Chapter 4

The Personal Construction of Modernity

In the two preceding chapters, we have looked at the construction of the Malay society as perceived by the two colonial officers from the macro perspective (and a bit on the micro perspective when we dealt with the character Saleh in *Saleh A Prince of Malaya*). In this chapter, we are going to get closer into the smallest entity of the Malay society, the individual, and witness what happened during the writings of the two colonial officers and how modernity has affected these Malay individuals. The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the construction of reality in a society,[1] the analysis of the selected short stories written by the two colonial officers is related to the reality faced by individual characters in their society. This is the best point of departure to see whether the character is inherently in conflict with his/her society, as claimed by conflict theorists, or always in harmony as claimed by structural functionalists.[2] It would also be interesting to see the two authors' inclination in subscribing to one of the schools of thought mentioned above in their presentation of modernity.

We begin with Swettenham's "A Malay Romance." This short story offers an insight into Swettenham's conception of modernity. The story centres around Raja Maimunah who after three years of marriage to Raja Iskander, suffers a palpable neglect from her husband and remarries Raja Sleman, "a stranger from a

neighbouring State" (1895: 183) who eventually helps her escape from the former. Her marriage to Iskander was decided by one of Raja Iskander's relatives and has proven to be unsuccessful especially in light of Raja Iskander's "acting on his right" (ibid., 182) abandoning her for a concubine. In Raja Iskander's eyes, his action "was simply following the practice of his ancestors and the custom of the country" (ibid.). A Malay Raja always aims to have many wives, and Iskander makes up stories trying to prove Raja Maimunah's infidelity as an excuse to marry another. For women in general and in particular women of high birth like Raja Maimunah, it is a dire offence for her husband to neglect her for a concubine.[3] It is at this moment, Raja Sleman comes as a saviour for her frustration. Raja Maimunah, like any other Malay woman, succumbs to what Swettenham describes earlier in "The Real Malay" that she "will come sooner or later to the conviction that life with another promises new and delightful experiences not found in the society of the first man to whom destiny and her relatives have chosen to unite her" (ibid., 10-11). Her elopement with Raja Sleman is an act of her own choice, as is a success as her life with him. For Swettenham, who admires Raja Sleman for his brave attempt, states that the people, [the Malays] "seek for no excuses to palliate his [Sleman's] conduct, and have no condemnation for this ruthless destroyer of Iskander's happy home" (ibid., 190).

Swettenham's sense of modernity in this story lies, first of all, in Raja Maimunah's decision to escape from her own husband out of her own free choice. In opposition to her Malay tradition, running away from her husband is regarded as taboo,[4] an act very much despised by the Malay society. In a society that "venerates

...ancient customs and traditions" (ibid., 3), Raja Maimunah is expected to submit to her fate and religious teaching on marriage. Nonetheless, Raja Maimunah does not care much about her own tradition and culture for she is extremely upset over these matters—the accusation of infidelity by and the neglect from her first husband, Raja Iskander. Her happiness lies in the ability to make the best choice in her life and her rational mind tells her that elopement is the best option available. The rationale to go against tradition set by one's own society is very much in tandem with Weberian rationalization, a key component of modernization. Rationality as a core feature of 'modern' thought which has driven Raja Maimunah to make her choice in trusting Raja Sleman, a stranger from a neigbouring state as Swettenham describes him. In fact, trusting a stranger, as Raja Maimunah does here, is very much a 'modern' decision. On top of that, both Raja Maimunah and Raja Sleman are taking, to make use of Giddens' term, a big "risk" by deciding to elope. She has even considered the rational calculability, to borrow Weber's concept, for her decision. The failure in escaping would amount to a death sentence for both of them.

The second feature of modernity in this story lies in the mutual attraction that takes place between Raja Maimunah and Raja Sleman as opposed to the imposition of love in the arranged marriage between Raja Maimunah and Raja Iskander. Marriage in traditional Malay society is a decision made by the parents and relatives of the couple. The two individuals involved have the least say in this decision-making, the bride has practically none. The married couple is supposed to carry out the roles and responsibilities that the older generation has provided as examples.

Mutual attraction and romance are secondary issues in the traditional marriage; the maintenance and the perpetuation of the society is the primary goal. Mutual attraction and romance presuppose the modern relationship that takes place between Raja Maimunah and Raja Sleman.

Swettenham's deliberate narration of Raja Maimunah's and Raja Sleman's union and happiness in the story serves to support his notion of modernity in his writing. He concentrates on Maimunah's happy marriage to Raja Sleman which helps intensify the following points. First of all, he wants to show that there is nothing wrong with Raja Maimunah as a wife, but has everything to do with Raja Iskander as a husband. Raja Iskander's veneration of tradition, abiding to what his ancestors have done, including keeping concubines, has done injury to his marriage to Raja Maimunah. Raja Iskander's veneration of his ancient history is a selfish act, showing no appreciative gesture to the ever-willing sacrifices of Raja Maimunah, whom after three years of marriage has bore him two children. There is a great sense of ingratitude and unfaithfulness here according to Simmel's conception of modern relationship which has occurred. The failure of Raja Maimunah and Raja Iskander's marriage is due to the latter's inability to be faithful and according to Simmel, faithfulness must exist in order for society to exist. In his own words, Simmel says, "without the phenomenon we call faithfulness, society could simply not exist, as it does, for any length of time" (Simmel, 1950: 379). Swettenham argues here that the veneration of tradition is no longer in tandem with the modern world, especially when no rationale can justify why one should revert to tradition; Simmel adds that

Raja Iskander's veneration of tradition is as an act of ingratitude towards Raja Maimunah. Maimunah, who dares to go against tradition (the action of a modern woman), achieves a life-long happy relationship with Raja Sleman.

Secondly, the acceptance of Raja Sleman's union with Raja Maimunah by a certain section of Malay society shows that the society is on the road to modernity. The Malays in the state where Raja Sleman lives do not fault him for being the "ruthless destroyer of Iskander's happy home" (1895: 190), for they approve of the mutual love that exists in the Sleman-Maimunah union. They have come to acknowledge and accept the importance of free choice, and trust. They have also come to appreciate the mutual love and understanding that can take place between two people which constructs a 'modern' society where tradition no longer rule but the collective rationality that determines the course of action of an individual. Rationality, mutual love and trust are the three important ingredients to modernity that Raja Maimunah and Raja Sleman help exemplify here even though their determination breaks from their tradition. The following story can describe the last point better while simultaneously strengthening the rationale for mutual love in a modern relationship.

In "The Eternal Feminine," Swettenham narrates the story of a very determined Malay lady named Siti Maamih, who lives with her lover in a Malay jungle, a white man by the name of Grant. They live happily with each other until the time comes when the Malay rulers have difficulties with the white men. Out of hate

and jealousy, or as proof of his loyalty to his ruler, the nearby Malay chief chooses to exterminate Grant and his lover. On the day the murders take place, Maamih thoughtlessly throws "herself on the body and puts her unwounded arm over Grant's neck to save him" (ibid., 88), however, she finds the lover dead. Swettenham greatly admires Maamih in this story for she is "united to the devotion which deemed no sacrifice too great for one she loved, ... that other sort of courage which comes of knowledge and deliberate intention" (ibid., 90).

This tragic story of Siti Maamih is written for these obvious reasons; one, to narrate the possibility of establishing a love relationship between a local lady and her devotion to a white man, a stranger from a different world and of a different civilization, as opposed to a stranger from a neigbouring state—Raja Sleman in the above story. Siti Maamih's case is much more complicated than the above story for it involves not only a mutual relationship but also an interracial relationship involving the subject people and the colonial masters. Swettenham's interest, of course, is to offer an insight into this formidable relationship yet it possesses the nature of modernity in its outlook.

First, the mutual love that exists between Siti Maamih and Grant cannot be an arranged one for Malay society in general and Siti Maamih's parents and relatives in particular do not approve of such a relationship. Traditional Malay society usually creates a certain barrier between the local and the outsider whereby the element of distrust is prominent. This practice applies to all outsiders even to Malay immigrants

who come and settle down in an established Malay region despite sharing the same religion.[5] It takes time for the local community to fully accept the presence of the newcomers. The Muslim Malay immigrants from Java, for instance, may initially face difficulties before being accepted by the local population. Their acceptance may take several months, or even years, perhaps only after several occasions by the newcomers in showing their loyalty to the local leaders; proving themselves as no threat to the peace of the community, and being cooperative within the local community in carrying out the communal activities. This usually includes religious activities as well. In the case of Grant, who stays in the jungle in order to do his surveying job, who in many ways prevents him from mixing around with the local community, has made himself far from being accepted by the locals. Being a person of a different faith (Christian) has made it even more impossible for the local Malays to accept him.

