "Rashidah binti Jaafar" denotes

she is "Rashidah, the daughter of Jaafar". Often the word "binti" is omitted, thus "Rashidah Jaafar". Malay females are also often named after wives of prophets, Muslim women martyr or words that have good Malay or Arabic meanings in the hope that the name would result in an amiable character.

Other than being addressed by her given name at birth, a Malay female may also be addressed by a term of address or kinship titles. In Malay society, kinship terms of address relationship either through blood or marriage. The term of address also extends beyond the genealogical referent to include strangers and neighbours. Term of address creates intimacy and familiarity between ties (Wazir Jahan Karim, 1995) and marks respect between the hierarchies. The classificatory of eldership is gendered across in at least three generations, the eldest being grandparental generation addressed as *datuk* (grandfather) and *nenek* (grandmother), parental generation as *pakcik* (uncle) and *makcik* (aunt) and *emak* or *ayah* for parents and *abang* (elder brother), *kakak* (elder sister) and *adik* (younger brother and sister) (Wazir Jahan Karim, 1995).

The last form of naming common in Malay society is the nickname (Asmah Haji Omar, 2007) or "an assumed name given by others" (Reah, 2003). There are two sides to this kind of naming. On the one hand, it can promote friendship and affection (Reah, 2003) while on the other, it can offend or oppress people. Asmah Haji Omar (2007), added that nicknames or "julukan" may be favourable or unfavourable. Che Husna Azhari (1993) noted that nicknames are common among the Malays (Kelantanese). In her short story, '*Mek Teh*, Mother Andam', Che Husna Azhari bestowed one of her characters a favourable nickname "Gemala" which in Malay is "batu yang bercahaya dan mempunyai hikmat" (Kamus Dewan, 2005) or "gem" in the English language. This nickname is given to a beautiful prima donna who is able to mesmerise the male audience (especially) through her dancing and acting abilities. One unfavarouble nickname which was popular during the 1970s was the term "Minah Karan" in reference to young Malay factory women who left the *kampongs* to seek better economic opportunities by working in the Free Industrial Trade Zone of Bayan Lepas, Penang. The Malay term translated as "women who deal with electric current" implies more than its literal meaning; it stigmatised these financially independent women as they are perceived as being "immoral" because they wore skirts and had relationships with men (Fatimah Daud, 1985).

A similar study also received interest from a Malaysian scholar, Shakila Abdul Manan (2000). She examined lexical structures employed to position both natives and non-natives in Joseph Conrad's *An Outcast of the Islands*, 1896. Lexically, natives are most often represented using negative and pejorative terms. Native women, for instance are described physically as "shapeless things" and "muffled-up forms".

7. CORPUS

The corpus for this study is selected from Zaman (1997) anthology of short stories, *Night & Day*. The selected short stories are "The *Kacang Puteh* and *Assam* Lady", "Ani" and "The Fat Woman". These stories were chosen because they deal specifically with Malay women characters.

"The Kacang Puteh and Assam Lady" is about an unnamed woman, referred to by the title of the short story. Besides being nameless, she is also not given any history or background. In 'reality' she is an insignificant individual who remains unnoticed by the people in her

environment. The only time she is heard is when she vends her tidbits to customers. She occupies her time by daydreaming of being a princess while selling her snacks.

"Ani" is about a local housemaid, juxtaposed as 'old-fashioned' (in terms of dressing and thinking) in contrast to her 'modern' employers and the other housemaids of Jalan 2/70A. She is a conscientious worker and religious. Her evenings are spent at the grocery shop with the group of housemaids from the street group trading neighbourhood gossips. However, Ani detests her peers' discussion of sexual fantasies as she believes that sex is a private matter that should not be discussed in public.

The fat woman is another unnamed woman character only identified by her fat body. She is portrayed as an outcast in the community. She is a prostitute, emotionally drained and embittered with life. The very limited narration about her background tells of her series of failures in love. Mistreatment by men has wounded her physically and emotionally. Therefore, she keeps her feelings suppressed.

