

**ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES IN SELECTED
CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN NOVELS IN ENGLISH:
AN ECO-MARXIST PERSPECTIVE**

ZAINOR IZAT ZAINAL

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2016

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: Zainor Izat Zainal

Registration/Matric No: AHA 100004

Name of Degree: PhD

Title of Thesis ("this Work"): Environmental Attitudes In Selected Contemporary Malaysian Novels In English: An Eco-Marxist Perspective

Field of Study: Malaysian Literature in English

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work;
- (2) This Work is original;
- (3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
- (4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
- (5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright of this Work to the University of Malaya ("UM"), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright of this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
- (6) I am fully aware that if on the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate's Signature

Date

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness's Signature

Date

Name:

Designation:

ABSTRACT

The field of environmental criticism has proliferated and inspired literary scholars from different parts of the world to participate in environmental discourse, discussing and deliberating on many environmental problems that vary in scale and scope. Criticism on Malaysian literature in English rarely addresses environmental concerns, and in this thesis, I attempt to redress this dearth by examining and critiquing four contemporary Malaysian novels in English: Keris Mas' *Jungle of Hope* (2009), Yang-May Ooi's *The Flame Tree* (1998), KS Maniam's *Between Lives* (2003), and Chuah Guat Eng's *Days of Change* (2010). The environmental complexities presented in these works differ, but the common thread in these works is the issue of land threatened by development plans. In these works, too, the land stands out as a trope for the environment in the Malaysian context. I discuss environmental attitudes expressed in these novels through issues such as alienation from nature, politics of the environment, development, and ethics. In order to explore attitudes towards these issues, this thesis draws on Eco-Marxism, a close reading of the texts using selected Marxist ecological insights and theory, informed by relevant postcolonial and environmental concepts/ideas; as well as historical and cultural changes — the ecological, economic, and political transformations that have occurred in Malaysia. Although Marxism is believed to lack an explicit perspective on ecology, we may still benefit from this theory, which provides the platform to dissect environmental issues in the Malaysian context. In this thesis, I argue that the writers exhibit a concerned attitude towards the environment, positioning their work as 'lessons' in nation-building, attesting to the tensions inherent in developing a country while maintaining and protecting the environment. This concerned attitude extends their apprehension in regards to humanity's past and present relationship to the environment and foregrounds the urgency to sustain the environment for present and future generations vis-a-vis the

rapid and dramatic transformations in Malaysian society — the consequences of capitalist modernisation, globalisation, and technological advancement. The writers' answer to environmental degradation in Malaysia is relatively practical: a genuine commitment to the environment is crucial if we are to move towards sustainability. This commitment can be mediated through a sense of place, a strong and resilient civil society, a development paradigm that puts more emphasis on people and the environment, and an environmental ethics focused on duty, relationships, activism and sustainability. In a country like Malaysia, where nation-building is still a process rather than an end result, the need to examine and re-evaluate our environmental attitudes is crucial. In the realm of Malaysian literature in English, these novels serve as the most explicit form for such an endeavour.

ABSTRAK

Evolusi dalam kritikan alam sekitar telah menjadi pendorong para ilmuwan sastera dari serata dunia untuk mengambil bahagian dalam wacana alam; dengan tujuan membahas dan membincangkan polemik persekitaran yang berbeza skop dan skala. Walau bagaimanapun, kritikan terhadap penulisan kesusasteraan Malaysia dalam bahasa Inggeris dilihat jarang menangani jurang permasalahan alam sekitar di dalam erti kata sebenar. Oleh yang demikian, di dalam tesis ini, saya cuba untuk mengatasi kekurangan tersebut dengan meneliti dan mengkritik empat novel kontemporari Malaysia yang ditulis di dalam bahasa Inggeris iaitu *Jungle of Hope* (2009) oleh Keris Mas, *The Flame Tree* (1998) oleh Yang-May Ooi, *Between Lives* (2003) oleh KS Maniam dan *Days of Change* (2010) oleh Chuah Guat Eng. Kompleksiti alam sekitar yang dibentangkan dalam karya-karya ini meskipun berbeza, namun titik pertindihan naratif dalam karya-karya ini adalah berkisar tentang isu tanah yang terancam oleh rancangan pembangunan. Dalam karya-karya yang dinyatakan, tanah berfungsi sebagai kiasan perbandingan untuk alam sekitar dalam konteks Malaysia. Saya bahaskan ciri-ciri alam sekitar yang diekspresikan dalam novel-novel tersebut melalui isu-isu seperti keterasingan dari alam semulajadi, politik alam sekitar, pembangunan sehinggalah etika. Dalam usaha untuk meneroka perincian dan sikap terhadap isu-isu ini, tesis ini menggunakan konsep Ekomarxisme, yakni pendekatan yang menggunakan perspektif ekologi dan teori Marxisme, didokong oleh konsep-konsep mahupun idea-idea pasca-kolonial dan alam sekitar, serta perubahan sejarah dan budaya cernaan transformasi ekologi, ekonomi, dan politik yang telah berlaku dalam konteks Malaysia. Walaupun Marxisme dipercayai kekurangan perspektif yang jelas tentang ekologi, kita masih boleh mendapat manfaat daripada teori ini, yang menyediakan landasan untuk mengupas isu-isu alam sekitar dalam konteks Malaysia. Dalam tesis ini, saya turut membincangkan bahawa penulis menunjukkan sikap yang prihatin terhadap alam sekitar, sekaligus mengangkat karya

mereka sebagai pengajaran berguna dalam misi pembangunan negara yang menyaksikan ketegangan yang wujud antara pembangunan dan perlindungan alam sekitar. Keprihatinan mereka terpamer melalui kebimbangan mereka terhadap simbiosis manusia dan alam sekitar mencakupi masa lalu hingga sekarang, dan gesaan terhadap kepentingan mempertahankan alam sekitar untuk generasi sedia ada dan masa hadapan, seiring arus perubahan yang cepat dan dramatik dalam masyarakat Malaysia natijah daripada modenisasi kapitalis, globalisasi dan kemajuan teknologi. Jawapan penulis berkisar keruntuhan alam sekitar begitu praktikal dengan penekanan diberikan kepada kepentingan menunjukkan kesungguhan dan komitmen, sekiranya kita ingin menuju ke arah pembentukan peradaban persekitaran yang sebenar-benarnya. Komitmen ini boleh diserlahkan melalui rasa kepemilikan kepada tempat, pembentukan masyarakat sivil yang bersepadu dan berdaya bina, anjakan paradigma pembangunan yang menjurus kepada manusia dan persekitaran serta penekanan etika alam yang memfokus kepada tugas, perhubungan, aktivisme dan kelestarian alam sekitar. Dalam sebuah negara seperti Malaysia di mana pembangunan bangsa masih merupakan proses berterusan dan bukan hasil akhir, keperluan untuk meneliti dan menilai kembali sikap dan perincian terhadap alam sekitar adalah amat penting. Lantaran itu, dalam dunia kesusasteraan Malaysia dalam bahasa Inggeris, karya-karya ini merupakan entiti yang paling jelas bagi daya usaha sebegini.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

This thesis and the long years it took to complete it have been a very enlightening and humbling experience for me. I learnt a lot about my country, in ways I would never have thought. I also learnt that this thesis would not have been possible without the help and support from many people.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Agnes S.K. Yeow, for offering key intellectual guidance and assistance, right from day one. I have also had the privilege to engage with and learn from fellow PhD students at UM. Christopher Lloyd De Shield, Haleh Zargarzadeh and Elham Mohammadi were kind enough to offer me their insights and words of motivation.

While I am grateful to my colleagues in UPM for their encouragement, I would like to extend individual thanks to my mentor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, for introducing me to Ecocriticism and for always providing support and encouragement when I needed it the most. Thank you to Rohimmi Noor, for always sparing time (and office space) to listen to and joke about my woes! Many thanks also go to “eagle-eyed” Patrick Yeoh, for his unfailing support and wisdom.

I am especially indebted to my friends, near and far, for their support and encouragement. Many thanks to Rohaizad Suaidi, for tirelessly reading every single sentence of my final draft (over many coffee sessions at Starbucks) before I handed it to my supervisor! Special thanks to Ann Rosnida Mohd Deni, my best friend for more than 20 years. I am grateful that I have a best friend who was crazy enough to take the PhD trail about the same time I did, even though she enrolled at a different faculty in UM! Thank you for sharing all the laughter and tears! I would like to thank my long-time friend and confidante, Faiz Helimi, for always making it a point to listen to me, giving me the necessary ‘pep talk’. Many thanks also go to my treasured friends Mohd Noor

Musa, Dr. Siti Hafizah Ab Hamid, Dr. Wan Aslynn Salwani Wan Ahmad, Dr. Siti Mistima, Dr. Faizahani Abd Rahman, Azlina Abdullah, Dr. Mohd Muzhafar Idrus and Adam Tuan Mukriz a.k.a Jeffrey Zain for their wonderful emotional support throughout the years.

A loving thanks to my family, especially my Momma, for her support and prayers all these years, of which sometimes I think I am undeserving. Abah, your love lingers beyond the grave.

I am extremely grateful to the Ministry of Higher Education for fully funding my PhD studies. Special thanks to UPM for granting me a study leave which has made this thesis possible.

Lastly, praise be to God, Lord of the Universe.

*Dedicated to *Negaraku*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Original Literary Work Declaration Form	ii
Abstract	iii
<i>Abstrak</i>	v
Acknowledgements	vii
1.0 Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study.	27
1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study	32
1.4 Literature Review	38
1.4.1 Ecocriticism and Postcolonialism	38
1.4.2 Ecocriticism and Marxism	46
1.4.3 Literary Criticism on the Selected Novels	49
1.4.3.1 Keris Mas' <i>Jungle of Hope</i>	49
1.4.3.2 K. S. Maniam's <i>Between Lives</i>	51
1.4.3.3 Chuah Guat Eng's <i>Days of Change</i>	54
1.4.3.4 Yang May Ooi's <i>The Flame Tree</i>	53
1.5 Theoretical Framework	60
2.0 Chapter Two: Forgotten Traditions and A Sense Of Place: Alienation From Nature In <i>Jungle Of Hope</i>, <i>Days Of Change</i>, and <i>Between Lives</i>	66
2.1 Alienation from Nature	66
2.2 Changing Relations in <i>Jungle of Hope</i>	69
2.3 Detached Relations in <i>Days of Change</i>	78
2.4 Weaving the Past and Present in <i>Between Lives</i>	84
2.5 Conclusion	96

3.0	Chapter Three: Resistance and Empowerment: Environmental Politics In <i>Jungle Of Hope, Days Of Change, Between Lives, and The Flame Tree</i>	100
3.1	Power Relations and Environmental Politics	100
3.2	Acceptance as Empowerment in <i>Jungle of Hope</i>	108
3.3	Resistance as Empowerment in <i>Between Lives</i>	115
3.4	Collective Resistance in <i>Days of Change</i>	124
3.5	Failed Resistance and Empowerment in <i>The Flame Tree</i>	134
3.6	Conclusion	147
4.0	Chapter Four: The Flaws of The Panacea: Development In <i>Jungle Of Hope, Days Of Change, Between Lives, and The Flame Tree</i>	150
4.1	Development Ideology	150
4.2	Cultural and Political Sustainability in <i>Jungle of Hope</i>	157
4.3	The “Forgotten” and the “Marginalized” in <i>Between Lives</i>	164
4.4	Vested Interests and Social Equity in <i>Days of Change</i>	171
4.5	People’s Participation in <i>The Flame Tree</i>	178
4.6	Conclusion	182
5.0	Chapter Five: Environmental Ethics in <i>Jungle Of Hope, Days Of Change, Between Lives, and The Flame Tree</i>	184
5.1	Environmental Ethics	184
5.2	Rights, Duty, and Character in <i>The Flame Tree</i>	194
5.3	Sacred Duty and Relationships in <i>Between Lives</i>	201
5.4	Kinship Ties in <i>Jungle of Hope</i>	207
5.5	Duty and Activism in <i>Days of Change</i>	212
5.6	Conclusion	215
6.0	Chapter Six: Conclusion	218
	References	226

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Attitudes toward nature and the environment have been constructed for us historically, both through our private, individual histories and through the public histories, implicit and explicit, by which we are socialized. ~ Owen Grumbling (1992)

1.1 Background of the Study

Environmental degradation in Malaysia has its roots in the British colonial administration, which was preoccupied with capitalising the land that is endowed with plenty of natural resources in order to fulfil the needs of industrialising Europe. Indeed, colonial control brought about a great deal of socio-ecological transformation in Malaysia, especially that which involved land use and people's relationships with it. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, prior to British colonisation, 95% of the land area of Malaysia was still forested (Brookfield, Potter, and Byron 23). This was further attested to by early European travellers, who described the Malaysian landscape they saw as "ranges of hill and valley everywhere covered with interminable forest, with glistening rivers winding among them" (Wallace 25).

The Malays and the Orang Asli (the indigenous peoples) co-existed with the forest. The forest was their dwelling, as well as a source of basic necessities, identity, and spirituality. Besides serving as a source of subsistence to the Malays and the Orang Asli, forest-fed rivers also served to facilitate commercial exchange (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 11-12). A wide range of forest products, such as aromatic gums and resins, were extracted by the Malays and the Orang Asli and later exchanged with goods brought by Chinese, Indian, and Arab merchants at trading posts set up by Malay rulers. Because population was relatively small and economic activities were subsistence-based, "the impact of Malay and Orang Asli activity was limited to small patches, leaving the forest cover itself largely intact" (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 13).

Land, in pre-colonial, traditional Malay society, was classified under two categories: *tanah hidup* (living land) and *tanah mati* (dead land) (Ismail 62). *Tanah hidup* refers to land that is occupied and worked on, while *tanah mati* is land which lacked evidence of being occupied. There was no such thing as private or corporate ownership of land. Land rights, therefore, hinged on the condition that the land was continuously worked on or occupied by individuals in the community. In those times, the relationship that the people had with the land was holistic: the land served as the source of life and livelihood itself, apart from the spheres of spirituality and social activities (Idris 7). Self-cultivation was the sole feature of land use, and most would work or cultivate on as much land as they deemed necessary (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 68). In line with this norm, very little was written about ownership. Land, therefore, could not be sold, mortgaged, or transferred. Thus, landlessness was unheard of before colonisation (Idris 7). This concept of customary tenure of land is not much different from Robert Sack's description of land in much earlier societies:

In the primitive view, land is not a thing that can be cut into pieces and sold as parcels. Land is not a piece of space within a larger spatial system. On the contrary, it is seen in terms of social relations. The people, as part of nature, are intimately linked to the land. To belong to a territory or place is a social concept which requires first and foremost belonging to a societal unit. The land itself is in the possession of the group as a whole. It is not privately partitioned and owned. Moreover, it is alive with the spirits and history of the people, and places on it are sacred. (22)

During pre-colonial times, very little of land was mapped. This resulted in a lack of formal documentation, which proved to work against the local people. Consequently, land grabs were made easy during colonial rule since the Malays and the Orang Asli had rather ambiguous proprietary rights, especially those who dwelled in the forest and those involved in shifting cultivation (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 62). The European powers mapped boundaries to secure their rights and those that they favoured, and designed new measures to regulate land use and access. One of these measures was the

registration of land titles under individuals and institutions (Idris 7). The British also established land codes and laws, which aimed to set the boundaries of Malay territory and designate land for economic purposes, especially for tin mining and, later, rubber (Brookfield, Porter, and Byron 34). Under this practice, unused forested land that had been surveyed by the British was labelled Forest Reserve, whereas land that did not belong in this category was labelled State Land (Hurst 58). The former was frequently claimed for plantations (Hurst 58). State land, on the other hand, belonged to the Sultans, who were often coerced by their British Advisers to alienate land to private interests, usually British-backed companies involved in mining and plantation agriculture (Idris 7). Ownership of land was also subject to legal rights obtained from the authorities, and any land cultivation without the permission of the land owner was against the law. Access to land was tightly restricted. Available land for shifting cultivation, a traditional means of subsistence practiced among the Malays and Orang Asli in the forest, became scarce (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 69). The British introduced strict measures to curb access and use of the forests, which resulted in serious repercussions for the Malays and Orang Asli. Dependent on the forest for their livelihood, they were denied access to forest produce and the forest trade.

Control over the forest, whether for mining, plantations or logging purposes, brought devastating ecological disruptions. Rubber plantations caused the loss of forest cover and top soil. Food for scrub and grass-dependent mammals also became scarce due to deforestation, leading to fierce, brutal cycles of crop destruction and wildlife killing (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 149-151). Wildlife dwindled in number not only due to deforestation but also big game hunting (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 192-200). Intensive tin mining also caused the diversion of streams to accommodate sluices, pollution of rivers with sand and silt, sterility of agricultural land, and forest clearance for timber and firewood (Brookfield, Porter, and Byron 32).

The forest monopoly not only caused ecological problems but also social problems. The harmonious relationship between the locals and the forests was disrupted, making the locals lose their ecological and economic stakes in the forests. To cope with shortages of labour in the rubber plantations, Indian immigrants were brought in, mainly from Tamil Nadu in the southern part of India. Chinese miners were brought in from China, mainly from Fujian and Guangdong provinces in the southern part of China, to work in tin-laden sands in valleys located in the West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, especially in Kinta, Perak. A few large Chinese entrepreneurs also managed to secure their monopoly in the mining industry by recruiting more labour and importing more machinery. Consequently, development was concentrated in Kinta Valley, Kuala Lumpur, and Seremban, places which benefitted from income generated by tin (Sani 8). Chaotic political conditions often ensued involving Chinese miners, Malay sultans, minor rulers, and villagers (Brookfield, Porter, and Byron 31). At the end of their rule, the British had identified the three major racial groups in Malaya by their economic functions and a dichotomy between rural and urban populations. Malays were identified with farming and rural settings, Chinese with entrepreneurial endeavours with urban identities, and Indians with rubber plantations and the rural environment.

When Malaysia gained independence in 1957, it inherited a colonial economic system that was highly dependent on the exploitation of its natural resources. Parallel to this, leaders, administrators, and the like were so steeped in colonialist thinking and methods of running the country that they merely followed in the footsteps of the British, continuing with the laws, policies and economic structures established by the British. No critical assessment of the society and the environment was deemed necessary (Idris 8). In fact, as Kathirithamby-Wells has noted, Malaysia entered nationhood without a viable program for a sustainable management of its environment (*Nature and Nation* 415-417). This was characteristic of Third World states in the 1950s and 1960s, which

eschewed concerns about environmental conservation in favour of initiating industrial development and maximising natural resource exports (Bryant and Bailey 56).

Like other postcolonial nations, nation building became the utmost priority for Malaysia right after independence. To this end, economic development took precedence over other things as it was believed that this would increase the people's quality of life, which in turn would lead to political stability. Development, therefore, became the nation's overriding priority and ideology, implemented mainly through economic and political measures determined by the government. As in most Third World countries, the Malaysian state plays the dual role of developer and protector of the natural environment (Bryant and Bailey 48). These roles position the state as trustees who implement programmes and projects that meet the concerns for economic development as well as environmental protection and preservation. In the same context, development in Malaysia is largely state-led and state-facilitated (Smeltzer 197; Jomo and Wee 1). This is evident in the state's formulation and implementation of various policies and strategies such as the National Economic Policy (NEP), aimed to provide physical and social infrastructure necessary for development and nation-building.

Upon independence, forested land, as much as it served as an economic resource through logging, was also seen as a stumbling block to the spread of plantation agriculture thus perceived as unproductive (Hurst 57). Government-sponsored land development and resettlement schemes involving the cultivation of industrial crops (such as rubber and oil palm) operating at federal and state levels, attested to this. A decade after independence, the Chinese were clearly dominating the economy, whereas the majority of the Malays continued to live in poverty, especially in the rural areas. This economic imbalance created tension between the two major races and became a major factor in a bloody riot that erupted on 13 May, 1969.

Malaysia's NEP came into being after the 13 May 1969 riot. It was designed as a social restructuring programme, and covered a period of twenty years (1970-1990). The NEP aimed to eradicate poverty and eliminate the association of ethnicity with economic function because creating conducive socio-economic conditions was seen as crucial for political stability and national unity. The period of 1970-1990, when the NEP was fully enforced, became the most important period in the country's development. Malaysia's economy accelerated tremendously in this period. In the '70s and '80s, it was the world's largest producer and exporter of tin, timber, rubber, and palm oil. By 1990, however, Malaysia had also significantly expanded its economy to include the manufacturing sector. Indeed, by the 1990s, Malaysia had experienced rapid economic growth, equitable distribution of income, and dramatic improvements in human welfare, epitomising the "miracle thesis," a "paragon of development," and "newly industrialising country" that had been associated with other nation-states in South East Asia (Rigg 3; Dixon and Smith 1).

Rapid development during the period of NEP has undoubtedly resulted in a tremendously improved economy. From an agriculture-based economy, Malaysia has evolved into a modern, industrialising, export-oriented economy. By 2020, it is expected that Malaysia will become a truly industrialised country. Throughout this evolution, poverty and income inequality have been relatively reduced. Employment rates, life expectancy, level of literacy and education, public facilities, and infrastructure have also improved. Since economic development is the comprehensive vision upheld by the state in order to improve the nation, it has become the over-arching national ideology in Malaysia that dominates public matters, reinforced especially in economics and politics.

However, this success story of development has attracted criticism, including that it has perpetuated the destruction of the natural environment and sacrificed

environmental sustainability (Rigg 35-36). In the '80s and '90s, there were many campaigns against the destruction of rainforests in Malaysia, some of which were initiated by the locals themselves and some supported by international NGOs.

Campaigns initiated by the locals had mixed results. Some projects have managed to make headway in making the state more open to public participation. The Sungai Selangor Dam, for example, completed in 2002, saw the Department of Environment meeting the demands of NGOs to extend the period for public review of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) beyond one month, and to ensure public participation in the review panels for the EIA reports (Ramakrishna 125). World Wide Fund for Nature Malaysia (WWF-Malaysia) too, came up with constructive comments and recommendations regarding what it deemed as an incomplete and 'weak' EIA for the Sungai Selangor Dam Project in 1999 ("Comments by WWF-Malaysia"). NGOs fighting for the scraping of the dam also managed to lobby for a more detailed social impact study of the dam (Ramakrishna 125). These successes were a milestone in the history of NGOs in Malaysia as The Natural Resource and Environment (Prescribed Activities) Order 1994/88 (NRE), for instance, does not allow EIAs to be made public and to be involved in public participation (Sharom 887). However, little is known as to what extent these recommendations were taken into consideration in planning and improving the design of the project. The Sungai Selangor dam project went ahead, was built on a vast area comprising several land areas in Fraser's Hill, Gerachi Jaya and Pertak, several rivers, and two Orang Asli villages (E. Tan, "New Dam Needed"). The Orang Asli lost their ancestral land and means of subsistence and were forced to resettle in 'new,' 'modern' sites, which they had difficulties adjusting to (Swainson and McGregor 155). Indeed, the plight of displaced indigenous people in Malaysia is not new, but this continues to be sidelined as the state works together with business

corporations to appropriate large tracts of forests to make way for development projects, cash crop plantations, and dams.

The Borneo Project, a U.S.-based non-governmental organisation, and Bruno Manser, an environmental activist from Switzerland, for example, provided support to indigenous communities such as the Penan and the Kayan in Sabah and Sarawak to fight for their rights and for the forest. Malaysia was criticised severely when the plight of these communities, whose livelihood in the forest were disrupted due to state-government-approved logging activities, were highlighted in international media (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 367-368). These criticisms came to a high point in 1988, when the European Parliament decided to suspend all European timber imports from Sarawak (Hezri and Hasan 42).

The range of environmental problems faced by the nation during and after the NEP period was tremendous. Broadly speaking, environmental degradation in Malaysia can be categorised into six areas: water pollution, toxic pollution, climate change, extinction of species, loss of biodiversity, and loss of forest cover (Sharom 857). Loss of forest cover, however, seems to be the most serious problem (Vincent and Ali 366-367). Forests that used to cover much of the country have diminished. It was reported that forest covered 77% of the total land area in Peninsular Malaysia in 1946, whereas only 48% of forest cover remained in 1988 (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 87). In 2011, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (henceforth, DOS) reported that only 44.05% of the total land area in Peninsular Malaysia was forest-covered (qtd. in Transparency International Malaysia). The DOS also reported that in Sarawak in 2011, forest covered 64.04% of the total land (qtd. in Transparency International Malaysia). Sabah's forest cover, which accounted for 75 % of total land area in 1975, had decreased to 59% in 1995 (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 142). The DOS reported that in 2011, only 57.5% of Sabah's land area was forest-covered (qtd. in Transparency International Malaysia). It

was estimated by the DOS that forest covered 54.5% of total land area in Malaysia in 2011 (qtd. in Transparency International Malaysia) but the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) projected that this is going to reduce further to 46% in 2020 (qtd. in Hon and Shibata 23).

Loss of forest cover, however, has declined in Peninsula Malaysia since the 1990s onwards, although the rate of deforestation still remains high both in Sabah and Sarawak (Ambali 468). These mixed results are in no way encouraging since most lowland forests in Peninsular Malaysia have been degraded and turned into townships, agricultural plantations, and industrial parks, whereas the still largely intact montane (mountainous) forests have been increasingly threatened by hill development projects (Sahabat Alam Malaysia 106-107). Hill development projects have become extensive since the 1980s due to a number of reasons. Two of these are the tourism industry and the increasing demand for land needed for industrial activity, commerce, construction, agriculture, infrastructure, and urbanisation (Chan 66). Hill land is generally environmentally-sensitive, and any alteration to its soil composition proved to be disastrous to both humans and non-humans. Time and again Malaysia has witnessed many tragedies caused by hill land developments such as the Highland Towers Tragedy in Kuala Lumpur in 1993, Genting Highland landslide tragedy in 1995, the North-South Highway landslide near Gua Tempurung in 1996, and the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide in 2008, to name a few (Zainal Abidin and Tew iv). Effects of hill land degradation are plenty, some of the major ones of which are deforestation, destruction of water catchments, change of climate, soil erosion, landslides, mudslides, river siltation, and sedimentation (Chan 69-80). Even since the government introduced tighter regulations concerning hill development in 1999, not much has changed as “unwarranted land-clearing practices on upland slopes [...] continue to flout such guidelines” (Sahabat Alam Malaysia 108).

Responses to environmental degradation in Malaysia have not been lacking. In fact, these responses can be traced back to the colonial times. Armed resistance by the locals to British unjust laws that pertained to land rights and access was relatively common then, though not many records are available. The implementation of forest or land laws triggered protests among the Malays, whose livelihood in the forest was threatened. Tok Bahaman's 1891-1895 rebellion in Pahang exemplified these protests (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 128). Haji Abdul Rahman from Terengganu, who represented 43 peasants who refused to bow to the British system of getting permits to plant hill paddy, contested the British notion of land use at the Land Office (Mohideen 246). Discontentment over land rights grew, which culminated in a Malay peasant uprising in Terengganu in 1928, led by To' Janggut. However, this resistance was quashed "swiftly and ruthlessly by British guns" (Idris 7).

Environmental concerns during colonial times were crudely informed by scientific discovery and botanical studies that were carried out throughout the Empire. Scientific discovery and botanical studies were rooted in European Enlightenment values, which valorised the superiority of the rational human mind over non-rational matter, including nature. People and nature in the colonies, therefore, were seen as 'uncivilised' by the British Empire and in need of being brought to order and rationality, named and labelled so as to enlighten the rest of the world (Adams and Mulligan 3). Forest sustainability, however, became a major concern throughout the British Empire due to hunting, commercial plantations, and scientific research. To this end, conservation was seen as extremely crucial. The inauguration of King George V National Park in 1939, a forested area that stretches over three states, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Pahang, reached the pinnacle of conservation efforts carried out by Theodore Hubback, a British officer, who was deeply concerned about wildlife preservation and the survival of the Orang Asli in the forests of Malaya (Kathirithamby-

Wells, *Nature and Nation* 199). King George V National Park was renamed as Taman Negara National Park shortly after independence in 1957. Hubback's efforts were commendable but not uncommon during colonial times. Coinciding with forest conservation measures carried out throughout the British Empire, especially in Africa, India, and Burma, Hubback's efforts were premised on the philosophy of Empire at that time, which was "the concept that protection and preservation of the biological realm were congruent with good governance and the enhancement of political power" (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 189). Indeed, conservation efforts, such as Hubback's, were an important part of colonial ideology by the 19th century, and had spread to become a global concern in the 20th century (Adams and Mulligan 1). This is evident from the creation of Kruger National Park in South Africa (1926), Hailey National Park in India (1936), Kivu National Park in Congo (1937), as well as other numerous conservation parks and sanctuaries throughout the world (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 211).

The oldest and largest environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Malaysia, The Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), was established in 1940 by a group of British expatriates committed to preserving the country's natural heritage. With the publication of *Malayan Nature Journal Volume 1* in 1940, the MNS set out to be Malaysia's premier environmental NGO, promoting conservation and environmental education, tasks they have continued to pursue until today. Decades of environmental work has made MNS the largest environmental NGO in Malaysia, surviving from colonial times until now. Amongst its greatest achievements are saving the Endau-Rompin Forest in the '70s, preserving and managing Kuala Selangor Nature Park in the '80s, introducing School Nature Clubs in schools in the '90s, and gazettement of the Royal Belum State Park in Perak in 2007 (Malaysian Nature Society, "Conservation").

NGOs working on environmental issues mushroomed from the '70s onwards. The Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) was established in 1970, WWF-Malaysia was set up in 1972, and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) was founded in 1977. These NGOs have been acknowledged as the pioneers of the environmental movement in Malaysia, which continued to grow in the '80s and '90s (Ramakrishna 116). To date, other than MNS, CAP, WWF-Malaysia, and SAM, Malaysia has 14 registered MNGOs (Malaysian Environmental NGOs) dealing specifically with the environment, such as the Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM), EcoKnights, Borneo Resources Institute Malaysia (BRIMAS), Sustainable Development Network Malaysia (SUSDEN), and Water Watch Penang (WWP). MNGOs in Peninsular Malaysia are mostly concerned with resource conservation and quality of life issues, whereas MNGOs in East Malaysia are focused on the needs of the forest and the indigenous people that inhabit it (Ramakrishna 118). These MNGOs differ not only in their concerns but also in their approaches in influencing political and governmental decisions related to the environment. Conducting and presenting research results, presenting viewpoints, contacting government officials, and lobbying through the media are popular tactics used by the MNGOs (Mohd and Sonn 75). Broadly speaking, however, they share the same aspirations of increasing environmental awareness, promoting activities that aid the preservation of the environment, and encouraging and developing policies geared to sustainable development (Ramakrishna 118).

MNGOs have been successful in some of their campaigns. CAP, SAM, and MNS have managed to halt a few development projects that were deemed environmentally destructive, such as the redevelopment of Penang Hill, the building of Tembeling Dam at Taman Negara, and extensive logging at the Endau-Rompin forest, but failed miserably to lobby for the termination of the Bakun and Selangor dam projects, the gazetting of Pulau Redang as a state marine park, and many more

unsustainable development projects that involved logging, deforestation, and the building of road, bridge, and hill projects (Weiss, “Prickly Ambivalence” 75). Many of these MENDOs have the scientific knowledge, skills and expertise which they have sometimes utilised to cooperate with the government to draft environmental policies. Regional and international support has also worked to these MENDOs’ advantage in addressing environmental issues. However, Jeffrey Vincent and Rozali Mohamed Ali in their 2005 book *Managing Natural Wealth: Environment and Development in Malaysia* doubt the degree of the ability of these MENDOs to influence the pace and direction of sustainable development and political outcomes in Malaysia (398). Ramakrishna also has the same opinion, arguing that MENDOs generally have “inadequate power” and “a weak voice,” preferring non-confrontational methods over aggressive ones (135). This is partially attributable to state-imposed constraints (Ramakrishna 135). A major constraint related to this argument is the Society Act (1966) and the Internal Security Act (1960) (replaced with Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (2012) in April, 2013), legislations that work in favour of the government in implementing its development policies. The Society Act for instance, requires every club, organisation, society, or political party to secure a licence, thereby granting the government the exclusive right to block or impede the formation of any organisation which it considers detrimental to the country. Whereas, the Internal Security Act gave the government and the police absolute power to arrest and detain whoever they think is a threat to national security, without trial.

Malaysia’s dynamic private business sector, which is the key economic growth driver and carries out much of the economic activities in the country, including agriculture, mining, and commerce, has also played a role in addressing environmental issues. Nowadays, more and more companies and multi-national corporations in this sector have included “green initiatives” in their corporate social responsibility, in line

with governmental efforts in leading green initiatives nationwide (Jeong 3-4). To illustrate, Digi, one of the leading telecommunications providers, has embarked on the “Mangrove-saving Project” to help stop the devastation of mangrove forests in Selangor (“Deep Green”). Sime Darby, the Malaysian-based diversified multinational involved in key growth sectors such as plantations, property, motors, and industrial equipment, has embarked on their “Plant a Tree Program,” with the aim of planting 300,000 trees (“The Sime Darby Plant a Tree Program”).

Grassroots campaigns, usually organised by ordinary people fighting for a common environmental cause, have also emerged in the past few decades. Their campaigns, though they were successful and worked to their favour, proved to be a long, difficult battle. The Bukit Merah Action Committee, founded in 1984, is an example. The committee, which represented about 10,000 residents of Bukit Merah, Perak, sued Asian Rare Earth Sdn. Bhd. (ARE), a Japanese-Malaysian joint-venture plant, in 1985 for its irresponsible dumping of radioactive waste. Prior to this, numerous complaints were received from the community about their failing health and increasing incidents of leukaemia, infant deaths, congenital diseases, and lead poisoning since the set up of the plant in 1982 (Consumers’ Association of Penang, “Chronology”). In 1992, the people of Bukit Merah won their suit against ARE. The factory was ordered by the Ipoh High Court to shut down within 14 days. This long battle was a feat considering residents in the community had to deal with health risks, countless false assurances by the government, and the police force, which were quick to arrest them when they set out to protest (Consumers’ Association of Penang, “Chronology”). The Bukit Merah Action Committee set the first precedent in Malaysian legal history for being the first community to tirelessly fight over an environmental issue in order to protect their health and environment from radioactive pollution.

Grassroots environmental movements in the past, especially in the '80s, were seen predominantly as racially motivated, which was simply because an environmental issue usually started off as an issue that affected a certain racial community, was fought for by that community, and was later championed by racial-based political parties (J. Tan, "Interview"). This, according to Hezri, a prominent researcher in sustainable development and environmental policy in Malaysia, is the outcome of racial-based politics, which has played a large role in Malaysian politics for decades (J. Tan, "Interview"). This, however, has changed. For the past few years, Malaysia has witnessed countless protests, demonstrations, and arrests involving the establishment of a rare earth processing plant project by Australia's Lynas Corporation in Gebeng, Kuantan, Pahang. What started off as a talk drawing less than 200 people in Kuantan in March 2011 quickly garnered thousands of supporters "from a much wider spectrum of society" as they learned of the impending radiation exposure and its effects on health, safety, and the environment (Gooch, "Green Movement"). This grassroots movement reflects the public's growing awareness of environmental issues and their rights for a safe and clean environment, the power of expressing their views publicly and in urging business corporations and the government to be more transparent and accountable to the people, as well as a shift from racial-based politics to environmental-based politics.

Although state power and its enforcement have been feared, in recent times, many have come forward to question and challenge the state's environmental decisions and implementations. Indeed, state governments have been accused of abusing and exploiting their power to launch land grabs for their state-backed corporations' profiteering agendas. A case in point is the over-acquisition of land in Pengerang, Johor, which raised concerns over the displacement of the community to make way for the state's cronies' development projects (Chua, "Time To Stop"). Recently, too, the Negeri Sembilan state government has also been accused of excising huge pieces of forest

reserve land for logging, plantations, and numerous development projects that benefits its cronies, resulting in the loss of 53 areas of forest reserves (Teoh, “Negeri ‘Illegally’ Clearing Off Forest Land”).

The government responded to environmental degradation in many ways, one of which was through legislation. There are currently 43 environmental-related laws in Malaysia. Following the Environmental Quality Act (EQA) in 1974, the government also set up the Department of Environment (DOE) in 1975. In 1988, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure was introduced. However, in his overview of the developments of environmental law in Malaysia, law expert Azmi Sharom asserted that “the problem with environmental law in Malaysia is not the lack of laws. Instead it is the lack of true political will to put those laws to their full use” (889). Citing the controversial Bakun Dam Case in Sarawak, which triggered a great hue and cry regarding the lack of transparency in its EIA as an example, Sharom contends that a more cohesive approach to environmental protection and management is needed in Malaysia (889).

What happened recently at the Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex (BTFC) is another example. Part of the gazetted Royal Belum State Park, the BTFC is believed to be older than the Amazon rainforest and is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna, including endangered species such as tigers, elephants and hornbills. Some 74ha of land at the BTFC was cleared to make way for an oil palm plantation, a move that seriously threatens endangered wildlife such as the Malayan tiger, as evident from the fresh tiger pugmarks that were spotted where the land had been cleared. It was also feared that the clearing would pollute the river. Local newspaper *The Star* reported on the ecological catastrophe and carried out an investigation (Lai). The land being cleared belongs to the Perak State Agriculture Development Corporation. However, the corporation denied ownership of the land and knowledge of any oil palm plantation development plan since

the land had already been surrendered to the Perak state government in order to protect the Belum forest reserve. The Perak Forestry Department, when contacted, said that the land cleared was not under its forest management plan. Perak Land and Mines Office did not have any records of an application to develop an oil palm plantation in the area. Only after a great hue and cry about the land clearing in BTFC, the Chief Minister of Perak ordered an in-depth probe, saying that the state is committed to protecting the protected and gazetted Belum Forest. The “who-is-responsible” game that revolved around BTFC exemplifies the lack of a cohesive approach in environmental protection and management in Malaysia.

Deeper shifts in people’s attitudes to the environment have been argued as one of the driving forces of environmental sustainability (Dobson and Sáiz 157-158; Dobson and Bell 1-4). Besides population, economic growth, and technological advancement, attitudes are believed to be the proximate causes or driving forces of environmental and ecosystem change (Harper 36). As historian Lynn White has posited, “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship” (18). In discussing attitudes toward the environment, accounts of attitudes to nature in the Western world form a predominant part. Environmental historicist Peter Coates gives a thorough account of the changing attitudes toward nature in the Western world (defined as Western Europe and North America) in his 1998 book, *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times*. Drawing on historical and philosophical texts, Coates argues that attitudes toward the environment seem fixed to the political goals of the times (3).

During classical times (565 AD-1100 BC), attitudes toward resources and nature were influenced by the enormous changes brought about by the expansion of the Greco-Roman empires, which also entailed the growth of semi-scientific knowledge, agriculture, shipbuilding, trade, and urban dwelling (Williams 74-75). Land was the main source of wealth and political power, and slavery supplied the labour for most

economic activities. The classical world saw nature as functional; its purpose was solely to serve humanity. Williams points out that early classical writings from Aristotle to Cicero demonstrate people's consciousness of their power to control and create nature (76). This belief was backed by their mythology, which underpinned the idea of man as "the orderer of nature" and even "the finisher of the creation" (Williams 76). This was further reinforced during the Medieval times (1100-1350) and the Middle Ages (1350-1500). According to Clarence Glacken, nature was studied for the compelling reason that it would lead to a greater understanding of God and, together with the new discoveries, was proof of God's existence and the truth of Christianity (qtd. in Williams 160). The dominant idea during the Middle Ages was the Great Chain of Being — God at the apex, and man serving as God's steward — which saw man as superior and ascendant to other elements of God's creation. Christianity promoted stewardship towards nature, which in turn provided the validation for exploitation of nature, without caring for the consequences of that exploitation, as argued by historian Lynn White, Jr. in his enlightening 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." The Enlightenment period (1600-1800) that followed glorified human reason, logic, criticism, and freedom of thought over dogma, blind faith, and superstition. It saw the emergence of modern scientific study of the natural world, causing humans to question what they could do with it. Humans took on the role of the master; completely detaching themselves from the natural world. The expansion of Europe, followed by the era of the capitalist world economy, saw the natural world invaded and utilised at all costs, further reinforcing the attitude of domination over nature (Williams 176-177).

In other parts of the world, particularly in Asia, attitudes toward nature are not as clear-cut. Social anthropologists Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland assert that a universal, Asian perception of the natural environment is out of the question since, in many Asian cultures, the nature-culture distinction is not as profound as in the West (4). Sometimes,

culture and nature are not distinguished sharply. To illustrate, Masao Watanabe reports that while Westerners discuss nature in the context of its relationship to humans, most Japanese do not draw a clear boundary between humans and nature, seeing nature as strongly connected with traditional values, dating back to the Edo period (the period when the Tokugawa Shogunate governed Japan, 1603-1868), which was characterised by resource-saving, nature-conserving, environmental-friendly behaviours, and community management of resources such as rivers, ponds, mountains, and trees (qtd. in Aoyagi-Usui, Vinken, and Kuribayashi 24).

Many Asian cultures also contextualise the oppositions between nature and culture, which applies closely to the concept of men and environment forming a moral unity (Bruun and Kalland 4). In the East, religion is closely linked to nature and ecology (Pederson 259). This paradigm emphasises religious values, ideas, and beliefs as determinants of human environmental behaviour. Asian history expert Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells, in examining the history of South East Asian environmental attitudes, highlights that South East Asian perceptions of nature have been viewed mainly in relation to religious ideology and animistic cults (“Socio-Political Structures” 26). In modern times however, South East Asian perceptions of nature recognised exploitation of the natural world as part and parcel of the political process (“Socio-Political Structures” 40).

Where Malaysia is concerned, it has been observed that attitudes towards the environment seem to evolve in accordance with four major phases of its history: pre-colonisation, colonisation, postcolonial administration prior to 1970, and from the 1970s onwards (Din 82). The first phase, prior to colonisation, was when the forests, the Malays, and the Orang Asli “co-evolved,” and “nature and culture” were “inextricably linked” (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 7). This was the phase when animist reverence for nature was part and parcel of the Malays’ and the Orang Asli’s cultures.

Before the coming of Islam, circa fourteenth to fifteenth century, the Malays were largely animists and loose adherents of the Hindu religion. Even after the Malays converted to Islam, animistic beliefs were still widely practised in the form of rituals meant to placate an environment abounding with 'spirits.' To the Malays and the Orang Asli, the land serves not only as a source of food and raw materials to ensure their survival but also of danger, especially if certain rituals, rules and taboos are broken. These ambivalent attitudes are not seen as contradictory but rather as complementing one another, codifying the Malays' and the Orang Asli's traditional survival strategies (Davison 80).

The second phase, during the colonial administration period from 1511 to 1957, saw the exploitation and commodification of the environment in order to serve the interests of the European empires: the Portuguese (1511-1641), Dutch (1641-1824), and British (1824-1957). The Chinese and Indians, brought in by the British to Malaysia in large numbers at the end of the 18th century and early in the 19th century, were involved in this enterprise, serving as indentured labours mainly at tin mines and rubber plantations. Their attitudes towards the land however, were ambivalent. Many Chinese for example, proved to be successful settlers in Malaysia during the colonial period due to their cavalier attitude to the land, and yet, they were also deeply conscious of their Buddhist teachings, which stipulate the harmony of man and nature (A. G. Marshall 28). The Indians, mostly making a living as indentured labours in the plantations, were said to have an "ecological identification" with the estates since their lives were strictly confined within the estate boundaries (Rajoo 156-158). Hinduism, the religion that distinctly characterised the Indians, may have dictated their lifestyles in the estates. To illustrate, they believed in the existence of powerful supernatural forces that might interfere with their lives and the environment. To pacify these forces, they worshipped

certain Shivaite (Shiva) Hinduism guardian deities, such as Murugan and Mariamman, and made ritual offerings (Rajoo 159).

The third phase, during the postcolonial period prior to 1970, saw little interest in the environment as there were more pressing issues to be dealt with such as poverty eradication, economic growth, and education. Tunku Abdul Rahman's (Malaysia's first prime minister after independence in 1957) laissez-faire attitude towards development, which continued the economic pattern initiated by the British, further encouraged the exploitation and the commodification of the environment. From 1956-1970, economic development plans and funding concentrated on improving agriculture (mainly industrial crops such as rubber and oil palm) and developing rural areas (opening up new agricultural areas, bringing in Malay settlers, and supervising the transformation of undeveloped land into settlement schemes devoted to the production of cash crops). These plans were commendable, but the implication was that any barriers or obstacles should be removed and abolished. The forested land was seen as a stumbling block, preventing the spread of agriculture. It was perceived as unproductive. Consequently, massive land clearance was carried out under the government's programs of agricultural transformation and land development. Sham Sani points out that these programs played the most significant role in environmental deterioration in Malaysia (13). Although the main cause of deforestation in Malaysia is agricultural expansion, in some cases, logging that occurred under the guise of conversion fellings for land development has also been another cause (Vincent and Ali 141).

The fourth phase, from the 1970s onwards, was when environmental issues began to take precedence as the nation faced (and continues to be faced) with pollution problems, inevitably the consequence of its economic growth. The most important period in the country's development was the period between 1970-1990, when the NEP was fully enforced. Malaysia's economy accelerated tremendously during this period. In

the '70s and '80s, it was the largest producer and exporter of tin, timber, rubber, and palm oil. By 1990, however, it had also significantly expanded its economy to include the manufacturing sector. Now, with the country aiming to become an industrialised country by 2020, development and growth seem unstoppable. Environmental degradation was given due consideration only in the Fifth Malaysia Plan (1986-1990), following pressure from diverse quarters (such as grassroots activists and NGOs) within Malaysia's own borders as well as the First World to strike a balance between economic development and environmental preservation. In the 1990s, following The Rio Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992, Malaysia succumbed to international pressure to adopt and maintain sustainable development (Sahabat Alam Malaysia 94). The proliferation of MNGOs in the past few decades attests to active participation of the non-governmental sector in moving towards sustainability. This environmental movement is considered one of the major social movements in Malaysia, which is still developing as a social and political force (Weiss and Hassan 1).

Today, the attitude of Malaysians towards the environment seems to be influenced by traditional belief systems and secular principles (Din 82). Malaysia's multiracial and multicultural makeup contributes to a variety of ethical precepts that promote a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. As a country with predominantly Malay, Chinese, and Indian traditions, practices, and attitudes towards the environment, Malaysia has a complex and diverse set of ethical tenets that recommend certain modes of behaviour towards the environment. Major religions in Malaysia, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, have long had environmental ethics that extends moral considerability towards the ecological system. Islam, for example, derives its environmental ethics from the idea that God created the world with all living things created with different functions (Deen 158-167). According to Islam, one of the functions of the environment is to serve humanity, but this does not mean humans are to

dominate and manipulate nature to their will. Instead, this highlights one of the functions of humans — to ensure ecological balance and sustainable care of nature. Hinduism subscribes to the power of the Supreme will which controls the creation, maintenance and annihilation of the cosmos (Dwivedi 310-318). Human beings are not seen as superior to other creatures. In fact, they have moral obligations and duties, which have been manifested or practiced through many aspects of the Hindu culture, such as sustainable agriculture and non-violent attitudes towards animals and nature. Buddhism too, emphasises simple, non-violent, and gentle attitudes towards all living things, which are regarded as spiritual entities. Buddhism also espouses the sanctity of human morality and the environment, reflecting the reciprocal causal relationship between the two (De Silva 318-323). Any changes in one will bring changes in the other. The superiority of the mind is also revered: a mind ‘polluted’ with evil thoughts will in turn pollute the environment.

Kadir Din, however, is sceptical of the practice of these religious teachings since

[...] such tenets are rarely translated into action beyond the level of ritual observance, especially among those who live in urban areas [...] It is more likely that with the spread of secular education, old values, which are largely based on supernatural beliefs, will be gradually fused with new secular values based on scientific understanding of the environment.
(82)

Din is prudent in establishing the relationship between traditional belief systems and secular values, but this relationship needs to be refined. The term secular values, taken to mean values that are devoid of religion, is rather vague and needs to be historicised in the Malaysian context. Following independence from the British in 1957, Malaysia, like most postcolonial nations that emerged after World War II, began to earnestly dismantle colonialist cultural influences. This process — decolonization — manifested itself strategically in the creation of nationalism, especially in ensuring that the multiracial people stayed united and had an identity as ‘true Malaysians’. This move, as well as

other decolonisation processes that the country embarked on, however, have not been able to completely wipe out colonial ideologies and thinking, especially those that are related to nature or the environment. When discussing the effects of ecological imperialism, Val Plumwood highlights the dualistic thinking of nature — the perceived binary dichotomy between nature and culture that has perpetuated and legitimised Western power structures favouring culture as a lasting legacy (qtd. in Huggan and Tiffin 4). Indeed, the colonial legacy of scientific, anthropocentric, and utilitarian attitudes towards nature still persists. As William Adams and Martin Mulligan have noted, independence gained by postcolonial states should have opened the way for more independent thinking about the relations between society and nature, perhaps based on non-Western traditions and cultural fusions. This did not happen. The decolonization had involved the creation of ‘modern’ nation states that were essentially built on European models and traditions and the deep ideological legacy of colonialism endured (Adams and Mulligan 5).

The “deep ideological legacy” pointed out by Adams and Mulligan, above, is none other than the belief that humans are superior to nature. Colonisation, along with the scientific and capitalistic accomplishments it has brought, has left a legacy of specific ideas about the subjugation and conquest of nature. The secular values mentioned by Din may just include these long-standing colonialist attitudes.

Din’s observation that the attitudes of Malaysians towards the environment are influenced both by traditional belief systems and secular principles also invokes the term “hybridity,” commonly used in postcolonial theory to describe culture that emerges out of the interactions between the coloniser and the colonised. Attributed to Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity theory argues that the colonisers and the colonised are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha

contends that there is a “third space” — a space in which cultural systems are constructed, colonial authority is challenged, and hybrid identities are created:

The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space -- a third space -- where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences. [...] Hybrid hyphenisations emphasize the incommensurable elements -- the stubborn chunks -- as the basis of cultural identities. (218)

This space, according to Bhabha, illustrates the dynamic nature of culture, which cannot be defined or fixed but rather must be seen within the context of its construction:

It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences -- literature, art, music, ritual, life, death -- and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation -- migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation -- makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition (247).

