



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***FORMATION OF IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENS OF
PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY IN SELECTED CHAN LING YAP'S NOVELS***

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FBMK 2022 50



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By

NURUL ATIQA BINTI AMRAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Philosophy**

January 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Identity is the prevalent topic in Malaysian Literature in English, but it is rarely discussed from the psychogeography lens. Past studies tend to approach Malaysian diasporic texts from the postcolonial theory and mainly focus on memory and trauma. Thus far, the discussions on Chan Ling Yap's works are limited to constructing multicultural space and identity. Therefore, my thesis attempts to delve into the urban realms and identity of the city inhabitants in four selected Chan Ling Yap's novels: *Sweet Offerings* (2009), *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (2011), *New Beginnings* (2014) and *A Flash of Water* (2016). I employ the theory of psychogeography by giving specific attention to its evolving branches, literary psychogeography, to study how urban settings affect the characters' emotions and behaviours in literature. The objectives are; to investigate aspects that influence the characters' movements and engagements with the urban environment, to examine the psychological process between the characters and the urban environment, and to analyse the representations and portrayals of the urban environment in Yap's selected works that influence characters' identity formation. The analysis chapter is divided into two steps. The first step identifies the main characters in the novels on their active movement and close connection to the urban realms. The second step is the textual analysis based on a three-tiered model, each with a distinct variable focusing on gender, psychology and urban studies. The characters' movements are examined using three thematic concerns inspired by Bridger's and Harlow's spatiality, temporality and embodiment. It further explores the psychology of the human senses, drawing from the sensual theory of modernity. The third tier of the analysis approaches the geographical part that draws from Lehan's, Lynch's and William's theory of the city in literature by emphasising the urban portrayals and perceptions. The theory develops our conscious awareness of how the urban environment feeds our emotions and drives us to change and make changes and to empower and be empowered. My thesis shows that the female characters claim their position in the city by breaking the boundaries of the masculine construction in the urban vicinity. The male characters partially embody the contemporary Western model

of an urban dweller. They possess some flâneur traits but are distinctly unique in that they enter and exit their urban spheres for various reasons. The local literary texts analysed and used in the psychogeography discussion thus far were mainly focused on the collection of poems produced by our local poets and novels written by Malaysian diasporic writers. Further research may compare the existing texts with other relevant texts from different genres or establish a new study for a more current text that portrays the present condition of our local metropolis.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PEMBENTUKAN IDENTITI DARI SUDUT PANDANG PSIKOGEOGRAFI DALAM NOVEL-NOVEL CHAN LING YAP YANG TERPILIH

Oleh

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Identiti adalah topik lazim dalam Kesusasteraan Malaysia dalam Bahasa Inggeris, tetapi jarang dibincangkan dari lensa psikogeografi. Kajian lepas cenderung untuk mendekati teks diasporik Malaysia dari teori pascakolonial dan tumpuan utamanya pada topik memori dan trauma. Setakat ini, perbincangan mengenai karya Chan Ling Yap hanya terhad kepada topik pembinaan ruang dan identiti pelbagai budaya. Oleh itu, tesis saya cuba menyelami alam bandar dan identiti penduduk bandar dalam empat karya terpilih Chan Ling Yap iaitu *Sweet Offerings* (2009), *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (2011), *New Beginnings* (2014) dan *A Flash of Water* (2016). Saya menggunakan teori psikogeografi dengan memberi pengkhususan kepada cabangnya yang sedang berkembang, iaitu psikogeografi sastera, untuk mengkaji bagaimana persekitaran bandar mempengaruhi emosi dan tingkah laku watak dalam sastera. Objektifnya adalah untuk menyiasat aspek yang mempengaruhi pergerakan dan penglibatan watak-watak dengan persekitaran bandar, untuk mengkaji proses psikologi antara watak dan persekitaran bandar, dan untuk menganalisis perwakilan dan gambaran persekitaran bandar dalam karya-karya terpilih Yap yang mempengaruhi pembentukan identiti watak. Bab analisis terbahagi kepada dua langkah. Langkah pertama mengenal pasti watak-watak utama dalam novel-novel dari aspek penglibatan aktif mereka dan hubungan rapat dengan alam bandar. Langkah kedua ialah analisis teks berdasarkan model tiga peringkat, setiap satunya dengan pemboleh ubah yang berbeza yang memfokuskan kajian tentang jantina, psikologi dan kajian bandar. Pergerakan watak-watak diperhatikan menggunakan tiga permasalahan ruang, masa dan kualiti pembentukan sesuatu jantina yang diilhamkan oleh Bridger dan Harlow, seterusnya meneroka psikologi deria manusia yang diambil daripada teori kemodenan deria. Peringkat ketiga analisis mendekati bahagian geografi yang diambil dari teori Lehan, Lynch dan William tentang bandar dalam kesusasteraan dengan menekankan isu gambaran dan persepsi bandar. Asas teori ini adalah ia membangunkan kesedaran kita tentang bagaimana persekitaran bandar mengisi emosi kita dan mendorong untuk berubah dan

membuat perubahan, memperkasakan dan diperkasakan. Tesis saya menunjukkan bahawa watak-watak wanita memperoleh kedudukan mereka di bandar dengan melepasi batasan pembentukan maskulin yang membentuk persekitaran bandar. Watak lelaki memiliki sebahagian daripada kualiti penduduk bandar dari model Barat masa kini. Mereka memiliki beberapa ciri flâneur tetapi unik dengan kualiti tersendiri kerana mereka bergerak di dalam dan luar bandar dengan pelbagai tujuan. Karya sastera tempatan yang dikaji dan digunakan dalam perbincangan psikogeografi setakat ini tertumpu terutamanya kepada koleksi puisi yang dihasilkan oleh penyair tempatan dan novel-novel yang ditulis oleh penulis diaspora Malaysia. Penyelidikan lanjut mungkin boleh membandingkan karya sedia ada dengan karya lain yang sesuai mengikut genre sastera yang berbeza atau mewujudkan kajian baru untuk teks yang lebih terkini yang dapat menggambarkan keadaan semasa metropolis tempatan kita.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Objectives	6
1.4 Research Questions	7
1.5 Theoretical Framework	7
1.5.1 Literary Psychogeography	9
1.6 Methodology	10
1.7 Definition of Terms	11
1.8 Positioning Chan Ling Yap in MLiE	14
1.8.1 About the Author	15
1.8.2 Historical Context of the Novels	17
1.8.3 Synopsis of the Selected Novels	18
1.9 Scope of the Study	24
1.10 Limitations of the Study	25
1.11 Significance of the Study	26
1.12 Structure of the Thesis	27
1.13 Conclusion	28
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	29
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 Malaysian Literature in English (Historical Overview)	29
2.2.1 Critical Approaches to the Contemporary Diasporic Writers	33
2.2.2 Literary Scholarship of Chan Ling Yap and Her Novels	46
2.2.3 Past Approaches to Identity and Space in MLiE	48
2.2.4 Critical Approaches to the City in MLiE	53
2.3 Psychogeography (Historical Overview)	55
2.4 Literary Psychogeography	59
2.4.1 The Western Literary Texts	60
2.4.2 The Flâneur or Modern Urban Figure	62
2.4.3 Temporal and Spatial Settings	64
2.4.4 The Evolution of Flânerie and Walking Practices	66
2.5 Conclusion	68

3	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY	69
3.1	Introduction	69
3.2	Conceptual Framework	69
3.2.1	Gendered Spatial Approach to Psychogeography in Literature	70
3.2.2	Psychological Approach to Psychogeography in Literature	73
3.2.3	The Urban Space in Literature: A Psychogeographical Experience	77
3.3	Methodology	79
3.4	Conclusion	83
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	84
4.1	Introduction	84
4.2	The Selected Characters	84
4.3	Gendered Spatial Construct	85
4.3.1	Mei Yin, Ming Kong and Nelly	86
4.3.2	An Mei	92
4.3.3	Ngao	95
4.3.4	Shao Peng and Li Ling	99
4.4	Psychological Process	102
4.4.1	Sensory Experiences in <i>Sweet Offerings</i>	103
4.4.2	Sensory Experiences in <i>Bitter-Sweet Harvest</i>	108
4.4.3	Sensory Experiences in <i>New Beginnings</i>	110
4.4.4	Sensory Experiences in <i>A Flash of Water</i>	114
4.5	The Urban Growth and Its Stories	117
4.5.1	The 1940s-1960s Malaya in <i>Sweet Offerings</i>	117
4.5.2	The 1970s Malaya in <i>Bitter-Sweet Harvest</i>	124
4.5.3	The 1850s-1860s Malaya in <i>New Beginnings</i>	127
4.5.4	The 1880s Malaya in <i>A Flash of Water</i>	133
4.6	Conclusion	137
5	FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	138
5.1	Summary of Findings	138
5.1.1	<i>Sweet Offerings</i>	140
5.1.2	<i>Bitter-Sweet Harvest</i>	141
5.1.3	<i>New Beginnings</i>	142
5.1.4	<i>A Flash of Water</i>	143
5.2	Suggestions for Future Research	144
5.3	Conclusion	145

REFERENCES	146
BIODATA OF STUDENT	163
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS	164



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	The Ong's House	19
2	An Mei's Family	20
3	Ngao's Family	22
4	Shao Peng's Family	23
5	Siew Loong's Family	23
6	Li Ling's Family	24

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IMIB	Northern Italian International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus
LI	The Lettrist International
MCP	Malaysian Communist Party
MLiE	Malaysian Literature in English
SI	Situationist International



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In Malaysian literature in English (MLiE), settings are the dominant component to set the literature apart from other genres in world literature. The natural, rural and urban landscapes are almost the universal settings in prose and poetry that portray Malaysia's past and present. However, it could hardly be argued that though the account of that setting qualifies a particular aspect of urban literature, rural or nature fiction, MLiE scholars and critics seldom highlight these aspects of representation to categorise them in these evolving contemporary literary genres. Moreover, the attempts to approach the literary texts tend to view the settings and characters from other dominant and popular theoretical frameworks, such as ecocriticism and urban studies. The critical approaches identify the presence of the natural environment, city or denoting the adjective 'eco or urban' to the characters being in that particular environment and setting being structured around the characters.