Secondly, as Fanon puts it, "colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of a race" (1967: 118), racial prejudice based on skin colour is not alien to any society in recorded history including Western society. Of course Grant's white skin is not associated with evil as white man would perceive blacks, however, it puts him in the same level as the white colonizers which Malay society in general may express silent disapproval of.

Siti Maamih's radical move is seen as a "mutual advantage" (Swettenham, 1895: 83) by Swettenham. Malay resentment, which are based on the two factors

discussed above, perceive the relationship between Siti Maamih and Grant as a threat to the Malay community. In a society where the happiness of the two individuals does not matter to the community, or as Swettenham puts it "under such circumstances a want of discrimination is not uncommon" (ibid., 84), the Malays decide that both Siti Maamih and her lover must be terminated.

Western rationality is always questioning authority; this is what Swettenham tries to project in his story. After Siti Maamih informs her lover that the Malay community is going to kill them both, Swettenham writes, "Grant said that he and she [Siti Maamih] had done no harm and the Malays could mean none..." (ibid., 87), later when facing their assailants Grant vehemently asks, " What harm have we done?" (ibid.) Siti Maamih who now shares a similar rationale with her lover insists upon staying despite being offered free passage –"they [the Malay warriors] told the woman [Siti Maamih] to leave the *infidel* and go away" (ibid.)(my emphasis). It seems as if the religious issue is being highlighted here when the Malay warriors ask Siti Maamih to leave Grant. She declines the offer by stating, "I shall stay with him" (ibid.), a decision which has proven fatal for both of them.

Towards the end of the story, Swettenham notes the following:

> I know of no similar attack being made by Malays on a white man within modern times, and I question whether there is such another instance of a Malay woman's devotion—not that they are not capable of such self-sacrifice, I think they are, but the circumstances necessary to call it forth very seldom arise (ibid., 89).

Swettenham is greatly relieved to inform us that Malays in the present times have come to accept the modern concept of mutual love that can possibly take place between two individuals of different races and religious faiths. More importantly, Swettenham admires Siti Maamih, the female protagonist in the story for the devotion shown to the white man; such devotion is similar to the notion of faithfulness proposed by Simmel. She, in the end, exemplifies a modern character who dares to question the traditional authority in her quest for a basic human need—to love and to be loved.

Swettenham expresses more of the views in his second book, *Unaddressed Letters* (1898) especially on matters pertaining to freedom of choice (largely on love and relationship[6]), which furthers strengthen the spirit of modernity which he has projected in his first book. He feels the urgency to further explain what he means by the "awakening" wave that is taking place in Malay society and how modernity as the internal process of social construction is affecting society at the basic level—the personal level.

For example, in "Daughters and Despotism," Swettenham writes "Nowadays, intelligent opinion is not surprised when tyranny is followed by rebellion. The world is getting even beyond that phrase. Both men and women demand that their opinions should be heard... in accordance with common-sense, with freedom of thought" (Swettenham, 1898: 99). What Swettenham is proposing here is that the world is changing, similar perhaps to that of Giddens' *Runaway World* (1999). In the society

where communal interests outweigh personal preference, young Malays are taught to listen and abide the advice of their parents and elders. In this changing world, however, Swettenham argues that the Malays with "their intelligence, their education, and even their knowledge of the world entitle them to hold and express opinions" (1898: 99-100) which is generally expressed by people in the West.

Freedom of speech would eventually evolve to freedom of action. While the freedom to act in a traditional society is limited for one has to put into consideration the interest of the community at large, one would not always worry about the outcome of one's decision. Action in the modern world, however, requires the individual to be accountable for his or her own action. In other words, in this changing world, modernity promotes individual becoming accountable for his or her actions. Freedom of speech and freedom of action have become the rights of the individuals in this modern world, of which, the consequences would, however, fall on each individual, be it good or bad. Freedom to act, for instance, in the case of Raja Maimunah, has brought happiness in her life even though she has to let go of her two daughters, while in the case of Siti Maamih, it has a detrimental effect. Then again, Swettenham stresses that married life (in the case of Raja Maimunah) and cohabitation (in the case of Siti Maamih and Grant) in a modern world would ensure that "man and woman are in complete sympathy, where mutual affection and admiration make self-sacrifice a joy, and trouble taken for the other a real satisfaction..." (ibid., 102).

In a modern society, Swettenham seems to argue that the happiness of the individual has to be taken care of first, this would then lead to the overall happiness of society; traditional society seem to claim otherwise. Marriage, the union of two individuals, is the responsibility of those two individuals. In "Of Change and Decay," Swettenham writes, "To love, as some can love, and be loved as well in return; to trust in the unswerving faith, the unassailable loyalty, the unbounded devotion of another, as one trusts God, in the simple laws of nature, in anything that is absolutely certain..." (ibid., 87). Swettenham seems to be arguing here that in the modern era, love, faith, loyalty and devotion between a married couple are the most important ingredients to a happy marriage. In a traditional marriage where love does not necessarily predetermine the happiness of the couple, the parents and the relatives play the role of being a 'watch-dog,' to guide, support and maintain the union. This is not to suggest that the notions of love and intimacy do not exist between the couple. What I am suggesting here is that the structure of the society is such that the society that brought the couple together played its roles to ensure the consistency in the marriage (i.e. to avoid divorce). However, in a modern society where individuals declare love "of man, for woman, of woman for man" (ibid., 82), the couple is responsible for maintaining the relationship. Swettenham adds, "There is a subject which has an abiding interest for all men and women who are not too old to love; it is Constancy" (ibid.). In fact, Swettenham argues that this is the hardest part in a modern relationship and it "is not altogether an easy path to tread" (ibid., 102).

Constancy involves enough sustenance of love, mutual understanding and the sharing of the same goals. To gain constancy is to gain solidarity in a relationship. Swettenham stresses the following: "I have believed; I have seen what, in my life, I would have maintained was perfect, *changeless* love; and I have seen that love bestowed, in apparently equal measure, on another" (ibid., 91)(my emphasis). It is out of her constant love towards Raja Sleman that Raja Maimunah remains steadfast in her second marriage which even the society surrounding them greatly admires of the two. Siti Maamih shares the same spirit of constancy in her formidable relationship with Grant that she refuses to accept the offer by the local warriors to leave him and escape death. Their relationship is so solid that both are willing to face death in the name of love, hence, putting the interests of the society behind them.

This is not to say that society is the great source of evil; it is quite to the contrary. According to Swettenham, society, as in Malay society, is conservative and cannot accept change in such a drastic manner. Swettenham states earlier in *Malay Sketches* that the Malay "is conservative to a degree...looks askance on all innovations, and will resist their sudden introduction. But if he has time to examine them carefully, and they are not thrust upon him, he is willing to be convinced of their advantage" (1895: 3). In other words, Malay society can accept the Juggernaut of modernity in a gradual manner. They will resist any sudden introduction as in "At a Funeral." This story describes the author's attendance at a funeral of a young Malay, the son of a Malay raja, who died after his return from his studies overseas. At the funeral, the author hears someone besides him say, "I am not sorry; it is better

to die than to live like that; he is at last at peace" (Swettenham, 1898: 74), referring to the son of the Malay raja.

'Living like that' refers specifically to the western lifestyle that the young Malay raja succumbs to after his return to his country. As a western product of education, the young Malay raja wants to introduce modern thought in his running of the state. This sudden introduction receives much resistance from his statesmen and the Malay population. There is no mention of the cause of death of the young Malay raja for Swettenham simply wants to stress in the story the expression of the man's great relief and thankfulness for the death of the young Malay raja, not the mourning and sorrowfulness which would normally accompany the death. The man says: "His [the young Malay raja's] sufferings were unbearable, he said; "they are over now, and why should I regret" (ibid., 81). The 'sufferings' here could refer to the resistances that the young Malay raja encountered when his introduction of the western lifestyle and methods of government was not accepted by the society. After his eighteen months of overseas training, the young Malay raja comes back to Malaya, but finds himself unsuitable to work with other Malay rulers, morally and professionally. The death of a raja[7] is usually a sad and sacred occasion to the Malays, unless the young Raja has done something that is awfully unacceptable to society as a whole. If he has, his death would come as a relief to the society.