In using words like “diaspora”, “displacement”, and “relocation,” Bhabha illustrates the dynamic nature of culture – the hybrid space that generates new knowledge, ideas, and creativity - implying that postcolonial authors inhabit the third space, and by extension the creative cultural productions that they bring into being. Bhabha’s conceptualisation of space, however, lacks the spatial conceptualization (Soja “Foreword” x). Expanding on the spatiality aspect, Edward Soja posits that the third space includes the first space (the real, physical world) and the second space (the imagined, spatial representations) (*Thirdspace* 10). The third space, according to Soja, must be understood as simultaneously real and imagined, for it always represents the connection between physical, geographical spaces and mental, cultural constructions of space (*Thirdspace* 11).

Considering struggles over real and imagined spaces are central to most postcolonial writings, the concept of a third space is particularly relevant now especially when globalisation has enabled cultures from the East and West to reach each other, resulting in the interaction, appropriation, and adoption (as well as rejection) of cultures. As Yazdiha has noted:

Yet the “solid” roots of historical and cultural narratives that nations rely upon are diasporic, with mottled points of entry at various points in time. An investigation of the roots of cultural symbols like folk stories, religion, and music would reveal sources varied and wideranging. (35)

This concept posits that people of any given society draw on multiple cultural resources to make sense of the world. The same thing can be said of the people of Malaysia. Our colonial legacy, our multicultural makeup, and our contact with the outside world make up the basis of this third space — the site where we could potentially delve into the economic, political, and social aspects that shape our attitudes towards the environment, and see whether these attitudes are influenced by traditional belief systems and secular principles or otherwise. It is also a site in which these environmental attitudes could be challenged and reshaped by writers, leading to better pro-environmental knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Texts, whether literary or non-literary, may convey the authors’ attitudes that invite the readers to participate in or reconsider important environmental issues. This begins with “the ability to imagine... [which] is at the forefront of change and is the impetus for possibility” (Wright 179). Rachel Carson’s revolutionary novel *Silent Spring* (1962), for example, helped to highlight the menace of pesticide pollution in America to the point that it led to the formation of modern environmentalism (Garrard 1). Indian historian and writer Ramachandra Guha, through his writings, rejects proponents of deep ecology philosophy that promote a set of environmental ethics aimed at wilderness preservation, human population control, and simple living, arguing

that the integration of ecological concerns with livelihood, work, equity, and social justice are the major underpinnings in India's environmental tradition (Guha 341).

Writers' attitudes on environmental issues are based on their evaluation of the issues, learned and formed as a result of their knowledge, experience, information acquired from others, and exposure to mass media. Writers' environmental attitudes, therefore, may reflect or inform a certain culture, just as culture may shape and inform writers' attitudes towards the environment. Philosopher Deane Curtin highlights the importance of literature in explicating environmental attitudes, which is better able at evoking "the moral imagination" (x). In the words of noted geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, "the forceful and precise articulation of environmental attitudes requires high verbal skills. Literature rather than social science surveys provide us with the detailed and finely shaded information on how human individuals perceive their worlds" (49).

Writers' attitudes toward the environment enable readers to learn, communicate, and perhaps re-evaluate their own attitudes and perceptions towards environmental issues. As Owen Grumbling has noted, literary texts that "dramatize or critique cultural attitudes toward environmental issues" serve as "benchmarks to which individual readers can compare-and-evaluate their own attitudes and behaviours" (152-153). Through literature, writers may also want to shape a certain kind of environmental attitude. Western nature writers, for example, express reverent, respectful, and concerned attitudes towards nature. Begiebing and Grumbling have noted that in doing so, these writers have also "heroically attempted to subvert the dominant Western industrial paradigm of human domination over the biosphere" (qtd. in Grumbling 153).

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Since environmental degradation is also a question of attitude, studies geared towards understanding environmental attitudes that emerge through forms of creative

cultural production such as literature are crucial. This study aims to examine selected Malaysian writers' attitudes towards the environment. To this end, the various ways in which Malaysian authors Keris Mas, K.S. Maniam, Chuah Guat Eng and Yang-May Ooi convey their attitudes towards the environment in their novels are explored, not only to reveal their environmental sensibilities, or lack thereof, but also to open a window through which to view and appreciate a variety of culturally, politically, and environmentally significant ideas about human to human and human to non-human relationships.

The aim of this study was accomplished by fulfilling the following objectives. The first objective was to identify common environmental issues through which these attitudes are conveyed. I will be using the term "environment" in the sense given by Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee in his 2010 book *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. Borrowing from Mukherjee, the concept of environment is not only restricted to living and non-living things, but it is also inclusive of culture, which inevitably entails economical, political and historical matters (4). "Environment", writes Mukherjee, "is the surroundings we find ourselves in, from ecosystem to biosphere, where humans and non-humans exist or co-exist naturally; and these are inclusive of culture" (4). The term environment used in this study is essentially different from "nature," which I take to mean non-humans, and distinguished from the work of humanity. For this study, too, I use a definition of "environmental attitude" referring to the writer's judgement or evaluation of the environment — his or her ideas, values, and beliefs with regard to the environment, which has a bearing on his or her work.

The next objective was to analyse the writers' conceptualisation and treatment of these environmental issues. My task was to provide a critical analysis of the cultural factors (which include economic, political, and historical factors) that shape the writers'

conceptualisation and treatment of these issues. The last objective was to establish the kind of environmental ethics promoted by the writers.

Through this study, I posit that environmental attitude is an impetus for change, and that we can seek answers to the present environmental problems in Malaysia from our writers' environmental attitudes. I make the case that the writers' evaluations of environmental issues provide a powerful critique, both explicit and implicit, to some of the conceptions and issues related to the Malaysian environment, past and present. Specifically, this study poses critical questions such as: What are the writers' attitudes toward the environment? What are the common environmental issues through which these attitudes are conveyed? How do the writers treat these issues? What are their strategies? What kind of environmental ethics can be traced in their works?

Through critical analyses of the writers' environmental attitudes, I will show that the writers express a deep-seated responsibility to the environment, therefore positioning their work as 'lessons' in nation-building, attesting to the tensions involved in developing a country while maintaining and protecting the environment. As a firm believer in such a tenet where literature and history illuminate each other, I contend that history also plays a significant role in shaping these attitudes. If we want to understand the environment and the crises it entails in Malaysia, we must consider the cultural changes — the ecological, economical, and political transformations that have and are occurring in the country. It is my contention, too, that attitudes towards the environment in Malaysia need to be understood according to the different phases of its history: pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial, marked by significant and sometimes overlapping cultural changes and forces such as colonisation, modernity, capitalism, the formation of the nation-state, rapid industrialisation, development, and globalisation.

Since attitudes towards the environment are always object-specific, environment in this research is represented by the land. In its narrowest sense, land may refer to soil,

or dry land. Land in the Malaysian context is commonly associated with the term *tanah air* (land and water), which is used in prose, poetry, songs, and conversations to refer to “motherland,” “homeland,” and “mother country.” According to Mahmud, “*tanah air*” is derived from the environmental attributes of Peninsular Malaysia itself:

The wide open oceans, the shallow inland seas, the bays, inlets, channels and straits, the rivers, their *kuala*, tributaries and valleys are so closely interwoven with the *terra firma* that Malay communities inhabit that they seem to form a seamless physical world. (5)

It is within this physical world that a Malay, prior to colonisation, “cultivates his wet and dry fields, rears livestock, fishes, trades, fights his wars, celebrates festivals, conducts his social relationships, and, finally, finds his eternal resting place” (Mahmud 5). Land, in the Malaysian context, carries sociocultural meanings and values. It also embodies identity, heritage, spirituality, and history. It has also been the subject of contention and struggle with the advent of colonial powers. For the past few decades, too, land has been under serious environmental threats, ranging from soil erosion to loss of biodiversity.

“Land,” writes Aldo Leopold, “is not merely soil” (Leopold 253). In fact, it is a system of interdependent parts, best regarded as a “community” that includes soils, waters, plants, animals, and humans (Leopold 239-240). This definition is very much similar to “ecosystem,” a scientific term that refers to the biological community that occurs in some place, made up of the biotic (living things) and the abiotic (non-living things). Forests, parks, and estuaries, for example, serve to illustrate ecosystems, although the boundaries that mark the edges or limits of ecosystems are usually not fixed in any objective way. For this research, I use Leopold’s concept of land as a trope for the environment in the Malaysian context.

This study explores, analyses, and critiques the various ways in which attitudes towards the environment are represented in selected novels by Malaysian writers within the contexts of the critical bodies of ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and Marxism. The

selected novels are: *Jungle of Hope* (2009) by Keris Mas, *Between Lives* (2003) by K.S. Maniam, *The Flame Tree* (1998) by Yang-May Ooi and *Days of Change* (2010) by Chuah Guat Eng. These texts are specifically chosen for their depiction of the environment set in colonial and postcolonial Malaysia. Keris Mas' *Jungle of Hope* is set in Pahang at the time of colonial administration in the 1920s-1930s. K.S. Maniam's *Between Lives* is located imaginatively in colonial and contemporary Malaysia. Yang-May Ooi's *The Flame Tree* is set in Britain and Malaysia in the '90s. The final text, Chuah Guat Eng's *Days of Change*, is set in Malaysia, spanning several decades from colonial times to the early 2000s. Indeed, the writers whose works are chosen for this study represent prominent voices in contemporary Malaysian literature in English.

The most important criterion for choosing these texts is the centrality of land in the development of plot, characters and conflict that ensues. In these works, land serves more than the needs of mere, cursory settings. It is elevated as the subject of the texts. Moreover, land in the texts do not fall prey to the usual tenets of "romanticised landscape" whereby it is glorified and idealized and bequeathed the wildness or the dreamlike, unrealistic qualities, thus becoming mere objects of the texts.

Another significant reason for selecting these texts is that they deal with one of the major environmental issues in Malaysia – land threatened or cleared by development projects. Land in these texts represents environmental degradation that affects not only the land but the community living on it, the native biological richness and the integrity of the ecosystem. This vicious threat is centred in the texts, the impact of which is felt and dealt with by the protagonists, who desperately go to great lengths to eliminate it. In short, the treatment of land and issues related to it is sustained throughout the texts.

The environmental issues and complexities presented in these works differ, but the common thread in these works is the land, which has been central to the environmental discourse in Malaysia. In these works, land stands out as a trope for the

environment in the Malaysian context. Each of these works also delves into the issue of land threatened by plans to develop them. Moreover, critical examination of these novels hardly explores the environmental aspect.

All of these novels were originally written in English except for *Jungle of Hope*, which was first published in Malay in 1986 as *Rimba Harapan*. The English-translated version that is used for this study was published in 2009. With the exception of Yang-May Ooi and K.S. Maniam, the writers' readership is mainly confined to Malaysia and South East Asia. Yang-May Ooi has a wider, international readership by virtue of having been published in the UK. K.S. Maniam is widely known in postcolonial literary communities, mainly for addressing the lives and problems of the colonial and post-colonial Indian Diaspora in Malaysia.

This research, however, is limited to novels set in, and written by Malaysian writers from Peninsular Malaysia. Considering that the geophysical, historical, cultural, political, and socio-economic backgrounds of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) vary significantly (Hurst 46; Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 221), this study does not cover literary texts from East Malaysia. To illustrate these differences, until recently, large scale land development in Sabah and Sarawak only had a minor impact on land use (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 221). In Sarawak, for instance, the Brooke colonial regime had an overt policy of preventing tree-crop plantation development in order to guard the interests of the indigenous people (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 221). Given that environmental-oriented criticism is relatively new in Malaysian literature in English, there is ample room for further studies of this nature to supplement or address the limits of the present study.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of the study

Since its establishment in the 1940s, the Malaysian English literary tradition has become considerably progressive, showcasing various genres such as poetry, drama,

short story, novels, and journalistic writings. This is evident from the array of writers who have earned substantial recognition and literary prizes locally and internationally. Even though the literary scene is still very much dominated by first or second generation writers who were born before independence from the British in 1957, the past few years have seen the emergence of younger, new-generation writers, such as Karim Raslan, Dina Zaman, Huzir Sulaiman, Amir Muhammad, and Shih-Li Kow and some who are considered diasporic/transnational writers, writing from outside Malaysia such as Yang-May Ooi, Tash Aw, Tan Twang Eng, Rani Manicka, and Preeta Samarasan. Despite the different backgrounds and locations, these writers are essentially Malaysian writers as their works imply and reflect ideas, beliefs, conditions, and so forth that are characteristically Malaysian.

Over a span of more or less six decades, the thematic trends in the Malaysian English literary tradition are plenty and diverse, reflecting the nation's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural background. Themes such as poverty, destitution, class distinction, nation formation, gender hierarchy, victimisation of women, and race relations seem to predominantly occupy the writers (Quayum 62-69). In a recent study, Andrew Ng argues that Malaysian writers writing in English are "more interested in the people who make up this imagined [Malaysian] community – their day-to-day struggles, their personal embrace of cultures, and their private religious beliefs," rather than the nation (*Intimating the Sacred* 12-13).

Looking at the array of themes that run through most Malaysian literary works in English, it appears that environmental concerns have been given insufficient treatment by Malaysian writers writing in English. This is not to say that the environment has been completely absent in Malaysian literature in English. The Malayan/Malaysian environmental setting and culture are most often reconstructed and reflected in Malaysian literary texts. The treatment of environmental themes, however,

has been lacking, and even if an environmental theme becomes the main theme of the work, this is more prevalent in poetry than in other genres. As Beda Lim has noted, first generation writers/poets writing before independence have indeed written about the Malayan landscape/environment in their works, albeit following the “romantic” footsteps, exploring and celebrating the distinctive and the aesthetic aspects of the environment such as trees, flowers, and animals, doing no more than imitating the English poets they have learnt at school (qtd. in Patke and Holden 50). This trend is more or less evident following independence. Poets like Muhammad Haji Salleh, Ee Tiang Hong, Shirley Lim, and Cecil Rajendra, to name a few, have indeed written and explored varied aspects of the environment in their works. Ee’s poems, for example, celebrate the wonders of the tembusu tree and the bougainvillea flower that commonly grace the landscape in Malaysia (Ee 16-19). Some of Shirley Lim’s poems in *Monsoon History* (1994) deal with animals that are native to Malaysia, such as the land-turtle, crocodile and panther (97-112). The treatment of these distinctive aspects of the environment in general, however, do not appear to have explicitly green concerns (Yeow, “Visions” 1). I agree as works that celebrate the wonders of the natural world tend to increase and activate our attentiveness towards the details of our environment, heightening our feel for “a sense of place” more than our feel for environmental significations or issues. Perhaps poet Cecil Rajendra, who has contributed to the growth of poetry in Malaysian literature in English from the 1960s to the 1990s, has been more consistent and assertive on the issue of environmentalism by criticising the negative effects of industrialisation and development on the country. This is evident from his collections of poems in *Bones and Feathers* (1978), *Hour of Assassins and Other Poems* (1983), *Dove on Fire: Poems on Peace, Justice and Ecology* (1987), and *Rags and Ragas* (2000), to name a few. Poems like “If Politicians were Trees,” “On Not Being Able to Write a Poem Celebrating the Erection of Another Multi-storyed

Complex,” “By Waters of the Tembeling,” and “Requiem for a Rainforest” all lambast the effects of development and uncontrollable loss of forest cover in Malaysia. Cecil’s work is indeed important to the postcolonial environmental discourse, especially in the context of the strong industrial lobby involved in the exploitation of the country’s natural environment in a non-sustainable manner.

In view of the thematic trends in Malaysian literary works, “green” concerns seem to be lacking. The dearth of environmental concerns in contemporary Malaysian literature could be mainly due to the writers’ preoccupation with the themes mentioned earlier. I take this as the manifestation and effects of colonization as well as the nation’s rapid economic development and technological advancement, which have alienated humans from nature and/or the environment, making it the least of their concerns. In addition, environmental issues in Malaysia are relatively contemporary issues. These issues only gained prominence in Malaysia in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, when a host of environmental problems afflicted the nation as a result of rapid development and urbanisation, and the trend of “going green” was sweeping the world. The novels that I have selected for the study reflect this awareness. Treating one of the major environmental issues in Malaysia (threats to land), these novels were published from the 1980s onwards: Keris Mas’ *Jungle of Hope* was first published in Malay in 1986, Yang-May Ooi’s *The Flame Tree* in 1998, KS Maniam’s *Between Lives* in 2003, and Chuah Guat Eng’s *Days of Change* in 2010.

The lack of green concerns in Malaysian literature in English could be due (but not limited) to the three factors mentioned above. This absence also explains the dearth of environmental criticism in the local literary-critical practice. This research is significant because it seeks to extend the range of literary-critical practice on literary works written by critically acclaimed Malaysian writers, placing a new emphasis on the environmental dimension. This study, to the best of my knowledge, would be the first to

analyse the novels of Malaysian writers from an environmental perspective. My analysis will lead to a greater understanding of the environmental and literary significance of the selected novels. My effort to “green” Malaysian literature in English, however, is not the first. Agnes Yeow, for instance, has commendably examined Malaysian poetry in English through a postcolonial eco-critical lens, explaining the “concept of a secular apocalypse” as a trope for Malaysian poets in their contemplation of environmental crises in both local and global contexts (“Visions of Eco-Apocalypse” 1). There have also been conscious efforts made by poets such as Ee Tiang Hong, Shirley Lim, and Muhammad Haji Salleh to “challenge and destabilize” exotic nature in Malaysia by “invoking its ecological reality” (“Greening”1). Whilst Yeow’s criticism centres on poetry, mine centres on novels.

This research is an especially timely project given that, at the turn of this century, environmental criticism has been rigorously undertaken in literary and postcolonial studies. This field has proliferated and inspired literary scholars from different parts of the world to participate in environmental discourse, discussing and deliberating on many environmental problems that vary in scale and scope. However, it becomes a matter of serious concern that Malaysian texts are lacking in this postcolonial debate on the environment. The absence of Malaysian texts has led me to think of a handful of Malaysian literary texts in English which may potentially contribute to a similar endeavour. In line with current scholarly efforts to make ecocriticism more “international” and postcolonialism more “green,” my research, an attempt to examine and critique non-canonised postcolonial environments conceived by writers largely unknown (except for K. S. Maniam) to both the ecocritical and postcolonial communities, will help extend postcolonial ecocritical studies beyond their current scope.

In addition, this research also serves to fill in the cultural gaps in an environmental reading of Marxism. As pointed out by Mukherjee, the underlying system that connects ecocriticism and postcolonialism is capitalism (13). The form of capitalism taken in a particular country, however, is not necessarily similar to other capitalist countries. In fact, capitalism can be categorised into four types: state-guided, oligarchic, big-firm, and entrepreneurial (Baumol, Litan, and Schramm 61). State-guided capitalism is characterised by state dominance and control on the allocation of resources in the economy with the aim of maximising economic growth (Baumol, Litan, and Schramm 63). Malaysia clearly exhibits this form of capitalism. Within the parameters of capitalism, too, culture plays a role in conditioning human-nature relationships. James O'Connor, for example, points out the different ways workers in America and Japan manage production (36). Production management in Japan stresses on skills and cultural norms such as duty, order, and honour, which are alien to production in America. Layfield, taking a cue from Marx's discussion of "production in general" in "The Grundrisse", contends that

...not all production is the same in its aims; in its organisation; or in the effect that it produces in societies through the actions of the producers. It is specific to different forms of society. The producer, as social subject, was born and socialised into a particular society. They also continue to live and work in that same society. The ways in which they do this will be specific to that society. (109)

This implies that an investigation into environmental degradation needs to take into account the cultural processes and forces that characterise human-nature interactions and how these contribute to ecological problems. Marxism offers a lot of insights into environmental degradation. This study enriches Marxist environmental readings by providing insights from Malaysian cultural perspectives.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Ecocriticism and Postcolonialism

Literature and the environment have long had a history together. Literary works, after all, are literally and/or imaginatively situated in places usually characterised by a number of environmental attributes and conditions. The environmental dimension in literary works, however, has only been given due consideration in literary and cultural debate in the past two decades. Indeed, ecocriticism, which aims to respond to the environmental crisis by promoting an ecological literacy through the analysis of literary texts where the relationship between the environment and humans is found, has vigorously addressed questions related to the idea of the environment as a political expression in literature. In its narrowest sense, ecocriticism is defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). Since its emergence as a field of literary study, ecocriticism has gone through three phases: the “first wave,” the “second wave”, and the “third wave.” The first wave of ecocriticism concentrated on Anglo-American genres such as nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction. It tended to be non-anthropocentric, focusing on the representation of “untouched by human” natural spaces. Garrard traces the history of important ecocritical tropes for the first wave: pastoral landscape, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, and animals (15). The second wave of ecocriticism, on the other hand, tended to be more anthropocentric, focusing on “a broader range of landscape and genres,” bringing together environment and environmentalism (Buell 138). The latter encompassed more timely environmental justice issues related to race, class, gender, and geography. Both waves of ecocriticism, nevertheless, show a penchant for “realistic mimesis” (the imitative representation of nature and human behaviour in art and literature) and “environmental referentiality” in texts (Buell 31-32). More recently, Scott Slovic has identified the “new” third wave of ecocriticism, which has concentrated

on global and neo-bioregionalist concepts of place, post-national and post-ethnic visions of the environment, gendered perspectives on ecocriticism, as well as the concept of “animality” (7). In the words of Adamson and Slovic, the third wave of ecocriticism “recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries. This third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint”(6-7).

Although criticised for being predominantly a White movement, privileging White American scholars, which in turn canonised American authors (Nixon “Environmentalism” 234; Huggan, “Greening” 703), this field has, nevertheless, proliferated and inspired literary scholars from other parts of the world to participate in the environmental discourse, discussing many environmental problems that vary in scale and scope, but which are usually categorized into local, regional, and global problems (Jamieson 10). Local environmental problems concern a particular locality, regional environmental problems concern environmental degradation that affects a region, and global environmental problems, such as climate change and ozone depletion, are shared across the globe. Many of these problems have been addressed rigorously by scholars outside the USA and UK, particularly by postcolonial scholars, in line with what Buell has characterised as “second-wave environmental criticism,” which conceives of the environment more broadly (to include humans) and takes into account factors such as race, class, gender, and geography (21-25). This is evidenced in books and critical anthologies such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin’s *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010), Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt’s *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives* (2010), Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B Handley’s *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (2011), Laura Wright’s *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (2010), Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence and the*

Environmentalism of the Poor (2011), Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee's *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (2010), and Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan and Vidya Sarveswaran's *Ecocriticism of The Global South* (2015), to name a few significant ones, in which the diversity of postcolonial environmental concerns is represented, discussed, and deliberated.

Huggan and Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, for instance, examines postcolonial texts from environmental and zoocritical perspectives, drawing on literary works from a host of critically-acclaimed postcolonial writers such as Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005), J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), Robyn Williams's *2007* (2001), Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1998), Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984), and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001). This pioneering book shed new light on postcolonial textual readings and criticisms, highlighting the need to dismantle the "species boundary," or the constructed antagonism between humans and non-humans (7). Expanding on their 2007 essay on "Green Postcolonialism," Huggan and Tiffin established the foundations for postcolonial ecocriticism by offering a representative survey of several key concepts, immediate concerns, and issues that are central in the dialogue between postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Among these are the all too-familiar contrasts between postcolonialism and ecocriticism, Western and postcolonial notions of development, contradictions in the representation of animals, disparity in literary modes such as pastoral, and the strain in activism and aesthetic function of literature. In this book also, Huggan and Tiffin have identified three central tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism. The first one is "the need of epistemic decolonisation," which calls for the preservation of the aesthetic function of literary works and their advocacy role in the social and political realms (14). Another task which awaits postcolonial ecocriticism is the provision of viable alternatives to Western ideologies of development

(19). Postcolonial ecocriticism, too, serves as an ecological lens to earlier postcolonial discourse by examining the social, cultural, and political components that are linked with environmental problems (3).

Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives, an anthology edited by Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt, brings together scholars from across the globe to bridge ecocriticism and postcolonialism. The essays in this collection attest to the diverse critical approaches in the debate on environmental issues such as environmental policy, land and water rights, food production, poverty, women's rights, indigenous activism, and ecotourism. These issues are arranged in chapters based on regional associations: Asia and the South Pacific, Africa, North America, South America, and the Caribbean. In the introduction, Roos and Hunt assert that globalism (what they understood as latter-day colonialism, involving economic and cultural imperialism) and its consequent ecological and environmental devastation requires active exchanges from both postcolonialism and ecocriticism (3). This parallel processing, however, does not imply that a particular approach or methodology can be applied to all cultural and geographical contexts. In Roos and Hunt's view, despite the varied cultural and geographical dissimilarities, any text can profitably be read from a postcolonial green perspective if only we are open to listening and learning from each other (9). In the afterword, Ursula K. Heise comments on the preoccupation of both postcolonial and ecocritical endeavours. Postcolonial scholars tend to avoid realist texts, preferring to assess to what extent social oppression is depicted in texts (258). Ecocritical scholars, on the other hand, prefer to concentrate on realist texts (and poetry) and evaluate the reality of environmental destruction (258). It is at this juncture that Heise believes in the power of the aesthetic, which not only has the potential to reshape "the individual and collective ecosocial imaginary" but also "the way in which aesthetic forms relate to cultural as well as biological structures" (258).

Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment, an anthology edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, brings together carefully-wrought essays that explore the relationship between humans and the environment across the globe. Affirming the inextricable link between postcolonial and environmental histories, they begin with the notion of “the land as a primary site of postcolonial recuperation, sustainability and dignity” (3). Drawing on works from Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific Islands, and South Asia, the essays are organised based on culturally thematic concerns such as cultivation, forests, animals and militourism. In the introduction, DeLoughrey and Handley trace the genealogies and epistemologies of the already apparent American-centred ecocriticism and highlight the emphasis of postcolonial ecological concerns that firmly place the human in nature (16). Four important areas of overlap are also identified: the role of colonialism in altering the environment, the (renewed) historical deconstruction of nature, in-depth engagement with sustainability and the non-human worlds, and the theorisation of the representation of non-humans that is removed from the typical dualist thought of the human and non-human (DeLoughrey and Handley 24-25). The coming together of postcolonialism and ecocriticism is extremely crucial to DeLoughrey and Handley as this would contribute to what Edouard Glissant has termed “aesthetics of the earth” (qtd. in DeLoughrey and Handley 25). Borrowing from Glissant, DeLoughrey, and Handley foreground the role of postcolonial ecocriticism in “aesthetics of the earth:” “speaking in ethical terms about the global and the local without reducing difference and without instituting old structural hierarchies” (25).

Laura Wright, in her book *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment*, interrogates the ways that postcolonial authors of fiction represent landscapes and environmental issues. Contending that Western environmentalist models cannot represent the varied factors and strategies for dealing

with postcolonial environmental issues, Wright showcases the similarities and non-correspondence between ecocriticism and postcolonialism and draws attention to works that have become a part of the postcolonial literary canon: Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977), Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* (2000), Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001), Joy William's *The Quick and The Dead* (2000), J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1984), and Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* (1998). Changes caused by colonialism as depicted in these international works are arranged in four thematic chapters: displacement of peoples as a consequence of land development, the marginalisation of animals as metaphor for marginalised people and commodified "other," water pollution as exemplified by Arundhati Roy's activism and her Booker-prize winning novel, *The God of Small Things*, and the relationship of women with the land that they have been dispossessed from. Compared to Huggan and Tiffin, who deal more with postcolonial ecocriticism key concepts, Wright gives a more exhaustive coverage of representations of non-Western understandings of the environment, pointing to the ambiguous nature of this relationship by interweaving historical and geographical facts.

Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, published in 2011, articulates the connection between ecocriticism and postcolonial studies through "slow violence", the notion that environmental threats such as climate change, toxic drift, deforestation and oil spills are problems that are "slow" to reveal themselves, but afflict people who are poor, powerless and displaced in the Global South. Nixon illustrates this concept by first urging a rethinking of violence, which need not "customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility" (*Slow Violence* 2). He then focuses on "the environmentalism of the poor", the activism mobilised by

the casualties of this “slow violence” – the poor or “the impoverished communities” (*Slow Violence* 4). Drawing on works by writer-activists from different parts of the world such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Arundhati Roy, Abdulrahman Munif, Wangari Maathia, Nadine Gordimer and Rachel Carson, who have aligned themselves with the environmentalism of the poor, Nixon deliberates on the rhetorical and visual challenges posed by these writers, looking into their strategies in combating environmental disasters. In short, Nixon foregrounds the role of postcolonial ecocriticism in the environmental discourse by looking at the centrality of fictional and non-fictional writing in the struggles for environmental justice in the Global South.

Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee’s *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* is also exemplary of a comprehensive literary analysis of the postcolonial environment. Through several key contemporary and canonical Indian novels, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* (2007) and Ruchir Joshi’s *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* (2001), Mukherjee theorised eco-materialism or eco-materialist aesthetics, which brings postcolonialism and ecocriticism to a new level of convergence, tapping into the forgotten philosophy of Marx’s historical-materialism. Mukherjee expands this philosophy by pointing to the nature of the environment, which is an “integrated network of humans and non-humans acting historically” (5). This, according to Mukherjee, highlights the intersections of humans, nature, history, and culture, which help explicate the history of India and its environment (5). Eco-materialism provides a new way of reading based on the historical-materialist elements present but untapped in both ecocriticism and postcolonialism (Mukherjee 59-60). Eco-materialism, therefore, is an innovative model of reading postcolonial environments as it addresses the loopholes in ecocriticism and postcolonialism, incorporating the

interplay of humans, nature, history, culture, and capitalism into the ecocritical reading of postcolonial texts.

Most recently, *Ecocriticism of the Global South* (2015), an anthology edited by Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan and Vidya Sarveswaran, brings together ecocritical essays authored by distinguished and up-and-coming scholars from the Global South - the “under-represented regions of the world in the field of ecocriticism” (3). Starting from the point that the literary-critical practice of ecocriticism has borne a distinct North-American and Western-European imprint, this indispensable anthology foregrounds the multiplicity of views related to the intersections of nature and culture from the perspective of developing countries. Drawing on works from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, China, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Cameroon, Ireland, South Africa, Nigeria, Iran and Pakistan, this anthology illuminates and resists social, cultural and environmental damage caused by colonial rule, war, social injustice and neo-liberal economic practices, thus serves as “one of the most thoroughly multicultural example of ecocriticism to date” (Slovic, Rangarajan and Sarveswaran 3).

From the array of works done on postcolonial works recently, postcolonial ecocriticism is already under way to accrue and renew discussions and arguments on environmentalism. Disparity in the methods of analysis demonstrated by the works mentioned earlier serves to show that postcolonial ecocriticism accepts a multiplicity of viewpoints and critical approaches, not limiting itself to a particular approach or methodology. This openness, I believe, is essential in illuminating the diversified cultural and geographical environments of the postcolonial world as well as the beliefs, practices, ethics, and attitudes that interconnect with these. It also affirms the role of critical and/or literary theory in assisting the postcolonial debate on the environment.

1.4.2 Ecocriticism and Marxism

One critical tradition that would assist in analysing the debate on the environment is Marxism. Comprising a diverse range of interpretations and applications, it is largely believed that Marxism has little to say about the environment (Hay 269). To complicate things, the Marxist camp was antagonistic towards environmentalism in the 1960s, often condemning it as the politics of the ruling class in the USA to divert people's attention from tough political issues at that time such as the Vietnam War, domestic poverty, and racism (Hay 259). From the 1970s onwards, however, Marxist co-option of environmentalism gained momentum, with arguments centring on how environmentalism has been insensitive to class, especially the poor, how capitalism has played a major role in environmental degradation, and how Marx had emphasised ecological well-being through his works. The latter was highlighted in 1971 by Alfred Schmidt, who had examined passages in Marx which deal with nature, claiming that Marx has not offered a comprehensive theory on the environment but had made "incidental references" to the human-environment relationship (qtd. in Hay 269). In 1974, German poet and social commentator, Hans Magnus Enzensberger foregrounded the insensitivity of the environmental movement to social class, claiming that environmental problems gained impetus only when the bourgeoisie, or the ruling class, were exposed to environmental problems (Hay 261-262). Enzensberger's argument set the impetus for Marxist scholarship on the environment. It became "the first case of substance in which the need to factor [the] global environmental crisis into Marxist praxis" (Hay 264).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on Marxist ecological insights, which is what Lievens has described as the attempt to "ecologise" Marxism, rather than to "Marxise" ecology, moving towards the foundations of an Eco-Marxism theory (5-6). Indeed, Marxist scholars like John Bellamy Foster, Jonathan

Hughes, and James O'Connor, for instance, have argued that Marx explained in detail the relationship between humanity and nature in historical materialism, which, therefore, provides a useful framework for the investigation of ecological problems (Foster 1; Hughes 1; O'Connor 35). David Layfield has also demonstrated how Marxism offers a means to understand various contemporary environmental crises. In his 2008 book *Marxism and Environmental Crises*, Layfield made a distinction between Marxist ecology and ecological Marxism (2). While Marxist ecology involves re-reading and recovering ecological insights from Marx's early philosophical works, ecological Marxism makes use of themes in Marx's works that give adequate attention to the social processes and social relations that condition material production (Layfield 2-3). This distinction, however, in my opinion, is complementary as it helps us to synthesize how Marxism elucidates environmental crises.

Where postcolonial studies are concerned, Marxism is often shunned, resulting in "little, direct, serious dialogue between Marxists and Postcolonial theorists" (Bartolovich 1). Eurocentrism, complicity with modernity and colonialism, reductionistic and totalising enquiries have been identified as the major contributing factors for the rejection of Marxism in postcolonial undertakings (Bartolovich 1; Lindner 27). In addition, some of the modes of enquiry deployed in postcolonial studies themselves, which have been informed by Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, have been known to be Marxist-unfriendly (Bartolovich 3). The reasons for the Eurocentric 'stamp' in Marxism have been identified and analysed. Marx's supposed ignorance of Non-Western societies and failure to account for colonialism in India and Africa have been attributed to his limited Eurocentric evidence and sources largely written by agents of Eurocentric diffusionism (Blaut 127; Lindner 28). Lindner, however, points out that, at the end of Marx's life, he had "a break" with Eurocentrism (28). This break was brought about by the awareness of anti-colonial struggles happening in Ireland and

India, evident in Marx's writings after the 1860s, which are largely overlooked by postcolonial studies (Lindner 38; Jani 82). Blaut further insists that later Marxists should reject Eurocentrism in Marxism since there is now enough information about the nature of non-European societies and anti-colonial struggles (127). In the words of Lazarus, "Eurocentrism has typically been viewed as the very basis of domination in colonial and modern imperial contexts; not as an ideology or mode of representation" (Lazarus 43).

Ecological insights in Marxism have recently paved the way for mutual and productive ecocritical undertakings. The application of Marxism in ecocritical literary undertakings was first demonstrated by Lance Newman in his 2002 article entitled "Marxism and Ecocriticism." Newman argues that an ecocritical study of nature writing would be pointless if the social and cultural histories of the place are not taken into account. Drawing on works by Henry Thoreau, John Bellamy Foster and Raymond Williams, Newman argues for the application of Marxism in ecocritical endeavours (12-16). Marxism, according to Newman, adheres to the fundamental law of ecology: that everything is connected to everything else. Likewise, our relations with nature are essentially historical, and "no history is adequate if it abstracts any one analytical category — economy, technology, ideology, or environment — from what is a combined, uneven, and above all, a specific process of human subsistence in the material world" (L. Newman 12). In his 2010 article "The Biopolitical Unconscious: Toward an Eco-Marxist Literary Theory," Leerom Medovoi argues that Marxism should be assimilated in the formulation of an ecocritical approach to literature by drawing on the "biopolitical unconscious," which entails the historical and political reflexivity associated with "bios" or "the environment" (127). Considering the environment has mattered to capitalism throughout history, Medovoi argues that this

kind of ecocritical project has similarities with Buell's "second-wave ecocriticism," which takes into account socio-political factors (136).

As mentioned above, Mukherjee provides in-depth analysis of contemporary Indian novels in English based on Marx's historical materialism, or the materialist conception of history, showing the relevance of eco-materialism to postcolonial ecocriticism (81). Eco-materialism incorporates the social, political, cultural and historical elements found in both ecocriticism and postcolonialism, pointing to the nature of the environment itself, which is "an integrated network of humans and nonhumans acting historically" (Mukherjee 5). A Marxist doctrine, Sebastiano Timpanaro points out that historical materialism sees texts as the result of cultural labour, enabled by the material environment that humans find themselves in (qtd. in Mukherjee 61-62).

1.4.3 Literary Criticism on the Selected Novels

1.4.3.1 Keris Mas' *Jungle of Hope*

Rimba Harapan (1986) is Keris Mas' (1922-1990) last and, arguably, finest novel (Amin vii). The translated version by Adibah Amin, *Jungle of Hope* (2009), has been adopted as one of the compulsory texts for the teaching/learning of the English literature component in secondary schools in Malaysia for the past decade. Set in the 1920s -1930s in colonial Malaya, *Jungle of Hope* traces the life of a traditional Malay rice farmer, Pak Kia, who is forced to move from Ketari to the jungle of Janda Baik when a disastrous flood destroys his land. At the same time, the British grant a permit to British-backed companies to buy the land in Ketari and its adjacent areas, including Pak Kia's land, for conversion into a sledge tin mine that would ultimately inundate and destroy it. Villagers are asked by the agents of these British-backed companies to sell their ancestral lands in Ketari with the option to relocate to a nearby frontier area, Janda Baik, a treacherous hilly forested area without proper accessible roads. Pak Kia,

however, is adamant about remaining a rice farmer in the tradition of his father and grandfather before him. His brother, Zaidi, on the other hand, is open to change and wants to acquire wealth and move away from traditional farming. Forced by the impending environmental disaster, Pak Kia reluctantly sells his land. He and his family suffer many hardships to clear the new land in Janda Baik and set up a new rice field. *Jungle of Hope* ends with Pak Kia and his brother appreciating each other's outlooks and principles. Pak Kia also agrees to consider applying for land to plant rubber in order to survive in times of change.

Personal experiences growing up in rural Pahang and substantial research have gone into the writing of this novel. The latter, according to Amin, is the result of Keris' stint as *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's* (The Institute of Malay Language and Literature) Resident Writer in 1984-1985, though Keris asserts that the historical data he had used may not be accurate (viii). The novel is highly critical in its portrayal of capitalistic development during the colonial times, which had affected and divided the Malays into three groups: the conservative as portrayed by Pak Kia, the modern as portrayed by Zaidi, and the lazy as portrayed by Tutung and Tapa (Abdullah 183). In Banks' words, the novel also serves "as a series of individual and group responses to major events and demands questioning the revitalization of their shared moral heritage as Muslims" (139).

Having received many awards for his contributions to Malay literature, Keris acknowledged that literature could not change the structure of society directly but asserted that literature could become the medium through which social awareness and progressive thinking are channelled to society (Mas 146). Keris's corpus of work, which comprises five novels, ten collections of short stories, a memoir, and about 200 critical essays, covering topics on writing, literature, culture and nationalism, reflect this sense of vocation. Ranging over a variety of themes and issues that have affected the Malays

in different periods, Keris's works provide the social commentary of the economic progress of the Malays and the challenges that accompany this progress. Banks, however, asserts that Keris was also a perceptive commentator on the practice of Islam and its rituals in Malay society (130). For these reasons, Virginia Mattheson considers Keris as a political writer (qtd. in Abdullah xv).

Critical examination of Keris's works hardly explores the environmental aspects *Jungle of Hope* included. The environment in Keris' *Jungle of Hope*, in my opinion, is indispensable as much as his varied Malay and Islamic-centred themes. I believe that *Jungle of Hope* offers a critical account of one of the environmental issues brought about by colonial capitalist industrialisation, which, to this day, has had a bearing on some of the environmental issues faced by the nation. This critical account is worth study.

1.4.3.2 K. S. Maniam's *Between Lives*

A prolific and versatile writer, K. S. Maniam writes in all of the major genres of the Malaysian English literary tradition: poetry, plays, short stories, and novels. Maniam and other writers such as Lloyd Fernando, Shirley Lim, Ee Tiang Hong, and Wong Phui Nam make up Malaysia's group of pioneering writers writing in English, a literary tradition that began about 50 years ago. Maniam's corpus of work, which comprises three novels, four plays, and four collections of short stories, as well as countless poems and short stories published in different volumes, are all based on settings ranging from British Malaya to Malaysia. Most of his childhood memories have been garnered to relive the conditions of the Malaysian Indian community who dwell in the estates, weaving fact into fiction, and fiction into fact in the process (Maniam, "Fiction" 263). The settings he chooses for his earlier works such as *The Return* (1981), "The Eagles" (1976), "The Third Child" (1996), and "Ratnamuni" (1981) evoke his childhood

experiences in the estates in Bedong, Kedah. Likewise, his childhood experiences have provided him much of the landscape and settings he has needed in his fiction.

As cautioned by Shirley Lim, readers unfamiliar with Maniam's works may easily mistake Malaysia for an Indian-dominant nation (S. Lim, "Gods Who Fail" 132). Critic L. S. Fallis, in his review of *The Return*, Maniam's first novel, laments that "there is little reference to Malaysia" (757). To Maniam, it is only natural that he writes about his own community, which is a testament to what he knows best, stemming from his immediate family background, society, and educational background ("Fiction" 263). Maniam also contends that a multiracial and multicultural country like Malaysia does not avail itself of a common source of collective imagery, symbols, and myths like a homogenous country, which is why he has recourse to Indian philosophy and religious beliefs, a literary technique he adopts through the omission of interracial or nationalistic Malaysian concerns ("The Malaysian" 80-81). Much criticism of Maniam's works has focused positively on this omission. Critic Carlo Coppola sees this as Maniam's "postcolonial, postmodern attempts at defining place and hierarchy in contemporary Malaysian society" (231). Indeed, it is this omission, that has helped shape Maniam's distinctive writing style, thereby contributing significantly to Malaysian literature in general and the literature of South Asian diasporas in particular.

In his earlier works, such as *The Return*, Maniam foregrounds the identity of the estate community through a host of challenges faced by them, such as poverty, alcoholism, illiteracy, marital conflicts, and the caste system. In "The Sandpit: Womensis" (1990), Maniam highlights the plight of Indian women caught between tradition and modernity, highlighting the diasporic identity that undergoes constant production and reproduction (Philip 184). Indeed, some of Maniam's works have championed women by giving them a voice. In his last novel, *Between Lives*, Maniam portrays the many facets of the Indian community by including characters from varied

social backgrounds and landscapes. As Sharmani Gabriel has noted, through many of his works, Maniam actively questions, resists, and problematises the constructions of ethnic and national identity in Malaysia from a diaspora perspective (238).

While some critics have lamented the portrayal of Hinduism in Maniam's works, particularly how it has derisively precluded the Indians from assimilating into the multicultural societies of Malaysia, Ng has applauded the use of Hinduism in Maniam's works, particularly for how Hindu thoughts are used to address the variety of issues pertaining to the diaspora, and how it has played the dual role of establishing their identity yet obstructing attempts of belonging in the new adopted land (*Intimating the Sacred* 107).

In most of Maniam's works, too, the rich, multi-faceted Malaysian landscape is portrayed realistically. Estates, jungles, islands, towns, and cities have all provided the physical settings to his stories. While Peter Wicks notes the prolific way that Maniam has explored and revealed a range of Malaysian landscapes, he is also critical of Maniam's tendency to resonate "a profound, haunted sense of cultural loss, and of never having arrived at a secular alternative" ("Malaysian Landscape"). He claims that this tendency is the result of Maniam giving voice to people who dwell in the shadows and on the margins of Malaysian life (Wicks, "Malaysian Landscape"). Wicks' study of the landscapes in Maniam's works, nevertheless, is probably the only critical examination of Maniam's works that explores the environmental aspect. After all, one of the central themes in Maniam's works is attachment to the land and the challenges and hurdles that accompany this overpowering process. In Maniam's last novel, *Between Lives*, Wicks examines the role of the land, through which Malaysians, irrespective of ethnicity, can find a legitimate place in the country (Wicks, "Malaysian Landscape"). David Lim does the same thing in his discussion of culture and race in Malaysia, suggesting Maniam's authorial intent in *Between Lives* is to defend culture (158). This is foregrounded

through land, which, according to Lim, is the “culture, the values, beliefs and history that root a person to firm ground and serve as his or her anchor in life” (160).

In *Between Lives*, Sellamma, an old, poor, rural Indian woman battles to keep her land from being acquired and developed as a theme park. Sumitra, a young, liberated Indian woman, who is a social worker, is entrusted with the task of persuading Sellamma to give up her land. Sellamma, steeped in memories of the land and the ancestral history and traditions attached to it, refuses to budge. Suffering from memory loss due to old age, Sellamma lives in her own world where the past is the present and the present is the past. As a result, Sellamma mistakes Sumitra as her long deceased sister, Anjalai. Sumitra, all too happy to play along if it means finding a way to convince Sellamma to move out, finds herself swept along a tide of memories, which changes her life and her world view. Upon her death, Sellamma bequeaths the land to Sumitra, who, with the support of her friends Christina, Aishah, and Nathan, refuses to surrender the land Sellamma has left her.

I believe that *Between Lives* is Maniam’s overt indictment of the environmental issues resulting from rapid development in Malaysia, a concern that I feel is dealt with more thoroughly in *Between Lives* than in his other two novels. In addition, scholarly writings on K. S. Maniam’s work have tended to focus on the first two novels, *The Return* and *In A Far Country*.

1.4.3.3 Chuah Guat Eng’s *Days of Change*

After four of her stories were published by the *New Straits Times* in conjunction with a short story writing competition in 1992, Chuah began to write seriously. In 1994, she published her first novel, *Echoes of Silence*, which made her the first Malaysian woman writer to publish a novel in English (Abdul Manaf and Quayum 393). Chuah’s commitment to write could not have come at a better time. The ‘90s was the decade

when the Malaysian English literary scene saw “an outburst” of many women writers, Chuah included (Abdul Manaf and Quayum 278).

Chuah’s corpus of work includes two novels, two collections of short stories, as well as several stories written in various publications and anthologies between 1992 and 2002. Critical reception of Chuah’s work however, is quite lacking. Her short stories, nevertheless, have been noted to address and investigate various issues, such as the patriarchal world of business, extramarital affairs, betrayal, and spinsterhood.

Her two novels are related – *Days of Change* is a sequel to *Echoes of Silence*. Both can be easily mistaken as belonging to the thriller or mystery genre. *Days of Change*, the sequel to *Echoes of Silence*, came out after a time-lapse of 16 years. Even though it is a sequel, it could be read on its own without referring or worrying too much about *Echoes of Silence*. The idea of writing a sequel came when Chuah felt like she had created some “unfinished business” for Hafiz, one of the characters in *Echoes of Silence* (Mojib, “Echoes”). Since the protagonist, Hafiz, is a Malay Muslim, Chuah did a lot of research on Islam and the Malay world, drawing on her visits to small Malay villages, readings, observations, and discussions with Malay friends, acquaintances, and business associates (Mojib, “Echoes”). In the Malaysian English literary scene, it is quite rare for writers to write or develop main characters that are of different races and religions, preferring to write about their own people. Chuah did exactly the opposite through Hafiz, her elderly-Malay-man protagonist, who lost his memory as a result of falling down a ravine. Ng is convinced of the characterisation of Hafiz, which to him is “an achievement” (“Chuah Guat Eng” 198). In addition, he applauds Chuah’s sensitivity to place, a trait which he finds often lacking in local narratives in English (“Chuah Guat Eng” 198).

Days of Change revolves around the life of Hafiz, a 55-year-old self-made Malay man. When the story begins, Hafiz is suffering from amnesia following a fall

down a ravine somewhere in the jungle of Ulu Banir, situated in the fictive district of Banir Valley. Unable to talk to a psychiatrist but eager to trigger his memory, he uses the I Ching, the Chinese ‘book of changes,’ which can be used to explore the unconscious. His experiment with the I Ching results in eight notebooks in which he records memories of his childhood; the women in his life; his battle with his friends against a major corporation bent on appropriating his land at Ulu Banir, and thus flooding the Banir Valley for a Disneyland-type theme park; and his efforts to bring development to Kampong Basoh, a poverty-stricken village in Banir Valley.

What is noteworthy about *Days of Change* is the “divergent narrative strains” which include a murder mystery, romance, parable, and supernatural tale that interlink to make up a complex yet arresting plot (Ng, “Chuah Guat Eng” 198). Even though the story mainly revolves around the Malay community, Ng commends the not-too-romantic landscapes of the kampong; the realistic balance of kampong folks caught up with poverty, tradition, and progress; the far-reaching effects of Imperialism on the Malays; and the inclusion of the Malays’ supernatural belief equivalent to the Western fairyfolk (“Chuah Guat Eng” 198). Chuah however argues that *Days of Change* is not “communal” in nature. Rather, it is a Malaysian novel (as proclaimed on the cover page of the novel), and reflects today’s Malaysia and some of the pertinent issues that it has had to deal with:

Among other things, I explore the impact of “development” projects by big, greedy, politically connected, business corporations on ordinary people’s lives and the natural environment; and the impact of faulty interpretations and violent enforcement of both secular and religious laws on the faith of ordinary Muslims like Hafiz. I also explore how, in spite of all the talk of racial and religious polarization and conflicts, most relationships are interethnic in the reality of daily life in Malaysia. (Mojib, “Echoes”)

Based on the above quotation, what particularly strikes me is Chuah's overt concern over the impact of development projects on the environment. This aspect, which seems to have been overlooked by critics, is focused on in the present study.

1.4.3.4 Yang May Ooi's *The Flame Tree*

To date, Ooi has published two novels, *The Flame Tree* and *Mind Game*, with Hodder and Stoughton, UK. When her two novels were published in the UK, *The Flame Tree* in 1998 and *Mindgame* in 2000, Ooi was the only Malaysian novelist who had been published internationally ("About Yang-May Ooi"). Critical reception of the two novels, however, has been lacking. This is probably because both novels belong to the thriller genre, which I suspect may not be a popular genre for readers, writers, and critics in Malaysia. As noted by Tamara Wagner, Ooi's two novels have been marketed as thrillers both in the Southeast Asian region and abroad ("Singapore's" 71).