Nevertheless, the Malaysian landscapes in literary works are not limited to the physical structure mentioned above. Wicks rightly elaborated other complex descriptions, including institutional landscapes, intangible landscapes of memory, dream and imagination, interior landscapes of mind and personality, and those living in the margins and shadows (21). This discussion represents an important topic to study because Yap mentioned in her interview that "it is always exciting to be writing about Malaysia because the country has all the ingredients of the modern world" (Yap). In this thesis, I wish to take the urban-centred approach to literary studies introduced by the Situationists in 1950s Paris. Literary texts are evaluated regarding how place and space affect human behaviours and feelings. Taking a deeper understanding of this theory, Holloway mentioned in a podcast that it is an experience of visiting a familiar site but feels "uncanny or disconcerting" (Powell 6:50).

I wish to explore the process of experiencing the urban environment while carrying a lot of conceptual information, knowledge and understanding of the place in reading selected novels. Revisiting the familiar sites in Malaysia as represented in Yap's novels elucidates the unnoticeable elements that have been disregarded in daily interactions, urging us to unfollow the ordinary. The theory of psychogeography draws from walking and thinking about the urban environment, including how individual constructs the space and how space directly or indirectly shapes the individual. The basis of the theory is that it develops our conscious awareness of how the environment feeds our emotions and drives us to change and make it a better place. The thesis demonstrates that the representation of settings and characters' experiences in the selected novels reveal multiple layers of human interactions with the environment. This

interaction is a process of dynamic emotional and behavioural experiences that shape one's identity. Chan Ling Yap revisits the historical urban sites and portrays them as agents of change in the characters' identities.

Yap's evocation of her ethnic story and history is addressed from various aspects as she presents the gradual mixture and collision through contrasting cultural traditions against modern influences. The narratives take readers on a journey across mainland China to the bustling port city of Singapore, from the untamed landscape and colonised nation to the end of the British Empire in Malaya, from the educated spires of Oxford in England and to the quiet life in Rome, Italy. Chan Ling Yap frames the notion of space with the characters' movements, suggesting transformations against the struggle from the internal and external forces within the temporal and spatial settings. As one of the contemporary Malaysian diasporic writers, Yap's works portray and explore issues surrounding the early communal beginnings primarily born from the migrant and diasporic experiences such as identity, culture, religion and sense of belonging. She revisits the historical sites and other seldom-visited spaces with preliminary ideas and knowledge of the places. She imagines the locations and recreates spaces where lives of the ordinary begin and develop in a country marked by colonisation, war, and multicultural conflicts. Her works are a breath of experience that renders a sense of defamiliarisation, an exciting aspect of the narratives that need further exploration in this study.

Navigating oneself outside the private spaces to examine public places or cities is a crucial discussion in psychogeography. In Yap's novels, 'spatial movements' denote changes in the interaction with the environment and the attempts to follow unfamiliar paths as a symbol of identity and cultural transformation. These are followed by other information about the characters' backgrounds, including their social class, education status, socio-economic, and gender. Yap does not disregard her cultural tradition altogether while trying to allocate her characters' desire for a modern shift. Female characters have been portrayed in a position of dilemma to make a difficult choice for their life. Fauzi notes, "women had no standing in any affairs other than that concerning their houses" (9). Hence, many representations of women associate themselves with this domestic setting in the novels. For men, wandering public places is a norm, but for women in the story, it is an exhilarating experience to empower and be empowered. One could see this spatial shift through psychogeography to transcend this traditional attachment. Yap creates an adequate representation of male and female characters to fit into the historical timeline she applies in each novel. She imagines the social landscape of life at home and in the city during that time. Their gendered roles and expectations could be better comprehended through this analysis.

The urban experience in a literary text is frequently overlooked in MLiE. Entering the urban site with fresh eyes requires noticing the unfamiliarity, beauty and exciting things in the environment. By looking consciously at the surrounding situations, one can identify what is missing and needs to be highlighted to make changes. In this case, psychogeography suggests that walking is beneficial to

achieving this environmental consciousness (*Psychogeography* 16). However, in today's world, this act has been interpreted in various contexts, that one regards it as long-distance travel by other means of transportation (Shah Khaidzir et al. 146-7) or any movement that can "break a path and leave a trace" (Coverley 12). Thus far, the settings and issues surrounding the characters' interaction with their environment in MLIÉ are explored from postcolonial theory. The characters are given the postcolonial identity to justify their actions and behaviours in response to their situations. The past studies primarily emphasised the postcolonial concepts to analyse identity in space, the victims of imperialism and capitalist growth, cultural memory, unresolved trauma and associating oneself with the idea of home and belonging. They are seldom viewed from a more postmodern framework. Little has been done to utilise this French-based theory to explore the colonial and postcolonial settings in the literary text. The notion of identity in space is prevalent in all of Yap's novels.

Some have also approached other relevant concepts that speak to the themes in narratives, such as multiculturalism and gender studies. Yet, very few attempted to read the present texts from the lens of psychogeography. One of the many attempts I wish to accomplish in this study is utilising psychogeography to read our local text rich with history and culture. This study also contributes to the vast scholarship on the contemporary revivification of psychogeography. However, it takes a dynamic and contradicting approach to do so. Chan Ling Yap's novels contrast sharply with the more complex literary psychogeography of the London authors, such as Iain Sinclair and Will Self. There will be justification and contestation between the original Situationists' praxis on psychogeography and the approach taken by the present study. Reading Yap's fiction and entering the places she set in the stories that previously, as readers, we were aware of and had some basic conceptual information about it, promotes a different set of wandering and observing. The path laid out in her narratives allows one to be immersed and draw richness from it. Though familiar with some aspects mentioned in the stories, the reading through this lens makes it an unfamiliar experience. In this case, we are responding differently to these places through the lens of psychogeography. Psychogeography allows reconnecting and disconnecting to the familiar and unfamiliar landscapes, thus helping one develop a desire to protect, support, and make changes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Throughout my study, there are four main research problems have been identified. Firstly, while identity is the prevalent research topic in MLIÉ, it is rarely discussed from the psychogeography lens. Some of the current research works on identity in MLIÉ through psychogeography establish the existence of a female flâneur (Amran & Arbaayah 81-93) and the flâneuse as the learner of places (Shah Khaidzir et al. 140-153). Both studies highlight female flâneur or flâneuse in their chosen Malaysian literary texts. The former used the female flâneur to investigate their presence and roles in public places and urban spaces. Meanwhile, the latter analysed Nor Faridah's travel poetry covering various locations across geographical borders. The study examines the poet's

“experience of a flâneur” and her role in the places she visited (Shah Khaidzir 150-1).

In contrast, Hashim and Fatin deal with the poet’s psychogeographic experience living and working in Kuala Lumpur to comment on the social and physical condition of the city (165-182). Though they do not specifically elaborate on the notions of identity and space in the poems, the poet, Nassury Ibrahim, performs the quality of a flâneur. Analysing poetry in the two works mentioned above deviates from this study’s initial purpose of examining Chan Ling Yap’s novels. However, their studies are significant because they push for a more inclusive appropriation of Malaysian literary text and context. They have cleared the path for this study to continue questioning identity in the selected texts through the lens of psychogeography.

Secondly, thus far, only a few critics and researchers have analysed Chan Ling Yap’s novels. My study utilises the brainchild of French-Marxist theorist Guy Debord to examine three crucial aspects of psychogeography in four selected Chan Ling Yap’s fiction, thus following the call for a fresh perspective on identity engaging with the concept of human-environment relationship. Employing an eclectic method of French-based theories with Malaysian fiction encourages literary studies in MLIÉ to be more dynamic and analytic. The previous studies used various theoretical frameworks to ground their discussion on multiple types of settings and symbols in Yap’s fiction. Besides the debate on identity mentioned above, Amran focuses on the city and perceptions in Yap’s selected stories (194-207). She emphasises the representation of the urban landscapes and public spaces in Yap’s tetralogy, while Nur looks at the multicultural landscape and issues portrayed in *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (1-10). Furthermore, Fauzi pays attention to “the function of food in the Peranakan Chinese women’s lives” in *Sweet Offerings* (11-12). She applies the ‘culinary capital’ concept “derived from a French sociologist and anthropologist”, which is rarely discussed in MLIÉ (13). The problem identified here is that the previous studies focused on a single novel, while the one who studied Yap’s tetralogy did not discuss the characters’ identities. Therefore, this thesis covers other aspects of Yap’s novels, specifically the identity, space and movement.