The young Malay raja, according to Swettenham, is the victim of "a civilization that cannot be wholly appreciated by primitive people" (ibid., 81). The

'juggernaut of progress' that the young Malay raja introduced and shared with his people turns out to 'trap' and eventually 'kill' him. The British administrators at that time believed that by sending young generations of Malay rulers overseas would make them able administrators. As we have noticed, many aspects of this story also appeared in Clifford's *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya* discussed in the last chapter. It is important to learn that both authors subscribe to 'safe education' in which they believe that young Malay rulers should receive their education here in Malaya, in their own environment. Swettenham says that young Malay rulers "do not understand why the burning moral principles of a section of an alien race should be applied to communities that have no sympathy with the principles, or their application to the different conditions of society" (ibid.). Modernity is an internal process of social construction and should be introduced gradually in order to be effective and therefore accepted by society.

Swettenham's third publication, *The Real Malay* features yet another impressive short story with an impressive title 'A Mezzotint.' He deals with the issue of education and the elements of modernity in this story. The story is about Unku Sherifa, a beautiful and intelligent daughter of a Malay chief, who is brought up by an English family in one of the British possessions in the East. Having returned to her own land, she finds comfort mixing with an old British officer, one Edward Cathcart, a gentleman of Indian blood, but raised and educated in England. Naturally, young Cathcart falls in love with Unku Sherifa or informally addressed as 'Unku Long' among her friends. Unku Sherifa as her Western upbringing has taught

her to be outspoken, a characteristic so uncommon among her native Malays, rejects the proposal. Being dejected, Cathcart freely accepts the offer of a transfer to another British Settlement and gets married soon after. With the death of Ungku Long's father, the whole family falls into misery. To ease their trouble, Ungku Long is forced to marry a son of another Malay chief. Two days before the wedding takes place, Cathcart, who happens to visit the state, meets with Unku Sherifa. Unku begs Cathcart to help her to elope to Singapore but the latter hesitantly denies her request. The wedding takes place as planned but the union lasts only a few months. Marriage calls for more than the meeting of two physical beings but includes emotions and the readiness to sacrifice and be faithful to the partner. These are important ingredients to a good marriage, an essence that was non-existent in Unku Sherifa's marriage. Poor Unku Sherifa roams with her mother into a foreign land and dies far away from her native people. Cathcart, unable to fulfill the request of his first lover, becomes reckless and falls into a life of misery and eventually dies, in another foreign land, thousand of miles away from Ungku Long.

Swettenham mentions in his introduction to his first book *Malay Sketches*, that, "Education and contact with Western people must produce the inevitable result" (1895: x), the present story exemplifies such a situation. In a modern world, where contact with the outside world and outside influence is almost unavoidable, Swettenham seems to suggest in his story that modernity has an irreversible impact as well. After having been educated and brought up in an English environment, Unku Sherifa's education has molded her "into a realm of knowledge beyond their [the

Malays'] old-fashioned ideas and more limited capacity" (Swettenham, 1899: 278). Even her shyness, which is "common to native girls rapidly wore off" (ibid., 277).

Her education has transformed both her behaviour and outlook. In one point in the story, she even retorts, "I don't want to marry any Malay" (ibid., 285), a rejection that is doubly impermissible to the traditional Malay lady. For one, Malay girls do not customarily reject a marriage proposal made by their parents or relatives, and two, Malay society usually prefer an arrangement of marriage among them (in-breeding). Those of other races have to be Muslim first before being permitted to marry a Malay girl.[8]

Apparently, Swettenham argues that Unku Sherifa's modern character is a product of western education and this is what has led her to suffer in the midst of an eastern culture. She may have the privilege of expressing opinions and free choice, but the society around her is not prepared to accept this modern element into their culture. Looking at it from a colonial discourse angle, the tragedy of Unku Sherifa's life lies in the limitations set forth by the British Empire that "intermarriage between natives and English men and women was undesirable" (Said, 1978: 213). Her union with Edward Cathcart is, in Cathcart's own word "indeed, ... impossible . . ." (Swettenham, 1899: 285). However, Swettenham's main concern here is the outcome of modernity that education and contact with Western people (i.e. the Juggernaut) had on Unku Sherifa which was total and irreversible.

Unku Sherifa's marriage to a Malay chief, which is against her choice and free will, is as Swettenham predicts "a failure—a failure of the worst—and in a few weeks, or at least months, the girl was divorced from her husband" (ibid., 188). One may very well hypothesize this failure, especially after becoming aware of Unku Sherifa's background. First, her marriage is not out of love, it is an arrangement made after she faced difficulties by the death of her father. For a person whose education has taught the modern mode of thinking and free choice, marrying someone without knowing and loving is out of question, yet she has been forced into it. Secondly, though very much related to the first marriage, this marriage fails due to Unku Sherifa's inability to show any affection towards her husband for she does not love him. Affection is a product of mutual love between a couple and in her case, there was hardly any.

Swettenham, of course, blames the Malay society and their resistance to change for Unku Sherifa's tragic life. After the failure of her marriage, Unku Sherifa "fell on evil days...and, after two or three years' wandering with her poor old mother, the girl died, and was buried in a foreign land, far from her own people" (ibid., 288). One simple reason for her wandering is to avoid shame, but Swettenham wants us to believe that Unku Sherifa is in search of a society, 'a foreign land, far from her own people,' that can easily accept her in the light of her modern character. For this reason, Swettenham argues that modernity can best be achieved through a process of 'regeneration' which involves the process of change in society as a whole

rather than a simple individual. To achieve this goal, the Malays require a process of education in order to construct a whole new generation that subscribes to modernity.

What contributed to Unku Sherifa's failure merely boils down to one factor—her surroundings. She is brought up in a modern English environment to think and act accordingly. Later, she is forced to live in her old surroundings, which by now is entirely alien to her. Swettenham seems to suggest that the ideal way of educating the Malays is to educate them in their own country (as Swettenham already argued in "At a Funeral"). Swettenham believes that Unku Sherifa is "wiser to remain in the cool, moonlit jungle, where, at least, she was at home with those of her own kind . . ." (ibid., 289). Any attempt to introduce any sudden change "more likely than not, will be disaster" (ibid.). Swettenham adds that, "it might be thought that a little education, a little emancipation, is what the Malay woman chiefly needs. I doubt it" (ibid., 272). Education (for both male and female) as a gradual process of social construction will generate a new generation and this would pave a better transition to modernity.

For that reason, education in the Malay States was slowly introduced during the last part of the second decade of the British Occupation. The "initiation of a system of education had to wait till the more urgent administrative and social services...had been provided for" (Chai, 1967: 228) in order to modernise the infrastructure. Even after the turn of the century, the total expenditure for education between 1906 until 1918 with comparison to the total revenue of the States remained

around one percent each year,[9] even after the post of Director of Education was created in 1907 and the Resident was released from the responsibility of education (ibid., 233). Of course, one could argue that the British's policy did not consider education of prime importance especially when one looks at the figures spent on educating the populous. Nonetheless, Swettenham had his own reason. He professed the concept of 'safe education,' as stated above which "preserve[s] the stability of Malay village life and economy" (Loh, 1969: 174). Hence, "forcing Malay girls to go to school might be construed as a violation of Malay custom and religion" (Chai, 1967: 232). Swettenham doubts the need for much enforcement. The Selangor State Government enforced compulsory attendance in June 1891 for Malay boys only. It was not until 1901 that all the Malay Federated States followed the step of the Selangor State Government and this time, girls were included (ibid.).

Towards the end of his short story, Swettenham makes an interesting comparison by comparing the life of Unku Sherifa and a beautiful green cicada. He writes:

> As I was writing these last words, a beautiful green cicada, with great eyes and long transparent wings, flew into the room and dashed straight at a lamp. In spite of several severe burns, and all my efforts to save her, she has accomplished her own destruction, and now lies dead and stark; the victim of a new light which excited her curiosity and admiration, but the consuming power of which she did not understand (1899: 289).

Obviously, what Swettenham is doing here is to use the green cicada as a metaphor of symbolic quality or an illustration just like an artist "was trying to do [producing graphic images] in relation to the probable general reader" (Hodnett, 1982: 4).

"Almost always illustrations occur in a novel at intervals where the reader will encounter them and somehow be affected by them as he reads along" (ibid., 3). So writes Edward Hodnett in his book *Image and Text*. As a self-taught artist,[10] Swettenham's tendency of using a symbolic graphical representation of character in his work of fiction is apparent here, perhaps to provide a more vivid, fascinating and appealing message to his reader, a quality not found in his colleague, Clifford.

The rise of photography in the 1890s produced graphic images which came to dominate illustration in English fiction and drove out "almost entirely . . . wood engraving" (ibid., 6) images. In his works of fiction, Swettenham seems to subscribe to this idea of "graphic expressiveness" (ibid., 16). The use of the green cicada as a graphic representation of the life of Unku Sherifa at the end of the text is in some degree supplementary, and contributes to "the reader's understanding of the text and reinforces the emotional effects sought by the author" (ibid., 8), it leads us to question the author's intention. As if, in reality, the author as the Resident did not have the power to save Unku Sherifa, that if only the latter were a cicada, then he could try to save her. Even then, the method of saving her was not necessarily appropriate, as it is the nature of the cicada to be easily attracted to the light, the best way is for the author to put out the lamp and stay in darkness for a while until the cicada goes away. However, he would not do so as it would be an act of giving in to an inferior being.