8. FINDINGS

Table 1 shows that Zaman used the word the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady and the *kacang puteh* and *assam* woman interchangeably to address the protagonist in "The Kacang Puteh and Assam Lady". In modern term, "woman" refers to "an adult female human" (OED, 2005) while "lady" is said to be of a more polite term to mean woman (OED, 2005). Both terms are considered polite forms when addressing a female adult. "Woman" or "lady" when collocated with other words can foreground a genderised meaning, often seen in asymmetrical relation to men, suggesting a "marked form" (such as "woman doctor" or "lady lawyer"). Zaman, however uses less of these. Instead at most times, the protagonist is merely "the woman" or "the lady".

Table 1: Naming ("The Kacang Puteh And Assam Lady").

CHARACTER	NAMING
The *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady	- frustrated spinster (Zaman, 1997) - banshee - black woman - The *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady - The *kacang puteh* and *assam* woman - a princess - dutiful daughter

The protagonist is a nameless character or a character without a birth name. At surface level, a nameless character is perceived as an unimportant character, easily forgotten or unrepresented, almost like a flat character, most often because she does not belong to mainstream society. However, at a deeper level, a nameless character or in the case of the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady, her nickname suggests intense meanings. The general stereotypical perception of selling snacks such as *kacang puteh* (nuts) and *assam* (preserved fruits) is seen to most as an undesirable profession; it does not require skills, it is dull and it does not promise lucrative returns. Snacks are foods that are not part of the main diet; they are often considered junk food, therefore suggesting that a person selling the snacks is also not

important. However, the original motive of this word now receives a different twist with the combinative effect of the word "lady". Its combinative effect breaks the racial stereotype of occupation attached to a specific gender and racial grouping, thus offering a different context from one's usual perception. Now, it is perceived as a small-time business managed by a woman and a Malay.

In addition, this kind of business is normally dominated by men of low education, without training and skill and offers a meager income. Therefore, the use of "lady" functions to provide an alternative reality, purging the trade of its gendered racists and derogatory overtones. Thus, men no longer dominate the occupation as it is a "lady" who is the seller and she is proud of her profession.

The attachment of the word "lady" too, uplifts the status of the product to be one of considerable importance like any other kind of food. The *kacang puteh* and *assam* are of non-perishable items, therefore suggesting that the products and the business are long lasting. This type of business is still important to society and that the kind of trade that she is involved in contributes to a form of economic growth, no matter how small it may be. Moha Asri Abdullah (1999) verifies that small enterprises (for instance, like the one engaged by the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady) contribute to the national economic growth and social development of a country. He adds that the over-emphasis on large-scale export intensive enterprises dominated by foreign capital during the 1970s-1990s has resulted in the weakening of local domestic enterprises. As a result, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in particular are established in Malaysia in order to reduce the "imbalanced industrial stricture of the country, widening pattern of manufacturing activity and inducing indigenously-based and a more balanced industrial development (Moha Asri Abdullah, 1999).

More importantly, the lady in the story could sustain her life decently in this business as demonstrated metaphorically in "the table is what she depends on for her meals and life" (Zaman, 1997) without having to beg or be involved in immoral activities.

The *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady is also juxtaposed to two sets of naming; in the eyes of society around her, she is viewed negatively, as "a frustrated spinster", "a banshee" and "a black woman" while to the protagonist's point of view, she views herself as "a princess" and "a dutiful daughter". The labeling "frustrated spinster" shows society's unjust treatment towards unmarried woman. Very often spinsters are regarded as frustrated or disturbed human beings. Such labelings perpetuate the ideas that only marriage (or from the radical feminism point of view, submission to men) can guarantee happiness to women. While spinsterhood is made as an unwelcome state, bachelorhood is viewed agreeably. We hardly ever hear of "frustrated bachelor" for apparently a bachelor never leads a frustrated life; he is carefree and is always in pursuit of potential matches. The word "bachelor" is often conjoined to the adjective "eligible" which phrase means "one that many people want to marry, especially because he is rich (OED, 2005)".