Psychogeography is based on the Parisian beginning and London awakening, thus making the theory an exclusive agenda for European urban practitioners. When the avant-garde movement entered the French capital, it sought to revolutionise mundane urban activity. They encouraged people to walk and let the environment influences their sense of direction and purpose. However, the present works and attempts to practice psychogeography have taken another revolutionary act by giving “a distinct break from the tradition” (Richardson 245). The third problem that I found while examining the praxis of this theory is that the scholars do not entirely elucidate all the significant aspects of the theoretical framework in one discussion. The following problems are derived from this theory. ‘Psychogeography’ denotes a combination of two disciplines. However, it entails more than just psychology and geography, but a deeper understanding of the complex human experience with the landscapes. The literary analysis in

psychogeography encapsulates arguments on a more inclusive and extensive appropriation of fields in multiple directions, contexts, and concepts. The following discussion addresses the problems in this theory.

The conceptual idea of the theory lies in gender, walking practices, psychology, geography, urban and modernity which requires extensive work to cover in one study. Therefore, several studies focus on one aspect of the theory. Some critics only pay attention to the gendered part of the target group. Regardless of the scientific or literary research, they encourage the involvement of female urban wanderers to deviate from the traditional Parisian male strollers but neglect an in-depth analysis of other aspects of psychogeography (Kim 79-93; Elkin 3-298; Kula 86-99; Bougherira 263-275). Their studies mainly contest the traditional idea of feminine and masculine space. Historically, women were treated poorly for being in public while men dominated the city. But today's argument proves that women play essential parts in modern development and should not be neglected or marginalised for being in the city. I argue the importance of equal gendered representation in the analysis to explore their different urban experience. Though one of the selected novels in this research has more female protagonists, arguably, I do not disregard the male protagonist involved in the stories.

Another group of psychogeography critics combine variables or explore more than one discipline to understand the human-environment interaction, such as psychology with urban geography, that covers memory, remembering, and trauma issues at a particular city or location (Bonnett 75-87; Capstick 211-226; Rose 101-4; Morrison 51-72). Their works examine the psychological changes in the human-environment interactions and validate the inclusion of other cities in the world rather than focusing on Paris and London. When the critics approach the text to contest the flâneur's identity, they must also consider the changes in the temporal and spatial settings imagined by the narrator or writer. This situation can be seen in Russell's discussion on postcolonial London, where he discovers Manzur Islam's dual depictions of the city in his text as symbolically hostile but homely (89-90). The city's description connotes the social condition of the people living there and the emotional impacts that they experience in the city. Therefore, exploring one aspect of the theory might require looking at other recurring elements that contribute to the overall information of the context presented in the text. This study manifests the critical discourse of human-environment interaction in identity formation by using three critical variables, gender, psychology and urban forms in psychogeography, which thus far remained little explored.

The notion of movement in this study deviates from the conventional act of walking introduced by the European psychogeographers. Though the flâneur usually reflects or embodies the modern figure in Paris and London or another Western metropolis that offers him 'a walkable facility' to explore his environment, changes in the geographical location perceived by the writer might provide a different psychogeographic experience and argument (Morrison 54). The modern development of transportation and other modes of travelling has

gradually superseded the act of walking. It is now considered an art and a metaphor for a more aesthetic and spiritual expression. Walking is now seen as a tangible and intangible aspect of life that one can “take a walk in his mind” to discover the world (Coverley 11-17). Moving from private space to the public domain or from home to the city gives Yap’s characters a sense of agency and facilitates identity formation. I propose that in Malaysia’s context of colonial and postcolonial settings, a different understanding of walking applies in this study. In the present works of Shah Khaidzir and his co-researchers, the concept of walking is seen in two ways. The first is the poet’s experience of wandering the streets in foreign countries, and the second is “the emotional journey associated with recalling the particular locations for certain reasons” (146). Bougherira also discovers the character’s different voyages to seek freedom, recover identity and empower oneself and the community (263-275). The critics mentioned here look at the setting on a larger scale, across different geographical boundaries. In this thesis, I pay attention to the internal and enclosed parts of the private and public domains. I argue the importance of looking at factors influencing their exit and entrance from one setting to another, an aspect that has not yet been explored extensively in psychogeography. The pressuring conditions of the environment can affect one’s decision to embark on a journey outside of their private realm and explore the public world. Therefore, considering various aspects of gender, psychology, and urban representation in the chosen texts, my thesis suggests looking at identity formation due to their spatial shifts.

Finally, using the lens of psychogeography to read Malaysian texts has been productively engaging in recent years. The growing interest and research in understanding human-environment interactions have marked its territory in the local literature, thus expanding this French-based theory or Western-centred ideology in the Malaysian context and text. Recent critical literary research has been made to read poetry using this lens. This contemporary approach can be seen in the study of Nor Faridah’s anthology of poetry (Shah Khaidzir et al. 140-153), selected poems from *Malchin Testament: Malaysian Poems* (Shah Khaidzir et al. 181-198) and Nassury Ibrahim’s selected poems (Hashim and Fatin 165-182). Yet very few attempts were made on prose or fiction. Therefore, it is a breakthrough for this study to problematise the conscious awareness of how the environment, predominantly the city, affects human behaviours and emotions in historical fiction.

1.3 Research Objectives

Three main objectives are proposed here to structure the following study:

1. To investigate aspects that influence the characters’ movements and engagements with the urban environment.
2. To examine the critical psychological process between the characters and the urban environment in the selected novels.

3. To analyse the representations and portrayals of the urban environment in the selected novels that influence characters' identity formation.

1.4 Research Questions

Three questions are proposed here to guide this study:

1. How is the concept of gendered spatial movement interpreted in the selected novels?
2. How is the psychology in psychogeography manifested in the selected novels?
3. How do Chan Ling Yap's portrayals and representations of the urban environment in her works influence and shape the selected characters' identity formation process?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This section explains the theoretical aspect of the theory utilised to analyse Chan Ling Yap's novels. The focus is on the application of psychogeography in literary practice. Firstly, a brief overview of the concept is laid out in this section. The following subsection elaborates on the nexus of literary psychogeography as a site of evolutionary adaptation and interpretation in this study. The idea is to frame a conceptual understanding of its application in literary or cultural production that disrupts conventional models of interpreting the text, individual psyche and the city. My discussion of this French-based theory and the avant-garde formulation embedded in a Marxist notion of praxis (Mudie 213) would revolve primarily around examining critical problems of human-environment interactions in the text built within imagination and reality.

Psychogeography is a theory that studies the influence of geographical environments on the individual's emotions and behaviours. Originated from the Lettrist International (LI), a French avant-garde group that actively operated in the 1950s and gradually developed by the Situationists International (SI) (Coverley 14). The original French word is *psychogéographie*, but most Anglophone scholars adopt the English word 'psychogeography', making it understandable for a broader adaptation. Guy Debord's *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* is considered the foundational document that introduced psychogeography. Debord sought to revitalize urban life and escape the capitalist mindset by bringing in the concept of wandering while observing. By performing this, he raised questions about the capitalist power structures in Paris and called for the masses to improve or change their lives from the mundane urban activities (Debord). The aims of psychogeography consist of observing the urban environment's aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual effects. This information is utilized to seize control of existing or new urban sites. It gives an exclusive

right to enjoyable activities or, to an extent, a more radical movement than merely a deadening economic activity. However, as much as profound practitioners such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd wanted to retain psychogeography's original definition and understanding, they agreed that straightforward interpretation of psychogeographic activity at some points in its scholarly contributions is less impactful and applicable for a broader discourse.

The theory extends to different regions and covers walking that does not confine to the traditional psychogeographic rubric but on a broader interest in urban walking (Richardson 241-253). Since it has garnered popularity from the early 1990s onwards, the original concept has been challenged by many, especially in England, where it gained massive revivification among literary critics (Bonnett 47). The renewed interest in this theory paves the way to view it as separate from the 1990s pioneers and practitioners (Richardson 243). Furthermore, the urban dweller known as the flâneur has been a significant figure in this movement, making his appearance crucial to the urban space and social context. The 19th-century flâneur represented the modern-capitalist metropolis of Paris, who became the hero in the city and the product of modernity (Mazlish 43). In the traditional Parisian construct, this figure is a wealthy man who has the luxury and time to stroll in the city and observe others. This idea has confined and restricted the women's involvement and participation in the cityscape, marginalizing them in an unstable and invisible position. It is shown in Sun Jai Kim's reading of Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman*. The female character strives to challenge this social setting to establish herself in London as a budding female writer surviving in a male-dominated world (79-93). Shah Khaidzir and his fellow researchers have positioned the female flâneur who connects with her environment and the crowd or audience by acknowledging and addressing their existence in her journey (143). Bougherira revealed the identity of a black female flâneur in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*. The novel's protagonist has undergone an identity transformation that she grows from a solitary wanderer to a stalker within the constraints of degrading American capitalist society (263-75).

Morrison stated that "walking provides a map of observed changes to the environment" (54). It is a philosophical step to search for intellectual freedom, a movement through the landscape to achieve sacred goals, an action to the imaginary world that allows the walker to transcend the boundary of time and space, and many other definitions explained by Coverley in his book, *The Art of Wandering*. Walking and flâneur have conquered other regions and appeared in the non-Western context of modernity. Walking has also been given new interpretations than the previous conventional walking on foot. Therefore, psychogeography has been applied in several different contexts and disciplines, such as psychogeography and architecture, psychogeography and education, or psychogeography and film (Löffler 7). In this research, I focus on psychogeography in literature, specifically the fictional text written in a non-Western urban environment, a deviation from its long tradition in European settings. These findings and the new possibilities of approaching the theory in a renewed discourse have allowed this study to employ this theory to read the selected texts.