Though remarkably full of sorrowful events, the short story presents a wider spectrum of Swettenham's modernity especially on matters relating to the education of Malay women, and to Malays as a whole. "A Mezzotint," a method of engraving a copper plate, suggests the permanent effect on a person like Unku Sherifa after receiving Western education. As it appears, the type of education that she receives does more harm than good to her and her native people. What is more, since the engraving is permanent, Unku Sherifa is unable to re-assimilate into her original native culture and custom. Her intelligence proves futile in the old surrounding of her "unregenerate" people, to borrow Swettenham's term. From the perspective of colonial discourse, Unku Sherifa's upbringing is simply an experiment (Saleh in Clifford's *Saleh: A Prince of Malaya* suffers a similar fate), to be studied and analyzed respectively by the educated West. Her whole life as an Oriental becomes an aspect of Orientalism as "a school of interpretation whose materials happens to be the Orient, its civilization, peoples and localities" (Said, 1978: 203). For Swettenham, Unku Sherifa's life is just another sad story of a woman who fails to realize her happiness which is promised by modernity, in the face of her own traditional society.

Clifford's *In Court and Kampong* presents a short story entitled "One More Unfortunate" which can be best described by Clifford's conception of modernity as a struggle between an individual against his/her own society. The story is about a Malay lady who captures Clifford's attention, not by her beauty for she has none, but by her courage which none of her compatriots possess. Malay women are of the

obedient type, and they would follow any arrangement of marriage, "a matter in which, of course, [they] would be the last person to be consulted" (Clifford, 1897a: 133). She chooses to kill herself on her wedding day for she is not allowed to marry the man of her choice. In her society, elopement is an alien concept for an innocent young lady like her although there is an example of a runaway wife as we have come across above. For that matter, committing suicide "is not only contrary to all natural instincts, but is, moreover, utterly opposed to the ideas which prevail among people of her race" (ibid., 133). It is an act alien to her race. For women, especially Malay women do not necessarily rebel, the only possibility left to the Malay lady in Clifford's story would be to commit suicide.

According to Emile Durkheim, one of the fathers of sociology of modernity, suicide is categorised into four types. The first one is anomic suicide. This type of suicide occurs when the rules that govern social life fail and the individual is left not knowing how to behave or what is appropriate. The second type is fatalistic suicide; one obvious example would be the practice of suttee in India in the past where a widow is compelled to throw herself into the funeral pyre. The third type is egoistic suicide and this occurs when an individual feels extremely challenged by another individual or society and he or she is not willing to submit to the prescribed norms. Lastly is the altruistic type that occurs when an individual risks his/her own life for the sake of saving others. A good example would be during a 'jihad' or holy war.

In the case of the Malay lady above, her suicidal act comes close to type one—the anomic—which was the result of a rapid change in her society. Traditional Malay society is not purely an economic institution; it is an egalitarian, economically self-sufficient society which has dramatically changed only after the colonial era.[11] The fact that the Malay lady had the privilege of meeting "a Pekan born Malay [who came] to the Jelai (the lady's district—in inland Pahang) on a trading expedition, and had cast his eyes upon the girl" (ibid., 132) suggests that the Malay society in this region had been greatly affected by European colonization. A rapid social change (economic as well as political) will create a state of anomie on an individual or group of individuals affected by this change. The fact that the lady falls in love with a stranger, a Pekan businessman, is something that not even her parents would be aware of as Clifford states, "Her parents...knew nothing of this intrigue" (ibid., 133). Her lover has to leave Jelai for another trading expedition and the Malay lady is left in a state of anomie and despair. The arranged marriage, which has been set by her parents, is not the kind of solution she is hoping for. Society has let her in a state of anomie and not knowing the appropriate thing to do, she is left with no alternative but to commit suicide.

Durkheim's studies on suicide helps strengthen his point on the collective conscience and social facts that the occurrences of any and all suicidal acts is suggestive of the underlying problems in a given society. Suicide takes place when society is not in total support of the individuals needs and leaves them more vulnerable to isolation and eventual suicide. The collective conscience is based on

the social facts and is very similar to Giddens' 'reflexivity' whereby society has to re-evaluate and correct itself when instance of 'going against the norms' takes place.

Since we are dealing with the colonial era, the society that we are referring to here can be extended to include white society and their collective conscience to effect change in the colonized society. This can best be demonstrated in Clifford's "A Tale of a Theft." As a colonial officer, Clifford has the chance to observe the lives of the prisoners in the Malay States. He learns about the poor conditions of the Malay prison, which have no proper ventilation and sanitation, and food is not provided to the prisoners by the local rulers. The prisoners receive their daily ration from those who are close to them such as their wives or families, or for that matter anyone who cares about them. Clifford learns from his visit to the prison, from the life of a slave-debtor named Talib and his fellow prisoners, the meaning of loyalty and love.

Talib is accused of stealing his Raja's *kris*, a crime which he did not commit, and is sent to prison without a trial. In the Malay States at that time, there was no such thing as a trial; therefore, one cannot prove his or her innocence unless proven guilty. As food is not provided by the state, Talib receives his daily ration of rice and fish from his sweetheart. Talib shares his food with his neighbour on his left, since his neighbour's ex-wife had stopped sending after she had re-married the local chief. It is later learned that it is his left-neighbour's ex-wife, having planned to marry the local Chief, who has lured him to commit the crime, which caused his imprisonment.

Talib's right neighbour, who looks more or less like a living skeleton, has received his daily food from his wife for the last ten years. His right-neighbour has reached the stage called *kaleh* – "it means insensibility, such as few can imagine or understand, and which is ... bestial, that it reduce[s] a feeling thinking human being ...[into]... the level of an ape" (ibid., 169). He does not recognise anyone anymore after having reached this stage, not even his wife who has been loyal in bringing his food for the past ten years.

Having seen the worst possible human conditions, in which Talib and his prison mates are experiencing, Clifford sadly expresses "if men suffer thus, what are the pains endured by tender women and by little children?" (ibid., 170) He sympathizes with Talib and the other innocent prisoners, as well as with the women and children who suffer from the injustices committed by their native rulers. Clifford cannot endure to ponder the complexities of loving human relationships involving Talib and his prison mates, especially when questioning the devotion of their loved ones. Talib himself is fed by his sweetheart, whose bond is not yet legalized in the eyes of society, yet, she remains loyal to her lover as opposed to Talib's left neighbour who is double-crossed by his own wife. Talib right-neighbour's wife remains faithful to her husband despite his *kaleh* condition. This is "the complexity of human love and affection that either pass or fail the test of time and suffering" (Mohamad Rashidi Pakri, 1998: 47).

Clifford's last sentence runs as follows: "And yet, all these things happened and are happening to-day, within shouting distance of Singapore, with its churches, and its ballrooms, its societies for the prevention of cruelty, its missionaries, its discontented exiled Europeans, its high standard, its poor practice, its loud talk, and its boasted civilization" (Clifford, 1897a: 170); this suggests two distinct characteristics of the modern western encounter with the East. One is the nature of power that the colonizer seems to possess in the process of social construction, as conflict theorists such as Marx would argue. The colonial society has to be viewed as a group that possesses power and acts as an 'agent' by providing the material conditions for the society (and the ideas/ideology) to change (this issue of colonial society acts as 'agent' of change will be further highlighted below in the discussion of Clifford's novel *Since the Beginning*). The comparison made here between the conditions in the Malay States and Singapore, an advanced city where Europeans lived, would certainly create, in Durkheim's term, 'social currents' for the society in the Malay States to change. The material conditions, to borrow Marx's words, created by trade and advancement in western technology would certainly affect the simplicity of the Malays egalitarian way of life. Two is the ability for the colonial officer to present the 'social facts' to his white society in order to affect and demand change in the colonized society. This act is quite contrary to Durkheim's notion of social change. He believes that social facts "emerge from the collective [collective conscience] and move to individuals rather than the other way around" (Craib, 1997: 30). In this case, and I take it to be true in the colonial era, an individual colonial

officer is capable of affecting change in the colonized society. It goes back to Marx's notion of power and class analysis.