The *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady is once referred to as "banshee" which is "a female spirit (in Irish stories) who gives a long sad cry as a warning to people that somebody in their family is going to die soon (OED, 2005)". The above meaning indicates that the protagonist as harmful, someone that is to be avoided because she heralds bad news to people.

The protagonist is referred to once as a "black woman"; the word "black" has long been associated in history with words that denote and connote a lesser quality, bad or evil with phrases like "black mark", "black magic", or "black sheep". "Black woman" somewhat connotes the character as a dangerous woman.

In her imagination, the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady regards herself as a "princess". This self-naming, which appears ten times throughout the text, has its significance. Princesshood suggests her yearning to be seen as important and to be admired. It is also indicated in the text that the princess must control her sexual needs and has to face a lot of obstacles in her life. The self-naming gives the protagonist reason to believe that her actions and sacrifices (maintaining purity and patience) are worthwhile. To rationalise her actions even more, she calls herself "a dutiful daughter", a naming that connotes a mother's blessing towards her daughter's actions.

Like the central character, the minor characters are not given any proper names as well. They are identified through their roles in society. The minor characters cover people from all walks of life, transcending age and gender groups. From youngsters (schoolchildren, yuppies) to mature people (senior citizens, women), from consumers (hungry customers of the Hainanese restaurant) to entrepreneurs (restaurant's owners), from the despised (prostitutes, drug addicts and whores) to the respected (a conscientious soul, the police) and from the natives (locals) to the foreigners (tourists). The mentioned individuals are deliberately unnamed or not shown to belong to any group as if to suggest that the indifferent treatments of other people's suffering is partly humane.

Table 2: Naming ("Ani").

CHARACTER	NAMING
Ani	- an aborigine from the Pahang jungle (Zaman, 1997) - Princess of the Hill *dara* (virgin)

The Malay pronounced "Ani" is a simplified pronunciation of the name "Aini" meaning "eyes" in Arabic. Indeed, in the short story "Ani", it is through her "eyes" that Ani observes and makes moral judgment of what is acceptable or unacceptable to her *kampong* and religious upbringing and chooses not to be influenced by the urban environment. As a housemaid, she is Ani to everybody, to her employer and even to her employer's youngest school-going daughter.

As shown in the table above, the nick-names assigned to Ani are varied depending on the speaker's perspective. Through her own gaze, she accepts her physical resemblance to the *orang asli* features, "an aborigine from the Pahang jungle". Even when the fishmonger calls her "Princess of the Hill", she recognises those words as empty words as they serve only to acknowledge her buying power roles. The word *dara* (virgin) used for Ani by other maids in the neighbourhood towards her was not intended to praise her purity or virtuosity, but more of parody, mocking her old-fashionedness in upholding her virginity in this modern era as depicted in "Hoi, Ani, YOU have problems! Who give three fucks for virginity? I don't want

to marry a village idiot and I don't want to get married. Oi, girl, spread your legs!" (Zaman, 1997).

Her employer, Moony, is addressed by the narrator as "Puan Moony". "Puan" is similar to the English "Mrs.", reserved for married women. Ani addresses Puan Moony as "kakak" which means "elder sister", a term of address initially used for elder female siblings or relatives in a family. Conventionally, it has been extended as a form of politeness or respect used to address other female individuals who have none whatsoever family relationship. To Ani, kakak is also "owner of the *jamban*" (toilet). The reference may sound rude to some, but, to Ani, who used to share a toilet with the whole kampong, having now her own toilet and "all mosaic tiled, with a shower" is a great privilege. Toilets, though very important in modern living, its existence and functions are often taken for granted. Most writers normally would not to mention this part of the house or to talk about toilet activities in their texts.

Moony and her daughters, Sara, Dee and Nora all possess universal names that are difficult to pin down to a fixed cultural or racial identity. These names are universal and commonly used especially in urban areas to indicate modernity or urbanness.