The rationale for using psychogeography, specifically literary psychogeography, is based on Chan Ling Yap's evocation of the idea of movement and mobilisation in her fiction. The obsession with place, such as making the private domain a perfect haven for individuals and connecting with the public space to establish oneself, is a crucial aspect of psychogeography. She emphasises this aspect as a trajectory to reconnect with her heritage and history. However, she found that "there is very little written on the personal lives (Chinese immigrants)- how they moved from place to place, their fortune when they first stepped into Malaya and so on" (Bissme n.p). Indeed, all of her novels manifest these internal and external shifts. Apart from that, her interest in the economy resonates in her writing style. She incorporates many historical details about the development of urbanisation and economic advancement during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Therefore, psychogeography is most suited to 'wander' Yap's imagination of the urban setting and her character's interaction with the space.

1.5.1 Literary Psychogeography

Literary psychogeography explores the effects of the fictional or imaginary geographical environment on the character's psyche, including their complex cognitive process, conflating with cultural elements in the narratives. According to Mudie, in assessing the relationship between psychogeography and literary text, especially novels, the notion of praxis offers a more complex set of questions to challenge the functions of the fictional text in producing the relationship between place and psyche (213). Praxis is defined as translating an idea into action that this Marxist notion is heavily embedded in psychogeographical practices. Holloway has also elaborated in podcasts that she described as the active doing to create or change for the self and others. There is also an anti-praxis or the adverse effect in response to the change that has been done (Powell 21:57).

The extent to which my interpretation of literary psychogeography as a practical mode of analysis goes beyond the mechanical explanations of the theory. In this non-Western literary text that is the focus of the study, the intention is to immerse in the reading of a place and human psyche where the author drew its richness. By reconnecting with the conflating elements of facts and fiction in historical narratives, the analysis presents an appreciation and recollection of the local environment, including the aesthetic nature of ethnic history and culture, thus helping to create change and protect these cultural aspects.

For the most part, this study focuses on the notion of gendered space where characters move within and beyond the designated positions to follow, resist, or lead a life freely created for them in the fiction. Unlike the Situationists' cultivation of the walking practices, which they introduced *derive* and *detournement*, this study deconstructs these elements. It turns them into identity construction through the physical shift from one place to another or position that elevates or demotes one's status. Secondly, it pays attention to the notion of psychology in psychogeography. It is to understand or give deeper meaning to the characters'

psyche in their actions or situations they respond to in the narratives. It is a process to get into the story deeper to move and feel the world of fiction through the characters' minds and bodies. In other disciplines, a psychogeographer goes outside the house to experience the world. Finally, the study discusses the representations of the place and space in the novels to examine aspects that influence the characters' identity formation.

1.6 Methodology

What is needed to apply psychogeography and achieve its goal of interacting with the environment is one's curious mind about their surroundings. In the context of other social science disciplines, the initial step to embarking on psychogeography is to pick up a map of a location and let the feet and mind follow or divert the course against the given direction (Bridger 1). More straightforwardly than Bridger's suggestion earlier, Richardson taught us to ditch the map and begin walking, observing, and getting lost in the unfamiliar territories (1). From this experience, one is considered a psychogeographer who consciously or unconsciously attempts to make sense of the surrounding by making critical remarks based on observations earlier. However, using the theory for literary practice requires a different approach to conducting this "wandering and observing" activity.

The analysis chapter is divided into two steps. The first step is to identify the selected characters in the novels. The selection criteria are based on their active movement and close connection to the urban realms. In this analysis, the terminology used to define their portrayals is not limited to the Baudelairian and Benjaminian flâneur, closely associated with the European urban figures. The characters are distinguished from the original solitary walkers due to the nexus of time and space that makes their movement a significant act of making a change in the environment and for themselves.

The second step is the textual analysis based on a three-tiered model, each with a distinct variable focus to answer the research questions. This strategy replicates similar techniques of picking up a map and embarking on an aimless journey, thus by going through the initial process of identifying the characters and their reasons for taking the 'walk' or making such an impactful movement out of their private space to the public world or city; this study gets to examine three critical psychogeographical variables which are gender, space and movement. This level is the first step to answering the first research question on how movement and gendered space are being interpreted in this analysis. The characters' movements will be examined using three thematic concerns inspired by Bridger's and Harlow's techniques in their feminist psychogeography. It investigates the spatiality, temporality, and embodiment of the characters guided by some of the questions that Bridger built in his reflection on hetero-normative assumptions to tackle gendered inequalities (291):

How do men and women enter and exit the environment?
What changes need to occur within environments to facilitate possible social change?
What are the gendered experiences of specific environments?
What are the emotional and behavioural effects of familiar and unfamiliar environments?
Are there any noticeable behavioural or emotional differences when moving between different environments?

Although Bridger and Harlow focused on women in their research, this study builds a strategy that can accommodate male and female characters in the selected novels. Hence, it does not highlight a specific gender but presents the selected protagonists as equally challenged and engaged in their environments.

The next level of analysis is to go deeper into the characters' sensory experiences with the urban environment. Based on my findings, as discussed in 1.2 Statement of the Problem, the psychological aspect of psychogeography is not given due attention by past studies, especially in MLiE. Examining this aesthetic of human psychology in psychogeography requires this study to look at the sensual theory of modernity, as Aimée Boutin and Kimberly DeFazio discussed. Yap's novels present a complex literary form where the environment is illustrated in traumatic settings during the colonial and postcolonial era, unlike other recent studies in MLiE that explored the postmodern settings in Malaysia. Another reason for highlighting this aspect in psychogeography is the insufficient research in literary psychogeography that highlights the characters' psychology in a given traumatic situation. Therefore, the second tier of close-reading of the selected texts examines the psychology of the human senses, differentiating the psychogeographic experience in reading this historical fiction from other literary genres that touch on the human sensory perception of the metropolis.

The third tier of this textual analysis approaches the geographical aspect of psychogeography, which focuses on the representation of the city and urban settings in literature. Various readings on the city in literature, such as by Kevin Lynch, Richard Lehan, and Raymond Williams, guide this analysis. Along with gendered issues and psychology, urban studies are also vital in psychogeography. Exposure to different kinds of environmental pressure, design, structure, and system influence the characters' emotions and behaviours when they live, move, and interact in the given spaces and places. This study looks not only at the emotional link with sensory experience in the city, as this will be discussed in the second tier, but also at the physical setting that connotes various social and spatial issues of the period under study.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Some of the French terms used throughout this thesis have specific meanings, particularly in the context of Situationist International (SI) and psychogeography

during its early commencement. They do not have an ideal translation equivalent to English but have been adopted in contemporary discussion. Their general descriptions may not represent the overall theoretical context of this thesis. For this reason, the original terminology is maintained while providing a contextual explanation throughout the discussion. Other technical terms used in this study help the reader comprehend the topics dealt with in this study.

1. Colonial: This thesis refers explicitly to the period of British colonisation and Japanese occupation in the history of Malaysia between 1826 to 1957. However, the historical timeline set in the novels begins in the 1850s until the 1970s. The stories highlight several significant events during the colonial period of the Chinese communal beginnings in Malaya, such as the large-scale Chinese immigration to Southeast Asia, the influence of the Western missionaries in China, the lifting of the travel ban, the Klang and Larut war, the class struggle between different class in Chinese society, Japanese occupation and the Emergency period (Wang *The Chinese Overseas*; Yen *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*).
2. *Dérive* (in French): It is a revolutionary act to wander around urban environments “to critique the capitalist formation of spaces and places” (Bridger 1) or “the experimental behaviour associated with the urban society’s condition” (Debord 40,52). It also explains how people can leave their work or purposeful activity to enjoy the ambience of entering or exiting unchartered zones or territory (62). However, this thesis rejects this idea as the peripatetic practices that the study discusses follow the revolutionary movement “breaking a path and leaving a trace” (Coverley 11), where a person has a purpose of entering or exiting a place and letting themselves be drawn or distracted by the attractions of the terrain.
3. Diasporic writers: These writers live outside or away from their native country, but their writings are constantly linked to their homeland, lost in nostalgia and memory, and strive to recreate “the space that has changed in their absence” (Devaki 251). Their diasporic identity and transnational status are reflected in their imaginative inscriptions of Malaysia with its cultural origins in the cross-temporal and spatial trajectories (Ang 26; Chin & Quayum 583). The new generation of MLIÉ writers that this thesis refers to belong in this category to disengage other established local and canonical writers discussed on a broader scholarship. This term is also used to position Chan Ling Yap and her works in Malaysian literature in English writings. However, the study does not wish to dwell deeper into the theoretical aspect of postcolonial diaspora.
4. *Flâneur*: According to Coverley, no ideal translations can give equal justice and capture the correct meaning of this French word (153).