It is interesting, however, to see Clifford's analysis of the characters in the story (even though as discussed above, he looks at the Malay society from a position of power) which goes beyond an ordinary colonialist—the 'agents' that affect change. Not only does he look at the oppression faced by Talib and his fellow prisoners but the intimacy and strong bond between their respective lovers, which brings us back to the notion of free choice and constancy in modernity as Swettenham raised earlier. Talib's girlfriend continuously supports him by visiting him in prison and providing him food is obviously an act of free will and constancy just as does the wife of Talib's right neighbour. In modern times, where mutual love is important, societal norms seem to be a minor consideration. Giddens would regard these types of people as having a 'pure relationship' where the relationship is not necessarily based on sexual need but rather based on intimacy (2000: 79). Both Talib and his right neigbour would be unable to have any sexual relationship for two obvious reasons—one, they are both in prison, and two, Talib is not yet married to his girlfriend (in Islamic and Malay culture, sex is prohibited before the couple is officially married) and Talib's right neigbour is already in a state of *kaleh*, he is not aware of his surroundings, yet, love prevails in both cases.

I consider Clifford's book *Since the Beginning* published in 1898, as his best imaginative work ever when it comes to the colonial novel of the era. In fact, it is the

first one ever written by a colonial officer in Malaya, yet, it receives less, perhaps, no attention at all from historians or literary critics. Hence, I intent to dwell on the novel thoroughly, both for its worth as a work of fiction and for its relation to Clifford's conception of modernity.

In short (I will analyse the novel in detail in a bit), the novel is about the life of Frank Austin, who begins his career as an assistant to the district officer in one of the regions in Malaya. When he first starts his service in Malaya, Austin is very keen in learning everything about Malaya and its people. For this reason, he chooses to spend his three months' leave on a visit to the state of Pelesu, one of the states in Malaya which has the least significant outside influences. There he meets a palace girl named Maimunah, with whom Frank Austin elopes on his return. Maimunah is a young and beautiful lady; Frank Austin is handsome and single, the two cohabitate for a number of years before Frank returns to England in search of a wife of his own race. Maimunah, who is by now a rich Malay lady, returns to Pelesu. Frank returns to Malaya with Cecily, his new wife, and is promoted to a District Officer of Kuala Senangan where the couple lives happily for more than one year. This until Maimunah, Frank Austin's former 'local' wife comes back to reclaim her love and rights from Austin. No persuasion from Maimunah wins over Austin's heart, for Cecily loves him unquestionably. In revenge for Austin's cruel dismissal of her, Maimunah murders Cecily by putting poison in her food. Frank, who loves Cecily more than life itself, decides, after much thought, to put an end to his life by

committing suicide. Thereby, leaving only Maimunah to weep over her own despair—her unsuccessful pursuit of love.

Since the Beginning is a novel which is interwoven with Clifford's personal dilemma between his love towards the natives and his worries concerning how modernity will change the lives of the Malays. Clifford's love towards the Malays can best be seen through his fictional counterpart, Frank Austin, and his efforts to learn every aspect of Malay life. In the novel, Clifford purposely brings Frank Austin to "land of Pelesu – roaming through the Undiscovered, heading casually for the Utterly Unknown," so that Frank can get an idea of a state in "its original state of sin" (Clifford, 1897a: 51), untouched by western influences, as he mentioned earlier in *In Court and Kampong*. Frank Austin "loved to yield himself unresistingly to the influence of his surroundings, and travelling on a moon-lit river, alone with Nature, and with the primitive man, had for him a peculiar fascination" (Clifford, 1898: 19). Frank is obsessed with "the study of the natives, and of native customs and characteristics, [and] led him to spend nearly the whole of his spare time among the Malays in the villages around the Station" (ibid., 24). To study the Malay culture and way of life, he

> went fishing with the villagers upon the rivers, and learned to throw a casting-net and set a fish-trap with the best of them. He went into the jungles with old men skilled in wood lore, and learned to rap the hard earth with the palm of his hand till the little timid mouse-deer, no bigger than rabbits, ran up through the underwood to answer his challenge. At the end of a year or two he could decoy ground-pigeons with a bamboo pipe, blown skillfully in imitation of their note, until they came bowing and scraping to his feet to be captured by means of a noose attached to a long rod; he could call half the birds of the jungle about him by whistling to them; he knew how to work *getah*,

> where to seek rattans, how to plant rice in half a dozen different ways; he could repeat the incantations, which it is wise to use under fifty different circumstances; he knew every proverb, every catchword, every superstition, every custom, every obscure phrase or fact which enables a man to understand the speech and the life of the Malay in the rice-field, in the village, in the palace of the Raja, on the river, or in the jungle (ibid., 25).

The results of all these efforts "tended to increase and strengthen his [Austin's] sympathy with them, and gave him a ready insight into their character and their hearts," (ibid.) this helps in shaping Austin's outlook on the Malay society and his actions later in the novel.

Armed with all the knowledge stated above, Frank Austin finds himself

> almost involuntarily, trying to form some idea of the lives lived by these strange folk; to picture the joys and sorrows, the hopes and the despairs, the comedies and the tragedies, of their obscure existence; and he was filled with a restless longing to study these things, to study with the loving eye and the sympathetic heart that alone can win to a complete understanding of the secret of an alien race (ibid., 23).

Among his English friends, Gregson appears to be critical of Frank Austin's enthusiastic efforts to understand the Malays. Gregson asks Austin to exercise a little moderation in his methods. He reminds Austin that, "it takes a pretty strong man to study native life thoroughly, as [he is] bent upon doing, without getting his [Frank's] own ethics and morality a trifle jumbled" (ibid., 33). Here, Clifford seems to give us some ideas as to what is going to happen to his hero, Austin, if he is not strong enough.

Frank Austin is well-accepted by the Raja of Pelesu and his Chiefs, especially in light of Pelesu's effort to re-establish contact with British government. Pelesu has

received a severe neglect from the British for mistreating one British trader some fifty years ago; no Englishman has ever dared to visit Pelesu after that tragic incident. The Raja obviously wants to seek reconciliation from the British by treating Frank Austin properly as their guest of honour. Frank Austin is provided a house near a river, in a town close enough to the Raja's palace from where he can observe the daily activities of the common people and the Malay rulers. Frank Austin, who has been dreaming of coming to such a place quickly uses this opportunity to learn more about the lives of the Malays by interacting with them. Amidst his interaction with them, Maimunah, the palace girl, falls in love with him. After the death of her parents, she has been taken by force from a far away village, to work as a slave in the palace. She has been longing for the white man to come and save her from the unbearable agony that she has experienced as a slave. Frank Austin could well be her saviour.

Maimunah, however, has long been admired by Pandak Aris, a gentleman of Pelesu. Even before Frank's arrival, the two has been meeting each other secretly. Thinking that Pandak Aris cannot bring a better future, Maimunah abandons him. This causes 'sakit hati' – (literally 'sick of liver'. See Clifford's discussion on amok on p. 64) in Pandak Aris, when he discovers that Maimunah is eyeing Frank Austin. Hence, Pandak Aris run amok in the town. He kills a few victims, and was also aiming to kill Maimunah, who happened to be in town. In the midst of this chase, Frank Austin kills Pandak Aris with his gun, and duly puts the town back to order. The Raja congratulates him for putting a stop to the amok incident. For Maimunah,

however, who has admired Frank Austin from the beginning, falls for him even more. Frank Austin's courageous act saving her life on that day intensifies her love towards him. That night, under the moonlight, Maimunah comes to express not only her thanks for saving her, but also her love for him, begging not only for love in return but for elopement. Frank Austin denies this possibility for it is against the law of Pelesu to do so. The palace girls belong to the Raja and he is the latter's guest of honour. On the actual night, one moonlit night, however, Maimunah creeps into Austin's house and kisses his feet and begs him to bring her along. Austin finally agrees.

The whole conflict of modernity in the novel begins, at least, at the micro level, with Maimunah's inner compulsion that only a person such as Frank Austin is capable of bringing change to her life that even Pandak Aris, the latter's local lover could not. In her eyes, Maimunah sees herself as a victim of the unjust Malay slave-debtor system whereby she becomes a slave because of her father's failure to pay his debt. She views traditional Malay society as being stagnant and she would continue to be a slave unless a 'divine' intervention (i.e. British intervention) comes to outlaw slavery. Frank Austin's presence (i.e. the 'divine' intervention) in the state of Pelesu in this manner can be viewed as the colonial manifestation of power that is beginning to affect the smallest section of Pelesu's Malay community, in the person named Maimunah. As a slave, she knows that the white men's civilization is against slavery and her rational mind tells her that she should take the risk in asking a favour from the white man, and to learn to trust him as well, despite being warned by her friend.

By aligning herself to Frank Austin, she believes that her freedom is on the way—or at least it is Frank Austin's moral obligation, to use Durkheim words, to ensure that Maimunah be freed. The fact that Austin agrees to elope with her shows that he subscribes to the belief that slavery is essentially evil and he is morally obliged to set her free.

