

INTERVIEWS WITH 5 YOUNG MALAYSIAN POETS

Introduction to the Feature on 5 Young Malaysian Poets

The Editors

As part of the focus on the theme of youth in this issue of *Men Matters Online Journal*, five young Malaysian male poets who have begun to make their presence felt in the Malaysian literary scene were interviewed. The spotlight on these young poets is supplemented by the voice of a senior Malaysian poet in this special feature. The first section of this special feature contains the interviews with these young poets. The second section is an essay titled “Advice to Young Poets”, written by the eminent Malaysian poet Wong Phui Nam, who has been writing poems since the late 1950s and continues to be actively involved in the Malaysian poetry landscape.

Though the five poets have been writing for some time, their poems were first published together in two Malaysian poetry anthologies that were edited by Malachi Edwin Vethamani and published by Maya Press. Four of these poets – those below the cut-off age of 35 – were published in *Malaysian Millennial Voices* (2021). Fikri Ahmad has four poems in this anthology, Joseph Lu has four poems, Yee Heng Yeh has three poems and Lim Jack Kin has one poem. These poems were selected by a panel of expert readers, including Wong Phui Nam.

Three out of the five poets went on to distinguish themselves in the Malaysian Poetry Writing Competition 2021 which was organised and sponsored by University of Nottingham Malaysia and Maya Press. The winning entries were published in *Year of the Rat and Other Poems* (2022). Lim Jack Kin won the first prize and another of his poems was given honourable mention. Yee Heng Yeh had one poem shortlisted and another in the longlist. Ismim Putera had a poem in the longlist. Wong Phui Nam was one of the three judges for the competition.

These five poets were asked to share their thoughts on their writing of poetry, their role models or influences and to discuss the creative process behind one of their poems. The following questions were posed to each of them:

- Could you describe your journey in writing poems: When you started writing poetry? What keeps you writing poems? Do you have any vision of how you see yourself as a poet in a few years?
- What are your preoccupations in your poems?
- Who are your favourite poets and do they have any influence on your writing?
- Do you think about your position as a Malaysian poet writing in English?
- Please choose one of your poems from *Malaysian Millennial Voices* or *Year of the Rat and Other Poems* and share your experience in writing it.

We invite you to read what the young poets have to say and to consider Wong Phui Nam's advice to the next generation.