Through tracing of its original usage, it has been widely accepted as a figure (mostly seen as male) whose earliest sightings were “linked with the streets of Paris” (154). He is also known through Charles Baudelaire’s essay, providing enough descriptions to view him as a modern urban figure who has the quality of an excellent observant and commentator. He finds the city as his home, and the crowd is his element, but he remains aloof, independent, and hidden from the world (Coverley 154; Tester 2). Hence, it has been generally accepted in English as a stroller, a wanderer or walker. Instead of following the flâneur’s original descriptions, this study implements the contemporary idea that an urban wanderer has evolved in different spaces and times.

5. Flânerie: It is an activity that the flâneur does when he is out in the street or, according to the definition given by Coverley, an action that “offers new ways of experiencing the city” (155). The mention of the term mainly refers to its origins in 1950s Paris. This unique description of the walking and observing activities explained by the scholars in psychogeography has influenced this study to expand the idea of moving beyond Baudelaire and Benjamin’s accounts. Therefore, this term will not be used extensively in the analysis for its inherent nature but to use different words and descriptions according to the subject matter.
6. Embodiment: This term refers to human’s lived experiences that bridge them with nature, society and culture. Because of the differences in human physiological nature and biology, the embodiment exaggerates these differences. It is used to explain the new identity of the urban figures during their inward and outward shifts in this thesis. In recent decades it has been widely explored in economics, politics, education and other interventions that create certain expectations and perceptions of the physiological nature of their bodies (Connell).
7. Identity: The identity is examined based on how the writer explores and engages with urbanity and modernity in her historical renditions. Particular attention is given to gender, psychology, and urban aspects represented in the novels, to raise questions of identity and space. These two terms are connected with various social meanings and shape social relations. This thesis enacts a double move; towards exploring the psychogeographic experience in the selected texts and exerting the influence of the theory in forming an identity that deviates from the Western theoretical tradition. It presents a departure from the existing scholarship on the Chinese Malaysian identity that is ethnographic based on their historical narratives. However, this study explores an identity shaped within/by the human-environment relationship.

8. Malaysian Literature in English: Due to the nation's historical experience, it is highly regarded as postcolonial literature during its early inception. However, over the years, this term encompasses various genres that no longer cater to the country's postcolonial context. This thesis focuses on a specific historical fiction genre and the new group of diasporic writers to position the selected author and her works in this scholarship. It does not aim to revisit the notable works of the early generation of local and international-based writers and other postcolonial-infused works but to pay more attention to the new generation and their thoughts on representing Malaysia in the 21st century reading culture.
9. Postcolonial: This term is used widely in this thesis that refers to the historical period after British colonialism in Malaya. Postcolonial is the study or specific concerns given to the notions of reclaiming and rethinking the history of imperialism and the agency of the colonised people and nation. The study uses this term to explain the shifting spatial and temporal settings. Among the pressing questions of resisting colonial oppression in postcolonial studies, this thesis emphasises how the text represents and responds to the transfer of power from colonial regime to postcolonial. In other words, the postcolonial aspect described in the novel is examined to explain the struggle over time and space that form the characters' identities.
10. Tetralogy: Refers to Chan Ling Yap's series of four related novels; *Sweet Offerings* (2009), *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (2011), *New Beginnings* (2014) and *A Flash of Water* (2016).

1.8 Positioning Chan Ling Yap in Malaysian Literature in English

Malaysian literature in English (MLIE) is an evolving literary branch exhibiting dynamism and resilience against challenges and difficulties in the Malaysian literary landscape since its inception (Quayum *Malaysian Literature in English* 178). In this study, I disregard other local and canonical Anglophone Malaysian writers by paying more attention to the new generation of diasporic writers of the 21st century. The former group of writers bravely overcame the challenging local literary scene. The writers and their works were marginalised due to the English language medium used in their literary works, yet they remain relevant to fellow Malaysians. In recent years, Malaysian diasporic writers have marked their territory and continued to address issues of concern to contribute to the country's literary market. They are regarded as the "outsider to the homeland" whose writings reflect their feelings, experience, longing and leaning toward the "space that has changed in their absence" or where they and their ancestors belonged (Devaki 251). The historical baggage often inspired their stories, emphasising the loss of roots, trauma and memory, cultural identity and rejoicing in the aesthetic of family values that mostly depict male supremacy and female

submission, or ethnic tradition versus Western modernisation. Their writings are also bound to impart new insights into the global context.

Several contemporary diasporic writers have published a consistent trend of returning to various historical landmarks and portraying the natural, social, multilingual and modern environment in Malaysia's past and present. By "contemporary" here, this thesis refers to the group of writers published since 2000. Consistent with the profiles above, Chan Ling Yap's works are a part of diasporic writing because, being a diasporic person herself, she constantly expresses the returns and inclination towards her ancestral roots and homeland. Yap conveys her confounded emotions about one's identity and space through her works. It positions her as an outsider who looks at the place and time in the distant land, moving through the imaginary descriptions of her ancestral experience and letting the readers feel her emotions and thoughts in a space where she is absent.

1.8.1 About the Author

Chan Ling Yap is a contemporary Malaysian diasporic writer based in the United Kingdom (UK) and has produced five historical fiction tracing the roots and routes of her ethnic identity in China and Malaysia. She was academically and professionally trained in the economic field, production and consumption of the rice market, and fisheries development. Born and educated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Yap was a former lecturer at the University of Malaya before joining the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome for 19 years. Yap is also the direct descendant of the prominent Chinese Kapitan, Yap Kwan Seng, who aided education development in the early days of post-independence Kuala Lumpur (Yap, *A Flash of Water* 376). Chan Ling Yap won the Popular Readers' Choice Award in 2014 for her third novel, *New Beginnings*, and in 2019 for her fifth novel, *Where the Sunrise is Red*. She settled in the UK with her family, started developing and teaching exercise regimes, produced literature and can be found at www.chanlingyap.com.

The return to Malaysia's past is an evocation of her identity and the places she belonged. The unique ingredients of history, culture and tradition provide "colourful backgrounds" to her writing (Yap). She illuminates this historical aspect set as the story's backdrop to reveal another layer of social, political, and economic struggles within the socio-landscape in colonial and post-colonial Malaysia. Despite the horrid descriptions happening to her characters, Yap makes sure that readers can grasp and learn the silent strength that prevails even when it seems impossible to survive. Her diasporic experience allowed her to enter the diverse culture and personalities vital for her writing, such as her experience working in Rome. She has written extensively in academic and technical works, and now she wants to write something different from what she had done before. The fictional writing brings her to the "areas in her mind which she never knew existed" (*The Sun Daily*). Some aspects of her narratives reflect her life and background, hence why most people think her work is biographical

(*Bitter-Sweet Harvest* interview). Edward Said had similar views on this: “the authors are shaping and being shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure” (12).

Born and surrounded by the urban community, some of the episodes in Yap’s fiction contain vivid descriptions of Malaysia’s urban lifestyle and landscape of the early modern stage. Like KS Maniam and the estate lifestyle in Kedah (Wicks 78), Che Husna Azhari and her reference to the “Malay laidback surroundings” in Kelantan (Ismail & Mohammad 213), Yap demonstrates herself as a complete insider of Kuala Lumpur and writes compellingly about the life and landscape of the particular urban sites in Malaysia. As mentioned in her fourth novel, *A Flash of Water* (2016), the school was founded by her great grandfather (376) and depicted in the story, thus reflecting her significant ancestral influences on the education development in this city.

She understood that it was difficult for Li Ling. They did not have enough resources to stream the children by age. The class consisted of children ranging from as young as ten. Li Ling was by far the oldest; compared to the others, she was a young adult. The class was further sub-divided into groups based on abilities. The children were recruited from all sorts of backgrounds and were of different ethnicity. A significant proportion of them was from Ceylon and India. Some already had a smattering of English. Li Ling could neither read nor speak English. She spoke Cantonese; she did not, however, read or write Chinese. Inevitably she fell into the bottom group amongst the youngest. (182)

Yap’s novels are another product of living in pre-and post-independence Malaysia. She portrays Kuala Lumpur in most of her novels as a bustling city full of colours and textures. Her ideas on urbanity stretch well beyond this city to the multicultural aspects and economy-driven Chinese community living in Malaysia. At the same time, she demonstrates various class descriptions in Chinese society that possessed great potential for social mobility, primarily through education and marriage. In her remarks,

“My novels, I believe, take the reader through history through the eyes of the living, of people, of hearts and souls. It makes history alive and exciting. It connects young people with their roots, so important in this fast-changing world where one can flounder and lose one’s identity in the maze of rapid technological advance. Wonderful as the latter is, it lacks the human touch.” (Yap 2018)

This urban setting of the past makes her works a compelling case to study and analyse from the lens of psychogeography that focuses on human interactions with the urban environments. Besides trailing the fictional path in her novels, this study explores individual experiences facing the eventful episodes and the relationship that they create with the spatial and temporal conditions of their surroundings.

1.8.2 Historical Context of the Selected Novels

Each novel incorporates the early generation's background story primarily born from the migrant and diasporic experience. Each narrative draws on a specific thematic concern and representation in line with the country's social, spatial and temporal context as the stories are set during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Furthermore, Yap highlights the formative period and early growth of colonial and postcolonial spaces and places where the characters gather, transform and progress in various social and spatial constructions. There is a need to understand this early communal history and the position of the Chinese people in Malaysia since the beginning to process the coherence between the historical representation and the growth of the fictional social and spatial settings.