The questions of risk and trust (trust, on the personal level, between two strangers is much better off explained by Symbolic Interactionist, Erving Goffman[12] which is not covered in this study) are making their appearance shown again as it has been in almost all his stories above as Giddens always regards it as one of the important elements of modernity, which by default, is also one of the important elements that helps assist change in a society. Maimunah regards her relationship with Pandak Aris as unproductive for he will only uphold the Malay tradition and will not dare to go against the Malay society in releasing her as a slave-debtor, or for that matter, even Pandak Aris would not be running any risk for her sake. Maimunah's instinct in this case is correct and her decision to elope with Austin testifies to two things. One, Maimunah is tired of Pandak Aris' indecision of being her protector and is only interested in the physical intercourse between them and, two, she is correct in trusting Frank Austin's ability to bring change in her life. She soon becomes Frank Austin's 'local wife.'

Maimunah stays with Frank Austin for a good number of years under the same roof until the day he decides to go back to England for good; at least that is

what he tells Maimunah. He gives Maimunah five hundred dollars, perhaps, as a compensation for being his 'local wife.' Maimunah duly agrees to the amount offered which is more than enough to support her for a lifetime (although she drags about leaving Frank Austin). They then both leave, Frank to England and Maimunah to Pelesu.

The fact that Austin agrees to keep Maimunah in his house after their elopement from Pelesu and Maimunah's ultimate happiness about this arrangement provides quite a radical change in the way Malay society views their relationship. I am very surprised to note that Clifford does not seem to stress on how the Malay society views this relationship. On the contrary, what we have learned from Siti Maamih and Grant in Swettenham's "The Eternal Feminine," is that there is no mention in the novel that both have ever received any threats from the local population. The local acceptance of the Maimunah-Austin relationship is somewhat similar to the acceptance of Raja Maimunah-Raja Sleman union in Swettenham's "A Malay Romance" above. A striking difference would be that the Maimunah-Austin relationship is not based on mutual love but rather on mutual dependency—Maimunah for her protection and Austin for his moral obligation and possibly sexual satisfaction. The fact that there exists a mutual dependency rather than mutual love will become a source of conflict between Austin and Maimunah as the novel continues.

Upon their return, the couple lives in a bungalow in Kuala Senangan, one of the outposts of the British Empire. Cecily is a great example of the wife of a British Colonial Officer who makes sacrifices in her life in order to be with her husband, is constantly in danger, and is always in solitude, for there are no other white couples who happen to live in the vicinity. Therefore, it is important, at this juncture, to also evaluate the relationship between the two for it may depict the sort of relationship that modernity would suggest.

Frank Austin's attraction towards his wife, Cecily, is mutual. Giddens describes "a good relationship is a relationship of equals, where each party has equal rights and obligations" (2000: 80). Applying the principles of mutual attraction, understanding, trust and respect, Giddens further argues for the emergence of the ideal form of relationship, in what he called "a democracy of the emotions" (ibid., 81).

The democracy of emotions that Giddens describes above can be best demonstrated through the following instances and conversations between Frank Austin and his wife. Cecily would wait patiently for her husband to come back from work every afternoon. Frank Austin, who understands "what life in an up-country station in the heart of the Malay Peninsula meant for a woman; he knew by observation some of the miseries of marriage in the East," (Clifford, 1898: 164) always tries to come back from work early to have tea and take a stroll along the beach with his loving wife. This has been their daily routine but "this newly married

pair wanted no keener excitement that was afforded by the companionship which each found so sweet, and they saw no cause for a quarrel with Fate on the score of the dulness or the monotony of their lives" (ibid., 162). Modernity promotes the ability for individuals to seek happiness at the lowest level—the individual level. From there, an individual will make an attempt to include another individual; then to the societal level, the kind of analysis Simmel focuses on. In the case of Frank Austin and Cecily, they are seeking happiness and enjoying their companionship to the fullest. At the same time, Austin seeks happiness by fulfilling his task as a District Officer of Kuala Senangan and Cecily seeks hers by helping the people around her, which makes Clifford admire her most.

Clifford dedicates one chapter entitled "Cecily" to study his admirable heroine closely. Cecily "has a great fascination for the ...[Malays] ... and a ready sympathy for those about her, which found its expression in a thousand little acts of kindness and forethought which speedily endeared her to the people of the land" (ibid., 184). Her daily life is not as monotonous as one may perceive. She is always busy helping people around. She is

> always at liberty when they [the Malays] sought her aid or her sympathy; a mother with a sick child, a weeping girl with some sad little story to tell to kind ears, a shock-headed little boy in trouble with his parents, all the afflicted of body or mind, all the sad, and the sorry, and the sick, came to her instinctively for comfort, aid and encouragement, and none ever came in vain (ibid., 184-185).

For the Malays in Kuala Senangan, their lives are brighter with the "presence of the light-hearted, great-souled little English girl in her pretty bungalow on the beach"

(ibid., 185). Cecily brings them a ready love and sympathy, which are wholly unselfish, therefore, she wins the hearts of Austin's people easily. To further depict Cecily's commitment towards her Malay friends, Clifford narrates her readiness to help an ailing wife and child of a poor fisherman, Mat Sam. She grasps her little medicine-case without even waiting for Mat Sam to finish his story about his sick family. Not only does she manage to save them both but she also teaches Mat Sam's family the virtue of cleanliness, all this at no cost.

The democracy of emotions leads Austin to sometimes think of the sacrifices his wife makes for his happiness. On one occasion, Austin says "I can't bear to think of you doomed to exile for my sake," voicing out his inner thought to his loving wife, almost like expressing 'the sin of ingratitude,' to quote from Macbeth, about his action of bringing Cecily to the remotest British colonial outpost. Cecily replies, "And how could anyone be dull alone with the man she loves best in such a lonely land as this?" (ibid., 172), an answer which truly reflects the person that she is. The notion of faithfulness and gratitude that bind two individual together as proposed by Simmel truly takes place in the Austin-Cecily relationship.

Clifford adds that Cecily is a "singularly pretty girl; delicately formed, with soft, rounded features, and tiny hands and feet ... she looked so *pure*, and *innocent*, and young ...[and lying there in the hammock, she looks]...so holy and so near to God..." (ibid., 159) (my emphasis). It is this purity and innocence of Cecily that serves to form the contradictory images of Maimunah in the novel. It is sad to say at

this point that nowhere in the novel does Clifford offer the feminine side of Maimunah nor the projection of intimacy that possibly takes place between them. Clifford is perhaps suggesting that the Malay woman is incapable of being affectionate and loving, or other factors prevented him from doing so.[13]

One afternoon, while Cecily is on her way to Mat Sam's house, she notices a beautiful tall lady whom she gathered had just arrived from Pelesu. On her way back to the bungalow on the beach, Celily's heart is "singing with content, and the lovely evening lights that fell around her seemed, to those who watched her, like the halo of a Saint," (ibid., 202) after saving Mat Sam's children. At home, there waiting for her is her loving husband, Frank Austin. Cecily asks him to investigate the arrival of a person from Pelesu, whom he may be familiar with.

As the novel continues, there is a question that Frank Austin never gives his wife a satisfactory answer to, despite having an ideal relationship, a democracy of emotion as Giddens describes. It is the question of Austin's refusal to take up the post of the Political Agent at Pelesu. The colonial office strongly recommended him for he has "the reputation of knowing more about the natives than almost any one else" (ibid., 163). Nevertheless, as a wife and out of mutual respect and understanding, Cecily understands that this is a sore subject, which her husband dislikes and she always strove to lighten his depression. She never asks the same question again. The readers know what is in Austin's mind, which Cecily does not. She is too innocent.

Frank Austin knows that trouble is coming; he feels that Maimunah has returned to look for him. He decides to resign from his office and duly return to Europe for good. He composes the resignation letter and then throws himself on a long chair thinking that all is done for the sake of his love, Cecily. However, Maimunah is already near, not letting Frank Austin go on with his plans as freely as he wishes. That very same night, Maimunah creeps into Austin's bungalow, wanting to claim Austin back into her arms, the way things used to be before. Austin denies the possibility of reuniting with her; even though, Maimunah generously pronounced her willingness to be Austin's second wife. Obviously, Austin "had always underrated Maimunah's affection and devotion to himself' (ibid., 219). Frank Austin vehemently says that he has sworn in front of God to love Cecily for all his life. Then Maimunah asks "And if she [Cecily] dies? Is the vow then dispensed with? And is it then permitted that thou shouldst marry again?", to which Frank replies, "It is permitted, but if she [Cecily] die I too should be as one dead. For I love her" (ibid., 224). Frank Austin's answer foreshadows what will then take place.