Ooi's novels portray women protagonists. Even though her novels cater to the international book market, Ooi's protagonists are not the typical women portrayed in fiction produced by diasporic women writers such as Catherine Lim, Tan Hwee Hwee, Shirley Lim and Teo Hsu-Ming, who usually strive for what Wagner has noted as "financial independence and romantic love (often of exoticized white males)" (Wagner, "Emulative" 80). Such characterisation often caters to consumers of internationally marketed "postcolonial exotics," hungry for what Wagner claims as the "Amy Tan syndrome" of suppressed, down-trodden, subaltern Chinese women (Wagner, "Emulative" 81). Ooi herself is aware of the marketability of this "diasporic bildungsroman," characterised by young, victimised Chinese girls growing up in thorny circumstances within a patriarchal Chinese tradition that disempowers girls and women, enduring much suffering and heartache in the process ("The Flame Tree"). In fact, in an interview with Wagner, Ooi recounted how she was expected to publish a story similar

to Chang Jung's 1991 autobiographical, set in a far off exotic place, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, when she submitted the manuscript of what is now *The Flame Tree* to a prospective publisher (Wagner, "Gorged-Out" 165). Such representations, whilst acknowledged by Ooi as necessary, tend to represent Chinese women disproportionately. This helps to explain why the characterisation of women protagonists in both of Ooi's novels deviate from the stereotype of victimised Chinese women. Instead, they are depicted as modern, young Chinese women that you might see every day in South East Asia, or in the West – women who are empowered, educated, articulate, and financially independent ("The Flame Tree"). Ooi made a conscious decision to venture beyond "bound feet" (Wagner, "Gorged-Out" 165). In the words of Ooi herself, "I like to think that my two books at least in their small way add a counterweight against the predominant image of Chinese women as victims" ("The Flame Tree").

Set in the late '90s, when Malaysia was on the cusp of the new millennium, Yang-May Ooi's *The Flame Tree* revolves around the construction of Titiwangsa University, a complete town and campus in the rainforest-covered hills of Malaysia, set to be the grandest, most visionary project in Asia. Jasmine Lian, who left Malaysia for Oxford when she was eighteen, is the youngest partner in one of the most prestigious law firms in London, Carruthers. Her client, Jordan Cardale, bids for the construction of the new university town in Malaysia. Jordan is determined to win the contract by any means necessary. Luke, an environmental consultant and Jasmine's long-time friend, on the other hand, is adamant to prove how Jordan's design of the new university town would be damaging to the environment and the people of Kampong Tanah. Torn between her career and the people that she has left for good, Jasmine struggles to choose the right course of action.

In her critical analysis of *The Flame Tree*, Wagner insists that Ooi delivers a clever and sustainable parody of typical manoeuvres in diasporic narratives (Wagner, “Gorged-Out” 166), aimed to revalue what Huggan has termed as “the alterity industry” or “a mechanics of exoticist representation/consumption within an increasingly globalised culture industry” (*The Postcolonial Exotic* x). Ooi’s women protagonists, nevertheless, juggle between becoming the subjects and the objects, pitted against the backdrop of readily available Occidentalism and Orientalist clichés (Wagner, “Emulative” 12). In *The Flame Tree*, for example, even though Jasmine is portrayed as a dynamic and modern woman, she is still the object of other people’s fantasies, especially Harry, her British husband. This fantasy, according to Ooi, taps into the archetype of the controllable, colonised oriental female (“The Flame Tree”). This archetype is a common cliché of Orientalism. Luke, Jasmine’s long-time childhood friend, is a descendent of a Western couple, born and raised in Malaysia. Such characterisation transcends the usual mode of stereotyping — a retaliatory and revisionist strategy commonly associated with Occidentalism (Wagner, “Emulative” 84).

Wagner also claims that the novel is “neither an environmentalist critique nor a contribution to fictionalisation of identity politics or postcolonial nation building” (“Gorged-Out” 164). While I may agree with the latter, I believe that concerns for the environment are also central to the novel and had indeed informed Ooi’s novel. Just as the haze which had severely affected the South East Asian region had influenced the writing of *Mindgame*, so had the issue of environmentally destructive development projects influenced the writing of *The Flame Tree*. The latter, which time and again has provoked public outcry in Malaysia, had inspired Ooi to write a thriller which was later to become *The Flame Tree*. Ooi was fond of recounting how she had been so inspired:

I was at home in Kuala Lumpur one holiday in the year that it rained endlessly. It was boom-time and everywhere, new hotels and apartment

blocks and casinos were reaching up to the heavy sky. As it rained day after day, I stayed indoors and read — the papers, novels, magazines, anything.

In the news was the terrible story of a residential block that had collapsed and killed scores of people. There were pictures of residents in pain and grief stumbling through the rubble. (“The Flame Tree”)

Ooi’s description resembles a national tragedy that occurred in 1993 — the landslide-related Highland Towers Tragedy, which caused the collapse of a residential tower block in Ampang at the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. This tragedy not only led to loss of life and the loss of use of the other residential blocks that remained standing, but it also triggered a public outcry against unscrupulous hillside development projects and rampant land clearing. It is my belief that Ooi’s environmental concern, as represented in *The Flame Tree*, warrants further study.

As evident in the discussion above, critical examination of the novels chosen for this study has for a long time now focused on social and human issues and hardly explores the environmental aspect. This dearth further justifies why their works are worthy of ecocritical investigation.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This research will be an exercise in eco-Marxism, a close reading of the texts selected for this study by drawing upon selected parts of Marxist ecological insights and theory that are appropriate to the Malaysian context of environment, informed by historical and cultural changes and the ecological, economical, and political transformations that have occurred in Malaysia: for example, in Chapter Two, Marx’s theory of alienation is adopted, and, in Chapters Three and Four, his concepts of power and capitalist-based development are utilised. While it is undeniable that historical materialism forms the bedrock of the intersection of postcolonial ecocriticism and Marxism, as Mukherjee has posited, my thesis taps into other key concepts and theories

in Marxism, informed by relevant postcolonial and environmental concepts/ideas, as well as the historical and cultural changes and the ecological, economical, and political transformations that have occurred in Malaysia. I hope to highlight how Marxism also provides a systematic treatment of issues related to current concerns of the environment in Malaysia, thus providing firm foundations for the analysis of the selected novels.

My research is also based on the understanding that different countries develop differently from each other, each charting its own growth economically, socially, and culturally. The relationship between humans and nonhumans, therefore, is a continuous cultural and historical relationship, set in a specific society or nation, and is shaped by environmental traditions, ideologies, and ethics. The ways humanity relates to the environment and its problems, therefore, is a cultural inter-change that is specific to the society they live in in a particular cultural milieu. My reading of the novels is a cultural practice that serves as a means to discover this cultural inter-change, shaped by the different phases in Malaysian history, as well as the changes, which are the consequences of capitalist modernization, globalization, and technological development. These different phases and changes essentially form the social and historical contexts in which the texts selected in this study were produced. My analyses are, therefore, informed by these contexts.

This thesis is divided into six chapters, including the concluding chapter. Chapter One is the introductory chapter. It sketches the background of the study, aims and objectives of the study, rationale and significance of the study, and gives an outline of the theoretical framework. It also reviews the literature on postcolonial ecocriticism, Eco-Marxism, and the selected works.

The four chapters of analyses that follow Chapter One cover a number of environmental themes/issues which are central to my Eco-Marxist approach. These involve the application of Eco-Marxism and cultural/historical readings, which help

ground readings on the Malaysian environment. Taken overall, they present a picture of concerned attitudes towards the environment in the literature of Malaysia. Since the beginning of this study, my aim has been to investigate the writers' environmental attitudes so as to make certain that environmental concerns and world views become an identifiable part of Malaysian literature in English and postcolonial ecological thought and literacy.

The second chapter, "Forgotten Traditions and a Sense of Place: Alienation from Nature in *Jungle of Hope*, *Days of Change*, and *Between Lives*," employs Marx's and Fanon's concept of alienation from nature to investigate humanity's estranged relationship with nature in *Jungle of Hope*, *Between Lives*, and *Days of Change*. Humanity's estranged relationship with nature is usually understood in the sense that humanity is 'detached,' 'cut off' from, and 'out of touch' with nature. This sense of disconnection is reflected in many different forms of modern, industrialised lifestyle, from having little contact with nature to being obsessed more about the latest technology than nature. This estrangement is also replicated in the commonly-held view that humanity is apart from nature, causing humanity to acquire the hubristic and utilitarian attitudes that contribute further to environmental woes. Although this chapter uses the concept of alienation from nature to show that it is one of the central causes of environmental problems related to the land, I also show that memory, history, forgotten traditions, and sense of place are used by the writers to treat alienation from nature. *Jungle of Hope*, *Days of Change* and *Between Lives* foreground forgotten traditions and sense of place as the factors that can bring people into the realm of nationhood. Nationhood, as these writers suggest, requires the engagement with the history of the land and the issues related to it, which can give people a stronger connection to the nation and a greater sense of belonging. The way of manifesting a sense of nationhood is to have a sense of devotion to the land, and this is achievable by relating to memory

and history. A sense of memory and history is crucial for being conscious of the significance of land in the past, present, and future, and how people strive to keep up with the demands of the times without losing sight of tradition and sense of place.

The third chapter, “Resistance and Empowerment: Environmental Politics in *Jungle of Hope*, *Days of Change*, *Between Lives*, and *The Flame Tree*”, asks how the writers drive the green agenda into the nation’s political consciousness. I analyse forms of resistance and empowerment in Keris’ *Jungle of Hope*, Maniam’s *Between Lives*, Chuah’s *Days of Change*, and Ooi’s *The Flame Tree* and what effects these aspects of power relations have on land that is threatened by environmentally-destructive projects. My analysis compares and contrasts the novels with Marxist theory of power, which usually involves the exercise of power over others, or the various ways that power is utilised in order to maintain the status quo, often involving coercion, control, oppression, and domination. Power, in this sense, is distributed among the top stratum of society, especially the capitalists (the ruling class) and the state. In environmental politics, this aspect of power often plays a role in denying, curtailing, or discouraging people from exercising their rights to participate in or resolve environmental conflicts. I argue that, although the writers seem to subscribe to this traditional concept/form of power, representing the state, the capitalists, and their ideologies as “having” power, they also undermine that “having” by delineating resistance and empowerment in order to create more equitable relations and structures of power. The interdependent aspects of resistance and empowerment serve to facilitate the exercise of countervailing power against those “having” power. I argue that the writers also present the notions of resistance and empowerment as “problematic:” demonstrating how resistance and empowerment are often constricted by the capitalists and the state, as well as how the realisation of resistance and empowerment essentially hinges on paying more attention to ideological rather than coercive domination.

The fourth chapter, “The Flaws of the Panacea: Development in *Jungle of Hope*, *Days of Change*, *Between Lives*, and *The Flame Tree*,” focuses on the state’s ideology of development, which rests on economic and capitalist priorities. In this study, development refers to the array of measures, plans, and policies introduced at many levels in society with the aim of improving the quality of people’s lives. Development, which is central to Marxist discussion of ecology, entails the dissemination and adoption of the ideology of capitalist modernity, which is repeated all over the globe. In this chapter, I analyse how the writers treat the state’s prevailing ideology of development, which essentially rests on economic and capitalist priorities. I examine how this ideology is understood and reflected in *Jungle of Hope*, *Between Lives*, *Days of Change*, and *The Flame Tree*. I argue that these works do not merely reflect this ideology but also illustrate different, contesting perspectives on development based on the notions of justice, democracy and sustainability. This is not to say that they reject development. On the contrary, they acknowledge that development is part and parcel of the social, economic, and political processes. However, through their treatment of development, they bring to light other equally important issues, thus emphasising the flaws of adopting a development ideology that is essentially based on economic and capitalist growth.

In the fifth chapter, “Environmental Ethics in *Jungle Of Hope*, *Days Of Change*, *Between Lives*, and *The Flame Tree*,” I investigate some of the environmental values and principles suggested by Keris, Maniam, Chuah, and Ooi. To help frame my investigation, I will first look at three concepts in Marxism that capture the linkage between Marxism and contemporary environmental ethics: sustainability, duty and activism. Marx’s contribution to the understanding of current environmental ethics may seem small, but it does have some interesting affinities with some of the concerns of contemporary environmental ethics — sustainability, duty, and activism. These three

ethical principles are not treated here in isolation from the four important arguments for “doing” environmental ethics, which are duty, character, relationships, and rights. My analyses of the texts, therefore, explore the kinds of duty, character, relationships, and rights illustrated by the writers that suggest how and what needs to be done to live sustainably now and in future.

Chapter Six, the Conclusion, serves as a synthesis of the findings of the preceding chapters, drawing similarities in the manner in which the writers represent their environmental attitudes, and signalling how a range of cultural factors — social, political, and economical — converge on issues related to land. I argue that these attitudes function as ‘lessons’ in nation-building, attesting to the tensions inherent in developing a country while maintaining and protecting the environment. This concerned attitude extends their apprehension in regards to humanity’s past and present relationship to the environment and foregrounds the urgency to sustain the environment for present and future generations vis-a-vis the rapid and dramatic transformations in Malaysian society — the consequences of capitalist modernisation, globalisation, and technological advancement.

My investigative framework is essentially eco-Marxist in that I am concerned with environmental degradation that needs to take into account the economic, political, and social processes and forces that affect human-nature interactions, and how these contribute to ecological problems. Through this framework, I hope to engage in the writers’ attitudes towards the environment. What I wish to explore are the cultural aspects that allow us to reflect on the state of the environment in Malaysia. In this way, not only do we engage in what Buell has termed the “environmental referentiality” in the texts (31-32) but also in the potentials of these texts to participate in environmental discourse as well as nation-building and invite readers to learn and re-evaluate their own environmental attitudes and perceptions towards environmental issues.

CHAPTER TWO

FORGOTTEN TRADITIONS AND A SENSE OF PLACE: ALIENATION FROM NATURE IN *JUNGLE OF HOPE, DAYS OF CHANGE, AND BETWEEN LIVES*

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. ~ Karl Marx (1852)

2.1 Alienation from nature

Humanity's estranged relationship with nature is usually understood in the sense that humanity is 'disconnected,' 'detached,' 'cut off' from, and 'out of touch' with nature. This sense of disconnection is reflected in many different forms of modern, industrialised lifestyle, from having little contact with nature to being more preoccupied with the latest technology than with nature. This estrangement is also replicated in the commonly-held view that humanity is apart from nature, causing humanity to take the hubristic, anthropocentric and utilitarian attitudes that often constrict their sense of awareness and responsibilities to protect, conserve, and sustain the environment.

The alienation of humanity from nature owes its intelligent discussion to the Marxist tradition (Eagleton xii). Indeed, Marx was an early critic of this estrangement. When Marx wrote "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" in 1844, he revealed his concern with the problem of humans' relationship to nature. Under capitalist modernity, humanity, under the conditions of industrial labour, suffers from a four-fold alienation: from nature, from the products of their labour, from other people, and from themselves. Bottomore et al. assert that the first three aspects of alienation are essentially aspects of the human selves, and to be separated from these aspects means to be alienated from human nature (10).

This alienation is further reinforced by the privatisation of land and the making of all things into commodities, cutting humans off from land and the freedom to co-evolve with it. This estrangement is what Foster and Clark singled out as the “metabolic rift” between humans and nature (Foster and Clark 188), which reconstructs nature as an alien “Other” (Layfield 88). Pepper observed that alienation from nature created “a state of mind [in which] people no longer appreciated the connections between the land and what they consumed every day, and did not see the countryside as place of production and power relations, preferring to regard it through romantic lenses as an idyllic place” (72).

Colonialism further perpetuated this condition by making colonies a fundamental part of the capitalist system, mainly supplying raw materials. Traditional economic structures were disrupted, causing natives to become proletariats working in mines and plantations. As Zahar noted, the alienation brought about by colonialism is a “double one,” whereby the colonised is exploited twofold: first, in his conditions of production, and secondly, in his dependence on the metropolis and the world market (13). Frantz Fanon, whose works are influential in the field of postcolonial studies, also expanded on alienation in his book, *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967), focusing on the psychological and intellectual consequences of alienation. To Fanon, Marx’s dichotomy between capitalists and labourers also entails the division between the coloniser and the colonised, which operates on racism, and which causes the colonised to internalise the cultural values of the coloniser, as well as a sense of inferiority (74). This cultural and psychological dislocation alienates the colonised from their own history and culture, depriving them of their ability to develop intellectually, to gain insight into their economic plight, and to engage in class consciousness (Zahar 14-15).

The alienation of human beings from nature is one of the central preoccupations of the writers in this study. Alienation from nature is seen as one of the central causes of

environmental problems related to the land. This “metabolic rift,” following Foster and Clark’s definition (188), gets varied treatments by Keris Mas, K. S. Maniam, and Chuah Guat Eng. Aided by the interplay of memory, history, forgotten tradition, and sense of place, Keris delineates the onset of alienation and how the protagonist tries to cope with it, whilst Maniam and Chuah deal with the outcomes of alienation and the possible ways of healing this rift. Borrowing from Featherstone’s usage of the terms, memory tends to be associated with individualised recollection, whereas history refers to the objective narrative of cause and effect evoked by the term “history” (Featherstone 171). “Memory,” writes Featherstone, provides “a flexible means of exploring postcolonial pasts,” and, therefore, “has more subjective connotations than history, and the practices it entails can also be related to wider social and cultural narratives” (172).

Tradition, other than the usual understanding of the handing down of practices from generation to generation, is often regarded as the opposite of modernity, usually associated with Westernisation, industrialisation, science, secularism, individualism, democracy, and rationalism. In non-Western nation-building, tradition legitimates things in terms of their fit with the internal history and identity of a society, whereas modernity legitimates things by reference to other societies (Rhum 351; Andaya 391). In postcolonial nations, tradition is usually revered, reclaimed and revitalised extensively following independence since colonialism had disrupted cultural traditions and imposed European ways of thinking and organising society (Ciaffa 121). However, as Ciaffa has noted, progress in any society not only entails the adaptation, changes, and abandonment of traditional ideas and behaviours, but it also involves the borrowing and adjustment of ideas from other cultural contexts (142). In this active and continuous process, some traditional beliefs, ideas, behaviours, and rituals tend to be dismissed as impediments to progress and modernisation and thus forgotten or abandoned, especially by the younger generation. Modernity however, has not replaced all tradition, and

traditional ways of knowing and perceiving the relationship of humanity and the environment continues to be the basis of human experience. Keris, Maniam and Chuah tap into and revive these forgotten traditions through their treatments of alienation. In doing so, they are also foregrounding the sense of place and belonging that underscores humanity's strong connection to the cause of protecting the environment, following the idea that a sense of place (also commonly referred to as 'place attachment' and 'topophilia') comprises humanity's meaningful/attached relationship with the physical and social environment of a particular piece of land, which as Low has noted, is "more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place" (qtd. in Cross 1).

2.2 Changing Relations in *Jungle of Hope*

Keris wrote *Jungle of Hope* (henceforth, *JOH*) based on his memories as a youth growing up in Pahang (Banks 137). These memories, coupled with extensive research of colonial history, were clearly utilised by Keris to reconstruct and critique the environmental damage produced by colonialism, particularly the alienation of Malay peasants from their land. Whilst the meaning of peasant may vary in different cultures, my analysis adopts Firth's 1950 definition of a peasant in the South East Asian context since this is the closest to the colonial context in *JOH*: "a man engaged in rural pursuits, primarily agriculture, with a comparatively simple technology and a special interest in the land he works . . . one may extend the application of the term to cover the majority of fishermen and even village craftsmen too" (503).

Set in the 1920s-1930s in colonial Malaya, *JOH* traces the life of a traditional Malay rice farmer, Pak Kia, who is forced to move from Ketari to the jungle of Janda Baik when a disastrous flood destroys his land. At the same time, the British grant a permit to British-backed companies to buy the land in Ketari and its adjacent areas,

including Pak Kia's land, for conversion into a sledge tin mine that would ultimately inundate and destroy it. The setting established in *JOH* alludes to real locations and past events in Bentong, Pahang, where Keris spent most of his youth. Ketari, Janda Baik, and Benus are all adjacent areas around Bentong. Janda Baik, the main physical setting in which *JOH* takes place, is a small idyllic village town in Pahang, Malaysia, surrounded by thick rainforests and cool rushing brooks and waterfalls. Stories passed down from generation to generation recount how Janda Baik was founded in 1932 by three men, Haji Deris, Haji Yasseh, and Haji Kadir, who came from the nearby Kampung Benus, which was severely affected by the flood that occurred in 1926, believed to have been caused by rapid expansion of mining and plantation activities ("Perkampongan Pelancongan"). Left with no choice, the three men relocated to the adjacent area known as Janda Baik.

Nestled between two rivers, Sungai Sum Sum and Sungai Benus, Janda Baik consists of five villages, with a population of approximately 1000 people. In the past, Janda Baik was famous for its biodiversity. It was home to various species of birds, especially hornbills, and wildlife such as pangolins, deer, civet cats, and monkeys. Sungai Benus teemed with fish. The local community, consisting mostly of the Temuan Belanda (indigenous people, or Orang Asli) and Malays, were said to be a self-sustaining community (Teh, "The Changing Landscape"). They mainly derived their food from the forest, from subsistence farming or forest produce harvesting, or from hunting and fishing. Nowadays, however, Janda Baik is threatened by unsustainable development caused by tourism-development projects that had continuously encroached on the land. Located approximately 45 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, the place is now a popular site for holiday and recreational activities for city folks. Since the 1990s, real estate and tourism have been the major crowd pullers to Janda Baik. For those wanting a home away from the hustle bustle of the city, Janda Baik served as a second-home

destination. For those wanting to commune with nature, Janda Baik has no shortage of ecotourism operators. Unfortunately, these developments have disrupted Janda Baik's forest coverage and biodiversity (Teh, "The Changing Landscape"). In addition, the increasing number of its population and tourists has resulted in unmonitored and irresponsible garbage dumping, leading to river pollution (Eng, "Rubbish Woes at Janda Baik").

The flood that affected Kampung Benus in 1926 and the displacement of the villagers that led to their relocation to Janda Baik were reconstructed in *JOH* to highlight the perils of colonial capitalist enterprises to the Malayan environment, and how this changed the relationship the Malay peasants have with their land. The colonial authorities, keen to exploit the natural resources that were abundant in Malaya in order to fulfil the needs to industrialise Europe, facilitated British investments in tin-mining and rubber plantations. Fallow land (land previously used for shifting cultivation but temporarily not under cultivation) was quickly earmarked for mining and plantation purposes (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 63). In addition, more and more land was acquired and converted to rubber plantations (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 65). The Malays were forced to either sell their land or take up rubber planting. Those bent on cultivating wet rice were encouraged to do so as wet rice fields were easily acquired as peasants would usually offer minimal resistance to plantation land expansion (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 63). By the 1920s, having developed large tracts of land in Selangor, Perak, and Penang for mining and rubber, the colonial administration set their sights on unoccupied adjacent territories that had not already been developed. Vast tracts of land in Pahang, Johor, and Kedah were identified (Kaur 136). Bentong in Pahang in the 1920s was already part of this massive expansion.

The 1926 flood not only affected people in Kampung Benus. It affected most of Peninsular Malaysia, resulting in extensive damage to property, road systems, and

agricultural land and crops. Indeed, the 1926 flood was recorded as the largest flood that had ever occurred in Peninsular Malaysia, followed by recurring floods in 1931, 1947, 1954, 1957, 1967, 1971, and 1992 (Ab. Ghani et al. 394). Floods in Malaysia can generally be attributed to natural phenomenon such as heavy rainfall and high tides, but man-made activities such as earth works, uncontrolled land development and inadequate drainage systems have also been cited as the causes. During the 1920s-1930s, the Malayan economy, which hinged on rubber and tin, was already integrated into the global supply chain. Extensive land clearing to accommodate these economic activities could have been one of the contributing factors for the flood in 1926. The opening of rubber estates, for instance, led to massive clearance of forests. Where mining was concerned, environmental problems such as formation of wasteland, damage to natural drainage, pollution, and the destruction of natural habitats have been identified as the by-products.

Backed by the growing demand for rubber in the expanding automobile industry in Europe and the United States, the rubber boom that started in the late 19th century and early 20th century also attracted settler immigrants and quite a number of Malay peasants, who made up the minority of smallholders and served as competitors to large rubber corporations, although their products were usually of inferior quality (Kaur 136). These smallholders, however, were pitted against a monopoly of British-linked merchant houses, fluctuating rubber prices, and restricted planting and production quotas meant to protect estate production interests (Kaur 136). The Malay Land Reservation Enactment introduced in 1913 was one of the measures to ensure that these smallholders would not be able to compete with larger rubber estates. Rubber cultivation at lands reserved for the Malays was either not allowed or allowed with higher land rent (Kaur 137). Peasants not involved in rubber production, on the other hand, continued to be involved in rice cultivation, living in the periphery with very

little assistance and incentive. Both Malay rubber smallholders and rice planters suffered from colonial discrimination against them in the 1920s and 1930s; what was described as “the dark years” for Malay peasants (Nonini 77).

The landscape that is depicted in *JOH* mediates many of the environmental changes caused by colonial economic engineering. On his way to the new village to see his brother, Zaidi, for instance, Pak Kia sees

. . . two verdant rubber estates, reaching up to the hills beyond. In the estate bordering the village, the rubber trees had grown tall and leafy, forming a lush, dark expanse. Each villager owned a few acres of that dark green stretch. In the one farther away, which extended half-way up the hills, the rubber trees were young, sparse and light green in hue . . .
(6)

The land that used to be dominated by forests is now dominated by planted rubber trees. What he sees marks the already wide-spread plantation-based colonial capitalism. Cikgu Brahim’s comments regarding the changes sweeping Ketari and the whole country further evokes mental pictures of the changing environmental realities:

Don’t you realise how much land in our country has been cleared to start tin mines and rubber plantations? Each tin mine takes up a whole district. Each rubber plantation wipes out a huge area of hills, jungles, ravines and valleys. To rake up the riches fast, they brought in tens of thousands of coolies from other countries. Look around you, the Chinese and the Indians have matched us in numbers. Like the white man, the Chinese and the Indians came to make a living. To get rich. Gradually, they began to open their own mines and rubber plantations. (62)

The changing landscape, as witnessed by Pak Kia and Cikgu Brahim, is also a testament to the changing relations between the Malay peasants and the physical environment around them caused by the colonial state and colonial capitalism, and how they have had to make many adjustments in response to these changes. Prior to colonisation, much of pre-colonial Malay society was organised around agrarian production at the fringe of forests. Largely dependent on the forest, they either practised shifting cultivation or rice cultivation. Hill or dry rice cultivation predominated most rice cultivation until the

1860s when wet rice cultivation gained prominence (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 81). The Malay agricultural practices were said to be technologically well adapted to the environment and quite efficient in relation to ecological circumstances (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 65). Most Malays were living at subsistence level, with no pressures to increase output or to exploit the environment as a commodity. The environment provided basic needs: food, shelter, and the materials to make rudimentary tools. The Malays took only what they needed from the land for their survival, which means that ecological change was generally limited as opposed to the more extensive and intensive forms of land use enforced under colonialism. The environment and its richness were not only the provider of basic needs but were also the basis on which traditional lifestyles and beliefs were constructed; it holds the family together, and it is around land that the social organisation of family and community revolves (Brookfield, Hadi, and Mahmud 29). As Kathiritambhy-Wells has noted, the relationship that the Malays had with the environment around them was one where “culture and nature are inextricably linked” (*Nature and Nation* 7).

This traditional lifestyle continued to some extent during colonial administration, as exemplified by Pak Kia in *JOH*. Although restrictive new laws and regulations regarding the land are enforced, and tin mining and rubber plantations become the order of the day, Pak Kia resists these changes by working religiously on his rice field, continuing with the traditional lifestyle. All his life, he has been planting rice on the ancestral land that he had inherited together with his brother, Zaidi. At a time when a sense of community and traditional values are diminishing in Ketari, Pak Kia chooses to pursue the way of life that suits him best. In fact, it sets him apart from most of the villagers around him, who have opted for growing rubber. Enticed by money and property that come with the new plantation economy, some villagers are tempted to sell

their land and open up new settlements and/or grow rubber. Some, however, choose to cling to their rice fields, living in poverty and hardship:

When the village near the town was opened, Pak Kia's family and scores of others stayed behind in the old village. Only about 30 families joined the venture, opening up the new village and planting rubber. It was now evident that the families in the new village had done better than those in the old one; they had money and some had property. (7)

Money and property, needs engineered from British capitalist expansion through tin mining and rubber plantation, have not only brought ecological disruptions to Ketari but also social and economic problems, splitting the villagers into two opposing groups – alienating some, like Pak Kia, from the rest of the villagers.

Pak Kia is not easily lured by these capitalist-induced needs. He works even harder in the rice field (8). His brother, Zaidi's advice to start a rubber plantation falls on deaf ears. At one time, when droughts affect his rice fields, Pak Kia dejectedly works on Zaidi's plantation:

Pak Kia was unhappy, but still he would not think of planting rubber. And so Zaidi supported his brother's family. Pak Kia was ill at ease. Never before had he depended totally on someone else. Though he helped tap his brother's rubber trees, he did not feel any better. He was impatient for the drought to end. Tapping rubber, for Pak Kia, was sheer hell. He yearned to return to his heave, his ricefield. (9)

Even though life becomes difficult due to natural disasters, and people in his village start to grow rubber because it is the order of the day and there is more money to be made from it, Pak Kia continues to resist the forceful imposition of capitalist modes and structures. The rice fields, rivers and orchards are the world to him (11).

JOH positions Pak Kia at the forefront of the changing environmental reality that is sweeping Ketari, which he unwaveringly resists. His resistance is echoed by a number of Malays in his village, who refuse to "work as coolies," "clinging even more firmly to their old way of life," to "their original rice fields and village," which they feel are their last bastion (62-65). This form of resistance has typically been propagated in

colonialist discourse, resulting in Malays being accused of being indolent, lazy, and unproductive (Alatas 95). Michael Adas, however, sees this resistance as a typical avoidance protest in pre-colonial and colonial Southeast Asia, by which dissatisfied peasants sought to attenuate their hardships and express their discontent through flight, sectarian withdrawal, or other activities that minimised challenges to or clashes with those whom they viewed as their oppressors (217). Through *JOH*, Keris replicates this resistance, delineating the strong relationship the Malays have with the natural world around them. Such resistance is grounded in the rural Malay culture, which has nurtured non-capitalist relations of production. The new forces and relations of productions that are taking root in the land around him are radically different from the relations of production nurtured by the pre-capitalist Malay culture. This brings Pak Kia into a conflict, and he resolves this by resisting conformity. The autonomy — the capacity to be his own person in control of his labour with nature and to engage in further productive activity without interference from manipulative external forces — is liberating to Pak Kia. The relationship he establishes with the land from which he extracts a living is, therefore, not only a cultural one but also a personal one. In contrast, his fellow village men may be working on their land growing cash crops like rubber, but they are subjected to laws, restrictions, and manipulations by the colonial administration and the global market. They are not in control of the processes involved in using or selling the product as these are quickly transformed into export commodities owned, controlled, and sold by the capitalists and then disbursed into the global economic market, which in turn regulates the price of rubber. Unlike Pak Kia, those involved in growing rubber have to rely on other external production factors in their labour.

Pak Kia's relationship with the land on which he lives and works has shaped his personal life and identity. While Marxism sees nature and humans as inter-related and not separated, I would like to refine this reciprocity by looking at the impact of labour

and nature in defining humanity's personal and cultural identity. I draw on the conceptual definition of environmental identity set out by Clayton, who has observed that an environmental identity is one part of the ways in which people form their self-concept (45-46). Environmental identity is similar to other collective identities (such as a national or ethnic identity) in that "it provides us with a sense of connection, of being part of a larger whole, and with recognition of similarity between ourselves and others" (Clayton 46). It extends beyond the largely anthropocentric construct of identity, taking into account "the larger, non-human context within which all human relationships occur" (Clayton and Opatow 5).

For Pak Kia, an important aspect of his personal identity lies in ties to the land and the kind of labour he engages in. When most people in his village were lured by easy money gained from selling their land and growing rubber, Pak Kia chooses to stay on his land and endure hardships. Pak Kia puts a high value on his living experience with the land that cannot be accounted for by money and economic status. The land is his day-to-day living experience, part of his sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Amidst the changing cultural and environmental identity of the majority of the Malays at that time, who are assimilating into the colonial capitalist plantation agriculture by growing rubber, Pak Kia intractably asserts his own identity by refusing to be alienated from his land and his labour. This identity with the land relates substantially to the Malays' identity in pre-colonial times, which was organised around the land and its agrarian production (Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 58). The land around Pak Kia encourages a strong and positive sense of self in him, what Ryan and Deci have described as the qualities desired of everyone's identity: autonomy, relatedness, and competence, which could be enhanced in one's interaction with the natural environment (qtd. in Clayton 50). Autonomy, relatedness, and competence in a natural environment is made possible because there are less limiting commands, laws, signs, and the expectations of others.

Marx's theory of alienation delineates Pak Kia's strong sense of identity, derived from the land and his daily experience of it. In a confrontation with his brother, Pak Kia reiterates his sense of self and identity:

I can't be like you, Di. You went to school, I didn't. You are smart, I am not. You studied under the newfangled religious teachers, I did not. You read the newspapers, I don't. But I am strong, I am hard-working. I am sturdy. And I am at home with a spade, a chopper and an axe. Let me go to Janda Baik. I'll plant dry rice first. Then I'll start another ricefield, maybe better than the present one. I have no faith in rubber planting. (57)

Keris revives forgotten tradition by highlighting the close relationship that Malay peasants in the past had with the land. This is characterised by a strong sense of identification with place — the meaningful relationship and sense of belonging that Malay peasants have with their land. In this kind of relationship, the land becomes an integral part of personal history, and identity. This tradition, which is linked to deep, reverent feelings for personal labour, identity, and sense of place was disrupted when colonialist capitalist expansion coerced the Malays into taking up mining and rubber planting, causing physical and psychological dislocation from their land, and by extension, their culture. It is this tradition that drives Pak Kia to hold on to his land and to refuse to be displaced from it.

To argue, as Fanon does, that alienation from nature also entails the alienation of the colonial subject from his history and culture, is, I think, to relate to a crucial point of *JOH*. The break-up of the Ketari villagers and the displacement of the villagers from their ancestral land attest to this. In the end, powerless against the onslaught of the changing economic realities around him, Pak Kia has to succumb to rubber planting.

2.3 Detached Relations in *Days of Change*

Chuah Guat Eng's *Days of Change* (henceforth, *DOC*) seems to continue where Keris left off. Whilst Keris delineates the onset of the Malays' alienation from the land

brought by capitalist and colonialist enterprises, Chuah's *DOC* illuminates the outcome of the long-standing alienation of humans from the land. This alienation, Chuah suggests, while having its roots in colonialism, is also caused by rapid modernisation, industrialisation, and capitalistic endeavours that have taken place in Malaysia following independence. The outcomes of alienation are many and varied, and take a number of different forms, but, in *DOC*, emphasis is on the indifferent attitudes towards land. Pak Kia and Hafiz set a profound contrast: Pak Kia is intensely connected to the land before him; the land is his livelihood. Forced alienation from his land affects him deeply. Although Hafiz is connected to the land by virtue of his career as a property developer, his outlook on land is different from Pak Kia. Land, to Hafiz, is a commodity, to be acquired for commercial and realty development. Because alienation has to do with the experiences of humans, and their labour and can be considered a condition that applies to everybody, it impacts people in different ways in relation to their statuses in society. As Marx has noted, "The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognizes estrangement as its own power and has in it the semblance of a human existence" ("The Holy Family"). The "disconnection" Hafiz experiences seems to be Chuah's approach to draw attention to how alienation affects humanity, especially the more privileged, like Hafiz.

Before the fall that causes him to lose his memory, Hafiz is a successful, wealthy property developer whose life is filled with hatred, revenge, a loss of faith, and meaninglessness. His outlook and attitude towards land is one of indifference. He has had his share of building condominiums (32) and reaping profit from commoditising land. Even the initial meeting he attends, which gathers his friends of different professional backgrounds and concerns bent on protesting the proposed theme park at Ulu Banir where he grew up, does not really affect him. In fact, it makes him more

pessimistic about the point of protesting. Instead of worrying about the cause, Hafiz is more worried about the ramifications of the protest; about what it would do to the protesters rather than what it would do to the land as a whole.

Hafiz's indifference to the land as a whole and the threat it is exposed to illustrates further the alienation of human beings from nature. His long years of living affluently in the city has somehow encouraged a strong disconnect from the land in Ulu Banir and a diminished sense of place. Being a lawyer and a property developer, he typifies city folks who have lost contact with nature, and who have become less likely to consider how their actions and decisions affect the environment. At times he has had to deal with protests by environmentalists, or "tree-huggers," which he abhors (32). Being an employer and a property developer, land becomes merely a commodity to him, to be processed and sold into the market for human consumption.

After being approached by Abu Bakar, CEO of Hartindah, who is bent on building a hotel on Jock's Hill, as part of the proposed Malaysian-Disneyland theme park, Hafiz begins to question whether this is the kind of property development he would be proud to be a part of. Knowing that part of the Malaysian-Disneyland theme park involves building an artificial lake built through a dam at the confluence of the Berintik and Banir rivers, Hafiz realizes too well that the dam would inundate large parts of the surrounding forest and valley in Ulu Banir. When Abu Bakar reveals to Hafiz his fetish for Disneyland (since childhood) as the rationale for developing the theme park, Hafiz "was inclined to draw the line" (32).

Subsequent threats that follow after he is approached by Hartindah further drive Hafiz to not give in to the proposed development project in Ulu Banir. When the phone line at his bungalow at Jock's Hill does not work, Hafiz begins to be suspicious. Accounts of several wrong-number calls that were received further substantiate his suspicion. Being harassed by some motorists on the road also seems to confirm his

fears. The last straw comes when his bungalow on Jock's Hill was burnt down due to arson. Hafiz fears for everyone related to him, especially his mother, who also has a stake in the bungalow. This makes him wonder how many people are threatened as he is and yet are helpless and not able to fend for themselves. It is at this point that he feels fortunate to belong to the "moneyed class" (59) — a manifestation of the many benefits of economic advancement achieved by the nation over the years following independence. He begins to see the nobility of efforts made by his friends to protect the ordinary citizens of Ulu Banir against the injustices perpetrated by politically connected companies like Hartindah, in the name of progress and development. At this point, Chuah establishes what is at stake and the complexity of the issue at hand.

One would expect Chuah to further advance Hafiz's fight to save Ulu Banir and build on this message: the importance of fighting for the environmental cause one believes in. Moreover, Hafiz seems to be the right candidate to embark on such a cause — he has the intelligence, the wealth, and the right 'connections.' This combination however, seems to have been slighted by Chuah. Hafiz resorts to a typical short-cut to resolve this conflict, one that undermines his credibility and integrity. He sets out to kill Abu Bakar, a plan which does not materialise due to his fall. After the fall, Hafiz wakes up to find himself in a house in Kampung Basoh. A group of *Orang Asli* had found him a couple of miles from the village, lying unconscious and delirious. He is then put under the care of an old couple, Pak Endot and Mak Soh, who are the village healers.

After returning to Kuala Lumpur, Hafiz dwells more and more on the memories of his days in Kampung Basoh. There was something about Kampung Basoh that "spoke to him" (153). He is reminded of the image of Pak Endot walking through the jungle looking for wild plants and roots, the "unhurried rhythm of their quiet lives," the "almost mystical tranquillity that came" over him when he stayed with them (153). He mulls over people's relationship to the land — the kind that his gardener, Maniam, a

Malaysian Indian, is deprived of. Once, when Hafiz and Maniam were discussing the evacuation of the squatter area where Maniam used to live to make way for a development project, Maniam explains why most squatters refuse to budge. It is because they do not want to be cooped up in a low cost flat that would not only limit but also put a stop to their interaction with the land itself, to grow vegetables and fruit trees, to rear chickens, to have their own sources of food (157). Kampung Basoh and Maniam's plight illustrate to Hafiz the deep sense of rootedness of rural folk in their land, "not as in nation, but as in the earth on which we stand" (157).

Hafiz decides to visit the old couple again to repay them for their kindness, but is instead is told that no such persons live in the village, and that Kampong Basoh does not exist. As Ng has noted, Hafiz's sojourn in Kampong Basoh utilizes the belief amongst the Malay folk in the existence of the "*orang bunian*" (supernatural beings equivalent to the Western fairy folk), who, despite being unseen by the living, live parallel to, and often mimic, the socio-cultural structures of the Malays ("Chuah Guat Eng" 198). I would like to expand on this belief, which I read as Chuah's effort to reclaim the Malays' cultural and environmental tradition. A part of this tradition is the belief about the Malays' concept of the environment, which has been replaced by secular and scientific thinking – the view that *dunia* (the environment or universe) is shared between humans, nature, and various forms of supernatural beings. Bound to the ideas of "universal kinship" and "geographical ties," a human being has to be cautious and act responsibly to the environment, "mindful of the fact that he is actually in the territories of other living souls, and therefore cannot wantonly misbehave himself" (Yaspar 270-271). Malays also believe that the universe is animate, that is, it has life force or "semangat." This life force permeates not only humans but also nature, including animals, plants and other inanimate objects (such as rocks and mountains) and supernatural beings (such as "*orang bunian*") (Yousof 11). This shared "internal

element” explains why humans, nature, and supernatural beings are believed to be interrelated and not completely separated or differentiated (Yaspar 276).

Supernatural beings are believed to have keen interest in human affairs, often helping and seeing to it that humans, in their daily activities, conduct morally responsible behaviour and do not invade their space. This explains why rituals and sacrifices are offered to the supernatural beings so that a harmonious environment is maintained. Hafiz’s sojourn in Kampong Basoh also resembles local traditional folk-tales and dramas whereby the protagonist has to venture into the mysterious domains of the supernatural beings to advance a cause. Like the typical Malay protagonist in traditional folk-tales and drama, Hafiz’s sojourn takes place when he is advancing his own personal cause, protecting Ulu Banir from Abu Bakar’s ruthless development project. Unlike the typical Malay protagonist who pursues his quest in the real world after a stint in the supernatural realm, Hafiz is made to forget and abandon his quest. He becomes more concerned with the people of Kampong Basoh and the abject poverty they live in. His amnesia plays a major role, of course. Chuah, however, seems intent on including the *orang bunian* domain (Kampong Basoh) into Hafiz’s environmental conscience as if deploying this surreal encounter as a ‘wake-up call’ to Hafiz.

Days of healing under the care of Pak Endot and Mak Soh have convinced Hafiz that the old couple’s traditional knowledge and skills should not die with them. He asks Mak Soh how she had acquired the knowledge. She says it is handed down through the generations in her family. Upon returning to Kuala Lumpur, Hafiz sets out to preserve Pak Endot and Mak Soh’s knowledge and expertise in traditional healing. He plans to bring in botanists, biochemists, and the like to get them to work with Pak Endot and Mak Soh so that their knowledge could be tested, documented, and systematised. In conjunction with this effort, Hafiz also plans to turn his father’s dream of a science college into a college of traditional science — a centre for the study of alternative

medicine. In addition, he plans to turn Kampong Basoh into a traditional health village, where non-disruptive tourism thrives. He envisions leading a life of spiritual enrichment and quiet happiness, watching the little village of Kampong Basoh grow into a thriving traditional health village around his College of Traditional Science (171).

The idea of preserving Pak Endot and Mak Soh's knowledge and expertise in traditional healing bears resemblance to current environmental efforts to preserve traditional ecological knowledge (also known as TEK), which is largely believed to be capable of contributing to ecological sustainability and the environmental decision-making processes. Hafiz's initiative is commendable, and it seems Chuah is suggesting that a way to "heal" the alienation of humans from the land is by preserving "forgotten" tradition. Ironically, this effort is undermined by the "impossibility" of carrying out his plan. The non-existence of Kampong Basoh and its people pose a challenge to Hafiz to realise his plan. Nevertheless, Hafiz's fall in Ulu Banir, followed by his stint in Kampong Basoh, reacquaints him with the land and demonstrates the inextricable link humanity has with it. His indifference towards the land changes into concerns for humans' rootedness in their land.

2.4 Weaving the Past and Present in *Between Lives*

Weaving threads of both the past and present, K. S. Maniam's *Between Lives* (henceforth, *BL*) also centres on alienation and its outcome through the lives of two Indian women in contemporary Malaysian society: Sellamma and Sumitra. Sellamma is an old, second-generation Indian woman who owns a beautiful piece of land at the outskirts of a city, acquired by her father during the colonial rule. Sumitra is a young, third-generation Indian woman working as a counsellor in the Social Reconstruction Department (SRD), assigned to persuade Sellamma to sell her land and move into a welfare home.

The land, central to the unfolding of events in *BL* belongs to Sellamma, a second-generation Indian woman making a living on her own land in an unnamed location. Her picturesque land is “valuable land...stretching from the laterite trail to the river and on to the fringes of a jungle...a bit of scenic country...and sits there in the middle of their plans for a few blocks of condominiums, and a theme park” (1). The land, which was referred to as a “settlement” during colonial times, was passed down from her “rubber plantation parents” (16). This settlement is etched in the history of Malaysian Indian history. The “settlement” of Indian plantation workers in Malaya began as early as the 1920s, when there was an increasing number of labourers who were destitute, too old to go back to India, or who chose not to, although the success of this “settlement” was questionable (Arasaratnam 196). The global depression in the 1920s and 1930s, which severely affected the plantation economy and the demand for labour, resulted in unemployment and under-employment in the estates, further plunging them into poverty (Arasaratnam 197). Some took the colonial administration’s offer of repatriation, while some chose to remain in Malaya and looked for other ways to earn a living. Those who stayed were usually allotted estate land, which they could work on until the depression was over. Some estate owners, however, leased out land to their workers.

Sellamma’s relationship with the land goes a long way back. Living off the land her entire life, Sellamma’s father, Arokian, is given the land title by a “white *thurai*” — his British employer at the estate — who is leaving the country for good. The white *thurai* gives Arokian the title to the land and advises him to “Keep that paper safely. It’s worth more than the words written on it. No one can take the land away from you now” (116). As the British-run rubber estate that Sellamma’s father works at is no longer hiring workers, Arokian finds himself trying to make ends meet. The settlement fortunately is fertile and he finds himself working on the land, growing fruits, herbs, vegetables, and

cattle, living a sustainable way of life. Arokian “preferred working on the land” (16), unlike some people in the settlement who chose to find work in some other places outside the settlement. Some even “sold their plots and their houses, and went away for good” (113). He is respected by the community and is regarded as their leader. He builds his own house and the other houses in the settlement. He also makes friends with the Malays and has an especially good relationship with Pak Mat, who assures him that “Our wings are here on the land, Arokian” (184). His family is also “better off than the others in the settlement” as “the land was flourishing,” enabling Arokian to employ some of the people at the settlement (16-17). But the Japanese Occupation throws his family into hardship, as his family is coerced into supplying vegetables to the Japanese army. His family unit, too, slowly crumbles after the Japanese occupation. His two sons leave the settlement to join construction work. His two daughters get married and leave the settlement. The uncertain political climate brought on by World War II, the Japanese occupation, and the return of the British to Malaya at that time have a big impact on Arokian. In addition, the nationalist movement among the Malays is also escalating; Malay hegemony (or *Ketuanan Melayu*) is becoming more and more relevant to the Malays. As recounted by Pak Mat:

‘The Malaikarans [Malays] are talking only about themselves. About being themselves.’

...

‘The Belanda [Dutch] people came,’ Pak Mat said. ‘Then the British, and your people and the Cheenans [Chinese], the Japankarans [Japanese], then the British again. How to be themselves? The Malaikarans ask.’

‘My people and the Cheenans?’

‘That’s how the Malaikarans are talking, Arokian,’ Pak Mat said. ‘Our people, the other people.’ (185-186)

Arokian, who earlier on had believed that he belongs to the land he has worked on, fears about the land being taken and thus loses interest in working on the land. Plagued by a feeling of displacement, he decides to return to India with his wife. Arokian’s decision could have been driven by his entrenched homeland attachment, which typically

characterises the older-generation India diaspora. One of the core elements of a diaspora, homeland attachment entails among others, “maintaining a collective memory of myth about the homeland”, “regarding the ancestral homeland as the true, ideal home and as the place to which one would (or should) eventually return”, committed to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland and to its safety and prosperity”, and “continu[ing] to relate, personally or vicariously” (Safran 83-84). Safran’s prudent observation is based on experiences of diasporas in the 20th century, especially the earlier generations who were still emotionally and physiologically attached to their homeland. As a result, they would typically nurture a desire to be restored to their original centers. The uncertain political climate in Malaya becomes almost like a convenient pretext for Arokian to return to India. Sellamma and her youngest brother however, choose to stay on the land. When her youngest brother disappears and is taken for dead, Sellama goes away for a few years. She comes back and does some odd jobs before taking up subsistence farming on her land, at the same time keeping pretty much to herself. This voluntary exile from the multicultural community surrounding her land goes on for many years until Sumitra comes into the picture.

Different from Sellamma, Sumitra has assimilated into the multicultural Malaysia. She makes friends with people from the other races, receives good education, and epitomises the modern Malaysian woman. Living in an increasingly secular and capitalist society, where material possessions, social ranking, and urban culture dictate the order of the day, cultural tradition and religion have less and less influence in Sumitra’s daily life. Steering clear from saris and religious rituals like the puja and puberty coming-out ceremony, Sumitra has shed most of the religious and cultural values and rituals usually practised by the Indian community, much to the disappointment of her mother and grandmother (80). Able to speak English, Malay, and

Tamil, Sumitra feels she is the right person to persuade Sellamma to abandon her land and move into the old folks' home.