The Chinese settlements in the Southeast Asian region can be traced as early as the height of the glory of the Malacca era. The Chinese traders traversed this region but returned home soon after. Following Admiral Cheng Ho's arrival in Malacca, these Chinese traders and voyagers settled here, forming a diversity in race, religion, language and culture in this land (Yang Wei 27). The highlight of Yap's novels begins during the mass migration in the late 19th century and the booming colonial era in the early 20th century, as represented in her third and fourth novels, *New Beginnings* and *A Flash of Water*. This era was critical in the British empire, where industrialization and land invasion contributed to the economic rise that gave them status and power over other nations and regions. British recruited the Chinese and Indians to develop tin mines and plantations in Malaya. The large scale of the Chinese and Indian immigrants contributed to the economic growth and changed the social landscape in the land. Their presence was dominant for their roles in the bustling British empire, which provided cheap labours for the British to reap Malaya's nature and treasure. Guan stated that the wealth and natural produce from agriculture and mineral resources were sent back to the "metropolitan centre of the British Empire" (170). Yap also revisits the watershed years during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, the Emergency period, the post-racial riots in May 1969, and the early development of modern Malaysia after it gained independence from the British in 1957 in *Sweet Offerings* and *Bitter-Sweet Harvest*.

These historical narratives portray the colonized and decolonized people whose social and spatial interactions tell a particular story. Yap incorporates the brutal exploitation of the colonisers, the economic expansion, and social and spatial division by the Western system against Chinese culture and tradition. The historical background in the novels presents the focal points to the complexities of experience, interactions, and movements within social and spatial constructions that inform the characters' development in the stories. Therefore, the novels present settings and characters worth studying as they render identities and characteristics that challenge the widely held stereotyped figure of the marginalised, gendered and muted. The main concern is to view such an identity from a distinct perspective that connects the characters to the setting, specifically the urban environments. This thesis focuses not on the migrants or ethnic minorities' relationships with the settlement area. It measures the spatial

interactions and behavioural consequences, turning people and the city into a manifestation of change and advancement. This human-environment relationship offers an investigation into the ordinary lives of Chinese people in Malaya while tracing the re-imagining of city space in the past.

1.8.3 Synopsis of the Selected Novels

Set in colonial and postcolonial Malaya, her writings are deeply infused with her Chinese identity and Malaysian cultural, historical and political landscape. The following subsections provide the synopsis and simplified family trees to help understand the narratives and selected characters.

1. *Sweet Offerings* (2009)

This novel is set between the late 1930s and 1960s. The story centres around three main characters; Mei Yin, Ming Kong, and Nelly. Yap demonstrates multiple protagonists to explore different perspectives of life and individual living during the period in this novel. As it is written through the eyes of different social classes within the Chinese community in Malaya, it covers the transition of each of these protagonists from the traditional way of life to the early modern state. Several significant historical events serve as the background in the storylines, depicting the early development of ethnic Chinese in Malaya. The early thirty chapters of the story are told in a third-person narrative, giving information and description of multiple sides of the three main protagonists; Mei Yin, Ming Kong and Nelly. Then, Yap changes the direction of her narrative by telling it from the first-person point of view. Readers can grasp the new generation's perspective on living during post-Independence Malaysia through An Mei.

Sweet Offerings offers more than just a tale of a Chinese family saga trapped between the traditional customs, cultural expectations and modernity. It reveals Mei Yin's story of arranged marriage and Nelly's compelling account of domestic abuse that she finally escapes from her husband and meets Ming Kong, the novel touches on various familial issues surrounding the traditional Chinese family in 1930s Malaya. Together, the three main protagonists live and build their families against Malaya's challenging economic and political settings. The notion of social mobilisation is apparent in the narratives through the characters of Mei Yin and Nelly. It defines the characters' identity development and the abandonment of the countryside for their lives and status in the city. In this novel, Yap also portrays the beginning of modern youth living during the end of colonialism and the early post-colonial era through the growing influence of economic advancement and education. The characters in the story epitomize the mobility and the culture of modernity when Malaysia plunges into the post-Independence state with a new political direction.

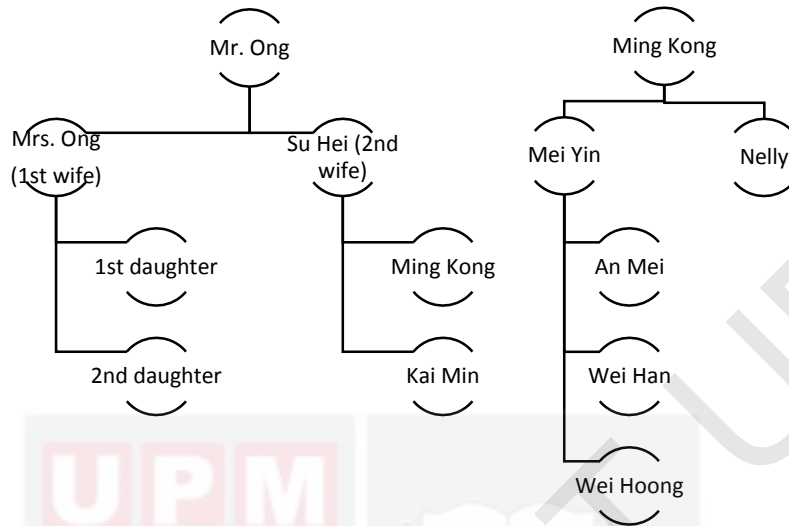


Figure 1: The Ong's House
(Source: *Sweet Offerings*, 2009)

2. *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (2011)

Yap's second novel is the sequel to her first novel hence the list of characters involved are very much related to the previous story. However, it is set in a different time frame, giving the narration a distinct mood and voice. The escalation of inter-ethnic hostilities and tensions after the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 led to a tragic incident on May 13, 1969. Yap sets the post-incident as the temporal and spatial background in this novel. The protagonist, An Mei does not face the race riots in Kuala Lumpur, but she experiences the consequences of the aftermath upon returning to the country. This novel narrates her life and journey, entwined with other pressing issues in the post-independence of modern Malaysia. Both An Mei and Hussein finished their studies at Oxford, giving them the intellectual advantage to share and pursue an ideal political direction for the country. However, An Mei's family was severely affected by the racial riots that they decided to leave Malaysia and settle in Oxford.

Though reluctant and torn between her family and Malay boyfriend, she returns with Hussein to Malaysia without her parents' consent. The following events reveal the challenges and obstacles she faces against the racial tensions that have marred Malaysia's social landscape. As a young and educated Chinese girl living in Kuala Lumpur, she does not fit the ideal traditional daughter-in-law image that Hussein's family seeks in this marriage. It is through this cultural marker that divides the two characters apart, conveyed through this interracial marriage. Their religion, culture and traditional expectations are integrated seamlessly in this narrative, evoking an emotional response to ponder these differences against the racial tensions in the country. After marrying Hussein and

embracing Islam, she stays and works in Kuala Lumpur while her husband pursues his political career in Kemun, a rural district with a major Malays population. Months later, she is forced to share her husband with someone else. An Mei also struggles to navigate her political stance amidst the conflict in the country. Tensions between An Mei and Hussein's family occurred rapidly, as intense as the political division among races after the riots. Unable to accept the changes and continue to live in despair, hopelessly waiting for Hussein and a new direction in the political situation in the country, she finally decides to leave the marriage and Malaysia. She settles in Rome and discovers a new life. After remarrying, An Mei strives to stay far away from Malaysia, building a new hope in a city far from the land where it used to be her home. Her departure marks the end of her dream of the homeland and a new beginning in a foreign country. The family trees provided below describe the characters involved in this novel.

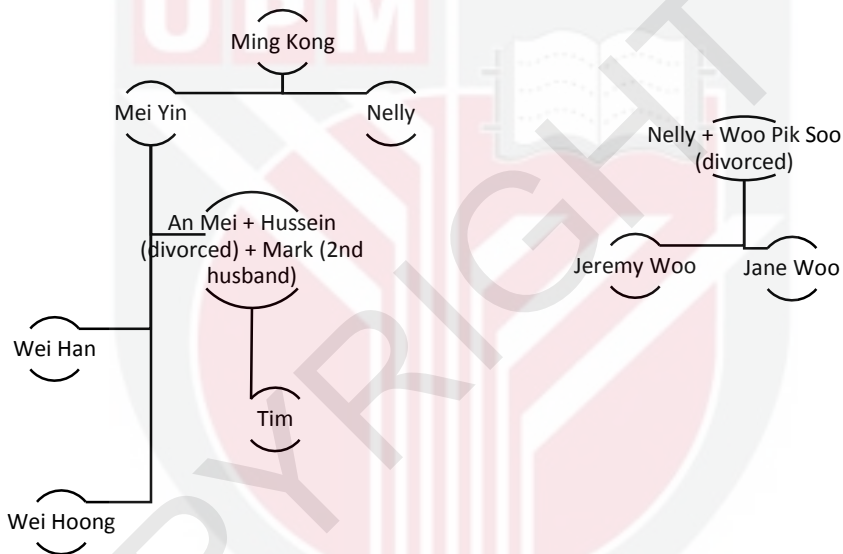


Figure 2: An Mei's Family
(Source: *Bitter-Sweet Harvest*, 2011)

3. *New Beginnings* (2014)