Maimunah, who is deeply in love with Austin, is willing to take the risk in order to win Austin back from Cecily. She has been "forced by circumstances to sacrifice her pride for the sake of her great love" (ibid., 222). Austin, who really believes that he has convinced Maimunah, that night, continues his duty as usual until his resignation letter is duly accepted. His task this time takes him away from Kuala Senangan for three days, and during his absence, Maimunah is busy finding

ways to poison Cecily. After his return, Austin discovers that Cecily's health is deteriorating. He tries every medicine that is available at hand but it is to no avail. Finally, Cecily, the innocent and devoted wife, dies in the arms of her loving husband. While weeping for the death of his wife, Maimunah comes to his room and confesses the murder, with a happy note, as if she could have Austin all to herself. Austin, on the other hand, is engaging in very serious thought with his inner self. He brings his memories back to the days when he saves Maimunah from the amok of Pandak Aris, then rescues her from Pelesu and lives happily with Maimunah for a number of years, but after all is said and done, it is Maimunah who has killed his loving wife, Cecily. Austin cannot bring himself to think that it is he who has actually killed Cecily. Is he not the person who saved Maimunah and then eloped with her? Had he not done that, Cecily would have still been alive now. Austin "no longer seemed to have a firm hold over his mind" (ibid., 259); he finally decides to kill himself with his own gun. Ironically, it is the same gun used to save Maimunah from the amok running of Pandak Aris earlier.

Clifford's *Since the Beginning* appears, at least to me, to be a successful attempt of a colonial officer to depict some of the dilemmas faced by them in the British outposts of that era. Clifford's portrayal of Frank Austin is realistic. A personal love affair with a local lady, which was considered taboo as the British officers were supposed to set a good example of a 'civilised' race, might have taken place in many British outposts. For this, I admire Clifford for being the first person to ever bring this issue out to the public. Those who are familiar with William

Somerset Maugham may have come across a short story titled "A Force of Circumstance" where the same theme of a white man having affair with a local woman is at play. If this is so, as far as Malaya is concerned, Maugham was not the first person to discover that expatriates do have affairs with local women. It happened long before Maugham set foot in Malaya. What may differ greatly between the local wife in Maugham's short story and Maimunah in Clifford's is that in Maugham's, the local wife is practically mute,[14] but Maimunah is outspoken. In the story, Clifford allows Maimunah to speak her mind to Austin.

For that matter, Maimunah is not only outspoken but also very strong in character. Right from the beginning of the novel, she appears very strong but not revealing the name of the person she is having an affair with, even after being tortured by the palace guards. However, this does not mean that she is not a vengeful type. Later, she stabs Pandak Aris, her secret lover in order to see him suffer equally as well, exactly the same way she does to Austin for abandoning her. Poisoning Cecily is the only way she can teach Austin to feel the pain of losing someone you love. Maimunah wants Austin to understand how much pain it cost to lose him.

For Austin, whose understanding of the Malays may be more proficient than any other British Officer of his time, lacks appreciation of Maimunah, a Malay lady. He underrates Maimunah's trust, affection and devotion towards him. In fact, the tragedies of the novel evolve around the matters of trust, affection and devotion among its main characters. Maimunah's trust in Austin has led her to believe that the

latter can be her protector. Austin's affection towards the Malays leads him to spend his leaves in order to study them. His quest to seek justice causes him to kill the running amok, Pandak Aris. Maimunah's affection towards Austin makes her share her life willingly with him. Her devotion to Austin drives her to come back and search him out in Kuala Senangan. Cecily's affection towards Austin is demonstrated by her willingness to come to the East with him. Finally, because of his inability to trust anyone else and to show his affection and devotion to his dead wife, Austin chooses to kill himself.

Austin's suicide creates more questions than answers. Does he die because he feels responsible for Cecily's death? Or is it because he loves Cecily so much that he wants to join her? Or is it because he wants to get away from Maimunah? If he feels responsible for Cecily's death, then he should have brought Maimunah to justice. If he loved Cecily so much, he should not have committed suicide for both he and Cecily know that the teaching of their religion states that the path he chooses leads to eternal damnation. He could simply leave Malaya for Europe if he wanted to get away from Maimunah; after all, he has already tendered his resignation letter. There ought to be more of a concrete reason for his suicide. It leaves more questions than answers.

As a matter of fact, his suicidal act is even difficult to categorize according to Emile Durkheim's studies on suicide cases. If Maimunah's confession of the murder leaves Austin not knowing how to behave, his suicide could be regarded as the

anomic type. There is also the possibility that Austin's suicide could be regarded as a fatalistic suicide—the suttee type, except in his case, he is the one who is compelled to join his wife after her death rather than the other way around, as practised in India in the past. There is no reason to suggest that his suicide act belongs to the altruistic type since he is not putting his own life at risk to save another. But if one looks at the position of the white men in the British Empire, where the principle of "intermarriages between natives and English men and women was undesirable" (Said, 1978: 213) is put in place, Austin's suicidal act could be regarded as an egoistic type for he stands tall with the Imperial ego. When we combine the two motives together—the external forces namely the Imperial ego and Austin's personal ego in not marrying Maimunah, we can conclude that his suicide is an egoistic type. But the following questions remain: Is Austin's suicide preserving the Empire's pride? Or is it the desirable result from the point of view of the British audience? What is obvious to me is that Clifford is again daring to expose the notion of the defeat of the colonizer at the hands of the colonized woman, which would welcome oppositional opinion in the metropolitan centre.

There is one aspect that is left neglected as the novel ends and it is the knowledge of the Malays and their culture which Austin seems to possess, and the good it does to him. One may wonder why Clifford chose not to explore more of this aspect in his novel. Frank Austin's quest for the knowledge of the Malays comes to a stop by the time he cohabitates with Maimunah. It is, as if, Austin has 'learned' his lesson well, by being too close to the Malays he has to pay the price for liberating

them, the so-called white men's burden. Quite obviously, Clifford wants to avoid this issue in his novel. His aim is to show that while modernity will bring progress to the Malays, the inevitable result will be that the Malay will be "less attractive an individual" as he states in the Preface to *In Court and Kampong*, reflecting similar ambivalence with that of Weber. Modernity as an evolutionary process, if suddenly introduced, will receive negative results and will possibly backfire on the introducer as Austin's life suggests. Saving Maimunah from the iron claws of the local rulers is a welcome liberation but to have her suffer the abandonment of love is inhumane, especially when Austin has reaped her innocence and given her high hopes of living in a modern 'civilisation' of the west. The modernity that Austin has introduced her to is not only proven irreversible but detrimental as well.

One personal note on the author before I end my discussion of this least known but invaluable work of colonial fiction. There seemed to be a similarity of reason for the appearance of Clifford's *Since the Beginning* and Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol*. In dire need for money to celebrate Christmas, Dickens was inspired to write this story about the spirit of Christmas. Clifford, who was the father of two at the time this novel was written, was supporting his family on a stipend from the Colonial Government. By writing such inspiring stories about his experiences in the East, Clifford happily notes that the money he earned from his works of fiction "seemed to me and to my wife to make all the difference between poverty and affluence" (*In Court and Kampong*, Preface: 49). Though arising from the dire need for money, both *Christmas Carol* and *Since the Beginning* are living

proof of the ingenuity of its respective authors. Men work better under pressure and so did these two authors.

The following two stories demonstrate the two elements of modernity namely faithfulness and gratitude in Clifford's work of fiction. When Simmel mentions faithfulness, he does not refer specifically to the love relationships that the majority of us would normally associate it with, rather these qualities should take place in each individual in a society, regardless of gender, ethnicity or race. In addition to faithfulness as I already quoted above "without the phenomenon we call faithfulness, society could simply not exist, as it does, for any length of time" (Simmel, 1950: 379), Simmel also introduced the notion of gratitude—"one of the feelings that keeps relationships going" (Craib, 1997: 160) as the most powerful means of social cohesion.

During his days in Pahang, Clifford is blessed with many loyal Malay followers of which one is Umat. In 1890, when he returns to Pahang after spending a year in England, Clifford finds that his Malay followers have scattered in many areas, looking for new jobs to earn their living. Clifford feels "very lonely" (1897b: 43) and right about this time, he meets Umat, a person whom Clifford writes "he has never left me, nor will he, probably till the time comes for one or the other of us to have his toes turned up to the love-grass" (ibid., 44). Umat understands Clifford's loneliness and at times, "would creep into my [Clifford's] bungalow, and, seating

himself upon the floor, would tell me tales of his own people until the night was far advanced" (ibid.).