Ani who hails from the remote area of Jerantut in the state of Pahang comes to work as a domestic helper in a westernised Malay household which serves toasted bread, butter, scrambled eggs, hot chocolate and listens to English Radio Station (FM Four). She is the person who not only looks after the daughters of her employer but is also the one to whom Sara and Nora turn to for friendship and motherly comfort. As a person who wakes up in the morning with "Allahuakbar" being the first word uttered, she performs her morning prayers, avoids listening to gossip by walking away from them and goes to the mosque religiously. She is depicted as a paragon of religious virtues. Living in an urban area, which practises modern lifestyle, Ani, the housemaid continues to exercise her own belief system, thus providing moral and religious environment to the daughters of the westernised family she works for. She challenges the stereotypical representation of the household maids who are supposed to be passive and only performed ordered tasks. In other words, Zaman does not depict Ani as an ordinary domestic helper.

Table 3: Naming ("The Fat Woman").

CHARACTER	NAMING
The fat woman	• Mek Bab (Zaman, 1997) • gila bab • Jabba the Hut • that girl

As suggested by the title of the short story, the central character in "The Fat Woman" is mostly referred to as the "woman" or "the fat woman". Like the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady above, the fat woman was also not given any birth name. Unlike the interchangeable terms of "woman" and "lady" used for the *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady, the fat woman was never granted the title of "lady" because she is involved in promiscuous sexual activities. As mentioned earlier, "lady" is considered a more polite term than "woman". However, the term "woman" is considered a second best term, to that of a "lady". Zaman challenges the stereotypical naming of the main character in "The Fat Woman" by never addressing her in

derogatory terms commonly addressed to the protagonist such as "prostitute" or "bitch". By doing so, the Fat Woman's actions challenge the suggestive meanings of these labels. "Woman" in English denotes "an adult female (OED, 2005). By using the word "woman" to address the protagonist, the narrator treats her as a person who is mature enough and responsible for her own actions. The word "fat" collocated to the noun "woman" shows the physical state of the protagonist, who is harmless; normally a fat woman tends to have difficulties in her movements and thus would not endanger others.

Her neighbours nicknamed her "Virgin Killer", "Jabba the Hutt" and "Mek Bab". The protagonist is called "Virgin Killer" because "she took all the boys in the neighbourhood to her room and slept with them (Zaman, 1997). Zaman juxtaposes the notion of virginity to Mek Bab's (male) clienteles. The gatekeepers of the Malay and English language perceive the idea of virginity differently. "Dara" which is "virgin" in Malay is defined in the Kamus Dewan (2005), as "gadis yang tidak pernah (masih belum) melakukan persetubuhan dengan lelaki" or "a young girl (my emphasis) who has never engaged in a sexual intercourse with a male". In contrast, a "virgin" is "a person who has never had sex" (OED, 2005). This shows that the dictionary also observes double standards of morality. The idea of virginity posited by the authoritative Malay language dictionary refers specifically to the non-involvement of the female sex in sexual intercourse but in the English language it refers to both sexes. Dictionaries must function to explain words or be descriptive and not prescriptive. This is especially so when society in general treats the dictionary as a point of reference when soliciting meaning and interpretation. In this story, Zaman contests the Malay patriarchal norm that places emphasis on female virginity but not male virginity. The issue of maintaining virginity or guarding one's chastity in sexual involvement is biased against women in the Malay culture. The nickname of "Virgin Killer" suggests that males are also equally culpable in issues of virginity or the engagement in illicit sex. Zaman has thus, challenged the stereotypical representation of the Malay women that has been imposed by patriarchy.

"Jabba the Hut" is the other nickname used to refer to the fat woman. The name is derived from a male character that is portrayed as an obese glutton or a villain in the movie "Return of the Jedi" by director, Steven Spielberg. Zaman's use of this naming demonstrates that a nickname such as "Jabba the Hut" can be gender neutral. Again, Zaman has challenged stereotypical representation of the woman by applying a male gendered naming to the fat woman.