Sellamma, steeped in memories of the land and the ancestral history and traditions attached to it, refuses to budge from it. For Sellamma, a vital aspect of her personal identity lies in ties to the land on which she and her family have laboured. Even after her family disintegrates, Sellamma keeps on tirelessly working on the Rama-Sita Grove. She demonstrates this commitment to Sumitra, often coaxing the young woman into picking up the *changkul* (hoe), working on the land together with her. Initially, Sumitra, who has never held a *changkul* in her life, finds it awkward. But after trying it, she could identify with the exhilaration that comes from "labouring" and "having contact" with the land:

I pick up the changkul and struggle through the furrow to [Sellamma's] side. I continue to struggle beside her, but my body is beginning to move less awkwardly. Then we are bringing the changkuls down together, and in the pause between the swings, I listen, as I've seen the old woman do, to the singing silence. Then the thud comes, we crack the lumps of earth, knock them into looser soil, and move on. The air fills, at first, with the smell of stale substances, coming perhaps from the trapped bodies of snails and their shells, then is slowly replaced with that of crushed grass and leaves, and of fresh sap. Better watch it, I tell myself, or you might get addicted to these things like the old woman! But I'm thrilled when after we've done the last furrow, we straighten up, and lean on the changkul handles, gasping, and smile at each other, the shining sweat of our labour feeling like a second skin on our bodies! (62-63)

The *changkul* is symbolic of Sellamma's personal relationship with the land. It is also symbolic of the labour that is carried out on the land. Maniam seems to imply that labour is one of the fundamental ways people relate to place. Sellamma makes this clear to Sumitra: "Appa always said be part of the handle, and you'll be part of the earth" (62). Here, the impact of labour and the land in defining Sellamma's personal and cultural identity is striking. This environmental identity, borrowing Calyton's term for how people form their self concept (45-46), is also inextricably linked to Sellamma's family history connected to the land.

Sellamma gradually reveals her family history to Sumitra. As first and second-generation Indian migrants in Malaya, Sellamma's family retain their Indian identity by practising integral parts of their motherland's culture such as the Tamil language and the Hindu religion. The Hindu religion especially plays a defining role in governing the norms, values, and rituals practised by the family. The family spends most nights reading the Ramayana: an epic, canonical Hindu scripture central to Hinduism that teaches the duties of relationships and the ideal characters for father, servant, brother, wife, and king. The Ramayana, according to Arokian, should be read so that they "feel the magical plentifulness of the land, and to treat everything that grew (on the land) with the greatest respect" (108). The Ramayana song also becomes the family anthem. Sellamma's father is even likened to Rama, while her mother is likened to Sita. The allegorical reference to Rama and Sita also serves to foreground Sellamma's family's origin and ancestral ties to the motherland. Rama, Lord Vishnu incarnate, and heir to the throne of King Dasrath, and his wife, Sita, were exiled to a forest as a result of her stepmother's greed to install her son, Bharat, as the King. Without complaining, Rama and Sita live in the forest for fourteen years. Similarly, Sellamma's father and mother were exiled, albeit voluntarily — separated and distanced from the homeland. For many years, they make a living out of the piece of land they settled on in Malaya.

In *BL*, Maniam elevates the Malaysian land as sacred. Many aspects of Sellamma's land are associated with religious identities and rituals that Sellamma's family used to practise, and which keep her attached to the land. The Sacred Rama-Sita grove is one of these. This sacred grove serves to highlight one of the important aspects of the tradition of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia: creating and/or building sacred places of worship similar to the ones found in their ancestral land, so that ties with the ancestral land are maintained. Sellamma's family is no different. Sacred groves, such as the one that sprawls over Sellamma's land, have their origins in India.

The sacred grove institution in India is very ancient and dates back to the pre-agrarian hunting-gathering period, before humans had settled down to raise livestock or till the land (Malhotra et al. 6). A traditional means of biodiversity conservation, these groves are similar to what is now referred to as natural sanctuaries, where all forms of living creatures are under protection. Dedicated to a certain deity, no one is allowed to cut any tree or plant, kill animals and birds, or harm any form of life in the sacred grove area. Ancient Indian texts have many references to sacred groves, and it is estimated that in India, now, there are at least 13,720 sacred groves (Malhotra et al. 12). In terms of religion, these groves serve to propitiate certain deities and/or ancestral spirits. These groves also have a sociocultural function in that they provide a cultural space to the community as the common property resource where festivals, social gatherings, and weddings are held. Sacred groves, too, have an economic function, whereby village folks collect and extract dead plant and animal material for fuel or energy. Lastly, sacred groves also have a political dimension in that they provide territorial affiliation and village membership. As sacred groves serve religious, sociocultural, economic, and political functions, they are invaluable in lessening human impact on the environment and ensuring uninterrupted ecological processes (Malhotra et al. 18). Nowadays, however, sacred groves are under threat by traditional belief systems, encroachment, and rapid urbanisation (Singh, "Forest Department").

By ascribing a religious identity to the Rama-Sita Grove, Sellamma keeps ties to the land, her family, and the Indian cultural tradition. Similar to the sacred groves in India, Sellamma's Rama-Sita grove is not excluded from threats. The first threat is during the Japanese Occupation, when Sellamma's family had to acquiesce to the Japanese soldiers' demands for vegetables. This human threat was treated with determination and faith by Sellamma's family, "The Ravana will be defeated" (149). Like the story in Ramayana, human threats are likened to Ravana, who comes to the

forest Rama and Sita live in, kidnaps Sita, and after many ensuing battles, is defeated by Rama. In the current setting, however, Maniam foregrounds different kinds of threat: unscrupulous development projects and the erosion of the Indian cultural tradition. The Rama-Sita Grove in *BL*, therefore, serves to emphasise how the land not only provides for Sellamma's livelihood but also the cultural space that gives her a sense of identity and belonging.

Another aspect of the land that is associated with religious identities and rituals is the river. It is sacred to Sellamma, just as water is considered sacred in Hinduism. Water is of special significance in Hinduism because it is related to physical cleanliness and spiritual well-being. This explains why most rituals and holy places are usually found on the banks of rivers, coasts, seashores, and mountains. To Hindus, water has spiritually cleansing powers, especially rivers, and there are seven sacred rivers in India: the Ganges, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu, and Kaveri. Bathing in rivers is considered sacred for it is believed to cleanse the bather of his or her sins. The river that runs through Sellamma's land is given the same religious significance. Swimming together with Sumitra, Sellamma reinforces the importance of the river to her family, "We always come here after working in the Rama-Sita grove. And after family quarrels or celebrations. More after the quarrels" (64). The river, therefore, cleanses the whole family from physical impurities as well as spiritual ones.

Throughout the different phases of Malaysian history, from being colonised to the present day, Sellamma asserts her own identity by refusing to be alienated from her land, which provides the basic necessities that she needs as well as spiritual strength and cultural continuity. Maniam deploys the land, the labour and the divinity attached to it as a crucial source of identity. As a result, Sellamma connects more with her land, more than she ever does with the people around her. This attachment, however, comes with a price as it causes Sellamma to lose connections with the larger Malaysian 'culture' of

national integration, modernisation, and rapid industrialisation as she is too absorbed with reliving her family history and cultural tradition. This is typical of Maniam's protagonists, who have been depicted as those whose attempts to negotiate a diasporic identity in a new land have failed to bear fruit (Ng, *Intimating the Sacred* 26).

Diverging from this type of depiction, Maniam focuses on the land in *BL*, and its importance for the construction of Malaysian Indian identity, self-definition, and self-worth. To him, these cannot be emphasised enough. For Maniam, therefore, "the natural environment . . . provide[s] a particularly good source of self-definition, based on an identity formed through interaction with the natural world and on self-knowledge obtained in an environmental context" (Clayton 51). Through Sellamma's identification and connection with the environment and the land, Maniam forges environmental identity as an equally-important notion of a diasporic sense of identity and belonging in Malaysia. Amartya Sen in his 2006 book *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* has highlighted the importance of choice vis-à-vis diasporic identity formation. He speaks of the different options, yet overlapping matrices of identity such as geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, employment, and food habits from which choices may be made, leading to one's formation of identity (5). This freedom to choose some of the matrices is the result of economic, political, and cultural changes that typically affect the diaspora's process of forming an identity in the host country. Sellamma's attachment to the land that her family has lived and worked on alludes to this choice. Other than the Hindu cultural traditions that she practices, her attachment to the land has also helped her establish her own sense of identity – a sense of identity that is so strong that she chooses to stay on rather than follow in her parents' footsteps returning to India.

Sellamma's meaningful relationship with the land contributes to a strong sense of place. This sense of place also alludes to the concept of nationhood as it applies to

second-generation Indian immigrants like Sellamma. Following Ben Anderson's concept of nations being "imagined communities" (6), membership of a nation is a cultural construct which requires people to carry out an act of imagination. For the Indian immigrant community who were here before Malaya was declared a nation in 1957, the concept of belonging to a nation was not imagined but lived. They identify themselves as belonging to the land they worked on. In the absence of a nationally-imagined community, Sellamma identifies herself with the day-to-day experience of living and labouring on the land, interwoven with cultural tradition and religious practices passed down by her family. Sellamma's level of identification with the land and her sense of attachment may indicate the level of emotional attachment to the land in earlier Indian diasporic communities whose traditional outlooks and rituals nurture and recognise humanity's inextricable links to the land.

Sellamma's sense of place and belonging to her land is also symbolic of the relationship formed by the Indian community to Malaysia. The land, to this community, is no longer an imaginary motherland far away but Malaya/Malaysia. Sellamma's refusal to follow in her parents' footsteps and return to India attests to the Indian community's seeing the land less as a place of temporary exile (from the homeland) and more as their new home. The sense of belonging they feel towards land they have worked on, affirms their sense of belonging to Malaysia, and disengagement from the ancestral homeland. Thus, they foster their sense of Malaysian nationhood through their rootedness in the land. To Maniam, the Malaysian sense of nationhood entails the awareness that the land has tremendous significance to its people, especially in creating a sense of belonging, and it is this significance that drives people to take up causes related to protecting the environment. The earlier Indian generations may have brought to the land they adopted a whole set of cultural traditions that shaped the way they related to the land, and, to some extent, they reshaped the land to fit these traditions, but

as time goes by, these traditions give the community a stronger connection to the nation as well as a greater sense of belonging.

At a loss to explain Sellamma's stubbornness to budge from her land, Sumitra laments, "Why doesn't Sellamma see what I see? I mean the breaking off and the discontinuity" (76). Sellamma's exile and Sumitra's lack of empathy and sensitivity to the significance of the land serve to foreground the effects of rapid industrialisation in town areas, which causes the rural folks to lose connection with world culture whilst the urbanites lose their link to nature. Maniam underscores this rift by focusing on a bigger issue — humanity's lost link to the land and its sacredness. He laments humanity's alienation from nature, especially the loss of connection and appreciation of land and its sacredness by new generations of Malaysians, who are lured by the trappings of capitalist modernity and promises of a comfortable life.

The Club, of which Sumitra is a member, and which she frequents with her friends, is symbolic of this lost link. Situated three kilometres from town and perched on top of a hill, The Club nestles among the lush jungle landscape of twenty hectares (131). Owned by Charlie Wong, people were sceptical when he decided to develop the place, at the same time leaving the lush jungle intact, "Who will go out to that isolation? Who will want to work there?" (131). Confident, Charlie Wong said, "Oh, they will come!" (131). Indeed, the place flourishes as it attracts many members who flock there for recreational and social activities. After many years of development, "following some deep-seated urgency Charlie Wong wants to share with the members," (132) The Club evolves to include facilities such as a golf course, jogging tracks, tennis courts, a swimming area made of small lakes and basins ending in a lagoon, and gaming rooms. The concourse, where members and visitors are greeted, is the hub "where you linger, mingle and chat for a while, before you decide where you want to go" (134). The "deep-seated urgency" that Charlie Wong builds upon is rooted in humanity's alienation from

the natural world caused by modernisation and industrialisation. The aesthetic, health, and recreational potentials of the land seem to be the remedies for human-nature alienation, thus gaining Charlie Wong's appreciation. These potentials are then capitalised into a valuable commodity and sold to urbanites, who would then gain access to the lush countryside. Maniam establishes this superficial link to nature through vivid descriptions of the feeling "aroused" when one is at the club,

. . . the feeling that you're in the middle of the jungle and the separate sections of the Club are only lookout posts. You can be in any wing, but you never get away from the sight of all that country. The joggers and golfers out there, on the winding track, or on the golf course landscaped into the age-old trees and vegetation, look like, as Christina puts it, animals in pursuit of some prey! And you're the watcher. Some members actually think of themselves as presences in all that barely tamed wilderness, bent upon pursuing whatever it is that escapes them in their daily lives. Even when you're working out in the gym or the squash courts, you only have to look through the glass walls for you to feel you're not some fitness freak, obsessed only with your body. (132)

The Club's members are offered a cosmetic link to nature, "to the feeling the place aroused" (131). Going to The Club is a form of escapism from the hustle-bustle of city-life and the stress at work:

Just the sight of The Club sitting up on the hills, not to mention the drive up the long and winding road to the main entrance, makes you feel you've put everything behind you. You reach the parking bays, fitted into the slopes and curves, and the polluted, traffic-clogged roads, and the stale air-conditioned and crowded shopping complexes fall away like some unnecessary memory. (132)

The land upon which The Club is built caters to the urbanites' aesthetic, health and recreational needs. These needs, however, are not so much different from the colonialist needs for highland retreats and/or resorts such as those developed at Fraser's Hills and Cameron Highlands (Kathirithambiy-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 156-157). The colonial mindset of retreating to the natural world for health and pleasure is reflected through Sumitra's trips to The Club. Used to seeing The Club through the colonial mindset of nature as the utilitarian space for health and pleasure, Sumitra fails to appreciate

Sellamma's land for its historical and cultural value. Maniam sets this contrast and offers historical and cultural tradition as a way of healing alienation from nature. Reconciling nature and humans does not require the re-creation of nature as *The Club* exemplifies but by putting people more in touch with the land and the cultural tradition that comes with it. In *BL*, Maniam ascribes religious identity to the land, endowing it with spiritual significance rather than scientific and anthropomorphic ones, thus showing a different understanding of the environment. Through Sellamma's devotion to the land, Maniam foregrounds the Indian cultural tradition — the forgotten traditional ways of knowing and perceiving the land — which continues to be the basis of human experience. In *BL*, modernity and rapid development may have increased alienation, but they have not replaced tradition. When the tradition of maintaining sacred groves and rivers is quickly vanishing and forgotten, Maniam revives this, offering it as a way to heal alienation from nature.

2.5 Conclusion

To sum up, the notion of alienation from nature is central in *JOH*, *DOC*, and *BL*. Following Marx's concept of alienation, alienation from nature is a four-fold process that overtakes humanity's relationship with the land, the effects of which are felt and dealt with by Keris, Chuah, and Maniam. Alienation has misplaced, as Bottomore et al. highlights, the maintenance of essential aspects of the human self (10). It has resulted in less identification with and attachment to land, subverting meanings that are fundamental to one's sense of identity and place. In the view of Marxism, alienation from nature derives specifically from conditions induced by capitalist modernity. Through their works, Keris, Chuah, and Maniam demonstrate humanity's efforts to reverse, amend, modify, and change this state of alienation. Keris, through *JOH*, delves into the onset of this alienation, focusing on the trauma felt by Malay peasants caught

between changing environmental realities and tradition. Maniam, through *BL*, also delves into this rift. He, however, offers a way to heal this rift — by going back to cultural and religious tradition. Keris' Pak Kia and Maniam's Sellamma, who throughout the respective stories live as colonial subjects, demonstrate the pre-independence relationship with the land, which entails cultural and religious understandings and practices of human-nature relationships, which in turn generate attachment and awareness to strongly protect land, as well as to resist attempts to change these understandings and practices. Chuah, through *DOC*, focuses on the outcome of alienation, examining how, through decades of independence, progress and modernity, postcolonial subjects have moved away from cultural and religious understandings of the human-nature relationship, thus becoming alienated from their cultural rootedness in land. In Hafiz's case, land is merely perceived as a commodity, entangled in political and economical forces that quickly replace tradition.

JOH, *BL*, and *DOC* also demonstrate the extent to which Fanon's argument is applicable to the Malayan/Malaysian context. Capitalist modernity, which has been going on since colonial times right to the present time, has resulted in the 'disconnection' from nature as well as history and culture, as exemplified by characters such as Hafiz and Sumitra. As Fanon has noted, alienation from nature also causes the colonised to be alienated from their history and culture. *BL* and *DOC* expand the long-term effects of alienation through current settings and generations that have partially/have not lived within the grip and embrace of the colonial times. However, Fanon's argument that alienation causes those affected by colonialism to forget their own history and culture proves to be problematic, specifically in the portrayal of colonial subjects such as Pak Kia and Sellamma, who show tenacious attempts to preserve cultural and religious traditions and resist forced evictions from their land. This implies that alienation from nature does not merely involve the internalisation of the

cultural values of the coloniser, as Fanon has argued, but it also involves resistance. In Pak Kia and Sellamma's cases, they resort to non-confrontational resistance.

The interplay of memory, history, forgotten tradition and sense of place by the writers raises a very important question about the place of nationhood in the Malaysian literary realm. A delicate issue, nationhood in culturally diverse Malaysia aims to instil a shared sense of loyalty and belonging to one nation. While I agree with Anderson's sense of nationhood as an "imagined community," which requires people to carry out an act of imagination through which they identify and feel a sense of belonging to the nation (5), there are many other potential factors involved in making citizens feel a shared sense of belonging to one nation. *JOH*, *DOC*, and *BL* foreground sense of place as the factor that can bring people into the realm of nationhood. Having a sense of place, particularly in relation to land, can motivate people to participate and engage in actions that help protect and conserve the environment. Nationhood, as these writers suggest, requires a serious engagement with the history of the land and the issues related to it, which in turn can give people a stronger connection to the nation and a greater sense of belonging. The way of manifesting a sense of nationhood, therefore, is to have a sense of place – a sense of attachment and devotion to land, achievable by relating to memory and history. A sense of memory and history is crucial to be conscious of the significance of land in the past, present and future and how people strive to keep up with the demands of the times without losing sight of tradition and sense of place. A sense of place may well serve as the immediate medium for humanity to protect land from threats mediated by the interests of the state and the capitalists, rather than a sense of nationhood based on an "imagined community." To have a sense of nationhood, as Keris, Maniam and Chuah imply, is to have a lived experience with land, and not an imagined political community. Forwarding a concept of nationhood which is realistic,

these writers marry alienation from nature with a belief in the affective sense of place and forgotten traditions.

Perhaps Maniam is the only writer that foregrounds forgotten tradition as a way to heal estrangement from nature. All three texts, nevertheless, serve as valuable resources for thinking about alienation and its effects on humanity, the immense capacity that humanity has to monitor and amend their relationships with nature, as well as how a strong sense of place serves as an indelible marker of one's identity and motivation to serve causes related to the environment.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER THREE

RESISTANCE AND EMPOWERMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN *JUNGLE OF HOPE, DAYS OF CHANGE, BETWEEN LIVES, AND THE FLAME TREE*

*Yet to appreciate the role that power plays in conditioning patterns of human-environmental interaction, it is necessary to adopt a more inclusive understanding of power that encompasses material and non-material considerations as well as the apparent fluidity of power itself ~
Raymond L. Bryant and Sinead Bailey (1997)*

3.1 Power Relations and Environmental Politics

The growing importance of environmental issues and their connection to political change points to the politics of environment. The question of “Who has the power?” is often central in environmental politics since power serves as a crucial mediation through which conflicts related to environmental problems are resolved (or not). This also points to the nature of power — that it is generally exercised and practised through human interactions, and thought of in terms of social relationships. These relationships usually result in unequal power relations — conceptualised and realised in terms of control, domination, coercion, dependence, or inequality — which would have a bearing on the outcome of environmental conflicts and activism.

A Marxist approach to environmental politics is concerned with debates related to materialism, justice, and nature in capitalist societies, with the aim of attaining a fairer distribution of rights and resources. Indeed, early Marxist writings in political ecology in the ‘70s focused on “unequal power relations, conflict, and cultural ‘modernisation’ under a global capitalist political economy as key forces in reshaping and destabilising human interactions with the physical environment” (Walker 74). In 1974, for instance, German poet and social commentator, Hans Magnus Enzensberger foregrounded the insensitivity of the environmental movement for social classes, claiming that environmental problems gained their impetus only when the bourgeoisie, or the ruling class, were exposed to environmental problems (Hay 261-262).

In their conceptualisation of power, Marx and Engels used the words “economic power,” “social power,” and “material power” interchangeably to refer to power (“The Communist Manifesto”). In Marxism, power is generally thought of in terms of class relations, determined by property. According to Poulantzas, power is derived from “the capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests” (qtd. in Sandbach 108). Class relations usually entail the relation between two of the most important classes in capitalist society: those who own and control the means of production (capitalists or the ruling class) and those working and depending on the capitalists for employment (workers or labourers). This relation is typically thought of as an “economic relation,” with the workers possessing labour power and the capitalists having power over the conditions of labour. In this context, too, power is held by the capitalist class. In other words, ownership of capital translates into power. The capitalist class is the most able to realise its own objective interests considering economic interests and technology often work to their advantage.

The capitalists may have economic power, in the sense that they have the power to control the means of production and investments, and they have the power to manage and control the labour process. They do not, however, possess the power of physical coercion and control over territory and thus cannot directly employ political means to enforce compliance (Isaac 169-170). The state, being a political structure (not an economic structure), holds this political power, providing, implementing, and enforcing sets of standards, codes of conduct, and law, as well as policies. Nevertheless, it is common to see the ruling class using the state as an instrument for the domination of society. The capitalists, by virtue of their economic power, can exert direct political will on the state to ensure that class power is maintained (S. Newman 141). Thus, economic power could also lead to political power. In the same context, the state is often thought

to play direct and indirect roles in securing the interests and power of the dominant economic class.

Control over the economy and the state are not the only sources of power for the capitalists. Another equally important source is control over ideas, or ideology. Marx's own works, such as "The German Ideology," "Capital," and "Grundrisse," have touched on ideology, particularly in the context of class struggle. Central to class struggle are the forms of consciousness, or the ideas and beliefs of the different social classes. These ideas and beliefs are dependent on the material conditions in which their adherents live and thus support the economic structure of a society. Often, the capitalist class controls the means of mental production, and through this control, they propagate and foster what Marxists call a ruling class ideology, which preserves the status quo. Ideology, according to Engels, is

a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. ("Marx and Engels Correspondence")

In this sense, "false consciousness" refers to the systematic misrepresentation of dominant social relations in the consciousness of the subordinate classes. Members of a subordinate class, for example, suffer from false consciousness in that their mental representations of the social relations around them systematically mask or obscure the subordination, exploitation, and domination those social relations represent.

Marxist thinking about the power of ideology and consciousness were extended significantly by Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Althusser defines ideology as a "system (possessing its logic and proper rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society" (qtd. in Goldstein 23). Althusser demonstrates the workings

of ideology through a useful distinction of state power and state control. State power is backed by repressive structures such as the law courts, the police, and the army. State control, on the other hand, is supported by ideological structures or state ideological apparatuses such as political parties, schools, media, religious institutions, family, and art (including literature). These institutions serve to secure an ideology that would side with the state and the political status quo.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is closely related to Althusser's distinction of state power and state control. Drawing on Marx's basic division of society into a base and a superstructure, Gramsci further divided the superstructure into the state or political society (coercive institutions) and civil society (all other non-coercive institutions). Indeed, civil society owes its intelligent discussion to Gramsci, who argues that civil society is the terrain of contestation between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces (Ramasamy 202). The state, which comprises public institutions such as the government, police, armed forces and the legal system, assert political control through rule (direct political control) and hegemony (subtle political control). Hegemony, in this sense, serves as an organising principle or ideology, which is not based on force and coercion but on the subordination of the rest of society through their own consent. Through means such as ideology and false consciousness, hegemony is diffused by the state and the ruling class to obtain and maintain their power. The rest of the society adopts as well as internalises these through the usual process of socialisation or culture.

The Marxist concept of power is essentially linked to economic, political, and ideological class domination. This conception, however, has raised some issues, especially its overemphasis on economics, as if "all spheres of social life [are] penetrated by a single, productivist logic which privileges economy and identifies class relations as key to the structure of domination and the forms of resistance" (Peet and

Watts 29). Therefore, the plurality of relations and struggles in society and the exercise of power by diverse, socially situated agents, precipitated by the rise of “new social movements,” such as those concerned with social justice, civil rights, environmentalism, and feminism, are often undermined (Isaac 220; Peet and Watts 30). In this light, post-Marxist theory has foregrounded production as not the only arena for collective resistance. In the words of Poulantzas,

A concrete society [a social formation] involves more than two classes, in so far as it is composed of various modes of production. No social information involves only two classes, but the two fundamental classes of any social formation are those of the dominant mode of production in that formation. (qtd. in Isaac. 116-117)

This implies that capitalists and workers, although the most important classes, are not the only classes or social relations in capitalist societies. Groups other than the capitalists and the working class are also important sources of power for they illuminate the active processes of a variety of human agencies, or actors, involved in environmental interaction. Arguments against Marxist theory of power also seem to centre on Marxism’s rootedness in class as the fundamental factor in environmental struggles. Barker et. al. however argue that this is no longer imperative since “everyday resistance, popular movements, and revolutionary situations are not utterly separate, but that at times one can turn into the other” (4). As Isaac has noted, these new kinds of social movements signal an autonomous discourse and exemplify attempts of these groups to advance their own environmental interests as well as highlight the importance of non-class relations (208). Treatments of Marxist discussion of power imply that the outcome of power relations involves domination, acceptance, resistance, and empowerment. Indeed, issues of resistance and empowerment that mobilise groups other than the capitalists and the working class to challenge injustice and subordination have recently been the focus of much Marxist research (Jessop, “Marxist Approaches to Power”).

The issue of resistance in the postcolonial context is often associated with textual representation. Early anti-colonial writings such as those produced by Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral and Edward Said helped in articulating the intersections of representation and resistance. Since representations of the Empire had been largely Eurocentric and dealt on “much of the drama of colonialist relations and post-colonial examination and subversion of those relations” (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 93), resistance to these representations have taken many forms and become central to postcolonial debates. Benita Parry however argues that postcolonial criticism has turned into colonial discourse analysis (“Institutionalization” 74) that distorts the representation of a physically and culturally violent colonial encounter (“Signs” 128). This limitation therefore, excludes any notion of active resistance (E. San Juan 2). Robert Young has also shown that the notion of resistance has been restricted to Bhaba’s idea of subversion, which is closely related to the idea of difference and the hybrid postcolonial diasporic subject (192). In *Postcolonial Resistance: Cultural Liberation and Transformation* (2008), Jeffress specifically addresses the question of resistance by linking the idea of resistance to agency and social change, rather than just subversion. Jeffress’ argument points to the need to rethink about resistance in terms of agency and transformation.

In this chapter, I analyse forms of resistance and empowerment in Keris’ *Jungle of Hope*, Maniam’s *Between Lives*, Chuah’s *Days of Change*, and Ooi’s *The Flame Tree* and what effects these aspects of power relations have on land that is threatened by environmentally-destructive projects. My analysis compares and contrasts the novels with Marxist theory of power, which usually involves the exercise of power over others, or the various ways that power is operated in order to maintain the status quo, often involving coercion, control, oppression, and domination. Power, in this sense, is distributed among the top stratum of society, especially the capitalists (the ruling class)

and the state. In environmental politics, this aspect of power often plays a role in denying, curtailing, or discouraging people from exercising their rights to participate in or resolve environmental conflicts. I argue that, although the writers seem to subscribe to this traditional concept/form of power, representing the state, the capitalists, and their ideologies as “having” power, they also undermine that “having” by delineating resistance and empowerment in order to create more equitable relations and structures of power. In other words, I look at resistance and empowerment as the writers’ efforts to reveal and contest the exploitation embedded in capitalist-based production and social relations, in eras that stretch from colonialist rule to post-independence to globalisation. The interdependent aspects of resistance and empowerment serve to facilitate the exercise of countervailing power against those “having” power. Resistance is taken to mean an individual and/or a social group’s strategies to shape the course of action and decisions related to land, whereas empowerment refers to the expected outcome of resistance: an individual’s and/or social group’s ability to either have a say in the making of decisions that affect their land and/or to gain control over their land. While empowerment may also involve resistance, resistance does not necessarily result in empowerment.

These aspects of power are central to understanding the private sphere of power (as opposed to the public spheres), which I suspect is often overlooked in the nation’s narrow political outlook, which sees politics as a practice associated solely with the public sphere and the state. The writers also present the notions of resistance and empowerment as “problematic:” demonstrating how resistance and empowerment are often constricted by the capitalist and the state, as well as how the realisation of resistance and empowerment essentially hinge on paying more attention to ideological rather than coercive domination.

In exploring power relations involved in the interaction between parties involved in environmentally-destructive projects, it is vital to also consider the political system that exists in Malaysia, considering that environmental struggles within a society are usually carried out based on the political system that exists. British colonial rule in Malaya was based on the divide-and-rule policy, whereby the economic and political needs of the colonial government were placed before all else, leaving the different races to fend for themselves. In the case of post-independence Malaysia, the struggle for power is usually carried out within what Neher has termed a semi-democracy (1949). A semi-democracy is characterised by liberal democracy (such as competitive elections, citizen participation, and civil liberties) as well as authoritarian rule (dominant political ruling parties and strong interventionist states) (Neher 1949). In Malaysia, a general election is held every five years, out of which a government is formed based on the majority political party in Parliament. Barisan Nasional (National Front), a coalition predominantly made up of UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), and MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress), has been Malaysia's ruling political coalition since independence.

Over the years, ethnic politics has also characterised much of Malaysian politics. Even environmental issues were not spared from ethnic politics. The case of Bukit Merah in the 1980s, for example, was seen predominantly as a Chinese issue because the Chinese community in Bukit Merah were the ones affected (J. Tan, "Interview"). The sacking of then-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998, however, followed by the formation of the *Reformasi* (reformation) movement, served as the catalyst for a civil society that is rooted in justice, democratic reforms, and governance, rather than in race and state patronage (Weiss and Hassan 12; Bowie 197). As Loh has argued, in the 1990s, "new democratic politics" has emerged, comprising new social organisations, NGOs, associations, and informal groups, which have their own set of leaders, goals,

and agendas, which are not based on race (Loh, *Old Vs New* xvi-xvii), or what Weiss and Hassan have termed as “contemporary Malaysian social movements” (12). These movements provide Malaysians with “some space to organize, to complement, or even to oppose [the state]” (Weiss and Hassan 5). Indeed, while civil society in Malaysia includes “advocacy-oriented non-government organizations (NGOs) [and] also networks of public intellectuals, trade unions, students, affiliated activists and politically engaged religious associations” (Weiss, “Civil Society” 60), it is also usually understood as a “democratizing agent” (Case 41) and “an arena of contestations of ideas between those who control the state and those who oppose it for various reasons” (Ramasamy 206). Even though scholars tend to agree that the civil society in Malaysia is reasonably diverse and vibrant (Weiss, “Civil Society” 742; Weiss and Hassan 11), it is generally weak and subordinated due to state-centralised constrictions and marginalisations (Verma 135; Ibrahim and Syed Zakaria 45; Ramasamy 214). This feature is typical of a semi-democratic country like Malaysia (Ibrahim and Syed Zakaria 45). Due to its authoritarian rule, it becomes a problem to question or criticise the state’s policies, decisions, and accountability.

3.2 Acceptance as Empowerment in *Jungle of Hope*

In Keris’s *JOH*, while Pak Kia struggles to resist being swayed by money and all the facilities and technology that come with modernity and the Eurocentric capitalist world, a parallel intermittent plot, which involves Pendekar Atan and minor characters such as Tutung and Tapa, demonstrates how the colonial capitalist enterprises seek to exert control over the land. Working on behalf of an ‘invisible,’ white man called Tuan Pekok, Pendekar Atan persuades the farmers to sell the land and move elsewhere, rather than be a small and struggling agricultural ‘island’ in the middle of a vast mining area. Backed by the Tuk Penghulu (Head of the village folks), Pendekar Atan entices all

the people in Ketari and the adjacent areas to the imminent wealth brought by the sale of their land. He manages to persuade most of them, except for Pak Kia, Pak Abu, Tutung, and Tapa. Pak Kia and Pak Abu “would not fall easily for sweet words or money” (41). Tutung and Tapa’s land now belong to Zaidi, who buys the land from the two brothers and promises them that they could stay on the land and work the rice fields for as long as they want. In addition, the money Tutung and Tapa received from the sale of their land have been invested in small rubber-plantations elsewhere. Convincing Zaidi to sell the land to Tuan Pekok proves a challenge to Pendekar Atan. To ‘win’ Zaidi’s favour, he ‘changes’ his behaviour and projects a ‘good’ image, emulating Zaidi’s religious and steadfast conduct (174). He moves to Bentong, brings his family along, goes to the mosque and joins religious classes (174). When it comes to Tutung and Tapa, however, they become easy prey for Pendekar Atan. Being uneducated, poor, and indolent, these weaknesses make it easy for Tutung and Tapa to be lured into gambling sessions organised by Pendekar Atan, incurring a lot of debts in the process, causing them to ‘surrender’ their land titles to him.

Capital, or wealth, is not the only mechanism by which the colonial capitalists exercise their power. Another equally important mechanism is ideology, which plays a dominant role in supporting colonial control over the land. As noted by Alatas, the plantation-based colonial capitalism was the dominant ideology of the ruling power in Malaya in the late 19th century and early 20th century (83). Embedded in this dominant ideology are the different ideas concerning labour and the different races. Rice cultivation, a major form of labour among the Malays, for instance, did not seem to serve colonial capitalism’s interests well as compared to tin and rubber. As a result, the Malays were considered unproductive and indolent. The Chinese migrants, on the other hand, because of their active roles in the capitalist enrichment of Malaya, were often praised as industrious and diligent. Soon, Chinese migrants who had accumulated

enough surplus capital joined in the capitalist economy, with some purchasing land for rubber growing and also tin mining.

Keris' understanding of the power of capitalist ideology among the Malays can be gleaned from Pendekar Atan and Zaidi. A Malay, Pendekar Atan's sole occupation is that of a middleman, arranging the sale of Malay land to Chinese *towkays* (business owners), or getting permanent grants for Chinese migrants who occupy licensed land (47). He himself does not own a scrap of land (46). Having worked for a Chinese, Towkay Chan, for eleven years, Pendekar Atan is obsessed with money, and this obsession influences his actions and thoughts. He is convinced that riches are the top priority in life. Having witnessed Towkay Chan's achievement of acquiring more than thirty acres of rubber plantation, three brick houses, and a lot of jobs from the government and estate towkays, he hopes to emulate the success:

To get a lot of money you must have *ong*, luck, said Towkay Chan, and you must have a lot of tricks up your sleeve. You must be smart. Hard working. Full of tricks. Smart. Pendekar Atan felt he had begun to put all this into practice. His diligence, trickery and smartness had given him food, shelter and clothing; but he was not yet rich. He did not have *ong* yet. He had been able to lease a piece of land and build his house on it through the hard work, trickery and smartness he had put into arranging the sale of the Ketari and Benus people's land to Tuan Pekok. (168)

To this end, Pendekar Atan's machinations unfold. He moves out of Towkay Chan's shop and moves to Bentong so that the villagers will accept an outsider like him. He gets the people to sell their land to Tuan Pekok. He himself buys his neighbour's land at a very cheap price (under the pretext of helping), with the grand scheme of leasing it out to Towkay Chan for twenty to thirty years. Leasing out the land to Towkay Chan who would then grow rubber is the only option Pendekar Atan has, since he has no capital to open a rubber plantation. In the long run, he would "...get money that matched the sale price of the land"(172). He even teams up with Zaidi, who gives him money to start planting rambutan. The money, however, is spent on his rubber plantation. During the

rubber slump that affects Malaya from 1929-1933, the colonial government introduced issued coupons to those who wished to sell rubber. Without those coupons, no rubber could be sold or bought. This slump is reconstructed by Keris in *JOH*. When the people of Ketari are severely affected by the rubber slump, Pendekar Atan capitalises on this restriction by buying coupons from the villagers at a low price and selling them in town for profit. Pendekar Atan's capitalist ideas and manoeuvres were largely based on unlimited greed for profit and subordination of all other interests to this, which works to affirm the power of capitalist ideology in the colonial times.

Zaidi, Pak Kia's brother, is portrayed as a very enterprising and business-minded Malay. Unlike Pak Kia, who is still steeped in the traditional way of life, he willingly embraces the plantation-based colonial capitalist ideology, knowing that the survival of the Malays in Ketari entails a change in their economic practice. Zaidi's bold transformation illustrates that power relations also involve acceptance. When Pak Kia and scores of others stay behind in the old village in Ketari to plant rice, Zaidi becomes among the first to open a rubber plantation in the new village. As his hard work bears fruit, he hires Chinese labourers to work in the plantation, ventures into wholesale supplying of jungle produce, and becomes the first Malay to use aboriginal labour (7). He also buys up some of the villagers' land (44), which was a common practice for capital-surplus groups among the Malays then to acquire villagers' land (Brookfield, Hadi, and Mahmud 29). Zaidi is every bit a self-made Malay man. He is also portrayed as a modern thinker: willing to try out new things, rejects traditional superstitions, and believes in the importance of education. His modern-thinking is also the result of being a member of an Islamic faction, Kaum Muda, which believes in rationalising and modernising the fundamentals of Islam, as opposed to another faction, Kaum Tua, which is essentially conservative and hostile toward changes and new ideas. These two factions, or schools of thought, played a role in influencing and shifting the Malay

people's paradigm towards economic, political, and social transformation. Throughout the colonial period, especially in the '20s and '30s, the Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua conflict persisted as the foundation of the Malay economic transformation and anti-colonial movement (Mohd Fiah 410).

Zaidi's enterprising pursuits, however, are not only personal but also political. His enterprising manoeuvres in the village do not seem to differ from Pendekar Atan's. He too believes "that Malays should grow rubber to get rich like the Chinese" (55). When Pak Kia contemplates selling the ancestral land he shares with him, Zaidi tries to persuade his brother not to sell it. However, he wants Pak Kia to start a rubber plantation (36). When Pak Kia finally agrees to sell their ancestral land and moves to Janda Baik, Zaidi makes it clear that whatever money he gets from the sale of their land will be used to plant more rubber (76). When Zaidi buys over Tutung and Tapa's land, he asks the two brothers to invest the money from the sale in rubber plots, convinced that they "must be helped; must be saved" and that they were "easy prey" for scheming people like Pendekar Atan (49). He is too aware of Tutung and Tapa's weaknesses for quick cash and debts, and their greed in taking advantage of a land-price boom that might not last.

Zaidi's obsession with rubber planting obscures his real intentions of helping the people of Ketari to stay put on their ancestral land. The arrival of the British colonial capitalists posed threats to the Malays' land. Land was required for commercial purposes and thus acquired in a variety of ways, seldom to the advantage of the Malays. As a result, land is hard to find then. Zaidi does not want the people of Ketari, especially his family members like Pak Kia, Tutung and Tapa, to flee to the jungle. He does not want them to plant rice, either, knowing too well that the menace of the mining activities nearby would inevitably inundate the rice fields. He believes that it is only fair that the Ketari people should be given a new piece of land to grow rubber to compensate

for their displacement, which is not the case in Ketari (36). Although the villagers' means of earning a living would change from planting rice to rubber, at least they would not have to be dispossessed of their land and suffer from displacement, which was a serious repercussion for the Malays as a result of British economic expansion and direct control over land access. Zaidi is too aware of the importance of land to the Malays at that time. Losses of land due to the environmental effects of mining have forced many villagers to either sell their land or relocate to new sites. He is well aware that those who sell their land are not given land to start a new life. The loss of land is a loss that can never be replaced. To him, land forms the basis of the Malays' daily lives. This concern, coupled with his concern for the rapid increase in the immigrant population and their control of the economy and the land, sets him apart from Pendekar Atan.

You know, Pendekar, I care for the Malays. And I myself don't just sit idle. I work, I toil, I plant rubber. If I were against the government, I wouldn't have planted rubber, or started a business; and in the end, I too, would have fled into the jungle. You, too, don't want to go into the jungle. But you felt nothing when others are driven into the jungle. That's where you and I differ, Pendekar. (74-75)

Zaidi's acceptance is derived from his knowledge and sensitivity to the environmental changes happening around him and in Malaya at that time. His acceptance of "power over" does not imply that he cannot attempt to moderate its effects. He has examined and analysed his people's predicament and vulnerabilities that cause them to be displaced from their land. He is also aware of the Malays' decreasing political power in view of the Chinese' increasing economic power, and is envious of the Chinese economic hegemony. The socio-economic and political changes at that time drive Zaidi to use his wealth to help the villagers in any way he can; using his wealth as resistance, addressing some of the uneven concentrations of power under the colonial rule, seeing to the political and economic survival of the Malays in Ketari at that time.

In *JOH*, Keris delineates the human-environment interactions in the Malayan environment in the '20s-'30s. These relations are largely linked to political, economic, and cultural domination. To accentuate the power of colonial capitalist enterprises, Keris broadens this domination to include the success of the colonial rulers and capitalists in manufacturing consent among the Malays to embrace the capitalist plantation economy, Zaidi and a score of other villagers included. Even though Zaidi adopts this ideology, he does not do so 'blindly.' He makes sincere efforts to salvage the Malays' land in Ketari, built upon a vision of social justice for the Ketari villagers and change in the villagers' practices and attitudes. Zaidi's hard work, however, is undermined since it is hardly able to stop the menace of mining from eating up the land in Ketari and the surrounding areas. Nor is he able to stop the breakup of the Ketari people into two factions – one that takes up rubber planting and the other that is displaced and has no choice but to flee to the jungle. Empowerment in *JOH*, as represented by Zaidi, involves embracing and giving consent to the capitalist ideology, but this is done with a clear conscience of alleviating displacement and landlessness among the Malays as well spurring the Malays' political and economic autonomy to faster growth. Zaidi's empowerment however, becomes a problem since the transformation that he aspires for is crushed by the counter-hegemonic struggle of his brother and some folks from the village. He is not really successful in convincing Pak Kia to take up rubber planting and not leave Ketari. Pak Kia's sullen resistance also represents the fragility of empowerment during colonial times. Empowerment, to Pak Kia, includes significant resistance to overt attempts to alter his livelihood, lifestyle and tradition. In the end, however, his resistance proves to be futile, leaving him with no choice but to flee from Ketari.

3.3 Resistance as Empowerment in *Between Lives*

In *BL*, Maniam unpacks power through the antagonistic relations between the postcolonial state and the individual. In political ecology, the state has historical and contemporary importance in the politics of environment. It is often regarded as a powerful actor as, generally, it has been proven to be able to determine, condition, and control human interactions with the environment (Bryant and Bailey 40). In this sense, the state seems to have power. Safeguarding the environment, as well as acting in the name of 'national interest,' has often been the public perception and expectation when it comes to the state. Ideally, the state plays the role of the protector of the environment. In fact, it is the only actor today in a position to address with authority political and ecological problems. Yet, the state sometimes reveals its contradictions by making decisions or taking actions that harm the environment far more than other actors such as businesses or multilateral institutions. These contradictions are mostly attributed to the primary goal of most states in the world: to pursue economic development, usually at the expense of the environment (Bryant and Bailey 51). It is worse when the state is a Third World state, where pressure for development is tantamount to industrialising and maximising natural resource use (Bryant and Bailey 56). To this end, the public will have to grapple with the possible incapability of the state to address environmental problems, particularly during the early years of independence. As Bryant and Bailey have noted, concern for environment was largely absent from official development programs in Third World countries, especially in the '50s and '60s (56).

Another concern the public usually has to wrestle with is the link between the power of the state and the development of global capitalism. Capitalism saw to it that the state functions, among other things, to provide diverse goods or infrastructure to the public so that capitalists will be able to accumulate capital. In this sense, the state acts as the facilitator of the capitalist system. The existence of this close and symbiotic

relationship between the state and capitalists is indeed a characteristic feature of the political process in many Third World countries, which is that the state is often said to be beholden to the interests of capitalists (Bryant and Bailey 62). However, the interests of the state and capitalists do not always correspond. Often, besides playing the role of protector and developer of the environment, the state is also expected to find a solution to environmental problems.

In *BL*, the state is represented through a fictive government agency, the Social Reconstruction Department (SRD). Maniam portrays the department as an important agency in the nation building agenda, which, in Malaysian politics, has always been a central yet delicate issue. Usually a process associated with plural societies, nation building in Malaysia is a multi-layered process generally aimed at both economic progress and development of national identity, which could ideally accommodate the various races and ethnicities whilst inculcating an overarching sense of nationhood (Ishak 101). According to Sharom Ahmat, nation building is achieved through these means: the creation of a strong economy, the stabilisation of internal factions and the promotion of domestic tranquillity, and the consolidation of cultural competencies, including the improvement of the quality of people's lives (qtd. in Suhana 116). To this end, the state has introduced numerous plans, policies, and ideologies implemented through its various departments, although many have lamented that these are Malay-centric and oblivious to the interests of other ethnic groups in the country.

Following the tragic racial riot in 1969, the state established the Department of National Unity, aimed at providing standards and measures so that all policies and measures of the state are formulated so as to blunt the edges of conflict among the different races and provide conducive conditions towards national unity. Another measure adopted was the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was aimed at eradicating poverty and eliminating the identification of ethnicity along economic function, seeing

that creating conducive socio-economic conditions was crucial for political stability and national unity. 'Bangsa Malaysia' (Malaysian nation), an ideology introduced by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed in 1991, aims to address the varying nationalisms within and across ethnic groups. 'Vision 2020,' also introduced in 1991, was a government policy targeting 'developed nation' status for the country by 2020. It also names national unity as a key component to achieving this status. In short, nation building in Malaysia is an on-going process that ideally should result in economic prosperity and national unity.

The SRD in *BL* functions as an agency that assists the state in promoting national unity, "...to encourage the mixing of the various communities" (2) and "to live up to what it wants to achieve in society...to be a close-knit community" (156). Other than this role, the Department also plays the role of a moral guardian, weeding out social ills and deviations — "from bringing wayward girls back to their families; making truant schoolboys see their self-worth, through to reconciling estranged wives to their husbands" (1) — through its trained social workers or counsellors. Sumitra, a young urban professional of Indian descent, has been given the task of persuading her 'subject,' Sellamma, to leave her land and get into a welfare home in town. It appears that the SRD have a similar function to the current state's Social Welfare Department, which serves to provide preventive and rehabilitative services in social issues and the development of the community, targeting groups such as children, people with disabilities, older persons, destitute persons, families (especially single parents or domestic violence victims), victims of natural disaster, and voluntary welfare organisations. From a Gramscian perspective, the SRD represents the state's endless ideological coercion to propagate itself through society, in order to bring about national and moral unity.

Sellamma seems to belong in one of the target groups identified by the SRD which has ‘deviated’ from ‘conformity.’ Sellamma’s ‘deviation’ or ‘social ill’ is “Obstructive Occupation of Land” (15), seen as a challenge to the grand project of nation building and what Loh describes as the new political culture of developmentalism, which valorises rapid economic growth (21). The land rightfully belongs to Sellamma, but due to plans to develop the land into condominiums and a theme park, and Sellamma’s stubbornness to cling to it, the SRD has been roped in to persuade her to give up her land. Because Sellamma is the rightful owner of the land, and because she refuses to conform to state directives, her “file,” which originated in the Land Office, was passed on to the Social Welfare Department, then reclassified and passed on to the Social Reconstruction Department (12). In this sense, the SRD — a “discreet and sympathetic organization” (12) — also serves as a ‘special task force,’ given the primary role of supporting, realising, and enforcing the ideology of economic prosperity, which requires total conformity of the ‘subjects,’ or citizens, to the state’s patronising, know-it-all, development policy and projects. Where Sellamma is concerned, the SRD aims to bring her around to the state’s ideology of progress and development to the point of handling the eviction of the old woman from her land. When the other state departments have not emerged victorious from the task of persuading Sellamma to give up her land, the SRD steps in to shoulder the responsibility, assured that the ‘subject’ could be brought to the right path, if only a well-trained counsellor is assigned the task of persuading Sellamma. As Wilson has highlighted, the SRD serves as a dual symbol of neo-colonialism and modernity, actively working to ensure that “silent conformity to governmental directives [...] will ensure a harmonious ethnic coexistence – the obverse of which is the eruption of violence that will surely ensue...” (Wilson 421).

To accomplish its mission, the SRD chooses Sumitra, a young urban professional of Indian descent. The SRD also works closely with the developer, making sure that the latter's people do not pay Sellamma visits whilst Sumitra plays her role to persuade the old lady (8). Besides being multilingual, able to speak Malay, English, and Tamil, Sumitra is perfect for the job as she has "the gift for dealing with the recalcitrant" (2), the "creative indifference," the "inner detachment," "that inner aloofness [in her] dealings with [her] subjects" (8), as well as "enough training to dislodge [subjects] from [their] own personality" (152). Eager to participate in "the wind of change that is at last unsettling old habits of thought and behaviour," Sumitra believes Sellamma is selfish to hold on to her piece of land when it could be shared and enjoyed by other people (2).

Embodying resistance, Sellamma defies countless orders to vacate her dwelling, clinging to her land stubbornly. Her sense of worth, values, knowledge, and attachment to the land are played out gradually and confidently, making Sumitra see in the end why she will not give it up. For Sellamma, a vital aspect of her personal identity lies in her ties to the land, the family history, and the traditions connected to it. This family history, inextricably intertwined with issues of loss and belonging, is gradually revealed and shared by Sellamma through her interactions with Sumitra. The values derived from her attachment to the land play a key role in influencing Sumitra to see things differently, thus going against the state's hegemonic strategy to acquire Sellamma's consent.

Sellamma's strong link to the land, intertwined with her knowledge and values derived from Indian culture and tradition, demonstrates that one's attachment to the land where one dwells is the result of one's relations and interactions with the land itself. This also suggests that the survival of land also depends on the maintenance of past mythologies and tradition, going beyond merely physical and psychological

attachment to include what Wilson considers “a sacred memorialisation of the land” (420). Maniam implies that knowledge and values derived from sacred and divine relationships with the land are dynamic empowerment, which, in Sellamma’s case, keeps her from being evicted.