Umat is, indeed, Clifford's most faithful and loyal companion. There comes a time when he disobeys Clifford's instructions not to follow him to his secret meeting with a hostile Chief and his six hundred followers. Umat anticipates danger and insists upon following Clifford. He persuades Clifford to let him follow and says: "*Tuan*, for how long a time have I eaten thy rice, when thou wast in prosperity and at ease; is it fitting that I should leave thee now that thou art in trouble? *Tuan*, where thou goest I will go. Where thou leadest I will follow after" (ibid., 45). Clifford then writes, "so Umat and I became friends, and life was to me a trifle less dreary because he was at hand. He taught me many things which I did not know" (ibid., 44). The above statement indicates the sense of gratitude and loyalty of the Malays of which Umat is demonstrating here. Being faithful and appreciative towards those who have shown good deeds are the qualities of the Malays that Clifford is addressing here.

Soon after his marriage, Umat becomes blind and has trouble working and helping Clifford the way he used too, but Clifford still keeps him, for Umat is, after all, his best companion. Both traditional and modern methods are being utilized in healing Umat's blindness but all efforts seem to be futile. Umat, at last, succumbs to his fate. However, he is lucky that around this time, his wife, Selema, is pregnant and the couple is awaiting their firstborn. While waiting for the child's birth, Clifford allows Umat and his wife to observe the traditional Malay care for pregnant women

such as "*pantang ber-anak*, or birth taboos" (ibid., 48). (We come across some elements of these Malay superstitions in the last two chapters). At last, Awang is born and he grows up "around his blind father" (ibid., 52). Clifford really admires the relationship between Umat and his son especially the "devotion he lavishes upon him" (ibid., 53). Clifford observes "long before the child can speak, he [Awang] and Umat understand one another, ... [I] ... hear them holding long conversations on the matting outside my [Clifford's] study –door with perfect content for hours at a time" (ibid., 52). Clifford prays that some day, Umat "may learn to see more clearly through Awang's eyes. Meanwhile, I [Clifford] think he is not altogether unhappy" (ibid., 53), Clifford concludes.

It may be true, to a certain degree, that the Clifford-Umat relationship is a master-servant relationship but the fact that Clifford is willing to take care of Umat and his family after the latter becomes blind makes such argument invalid. Clifford's decision to take care of Umat and his family when the latter is almost invalid is due to Clifford's appreciation of Umat's loyalty, faithfulness and gratitude towards him when Umat was young, strong and very protective of him. After all, Clifford is very pleased to see that his loyal friend is happy and able to share his happiness with his son, Awang. To Umat, the faithfulness and gratitude that he has shown Clifford in his younger days is finally paying off. Clifford certainly hopes that the good qualities that Umat possesses will be passed on to Awang, especially since Umat is a very passionate father as Clifford demonstrates above.

Clifford's "A Daughter of the Muhammadans" depicts another Malay character that embraces the element of faithfulness Simmel talks about in his works. This short story best demonstrates Clifford's sense of modernity as far as personal construction of reality is concerned. In the story, Clifford shows his admiration for a leper's wife named Minah who lives about twenty-miles north of Kuala Lipis with her leper husband. Clifford first meets this lady carrying her leper husband on her back when he makes a trip to the northern part of Kuala Lipis with the local Headman and a few Malay followers. On his first encounter, the Headman, being courteous to the white man, asks for Clifford's forgiveness for witnessing such "an ill-omened sight, ... she [Minah] is a bad woman to bring this shame upon our folk" (Clifford, 1899: 143). Clifford, however, sees things otherwise. He addresses to the Headman and the Malay followers the following: "Of a truth, this woman [Minah] of thy village is greater than any of her kind of whom I [Clifford] have heard tell in all this land of Pahang. Thy village, O Penghulu, hath a right to be proud of this leper's wife" (ibid., 144). Clifford even gives her a small sum of money "in token of the honour in which I [Clifford] hold her" (ibid., 145). Clifford advises the Headman not to do any harm to the leper and his wife and asks Minah to seek his help should any trouble arise.

The incident above opens up the question of the Headman's eastern courtesy in an encounter with that of Clifford's modern western rationality. First, the Headman's act of asking forgiveness/excuses from Clifford after watching such an undesirable scene suggests the Malay perception of the white man as being equal to

the local Chiefs or Rajas for the latter usually regards such encounter as bringing bad luck. The Malays tend to ignore or discriminate against the leper population from the mainstream in order to avoid further spread of the disease. This is why even the encounter with them is unwelcomed and unbecoming. The fact that Clifford does not show a negative reaction but praises Minah instead suggests the misconception in the Malay perception of the white man. Secondly, the Headman and the rest of the Malay population see nothing noble about Minah's effort in taking care of her leper husband. They encourage her to leave him instead for such a husband cannot perform his duty anymore. The religious institution even comes in to say that there are 'such provisions' to permit Minah to leave her leper husband, but Minah's faithfulness towards her husband overpowers the demands of her society. Clifford sees the relationship between Minah and her leper husband very differently. He asks the Headman and the Malay population to admire Minah instead of despising her. Clifford sees Minah's relationship with her husband as a "pure relationship" as Giddens suggests earlier. Despite her husband's state of health, Minah's love towards him has not changed. She even persuades Clifford to let her take care of her husband, as we will observe shortly.

And trouble does arise one day when the Headman announces that all the leprosy victims are to be quarantined in one place. This means that Minah will be separated from her loving husband. She travels twenty miles down the river to see Clifford and begs him not to take Mamat away for "he [Mamat] is all I [Minah] have; all I have, and in truth I cannot live without him" (ibid., 166). Clifford recalls

his meeting with Minah earlier and understands her worries. He allows Minah to continue taking care of her loving husband and as soon as this permission is granted, Minah's "great faithful eyes filled with tears" (ibid., 167) of happiness. Clifford "looked into her [Minah's] face [and] it shine[s] with the beauty of her soul" (ibid., 168).

Clifford's praise of Minah in front of the Headman and his Malay followers and his later approval of Minah taking care of her leper husband serves to create much needed social forms according to Durkheim in order to bring change in a society. This social form, which cannot be established overnight or by a single stroke, must be formed on the structure of 'moral individualism' as Durkheim always stresses. The highest form of morality that Minah is demonstrating is in conflict with the Malay values as projected in the Headman's disapproval of her taking care of her leper husband. What Clifford is doing here is trying to transform the previous understanding of the Malay society of such a perceived evil as leprosy into a sympathetic understanding in which the saintly personality of Minah is worthy of admiration. Social forms in modern society, among other things, have to be based on the creation of moral individualism as Minah is demonstrating in the story. He hopes that his praise and encouragement of Minah (as opposed to the Headman's hatred) will serve as a necessary conflict and condition of social change which will amount to the reformulation in the Malay sense of traditional values into a more appropriate modern one.

Overall, from the personal and intra-personal point of view, the two authors under study have penned, in their Malay characters, and are in support of the creation of moral individualism over that of repressive traditional Malay's collective conscience. Swettenham's 'regeneration' of the Malays requires individual Malays to act according to what he or she feels right or believes in despite what Malay society traditionally subscribes to. Ungku Maimunah accomplishes hers by learning to trust her lover and in risking her life and going against the wishes of her society. In the following short story, Clifford demonstrates the two elements of modernity that Simmel mentioned above. Society tries to maintain its the status quo or the established social facts, to use Durkheim's term, and usually resist the acceptance of new elements such as the relationship between Siti Maamih and Grant; yet, Siti Maamih fights for what she believes as her right for her individualism, even though she has to die for it. Clifford, despite showing his sympathy towards the Malays, cannot deny the fact that the Malays are face to face with modernity especially with the social undercurrent taking place beneath the traditional Malay society facing the modern world as the suicidal act of the lady in "One More Unfortunate" suggests. Clifford, however, sees immediately the quality of moral individualism in the Malay society and duly promotes them. The Platonic relationship that exists between Talib and his lover, and that of Talib's right neighbour and his wife receives full praise from Clifford. Umat's sense of gratitude should prevail and be passed on to the next generation. The faithful character of Minah should be groomed and admired instead of being ostracized by the Malay society.

The two authors see the individual as an integral part of society which can affect much needed and desirable change in Malay society by supporting such instances of moral individualism in the stories. However, both authors see the implications that sudden introduction is dangerous, as in the case of Swettenham's Unku Maimunah and Clifford's Maimunah. Moral individualism should call for a society to engage in the 'reflexivity' process as Giddens suggests. The two authors hope that in light of the continuous inputs of social undercurrents (i.e. suicide) and other actions of individualism; society begins to understand the dynamics behind those instances and begins to change gradually on towards modernity.