The last form of nickname reserved for the fat woman is "Mek Bab". The word "Mek" in Mek Bab, is often used to "address females in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu" (translated from Kamus Dewan (2005)). Amat Johari Moain (1989) states that this name-calling is used to address women in Kelantan whose names are not known. According to Che Husna Azhari (1993), "every woman is a potential "Mek" as a term of endearment". Therefore, it can be inferred that the term is normally used to name females in the East Coast to indicate fondness. The naming "Mek" also surfaces because prostitution or its related acts is not uncommon in Malay society even in what is considered an 'Islamic' state like Kelantan. Haryati Hasan (2005) in her study has discussed in great detail the social history of these women in Kelantan, from 1900 to 1970.

Connotatively, the term "Mek" is frequently associated with "uneducated" kampong women or those who are engaged in ordinary or unfavourable trade in the society. For instance, in the short story "Mek Teh, Mother *Andam*", Che Husna Azhari (1993) reserves "Mek" for Mek Teh and Mek Tok Gemala, both members of the Mak Yong and the Menora (traditional dancing troupe) who are regarded as having lesser "repute or breeding" and the "scourge of the village *imam*". Educated and good-natured characters are usually spared from such naming, which suggests that Che Husna Azhari's choice of naming is a conscious one.

The word "Bab" is the shortened form of the spoken Malay word "debab" which means "gemuk, tambun, berisi (Kamus Dewan, 2005) or "fat". Mek Bab"s state of body has been mentioned throughout the text as "face enmassed in fat" (Zaman, 1997), "unbalanced physical self ", "jutted out like a watermelon stomach ", "big floppy long balloons (breasts)", "beach ball stomach", huge *tetek* (breasts)", "old monkeys' breasts", "semi-hard plasticine, rolled and made big, like out-of shape sausages legs ", "misshapened fleshy pillars (legs)" and "lumpy backside ". Woman's body parts such as breasts and legs are usually used to accentuate male sexual desire but Zaman challenges the male fetishisation of women body parts by disparaging them with adjectives such as "big floppy long balloons" and "out-of shape sausages" respectively.

Another possible meaning of "Bab" as suggested in the sentence "mek bab, makan banyak sangat nati (sic) gila bab (Zaman, 1997)", is derived from the shortened form of the word "babi" which is "pig" in the Malay language. The pig is an animal that carries negative connotation in the Malay Muslim culture. Muslims are prohibited to consume pork or any pig-originated product or food as they are deemed "*haram*" (prohibited from the point of view of Islam). "Pig" in informal language also carries negative connotation; it refers to a person who is unpleasant or difficult to deal with or a big eater (OED, 2005). Often, in Malay society, words that have unfavourable meanings are not uttered; they are either spelled out (in Roman letters "b.a.b.i." or Jawi letters "ب.ا.ب.ي.") or shortened form (in "bab"). Zaman uses of "bab" to imply the word "debab" or "babi" in a politer form or in a euphemism which is defined as "the use of a vague of indirect expression in place of or which is thought to be unpleasant, embarrassing, or offensive (Crystal, 1992)". When used in this form, the original intended words are thus made less noticeable and less abusive. The combinative effect of the word Mek Bab shows that Zaman challenges the norm by accommodating even the most ostracised person in the society with a politer form of naming.

9. CONCLUSION

Naming is not only a referring expression to an individual but also carries loaded meaning. It characterises and categorises women, which in turn creates certain kinds of responses and attitudes in people.

The *kacang puteh* and *assam* lady, the fat woman and Ani are projected with two views of namings. From the narratorial point of view, all central characters are portrayed encouragingly, while from the perspectives of other minor characters, the central characters are described disapprovingly. Basically in these situations, Zaman is purporting readers not 'to judge a book by its cover'.

Such narrative technique employed by Zaman shows that the author does not subscribe to the stereotypical namings of the protagonists, which simultaneously suggest her non-judgmental

attitude towards the characters. As an author, Zaman has challenged the stereotypical naming assigned to these characters.

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