

# The Grotesque female in Malaysian poems: shaping the migrant's psyche



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# Carnavalesque

- **Grotesque body** - body image projected through various forms, not normally perceived, causing unease and horror. The form appears as a whole body or as fragmented parts of the body. It can transgress limits, fuse with other beings or transform to show degradation and inversion. The body parts may also appear exaggerated, dismembered or distorted.

- **Festive language** - language that is used during the carnival, and is usually violated speech with no qualms about the rules of decorum. It operates through curses, which cause injury and destruction, abuses, which violate or misuse natural affairs in life and profanities, which degrade the sacred.

- Parody - the distortion of human existence in official ideas of society, history, ideologies, realities and relationship through contrast, mockery and grotesque intrusions.



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# Post colonial literature

- Ashcroft et. al. (1995:321) explains:

the body is the inescapable, visible sign of oppression and denigration. In a more general way the 'fact' of the body is a central feature of the post-colonial, standing as it does metonymically for all the visible signs of difference, and their varied form of cultural and social inscription, forms often either undervalued, over determined, or totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse.

# Post colonial writer

- loss of identity in the post-colonial psyche is 'dislocation', which results "from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour" (Ashcroft et.al. 1989:9). The post-colonial writer places an importance on body, in the physical sense because he has been 'othered' due to his biological condition, which is graded as inferior.

# A new identity

- rejection and resistance
- the idea of regenerating





# China bride

by Wong Phui Nam



From my first bright flow of blood, I caught the sea scent  
I carried of the fecund belly-heaviness of bitch  
and sow. In open day, I grew almost light as flame,  
Smouldering magnolia touched off by late winter rains.  
I was such as smoked the senses of boys and men till  
they, wallowing in their secret sty of thought, fed  
wasting on my flesh attained, yet never attainable.  
I was sent for then, bought bride to help him into breeding  
flesh, sweaty forgetfulness of darkness he disturbed  
on spirit-infested jungle rivers concealing ore.  
But he never found me even as he rifled, sieved  
my body, smelling out crotch and underarm and drugged  
himself on bitter exhalations from my woman's glands.  
He burrowed, a fly into carrion, to seed me with his death.

# Variations of a birthday theme : Kali

by Wong Phui Nam



All we creatures who shall be seized and led  
by the neck into the terrible black mills  
of our mother's mouth; who, unjointed, shall be  
stripped of skin, of nail, of hair; in the grey  
residue of flesh be mashed with entrails  
into a gorge to line and feed the abyss...  
from chewed over bones spat out with saliva  
shall wake to dream another body. Save,  
into its granite darkness break hell's fires,  
purging us of all hint of bone, of flesh,  
of viscera, leaving no ash, no grain,  
no single speck from which we sprout again,  
with us, our mother's insane face, eyes rolling,  
tongue out adrip, bright with her children's blood.

Conclusion: parody of human existence

- **Trust**
- **Solidarity**