Sellamma’s attachment to the land bewilders Sumitra at first. She finds it hard to “really find out what makes her cling to that land, let alone iron her out” (139). The task of persuading Sellamma to give up her land becomes increasingly difficult for Sumitra as Sellamma entices her into personal history and sacred rituals. She finds that as much as she puts up with Sellamma’s *pūja* (act of worship), family history and dips in the river, she also needs more time to write her progress reports, and reports orally to the DH (Head of the SRD), “Why not give me another week, give me two weeks, better still three weeks. While you’re at it, why not give me a few months!” (139). Sellamma’s case proves very challenging to Sumitra, to the point that the DH says, “But you won’t let it go out of hand, right?” (140). Stalling for time, Sumitra tries to rationalise her case:

Owing to the irreconcilable differences between the subject and myself, I’ve to go through various rituals the subject insists on, before I can get anywhere near the realities that lie locked up in that ancient skull of her. As the DH is aware, if you don’t know the nooks and crannies, and what-have-you, of the subject’s personality, you can’t bring the subject round to our realities and our values. (139)

But the more she spends time with Sellamma, the more she is pulled into the old woman’s memory and valorisation of forgotten culture and the past. Sumitra finds herself slowly slipping into Sellamma’s past. Photographs, stories, and religious rituals done together with Sumitra, and later with Sumitra’s family members (mother, father, grandmother, brothers, sisters in law, nephews and nieces) bring Sellamma back to events revolving around the first and second generation Indian migrants working as rubber tappers and farmers, and how they grapple with the issue of belonging to the new

adopted land. Sellamma's empowerment, mobilised through memories and rituals, also offers a glimpse into the role of Hindu culture and tradition in establishing and expanding the identity and cultural heritage of the Indian community in multicultural Malaysia. This identity and cultural tradition is further extended when Sellamma decides to transfer the land title to Sumitra's name, just before she dies.

'There is still one more thing to do, Amma.'

'What's that Sellam?'

'Something that will stop those people from taking this land away,'

Sellamma says. 'Anjalai-Akka [Sumitra] has to have the land, Amma'.

(307)

After Sellamma's death, Sumitra with the support of her friends, Christina and Aishah, refuses to surrender the land Sellamma has left her. Her last progress report attests to her determination to save the land from being grabbed by the state:

The differences between the subject and myself have been located, and I find they are neither ancient nor irreconcilable. The rituals that I've gone through have brought me back to the nooks, crannies and what-have-you of our own personalities. The DH may not know it, but it is only by re-evaluating our realities and values that we can bring ourselves round to accepting the subject's view of herself and of the world. (218)

This last deed suggests the state's failure to play the dual roles of developing and protecting the environment. Maniam foregrounds this failure through the irony of the aim of the formation of the SRD itself. Whilst aiming for national unity and eradication of social ills, it fails to show considerable sensitivity to the Indian community's culture and customs, particularly its sacrosanct realm, which is intricately connected to land.

Through Sellamma, Maniam also criticises state authoritarian dominance in decision making related to land and its ruthless discrimination against what is perceived as 'powerless' and 'vulnerable' citizens. Maniam's characterisation of Sellamma as an ageing and lonely Indian woman alludes to this discrimination. Indeed, it is through Sellamma that Maniam gives a voice to the marginalised 'Other' – the limited and often censored voice of the Indian community in Malaysia, often overridden by 'national

interest' claims of progress and development. Through Sellamma and her land, Maniam incorporates the 'periphery' into national politics, highlighting some of the political aspects of development, which amplifies the marginalisation of Indian Malaysians.

Resistance in *BL* is also represented by Sumitra. Naturally, Sellamma's land does not have high emotional value for Sumitra. Working for the state, Sellamma's land in Sumitra's point of view is laden with potential economic value. However, over the course of her intimate interactions with the old woman, Sellamma's personal connection and meanings arise and Sumitra becomes connected to the coveted land, adding depth to her own soul-searching and sense of self. She realises that the significance of the land goes beyond the tangible — that it bears multilayered cultural meanings and symbols; and that it is laden with knowledge and memory. These lead Sumitra to a deeper understanding of the significance of the land, thus driving her to save it from unscrupulous development projects. Maniam hints that it is this deeper understanding of the land that subtly erodes the long-held ideology of progress-and-development, thus increasing Sumatra's and her family's sense of solidarity with Sellamma.

With the help of her friends, Nathan, a lawyer, and Aishah, her colleague in the SRD, and the support of her family, Sumitra transfers the title deed to her name, as requested by Sellamma. After Sellamma's passing, the developer comes to mark the land and begins work on the land surrounding Sellamma's land. Sumitra, with the help of Periasamy, the milkman who served Sellamma throughout his life, her parents and her friends Aishah and Christina construct fences, put up lighting around the land, and keep vigil to ward off the developer's men. These efforts are further reinforced by Sumitra and her friends when they put up a website highlighting their confrontation with the injustice. How much influence this attempt will have in making sure Sellamma's land does not fall into the hands of the developer is not clear in *BL*, but this serves to illustrate the expansion of empowerment — from the private sphere to the

public sphere, and from the personal sphere to the political sphere. Sumitra, her parents, and her friends extend Sellamma's personal resistance to the public sphere, demonstrating their activism online, as well as their roles as assertive citizens with socio-political ability. Maniam also delineates the nuanced and dynamic image of the Internet as an arena for resistance — an arena to protest and garner public support, away from the constricting “power over” of the state. This arena reflects what Hirsch and Warren have noted as “the emergence of new voices and arenas for resistance or response to dominant forces” (2). In semi-democratic Malaysia, the media and the state have a symbiotic relationship. Mainstream media are often controlled and owned by the state. Laws related to the operation of media often give the state the power to censor or stop the transmission of information that is deemed as going against state policies. This symbiosis naturally manifests in pro-state press and broadcasting coverage, often sidelining alternative voices struggling to gain a hearing. However, in the past few decades, the proliferation of new media in Malaysia has provided a venue in which more basic political conflicts are waged. Alternative media and the Internet have become the arena for those who want to be heard and need a less constrictive democratic space. Maniam accentuates this political liberalisation through Sumitra's efforts to raise the society's awareness of the injustice suffered by Sellamma. The Internet, Maniam elucidates, provides greater freedom of expression and political participation and challenges the existing power structures in ways that have been limited before. This measure may serve as “an example of the countervailing implications of the globalisation process, where intensified market penetration and appropriation of hitherto peripheral environments are accompanied by expanding communications networks and new political possibilities for resistance” (Hirsch and Warren 4).

In *BL*, Maniam delineates the human-environment interactions in the postcolonial Malaysian environment, foregrounding his indictment of state control and

domination whilst highlighting the problems of resistance and empowerment. Both Sellamma and Sumitra exemplify resistance and empowerment, the former using her knowledge and memory to resist the displacement from her land, whereas the latter uses her skills and connections to help save the land from being grabbed by the developer. In Sellamma's case, resistance poses a problem as she is denied the right to live on her land. Sumitra's indifference towards Sellamma's predicament in the beginning of the story demonstrates the extent of the power of the state's progress-and-development ideology. Maniam probes into this ideological domination, pointing out the need to pay more attention to ideological rather than coercive domination. Sellamma's resistance, which is limited to the private sphere, needs to be advanced, which is why Sumitra is given the role by Maniam to extend it into the public sphere. Maniam underscores what happens when strongly-held personal and cultural views come into conflict with those of the state. Through these power relations in *BL*, Maniam also affirms the contradictory roles of the state, as the protector and destroyer of the environment. The state's complicity in making decisions and taking subsequent actions to evict Sellamma from her land attest to these opposing roles.

3.4 Collective Resistance in *Days of Change*

Through *DOC*, Chuah unpacks power through Hafiz and his friends' battle against an intimidating property development company bent on two things: appropriating his land at Jock's Hill and building a dam at Banir Valley as part of the Malaysian-Disneyland theme park, proposed by Hartindah, the country's largest developer. The proposed development project is expected to affect Banir Valley, part of which is gazetted as a Forest Reserve. The surrounding forest and valley would be severely inundated as a result of this project.

This fictive scenario resembles many of the environmentally-destructive development projects that revolved around the destruction of hills, forests and rivers; the displacement of people; and the construction of dams in Malaysia. What these projects shared in common was that they were approved one way or another by the state and were subsequently objected to by most local and foreign ENGOs. Some of these projects were shelved due to the strong concerns raised, but some were completed despite the objections and lack of justification on the part of the state. The proposed Tembeling dam, which was planned for construction in Taman Negara (National Park) in the 1980s, for instance, was shelved due to strong advocacy by several NGOs (Ramakrishna 124). Another project that was shelved was the construction of a Disney-like theme park in 1990 on Penang Hill. The proposed project was stopped due to public campaigns and reviews of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by NGOs (Ramakrishna 124). The proposed Hill Road linking three hill stations — Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill, and Genting Highlands — was also shelved in 2000.

One project that went on despite protests is the controversial Bakun Dam Project in the interior of Sarawak, which raised concerns and protests from ENGOs inside and outside Malaysia. Meant to bring development and progress to East Malaysia, the Bakun Dam boasts of being Asia's largest dam outside China and the second tallest concrete-faced rockfill dam in the world. The Dam, once completed, will see Bakun Lake being the biggest lake in Malaysia and Bakun Power Station will be the largest hydroelectric dam in Malaysia. The costly state-approved project raised environmental concerns such as the relocation of indigenous people, the flooding of forests and the catastrophic amount of bio-mass removal (or deforestation). Research done by the Bruno Manser Fund revealed that the mega project had submerged 695km² of rainforest, an area the size of Singapore, and with it, one of the worlds' biodiversity hotspots (The Borneo Project). In addition, thousands of Sarawak natives such as the

Ukit, Kayan, Kenyah, Lahanan and Penan who have been fishing, hunting, and harvesting at the Bakun area, have been displaced from their ancestral homes. Those who refused to be resettled in Asap now live in floating homes without getting any compensation (The Borneo Project). Those who resettled to Asap were given three acres of land instead of the promised 10 acres and had had to pay for their new homes (International Rivers). On top of all this, controversies also revolve around issues such as lack of state transparency, accountability and sensitivity in dealing with the indigenous people affected, and the use of draconian legislation to restrict and stifle the indigenous people's opinion (World Commission on Dams).

While state-backed and state-owned businesses may be complicit in exercising the state's domination in making decisions that affect the environment, active state complicity stems from its legal system, which the state has the ability to manipulate. The Natural Resource and Environment (Prescribed Activities) Order 1994/88 (NRE), for instance, does not allow Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs) to be made public or to involve public participation (Sharom 887). The Land Acquisition Act 1960, which was enacted to enable the federal government to make compulsory acquisition of land from the people for infrastructural and public projects, was amended in 1991 to enable state governments to acquire land and then alienate such land to the private sector for property development. In other words, land matters are clearly under the jurisdiction of the state government. The state, therefore, has the power to gazette, de-gazette, or re-gazette areas as it deems necessary. Kota Damansara (Sungai Buloh) Forest Reserve, for example, has been slowly ruined by various development projects since its first clearing in 1988 for the construction of the North-South highway (Sivarajan, "Stop The Destruction"). Templer's Park, a forest reserve in the Klang Valley, has also been subjected to the same 'fate.' Gazetted as a Forest Reserve in 1954, parts of Templer's Park were de-gazetted in the '90s to make way for logging, a golf

course, roads, and high-end housing areas. According to Nadeswaran, “the alarms and warnings raised by environmental groups like the Selangor Nature Society over the past years have gone unheeded. Successive chief ministers and exco members just approved the de-gazetting without even considering the views of the stakeholders, in this case, the people for whom the park was bequeathed (“Who Raped and Plundered Templer’s Park?”).

Besides the power to alienate land for what it deems as beneficial for infrastructure and development projects, the state also had the power to detain people without trial or criminal charges under limited legally-defined circumstances. The Internal Security Act (ISA), The Official Secrets Act (OSA), and The Society Act are legislations that work in favour of the government in implementing its development policies. The Society Act, for example, requires every club, organisation, society, or political party to secure a licence, thereby granting the government the exclusive right to block or impede the formation of any organisation which it considers detrimental to the country. The ISA gives the government and the police the absolute power to arrest and detain any person whom they think is a threat to national security, without trial. Although the ISA was repealed and replaced by other legislation in 2012, its enforcement for many years since 1957 was dreaded and feared by many.

Chuah assembles these past, real, controversial projects, making them into a blueprint of the environmental dilemma in *DOC*. Chuah reconstructs the conflicts that arose from these lived realities through the proposed theme park in Banir Valley, which is set to bring a host of environmental and social justice issues. Issues such as land grabs, profiteering state-backed business, and repressive laws play a central role in raising the question of power in *DOC*. Repressive “power over” is clearly established at the beginning of the novel. When Yew Chuan reveals Hartindah is the property developer behind the cartoon theme park, Hafiz’s immediate response is “Untouchable,”

referring to Hartindah's close connection to a leading member of the ruling party (32). To Hafiz, the close rapport between a state leader and Hartindah precludes the possibility of protesting against the project in Banir Valley. Hafiz's skepticism reflects a characteristic feature of the political process in Malaysia — the close and symbiotic relationship between state and business leaders. As a result of these close ties, business corporations usually gain the upper hand in influencing the state's decisions and enforcement of law and regulations related to the land. In this symbiotic relationship, the state often serves to facilitate the businesses so that the latter will be able to pursue its interests. In other words, the state and the businesses are often beholden to each other's interests. As Beeson has noted, "conventional distinctions between the political and economic spheres are simply not applicable" in Malaysia (340). In *DOC*, the interests of the state and the capitalist businesses seem to coincide and rule out any hope of saving Banir Valley from the menace of environmentally-destructive development projects. When Yew Chuan asks Hafiz if he would join the protest, Hafiz remains skeptical about protesting:

I didn't see much point in a protest. To whom would they protest? To whom could they protest? I ran through in my mind what the protestors were likely to do: hold meetings, pass resolutions, write protest letters, and then hope the press would be courageous enough to run their story. Things like that could work, but only temporarily. They were more likely to land the more vocal activists in indefinite detention under the Internal Security Act. That was the last thing I wanted for Yew Chuan who was already pushing seventy. I decided to attend the meeting to see if there were any firebrands who needed to be held in check – for their own sake (33).

Hafiz's skepticism mirrors common attitudes towards power relations in Malaysia, whereby attempts to resist are often slighted and accorded an implicit and reducible role in view of the immense possibility of being detained under repressive laws such as the ISA, which have operated long enough to maintain the state's power, thus denying and discouraging people from exercising their rights to co-exist with the land and participate

in land-related issues and decision-making. Hafiz's concern, which is more towards the people involved in the protest rather than the ecological devastation the project is set to bring, also serves to show how some of the repressive laws have become a 'legacy of fear,' instilling fear amongst the people, crushing attempts to voice out concerns and fights for justice.

Nevertheless, this fear pushes Hafiz to find out more about the environmentally-destructive project. He goes to see Abu Bakar, the CEO of Hartindah, an unabashed Malay capitalist set to realise his fetish for Disneyland. Abu Bakar's arguments for the project are further buttressed by offering Hafiz a piece of land in exchange for Jock's Hill, about 40 kilometers from Banir Valley. This piece of land is mostly a mangrove swamp, whilst the rest is part of a forest reserve. Abu Bakar's ability to offer a piece of land that is partly a forest reserve alludes to the power of businesses in influencing the state to de-gazette forest reserves to accommodate the profiteering agenda of its own business allies.

Abu Bakar is quick to remind Hafiz of the "Malay Agenda," an ideological apparatus having its roots in the Malay hegemony predominantly solidified by the National Economic Policy (NEP), which was carried out for decades to eradicate poverty and correct economic imbalance amongst the races. The Malay Agenda, the ideal of *Ketuanan Melayu* (or Malay supremacy) as stipulated in the Malaysian Constitution, has been propagated and taken advantage of by Malay politicians to advance special privileges and preferences to the Malays in both the government and private sectors. Institutions, policies, administration, and mind-set have been geared to see the Malay race have an important economic edge over other races. This ethnicised policy has resulted in, among others things, the awarding of denationalised public assets and ventures to state-linked contractors, cronies, and siblings, and the creation of a cadre of elite, Malay capitalists with close ties to those in political power (George,

“Renationalise”). As noted by Leigh, this deliberate process of allocating wealth and power to the Malays is often legitimised by employing the ideology of the NEP (93). With ‘cables’ in the ruling party, Abu Bakar represents this elite group of “Bumiputera capitalists” who have “achieved considerable economic achievement – primarily as a direct consequence of their political connections” (Beeson 340).

Abu Bakar plays out the rhetoric of the Malay Agenda to persuade Hafiz to give up his land, making it seem like it is Hafiz’s ‘obligation’ to his race. “Think it over carefully. At stake is the Malay agenda” (69). This rhetoric articulates a central dilemma in Malay thought towards the Malays’ economic predicament, the “dilemmas of development and the shaping of a Bumiputera ideology that was to underpin the political economy of independent Malaya” (Harper 258). As Harper has noted, “It recognized the need for the community to strengthen itself internally by its own efforts, but, at the same time, the leaders immersed in these debates were seduced by the promise of the resources of the state that soon would be at their disposal to assist them to achieve this end” (261). Years after the NEP was over and replaced by the National Development Policy (NDP), the ideology that the Malays are still far behind economically and that the state is therefore obligated to help the Malay business community still prevails in the Malays’ psyche. A resolution at the Malay Economic Congress recently that calls for the Malay Agenda to be the state’s top priority, attests to this mentality (Zahiid, “Make Malay Agenda”).

Abu Bakar uses the Malay agenda to advance his case, knowing full well Hafiz’s rags-to-riches background. Hafiz’s father, Dato’ Yusof, is a well-known figure in Banir Valley. He is remembered as “a good man and as a representative of that rare breed: the self-made, successful, socially-conscious Malay entrepreneur” who brings development to the valley (150). With this kind of background, Hafiz is expected to follow in his father’s footsteps, doing business with a social conscience, which translates into helping

fellow Malays like Abu Bakar. Abu Bakar offers Hafiz a stake in the project with the condition that Hafiz will use more Malay contractors and suppliers. Because of his company's link to a state leader, he is confident that he could get Hafiz the necessary financing to build his Malay college (69). Abu Bakar makes it seem like the project would be his effort to advance the Malay community, when it is a camouflage for his own profiteering agenda. Chuah's use of the Malay agenda in *DOC* illuminates the politicisation of the environment on the basis of the Malay hegemonic order, which had become organised around the legitimacy of state and capitalist coercion, centred on the ability of being able to persuade the Malays that they would benefit from state-approved projects. It is this "power over" that typically stifles the political power of the people (especially the Malays) to question and challenge state-backed, environmentally-destructive development projects. This form of power closely follows the Marxist conception of power, where dominance and exploitation are exercised through the capitalists, the state, and the ideology propagated by both.

Chuah, however, conveys her optimism towards solving environmental threats through resistance and empowerment. The protesters lined up by Hafiz's friend, Yew Chuan, are all educated, urban citizens intent on raising public awareness and making the Banir Valley issue heard, despite the daunting obstacles that await them. Some of these protesters know too well what is in store for Banir Valley if the proposed project proceeds. Beside Yew Chuan and Hafiz, there are Dr. Mohini; Hector Wong, a journalist attached to a regional newsmagazine based in Hong Kong; Faridah, a psychologist; and Sundram, an engineer who works with the Waterworks Department and also is a chairman of the Malaysian Nature Society's local branch. These characters embody empowerment, each with his or her expertise and knowledge, which are then played out collectively in the public sphere to stop the proposed project. Different from his friends, Hafiz's sense of worth, values, and knowledge is played out individually,

leading to his devious plan to kill Abu Bakar. Chuah seems to suggest that one's resistance, if not mediated through proper means and methods, could lead to disastrous consequences that would defeat the purpose of fighting for an environmental cause.

When news regarding Hartindah's plans for the Banir Valley received coverage in the local and regional media due to Hector's role in drumming up media interest, the protest group organised by Yew Chuan relentlessly lobbies for its case. Hector's position as a journalist attached to an external press service proves advantageous and liberating considering the media in Malaysia has either been co-opted or is controlled and constantly reinforces the state's ideology regarding development. Hector writes about how the development project is merely a pretext to log the forest in Banir Valley. "Sundram gave interviews, wrote letters to editors and even articles explaining the importance of forest reserves and the ecological impact of the proposed theme park. Faridah, the psychologist, did the same on the issue of the sociological and psychological impact of displacing people from their ancestral homes" (60). The media exposure led to some conspiracy theories, which were "picked up by journalists writing for regional newsmagazines, and they began to probe into Hartindah, its finances, and its political connections" (61). Months of intense lobbying pays off when, a few months later, Hartindah announces that the project is shelved until a thorough environmental impact assessment has been made.

Yew Chuan's group's fight against Hartindah's proposed project is a manifestation of empowerment. After decades of progress in economy and education, Yew Chuan's group is convinced of their right to freedom of expression and the right to participate in issues that concern the land threatened with social and environmental degradation. The community-based group proves to be a formidable player in the controversial Banir Valley project, challenging the moral character of the state and business corporations. Chuah suggests that if the public sphere realises its unique

potential in resistance and empowerment, and work together irrespective of ethnicity, race, or religion to shape the course of action and decisions related to the land, it would be able to create more equitable relations and structures of power. More equitable relations and structures of power here means the public would be able to challenge the role of the state in managing the various aspects of environmental well-being, and thus able to pressure the state and its backed business corporations to modify or stop practices that contribute to land and community degradation. Yew Chuan's group's struggle to fight the ecological injustice brought by a development project implies that when an environmental issue is fought for, per se, like in *DOC*, without exploiting communal or racial politics that are central in contemporary Malaysian politics, it would help an environmental issue to be resolved. The group's civil society-based protest and lobbying reflects what Weiss has noted as a "reasonably diverse and vibrant" civil society in Malaysia, which has "expanded dramatically since the 1980s" (Weiss, "Edging Toward a New Politics" 742).

Yew Chuan's group's resistance also serves as a significant political intervention that proves "civil-society activism has succeeded in influencing state policies and political norms" in Malaysia (Weiss, "Prickly Ambivalence" 78). This, I believe, also reflects what capitalist modernisation in Malaysia has brought over the years, such as more equal access to education, occupations, and wider access to information through the media, all of which play major roles in advancing knowledge of environmental issues, as well as sensitivity to local environmental conflicts and resistance. It also signifies what Bryant and Bailey have identified as "a new politics of the environment in the Third World" (131). This "new politics of the environment" is evoked by Chuah on two levels. On one level, the Malay-agenda politics played out by Abu Bakar and the lobbying by Yew Chuan's group represents Malaysians' revulsion to the manner in which the state and its cronies exercise their power to realise environmentally-

destructive projects, denying freedom of expression, right to information, participation in decision-making, and right to justice — traits associated with liberal democracy. At another level, these politics also signify the erosion of the state's hegemony and authoritarian rule over the society based on rapid economic development and the rise of civil society in Malaysia, which has matured over the years.

3.5 Failed Resistance and Empowerment in *The Flame Tree*

Set in the late '90s, when Malaysia was on the cusp of the new millennium, Yang-May Ooi's *The Flame Tree* (TFT) revolves around the construction of Titiwangsa University, a complete town and campus in the rainforest-covered hills of Malaysia, set to be the grandest, most visionary project in Asia. *TFT* is informed by the interplay of many of the local and global events that took place in Malaysia in the 90s — a significant era in Malaysia's history. Marked by its robust economic growth, this period saw the evolution of Malaysia from an agriculture-based economy into a modern, industrialising, capitalist, export-oriented economy. Throughout this evolution, poverty and income inequality have remarkably declined. Employment rates, life expectancy, level of literacy and education, public facilities, and infrastructure have all improved.

It was during this period, too, that the physical landscape of Malaysia changed tremendously. This change is captured by Ooi at the beginning of the novel. Upon returning to Malaysia, after years of living in the UK, Jasmine notices that “the capital city of Kuala Lumpur has tamed the tropical wilds with tarmac, tower blocks, shopping malls, and air-conditioning. Highway arteries link its wealth to other centres of commerce and industry – Johore Baru to the south, Ipoh and Penang to the north” (19-20). In describing Kuala Lumpur, Jasmine is struck in awe:

The last time she had been here, there had not been a skyline to speak of. Now, sleek buildings of glass and steel gleamed in the sunlight. . . . She could not match the wealth of what she saw with the hazy picture she had held in her mind of a much smaller and less imposing capital city.

She felt a buzz from the energy and bustle she sensed all around. This was a city of money and new prospects, racing to catch up with its more mature cousins in the West. (16)

These snapshots of modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation, however, are also complemented by some 'ugly' landscape that attests to inevitable environmental destruction,

Three hours north of KL, just outside Ipoh, she searched the landscape for the limestone hills whose caves for generations had housed dwellings and sacred temples. In the ten years she had been away, cement and chalk factories had arrived to devour the limestone. There remained only gorged-out cadavers of hills and the debris of dead forests. Relentless blasting for chalk had drained the land of holiness and life. (17-18)

The change in the physical landscape of Malaysia in the '90s is also attributable to the emergence of numerous mega projects, defined broadly by Gellert and Lynch as "projects which transform landscapes rapidly, intentionally, and profoundly in very visible ways, and require coordinated application of capital and state power" (15). Strassman and Wells point out that such projects use heavy equipment and sophisticated technologies, usually imported from the Global North and require a huge backing of international finance capital (qtd. in Gellert and Lynch 16). Indeed, the '90s in Malaysia is also known as the era of mega projects. Many multi-billion dollar mega projects were launched during this era, mostly for functional, symbolic, and ideological reasons. These projects attest to the integration of the Malaysian local market to the global finance market, and symbolise "the shift from Third to First World status, from cultural periphery to creator of cultural symbols for global consumption and regime maintenance based on legitimisation through internationalisation" (Douglass 2322). Most prominent of these projects are the Petronas Twin Towers (the tallest twin building in the world), KL International Airport (KLIA), the Sepang International Circuit, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the Bakun hydroelectric dam, and Putrajaya, the new federal administrative capital.

Mega projects usually involve (i) infrastructure (e.g., ports, railroads, urban water and sewer systems), (ii) extraction (e.g., minerals, oil, and gas), (iii) production (e.g., industrial tree plantations, export processing zones, and manufacturing parks), and (iv) consumption (e.g., massive tourist installations, malls, theme parks, and real estate developments), which all have their functional purposes (Gellert and Lynch 16). The controversial Bakun dam project in Sarawak, for example, was purportedly built to meet the growing demand for electricity, especially in Peninsula Malaysia. Most of these projects are also a combination of functional, symbolic, and ideological purposes. Most mega projects, as noted by Gellert and Lynch, are supported by modernising ideologies, made up of three important elements: the idea that individuals must sacrifice themselves for the public good, the definition of progress as evolution towards urban life, and the idea of rational control over nature with an assumption that technology can at least mitigate the ecological effects of mega projects (20). In the same context, the Petronas Twin Towers was symbolic of the new national development strategy linked to Vision 2020, which aims to turn Malaysia into a fully developed country by 2020. In line with this vision, “world class” infrastructural development projects such as the Petronas Twin Towers, which would “put Malaysia on the world map,” were deemed necessary (Bunnell 7). As argued by Bunnell, The Petronas Twin Towers not only represent Malaysia’s state conception of modernisation, development, and urbanity, but they also promote the state ideology of the sky is the limit for what Malaysia can do, what Khoo has pointed out as “mental decolonisation of a nation thought to be afflicted by a complex of subservience and inferiority *vis-à-vis* the west and other parts of the “developed world”” (qtd. in Bunnell 12).

The ‘90s was also the era when the word globalisation preoccupied public consciousness all over the world. Malaysia was no exception. In Malaysia, this means it has to adopt a more open policy not only economically but also socially and culturally.

Malaysia responds to globalisation in many ways, for instance, by promoting massive inflows of portfolio investment, adopting a more liberal education policy, and guaranteeing freedom of expression online (See 9-12).

Also concurrent to the globalisation phenomenon in the '90s was the millennium anxieties. As the world approached the third millennium, all kinds of predictions about the new millennium were made by scientists, economists, religious leaders, and politicians, which further escalated people's anxiety. As noted by Starrs, millennium anxiety and globalization also involved elements of the persistence of "traditional" imperialism and colonialism, which eventually make Asians and ex-Western colonies become uncomfortable with or suspicious of globalization (4). This distrust has culminated in Asian nationalism, propagated and reinforced through the Asian values ideology in the 90s in South East Asia, particularly by the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew and Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamed (Starrs 7). Rejection of the hegemonic political, social, and cultural norms that are Western and the promotion of other equally good alternative norms considered Asian is at the core of the Asian values argument. It also advocates immense emphasis on forms of conduct within relationships and on personal virtue, obedience to authority, family, loyalty, social harmony, and education, all resting on Asian cultural premises (Barr 5). Mahathir's Asian values, for example, centres around four areas: emulation of East Asian values and work ethic, and resentment against liberal democracy, the corrupting influence of Western values, and the West's continuing exploitation of the developing world (Barr 41-45). It is usually argued that the propagation of Asian values serves to undermine and dismiss public opinions and criticism, traits usually associated with Western democracy (Barr 178). Loh argues that, in Malaysia in the '90s, Asian values were a manipulation on the part of the state "to legitimize their authoritarian

developmental states and downplay demands for liberal democracy” (Loh, “Developmentalism” 50).

The ‘90s was also marked by a lot of local and international criticism, especially concerning the destruction of the natural environment and the sacrifice of environmental sustainability (Rigg 35-36). A large amount of this has been focused on the growth of palm oil plantations, logging, hill development projects, and the persistent engagement with mega projects, all of which entail the destructions of rainforests, the loss of biodiversity, and the displacement of people from their land. Malaysia was criticised severely, especially when the plight of the Penans in Sarawak, whose livelihood in the forest was disrupted due to state government-approved logging activities, were highlighted (Kathirithamby-Wells, *Nature and Nation* 367-368). The Bakun Dam project also received its fair share of criticism, especially for its ruthless destruction of the rainforests and the displacement of thousands of indigenous people in Sarawak. *The New Straits Times* reported that the site of the Pertonas Twin Towers, even before its conception, was also contested, mainly by the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM) and an architect, Ruslan Khalid, who were advocating for the development of a “people’s park” (qtd. in Bunnell 13).

To complicate this growing criticism, the ‘90s was also marred by ‘national tragedies’ caused by hill land developments such as the Highland Towers Tragedy in Kuala Lumpur in 1993, Genting Highland landslide tragedy in 1995, and the North-South Highway landslide near Gua Tempurung in 1996 (Zainal Abidin and Tew iv). These tragedies claimed many lives, caused a lot of damage to the environment, and the public was in uproar after each tragedy. They demanded explanations, compelling the state to carry out investigations. The collapse of Highland Towers, for example, revealed that the hill-slope land behind one of the blocks of the towers was denuded of trees and water flowed over this area, carrying silt. The water that was diverted by

another development project up the hill had flowed behind the blocks, causing the slope to become unstable, hence the collapse. The state introduced tighter regulations concerning hill development in 1999, but not much has changed as “unwarranted land-clearing practices on upland slopes...continue to flout such guidelines” (Sahabat Alam Malaysia 108). These national tragedies, however, served as catalysts for greater environmental awareness and activism.

Ooi's *TFT* incorporates many of the most significant things that occurred in Malaysia in the '90s: globalisation phenomenon, mega projects, national tragedies, and the propagation of Asian values to delineate the politics of the environment in Malaysia. The futuristic Titiwangsa University in *TFT*, for instance, represents the craze surrounding most mega projects in the '90s. A university of the 21st century, it is envisioned that Titiwangsa University, with its impressive curriculums and students, would be the first Asian university to rival the reputations of Oxford in England and the Ivy League universities in the USA, and thus would become the envy of its Asian neighbours and the West. The site for the university is located 400 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, up in the hills of the Titiwangsa Range. Two towns would be directly affected by the project: Ranjing (fictive) in the foothills and Kampung Tanah (fictive), up on the slopes.

A complete town and campus in the rainforest-covered hills, the Titiwangsa University project is located in the Titiwangsa mountain range, also known as the Main Range, of Peninsular Malaysia. Ooi could not have picked a better setting for *TFT* as the Titiwangsa range is real, and forms the backbone of Peninsular Malaysia, extending for about 500 kilometers from the Malaysia-Thai border to Negeri Sembilan. A biodiversity hotspot, the Titiwangsa Range is covered with forests and is home to a great wealth of endemic and endangered species. Many rivers of the Peninsula have their headwaters in the range, and a large population of Orang Asli also resides in the lower slopes of the

Titiwangsa Range. Many of the protected areas in the Peninsula, such as Taman Negara and Royal Belum State Park, also cover vast areas in the range. With so many ecological properties at stake, the proposed Titiwangsa University town, located in the Titiwangsa Range, becomes a perfect site for power struggle.

On one hand, there is Bill Jordan, owner of Jordan Cardale PLC, a construction and property management firm in the UK, which boasts of projects involving hotel complexes, office buildings, shopping malls and condominiums in most parts of Asia. One of the six firms to bid for the construction of the new university town, Jordan represents neo-liberal business corporations from the West, pressured to move to Asia “just as the building industry collapsed at home” (77), tapping into and riding on its booming market. Having tried in vain to secure large-scale, high-profile projects in Malaysia, Jordan is determined to win the bid:

‘All our developments so far count for peanuts. Any jerry-builder worth his salt can put those up,’ Jordan said. ‘We should now be beyond that level of the game. We should be producing first-class top quality developments, the kind that people talk about and want a stake in – and will pay big money for’.

...

‘To win in Malaysia’s highly developed economy, you have to be a world-class player, Jordan said. ‘Malaysia is where we have to be seen if Jordan Cardale is going to amount to anything. Once we get in, we’ll be among the best in the business. And we’ll have to put down the first marker in Jordan Cardale’s Asian empire’.

...

‘The university project is our ace,’ Jordan said. ‘Anything it takes to win, we’ll do it. This is the gateway to the big time. No one is going to stand in my way.’ (77-78)

Jordan’s past and present business deals, coupled with his monetary wealth, affect his attitudes toward the way he perceives the Titiwangsa project. Riding on the Malaysian state’s mega project craze, Jordan tailors a project that would give Malaysia and its people the prestige it would need to compete and stand out internationally, as well as a project that can be easily won with the ‘right’ kind of ‘offerings’ and ‘control’. To this

end, Jordan offers the Titiwangsa Tower, part of the overall proposed design for the university town, which would be the tallest tower built on the highest site in the world. It would, according to Jordan, win him the bid as well as give Malaysia back its national prestige after the Petronas Twin Towers lost the record of the tallest building in the world to the Shanghai World Financial Centre (80). Acting upon his hunger for the Titiwangsa project, Jordan is resolute to “conquer the jungle for the next millennium. The Empire might be dead but we Brits can still thrash ’em all. We’ll civilise the wilderness, like we’ve been doing for centuries” (80).

Jordan is well aware of the risks involved in the Titiwangsa tower design — that the foundations of the tower would pierce into the limestone, which would eventually result in a major landslide — but his determination to capitalise on the land immunes him to the probable catastrophe. He knows that unless the design is manipulated to blind the authorities of the impending disaster, his bid will not be accepted. The geophysical data that comes together with his design is therefore manipulated to obscure the flaws and the impending catastrophe. To this end, he pays his accomplices extravagantly: Scott, the architect; Tsui, the mainland Chinese geophysicist, who provides the graphic logs showing the multi layered soil and rock embedded below the site; and Zain, the project manager and surveyor. Using his financial power to make them beholden to him, Jordan is confident that these men would not “bit[e] the hand that fed them” (230). Scott, besides being paid handsomely, is well aware of the international contacts Jordan’s project would bring him. Tsui “had no morals and no god but money” (230). Zain, “a weak, cowardly man, who’d grown accustomed to the wealth and status that working for Jordan had brought him,” proves to be easy prey (230).

Jordan’s equally important accomplices are Tan and his brother, Kidd. Tan owns a security business in Malaysia offering personal and property protection, surveillance equipment and profile investigation. He thrives on the business, which is helmed with

the objective of ensuring the success of the associate's enterprise, often using intimidation and threats. In Kampung Tanah's case, Jordan sets out to control the people of Kampung Tanah's thinking, making them embrace the idea that the Titiwangsa project is needed to develop and bring wealth to the small town, in line with state ideology of modernisation, development, and urbanity. Tan and his brother set out to approach some of the businessmen in Kampung Tanah. One of them is Wong, a businessman in Kampung Tanah who runs a general goods shop. In one of their earlier meetings, Tan briefs Wong on the kind of development the project would bring. He also 'shares' with Wong the sentiment of progress-and-development, which has long become the nation's overriding priority and ideology, implemented mainly through economic and political measures determined by the state :

University – top class. New life into this dead place, heh, what do you think? Businesses will follow, tourists will come to see this new wonder of Asia. There'll be condos and country clubs, restaurants and malls, casino, even, maybe – bright beautiful lights flashing up the night, big fancy freeways zooming us all up and down to KL, to Kuantan, anywhere you want, everything you want. (12)

The 'picture' given by Tan above echoes with the picture of post-colonial Malaysia, which aspires to pursue wealth and economic growth. He then gives money to Wong and intimidates him into becoming the "representative" of the Kampung Tanah Development Committee, a committee set up by Jordan, which would be given the task of networking and persuading the town people to embrace the rewards of progress and the rich prospects that Jordan's proposed development project would bring. Jordan also establishes the International Development Foundation, with Tan as the Vice President, to 'disseminate' funds to all eight members of the Kampung Tanah Development Committee on the pretext that they do not care who wins the project but believe that "the local community and international business interests can build a successful local economy if we all work together" (172). Enticed by money, the Committee members

network throughout the town, feeding the town people progress-and-rich-prospects propaganda, until it “became received knowledge” (173), or, in Gramscian terms, “consent.” This “consent” affirms the active role of subordinate people themselves in reinforcing the hegemony of the ruling stratum of the society. In Kampung Tanah, this “consent” also plays a definite role in drowning other concerns, especially suggestions made by Dr. Kenneth Chan, the town’s doctor, that the town people should make submissions to protest the impending environmental impact and the relocation of the people to New Kampung Tanah. In TFT, Ooi illuminates “power over” through Jordan’s devious machinations, exercised through control, coercion, and ideological manipulation.

Dr. Chan and Luke McAllister both try to counter “power over,” which acts to control the people of Kampung Tanah. Luke McAllister is the environmental consultant who is hired by Dr. Chan to look into the technical side of the proposed designs and their subsequent environmental impact. Born to American and British parents, Luke was born and raised in Malaysia. His parents had long left for America. Having majored in Environmental Sciences and Development, Luke chooses to stay in Malaysia and regards the country as his home (51). Attached to a local university, Luke has been hired countless times to give environmental recommendations to government bodies and Third World development agencies. His life is often threatened as a result.

Luke uses his knowledge and expertise as a key resource to do preliminary investigations, which eventually reveal that Jordan’s proposed design has disastrous environmental consequences. First, the people of Kampong Tanah would have to be relocated at the proposed New Kampung Tanah, 10 miles away from the university town. This means they would not be involved in the economy of the newly developed area. Access to this new location would also only be available through a circuitous detour from the new proposed highway. Second, the design of the university tower

would be damaging to the environment. Luke finds that the height and the style of the building are not compatible with the slopes and the natural environment surrounding it, which could result in “a major landslide of colossal proportions” and wipe out New Kampung Tanah (203).

Using his knowledge and expertise, Luke tries to instil awareness in the people of Kampung Tanah of what is in store for them when the proposed development project is approved. His awareness campaign, however, falls on deaf ears as more and more people in Kampung Tanah are ‘bought over,’ intimidated and threatened by Tan. Dr. Chan decides to leak part of Luke’s report to the media in the hope that it will alert the authorities and subsequently make the authorities consider Jordan’s proposed design and its environmental impact. Consequently, Tan intensifies his intimidation by kidnapping Wong’s son and threatening Sarojaya and Ibrahim, members of the Kampung Tanah Committee. Luke’s office in campus is also burnt down, destroying the data he had gathered for Jordan’s proposed design. Dr. Chan also dies in a car accident staged by Tan.

Because of the ‘publicity’ by the media, Jordan’s proposed project receives its fair share of criticism. Ooi demonstrates that capitalist hegemony over the Malaysian society is never totally complete and that the degrees of consent (and dissent) vary. To silence dissent, Jordan is forced to suppress these criticisms, especially those made by Luke, who holds the key to his flawed design. Taking advantage of Luke’s ‘white’ background, Jordan launches a ‘smear campaign’ against Luke, playing on the locals’ dislike and distrust of outsiders, especially the whites. At a time when globalisation is often equated by Asian nations with Western political, social, and cultural hegemony, Jordan’s ‘smear campaign’ has to be geared to reinforce the cautious feelings the locals have towards any foreign interference in local affairs.

Thus, at a press conference, Jasmine, as Jordan's lawyer, questions Luke's alleged link with the radical Green Action Direct, an ENGO based in the West. She also lists "all the development projects he has hampered, curtailed, destroyed, brought down across Asia," making Luke appear as a 'Western' leftist green campaigner with an agenda, and a 'troublemaker,' whose consultancies had had a hand in curtailing some projects in Asia (195-196). Jasmine plays out the sentiments of dislike towards Western hegemony, knowing that "The Asians have always been deeply suspicious of whites with "we know what's good for you" attitudes" (195). These sentiments, according to Beeson, often find a receptive audience in Malaysia (339). As noted by Wagner, the smear campaign against Luke is Ooi's tactic for dismantling the typecasting usually involved in anti-globalisation campaigns ("Singapore's New" 71). Such campaigns reflect the distrust of developing nations towards the environmental movement, which has traditionally been dismissed as another alien first world-"ism" and a ploy to retard the pace of development in the former colonies (McDowell 308-309). This distrust and resentment were also part of the outcome of millennium anxieties that swept the world in the '90s, whereby globalisation meant the continuation of imperialism and colonialism to Asians and ex-Western colonies (Starrs 4). This distrust and resentment has been propagated by some Asian nations to dismiss attempts by outsiders to meddle with any 'internal' issues or conflicts in the name of 'national interests.' Since Luke is not a typical Malay, Chinese, or Indian Malaysian, and given his foreign, mixed American and British parentage, the distrust and dislike towards him become almost automatic. To a large extent, this distrust also plays a major part in curtailing Luke's efforts to stop Jordan's destructive project as it gives the local people and the authorities the impression that he is trying to meddle with things and events that an outsider does not understand. Lam, the police officer in charge of interrogating Luke personifies the anti-Western dislike:

I don't like you Whites, your kind sucked Asia dry in the past and you're still trying to get what you can out of us. You people are proud and weak. None of your tricks are going to fool me. ...You Whites like to make trouble where you don't belong. That may work in the West but not here. (236)

Jordan's machinations prove to work for him when the planning review passed his tender and no protest submission was made on behalf of the local residents. The smear campaign against Luke has also harmed Luke's career, resulting in cancelled contracts and lecture series. These machinations serve to illustrate the "power over" that capitalists have. Through coercive and ideological domination, Kampung Tanah, and Malaysia, by extension, is easily subjugated to serve Jordan's vicious needs.

Resistance and empowerment, as exemplified by Luke's and Dr. Chan's efforts to stop the destructive project, is pitted against "power over" in *TFT*. These antagonistic relations imply that the capacity of grassroots movements depends in part on their capacity to counter the power of capitalists. In *TFT*, Luke and his friends are not able to stop the environmentally-damaging project. A year after construction begins, the university tower that is being built collapses, causing a massive landslide that causes a massive environmental damage, adversely affecting tracts of forest and the Kampung Tanah people (304). In Kampung Tanah's case, Luke's awareness campaign fails to persuade the people to contest Jordan's proposed project. Dr. Chan's attempts to let the public and the authorities know about the flaws of Jordan's design is also easily countered, backed by the ideology that any 'interference' by those representing the First World country or First World environmental movement is encroaching the rights of Malaysians to enjoy the benefits of progress. This ideology, coupled with the ideology of progress-and-development, which have been propagated by the state and internalised by the rest of society for many decades, come in handy for the capitalists to advance their interests. In *TFT*, Ooi seems to necessitate the need to focus more on ideological rather than coercive domination.

In addition, Ooi seems to suggest that global and local capitalism is the name of the power structure that dominates Malaysian politics and its environment. It is a system based on social and ecological exploitation for the profit of the capitalists, backed by the involvement of capitalising foreign corporations and the inability of the state to exercise environmental governance and the civil society to express their opinion, to gain information, participate in decision making, and influence decision making. *TFT* demonstrates this power structure — Jordan's devious material power, facilitated by the involvement of capitalist local cronies, far outweighs the knowledge or the empowerment that Luke holds in his capacity as an environmental consultant. In *TFT*, resistance and empowerment become a problem when efforts to reveal the 'truth' about Jordan's flawed design are constantly countered with material and ideological dominance and coercion. Consequently, the community of Kampung Tanah are deprived of their rights to information, rights to participate in decision-making and rights to justice.

3.6 Conclusion

Overall, the authors juxtapose the notions of resistance and empowerment to drive the green agenda into the nation's political consciousness. Resistance and empowerment are the writers' attempts to divulge the exploitation and coercion entrenched in capitalist-based production and social relations. Understanding these aspects of power compels us to be cautious about how environmental struggles are sometimes constrained by external forces related to capitalist influences and advancements which both allow and limit countervailing actions. These notions of power are expressed, described, enacted, and legitimated in the private and public spheres in all of the novels. As demonstrated in *JOH* and *BL*, the quest for environmental justice is often instigated by individuals, whereas in *DOC* and *TFT*, the

pursuit often involves the collective action of small groups of individuals. This scenario alludes to the nature of environmentalism in Malaysia itself, which usually begins at the grassroots level (J. Tan, “Interview”). It also compels us to understand power relations in terms of the interaction and strategies within the layers of civil society itself, and between civil society and the state.

In *JOH* and *TFT*, control and domination of the capitalists, the state, and the ideology propagated by both seem to be a damning indictment of environmental struggles, whereas, in *DOC* and *BL*, resistance and empowerment lead to an effective exercise of countervailing power. This suggests that whilst the authors continue to subscribe to the strongly entrenched tradition of “power over,” which often involves coercion, control, oppression, and domination, they also apply notions of resistance and empowerment in order to create and also suggest more equitable relations and structures of power. Direct and indirect political, economic, and ideological controls stifle the exercise of human rights — particularly freedom of expression, the right to information, participation in decision-making, and the right to justice. In the same context, resistance and empowerment become problematic when ideological dominance and coercion are constantly manufactured by the state and the capitalists to stifle public opinion and participation in issues related to environmentally-destructive projects.

In a semi-democratic country like Malaysia, the notions of resistance and empowerment expose the paradox of balancing ecological and human considerations in a semi-democracy country, where governance and decisions related to the land continue to be defined and constrained by the dominance of the state, the capitalists, and the ideology propagated by both, and limited space is provided for civil society participation. These notions, too, seem to convey the writers’ attitudes towards the political culture in Malaysia, which is that it needs the civil society to be more knowledgeable and “proactive” in fighting environmental abuse and injustice rather

than “submissive” through the exercise of individual and collective agencies to promote and advocate for environmental activism. In addition, the writers also warn against the subordination of the society through ideological coercion, which often prevails through their own consent.

Many of the power relations analysed are relations that are difficult to change, at least in the short term. While some of these may prove difficult, forms of resistance mooted by the authors which involve protest, non-cooperation, persuasion, lobbying, and intervention are unmistakably on a trajectory towards the “new politics” described by Loh (*Old vs New* xvi- xvii), moving away from ethnic-based politics to environmental-based politics. These forms of resistance also imply that power structures and relations can be changed in the politics of environment. These changes, ranging from individual knowledge to group activism, may sound like a feat but still worth a try.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FLAWS OF THE PANACEA: DEVELOPMENT IN *JUNGLE OF HOPE*, *DAYS OF CHANGE*, *BETWEEN LIVES* AND *THE FLAME TREE*

Ideology... is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence. ~ Louis Althusser (1964)

4.1 Development Ideology

Ideology is a term formulated by Marx to show how cultures are structured in ways that enable the group in power to have maximum control with minimum conflict (Lye, “Ideology”). When Marx wrote “The German Ideology” in 1846, he described ideology as:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (“The German Ideology”)

Thus, ideology is related to the ideas, beliefs, perceptions, and values propagated by the ruling or dominant economic class to legitimate their power and maintain the status quo. This ‘false consciousness’ is then adopted by the society. Althusser explains that this set of beliefs are inculcated through the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) such as the religious, family, law, and arts institutions (Padley 166). Consequently, the society ends up seeing, believing, and adopting this ruling ideology. The success of the ruling or dominant class in infusing their ideology, to the extent it is accepted by the other classes in the society as an often implicit “common sense” is referred to by Gramsci as hegemony (Brooker 113-114). This hegemonic power, however, is “always contested, always historically contingent and always unfinished” as “subaltern groups realize their own capacity to become philosophers of their daily experience; they come to understand

the hegemonic common sense that they otherwise take for granted” (Stoddard 201). In the words of van Dijk,

Ideologies may thus serve to establish or maintain social dominance, as well as to organize dissidence and opposition. Under specific conditions, they may serve to found and organize the social thoughts and practices of any social group. Of course, this neutral definition of the concept of ideology does not at all prevent us from critically analyzing and opposing bad ideologies, in the same way as a general theory of power does not prevent us from criticizing and opposing power abuse and domination. (14)

In other words, whilst classical Marxist theory of ideological power is largely unidirectional, involving the dissemination of ideology from capitalist class to subordinate classes, the Gramscian concept of ideology involves a tension between class domination and the resistance of subaltern groups (Stoddard 220).

As production became increasingly internationalised and capital became more and more centralised, the ideology of development was also disseminated across the globe. This ideology was first discussed at length by Lenin, which quickly resonated across the Third World countries (Munck 40). Known for his theory of imperialism, Lenin argued that imperialism would stop development as “the tendency to stagnation and decay, which is characteristic of monopoly, continues to operate, and in certain branches of industry, for certain periods of time, it gains the upper hand” (“Imperialism”). This view, that imperialism was becoming an obstacle to development, echoed with the communist movement in Russia in the 1900s. Since the communist movement was also becoming a nationalist movement, imperialism was seen as “retrogressive economically and foreign capital investment not only as an affront to national dignity but also a simple drain on national resources” (Munck 47). Development, therefore, was likened to national development. Production was thought of as better controlled under national bourgeoisie than under international or imperialist control. This ideology quickly caught on in the Third World countries: “The ideology of

the proletarian revolution in the West became the ideology of the peasant mobilization in the East, and then the ideology of modernizing elites in the South” (Munck 49).

Marx had had three great development expectations regarding the global character and consequences of capitalism. He envisioned repetitions, universalisation and utopia (“Capital Volume 1”). Drawing on rapid industrialisation in Britain during the nineteenth century, Marx contends that capitalist industrialisation would be repeated in other parts of the world, that “the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future”(“Capital Volume 1”). In “The Communist Manifesto”, Marx again reiterates his theory of development in that “it compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates “a world after its own image”” (“Communist Manifesto”). Universalisation is the expectation that capitalist countries would be unified in a single, interdependent system. Utopia is the vision of a society which is free from wants and free from hurdles which limit their capacities, which would be made possible by revolutionary proletariat. These beliefs in capitalism as a uniform process replicated throughout the globe were later expanded by Leon Trotsky to theorise uneven and combined development, the process by which capitalism transforms the world as a whole but does so in different ways, developing productive and social forces in some areas but (as part of the same process) restricting or distorting growth in others (G. Marshall, “Uneven Development”).