The novel is set in the 1850s when Malaya was under the British colonial government. It presents a familial account of the diasporic experiences, beginning in the Southern Province of Guangxi during the Taiping Rebellion and the Opium Wars that had destroyed the cities and people. The situation had a destructive impact on the social and economic institutions in parts of China, thus forcing people to live in poverty and misery. Scheltema recorded that China was made to yield to the British. At one point, the Chinese government prohibited the

use of opium among its people as they saw how it had taken its toll on people's property and destiny, paralysing their social, political and economic systems (213-4). However, after many failed attempts to curb the advancement of opium and external pressures, the Chinese government succumbed to the Western powers led by Britain. They controlled financial institutions and exploited the people (Yen 411). It starts with the story of a man who travels through the city to find a job. Upon returning, he finds his wife and daughter have been abducted and sold to a brothel in the town. While trying to rescue them, he falls into his uncle's trap as they sell and force him to board a junk to the British Malaya. As Ngao settles in a foreign land, he dreams of building a new life with his family here. With each passing day he spends on the plantation and builds trust and connection with his fellow Chinamen, China becomes a distant memory that only through remembering his wife and daughter helps his spirit up. He gradually re-roots himself in Malaya with minimal mention of returning to China compared to other Chinese migrants who constantly mention returning home. When Ngao learns about his wife's death, he strives to bring his daughter to Malaya. With the help of his aunt in China and a British officer who is relocated to Singapore, Shao Peng disguises herself as a boy and boards the ship to the South Seas. It was recorded that very few families could be settled or created in the foreign land as the exclusionary policies in China prohibited women from travelling out of the country (Wang 63).

The novel emerges as a personal account and depicts the typical story found among the Chinese immigrants who arrived in British Malaya with nothing. Mostly these Chinese immigrants were poor and illiterate. They left their homeland for economic advancement (Yen 293). They built their business empire to be passed down to their generations through "hard work, thrift, business acumen and luck" (79). Yap manifests this rags to riches model in her protagonist at the heart of the narrative. Unlike the typical model above, Ngao is not illiterate as others perceived. He has a rich family background, but his uncle denied his rights due to internal conflict. Indeed, he never attempts to leave China and his family behind. While other migrants feel the urge to return home and take this as their temporary exit from China's economic and political pressure, Ngao is not inclined to leave this new land. Chan Ling Yap presents the individual story intertwined with the history of wars in China and Malaya: the Chinese mass migration, illegal opium trades, the development of the agricultural and mining industry at the end of the 19th century, the Selangor civil war and the reconstruction and advancement in Kuala Lumpur by Kapitan Yap Ah Loy. Yap also portrays the multicultural society and landscapes as Malaya emerges under the yoke of British imperialism. The British did not interfere much in the Chinese community, giving them "a high degree of self-government". However, the kinship associations they established to protect the members and fellow compatriots had secrets and internal conflicts, divided in power and authority (Yen 128). This diasporic account of an impoverished man from China who built his fortunes in Malaya adds another dimension to the history of urban landscapes in the country, specifically the development in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

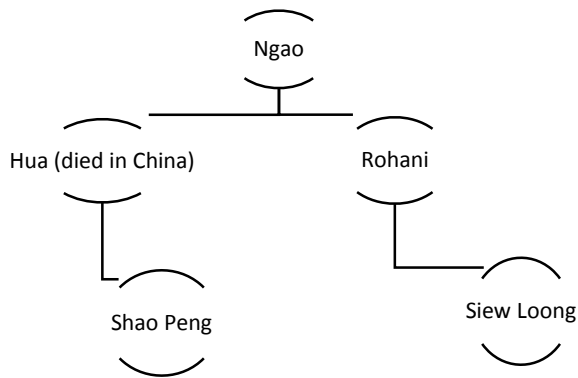


Figure 3: Ngao's Family
 (Source: *New Beginnings*, 2014)

4. *A Flash of Water* (2016)

The final text in this selection is set in the 1880s in China and Malaya. Its centrality. *A Flash of Water* is the fourth novel that completes the tetralogy of a family saga consisting of several generations against the turbulent political, economic and social changes in China and Malaya. Set in 1883, as China is financially, politically and socially unstable, the inherent antagonism by the rural Chinese against the intrusion of foreigners and Christian missionaries and the hostile charge by the warlords are growing intensely in this temporal setting. The novel tells the tale of two main female characters, Shao Peng and Li Ling, trapped in the Chinese tradition and customs that bind them to their ill-fated journey in China and Malaya. This story does not manifest the traditional patrilineal patterns of continuing the fortunes, luck, and values from father to son. They are identified based on their distinct social class and the need for emancipation against traditional boundaries in male-dominated spaces. Unlike the typical model of the first Chinese immigrants who passed down their business to the second generation, Yap's protagonist does not belong in this category.

Shao Peng is a passionate and intellectual woman who received British education and a modern upbringing in late 19th century Malaya. She refuses to follow her father's arrangement regarding her future and joins the Christian missionary to China to visit her dying aunt. In China, she meets Li Ling, who needs to escape being a concubine to a warlord. The situation in China has opened the door for women to travel abroad. The influence of Christian missionaries against the country's poor political conditions had strengthened the external forces to dominate China's policy, especially on lifting the travel ban for women. Li Ling comes from a lower-class background, lacks education, and lacks social independence. Through Shao Peng, Li Ling flees to Malaya.

However, upon returning to Malaya, Shao Peng is caught with the family problems that she must leave Li Ling at the Convent. This novel has also relived the experience of living during the early development of Western schooling in Malaya brought by the missionaries. The school was established for the elite colonials and expatriates. Shao Peng's involvement with the school and missionaries tells readers about her social position and Yap's evocation to her family background, whose ancestral played a significant role in building a school in Malaya.

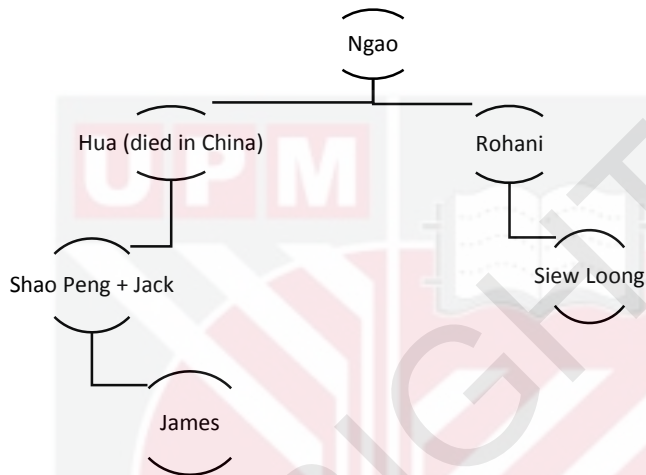


Figure 4: Shao Peng's Family
(Source: *A Flash of Water*, 2016)

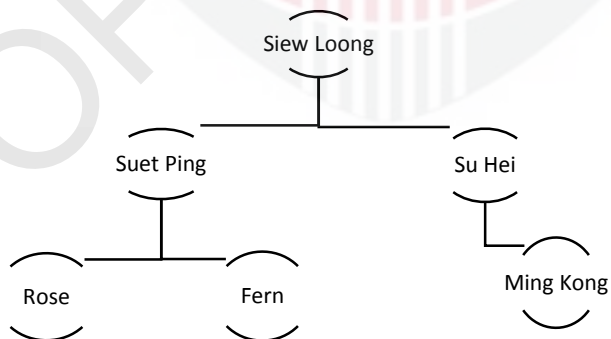


Figure 5: Siew Loong's Family
(Source: *A Flash of Water*, 2016)

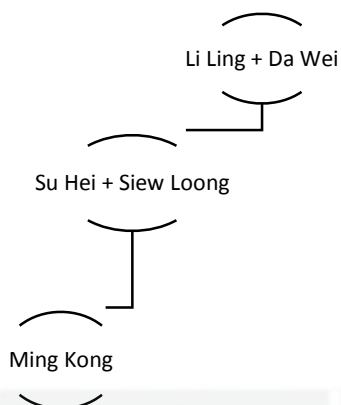


Figure 6: Li Ling's Family
 (Source: *A Flash of Water*, 2016)

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to one author, Chan Ling Yap, within the bigger pool of Malaysian literature in English (MLiE) writers. This study's primary concern is Yap's characters and their interactions with the environment set in the narratives. It argues that this interaction provides a conscious awareness of how place affects behaviours and feelings, thus giving the characters' identities a more paradigmatic discourse. Consequently, the notion of identity is reformulated according to the psychogeographic framework. It is done by considering various conceptual information about the settings and characters involved in the novels. The characters' selections also follow the criteria outlined by the theory to achieve the ultimate purpose of human-environment interaction. To select the characters, I focus on the scope of their attached-detached position with the city that involves physical movement to enter and exit the spaces designated for them in the narratives. Characters that do not have direct or significant interaction with the private and public spaces are omitted in this analysis.

To highlight the human-environment interaction, I focus on the recurring motifs, symbols, ideas, and words that carry the pursuit to a shift in the spatial experience. Anything that links to urbanity or public spaces and the attempts to enter this area is highlighted. The characters' interaction with their private and public spaces helps to understand their desire, emotions and behaviours affected by the disruptions and interventions in their surroundings. These aspects represent environmental consciousness that comes under the rubric of psychogeography. The present scope of psychogeographic analysis is different from that of the Situationist in the 1950s. This study demonstrates that it leans towards contemporary revivification without neglecting some of the original

frameworks, such as the gendered and spatial elements. As Richardson mentioned, the current work does not take a total break from the Situationist. The old and new approaches contain distinctions in how they respond to the cultural, political and social situation in the given time (245).