Under British colonial rule, development concerns in Malaya were largely economic, and revolved around capitalist accumulation meant to serve British business interests, as well as the needs to industrialize Europe. As Jomo and Wee explain, “colonial bias for these interests was reflected in public development expenditure that prioritized economic infrastructure to service the primary commodity export economy”

(50). When Malaya gained independence in 1957, it inherited not only the colonial economic system but also a social formation that is characterised by uneven development (Sundram 8). Class, race, region and economy played a role in the development of Malaysia, hence the prevalent poverty in certain regions and the identification of race with economic function. This kind of social formation created tension between the different races that led to the ideology that economic wealth would ensure political stability. To this end, economic development takes precedence over other things as it is believed that this will increase the people's quality of life, which will in turn lead to political stability. Development, therefore, became the nation's overriding priority and ideology, implemented mainly through economic and political measures determined by the government. Like most Third World countries, the state plays the dual role of developer and protector of the natural environment (Bryant and Bailey 48). In the same context, development in Malaysia is largely state-led and state-facilitated (Smeltzer 197). According to Leftwich, Malaysia is described as a "dominant-party developmental democratic state" (qtd. in Ibrahim and Syed Zakaria 50). Over the years, too, development efforts in Malaysia have seen "greater state intervention" (Jomo and Wee 4).

Indeed, the ideological underpinnings of development in Malaysia seem to revolve around the nation's economic goals and achievements, which is not that different from the colonialist goals of development. In the wake of decolonisation, the state concentrated on economic methods and schemes to catch up with the already advanced, industrialised Western countries. The colonial ideology of development — which concentrated on economic growth — became the panacea, and was thus adopted religiously. To this end, many policies were lined up and carried out with the overriding ideology that economic progress would ensure racial equality, political stability, and national unity. The period of 1970-1990, when the NEP (New Economic Policy) was

fully enforced, became the most important period in the country's development. The NEP is further reinforced through Vision 2020, introduced in 1991, which aims to elevate Malaysia to a fully developed country by 2020. Other equally important policy instruments and ideological apparatuses were control over the media and prohibitive laws such as the Internal Security Act (now replaced with Security Offences (Special Measures) Act), the Official Secrets Act, the Printing Presses and Publications Act, the Emergency Ordinance, the Official Secrets Act, and the Sedition Act, which legitimate the state's ideology, thus restricting ideas that could challenge the state (Humphreys 25). Malaysia's economy accelerated tremendously from the '70s to the '90s, and this tremendous growth was often linked to development. In the '70s and '80s, it was the largest producer and exporter of tin, timber, rubber and palm oil. By 1990, however, it had also significantly expanded its economy to include the manufacturing sector. Indeed, by the 1990s, Malaysia had experienced rapid tremendous economic growth, equitable distribution of income, and dramatic improvement in human welfare, epitomising the "miracle thesis," "paragon of development," and "newly industrialising country" that had been associated with other nation-states in South East Asia (Rigg 3; Dixon and Smith 1).

Rapid development during the period of NEP and the subsequent decades has undoubtedly resulted in a tremendously improved economy. Described by Pereira and Chee as an "interventionist developmental regime," the state through its power had to "reallocate economic resources as a means to deal with ethnic conflict" (129). For Malaysia, state intervention was necessary, and this proved to work. The state has "delivered" development for the people, as well as has shown "positive prospects" for further development (Pereira and Chee 142). This unprecedented growth is usually attributed to the state's adoption of free market and neo-liberal development principles, inculcation of unique Asian cultural values, as well as a strong interventionist role in

improving domestic economies (McGregor 55). However, this success story of development has received a lot of criticism. One of which is the extent to which development has perpetuated the destruction of the natural environment and sacrificed environmental sustainability (Rigg 35-36). Indeed, the range of environmental problems faced by the nation during and after the NEP period was tremendous. Water pollution, toxic pollution, climate change, extinction of species, loss of biodiversity, and loss of forest cover are prevalent. The latter, however, seems to be the most serious problem (Sharom 857; Vincent and Ali 366-367). Forests that used to clothe much of the country have diminished.

Another criticism against this success story is the authoritarian/paternalistic role of the state in setting, determining, and directing the economy to the extent that it became a problem to question the “received” doctrine of development, which saw economic and capitalist priorities prevail over other equally important concerns of development such as poverty alleviation and national unity (Lee 66-67). Indeed, the prevailing paradigm of development in Malaysia is development that is driven by power and capital (Ibrahim and Syed Zakaria 47). To complicate matters, a politics of “developmentalism” also occurred in the ‘90s, especially among the business and middle classes. Loh describes this as a “cultural consequence” of the dirigiste developmentalist state that valorises economic growth and political stability (Loh, “Developmentalism” 21). In the words of Saravanamuttu and Loh, “Developmentalism has affected all ethnic communities and tends to create a quiescent political culture in which people see the state as the guarantor of a modern livelihood and lifestyle” (30). In other words, because the state has ‘delivered’ development (and therefore, political stability), it is believed that only the state is capable of sustaining such prosperity and stability. To some extent, it is this politics that severely curtails democratic discourse in Malaysia (Loh 21), contributing to what Leftwich has pointed out a weak and

subordinated civil society (qtd. in Ibrahim and Syed Zakaria 48). Because the state has “delivered” development to the society, it has also found it hard to expose itself to criticism, hence the authoritarian rule that “limits civil and political rights and [...] curtail[s] constitutional checks on its power” (Balasubramaniam 211).

Development and environment are often at odds with each other since environmental concerns are usually linked to questions of development, and vice versa. Striking a balance between meeting economic needs and sustaining the environment proves to be a difficult task. Huggan and Tiffin, among many others, have foregrounded development as an “essential task” in postcolonial ecocriticism, revolving around the fundamental questions of what and how can postcolonial ecocriticism contribute to the current debate on development, as well as to what extent postcolonial writers are able to pursue an anti- or counter-development approach in their writings (27). Definitions abound about anti- and counter-development approaches but, for this study, the similarity between anti- and counter-development is underscored, referring to development that counters the dominant (Western) development trends and thinking. Sen, too, has highlighted the need to delve into the ideology of developmentalism in postcolonial countries so that postcolonial environmentalism can be discussed in conjunction with economic discourses (366).

In this chapter, I analyse how the authors treat the state’s prevailing ideology of development with the understanding that development is the array of measures, plans, and policies that are introduced at many levels in society with the aim of improving the quality of people’s lives. Borrowing from Lee’s deliberation on the state of development in Malaysia, I understand the state’s prevailing ideology of development to be development measures that focus on economic and capitalist priorities (66-67). In fact, this ideology is often thought of as a panacea for nation-building. Keris, Maniam, Chuah, and Ooi, through their creative responses to the rapid development that has

occurred in Malaysia, offer individual expressions and powerful critiques on development, not merely reflecting on this ideology, but also illustrating different perspectives on development based on notions of social justice, democracy, and cultural sustainability. That is not to say that they reject development. On the contrary, they acknowledge that development is part and parcel of the social, economic, and political processes. However, through their treatment of development, they bring to light other equally important issues, thus emphasising the flaws of adopting a development ideology that is essentially based on economic and capitalist growth.

4.2 Cultural and Political Sustainability in *Jungle of Hope*

Set in the 1920s-1930s in colonial Malaya, *JOH* delves into issues of development, particularly with regard to the Malay peasantry. Malaya, in the 1920s - 1930s, was actively undergoing the process of modern economic development, propelled by the needs to industrialise Europe. The British adopted a laissez-faire policy, a dominant economic ideology in the the Western world that lasted throughout the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century. A doctrine of capitalism, a laissez-faire economic ideology upholds that economic interests should be driven by market forces and free from the state's intervention. Property rights are also valorised. The state's role is to enforce the laws necessary to enable those who have wealth to retain power and to leverage this wealth to gain more.

Thriving on the tin and rubber industries, the colonialist state took up developmental efforts which mainly revolved around promoting British capitalists and building road and railway transportation that served to facilitate those industries. On top of this, the British also brought in large numbers of Chinese and Indian indentured labours, changing the society into a multi-cultural one, with little regard for social integration. These three major races were then separated by occupation and geography.

The Malays mainly lived in the rural areas where agriculture was the main occupation, the Chinese mainly occupied coastal and urban areas where modern industry and commerce were located, whereas the Indians mainly became isolated in plantation estates with little contact with the outside world. By the time Malaya gained independence in 1957, uneven social and economic development was prevalent, with towns like Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Ipoh becoming core areas for economic growth and rural areas the peripheries.

Anti-colonialist sentiments, which were on the rise in Malaya during the Japanese Occupation, had left an impact on Keris. As a writer, Keris felt that he needed to change the attitude and mindset of the Malays if they wanted to break free from colonisation (55). Keris, therefore, set out to “lessen the suffering of the Malay poor and, if not to immediately alleviate their plight, to give hope to them and to their children that they may ascend beyond poverty” through his writings (Banks 135-136). On August 6, 1950, Keris founded ASAS 50 (Writers Association '50) together with 18 other founding members (mostly writers) to develop Malay language and literature. It also aimed at freeing the Malay society from cultural elements that hinder progress, advancing the intellectual awareness of the Malays, fostering Malay nationalism, and refining and promoting the Malay language as the lingua franca of Malaya.

Through *JOH*, Keris analyses the Malays' response to the colonial ideology of development that reflects a disdain towards a traditional subsistence rural economy, as opposed to the rubber and tin mining industries. Keris foregrounds this response through the breakup of people in Ketari into two: those who refuse to grow rubber and choose to relocate to the forests, like Pak Kia and Jusuh, and those who willingly embrace the plantation economy, like Zaidi, Pak Kia's brother. More and more people in Ketari had sold their land and rice fields and moved deep into the jungle at nearby areas such as Lebu, Asap, and Janda Baik (9). Pendekar Atan, on behalf of a white man

called “Tuan Pekok,” persuades the farmers to sell their land and move elsewhere. The onslaught of tin mining is spreading fast and the impending environmental changes that would result in a “vast expanse of rock and sand” would make it impossible for the Malays to hold on to their rice fields (42). Zaidi tries to make Pak Kia see the impact of these changes:

That’s the truth of the matter. The Ketari folks must sell their land, not because their ricefields are damaged beyond hope, but because Tuan Pekok wants to open a huge mine stretching from Perting right up to Benus and Cegar Medang. Soon the entire Bentong area will be ravaged by the white man’s dredge. Canang upstream, Perting behind the town, Sungai Marung, Sungai Nilam, Ketari, Benus right up to Cegar Medang will be a stretch of sand and rock. (35-36)

Like a score of other villagers in Ketari, Zaidi, moves to a village near town, planting rubber. Life is hard, initially, as he waits for the rubber trees to mature, but as time goes by and the rubber price soars, he becomes more enterprising. He hires Chinese labourers to work at his plantation, and ventures into other businesses like supplying jungle produce to contractors and opening up a retail shop (7-8). Henceforth, he is looked upon as a rich and self-made man. Unlike Pak Kia, Zaidi adapts well to the pressures of the British colonial policy of encouraging rubber planting. He sees the times changing and switches to rubber planting.

Zaidi’s role in the novel serves to highlight the Malays’ position within the new capitalism. The unfavourable position of the Malays in the new capitalism is keenly felt by Zaidi. He fears that progress brought about by the British will eventually cause the Malays to lose their place. The idea of economic competition enters his consciousness. Whilst he acknowledges his brother’s obstinacy in sticking to the tradition of the Malays, which is entrenched in a non-capitalist culture, he is also worried about non-Malay capitalism, which is also relentlessly taking root in Bentong. If the Malays continue with their traditional way of thinking and doing things, he believes that the

country will be taken over by the other migrant races, who are quick to take advantage of the changes around them.

He tries to make Pak Kia see this, knowing full well that the Malays would be lagging behind economically if they do not adapt to the economic changes happening around them.

Abang, don't you see how many Chinese are living in Bentong now? Once, there were only Malay shops at the Ketari junction. . . . Now there are three Chinese shops, all brick. . . . One day not only Bentong, but Ketari too will become a Chinese town. Not just the town, but the entire area, many miles around, will belong to foreigners. This country will have bigger schools, roads surfaced with tarmac, bigger hospitals and government offices. And where will we be? In the jungle. (58)

Zaidi realizes that the traditional way of life, relying solely on the rice fields, has become almost impossible to maintain. He makes plans for his brother. His plan is to get a plot of land so that his brother could plant rubber. While waiting for the trees to mature, Pak Kia could still work on his rice field as it would take years for Tuan Pekok's dredge to reach Ketari. He is worried about the numerous challenges that await Pak Kia if he decides to move to Janda Baik. His plan of course, could not sway Pak Kia's stand.

Zaidi's concern for the Malays' plight does not revolve around his brother only. Tutung and Papa, two simple-minded and gullible villagers in Ketari, also receive help from Zaidi. Zaidi buys their rice fields, and with the money from the sale, he gets them to invest in rubber plots. While waiting for the trees to mature, he lets them work on their rice fields for as long as they wish, as if the rice fields are still theirs (45). Convinced that they "must be helped; must be saved" and that they were "easy prey" for scheming people like Pendekar Atan, this kind of arrangement is the least he could do to save them from displacement (46-49).

These two antagonistic responses to capitalist development brought by the British, as represented by Pak Kia and Zaidi, serve to highlight further insights into the

ideology of development among the Malays. Keris is not against development. In fact, he promotes it. Unlike the secular reasoning that underpins the British development ideology, the idea of development that Keris promotes integrates Islam, which forms a fundamental part of the Malay culture. He uses central Islamic ideas and values that were advanced during the colonial times to promote the Malays' economic development and social betterment. He makes use of the real conflict between Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda (Old and Young Factions) whose teachings and ways of perceiving Islam differ. These factions were in conflict right from the early 1900s to the 1930s (Mohd Fiah 410). During this period, with the advent of literacy among the Malays, following the publication of Malay language newspapers such as *Seri Perak*, *Jawi Peranakan* and *Al-Imam*, there was a growing consciousness among the Malay intellectuals of the need to transform the Malays' thinking towards Islam, said to revolve around "blind imitation" — simply accepting the words and opinions of religious scholars, resulting in Muslims' "backwardness and degradation intellectually, politically and economically" (Sulaiman et al. 9-10). It was against this background of conflicting ideas that the factions materialised. Kaum Tua, or the traditionalists, are said to be influenced by the Malay culture and civilisation, which drove them to adhere blindly to the traditions passed down by their forefathers. Material, economic, or worldly pursuits are not thought of as having religious or spiritual values. Kaum Muda, or the modernists, on the other hand, were inclined to independent reasoning, whereby religious teaching of the Quran is re-interpreted and re-evaluated to make Islam attuned with the changing times. Striving for economic activities is considered a 'calling,' or a religious duty that glorifies God's generosity in giving humanity the material world.

In *JOH*, the Kaum Muda teachings reach Ketari, in the form of a religious teacher who preaches on the need to adapt a new perspective on religious thinking, bringing about reconciliation and adaptation which would enable the Malays to adjust to

the capitalist development going on around them. Zaidi and his friends, who attend the talk by the religious teacher, find him different from previous pious teachers who often came to preach in Ketari. The religious teacher talks about the need to “strive for the hereafter as if we would die tomorrow, and to strive for this world as if we would live forever,” and questions “why is the result of our hard work so meagre compared with that of the non-Muslim?” (30). He also stresses on the necessity of taking daily work seriously, that this work is also a religious duty that is based on the Islamic values of schedules and rules (31). Throughout his preaching, the religious teacher strongly argues for a rational and individualistic approach to religion, what Sulaiman et al. have illustrated as the Kaum Muda’s distinctive way of making use of independent reasoning “to verify all religious matters” (9).

Taking a cue from the religious teacher’s preaching, Zaidi sees the need for the Malays to compete in the new capitalism. The Kaum Muda’s teaching presents a new perspective about the teachings of Islam that serves to instil the spirit of competing economically, being active along the path of development, besides going for the hereafter. He tries to make Pak Kia understand where the Kaum Muda is coming from:

The Kaum Muda don’t just study the twenty traits of Allah. Nor just religious duties. . . . Studying religious duties goes further than learning verses by heart.

. . .

Islam is not just preparation for death and beyond. It also has teachings for life in this world. Our people refuse to learn. That’s why so many lead chaotic lives; the poor remain poor to the grave. ... (34-35)

Pak Kia, however, brushes off Zaidi’s reasoning: “Enough, I just go by the usual practice. Cleansing, praying, fasting, I know how to do them. And I know a few prayers by heart” (34). Pak Kia’s response seems to suggest that he belongs in the Kaum Tua faction, whose blind adherence to tradition and religion had instilled an attitude that refuses to accept change and independent reasoning. This explains Pak Kia’s refusal to adapt to the changing times.

Unlike Pak Kia, who is still steeped in the traditional way of life, Zaidi willingly embraces the plantation-based colonial capitalist ideology. When Pak Kia and scores of others stay behind in the old village in Ketari to plant rice, Zaidi becomes among the first to open a rubber plantation in the new village. His hard work bears fruit and he becomes a self-made Malay man. His enterprising manoeuvres in the village do not seem to differ from Pendekar Atan's. He believes that growing rubber will improve the Malays' economic prospects. His idea of development, however, differs from the hegemonic colonialist ideology.

Well-informed about the scarcity of land in Malaya at that time, Zaidi believes that development practices should also have a strong sense of justice and tackles the far wider issue of social equity within the colony, in view of the non-Malay capitalism that is relentlessly taking root in Malaya and the Malays' unfamiliarity and vulnerability in the new economy. To Zaidi, it is only fair that the Ketari people be given a new piece of land to grow rubber to compensate for their displacement:

"I'm sure you know all about that, Pendekar. But what's the sense of getting riches for the country if the Malays must flee to the jungle? Isn't that injustice?"

...

"That's it. They have to move. Do you think they have a choice, Pendekar? They have to move. They are forced to move. They are treated like buffaloes: shoed off, willy-nilly, into the pen." (74)

Although the villagers' means of earning a living is changed from planting rice to rubber, at least they would not have to suffer from displacement. To Zaidi, land is the foundation of the Malays' lives that roots them to their family, culture, values, beliefs and history. In short, the land is the material reality that would ensure the survival and sustainability of the Malays in the capitalist economy. The British colonialist development ideology fails to take this into account, and in the process, causes a deep resentment and hostility among the Malays, especially the Kaum Tua, against the

development of the British and non-Malay capitalism. When efforts are made by the Kaum Muda to mobilise the Malays' social, economic, and political transformation, the British feared these and associated them with anti-British sentiments (Mas 131). Keris illustrates this distrust when the police come to stop the gathering of the villagers at Cikgu Nasir's place, where the Kaum Muda religious teacher is preaching (32-33).

In *JOH*, Keris foregrounds development as an essential force that needs to be embraced by the Malays. The unfavourable position of the Malays in the new capitalism is Keris' main concern. Progress and development brought about by the British is fast replacing the rural Malays' traditions, as well as inducing the displacement of the Malays from their land. Development, therefore, does not address the far wider issue of social equity and justice. Rice cultivation, for instance, which was the Malays' main economic activity, was not renewed and developed under the new capitalist economy so as to ensure the Malays' cultural survival and sustainability. This injustice is expanded by Keris by making the land his focal point in discussing development. It is not only a material reality that is intricately linked to economy and traditions, but also the foundation of the Malays' social and political consciousness. To Keris, development is essentially material progress, but this progress should also encompass justice, social equity, and cultural sustainability.

4.3 The "Forgotten" and the "Marginalized" in *Between Lives*

BL spans through significant phases in Malaysia's history from British colonisation to contemporary Malaysia. These phases, as depicted in *BL*, also chart the various social realities experienced by the Indian diaspora in Malaysia. Malaysian Indians comprise Malaysia's 1.8 million Indian population, representing almost 8% of the total population. A non-homogenous ethnic community, nearly 90% of Malaysian Indians are of South Indian origin, principally Tamilians, Malayalis, and Telugus, who

were brought into Malaya under the colonial indentured system. The rest, often referred to as the “non-labour migrants,” were brought in from Ceylon and North India to run the administrative, technical, defence, and security services.

Today, the Indian community in Malaysia, once largely a community of plantation workers, has become diversified economically, although they are still perceived as “marginalised” in socio-economical and political terms (Muzaffar 21; Appudurai and Dass 8-12). The reasons for the marginalisation of Indians in Malaysia can be traced to their migration history. The middle of the 19th century marked the cultivation of cash crops in Malaya, especially rubber. Indian labour immigrants were brought in by the British on a large scale to work at the rubber plantations, especially during the period of 1911-1930, after which the number of arrivals declined (Sandhu 155). Pitted against the indenture system of labour recruitment, which chained the labourer to low wages, harsh working conditions, and British manipulative regulations, the Indian community lived in abject poverty and was “deprived [...] of the economic foundation necessary for a politically significant role” (Muzaffar 212-213). In fact, as Appudurai and Dass have noted “there was a covert conspiracy to keep this group mired in ignorance and poverty with the object of perpetuating the labour force for the plantations” (6).

Independence did not change the role of Malaya as a producer of rubber, further confining the rubber plantation Indians to a life of poverty, although they gained benefits like schools, health clinics, water supply, and electricity from the government’s developmental efforts (Muzaffar 221). Political representation during and after independence was generally weak and tended to overlook the bulk of ordinary Indian people and their participation (Muzaffar 220). The May 13, 1969 riot, which signalled the emergence of Malay hegemony in socio-economic and political aspects, coupled

with the politics of communalism amongst the different economic classes of Indians, further contributed to the marginalisation of the Indians (Muzaffar 230).

As descendants of migrants from India, the Indian diaspora in Malaysia practise an integral part of the Indian culture, maintaining links with their ancestral homes to a large extent. The Hindu religion, the Tamil language, Indian films, music, and the performing arts, for example, play a big role in helping them to maintain the Indian identity and traditions. Emotional attachment to the ancestral land that are manifested in the practise of the Hindu religion and culture perhaps helps to explain why the Indians in Southeast Asia have been a difficult minority community to integrate into nation building, especially the older generations (Arasaratnam 220). This attachment, however, has not deterred them from assimilating and blending into the multicultural and multiracial society that characterises the makeup of Malaysia. In fact, the Indian in Malaysia is not “so completely alienated from his environment or so drastically separate from the indigenous people” (Arasaratnam 9). After almost 40 years of independence, however, and after the implementation of so many economic policies and strategies that are said to be oblivious to the plight of the Malaysian Indians, the socio-economic status of Malaysian Indians is still questionable, contributing to “a strong sense of alienation and hopelessness” (Jegathesan, “Alienated Malaysian Indians”).

Like Keris, Maniam does not really oppose development. He acknowledges progress brought by the state’s developmental efforts. Sumitra’s father, for instance, epitomises the Malaysian Indian man who has worked hard to have a good social standing in the Malaysian society, “retired from a fourth or fifth ranking job in the local branch of some ministry – a job that brought him a substantial gratuity and a comfortable pension” (9). With this job, he was able to provide his family with a two-storey bungalow and has good “connections” with the State Education Office, which had awarded Sumitra with a scholarship. Sumitra’s father’s upward social mobility

marks in some ways the socioeconomic success of post-independent Malaysia. Sumitra herself has assimilated into multicultural Malaysia. She makes friends with people from the other races, receives good education, and epitomises the modern Malaysian woman. Sumitra and her father, in some ways, represent the socioeconomic success of Indians in post-independent Malaysia.

Sellamma, on the other hand, represents the “other” facade of development in Malaysia. Following the disintegration of her family after the Japanese Occupation, Sellamma lives by herself on the land that was given to her father by his white, rubber estate employer. After the death of her youngest brother — the only other family member who chooses to stay with her on the land — she disappears for many years and comes back and does some odd jobs before taking up subsistence farming on her land, and, at the same time, becoming a recluse. This voluntary exile from the multicultural community surrounding her land goes on for many years until Sumitra comes into the picture. Through Sellamma, Maniam makes a moving statement about how the state’s development ideology and subsequent policies have historically and politically forgotten, overlooked, and alienated the Indians. Left to fend for herself, Sellamma remains cocooned on her land for many years. This relatively alludes to the majority of Indian communities which had remained cocooned in the rural plantations, especially in the early decades following independence, with scant regard by the state for their socio-economic mobility (Govindasamy 96). Sellamma’s isolation serves as a grim reminder of the failure of the state to integrate effectively all the races in the mainstream socio-economic development.

In *BL*, Maniam highlights many of the downsides of development. One of these is the involuntary displacement of people from their land, or commonly referred to as ‘land grabs’. Indeed, since independence, development projects that include dams, roads, housing, commercial, and industrial uses have resulted in the acquisition of land

and the displacement of politically and economically weaker communities and individuals. Since land is a state matter, the state has the incontestable power to alienate land for agriculture, building, and industry; imposing and altering conditions and restrictions in interest; and reserving state land by notification in the Gazette for any public purpose such as for recreation parks (Abdul Kader 14). With the power given to the state, it can also seize private land for development by private companies and individuals. In the same context, any piece of land that it has been acquired for public purposes can also be used for private development. In recent decades, state governments have been subjected to public complaints and criticism for abusing their powers in relation to the disposal and use of land. There have been too many cases of power abuse such as land being given to individuals or companies based on favouritism or cronyism; reserve land alienated without revocation of the reservation; and public grounds, open spaces, hill lands, and water catchment areas being given away for housing or commercial development (Abdul Kader 15). Indeed, the perils of land grabs have been going on for decades, resulting in serious threats, from loss of biodiversity to displacements of humans from their land. This displacement is often accompanied by losses of livelihoods and cultural identities, as well as sacred places of worship. Such displacement is often justified by the need to sacrifice for public purposes and/or national interests and the exclusive right (or, in some cases, abuse) of the state to acquire land that it deems necessary for public purposes. In order to emphasise the pervasiveness of this involuntary displacement, Maniam focuses on the plight of an Indian woman who happens to be living in the wrong place. The beautiful piece of land that Sellamma owns becomes an attractive place for the proposed building of a condominium block and a theme park. Facing eviction from her land, Sellamma shares the same problem faced by other invisible and powerless victims who bear the brunt of environmental crises that are intricately connected with the state's ongoing processes of

development. Maniam seems to suggest that people like Sellamma — female, old, Indian, and living by herself — are most vulnerable to displacement caused by the state's ruthless developmental efforts.

There is no specific plan on how to compensate Sellamma for vacating her land, except that she will be sent to an old folks' home. In discussing the displacement of the Indians, Govindasamy notes that "there have never been any clear policies to resettle the displaced Indians...despite official vision statements about equity and balanced development, in practice the Malaysian government's region building does not include the poorer members of this ethnic minority" (102). By establishing Sellamma's 'unlikely' compensation, Maniam seems to draw attention to the plight of the Indians, who, when displaced from their land, get little or no compensation that befits their loss.

While some critics have lamented the portrayal of Hinduism in Maniam's works, particularly how it has derisively precluded the Indians from assimilating into the multicultural societies of Malaysia (Wicks "Malaysian Landscape"; Fallis 757; Tang 278), Ng has applauded the use of Hinduism in Maniam's works, particularly in how Hindu thoughts are used to address the variety of issues pertaining to the diaspora and how it has played the dual role of establishing their identity yet obstructing attempts of belonging in the new adopted land (*Intimating the Sacred* 107). In *BL*, Maniam deploys Hinduism again but this time with a slightly different agenda. Hinduism in *BL* serves to play the role of a saviour, which keeps Sellamma attached to the land and ancestral heritage, and which, in the end, helps to save the land from the malevolent forces of unscrupulous development practices. Throughout the different phases of Malaysian history, from being colonised to the present day, the land remains particularly relevant to Sellamma as a meaningful source of self-identity as well as spiritual strength and cultural continuity. Sumitra does not see this in the beginning, but the more she spends time with Sellamma, the more she is pulled into the old woman's memory and

valorisation of forgotten culture and the past. Sumitra finds herself slowly slipping into Sellamma's past. Photographs, stories and religious rituals done together with Sumitra, and later with Sumitra's family members (mother, father, grandmother, brothers, sisters in law, nephews, and nieces), bring Sellamma and Sumitra back to events revolving around the first and second generation Indian migrants working as rubber tappers and farmers, and how they grapple with the issue of belonging to the new adopted land. The family history and religious traditions that Sellamma shares with Sumitra divulge the sacrosanctity of the land, which prompts Sumitra to question her part in the state's attempt to evict the old woman from her land. Through *BL*, Maniam again affirms Ng's argument of how sticking to religious and family rituals and heritages actually help the Indian diaspora to "“root” spiritually and transcendentally to a land in which they cannot otherwise find a sense of belonging” (26-27).

In *BL*, Maniam underscores the consequences of adopting development ideology that rests on economic and capitalist priorities. Closely related to these priorities is the view that land is a commodity for economic exploitation and profitability, instead of a resource to be nurtured, respected, and passed down from generation to generation. In such an ideology, costs are imposed, and as Sellamma's plight in *BL* reveals, these costs are borne by the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society, thus attesting to strong elements of neocolonisation that persist between the state and its marginalised citizen(s). Maniam suggests that Indians like Sellamma are victimised when there is no particular obligation on the part of the state to understand and respect their sacrosanct realm and their special dependency and attachment to the land. To the Indians, the land comes with long-established identity, family, and religious traditions. Through Sellamma's attachment and reverence for the land, Maniam illustrates how divinity prevails in the land. Thus, developmental efforts that induce displacement must take into account this revered aspect, which is the sacrosanct realm of the Indians.

Maniam also implies that, as much as people have the rights or access to development, these rights also entail the right to be protected from the negative effects of development. He seems to foreground Sellamma's forced eviction as incompatible with the goals and ideology of development promoted by the state. The overriding ideology that economic progress would ensure racial equality, political stability, and national unity, however, seems to distance the state from the costs borne by the marginalised part of the society. Ideally, development that the state aims and works for should cover basic living requirements that humanity is entitled to, including their spiritual and cultural needs. Maniam's imploring idea of development is development that does not infringe on social justice and human rights, one that does not threaten the sustainability of cultural and religious traditions. Development, in Maniam's view, entails one's right to the land and the environment around one, which resonates with one's right to make life worth living, materially, culturally, and spiritually.

4.4 Vested Interests and Social Equity in *Days of Change*

Chuah's *DOC* spans the different phases of development that Malaysia goes through, right from colonial to contemporary times. Her focus, however, seems to revolve around the Malays, who have been a fundamental focus of the state's development ideology and policies following the racial riot in 1969. The different phases of development and how the Malays struggle to catch up with the state's prevailing ideology and plans, geared mostly on promoting Malay interests, are depicted in *DOC*. To a large extent, Hafiz's journey in life parallels the Malays' socio-economic transformation after independence. Indeed, one who is familiar with Malaysian and/or Malay history would probably take this novel as a historiographical account of the country, right from the colonial phase to the current, postcolonial phase. As pointed out by Andaya and Andaya, a decade after independence, the Malays were "left behind

economically”: they made up 75% of half of the population that were living below the poverty line, there were very few Malays involved in professional occupations, and they only had 1.5% of equity ownership in Malaysia (qtd. in Milner 202). The Chinese, on the other hand, were clearly dominating the economy. This economic imbalance created tension between the two major races, which resulted in the eruption of a bloody riot on May 13, 1969. Malaysia’s New Economic Policy (henceforth, NEP) was a policy that came into being after the riot. It was designed as a social restructuring programme, expressed clearly in the Second Malaysia Plan of 1970-1975 and covered a period of twenty years (1970-1990). The NEP was aimed at eradicating poverty and eliminating the identification of ethnicity along economic functions, seeing that creating conducive socio-economic conditions was crucial for political stability and national unity. To this end, it saw the need to increase the Bumiputeras’ (a post-independence term to refer to the Malays and the indigenous people) stake in the economy to 30%. Raising the level of Malay participation in the economy thus became a major priority under the NEP.

The sense of the Malays “being left behind” has been addressed in a range of ways under the NEP. Measures include bringing in more Malays into the higher education system and the government sector. Besides the government, Malay-based associations and political groups concentrated on debating causes and solutions and implementing programs aimed at assisting and reforming the Malays, making them more “disciplined, entrepreneurial and economically minded” (Milner 207). *Revolusi Mental* (Mental Revolution), a book published in 1971 by the dominant ruling party UMNO (United Malay National Organisation), is a testament to these efforts, urging the Malays to increase their desire and interest in wealth, science, and technology and to modernize their traditional occupations (Syed Hussein 148). Mahathir Mohammed, who served as Prime Minister from 1981 to 2003, advocated for the “New Malay” or “Melayu Baru” — Malays that are less bound by tradition and more assertive so as not

to be dominated by other ethnic groups (Milner 208). By the early '90s, twenty years after the implementation of NEP, the Malays had managed to have a more than 20 percent share of equity in the commercial world (Ho 210). In addition, there has been a substantial increase in the Malays' involvement in the modern sector of the economy, education, and urban environment.

As a national narrative, Hafiz and his father Yusof epitomise the journey of the "New Malays." The rag-to-riches story of Hafiz and his family is assembled against this socio-political backdrop. Born to a Malay father and a Chinese *Peranakan* (descendants of Chinese immigrants who came to the Malay Archipelago between 15th to 17th centuries) mother, Hafiz grows up in Ulu Banir with his parents and the Templetons, British owners of the Templeton rubber estate and Jock's Hill. As a child, he lives at the Templeton bungalow since his parents work with the Templetons — his mother is a maid while his father works for Jonathan Templeton as a driver. He spends many happy days exploring the jungle surrounding the hill with Mike Templeton, or Malik, his half-brother, the result of his mother's affair with Jonathan prior to the Japanese Occupation. He has fairly ambivalent feelings about Jock's Hill, which belongs to him. The hill reminds him of the brotherly bond he had with Mike, but it also symbolises his family's servitude to the Templetons. To top it all off, it is also the place where the women who matter to him, Cynthia and Esther, were murdered. Cynthia was his girlfriend, originally from London, whereas Esther was Jonathan's wife, who was like a second mother to him. Jock's Hill serves as a grim reminder of Hafiz's personal history.

After moving from the servants' quarters at Jock Hill's bungalow to Kota Banir, Hafiz's father, Yusof, with Jonathan's financial assistance, starts a garage business which eventually thrives. Jonathan slowly sells his shares in the plantation to Yusof, and the two become partners. By the time Hafiz returns from studying law in the UK in 1976, Yusof has bought most of the plantation. With a government loan, Yusof

develops the estate into a golf course. Jonathan had then given up his position, totally. During the '70s and '80s, times were hard, so Yusof and Hafiz decide to move into the construction business. Hafiz's father then builds a new golf club in Kota Banir and builds affordable homes for the lower income groups in Kampung Banir Hilir. People in Kota Banir respect Yusof for being a self-made, successful, and socially-conscious Malay entrepreneur. Yusof also has the aspiration to build a science college on top of Jock's Hill, a dream which never materialises during his lifetime. Hafiz continues on with his father's legacy, being a wealthy property developer.

Yusof and Hafiz's economic ventures reflect to some extent the state's massive affirmative development policy and plans that favour the Malays, which are welcomed by the Malays themselves in view of their poverty and economic backwardness, and which propelled the emergence of Malay hegemony in socio-economic and political aspects. Through *DOC*, Chuah questions the growing influence of the capitalists and political elites that are overshadowing the state's role in development. She underscores the importance of differentiating between development plans that are economically driven and those that are politically motivated, the former with the intention of improving the economy and the latter with the intention of gaining political leverage and advancing the political agenda of leaders. At the same time, Chuah also highlights the blurry line between the two. The development project proposed by Hartindah in *DOC* is politically-motivated, hiding behind so-called economic improvement, with capitalists and political leaders having vested interests, backing each other to maintain their privileged positions. Chuah shapes the conflict to revolve around the proposed project of Hartindah primarily to expose the manipulation of the NEP by Malay elites, particularly in how it has penetrated the Malay psyche and has been adopted by the Malay capitalists to advance their interests. As Abu Bakar has demonstrated, he is ready

to fight doggedly at the expense of Kota Banir and its community, with the Malay agenda providing a convenient pretext for development.

Chuah also highlights the downside of development in Malaysia. When Hafiz falls into a ravine that eventually brings him to poverty-stricken Kampong Basoh, he wonders why development has not reached the people there. He is appalled by the poor conditions in which the people live and exasperated at their placid acceptance of their abject poverty (103). The ideology of development as material prosperity, economic restructuring, and poverty eradication has not translated into the sharing of wealth in an equitable manner. This impact is seen and experienced by the Malay villagers in rural areas, further reinstating the socio-economic divide of the nation, or what is now popularly termed as the urban-rural divide.

This divide is captured by Chuah with the message that the ideology of development propagated and implemented by the state has not tackled the far wider issue of social equity within the country or within the Malay community, for that matter. As Jomo and Tan have noted, the state's developmental ideology and efforts have expanded and consolidated the Malay middle class with Malay capitalists acquiring tremendous wealth, ostensibly on behalf of the larger Malay community (3). Chuah implies that social equity is the cornerstone of society, which cannot be maintained for a few at the expense of many.

What is particularly striking about Chuah's treatment of development is how she offers an alternative approach to development with the emphasis on poverty eradication. Although poverty eradication has been relatively successful in Malaysia, there still remains a considerable number of people experiencing poverty for one reason or another (A. Hatta and Ali 48). Chuah is inspired by this micro-approach to development. Kampong Basoh and its people's rootedness in their land makes Hafiz mull over the concept of progress and development and how these have not alleviated

the abject poverty in Kampong Basoh. When Hafiz asks about how they earn their living, Pak Endot says he does “*kerja kampung*” (village work), while his wife says she makes do with the gifts their patients and clients bring them. Whilst he is amazed at the couple’s expertise, he also feels appalled at the state of poverty they are in and irritated at their placid acceptance of the conditions (103). He also recalls what Maniam (his gardener) had to endure in the name of progress and development. Maniam had to vacate the squatter area where he lived to make way for another prestigious office block and shopping mall in the city. Prior to that, he was forced to vacate his quarters in an oil palm estate. These recollections make Hafiz realise that development affects people’s relationship with the land. In Maniam’s case, the land not only provides a dwelling place but also the autonomy to labour on it, growing vegetables, rearing chickens and other sources of food. In a similar context, Pak Endot and Mak Soh and the people of Kampong Basoh also thrive on their land, surviving on what the land has to offer.

To this end, Hafiz is adamant to bring development to Kampong Basoh, what he refers to as “the mid-point between tradition and modernity” (170). Thus, Hafiz plans to turn his father’s dream of a science college into a college of traditional science. In addition to this college, Hafiz also plans to develop Kampong Basoh into a whole traditional health village where non-disruptive tourism would thrive. Hafiz’s plan to bring development to Kampong Basoh resonates with the concept of sustainable livelihood, first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, which advocates for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication. Applied most commonly at the household level, Chambers and Gordon define a sustainable rural livelihood as:

A livelihood [that] comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which

contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term. (qtd. in Krantz 1)

Since the introduction of this concept in 1987, sustainable livelihood has been approached, discussed, and redefined differently by many scholars. Krantz, however, has identified three basic features which most approaches have in common (11). The first is that the approach focuses on the livelihoods of the poor, since poverty reduction is at its core. The second is that it begins with an analysis of people's current livelihood systems to identify an appropriate intervention. The final feature is its emphasis on involving people in the identification and implementation of activities where appropriate.

Hafiz identifies with the livelihoods of the poor in Kampung Basoh. He is amazed with the close relationship the people of Kampung Basoh have with their land and how their traditional, conservative lifestyles and knowledge revolve around it. He is also aware of how the people of Kampung Basoh seem to lack young people, probably driven to work in towns due to the prevalent poverty (99). To Hafiz, the couple's rich knowledge and skills in traditional medicine, health practices, and the forests around them are not being renewed and developed enough to ensure that these can be utilised and passed down to future generations. The villagers' nature-culture link needs an intervention effective enough to reduce poverty, upgrade the people's quality of lives, and sustain future generations. The college he plans to establish would bring in botanists and biochemists to get them to work with Pak Endot and Mak Soh so that their knowledge is not wasted and, therefore, could be tested, documented, and systematised. The whole idea of preserving Pak Endot and Mak Soh's knowledge and expertise in traditional healing bears resemblance to current environmental efforts to preserve traditional ecological knowledge, which is largely believed to be able to contribute to ecological sustainability and environmental decision-making processes. To Hafiz, preserving traditional knowledge means sharing Pak Endot and Mak Soh's knowledge

about the environment around them with the world outside of Kampung Basoh, hence the college and the plan to promote Kampong Basoh as a whole traditional health village where non-disruptive tourism would thrive. By developing Kampong Basoh as a traditional health village, the villagers could identify with their strengths in traditional knowledge and medicine, thus involving them in the implementation of activities that help reduce their poverty. This way, Chuah suggests, villages or rural communities whose lifestyles are based upon indigenous knowledge and skills could develop much greater cultural pride as well as environmental sustainability. In this way, too, community life is sustained and restored, as the younger generation would find it worthy to stay and earn a living in their own village. A sense of place in the village now mostly emptied of children's voices and the energy of young people who had left to seek urban futures will also be preserved.

Through Hafiz's proposal to develop Kampong Basoh, Chuah also criticises the state's ideology of development, which has not really taken into account the best interests of the rural communities. Future development that concerns the rural areas, Chuah contends, must enrich rather than dispossess or destroy the cultural wealth of the rural areas. The proposed theme park at Banir Valley also serves as a reminder that, if development serves the vested interests of politicians and capitalists alike, traditional Malay society and culture will be a thing of the past to the point that it would just be a cultural memory and a long-gone narrative. Hafiz's insomnia and Kampong Basoh's non-existence serve as metaphors to this impending loss.

4.5 People's Participation in *The Flame Tree*

Ooi's *TFT* is set in the '90s, marked by the interplay of many concurrent events that took place in Malaysia. Rapid tremendous economic growth ensued, especially in the private sector as a result of its economic liberalisation policy, which substantially

involved a lot of privatisation and new, foreign investments (Jomo and Wee 8). Besides this, striking change in the physical landscape, costly construction of mega projects, growing consciousness of globalisation, as well as mounting local and international criticism against the destruction of the natural environment and the sacrifice of environmental sustainability characterised the '90s in Malaysia. These are captured by Ooi in *TFT*, through the futuristic Titiwangsa University town, a megaproject that embodies Malaysia's remarkable economic and technological growth. This development project is set to bring economic wonders to two towns: Ranjing and Kampung Tanah "on the path to a better state of existence" (11).

Despite these enticing promises of development, the Titiwangsa University town also symbolises environmental challenges and problems associated with Malaysia's rapid development ethos. Ooi highlights these through the Kampung Tanah people's concerns regarding the proposed university town. Dr. Kenneth Chan, Horatio Sarojaya, and Abdul Ibrahim, the 'informal' leaders in Kampung Tanah, a town that would be the most affected by the megaproject, are suspicious of the environmental impact of the proposed project. Because they do not have the knowledge to evaluate the impact of the development project, they hire Luke, whose expertise in environmental impact studies would shed light on the costs that have to be borne by the people of Kampung Tanah.

Through Luke, Ooi delves into the question of livelihood, which is inextricably linked to development. The people of Kampung Tanah, comprise mainly of farmers and Orang Asli, depend totally on their land for survival. The land provides the community with food, water, and a spiritual life. Luke reminds them of their survival in the long term, that they do not want progress at the expense of their livelihood. He highlights the significance of the land to the people — how it has provided them with food, water, and spiritual life. When asked by Ibrahim what kind of development was right for them, Luke emphasises the need for the people to be involved in the new economy, that

everyone has a stake and should not be alienated, and that the new economy should be sustainable enough for future generations (117). He draws their attention to how everyone should be involved in the development project, that they do not want progress at any cost: “Local skills, local knowledge of the land, local labour. Everyone has a stake, no one is alienated” (117). He also underscores the importance of proper planning and management of the land — how the hilly terrain, and the impending soil erosion and air pollution would need to be addressed. He stresses the importance of proper management of the land in Kampung Tanah, that the development project should also take into account environmental sustainability and the imminent environmental problems such as soil erosion and air pollution (116). The community plays a part in ensuring that their livelihood on the land is not compromised. The farmers for instance, need to safeguard the quality of the soil and the elements (115). The Orang Asli, on the other hand, can use their long-acquired forest skills to help maintain the forest and to contribute to house-building and furniture-making (115). With his knowledge, Luke shows the people “how development and local concerns could work together” (116).

Luke’s advice on the impending development at Kampung Tanah illuminates Ooi’s idea of development that promotes intelligent participation, social justice, and local control of resources. People’s participation in the development project seems crucial in order to give them a voice, to give them the chance to participate in the local economy without coercion and to lead lives that allow for the preservation of culture, history, and tradition. Grassroots actors like the people of Kampong Tanah should not accept development passively but strike out to defend their livelihood interests. However, overt attempts to resist environmentally-destructive development projects like those made by Dr. Chan, who leaks part of Luke’s report to the media, are rarely sufficient due to political and economic oppression by the more powerful Jordan and his accomplice, Kidd Tan. When Dr. Kenneth Chan, who is adamant that the Committee is

trying to buy the whole town, leaks part of Luke's report to the media, Tan intensifies his intimidation by kidnapping Wong's son and threatening Sarojaya and Ibrahim, members of the Committee. Luke's office in campus is also burnt down, destroying the data he had gathered for Jordan's proposed design. Dr. Chan dies in a car accident staged by Tan.

Ooi seems to imply that grassroots actors like Dr. Chan and Luke play an equally important role in participating and ensuring development projects take into account social and environmental justice and that their voices should be heard. She seems to question the state's developmental role, which is greatly undermined by its own policy of economic liberalisation and the overpowering influence of business interests, both local and international. The state's role in the megaproject is not clearly defined except for approving the reports and data forwarded by the bidders in order to decide which bidder is best awarded the project. This executive role also seems to limit the participation of the people of Kampung Tanah in the planning and decision making that involves their land and livelihood. It demonstrates the state's physical and emotional distancing from the immediate 'object' of development that they purport to serve. The collapse of the university tower within a year after the project starts attests to the state's ineffectual role in making sound decisions as well as taking proper actions that would ensure the sustainability of the environment. The state's lack of involvement in the megaproject suggests its lack of true political power in comparison to the powerful interests and influences of the capitalists. Until the university tower collapses and claims many lives, the state remains 'behind the scenes,' in its ineffectual role. Dr. Chan and Luke's failures to overcome political obstacles that accompany the Titiwangsa development project illustrate the lack of democracy in development projects and environmental planning. Their failures also reflect Ooi's understanding that development cannot be imposed as a lasting benefit without taking into consideration

the inextricable link between the land and its entire ecosystem and public opposition/participation and other factors external to the community itself. In other words, the sustainability of the land and the community must be integral parts of the development ideology, planning, and decision-making.

4.6 Conclusion

To sum up, the state's development ideology which rests on economic and capitalist priorities are reflected and delineated by the writers. Development is acknowledged by the writers as part and parcel of social, economic, and political processes. In this light, the writers are not really concerned with forwarding anti- or counter-development approaches. Rather, through their treatment of development, the writers advocate for further improvements to the state's ideology and implementation of development, bringing to light other equally important issues and 'lessons,' as well as emphasising the flaws of adopting a development model that is essentially based on economic and capitalist growth. This treatment resonates with what Huggan and Tiffin have deliberated about the treatment of development in postcolonial texts, "that the battle is not against development or tourism as intrinsically harmful processes and activities, but rather against the often flagrant human and environmental abuses that continue to be practised in their cause" (77).

In a postcolonial nation that is not homogeneous, delivering development proves to be challenging as a lot of cultural and historical aspects need to be considered. In *JOH*, Keris recognizes that development is essentially material progress, but this progress should also encompass justice, social equity, and cultural sustainability. In *BL*, Maniam underscores the consequences of development ideologies that rest on economic and capitalist priorities, highlighting the costs borne by the most marginalised and vulnerable members of the society as well as imploring for development that takes into

account spiritual and cultural needs. Chuah, through *DOC*, implies that social equity is the cornerstone of society and cannot be maintained for a few at the expense of many. To Chuah, development should also take into account the best interests of the rural communities and that it should enrich them rather than dispossess or destroy their cultural wealth. In *TFT*, Ooi contends that development cannot be imposed on the people as a lasting benefit without taking into account the inextricable link between the land and its entire ecosystem, and that democratic participation as well as other factors external to the community should be given a positive role in order to improve accountability. She also underscores the sustainability of the land and the community as crucial factors in the ideology, planning, and decision-making about the environment. Indeed, the writers navigate and negotiate the state's ideology of development through notions of justice, democracy, and sustainability, which resonate with current environmental concerns. By raising questions and issues central to the state's ideology of development, the writers are already contributing to the debate on development in postcolonial environments, calling for a new paradigm of Malaysian developmentalism. What is required is development that is based on genuine commitment to the environment, taking into account subjugated voices and knowledge from civil society.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN *JUNGLE OF HOPE, DAYS OF CHANGE, BETWEEN LIVES, AND THE FLAME TREE*

We must also ensure that our valuable resources are not wasted. Our land must remain productive and fertile, our water unpolluted, our forest resources capable of regeneration and able to yield the needs of our national development. The beauty of our land should not be desecrated; for its own sake and for our own economic advancement. ~ Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia 1981 - 2003 (1991)

5.1 Environmental Ethics

In the preceding chapters, I have examined some of the fundamental issues related to land in Malaysia, which also constitute a central preoccupation in the selected novels. Alienation from nature, politics of the environment, and capitalist-based development have all contributed to environmental problems, leading to the crucial question: where is rapid economic transformation and development leading us? Embedded in these issues are some practical and moral suggestions, or environmental ethics. Environmental ethics seeks to deal with ethical problems related to the environment by critically examining the beliefs and values that we associate with the environment as well as prescribing how we should act and behave in order to sustain it. This kind of moral examination is crucial in guiding humanity to prudential decision making and problem-solving. As pointed out by Michael Boylan, “the [environmental] decision-making process differs when we add the ethical mode” (8).