This thesis focuses on her four novels that form a tetralogy that traces the lives of one family. *Sweet Offerings* (2009), *Bitter-Sweet Harvest* (2011), *New Beginnings* (2014) and *A Flash of Water* (2016) are imbued with understanding, communicating and imagining of the interactions between urban landscape and community. The novels capture Chan Ling Yap's appreciation of journeys and change from the early urban development in Malaya to the sprawling modern landscape in Malaysia. The movement within and beyond spaces resonates with the journey of one family and their communal beginnings in the rise of Chinese economic, wealth and status in Malaysia. Yap's constant reference to the major town and city affected by the colonial influence and complexity of the hybrid structure and elements in her portrayal of modernity and urbanity are projected well in her novels. The construction of the early town and city is often related to the influence of British colonisation, hence portraying the apparent colonial experiences. Melaka, Penang, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur manifest through the characters' journey and change that these places contribute to shaping human-environment experience. Space, movement and identity are the core elements of human existence, and the interconnectedness of these aspects makes their presence significant (Éva 8). Finally, the omission of the fifth novel, *Where the Sunrise is Red* (2018), is due to the plot departure that does not contribute to the sequence of journey and change in the other four novels. The latest work is culturally and thematically different even though the historical setting is within the same timeline.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Malaysia is rich with the pre and post-Independence group of writers with their imaginative recreations in utilising and reshaping historical facts in fiction. However, this thesis is limited to studying Chan Ling Yap's works. She has published five historical fiction yet, focusing only on her four novels for two reasons. Firstly, she captures the growth of the Chinese protagonists monitored through their unique cultural and traditional values and the evolution and development of Chinese living in Malaysia. Yap's portrayal of journey and change through spatial movement, especially from private to public, home to the city, and tradition to modernity, is evident in the four novels. Read as tetralogy but independently complete in themselves, one would be able to identify that Yap is deeply infused in Malaysia's Chinese business history and ideology. Her conviction that each space and place in the story provide dynamic interactions to the characters' development is progressively consistent in this tetralogy. The analysis in this thesis would further establish how Yap gradually enhances the journey towards wealth and status in the diversity of the characters' struggles and experiences.

Secondly, the study focuses on Chinese characters as the novels' protagonists and significant urban dwellers. Other ethnicities are mentioned, but Yap does not emphasise the crucial characters' development in the story. The Malays, Indians and British communities live or interact with the Chinese characters but are less dynamic in their presence and interaction with the urban space and public places. However, the social diversity reflects Yap's endeavour to portray an inclusive and multicultural structure of Malaysia's colonial and post-colonial setting, eventually to the hybrid influences in the nuance of modern life and values. In this thesis, Malaysia's historical and socio-political landscapes explore the situation and condition of the Malaysian Chinese identity and community in Yap's works. I deliberately choose not to link to other Chinese identities and communities in China or other countries to retain Yap's vision and ingenuity. However, some comparisons would justify the characters' journey and changes that profoundly impacted their identity. I would also not exhaust any argument on the specific traumatic experience during the colonial intervention. This thesis intends not to respond to the unresolved trauma but to suggest a conscious awareness of human-environment interactions in the Malaysian text and context.

In choosing psychogeography as the theoretical framework for this thesis, I have limited its application in literature. There are other analytical and scientific branches in psychogeography; however, they do not foreground the literary property essential in the textual analysis of any cultural and literary works. The limited number of current studies in the context of non-Western discourse encourages this thesis to analyse texts written by South-East Asian writers. The reformulation of psychogeography shows that this theory has become more inclusive than its predecessor. Ann Tso explains that literary psychogeography "inspires multiple interpretations of the city and its history" (15). Therefore, this framework could deconstruct the understanding of urban spaces and experiences in Malaysia that were previously argued within postcolonial or other theoretical underpinnings. The literary psychogeography extends the knowledge of defamiliarizing the controlled perceptions of the city. Since this study utilises the psychogeographic framework, the discussion on identity and other related terms such as embodiment, characteristics attributed to specific social markers, expected behaviours, and gendered distinguishing features would adhere to this theoretical framework. Using other disciplines to explain each aspect of psychology and geography is crucial to aid the analysis and address the conscious awareness of how place affects human behaviours and emotions.

1.11 Significance of the Study

The primary significance of the study lies in its greater emphasis on how the urban environment affects human behaviours and emotions. Consequently, this interaction produces a more liberating identity and a conscious awareness of one's true sense of self within their environment. It is also significant in that this study employs the Situationists theoretical framework to analyse Chan Ling Yap's novels. However, it is impossible to fully unpack the potential of the new practitioners of psychogeography in this thesis. Thus far, there are limited attempts to use psychogeography to approach Yap's works and other

contemporary historical fiction in MLiE. The focus on urban imaginaries and experiences distinguishes this study from other works emphasising different imaginary settings and environments in literature. This study deviates from other theoretical frameworks concerning how literature treats natural environments and physical landscapes. My approach intensifies the discourse of urban interactions and explorations by examining the concept of physical space like home and city. The primary concern of this theory that is not highlighted in other frameworks is the ability to let one be drawn to the familiar place but notice the unfamiliarity by breaking the usual paths, rules or expectations. Analysing the depictions of various interactions with the urban environment and shifting perspectives on spaces for men and women in Chan Ling Yap's historical novels could lead to new insights into gender, psychology and urban studies. Space becomes a site for empowerment and resistance against the traditional and gendered constructs. The rebellious and revolutionary acts to do something unordinary in the urban and public spaces require one to be conscious of their situations, emotions and behaviours to respond to the given condition. Based on this aspect of psychogeography, this thesis foregrounds Yap's evocation of her Chinese characters and identities.

This thesis is significant in contributing to the Chinese diaspora's extensive scholarship and Malaysian Literature in English. It offers general insight into the complexity of diaspora and exclusive attention to the plight of the Malaysian Chinese community from the beginning of their migrant journeys until the post-Independence period. My research also emphasises Chan Ling Yap's works that have not yet been discussed extensively in literary academia. This study positions her and her novels within this MLiE scholarship. When one thinks of novels from the same genre, they tend to centre on the works of veteran Malaysian Chinese diasporic writers, such as Shirley Lim, Wong Phui Nam, or other award-winning authors who have been the talk of the town, including Tash Aw and Tan Twan Eng. Now, it is a perfect time to consider other lesser-known works by an author who belonged to the same category. This thesis introduces literary works with a different style of weaving history in the narratives, leaning the author's focus toward the context of the 21st century. Therefore, it facilitates awareness of intergenerational trauma, intercultural understanding, and different diasporic consciousness.

1.12 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and presents background information about the study, problems highlighted in analysing the texts, the main objectives, and three questions that offer the schema in which the analysis will be presented. The background of the selected author and her novels have been elaborated. It sets her works within the contemporary diasporic writers of the 21st century. The second chapter establishes the previous studies and works done in Malaysian Literature in English from its early beginning to the development of the current generation of diasporic writers. It aims to position Chan Ling Yap and her works among these writers and, at the same time, establish the gaps in the research. At the same

time, it covers the theoretical background of psychogeography and one of its growing branches in the scholarship: literary psychogeography. The reviews established the conceptual understanding and various works that have been done within the ever-increasing interest in psychogeography.

I explore the conceptual framework on three distinct psychogeography variables: gender, psychology, and urban studies. This chapter also discusses the methods used to conduct the textual analysis in reading Yap's novels. The fourth chapter presents the textual analysis of Yap's selected novels. Firstly, I address the criteria for choosing the characters. Then I discuss the gendered-spatial aspects that can be discerned from reading the novels. Based on three elements; spatiality, temporality and embodiment, the characters' reasons behind their exit and entrance to the urban space are recognised and interpreted. Secondly, this chapter analyses the characters' sensory experiences in the urban environment. It problematizes the central importance of the sense of vision and physical stimuli of walking for the emanation of psychogeographical experiences in the city in literature. The final discussion focuses on the geographical presence of the city in the selected texts by emphasising the characters' perceptions about living and moving in this urban setting.

The fifth chapter concludes the findings and presents answers to the questions highlighted in Chapter 1. It summarises the research problems and reemphasises the centrality of space and identity in the psychogeographic reading of Chan Ling Yap's selected novels. It also justifies that the study has contributed to the contemporary discourse by partially taking the conventional idea of psychogeography of the 1950s and adapting the framework to a non-Western context and text. I conclude with suggestions for future research and other possibilities that can be achieved by utilising this theory in Chan Ling Yap's novels and Malaysian literature in general.

1.13 Conclusion

Reading Chan Ling Yap's selected novels expands and contributes to the new scholarship on reading non-Western text and context through the lens of psychogeography. It also contributes to the current discourse of Malaysian Literature in English that has made little attempt to analyse novels from this psychogeography perspective. Yap's works are often neglected in the existing discussion of identity, specifically the human-environment relationship, which pays attention to the urban setting in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Therefore, this chapter lays the foundation of this thesis to accentuate and justify the significance of pursuing this idea. This thesis attempts to cultivate productive inquiries in the discourse of identity and its relationship with the urban environment by focusing on gender, psychology and city issues in literature.

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