A discipline of philosophy that emerged in the West in the ‘70s, environmental ethics developed in response to the rigorous questioning and rethinking of the moral relationship between humanity and nature, reflected in publications such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1963), Lynn White’s “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (1967), Garrett Hardin’s “The Tragedy of the Commons” (1968), and Paul

Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968), which underscore environmental degradation caused by a multitude of anthropocentric activities and attitudes.

By and large, grounded on Western perspectives and cultural experiences, the field of environmental ethics has flourished and grown more important since the '70s as it was believed that traditional ethical theories were too anthropocentric, and thus inadequate to discuss the moral complexity of human-nature relationship. Early environmental ethicists such as Holmes Rolston III and J. Baird Callicott advocated the need to ascribe intrinsic value to nature (value in its own right, independent of human interests), which then led to the divisive views of individualism and holism. Under individualism are theories generally considered to be forms of individualism such as biocentrism (the view that each living thing matters morally in its own right), which was proposed by Albert Schweitzer, and animal rights (the view that some or all animals have moral rights), advocated by Peter Singer. Under holism, ecocentrism theory, for instance, (the view that individuals in the ecosystem have value because they have something to contribute to the ecosystem) dominates. Aldo Leopold is considered the pioneer in the development of ecocentric environmental ethics, calling for the radical view of a "land ethic," which shifts the focus of moral consideration from humans to the biotic communities of the land.

In the '90s, criticisms centred around the field's preoccupation with abstract questions about value rather than its practical relevance on environmental policies. In view of the latter, some ethicists proposed pluralism, based on the recognition that there is no one valid, correct moral theory. To the pluralists, environmental ethics needs to make room for different ethical approaches, including Non-Western cultural and religious perspectives in order to tackle different kinds of environmental issues. Robert D Bullard and Peter S. Wenz, for example, have raised the issue of overcoming racism in environmental decision making in line with the new movement of environmental

justice, which aims to highlight how environmental ethicists have ignored the issue of justice for humans, especially in terms of the distribution of environmental benefits and burden. Ramachandra Guha in his article “Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique,” criticised the deep ecology movement’s focus on the need to preserve wildlife rather than humans (340). Such efforts, according to Guha, are not appropriate when applied to the Third World context, especially when it would lead to the displacement of people from their land (344). Segun Ogungbemi and Godfrey Tangwa have also pioneered philosophical discussions on environmental ethics from an African perspective. Ogungbemi, for instance, probes into the cultural causes of environmental degradation in Africa and proposes what he calls “ethics of nature-relatedness,” which is “ethics that leads human beings to seek to co-exist peacefully with nature and treat it with some reasonable concern for its worth, survival, and sustainability”(337). Tangwa proposes “eco-bio-communitarianism” as a theory for African environmental ethics which entails the “recognition and acceptance of interdependence and peaceful coexistence between earth, plants, animals and humans” (389).

Three dominant schools of thought have emerged from environmental ethics. The first school of thought, deep ecology, was founded by Arne Naess, who argues that a profound response to environmental degradation would be a change in our assumptions about the world. He proposes a “biospherical egalitarianism,” which is the idea that all living things have an equal right to flourish and that humanity needs to see the self as relational (rather than distinct) to aspects of nature. The second school of thought that has had a profound impact on environmental ethics is ecofeminism. Ecofeminists analyse the link between the domination of nature and the domination of women. In essence, what these two schools have in common is that they “criticize what they take to be common assumptions (at least within Western cultures) about the

distinction between what is natural and what is artificial or cultural” (McShane 415). Lastly, social ecology, pioneered by Murray Bookchin, asserts that domination of nature stems from social hierarchy and domination, which are major aspects of capitalism.

Recent trends in environmental ethics include environmental virtue ethics (sometimes called character ethics), which focuses on how people can achieve moral excellence and the incorporation of theories about value from other fields such as economics and aesthetics. Indeed, many different ethical theories and approaches to the environment have been offered to provide the platform for humanity to develop more informed judgements about the construction of their moralities and those of others’. These theories and approaches may offer different prescriptions of what needs to be done, but the general consensus in the field is that the ecosystem is running on limited capacity to withstand destruction and that human activities need to proceed with caution and humility for the sake of future generations as well as other living beings (Des Jardins 251).

In this chapter, I investigate the environmental values and principles suggested by Keris, Maniam, Chuah, and Ooi in their treatment of land-related issues. My analysis of these values and principles is based on four ethical arguments for “doing” environmental ethics: duty, character, relationships, and rights (Traer 138). Duty refers to taking the right action, or doing what is right for other persons, future generations, and nature. Character implies being a good person, having ecological virtues that would involve “not just the disposition to act in a particular way but also the ability to identify cases to which the virtue is applicable, having the appropriate emotions and attitudes, acting for the right reasons and so on” (Jamieson 86). Relationships connote having feelings of empathy and integrity for ecosystems, which enables us “to see and appreciate our relationships in nature and also to discern and define the integrity of

ecosystems” (Traer 101). Lastly, rights refer to our duty to provide the necessary social conditions for the realisation of animal and human rights.

Although Marx does not provide a detailed blueprint of an environmental ethics, the environmental turn in Marxism recently offers a lot of insights into environmental degradation as well as ethics. In the field of environmental ethics, Attfield asserts that Marx’s idea of humanity’s role as “good heads of the household” carries clear ethical implications that humanity does not own the globe and that it is a patrimony for future generations (21). Clark and Foster also posit that Marx’s theories and ecological insights point to, among other things, the sustainability of society (143). As I established earlier, Marx’s historical materialism sees nature and humans as inter-related, not separated. This relationship between humans and nature, termed as “metabolism,” is widely used in many of Marx’s published works, especially in “Capital Volume 1,” in which Marx detailed the labour process as a metabolic process between humanity and nature. This interdependence implies that nature plays an indispensable role in maintaining the lives of human beings, while humanity, in turn, participates in maintaining nature. Some modes of capitalist production and labour, however, because of the emphasis on the pursuit of profit, have disrupted this metabolism, causing severe “metabolic rifts” — the “rupture or interruption of a natural system” — in the reciprocal bond of humans and the environment around them (Foster 158; Foster, Clark, and York 125). Marx developed the concept of “metabolic rift” in view of

the alarm raised by agricultural chemists and agronomists in Germany, Britain, France and the United States about the loss of soil nutrients — such as nitrogen, phosphorous [sic] and potassium — through the export of food and fibre to the cities. Rather than being returned to the soil, as in traditional agricultural production, these essential nutrients were being shipped hundreds or even thousands of miles away and ended up as waste polluting the cities. (Foster and Clark 188)

Drawing on the rampant large-scale capitalist agriculture and industry in most parts of Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century, Marx highlighted how these had impoverished the soil. In traditional agriculture, nutrients from minerals found within the soil, such as potassium, phosphorous, and nitrogen, are returned to the soil immediately when plants decompose and release nutrients back into the soil, making the nutrients available and ‘recycled’ for the next generation of plants. In capitalist agricultural production, however, this natural condition of production is disrupted as crops are continuously harvested and exported to cities. As a result, nutrients flow out of the countryside and into the cities, most often ending up as waste which then contributes to pollution. The application of artificial and synthetic fertilisers into the soil for crops also restricts the natural process of replacing the soil nutrients. Marx had then emphasised in “Grundrisse” that capitalist agriculture had ceased to be “self-sustaining” (qtd. in Foster 156). Scientific and technological development has no doubt helped capitalist agriculture to develop synthetic fertilisers. It has also facilitated the import of natural fertiliser by large scale agriculture. These measures, however, serve to highlight the fact that capitalist agriculture has managed to increase production but failed to address the metabolic rift in the soil nutrient cycle (Clark and York, “Rifts and Shifts”).

Metabolism, therefore, entails the process by which humans take what they need from nature and give back in return to ensure the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem. Metabolic rift, as exemplified by intensified capitalist agriculture, quickly escalated to a wider, global scale. Colonisation saw to it that a new and international division of labour was created, involving the conversion of “one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production for supplying the other part, which remains a pre-eminently industrial field” (Marx, “Capital Volume 1”). This rift, according to Foster and Clark, was amplified with ecological imperialism, which went hand in hand with colonisation (188). Land in England, for example, was so exhausted from large

scale agriculture that agriculturalists there had to seek soil nutrients from countries in South America such as Peru, Chile, and Bolivia. Over time, other environmental problems such as deforestation, loss of soil nutrients, poor air quality, water pollution, and toxic waste have become some of the symptoms as well as manifestations of this rift.

Marx's concern for sustainability is applicable to our contemporary situation. Its relevance and ethical dimension bear affinity to the concept of sustainable development, defined by the United Nations in 1987 as socio-economic development that meets "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" ("Our Common Future"). Stemming from concerns on how best to address global environmental problems, the United Nations provided the conceptual framework whereby economic development, social equity, and environmental protection become three-fold goals. Fundamental to this concept is the responsibility of the society for today's population's quality of life, as well as the preservation of the environment, so that the future population also gets to experience good quality of life. Also fundamental to the concept of sustainable development is its interconnectedness to ethics, which points to the importance of relationships that honour the interdependence of the ecological system, the choices that we make in maintaining our relationships with the environment around us, and the attentiveness to the needs of others, respectively (Grace 2).

Closely related to environmental sustainability is the role or duty of humanity in ensuring the sustainability of the environment. In "Capital Volume 3" for instance, Marx reminded humanity about their crucial role as "good heads of the household" ("Capital Volume 3"). Based on the belief that a sustainable relation between human beings and nature is crucial for the sake of the earth and future enations, Marx asserts that

Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as *boni patres familias* [good heads of the household]. (“Capital Volume 3”).

“Good heads of the household” implies that humanity has a huge responsibility to sustain the environment so that succeeding generations will not be deprived of their rights to coexist with nature. It also implies a ‘give and take’ relationship to ensure the regenerative capacity of the ecosystem.

Marx’s theory of labour also carries particular relevance for an understanding of the role of humanity in environmental sustainability. The conception of labour to serve human needs, which is foregrounded by Marx in his theory of labour, has led critics to describe him as an extreme advocate of the ‘domination of nature’, which entails subjugation and exploitation. This scepticism implies that nature does not fall under moral considerability, and humans are free to do what they want with nature. Han, however, offers a persuasive counterargument, drawing from Engels’ recognition that

We by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly. (qtd. in Han 22)

Han contends that Engels was referring to “mastery” rather than “domination,” that “domination” involves absolute manipulation of nature by humans and is devoid of moral constraints (18). “Mastery” over nature, on the other hand, is referred to as the conduct of “reasonable adjustment and common control” for “the material metabolism between human beings and nature” (Han 23). Marx himself does not see any connection between mastery and human-nature relationship:

Basically the appropriation of animals, land etc. cannot take place in a master-servant relation, although the animal provides service. The presupposition of the master-servant relation is the appropriation of an alien will. Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal, may well provide a

service, but does not thereby make its owner into a master. (“Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”)

In fact, Engels does not identify with a one-sided human domination or control of nature:

Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. This holds good in relation both to the laws of external nature and to those which govern the bodily and mental existence of men themselves - two classes of laws which we can separate from each other at most only in thought but not in reality. ... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on natural necessity. (qtd. in Lenin, “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism”)

Marx and Engels envision “an existence in harmony with the established laws of nature” (Engels, “Anti-Duhring”), which indirectly implies that humans and nature both fall under moral considerability, and that, as “heads of the households” (Marx, “Capital Volume 3”), humans have the duty to regulate and control their interactions/activities with nature so as to ensure succeeding generations would not be deprived of it.

Other than reasonable conduct with nature, Marx has also highlighted activism. In “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” Marx uses the concept of ‘species-being’ to describe alienation, which means that humanity, under estranged labour, is alienated from his human aspect. This human aspect is a process of the self-making of the human species, realised through a direct, practical, and organic relation to other species and the whole of the natural world:

The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on organic nature; and the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art – his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible – so also in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc. The universality of man appears in

practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body. (“Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”)

According to Dyer-Witherford, ‘species being’ is Marx’s idea of what it is to be human, which not only refers to humanity’s biological and ecologically-embedded existence but also humanity’s capacity to transform itself through “a process of collective and individual self-development [that] entails material capacity, self-consciousness and collective organization, all feeding into each other” (17). This ability to consciously plan their interaction with nature (and other species) and act collectively to meet the needs of society and nature is what makes human beings social beings. Species-being therefore, implies the call for activism on the part of humanity, whereby cooperation and interaction among humans as well as the natural world is crucial. Coupled with ‘reasonable conduct’ as “good heads of the household” mentioned earlier, Marx’s ‘activism’ avails us of an ethics of active participation in serving causes related to sustaining the environment.

Marx’s contribution to the understanding of current environmental ethics may seem small, but it does have some interesting affinities with some of the concerns of contemporary environmental ethics, which are sustainability, duty, and activism. These three ethical principles are not treated here in isolation from the four important precepts for “doing” environmental ethics established earlier, which are duty, character, relationships, and rights. Environmental sustainability, which revolves around the idea of making decisions and taking actions that aim to preserve the capability of the environment to support present and future humanity, is a major concern in contemporary environmental ethics, which inevitably requires humanity to fulfil duties, build character, honour relationships, claim rights, and engage in activism. My analyses of the texts, therefore, explore the kinds of duty, character, relationships and rights proposed by the writers in facing land-related crises.

5.2 Rights, Duty and Character in *The Flame Tree*

In Ooi's *TFT*, environmental sustainability is a central theme, implicit in the way the novel is divided into three parts: Part One – Yang, Part Two – Yin, and Part Three – Tao. These divisions, named after major Taoist principles, are grounded in the dominant cultural traditions of Taoism, which, to this day, has continued to influence Chinese thinking about humanity's relationship with the environment. In Taoism, the environment is conceived as an articulate unity — a unity between humanity and nature. The Taoist principles of yin and yang, illustrate how this unity works. Although yin and yang are opposite in nature (yin – the feminine and negative side, yang – the masculine and positive side), they rely on each other and cannot exist without each other. Balance is therefore achieved by the interchange and interplay of these two components. In the same context, fundamental to the concept of sustainability are the social, economic and environmental systems of a society, which are interdependent and must be kept in harmony, or balance, if the society is to continuously function now and in the future.

The Taoist elements of yang, yin and tao provide an enriching basis of the causal connections between the characters and the juxtaposition of events. Part One – Yang – is described by Ooi as the “masculine principle,” the “animus” that gives logical reasoning and proud strength, and the “ambition” that steers humanity to power and achievement (1). Part One essentially establishes the story's exposition — especially the relentless “ambitions” behind the most visionary megaproject in Asia and the symbol of the nation's ambition — the Titiwangsa University. Other ambitions also unfold — Ooi ascertains this through the ‘stakeholders’ involved and the ethical dilemmas that ensued. There is Jasmine who leaves Malaysia behind at eighteen and, through hard work and perseverance, becomes the youngest ever partner in one of the most prestigious law firms in London and is set to lead the legal team of Jordan's construction and property management business. Jordan's ambition is to win the Titiwangsa University contract

— by any means. Tan and his brother, who thrives on security businesses, and whom Jordan has hired, also play a part in ensuring the contract is won. There is also Luke, an environmental consultant who is adamant to look into the technical side of the designs submitted during the tender process so as to ensure a sustainable development is delivered to the people. There is also Dr. Chan, who is determined to ensure that the proposed development brings prosperity to Ranjing and Kampung Tanah without bringing any environmental disasters. Through the exposition of these characters, Ooi establishes the ethical dilemmas involved and how the characters attempt to navigate through these dilemmas. Luke and Chan are concerned with the economic prosperity that the project would bring, but not at the expense of transparency, social justice, and respect towards the people's rights and their vulnerability. Jordan and Tan are not even bothered with the kinds of immoral consequences stemming from their actions as long as they manage to secure the Titiwangsa contract. The ethical dilemma is most profound in Jasmine's case. Her part as the legal advisor in the Titiwangsa project consistently challenges her abilities to determine the right thing to do, carry out effective ethical action, and lay out an effective strategy in order to avoid any ethical quandary in the future.

Part Two of the book –Yin – is described by Ooi as “feminine,” the “nurturing spirit that allows us to love and guides us to wisdom” and the “intuitive emotion that holds us against the storm, and in endurance, roots us to life” (217). This part revolves around what happens when the Titiwangsa project is awarded to Jordan. Land is cleared for New Kampung Tanah. Foundation works for the tower begins. The project brings prosperity to the town as jobs are created and businesses thrive. Dr. Chan and Luke, however, suffer the consequences of their battle to expose Jordan's faulty design. The former dies in a tragic car accident staged by Tan. Luke suffers from bad publicity he receives as a result of Jordan's slanderous campaigns.

Part Two essentially reveals the consequences of the unethical decisions that are made in Part One of the story, following Jordan's vicious scheming, Jasmine's blatant ignorance, and Tan's complicity in Jordan's relentless ambition. The controversial university tower collapses within a year after construction begins causing a massive landslide that slams into the town hall of New Kampung Tanah where Jordan is holding a celebration to commemorate the completion of Phase I of the project. The landslide "skidded and flowed down the full length of the slope, taking with it the new town, tracts of forest, cleared ground and any car, float, surprised resident and costumed child in its path" (304). What is particularly striking in Part Two is how Jasmine and Tan deal with the consequences of their actions. Realising their mistakes too late, Jasmine and Tan receive their 'wake-up call' that an ambition that does not take into consideration the interdependence of people and their environment yields disasters and catastrophes. Before the collapse, when a reporter enquires about the Titiwangsa Tower foundation, Jasmine is disturbed and remembers what Luke has told her. Having witnessed the catastrophe, Jasmine feels that she is to be blamed for her ignorance. Tan, too, is overwhelmed by the tragedy and is convinced that he is paying for his sins, especially for his part in Dr. Chan's tragic accident: "If I take a life, I pay with a life" (234).

Part Three – Tao – described by Ooi as "the way of harmony," "the intertwined balance of yin and yang" that enables us "to walk the path of life with true courage to illuminate the chaos with our inner light" (341), reveals the aftermath of the tragedy as well as accounts for all remaining loose ends. Trying to make up for their mistakes, Jasmine and Tan try their best to expose Jordan's evil doings. Jasmine goes to Robert's office in Kuala Lumpur and gathers evidence of Jordan's part in the disastrous project: a recording of the conversation between Jordan and Zain, whom he has bribed; notes exchanged between Jordan and Tsui, whom he has also bribed; and Luke's missing reports (377-383). Tan, on the other hand, writes everything about his involvement with

Jordan to pass to Luke as evidence. Feeling guilty over his involvement in Dr. Chan's murder, he feels that he "had been the catalyst. He had killed the man who might have saved them all. Who might have stopped the construction of the tower. Who might have stopped Jordan" (387). He also wants to stop Kidd, his brother and business partner, who has been hired by Jordan to kill Luke, convinced that he was "offering to the spirits . . . And then he would have repaid his debt. A life for a life" (387). Tan also consoles himself that he no longer does any dirty work. During the catastrophe, he helps rescue other people, saving lives, including Luke and Jasmine.

The Taoist principles of yin, yang, and tao assist Ooi in establishing the metaphysical linkage between humanity and nature. This linkage also has a moral implication as Taoism teaches the interdependence of things, much like ecology, whereby every member of the ecological system is equal and dependent on each other for survival, sustenance, and fulfilment (Ip 295). This very strong sense of dependence and connectedness carries with it a positive attitude that promotes good behaviour towards the environment — to "act in accordance with nature" (Ip 294). In *TFT*, this interdependence is threatened due to the construction of Titiwangsa university. Economic wealth that comes with the development of the mega project is welcomed, but the defective design of the university tower disrupts the interdependence of things in Kampung Tanah, or the "equilibrium" as Tan comes to realise too late, bringing "destruction to the balance of life in Kampung Tanah" (389). As Ooi has highlighted in Part Three, it is the "inner chaos" (341) that enables the tragedy to happen, stemming from ignorance and denial on the part of humanity to feel and appreciate the interconnectedness of every form of life. Through the concepts of yin, yang, and tao, Ooi elevates the needs for humanity to live in harmony with nature and for humanity to be responsible, positive, cooperative, kind and committed to sustain the environment.

Besides the emphasis on sustainability, Ooi also highlights the conditions necessary to promote activism. Ooi suggests that people should claim their rights to information and to participation in decisions related to development projects, as well as the rights to participate and form their environmental committee that works to prevent projects from impacting the land and its community. The first step taken by Dr. Chan towards realising these rights is by gathering the necessary data and reports. He hires Luke, a local university researcher who is also an expert in environmental assessment. Concerned and keen to help the people by bringing his scientific and analytical expertise to bear on the impending environmental problem foreseen by Dr. Chan, Luke alludes to the role of knowledge in advancing more powerful arguments about risky environmental projects and the need for a more discriminative approach to development. Besides claiming participatory rights, knowledge backed by scientific research and evidence is also seen as a condition necessary to promote activism. Dr. Chan and Luke's collaboration articulates the people's rights to information, participation in decision-making, and justice where development projects are concerned. Ooi also seems to suggest that people affected by development projects should assert their political participation collectively when state officials or agencies fail to act or ensure that the land is being protected. Claiming their participatory rights in ensuring sustainability, Ooi asserts, is the ultimate action the public should take, even though business corporations such as Jordan's often trample on these rights.

While Dr. Chan and Luke take it as their duties to protect the land involved in the construction of the Titiwangsa University megaproject, Jordan, Jasmine, and Tan choose to concentrate on fulfilling their self-interests. Jordan's self-interest is evident in his scheming to win the Titiwangsa project tender and his blatant disregard towards distant people and land. Jasmine's self-interest however, is compounded by the dilemma of serving the interests of her client, Jordan, and the people of Kampung Tanah, "the

kind of people from whom she had come” (87). She is aware of the issue that “development must benefit the local people” (82) and knows that the Kampung Tanah residents will have to be relocated and, therefore, not incorporated into the development of Titiwangsa if Jordan were to win the contract. But, in order to convince Jordan and his associates that she is professionally right for the job and is doing everything to help them to secure the contract, she proposes that Jordan buy the New Kampung Tanah land and reduce the tender price. In exchange, the locals are given expensive new houses in exchange for their old ones, and are required to pay the difference in value. This way, Jordan gets to recoup the losses he incurs in reducing the tender price and in relocating the people. Jasmine will also make sure that she would include exclusion-of-liability clauses in the agreements that the people have to sign for when they relocate (86). Jasmine’s role as the legal advisor in the Titiwangsa project positions her at the centre of the ethical dilemma revolving around the proposed project. She could have been the agency for ethical actions, but this is dismissed for the sake of fulfilling her ambition. She consoles herself that Kampung Tanah’s interests were not her concern, and that she is not their lawyer (87). She resolves the ethical dilemma she faces by reminding herself that her job and her commitment to act in the best interest of her client takes precedence over other matters.

Ooi highlights the perils of fulfilling one’s self-interest through Tan’s actions to capitalise on Jordan’s ‘offers’ to make sure the contract will be awarded to Jordan PLC. Tan’s ruthless complicity in Jordan’s unscrupulous ambition has long-term, fatal effects on Kampung Tanah, its people, and the environment around them. For quite some time, he shows no remorse for his part in threatening, intimidating, and ‘buying over’ the people in Kampung Tanah so that they will embrace progress, always making up for his immoral acts with devout Buddhist worship: “He was an intensely religious man and contributed an impressive sum every month to the temple” believing that “dues” are to

be paid and “favours” are to be bestowed, and that these are all part of his duty and obligation (36). To Tan, as long as he fulfils his duties to the gods and spirits (pays his dues), his business enterprise should be doing alright (favours bestowed by the gods and spirits). However, when the tower collapses, Tan begins to see the damage he had caused to the people of Kampong Tanah, convinced that he is paying for his sins, especially for his part in Dr. Chan’s staged car accident. Ooi seems to emphasise here that one’s ‘good’ character goes beyond fulfilling duty to the gods and spirits but also to strangers — humans and nonhumans included. Tan’s remorse, in the end, bears resemblance to the Buddhist precept concerning killing living creatures, based on the ethical premise concerning the value of life. Buddhism values all living creatures, and, therefore, it is the responsibility of humanity to abstain from destroying nature, animals, and fellow human beings. The infliction of suffering and pain on living creatures is also condemned. It is these critical aspects of Buddhism that Ooi tries to draw attention to in Tan’s characterisation. Implicit in these aspects is the essence of Buddhist environmental ethics — the duty to be non-violent and gentle towards all living creatures, as well as acting with a pure mind that is devoid of greed and hatred (De Silva 322). Ooi demonstrates that fulfilling this duty is fundamental, that the good ‘character’ is one who has knowledge about this duty, and thus applies it by having empathy and acting responsibly to preserve the integrity of the environment.

Jasmine’s blatant ignorance when she finds out the truth about Jordan’s defective design also points to the interconnectedness between intention, behaviour, and long-term effects. The moral to be drawn from this is quite straight-forward: the sort of intentions and behaviours a person seeks to achieve when dealing with the environment determines the effects of these intentions and behaviours onto the environment. The New Kampung Tanah tragedy is symbolic of the long-term effects of bad intentions and behaviour. As Ooi has highlighted in Part Three, it is the “inner chaos” (341) that

enabled the tragedy to happen, stemming from self-interest fulfillments. Here, Ooi also makes clear another duty, which is the necessity of humans to practice self-restraint, where environmental sustainability is perceived as emerging through one's 'inner revolution' in choosing the right intention and course of actions, as well as to correct their course of actions when it becomes evident that these actions cause tremendous disruption to the sustainability of the environment. Self-restraint also seems to hinge on the ultimate duty to act with care and compassion. Through care and compassion towards others, activism towards sustainability can be carried out both in the private and public arenas.

Through Dr. Chan's and Luke's attempts to save Kampung Tanah, Ooi makes clear the duty to promote for environmental justice. Underlying this duty is the human potential to do harm when the relations among humans as well as the relations between humans and the rest of the environment are not aimed at the general good. Dr. Chan's and Luke's public activities, which are private activities to begin with, are activities that, in the end, are left in the hands of Luke. Luke, who holds the key to Jordan's devious plan, becomes Ooi's most important moral agency in *TFT*. The ultimate 'responsibility' given to Luke, however, seems to encourage an individualised project of activism. Harnessing the power and influence of a group seem to be too big a task for Luke to tackle, leaving him alone in his quest to seek justice for the people of Kampung Tanah.

5.3 Sacred Duty and Relationship in *Between Lives*

Implicit in Maniam's *BL* is an environmental ethics that is largely grounded in Hinduism, which has relatively been employed in most of his works to address various issues pertaining to the Indian community in Malaysia. Maniam inherits from Hinduism an ethic that holds the land in reverence, so much so that caring for it and ensuring its

sustainability are of paramount importance. Ng, in his 2011 book *Intimating The Sacred: Religion in English Language Malaysian Fiction*, has argued that Hinduism helps the characters in Maniam's two other novels to root "spiritually and transcendently to a land which they cannot otherwise find a sense of belonging" (26-27). In *BL*, Hinduism again plays a fundamental role, this time with the ethical message that caring and sustaining humanity's relationship with the land is one's religious calling.

In *BL*, religious values and ethics seem to be one of the major conditions necessary to promote activism. By letting Sumitra and, soon after, Sumitra's family see and experience the "magical plentifulness" (108) of her land, Sellamma demonstrates how rituals associated with religion can be used as a mechanism to create respect for the land, and eventually encourage humans to fulfil their duty to contribute to sustainability. By swimming together with Sumitra in the river that sprawls across her land, for instance, Sellamma reinforces the spiritual importance of the river to her family. This ritual, as well as other rituals performed on her land, proves to work for Sellamma as it enables Sumitra and her family to believe in and treat the sacred land around them with respect. Helping to protect Sellamma's land then becomes a social calling, as well, as Sellamma makes Sumitra and her family realise that her land is also a part of Sumitra and her family's heritage, and that attempts to dispossess Sellamma from her land is unjust and sacrilegious. Maniam also seems to suggest that, when religion is sidelined, the environmental values and ethics embedded in the religion that encourage due respect and regard for God's creation are naturally sidelined, too. In the same context, Maniam implies that the sustainability of religious knowledge, values, and ethics is also crucial to the sustainability of the environment. To Maniam, religious knowledge, values, and ethics are humanity's solid supporters that give substance to life (D. Lim 41).

Threatened by involuntary displacement from her land, Sellamma shares the same problem faced by other invisible and powerless victims, who have to bear the brunt of environmental crisis alone. Besides providing the material and historical significance of the land, Maniam also imparts the spiritual relationship that Sellamma has with the land — a relationship that also plays a fundamental part in explaining why she refuses to budge from her land, thus claiming her rights to continue living on it. The values that she inherits from the teachings of Hinduism, particularly from the Ramayana, are put to practice on her land. Here, Maniam seems to remind us of a long-held Hindu view of divinity — that divinity is pervasive in all species, as stated in most of its sacred texts, especially in its Vedas (Dwivedi 162). The concept of “God is one and is everywhere present” enjoins Hindus to respect all elements of creation in order to maintain and protect the relationship between humanity and nature (Dwivedi 162). In *BL*, Maniam reiterates this view of divinity through Sellamma’s attachment to the Rama-Sita Grove, the garden where Sellamma’s family grows vegetables. When she is a child, she used to delight in associating the vegetables in the grove to the physical attributes of goddesses — referring to ladies fingers as “Sita’s fingers” and the brinjals as the Great Devi’s “breasts” (184).

The Hindu concept of the Earth as ‘the Mother,’ who provides energy for the sustenance of all species, also carries particular relevance in *BL*. When Sellamma plucks a brinjal in the Rama-Sita Grove, she is convinced that

‘When they cut them open, they will see,’ Sellamma said. ‘The seeds like pearls. The flesh like milk.’

‘The will only taste the ripeness,’ Anjalai said.

‘They will feel the Great Mother in everything,’ Selamma said and plucked one and held it tenderly against her cheek. ‘All from this land!’ (185)

By referring to the land as the “Great Mother,” Maniam reveals the Hindu concept of the earth, which sees The Earth as Devi, the goddess, or The Mother, who deserves devotion and protection. Many Hindu texts, especially the Atharva Veda, recognize that

human beings benefit from the earth and thus encourage humanity to offer gratitude and protection in response (Dwivedi 165). Through the “Great Mother,” Maniam conveys the message that land is sacred and thus worthy of sustaining, because of the spiritual knowledge and connection it offers.

This knowledge, however, is insufficient to help Sellamma protect her land. Sellamma’s devotion and active participation in seeing to the sustainability of her land serves to highlight the importance of moral agencies and collective activism in serving causes related to the environment. Sellamma’s efforts are invisible to the public, making her efforts a solitary duty, thus encourages an individualistic understanding of environmental activism. None of the state agencies that have worked on Sellamma’s case try to understand the spiritual and emotional connections Sellamma has with her land. Until Sumitra comes into the picture, Sellamma’s rights of access to justice become limited due to her unsocial, recluse lifestyle. Her rights, however, are extended when Sumitra, her family, and friends discover the reasons behind Sellamma’s reluctance to give up her land and unite to publicise and make the injustice imposed on her known to the public. Maniam seems to suggest that another condition vital in sustaining the environment is cooperation and/or connection with people who have the knowledge and the means to disseminate information about the causes and consequences of environmental threats. Complementary to this condition is also voluntary collective action, as exemplified by Sumitra, her family, and friends’ efforts to ward off the developer and to make the threats posed to the land known to the public.

Maniam puts forward several ways in which one can fulfil one’s duties, or act in ways that contribute to sustainability. One is the duty to treat land as sacred. Hinduism’s concept of *pancha mahabhutas* (five great elements that constitute the physical world) is of particular relevance to Maniam to show the land’s sacredness in *BL*. Earth, water, fire, air, and space are five essential elements that make up all of creation, and it is

believed that, upon death, humans dissolve into these five elements, thus balancing the cycle of nature. The interconnectedness of these elements is demonstrated towards the end, when Sumitra scatters Sellamma's ashes all over the Rama-Sita grove and the river, saying, "Now you really belong to the land, Sellam. Now you really belong" (325).

Indeed, three main segments of the physical environment — space, water and earth — that create a web of life, hence the interconnectedness of the cosmos and humanity, are given great significance in *BL*. Many aspects of the land are ascribed with religious identities. The Rama-Sita Grove that sprawls on Sellamma's land, serves economic as well as religious functions. When Sellamma brings Sumitra to the Rama-Sita Grove, she insists that Sumitra has "contact" with the soil. The *changkul* is symbolic of this contact for it is the means by which humanity works on the soil and, therefore, realises the interconnectedness of humanity and the earth.

Sellamma's devotion to her land also illuminates one's responsibility to protect the environment. To articulate this message, Maniam avails us of the Hindu concept of dharma, which is commonly referred to as one's duty and responsibility to the religion. Protecting the environment is considered an important expression of dharma, with two-fold duties: duty to the self, whereby inner strength is sought through spiritual action, and duty to the community, whereby social good is worked for (Dwivedi 169). All the rituals performed and practised on the land by Sellamma and her family are based on principles properly knitted with the Hindu way of life. The fundamentals are observed by Sellamma even after her family disintegrates. To Sellamma, protecting her land and the divinity that prevails in it is her duty — a duty that gives her strength, fulfilment and character. It is also a duty that she wants succeeding generations, represented by Sumitra and her family, to realise, practise, and sustain. Here Maniam seems to extend the individual duty to community duty, stressing the importance of passing this duty to

succeeding generations. Embedded in this individual and communal duty is the idea that sustainability is a practice that can potentially unite a community.

Modernity, materialism, individualism, and rapid economic transformation have somehow alienated Sumitra and her family from the Hindu way of life. Sumitra's condescending attitude towards Sellamma's obsession with her *puja* (act of worship) in the beginning, thinking that Sellamma is not in tune with the changing times, reflects the effect of this alienation. Sumitra's disdain towards the spiritual traditions that Sellamma inherits from her family also points to this alienation: "You've to take life as it comes, and not go off into some weird process of bringing back into life what was not living properly!" (76).

To fight for environmental justice also underlies Maniam's concern about sustainability. This duty is built upon the practice of solidarity with the vulnerable and marginalised such as Sellamma, who faces forced eviction from the land where she lives, works, and has a spiritual connection with. In her own way, Sellamma instils this duty in her tireless devotion to her land, and when Sumitra, her family, and friends recognise this, they develop a common strategy to act as a group toward helping her to preserve the land, especially after Sellamma's passing. When the developer comes to mark the land and begins work on the land surrounding Sellamma's land, Sumitra, together with her parents and her friends Aishah and Christina, construct fences, put up lighting around the land, and keep vigil to ward off the developer's men. These efforts are further reinforced by Sumitra and her friends when they put up a website highlighting their confrontation with the injustice. When Christina and Aishah, Sumitra's friends, remark on her attachment to Sellamma, Sumitra's response affirms the need to fight for justice, as the land does not only symbolise her relationship to Sellamma but also the sacredness of Mother Earth:

‘Become really attached to her, huh?’ Christina says, a little nervously.
‘Not just to her’
‘To her land?’ Aishah says.
‘More than the land.’ (320)

5.4 Kinship Ties in *Jungle of Hope*

Keris Mas’ *JOH* offers a glimpse into the rural Malay community’s struggle with the changing environment around them at a time when new laws and regulations regarding the land are enforced and tin mining and rubber plantations become the order of the day. Through Pak Kia’s struggle to begin a new life in the jungle of Ketari, Keris reveals the restrictions involved in promoting activism during colonial times, especially the claiming of rights to be free from ecological destruction. The disastrous flood that destroys his land, the impending conversion of the land in Ketari into a sledge tin mine, and the pressure to sell off his land leave little room for Pak Kia to assert his rights to live on his land and continue with the traditional lifestyle of farming rice. The only option left is to relocate to the jungle and continue with the traditional lifestyle, which does not last long when Pak Kia succumbs to planting rubber in order to survive in times of change.

In *JOH*, Keris seems to emphasise more on duties and caring relationships rather than activism. He does this by reverting to some of the environmental ethics practised by traditional Malay society, which may shed light on what kinds of duties contributed to the sustainability of land in the past. The traditional Malay community recognises the moral code of not taking more than one needs from nature (Haji Salleh 78). Taking only what they need for subsistence, they have a deep and strong respect for plants, animals, and the sea. This principle of sufficiency explains why when a piece of land was cleared to build a house, it was cleared to accommodate only the house and a small area for subsistence cultivation, while the surrounding area remained undisturbed. In *JOH*, when Pak Kia and a few others move to the jungle, they clear only the land that they need to

build houses and to plant paddy and fruit trees. The move to the jungle has inevitably brought about some ecological disturbance: one of the biggest threats facing Pak Kia and the others is the menace of wildlife such as wild boars, tigers, and elephants that ram into houses and destroy crops. Still, the settlers in the jungle acknowledge that “We share a common boundary with the animals in the jungle” (207). Jusuh and Pak Kia are equipped with guns, ready to use them if the wildlife menace gets out of hand. However, because of the values they place on sharing the land with the animals, they choose to ward off the animals through preventive measures. Building fences, lighting torches behind their houses, and beating bamboo gongs and empty tins are some of the measures taken to keep the wildlife away from their land at night (199-201). These practices are tirelessly observed every night, so that the entire new village looks like a “jungle was on fire” (202) and filled with a “tremendous din” (201).

During the day, monkeys also pose a problem to the villagers. They come in groups, “numerous,” “approaching cautiously, keeping under cover” before attacking (234). Besides keeping them at bay with the din from the rattle of empty tins, Pak Kia would wait until a great number of them appear and fire a shot to scare them off, which would then make the monkeys run helter-skelter (234). This serves to show that villagers would not kill animals unless they became truly a threat to humans’ lives. As Pak Kia explains to his son Karim, ““I shot only to scare them,” . . . “If we had shot to kill, hundreds would have died these past few days” (236). When a baby monkey is accidentally killed, Karim is distraught, but Jusuh assures him that even though “The war with the monkeys is a never-ending one” (237), the villagers do not condone unnecessary death and cruelty. ““We are not beasts,” . . . “We fight only in self-defence, for our own safety”” (236-237). Through these challenges faced in the jungle, Keris seems to suggest the duty to respect the land and its inhabitants, to have empathy,

as well as to act with care and compassion in order to ensure the integrity of the environment.

In *JOH*, Keris demonstrates that the duties to respect the land and to act with care and compassion is supplemented with rituals. For example, when land is to be cleared for dwelling purposes, the area to be cleared would be subjected to certain rituals meant to pacify the spirit of the plants and animals that are affected in the clearing. In *JOH*, a spirit appeasement ceremony conducted by Tuk Pawang, the traditional village expert in the occult, is held before the work of clearing the land begins (119-121). When the land is threatened by the menace of elephants, some villagers seek the help of Tuk Pawang, who gives them a charm — so that elephants would steer clear of their land.

These rituals demonstrate the Malays' traditional beliefs in animism — that animals and plants have soul spirits. These animistic beliefs and rituals may be attributed to the Malay concepts of *tubuh* (body) and *semangat* (spirit), which justify why subsistence-related activities such as hunting, fishing, or farming are perceived to be both practical and ritualistic (Davison 80). In addition, these beliefs may also be attributed to the belief that man, nature, and the supernatural are common parts of the universe or *dunia*. The supernatural, comprised of gods and special ancestral spirits, among other entities, are believed to co-exist in the world and despise the idea of humans encroaching upon their rights to live (Yaspar 273). During the spirit appeasement ceremony, Tuk Pawang orders a seven-day taboo period so as to placate these spiritual beings (121), reflecting the Malays' beliefs that any 'disturbance' of animals and plants has to be preceded by actions that placate or cajole the soul spirit that they possess. This ceremony, and the subsequent taboo period, also underscore how access to the forest is closely regulated by the observation of traditional rituals. Animism, however, is often at odds with the teachings of Islam in the traditional Malay

society. This mixing of values and beliefs typically characterise the traditional community, with some grappling with the issue of practising and/or abandoning certain rituals and animistic beliefs. In *JOH*, Zaidi and Jusuh wrestle with this issue.

The spirit appeasement ceremony for instance, does not sit well with Zaidi because he feels it is against the teachings of Islam. Although he is against it, Zaidi does not openly oppose this ritual. He attends the small feast that is held after the ceremony, where Quranic prayers are recited by a local imam for the land clearing. Zaidi's attitude seems to represent Keris' personal belief in the Malays needing a revitalised Islamic faith, devoid of spirit worship and other magical elements, and strengthened with Islamic values and ideals that could be used for economic and social betterment (Banks 130). In his portrayal of the traditional Malay community in *JOH*, Keris tries to promote these values and ideals, subtly rejecting ancient customs (or *adat*, in Malay) that lie outside Islam.

Amidst the modern, colonialist, capitalist economy that is sweeping through Ketari, Keris delineates the need to act in ways that contribute to sustainability, which is already practised in the traditional Malay community. Acting in ways that contribute to sustainability stems from the spirit and values of cooperation and helpfulness that characterise traditional, rural village life. In discussing the sense of community among (traditional) Malays, Wilson stresses on "kinship ties" that people in *kampongs* (villages) practise, even though they are not related by blood (qtd. in Milner 195). It is this "kinship" that becomes the unifying force in Malay villages, so much so that individualistic social behaviour is disdained (Milner 194).

The spirit and values of cooperation and helpfulness delineates the Malays' idea of relationships. This is conveyed through Zaidi's selfless, enterprising pursuits. Zaidi's affluence does not blind him to the environmental changes happening around him and in Malaya at that time. He has examined and analysed his people's predicament and

vulnerability that cause them to be displaced from their land. He is also aware of the Malays' decreasing political power in view of the Chinese' increasing economic power, which makes him envy the Chinese economic hegemony. The socio-economic and political changes at that time drive Zaidi to use his wealth to help the villagers in any way he can with the aim of ascending beyond poverty. He demonstrates that to act with care and compassion is to extend economic cooperation beyond his close relatives, such as Pak Kia, Tutung and Tapa, by hiring Chinese labourers to work in his plantation; venturing into wholesale supplying of jungle produce, and even incorporating the Orang Asli into his production system when labour is in short supply (7). He takes into account the different needs of the villagers, the main one being their dependency on their land for subsistence and economic growth. He buys up some of the villagers' land, letting them work on their land for free, as he does not want them to flee to the jungle. He does not want them to plant rice, either, knowing too well that the menace of the mining activities nearby would inevitably inundate the rice fields. He believes that it is only fair that the Ketari people should be given a new piece of land to grow rubber to compensate for their displacement (36). Although the villagers' means of earning a living is changed from planting rice to rubber, at least they would not have to be dispossessed of their land and suffer from displacement.

Zaidi's affiliation with Kaum Muda opens his mind to change and capitalist modernity and drives him into economic undertakings that advance his community so that the close link between them and the land is sustained. His efforts are humane and rest on feelings of empathy and integrity. He realises that he has to care about his people, that it is his duty to look back and give back to the people who directly or indirectly make his affluence possible. His efforts, which stem from his conscience to care and help, sustain the disadvantaged and poor people at that time, as well as preserve their intricate relationship to land. Since colonial capitalist expansion brings

about destruction, abuse, and displacement to the people and their land in Ketari, Zaidi sees it as a social injustice, hence his efforts to seek knowledge and wealth as well as to help his fellow villagers in any way he can so that he and future generations would not be subjected to the same injustice.

A foil to Zaidi, Pendekar Atan succeeds in enticing most of them to the wealth that they get by giving up their land, except when it comes to Pak Kia, Pak Abu, Tutung and Tapa. He is there as a reminder for what a person might become if economic advancement and progress are largely based on individualism and unlimited greed for wealth accumulation with no ethical consideration for any other interests. Zaidi then, becomes Keris' most important moral agency in *JOH*. This strategy, however, makes Zaidi's efforts seem solitary, and thus conveys an individualistic conception of activism, acting based on personal wealth, knowledge and decision.

5.5 Duty and Activism in *Days of Change*

In *DOC*, Chuah tells the story of the fulfilment of duties through Hafiz and his friends' battle against an intimidating property development company bent on two things: appropriating his land at Jock's Hill and building a dam at Banir Valley as part of the Malaysian-Disneyland theme park. The proposed development project is expected to inundate Banir Valley — part of which is gazetted as a Forest Reserve. Yew Chuan, Hafiz's long time friend, lines up educated, urban citizens intent on protesting against the project and raising public awareness, making the Banir Valley issue heard, despite the daunting obstacles that await them. It is not an easy task for Malaysian communities to protect their environment and way of life in the face of increasing pressures for resource exploitation and capitalist growth. Repressive laws and mainstream media that are controlled and owned by the state also play a role in stunting public opinion.

Hafiz, who was raised in Banir Valley, knows the landscape too well to ignore the history of the valley he and the community have developed a relationship with.

All around us was virgin forest. From our distance and height, the tree tops below us looked just like broccoli...Under that canopy are the two endangered rivers. The smaller river, the Berintik, I knew well as a boy for it flows past the wild, eastern foot of Jock's Hill on its way south to join the Banir, the river that gives the district its name. From that confluence, the much larger Banir takes a time-worn course westwards, through untrodden jungle to the padi fields, fruit orchards and vegetable gardens of rural Kampong Banir Hilir, through the town of Kota Banir, and then through the desolation of the mangrove swamps before it too loses itself in the sea. (31-32)

Yew Chuan too, knows too well the impending environmental disaster that is in store for Banir Valley if the proposed project materialises. "All this will disappear, you know," Yew Chuan says to Hafiz (31).

Protesting against the project reveals Chuah's concern that careful thought must be given to new development projects. Based on the understanding of land as an integral part of the community's history and identity, the group of protesters take it as their duty to care and act for Banir Valley. Besides Yew Chuan and Hafiz, there is Dr. Mohini; Hector Wong, a journalist attached to a regional newsmagazine based in Hong Kong; Faridah, a psychologist; and Sundram, an engineer who works with the Waterworks Department and also is a chairman of local branch of the Malaysian Nature Society. These characters exhibit a willingness to act for Banir Valley. Through their expertise and knowledge, they take it as their duty to do what is right for Banir Valley, at a time when the sustainability of Banir Valley is becoming increasingly uncertain. Giving different perspectives on the catastrophe that awaits Banir Valley, the group displays a sensitivity that transcends strictly economic relations with no obligations to an understanding of the importance of land, and thus the responsibility of keeping a special eye out for local environments and environmental issues. It is this sensitivity that creates

deep caring on the part of the group and promotes activism, which is played out collectively in the public sphere to stop the proposed project.

When news regarding Hartindah's plans for the Banir Valley receive coverage in the local and regional media due to Hector's role in drumming up media interest, the protest group organised by Yew Chuan relentlessly lobbies for its case. This activism, Chuah stresses, needs to be backed by knowledge based on research and evidence. Hector's position as a journalist attached to an external press proves advantageous and liberating considering the media in Malaysia has either been co-opted or is controlled, and constantly reinforces the state's ideology regarding development. Months of intense lobbying by Yew Chuan's group pays off when a few months later, Hartindah announces that the project is shelved until a thorough environmental impact assessment has been made.

Engaged in varied lobbying actions, Yew Chuan's group's fight against Hartindah's proposed project demonstrates the result of claiming participatory rights in environmental problems and striving for solidarity between different individuals, regardless of race and religion. After decades of progress in economy and education, Yew Chuan's group is convinced of their right to participate in issues that concern the land. The community-based group proves to be a formidable player in the controversial Banir Valley project, challenging the moral character of the state and business corporations. It begins with one act and one decision that kick starts the flow of goodness into the Banir Valley community. Through this solidarity, the sustainability of Banir Valley is advanced. The larger community outside Banir Valley learn about the history of the place they are exposed to, recognise past relationships that have enabled the valley to prosper, and begin to see through empathetic eyes the ways in which development could influence environmental and human futures. Chuah demonstrates that activism begins with the actions of citizens politically advancing their rights,

claiming their participatory rights to information, decision-making, and justice in the form of collective action, organised through grassroots movements.

Different from his friends, Hafiz's sense of worth, values, and knowledge is played out individually, leading to his devious plan to kill Abu Bakar. Chuah seems to suggest that a willingness to act for others requires sensitivity and that this sensitivity could lead to disastrous consequences that would defeat the purpose of fighting for an environmental cause if it is not mediated through proper ethical means and methods. Hafiz's relentless efforts to bring development to Kampong Basoh, however, are inspiring. It teaches us that, as we proceed through life, a willingness to act for others, and to provide the necessary conditions for the realisation of human rights, especially to those who are the least fortunate and the most vulnerable, is part of our duty in ensuring environmental justice and sustainability. Hafiz's solitary act however, seems to foster an individualised sense of duty towards ensuring sustainability. It also highlights the irony of his character — he has empathy for the cause of Banir Valley but chooses to take matters into his own hands by attempting to kill Abu Bakar.

5.6 Conclusion

Based on an understanding of the responsibilities on the part of humanity to serve causes related to sustaining the environment, Ooi, Maniam, Keris, and Chuah seem to promote environmental ethics that are appropriate to the achievement of sustainability in Malaysia. The view that humanity is part of the environment of a place is foregrounded in all of the texts, reiterating the interconnectedness of all things in this world in a cause-and-effect relationship. This understanding is crucial in order to drive the message that what we do with the environment around us, and the kind of persons we are, matter. The writers seem to suggest that humanity's core duty is to respect land and its community, to act with care and compassion towards humans and nonhumans,

and to seek social and environmental justice. In foregrounding the fulfilment of these duties towards sustainability, writers like Ooi, Maniam, and Keris demonstrate that these duties can be traced back to religious and cultural traditions, which have not been eroded by capitalist modernity and which can be shared and reinforced to potentially draw individuals in the direction of that ultimate goal of caring for and sustaining the environment.

Being a good person with ethical and moral strength can be challenging. Closely related to this challenge is having empathy and integrity. The writers seem to suggest that empathy and integrity — the ability to understand and do the right thing in the midst of an environmental crisis or dilemma — are also fundamental in dealing with the environment. These inner qualities can be cultivated through regular practice of our own cultural orientation and faith. A sense of place, belonging and community, which nourishes shared identity, also serves to help shape good attitudes and behaviour toward nature.

In terms of activism, the claiming of rights is seen as crucial by Ooi, Maniam, and Chuah with the emphasis on the rights to justice, to get access to information, take part in decision-making, and to form an environmental committee. This claiming of rights alludes to the recent rise of the concept of civil society in the Malaysian context. These rights, however, need to be backed by knowledge based on scientific research and evidence and collective resistance action. As Curtin has highlighted, activism, nowadays, “is a practice of resistance. It is the attempt to establish and maintain a public space in which the common good can be fostered” (194). The claiming of these rights however, proves to be a problem in Malaysia where capitalism does not show any sign of stopping and being critical of the state and its affiliates poses a threat to communities and grassroots actors. Checks and balances need to be applied to sanction the complicity of the state and business interests in environmental degradation. When no checks and

balances exist, as illustrated in *BL*, *DOC*, and *TFT*, the impacts are felt in the realm of human rights and environmental protection. The claiming of rights echoes what Marx has termed as realising “species-being,” or what it is to be human — to be able to develop through material as well as collective cooperation with humans and the natural world. However, the writers’ focus on the fulfilment of duty by individual characters seems to reinforce an individual, private sense of activism towards environmental sustainability, when fulfilling duties towards sustainability also requires collective participation in public life. Perhaps this shortcoming has much to say about the actual resolution of environmental problems in Malaysia, and that it needs a shift in environmental attitudes, beliefs, and values, stemming from a serious understanding of individual and collective environmental commitment.

To sum up, environmental ethics in the Malaysian context seems to revolve around the profound ideas that we are part of the environment, that the future of the environment hinges on actions and knowledge to ensure its sustainability, and that action is derived from a sense of shared duty and activism and having good character and relationships. These ideas, although not new, must not be misconstrued as unique, Malaysian environmental ethics as they show some coherence with the existing known ethics of the environment, such as sustainability, ecocentrism, environmental justice, and virtue. Given that these existing ethics are the outcomes of global concern about the current environmental crisis, the writers’ treatment of environmental ethics can be perceived as a cross-cultural dialogue that seeks to distil from the Malaysian culture those values and attitudes that govern and develop humanity’s judgment about their moral relationship and interconnection with the environment.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In terms of postcolonial environment, as in terms of all forms of creations and invention, imagination is at the forefront of change and is the impetus for possibility.. ~ Laura Wright

In this thesis, I analysed and examined environmental attitudes in the following selected Malaysian contemporary novels in English: Keris Mas' *Jungle of Hope*, K.S. Maniam's *Between Lives*, Chuah Guat Eng's *Days of Change*, and Yang-May Ooi's *The Flame Tree*, using an Eco-Marxist approach — a close reading of the texts using select Marxist ecological insights and theory, informed by relevant postcolonial and environmental concepts/ideas as well as the historical and cultural changes that have occurred in Malaysia. Although Marxism is believed to lack an explicit perspective on ecology, we may still benefit from this theory, which I believe provides a lens to dissect environmental issues in the Malaysian context, thus contributing to our understanding of the inextricable human-nature relationship and account for the ways we deal with environmental issues in Malaysia.

Overall, I discussed these attitudes through four pertinent environmental themes: alienation from nature, politics of the environment, development, and ethics. In Chapter One, I sketched the context of the study, justified it, provided an outline of its objectives and scope, and reviewed the literature on ecocriticism and postcolonial ecocriticism, as well as the selected Malaysian texts. The subsequent four chapters are organised according to four environmental theme issues: alienation from nature, politics of the environment, capitalist-based development, and ethics. These chapters were inspired by the drive to know the writers' attitudes towards the environment, and the multifaceted cultural and environmental factors that help shape these attitudes.

In Chapter Two, I analysed the notion of alienation from nature. I delved into how Keris, Chuah, and Maniam demonstrate humanity's efforts to deal with alienation in *Jungle of Hope*, *Days of Change*, and *Between Lives*, respectively. I argued that all three texts by these writers serve as valuable resources for thinking about alienation and its effects on humanity, the immense capacity that humanity has to monitor and amend their relationships with nature, and how a strong sense of place and tradition serves as an indelible marker of one's identity and motivation to serve causes related to the environment. Keris, through *JOH*, for example, delves into the onset of this alienation, focusing on the trauma felt by Malay peasants caught between environmental realities and tradition. Chuah, through *DOC*, focuses on the outcomes of alienation, examining how, through decades of independence, progress and modernity, indifference to the land and its relationship to humanity becomes second nature. Land is merely perceived as a commodity, entangled in political and economical forces that quickly replace tradition. Maniam, through *BL*, also delves into this rift. He, however, offers a way to heal this rift by going back to cultural and religious tradition.

I examined notions of resistance and empowerment in Keris' *Jungle of Hope*, Maniam's *Between Lives*, Chuah's *Days of Change*, and Ooi's *The Flame Tree* in Chapter Three and what effects these notions have on land that is threatened by environmentally-destructive projects. I argue that, whilst the authors continue to subscribe to the strongly entrenched tradition of "power over," which often involves coercion, control, oppression, and domination, they also apply notions of resistance and empowerment in order to create and also suggest more equitable relations and structures of power. In *JOH* and *TFT*, control and domination of the capitalists, the state, and the ideology propagated by both seem to be a damning indictment of environmental struggles, whereas, in *DOC* and *BL*, resistance and empowerment lead to an effective exercise of countervailing power.

Direct and indirect political, economic, and ideological control stifle the exercise of human rights — particularly freedom of expression, the right to information, participation in decision-making, and the right to justice. In the same context, resistance and empowerment become problematic when ideological dominance and coercion are constantly manufactured by the state and the capitalists to stifle public opinion and participation in issues related to environmentally-destructive projects. In a semi-democratic country like Malaysia, the notions of resistance and empowerment expose the paradox of balancing ecological and human considerations in a semi-democratic country, where governance and decisions related to the land continue to be defined and constrained by the dominance of the state, the capitalists, and the ideology propagated by both, and limited space is provided for civil society participation. These notions, too, seem to convey the writers' attitudes towards the political culture in Malaysia, which point to the needs for the civil society to be more knowledgeable and "proactive" in fighting environmental abuse and injustice rather than being "submissive," through the exercise of individual and collective agencies to promote and advocate for environmental activism. In addition, the writers also warn against the subordination of the society through ideological coercion, which often prevails through people's own consent.

In Chapter Four, I focused on development with the understanding that development is the array of measures, plans, and policies that are introduced at many levels in society with the aim of improving the quality of people's lives. I argued that, through their treatment of development, Keris, Maniam, Chuah and Ooi bring to light other equally important issues, which are notions of justice, democracy, and cultural sustainability, thus emphasising the flaws of adopting a development model that is essentially based on economic and capitalist growth. In *BL*, Maniam underscores the consequences of development ideology that rests on economic and capitalist priorities,

highlighting the costs borne by the most marginalised and vulnerable members of the society as well as imploring for development that takes into account spiritual and cultural needs. Chuah, through *DOC*, implies that social equity is the cornerstone of society, which cannot be maintained for a few at the expense of many. To Chuah, development should also take into account the best interests of the rural communities, and that it should enrich them rather than dispossess or destroy their cultural wealth. In *TFT*, Ooi contends that development cannot be imposed on the people as a lasting benefit without taking into account the inextricable link between the land and its entire ecosystem, and that democratic participation as well as other factors external to the community should be given a positive role in order to improve accountability. She also underscores the sustainability of the land and the community as crucial factors in ideology, planning and decision-making about the environment.

JOH, *BL*, *DOC*, and *TFT*, as discussed in Chapter Five, show the environmental values and principles suggested by Keris, Maniam, Chuah, and Ooi in their treatment of land-related issues. My analysis of these values and principles is based on four ethical arguments for “doing” environmental ethics: duty, character, relationships, and rights (Traer 138). Marx’s contribution to the understanding of current environmental ethics may seem small, but it does have some interesting affinities with some of the concerns of contemporary environmental ethics, which are sustainability, duty, and activism. These three ethical principles are also investigated to enrich the four important arguments for “doing” environmental ethics, which are duty, character, relationships, and rights. The writers seem to suggest that humanity’s core duty is to respect the land and its community, to act with care and compassion towards humans and nonhumans, and to seek social and environmental justice. In foregrounding the fulfilment of these duties towards sustainability, writers like Ooi, Maniam, and Keris demonstrate that these duties can be traced back to religious and cultural traditions, which have not been

eroded by capitalist modernity and which can be shared and reinforced to potentially draw individuals in the direction of the ultimate goal of caring for and sustaining the environment. The writers seem to suggest that empathy and integrity — the ability to understand and do the right thing in the midst of an environmental crisis or dilemma — are also fundamental in dealing with the environment. These inner qualities can be cultivated through regular practice of our own cultural orientations and faiths. A sense of place, belonging, and community, which nourishes shared identity, also serves to help shape good attitudes and behaviour toward nature. In terms of activism, the claiming of rights is seen as crucial by Ooi, Maniam, and Chuah, with emphasis on the rights to justice, getting access to information, taking part in decision-making, and forming an environmental committee. These rights, however, need to be backed by knowledge based on scientific research and evidence and collective resistance action.

Among the things that inspired my study was the conviction that Malaysian writers do have some ‘attitudes’ about environmental issues, which are learned and formed as a result of a person’s direct experience, information acquired from others, and exposure to mass media. My study revealed that the writers in this study showed concerned attitudes towards the environment, as they engaged with environmental issues along with the social, economic, and political problems affecting the Malaysian society, given that these problems are inseparable from environmental issues and also inform and reinforce one another. Initiatives by the writers to share their concerned attitudes towards the environment are no less important just because these attitudes are restricted to texts. They have proven that having an attitude is not enough, that it is necessary for them to delve further into the environmental realm, deliberating on the issues and their effects on the different communities and the ecological system that make up Malaysia. By raising questions and issues central to the state of the

environment in Malaysia, the writers are already contributing to the debate on postcolonial environments.

This study revealed that the selected texts serve as valuable resources for “lessons” in nation building, attesting to the tensions involved in developing a country while maintaining and protecting the environment. Indeed, these historicised and politicised novels need to be read as exemplary instances of postcolonial productions critical of the state of the environment in Malaysia. What I have discovered in these novels is the need for a fundamental understanding of the degradation of the environment in Malaysia, which is, historically, the by-product of a development paradigm that is driven by economic and capitalist priorities. The writers’ answer to environmental degradation is relatively practical: a genuine commitment to the environment is crucial if we are to move towards sustainability. This commitment can be mediated through a sense of place, a strong and resilient civil society, a development paradigm that puts more emphasis on people *and* the environment, and an environmental ethics focused on duty, relationships, activism, and sustainability.

What I have also discovered in this study is the role of history in shaping these attitudes and that the environment in Malaysia needs to be understood according to the different phases of its history: pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, which are marked by significant and sometimes overlapping cultural changes and forces such as colonisation, modernity, capitalism, the formation of the nation-state, rapid industrialisation, development, and globalisation. These different phases of Malaysian history, however, have not obscured the commendable influences of traditional beliefs and systems in the selected works, proving that capitalist modernity and its central tenets — science, secular culture, liberal democracy, individualism, and humanism — have not replaced tradition, and that traditional ways of knowing and perceiving the environment continue to be the basis of humanity’s experience.

Readers could re-examine and re-evaluate the environmental attitudes (or the lack thereof) that they have before and after reading these texts. Like other developing nation-states, Malaysia faces the task of nation-building and inculcating a sense of commitment and loyalty among its people. This challenging task is framed within these novels, articulated through land, which is symbolic of a shared heritage that provides the characters with a sense of place and, consequently, a sense of duty and activism to protect and ensure its sustainability. Readers are therefore reminded that land and environmental concerns could serve as a common cause that brings people into the sphere of nation-building, instead of minding their own business, leaving this delicate goal in the hands of politicians and/or institutions. In the same context, these writers suggest a different way of looking at nationhood, moving away from communal views to environmental views, and from ethnic-based politics to environmental-based politics.

The writers extend their apprehension in regards to sustaining the environment for present and future generations vis-a-vis the rapid and dramatic transformations in Malaysian society — the consequences of capitalist modernisation, globalisation, and technological advancement. In a country like Malaysia, where nation-building is still a process rather than an end result, the need to consider present and future needs of humans and their environment is a deep-seated need. In its quest to achieve the status of a developed nation by 2020, Malaysia requires an overhaul in its way of thinking about the environment. In this context, too, examining and re-evaluating our environmental attitudes is crucial. In the realm of Malaysian literature in English, these novels are certainly the most explicit form for such a project.

This study should not be considered as a full representation of the large spectrum of voices that make up Malaysia on the issue of the environment. After all, this study delves into the issue of land threatened by plans to develop it. I should mention, therefore, that to do justice to Malaysian literature in English, future research

should examine other equally important environmental tropes other than land, and other environmental issues, such as industrial-based pollution and conservation-based efforts. In the same context, since my study is limited to the novels selected, it would be insightful if future research could incorporate texts written by other writers, as well as other genres such as poetry, short stories, and plays. I should also mention that to do justice to Malaysian literature in English, literature in English from Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) merit an ecocritical study, as well. Considering the geophysical, historical, cultural, political, and socio-economic backgrounds of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) vary significantly (Hurst 46; Jomo, Chang, and Khoo 221), and that environmentalism in East Malaysia is more reflective of the people's movement (J. Tan, "Interview"), an ecocritical study of East Malaysian texts would paint a more robust picture of Malaysian literature in English to the rest of the literary world.

Finally, it is hoped that this thesis has given a fresh impetus to the cause of environmental criticism in the local literary-critical practice, prompting others to continue to address and critique environmental representations from as many Malaysian perspectives as possible, using as many theories as possible.

REFERENCES

- A. Hatta, Zulkarnain, and Isahaque Ali. "Poverty Reduction Policies in Malaysia: Trends, Strategies and Challenges." *Asian Culture and History* 5.2 (2013): 48-56. Print.
- Ab. Ghani, Aminuddin., et al. "Inferring Digital Flood Mapping from Known Free Data." *3rd International Conference on Managing Rivers in the 21st Century*. Ed.: 3rd International Conference on Managing Rivers in the 21st Century. Print.
- Abdul Kader, Mohideen. "Land Alienation: The Need for Transparency and Accountability." *Tanah Air Ku: Land Issues in Malaysia*. Ed. Penang, Consumers' Association of. Penang: Consumers' Association of Penang, 2000. 12-19. Print.
- Abdul Manaf, Nor Faridah, and Mohamad A. Quayum. *Colonial to Global: Malaysian Women's Writing in English 1940s - 1990s*. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2001. Print.
- Abdullah, A. Rahim, ed. *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Keris Mas*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995. Print.
- Adams, William M. "Nature and the Colonial Mind." *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial World*. Eds. Adams, William M. and Martin Mulligan. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003.16-50. Print.
- Adams, William M. and Martin Mulligan, "Introduction." *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*. Eds. Adams, William M. and Martin Mulligan. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003. 1-15. Print.
- Adamson, Joni, and Scott Slovic. "The Shoulders We Stand On: An Introduction to Ethnicity and Ecocriticism." *MELUS* 34.2 (2013): 5-24. Print.
- Adas, Michael. "From Avoidance to Confrontation: Peasant Protest in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23.2 (1981): 217-47. Print.
- Alatas, Syed Hussein. *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1977. Print.
- Ambali, Abdul Raufu. "Policy of Sustainable Environment: Malaysian Experience." *European Journal of Scientific Research* 48.3 (2011): 466-92. Print.
- Amin, Adibah. "Introduction." *Jungle of Hope*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2009. vii- x. Print.
- Andaya, Barbara Watson. "Historicising "Modernity" in Southeast Asia." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40.4 (1997): 391-409. Print.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 1991. Print.

- Aoyagi-Usui, Midori, Henk Vinken, and Atsuko Kuribayashi. "Pro-Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors: An International Comparison." *Human Ecology Review* 10.1 (2003): 23-31. Print.
- Appudurai, Jayanath, and G.A. David Dass. *Malaysian Indians: Looking Forward*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2008. Print.
- Arasaratnam, Sinnappah. "Malaysian Indians: The Formation of Incipient Society." *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Eds. Sandhu, K. S. and A. Mani. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993. 190-210. Print.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Attfield, Robin. *Environmental Ethics: An Overview for the Twenty-First Century*. 2nd ed. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2014. Print.
- Aziz, Abdul Rahman. "Tiga Kelompok Sosial Melayu Dalam Rimba Harapan." *Sasaterawan Negara Keris Mas: Tanggapan Tokoh Dan Sarjana*. Eds. A. Karim Abdullah and A. Rahim Abdullah. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2001. 174-83. Print.
- Balasubramaniam, R. Rueban. "Hobbesism and the Problem of Authoritarian Rule in Malaysia." *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 4.2 (2012): 211-34. Print.
- Banks, David J. "Keris Mas's Critique of Islamic Rituals in Malay Life." *The Global South* 3.2 (2009): 130-43. Print.
- Barker, Colin, et al. "Marxism and Social Movements: An Introduction." *Marxism and Social Movements*. Eds. Barker, Colin, et al. Leiden and Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013. 1-37. Print.
- Barr, Michael D. *Cultural Politics and Asian Values: The Tepid War*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Bartolovich, Crystal. "Introduction: Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies." *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*. Eds. Bartolovich, Crystal and Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 1-20. Print.
- Baumol, William J., Robert E. Litan, and Carl J. Schramm. *Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity*. Yale: Yale University, 2007. Print.
- Beeson, Mark. "Mahathir and the Markets: Globalisation and the Pursuit of Economic Autonomy in Malaysia." *Pacific Affairs* 73.3 (2000): 335-51. Print.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Blaut, J.M. "Marxism and Eurocentric Diffusionism." *The Political Economy of Imperialism: Critical Appraisals*. Ed. Chilcote, Ronald. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999. 127-40. Print.

- Bottomore, Tom, et al., eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell 1991. Print.
- Bowie, Alasdair. "Civil Society and Democratization in Malaysia." *Growth and Governance in Asia*. Ed. Sato, Yoichiro. Hawaii: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004. 193-202. Print.
- Boylan, Michael. "Ethical Reasoning." *Environmental Ethics*. Ed. Boylan, Michael. 2nd ed. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014. 3-13. Print.
- Brooker, Peter. *Cultural Theory: A Glossary*. London: Arnold, 1999. Print.
- Brookfield, Harold, Abdul Samad Hadi, and Zaharah Mahmud. *The City in the Village: The in-Situ Urbanization of Villages, Villagers and Their Land around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.
- Brookfield, Harold, Lesley Potter, and Yvonne Byron. *In Place of the Forest: Environmental and Socio-Economic Transformation in Borneo and the Eastern Malay Peninsula*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1995. Print.
- Bruun, Ole, and Arne Kalland, eds. *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*. London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1995. Print.
- Bryant, Raymond L., and Sinead Bailey. *Third World Political Ecology*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. Print.
- Bunnell, Tim. "Views from above and Below: The Petronas Twin Towers and/in Contesting Visions of Development in Contemporary Malaysia." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 20.1 (1999): 1-23. Print.
- Case, William. "Thorns in the Flesh: Civil Society as Democratizing Agent in Malaysia." *Civil Society in Asia*. Eds. Schak, David C. and Wayne Hudson. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003. 40-58. Print.
- Chan, Ngai Weng. "Degradation of Highland Areas in Malaysia: Effects on Water Resources." *Tanah Air Ku: Land Issues in Malaysia*. Ed. Consumers' Association of Penang. Penang: Consumers' Association of Penang, 2000. Print.
- Chua, Jui Meng. "Time to Stop the Land Grabs." *FMT News*. Free Malaysia Today. 15 November 2012. Web. 6 Dec. 2012.
- Chuah, Guat Eng. *Days of Change*. Kuala Lumpur: Chuah Guat Eng, 2010. Print.
- Ciaffa, Jay A. "Tradition and Modernity in Postcolonial African Philosophy." *Humanistas* 21.1&2 (2008): 121-45. Print.
- Clark, Brett, and John Bellamy Foster. "Marx's Ecology in the 21st Century " *World Review of Political Economy* 1.1 (2010): 142-56. Print.

- Clark, Brett, and Richard York. "Rifts and Shifts: Getting to the Root of Environmental Crises." *Monthly Review*. Monthly Review Foundation, Nov. 2008. Web. 15 Oct. 2014.
- Clayton, Susan. "Environmental Identity: A Conceptual and an Operational Definition." *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*. Eds. Clayton, Susan and Susan Opatow. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003. 45-66. Print.
- Clayton, Susan, and Susan Opatow. "Introduction: Identity and the Natural Environment." *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*. Eds. Clayton, Susan and Susan Opatow. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2003. 1-24. Print.
- Coates, Peter. *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times*. California: University of California Press, 1998. Print.
- Consumers' Association of Penang. "Chronology of Events in Bukit Merah Asian Rare Earth Development". Consumers' Association of Penang, 2011. Web. 25 Jun. 2011.
- Coppola, Carlo. "Review of Sensuous Horizons: The Stories and the Plays by K. S. Maniam." *World Literature Today* 71.1 (1997): 231-32. Print.
- Cross, Jennifer E. *What Is Sense of Place?* 12th Headwaters Conference, Colorado, 2-4 November 2001. Unpublished conference paper. Colorado State University, Department of Sociology, 2012. Web. 9 Jul. 2014.
- Curtin, Deane. *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 2005. Print.
- Davison, Julian. "Traditional Attitudes Towards the Environment." *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: The Environment*. Ed. Sham Sani. Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1998. 80-81. Vol. 1. 15 vols. Print.
- Deen, Mawil Y. Izzi. "Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society." *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*. Ed. Gottlieb, Roger S. New York: Routledge, 1996. 158-67. Print.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, and George B. Handley, eds. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- De Silva, Lily. "The Buddhist Attitude Towards Nature." *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Eds. Pojman, Louis P. and Paul Pojman. Belmont: Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning, 2008. 319-23. Print.
- Des Jardins, Joseph R. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*. 2nd. ed. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997. Print.
- DiGi. *Deep Green*. DiGi, 2011. Web. 8 June 2011.

- Din, Kadir. "Environmental Ethics." *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: The Environment*. Ed. Sham Sani. Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1998. 82-83. Vol. 1. 15 vols. Print.
- Dixon, Chris, and David W. Smith, eds. *Uneven Development in South East Asia*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997. Print.
- Dobson, Andrew, and Ángel Valencia Saiz. "Introduction." *Environmental Politics* 14.2 (2005): 157-62. Print.
- Dobson, Andrew, and Derek Bell. "Introduction." *Environmental Citizenship*. Eds. Dobson, Andrew and Derek Bell. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006. 1-17. Print.
- Douglass, Mike. "Mega-Urban Regions and World City Formation: Globalisation, the Economic Crisis and Urban Policy Issues in Pacific Asia." *Urban Studies* 37.12 (2000): 2315-35. Print.
- Dwivedi, O.P. "Satyagraha for Conservation: A Hindu View." *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Eds. Pojman, Louis P. and Paul Pojman. Belmont: Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning, 2008. 310-18. Print.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick. "Species-Being and the New Commonism: Notes on an Interrupted Cycle of Struggles." *The Commoner*. N. 11 (2006): n. pag. Web. 6 May 2014.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Why Marx Was Right*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. Print.
- Ee, Tiang Hong. *Myths for a Wilderness*. Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, 1976. Print.
- Eng, Sew Kee. "Rubbish Woes at Janda Baik ". 2011. *Wild Asia*. Wild Asia, 2011. Web. 25 January 2012.
- Engels, Frederick. "Marx and Engels Correspondence." *Marx and Engels Internet Archive*: Marxist.org, n.d. Web. 8 October 2012.
- . "Anti-Dühring." *Marx and Engels Internet Archive*: Marxist.org, n.d. Web. 6 May 2012.
- Fallis, L. S. "Review of the Return by K. S. Maniam." *World Literature Today* 56.4 (1982): 757. Print.
- Featherstone, Simon. *Postcolonial Cultures*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. Print.
- Firth, Raymond. "The Peasantry of South East Asia." *International Affairs* 26.4 (1950): 503-14. Print.
- Foster, John Bellamy. *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000. Print.

- Foster, John Bellamy., and Brett Clark. "Ecological Imperialism: The Curse of Capitalism." *Socialist Register* 40 (2004): 186-201. Print.
- Foster, John Bellamy, Brett Clark, and Richard York. *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010. Print.
- Gabriel, Sharmani Patricia. "Nation and Contestation in Malaysia: Diaspora and Myths of Belonging in the Narratives of K. S. Maniam." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36.2 (2005): 235-48. Print.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Oxon: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Gellert, Paul K., and Barbara D. Lynch. "Mega-Projects as Displacements*." *International Social Science Journal* 55.175 (2003): 15-25. Print.
- George, K. "Re-Nationalise These Profiteering Firms: Mahathir's Malaysia Inc and Privatisation Have Burdened the People and Bred Corruption." *Aliran Monthly*. Aliran, 2005. Web. 22 Jun. 2012.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll. "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Eds. Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996. xv-xxxvii. Print.
- Goldstein, Philip. *The Politics of Literary Theory: An Introduction to Marxist Criticism*. Florida: Florida State University Press, 1990. Print.
- Gooch, Liz. "Green Movement Takes Root in Malaysia." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 19 Jun. 2012. Web. 25 Jan. 2015.
- Govindasamy, Anantha Raman. "Indians and Rural Displacement: Exclusion from Region Building in Malaysia." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 18.1 (2010): 90-104. Print.
- Grace, Bill. "Sustainability and Ethics". *Grace and Associates*. Grace and Associates, n.d. Web. 4 Dec. 2013.
- Grumbling, Vernon Owen. "Literature." *Greening the College Curriculum: A Guide to Environmental Teaching in the Liberal Arts*. Eds. Collett, Jonathan and Stephen Karakashian. Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1996. 151-73. Print.
- Guha, Ramachandra. "Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique." *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Eds. Pojman, Louis P. and Paul Pojman. 5th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2008. 338-45. Print.
- Haji Salleh, Muhammad. "Natural Resources in Daily Life." *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: The Environment*. Ed.Sani, Sham. Kuala Lumpur. Archipelago Press, 1998. 78-79. Vol. 1. 11 Vols. Print.

- Han, Lixin. "Marxism and Ecology: Marx's Theory of Labour Process Revisited." *Eco-Socialism as Politics: Rebuilding the Basis of Our Modern Civilisation*. Ed. Huan, Qingzhi. London and New York: Springer Science+Business Media B.V., 2010. 15-32. Print.
- Harper, T. N. *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.
- Hay, Peter. *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002. Print.
- Heise, Ursula K. "Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Question of Literature." *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives*. Eds. Roos, Bonnie and Alex Hunt. Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2010. 251-58. Print.
- Hezri, A. A., and Mohd Nordin Hasan. "Towards Sustainable Development? The Evolution of Environmental Policy in Malaysia." *Natural Resources Forum* 30 (2006): 37-50. Print.
- Hirsch, Philip, and Carol Warren, eds. *The Politics of Environment in Southeast Asia: Resources and Resistance*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Ho, Khai Leong. "Dynamics of Policy-Making in Malaysia: The Formulation of the New Economic Policy and the National Development Policy." *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 14.2 (1992): 204-27. Print.
- Hon, Jason, and Shozo Shibata. "A Review on Land Use in the Malaysian State of Sarawak, Borneo and Recommendations for Wildlife Conservation inside Production Forest Environment." *Borneo Journal of Resource Science and Technology* 3.2 (2013): 22-35. Print.
- Huggan, Graham. "'Greening' Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 50.3 (2004): 701-33. Print.
- . *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Oxon: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Hughes, Jonathan. *Ecology and Historical Materialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.
- Humphreys, Andrew. "Malaysia's Post-9/11 Security Strategy: Winning 'Hearts and Minds' or Legitimising the Political Status Quo?" *Kajian Malaysia* 28.1 (2010): 21-52. Print.
- Hurst, Philip. *Rainforest Politics: Ecological Destruction in South-East Asia*. London: Zed Books, 1990. Print.
- Ibrahim, Zawawi and Sharifah Zarina Syed Zakaria. "Environment and Social Science Perspectives in Malaysia." *Akademika* 76.3 (2009): 43-66. Print.

- Idris, S. M. Mohamed. "Foreword." *Tanah Air Ku: Land Issues in Malaysia*. Ed. Consumers' Association of Penang. Penang: Consumers' Association of Penang, 2000. 5-10. Print.
- International Rivers. "Bakun Dam". *International Rivers*. International Rivers, 20 Apr. 2012. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.
- Ip, Po-Keung. "Taoism and the Foundation of Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*. Eds. Botzler, Richard G. and Susan J. Armstrong. 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 1998. 290-96. Print.
- Isaac, Jeffrey C. *Power and Marxist Theory: A Realist View*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1987. Print.
- Ishak, Mohamed Mustafa. "Managing Ethnicity and Constructing the 'Bangsa Malaysia' (a United Malaysian Nation)." *Malaysian Management Journal* 6.1 & 2 (2002): 99-115. Print.
- Ismail, Basir. *Land and Agricultural Policy: A Mismatch*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Palm Oil Board, 2005. Print.
- Jamieson, Dale. *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print.
- Jani, Pranav. "Karl Marx, Eurocentrism, and the 1857 Revolt in British India." *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*. Eds. Bartolovich, Crystal and Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 81-100. Print.
- Jefferess, David. *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. Print.
- Jegathesan, M. "Alienated Malaysian Indians a 'Breeding Ground for Terrorism'." *Malaysiakini*. Malaysiakini. 3 Jun. 2002. Web. 7 Nov. 2011.
- Jeong, Chun Phuoc. "Malaysia's Strategic Green Initiatives." *IMPAK* 3 (2010): 1-4. Department of Environment Malaysia. Web. 2 Feb. 2011.
- Jessop, Bob. "Marxist Approaches to Power". *Bob Jessop*. Bob Jessop.org, 27 Mar. 2014. Web. 10 February 2015.
- Jomo, K. S., Y. T. Chang, and K. J. Khoo. *Deforesting Malaysia: The Political Economy and Social Ecology of Agricultural Expansion and Commercial Logging*. London: Zed Books Ltd, 2004. Print.
- Jomo, K. S., and Chong Hui Wee. "Lessons from Post-Colonial Malaysian Economic Development." *Achieving Development Success: Strategies and Lessons from the Developing World*. Ed. Fosu, Augustine K. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 50-71. Print.

- Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar. *Nature and Nation: Forest and Development in Peninsular Malaysia*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2005. Print.
- . "Socio-Political Structures and the Southeast Asian Ecosystem: An Historical Perspective up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*. Eds. Bruun, Ole and Arne Kalland. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1995. 25-47. Print.
- Kaur, Amarjit. "Economy and Society: The Formation of National Economy." *The Shaping of Malaysia*. Eds. Kaur, Amarjit and Ian Metcalfe. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999. 119-69. Print.
- Krantz, Lasse. *The Sustainable Livelihood Approach to Poverty Reduction*: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2001. Print.
- Lai, Isabelle. "Clear Threat." *The Sunday Star* 18 Sep. 2011: 1+. Print.
- Layfied, David. *Marxism and Environmental Crises*. Suffolk: Arena Books, 2008. Print.
- Lazarus, Neil. "The Fetish of "the West" in Postcolonial Theory." *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*. Eds. Bartolovich, Crystal and Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 43-64. Print.
- Leigh, Michael. "Political Economy of Logging in Malaysia, Sarawak." *The Politics of Environment in Southeast Asia: Resources and Resistance*. Eds. Hirsch, Philip and Carol Warren. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Lenin, V্লাইদিমির. "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism." *Lenin Internet Archive*: Marxist.org, n.d. Web. 10 September 2011.
- . "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism". *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2013
- Lee, Hwok Aun. "Development in Malaysia: Economics and Politics of an Idea." *Akademika* 64 (2004): 65-81. Print.
- Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1966. Print.
- Lievens, Matthias. "Towards an Eco-Marxism." *Radical Philosophy Review* 13.1 (2010): 1-17. Print.
- Lim, David C. L. "'Your Memories Are Our Memories': Remembering Culture as Race in Malaysia and K.S. Maniam's *Between Lives*." *Overcoming Passion for Race in Malaysia Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lim, David C. L. Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2008. 153-66. Print.
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Gods Who Fail: Ancestral Religions in the New Literatures in English from Malaysia and Singapore." *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader*. Eds. Quayum, Mohamad A. and Peter C. Wicks. Petaling Jaya: Pearson Education Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., 2001. 126-35. Print.

- . *Monsoon History*. London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1994. Print.
- Lindner, Kolja. "Marx's Eurocentrism: Postcolonial Studies and Marx Scholarship." *Radical Philosophy* 161 (2010): 27-41. Print.
- Loh, Francis Kok Wah. "Developmentalism and the Limits of Democratic Discourse." *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*. Eds. Loh, Francis Kok Wah and Boo Teik Khoo. Surrey: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2002. 19-50. Print.
- . *Old Vs New Politics in Malaysia: State and Society in Transition*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009. Print.
- Lye, John. "Ideology: A Brief Guide". 1997. *John Lye's Course and Source Page*. Department of English Language and Literature, Brock University. 23 Mar. 2013. Web.
- Malaysian Nature Society. *Conservation*. Malaysian Nature Society, 2011. Web. 18 Nov. 2011.
- Mahmud, Zaharah. "The Malay Concept of Tanah Air: The Geographer's Perspective." *Memory and Knowledge of the Sea in Southeast Asia*. Ed. Wong, Danny Tze-Ken. Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences, Universiti of Malaya, 2008. 5-14. Print.
- Malhotra, K.C., et al. *Cultural and Ecological Dimensions of Sacred Groves in India*. New Delhi: Indian National Science Academy, 2001. Print.
- Maniam, K. S. *Between Lives*. Petaling Jaya: Maya Press, 2003. Print.
- . "Fiction into Fact, Fact into Fiction: A Personal Reflection." *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader*. Eds. Quayum, Mohamad A. and Peter C. Wicks. Petaling Jaya: Pearson Education Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., 2001. 263-68. Print.
- . "The Malaysian Novelist: Detachment or Spiritual Transcendence?" *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader*. Eds. Quayum, Mohamad A. and Peter C. Wicks. Petaling Jaya: Pearson Education Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., 2001. 80-84. Print.
- Manickam, Janakey Raman. *The Malaysian Indian Dilemma: The Struggles and Agony of the Indian Community in Malaysia*. Klang: Nationwide Human Development and Research Centre, 2009. Print.
- Marshall, Adrian G. "Man and Nature in Malaysia: Attitudes to Wildlife and Conservation." *Nature and Man in South East Asia*. Ed. Stott, P.A. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1978. 23-33. Print.
- Marshall, Gordon. "Uneven Development". A Dictionary of Sociology. Encyclopedia.com, 1998. Web. 11 Oct. 2011.

- Marx, Karl. "Capital Volume 1." *Marxist Internet Archive*. Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 7 Sep. 2011.
- . "Capital Volume 3." *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2012.
- . "The Communist Manifesto." *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.
- . "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts." *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2012.
- . "The German Ideology." *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 13 Sep. 2011.
- . "The Holy Family." *Marxist Internet Archive*: Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2011.
- Mas, Keris. *The Memoirs of Keris Mas: Spanning 30 Years of Literary Development*. Memoir Keris Mas: 30 Tahun Sekitar Sastra. Trans. Shah Reza Ibrahim and Nor Azizah Abu Bakar. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2004. Print.
- . *Jungle of Hope*. Trans. Adibah Amin. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2009. Print.
- McDowell, Mark A. "Development and the Environment in Asean." *Pacific Affairs* 62.3 (1989): 307-29. Print.
- McGregor, Andrew. *Southeast Asian Development*. Oxon: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- McShane, Katie. "Environmental Ethics: An Overview." *Philosophy Compass* 4.3 (2009): 407-20. Print.
- Medovoi, Leeron. "The Biopolitical Unconscious: Toward an Eco-Marxist Literary Theory." *Mediations* 24.2 (2010): 122-39. Print.
- Milner, Anthony. *The Malays*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. Print.
- Mohd, Rusli, and Kenny Sonn Lee Cheh. "Tactics of Environmental Ngos in Influencing Public Policy in Malaysia." *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 7.2 (1999): 71-77. Print.
- Mohd Fiah, Ahmad Faisal. *Role of Al-Imam in Malay Transformation until 1941*. International Conference on Social Science and Humanity, Singapore, 26-28 February, 2011. Unpublished conference paper. IACSIT Press. Web.
- Mojib, Erfan. "Echoes of Fiction, Days of Malaysia." *Monorail* November 2010: n.p. Web. 6 May 2011.
- Mohideen, Shahridan Faiez. "How Culture Determines Land Use Relationships: Revisiting an Old Land Conflict." *Tanah Air Ku: Land Issues in Malaysia*. Ed.

- Consumers' Association of Penang. Penang: Consumers' Association of Penang, 2000. 238-49. Print.
- Mukherjee, Upamanyu Pablo. *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Munck, Ronaldo. *Marx @2000: Late Marxist Perspectives*. London: Zed Books Ltd., 2000. Print.
- Muzaffar, Chandra. "Political Marginalization in Malaysia." *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Eds. Sandhu, K. S. and A. Mani. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993. 211-36. Print.
- Nadeswaran, R. "Who Raped and Plundered Templer's Park?" *Malaysia Today*. Malaysian Today, 15 November 2012. Web. 3 Dec. 2012.
- Neher, Clark D. "Asian Style Democracy." *Asian Survey* 34.11 (1994): 949-61. Print.
- Newman, Lance. "Marxism and Ecocriticism." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 9.2 (2002): 1-25. Print.
- Newman, Saul. "The Place of Power in Political Discourse." *International Political Science Review* 25.2 (2004): 139-57. Print.
- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print.
- . "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism." *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. Ed. Loomba, Ania et al. Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Ng, Andrew Hock Soon. *Intimating the Sacred: Religion in English Language Malaysian Fiction*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011. Print.
- . "Chuah Guat Eng, Days of Change: A Malaysian Novel." *ASIATIC* 4.2 (2010): 196-98. Print.
- Nonini, Donald M. *British Colonial Rule and the Resistance of the Malay Peasantry, 1900- 1957*. Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series 38. New Haven: Yale University 1992. Print.
- O'Connor, James. *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1998. Print.
- Ogunbemi, Segun. "An African Perspective on the Environmental Crisis." *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Eds. Pojman, Louis P. and Paul Pojman. Belmont: Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning, 2008. 330-37. Print.
- Ooi, Yang-May. *The Flame Tree*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998. Print.

- . "About Yang May-Ooi". *Fusion View*. N.p., 2006. Web. 15 Aug. 2011.
- . "The Flame Tree". *Fusion View*, N.p., 2006. Web. 15 Aug. 2011.
- Padley, Steve. *Key Concepts in Contemporary Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Parry, Benita. "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Lazarus, Neil. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 66-80. Print.
- . "Signs of Our Times: A Discussion of Homi Bhabha's the Location of Culture." *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*. Eds. Miyoshi, Masao and H. D. Harootunian. Durham. : Duke UP, 2002. 119-49. Print.
- Patke, Rajeev S., and Philip Holden. *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English*. Oxon: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Pederson, Poul. "Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity: The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm." *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*. Eds. Bruun, Ole and Arne Kalland. London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1995. Print.
- Peet, Richard, and Michael Watts. "Liberation Ecology: Development, Sustainability, and Environment in an Age of Market Triumphalism." *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*. Eds. Peet, Richard and Michael Watts. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. 1-45. Print.
- Pepper, David. *Eco-Socialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Pereira, Alexius A., and Kiong Tong Chee. "Power and Developmental Regimes in Singapore, China and Malaysia." *Global Economic Review: Perspectives on East Asian Economies and Industries* 34.1 (2005): 129-44. Print.
- "Perkampungan Pelancongan No.1 Di Malaysia". *Janda Baik Transformasi Perkampungan Pelancongan*. Janda Baik.net. Web. 22 Jan. 2015.
- Philip, Susan. "Diasporic Spaces in K. S. Maniam's "The Sandpit: Womensis"." *Asian Theatre Journal* 21.2 (2004): 177-86. Print.
- Quayum, Mohammad A. *One Sky Many Horizons: Studies in Malaysian Literature in English*. Shah Alam: Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., 2007. Print.
- R. Rajoo. "World-View of the Indians with Regard to Their Social Identity and Belonging in Malaysia, C. 1900-57." *Malaysian World-View*. Ed. Mohd. Taib Osman. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985. Print.
- Ramakrishna, Sundari. "The Environmental Movement in Malaysia." *Social Movements in Malaysia: From Communities to Ngos*. Eds. Weiss, Meredith L. and Saliha Hassan. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. 115-39. Print.

- Ramasamy, P. "Civil Society in Malaysia: An Arena of Contestations?" *Civil Society in Southeast Asia*. Ed. Lee, Hock Guan. Pasir Panjang: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004. 198-216. Print.
- Rhum, Michael R. "'Modernity' and 'Tradition' in 'Thailand'." *Modern Asian Studies* 30.2 (1996): 325-55. Print.
- Rigg, Jonathan. *Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Roos, Bonnie and Alex Hunt, eds. *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010. Print.
- Sack, Robert. *Conceptions of Space in Social Thought*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1980. Print.
- Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1.1 (1991): 83-99. Print.
- Sahabat Alam Malaysia. *Malaysian Environment: Alert 2001*. Pulau Pinang: Sahabat Alam Malaysia, 2001. Print.
- Sandbach, Francis. *Environment, Ideology and Policy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1980. Print.
- Sandhu, K. S. "The Coming of the Indians to Malaysia." *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Eds. Sandhu, K. S. and A. Mani. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993. 151-89. Print.
- San Juan, Jr., E. *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1998. Print.
- Saravanamuttu, Johan, and Francis Kok Wah Loh. *Political Culture in Malaysia: Contesting Developmentalism in a Multi-Ethnic Society*. 20th International Political Science Association World Congress, 9-13 July 2006. Unpublished conference paper. IPSA, 2006. Web. 11 May 2013.
- See, Hoon Peow. "Globalization and the Malaysian Experience: Upsides and Downsides." *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 2.1 (2011): 1-27. Print.
- Sen, Amartya. *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity*. London: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- . *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor, 2000. Print.
- Sani, Sham. *Environment and Development in Malaysia: Changing Concerns and Approaches*. Kuala Lumpur: ISIS Malaysia, 1993. Print.
- Sharom, Azmi. "Malaysian Environmental Law: Ten Years after Rio." *Singapore Journal of International & Comparative Law* 6 (2002): 855-90. Print.

- Sime Darby. "The Sime Darby Plant a Tree Program". Sime Darby, 2011. Web. 3 Aug. 2011.
- Singh, Rachna. "Forest Department Launches Initiative to Conserve Sacred Groves." *The Times of India*. The Times of India. 4 Sept 2008. Web. 16 September 2011.
- Sivarajan. "Stop the Destruction, Gazette the Kota Damansara Forest". *Socialist Party of Malaysia*. Socialist Party of Malaysia, 2 April 2008. Web. 6 December 2012.
- Slovic, Scott, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran, eds. *Ecocriticism of the Global South*. London: Lexington Books, 2015. Print.
- Slovic, Scott. "The Third Wave of Ecocriticism: North American Reflections on the Current Phase of the Discipline." *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* 1.1 (2010): 4-10. Print.
- Smeltzer, Sandra. "The Message Is the Market: Selling Biotechnology and Nation in Malaysia." *Taking Southeast Asia to Market: Commodities, Nature, and People in the Neoliberal Age*. Eds. Nevins, Joseph and Nancy Lee Peluso. Selangor: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009. 191-205. Print.
- Soja, Edward. "Foreword." *Postcolonial Space: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture*. Eds. Teverson, Andrew and Sara Upstone. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ix-xiii. Print.
- . *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996. Print.
- Starrs, Roy, ed. *Nations under Siege: Globalization and Nationalism in Asia*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Print.
- Stoddard, Mark C. J. "Ideology, Hegemony, Discourse: A Critical Review of Theories of Knowledge and Power." *Social Thought and Research* 28 (2007): 191-225. Print.
- Suhana Saad. "Re-Building the Concept of Nation Building in Malaysia." *Asian Social Science* 8.4 (2012): 115-23. Print.
- Sulaiman, Adibah, et al. "Malay Society of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century: Blind Imitation Vs Independent Reasoning." *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 7 (2011): 7-13. Print.
- Sundram, Jeyaratnam. "Race, Class and Uneven Development in Malaysia." Diss. Michigan State University, 1989. Print.
- Swainson, Luke, and Andrew McGregor. "Compensating for Development: Orang Asli Experiences of Malaysia's Sungai Selangor Dam." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 49-2 (2008): 155-67. Print.
- Tan, Esther. "New Dam Needed, but Concerns Remain." *New Sunday Times*. New Sunday Times, 7 Mar. 1999. Web. 17 Apr. 2012.

- Tan, Jun-E. "Interview with Dr. Hezri Adnan". *MESYM.com*. MESYM.com, 2014. Web. 16 Jan. 2015.
- Tang, Soo Ping. "Ralph Ellison and K.S. Maniam: Ethnicity in America and Malaysia, Two Kinds of Invisibilty." *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader*. Eds. Quayum, Mohamad A. and Peter C. Wicks. Petaling Jaya: Pearson Education Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., 2001. 276-89. Print.
- Tangwa, Godfrey. "Some African Reflections on Biomedical and Environmental Ethics." *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Ed. Wiredu, Kwasi. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 387-95. Print.
- Tate, Muzafar Desmond. *The Malaysian Indians: History, Problems and Future*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2008. Print.
- Teh, Evelyn. "The Changing Landscape of Janda Baik". *Wild Asia*. Wild Asia, 2011. Web. 26 Jan. 2012.
- Teoh, El Sen. "Negeri 'Illegally' Clearing Off Forest Land." *FMT News*. Free Malaysia Today, 23 Oct. 2012. Web. 6 Dec. 2012
- The Borneo Project. "Pictures from Sealed-Off Bakun Dam Zone Reveal Social and Environmental Disaster". *The Borneo Project*. BorneoProject.org, 2012. Web. 4 Dec. 2012.
- Traer, Robert. *Doing Environmental Ethics*. Colorado: Westview Press, 2009. Print.
- Transparency International Malaysia. "Forest Governance and Integrity". Transparency International Malaysia 2013, n.d. Web. 21 May 2016.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1974. Print.
- United Nations. "Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development". General Assembly Resolution 42/187. Oslo, United Nations, 1987. UN Documents. Web. 14 Feb. 2014.
- van Dijk, Teun A. "Discourse, Ideology and Context." *Folia Linguistica* XXX.1-2 (2001): 11-40. Print.
- Verma, Vidhu. *Malaysia: State and Civil Society in Transition*. Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc. , 2002. Print.
- Vincent, J.R., and Rozali Mohamed Ali. *Managing Natural Wealth: Environment and Development in Malaysia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005. Print.
- Wagner, T.S. "Gorged-out Cadavers of Hills": Parodying Narratives of Alterity and Transformation in *the Flame Tree*." *British Asian Fiction: Framing the Contemporary*. Eds. Murphy, Neil and Wai-Chew Sim. New York: Cambria Press, 2008. 163-82. Print.

- . "Singapore's New Thrillers: Boldly Going Beyond the Ethnographic Map." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 37.2-3 (2006): 69-89. Print.
- . "Emulative Versus Revisionist Occidentalism: Monetary and Other Values in Recent Singaporean Fiction." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 39.73 (2004): 73-94. Print.
- Walker, Peter A. "Political Ecology: Where Is the Ecology?" *Progress in Human Geography* 29.1 (2005): 73-82. Print.
- Wallace, Alfred Russel. "The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise. A Narrative of Travel with Studies of Man and Nature." London: Macmillan, 1869. Print.
- Weiss, Meredith. "Edging toward a New Politics in Malaysia: Civil Society at the Gate?" *Asian Survey* 49.5 (2009): 741-58. Print.
- . "Prickly Ambivalence: State, Society and Semidemocracy in Malaysia." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 43.1 (2005): 61-81. Print.
- . "Civil Society and Political Reform in Malaysia." *Civil Society in Asia*. Eds. Schak, David C. and Wayne Hudson. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003. 59-72. Print.
- Weiss, Meredith L., and Saliha Hassan, eds. *Social Movements in Malaysia: From Communities to Ngos*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2004. Print.
- White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. Ed. Pojman, Louis P. 3rd. ed. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001. 13-18. Print.
- Wicks, Peter C. "Malaysian Landscapes in the Fiction of K S Maniam." *USQ ePrints*. University of Southern Queensland, 2007. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.
- Williams, Michael. *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. Print.
- Wilson, Bernard. "Meta-Mobilis: The Case for Polymorphous Existence in K.S. Maniam's between Lives." *Tracing an Indian Diaspora: Contexts, Memories, Representation*. Eds. Raguram, Parvathi, et al. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2008. 408-27. Print.
- World Commission on Dams. "The Resettlement of Indigenous People Affected by the Bakun Hydro-Electric Project, Sarawak, Malaysia". *International Rivers*. International Rivers, n.d. Web. 21 May 2016.
- Wright, Laura. *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010. Print.

- WWF-Malaysia. "Comments by WFF Malaysia on the Detailed EIA for the Proposed Development of Sungai Selangor Dam in Hulu Selangor." 1999. Web. 20 Oct. 2013.
- Yaspar, Md. Salleh. "The World-View of Peninsular Malaysian Folk-Tales and Folk Dramas." *Malaysian World View*. Ed. Mohd. Taib Osman. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985. Print.
- Yazdiha, Haj. "Conceptualizing Hybridity: Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid." *Formations* 1.1 (2010): 31-38. Print.
- Yeow, Agnes S.K. *Visions of Eco-Apocalypse in Selected Malaysian Poetry in English: Cecil Rajendra and Muhammad Haji Salleh*. International Conference on Literature and the Environment, November 2008, Wuhan, China. Unpublished conference paper. University of Malaya Library, Kuala Lumpur, 2011. Print.
- . *Greening the Exotic in Malaysian Poetry: Literary Strategies for an Endangered Postcolonial Land*. The New Exotic? Postcolonialism and Globalization Conference, June 2009, Dunedin, New Zealand. Unpublished conference paper. University of Malaya Library, Kuala Lumpur, 2011. Print.
- Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Yusof, Ghulam Sarwar. *Panggung Semar: Aspects of Traditional Malay Theatre*. Petaling Jaya: Tempo Publishing (M) Sdn. Bhd., 1992. Print.
- Zahar, Renate. *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation*. Trans. Feuser, Willfried F. London: Monthly Review Press, 1974. Print.
- Zahid, Syed Jaymal. "Make Malay Agenda 'Top Priority'." *Free Malaysia Today*. Free Malaysia Today. 24 Oct. 2012. Web. 30 Oct. 2012.
- Zainal Abidin, Roslan and Tew Kia Hui. *Evaluation of Soil Erosion Features along the North-South Expressway (Bukit Kayu Hitam – Johor Bahru)*. Sungai Buloh: Tew Kia Hui, 2000. Print.