

Conference Paper

Literature Relived: 21st Century Literary Research Paradigms Amidst The 4IR

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Abstract

Literary works, in the words of Terry Eagleton (1996), are vehicles for ideas, a reflection of social reality and the incarnation of some transcendental truth. Works of literature also contain a structure of values which informs and underlies our factual statements, described also as the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power structure and power-relations of the society we live in. In the 21st century, works of literature still comprise modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power, more so in the wake of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). In my paper, I focus on my own research by presenting a case study in order to demonstrate that 21st century literary research paradigms can indeed survive the 4IR. Finally, I will share my thoughts on how it has indeed been possible to mount a literary contestation to the 4IR: through focusing on the Malaysian National Culture Policy as its backdrop, namely to foster and preserve national identity created through national culture as it is also highly possible to foster and preserve national identity created through works of literature which contain elements of national culture.

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Received: 1 July 2019

Accepted: 18 July 2019

Published: 31 July 2019

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

Keywords: Anthony Burgess, collective memory studies, Malaysian National Culture Policy, Muslim Malay characters, nation-building, national identity, *The Malayan trilogy*.

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the AICLL 2019 Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

My university, which is Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia, has a mission and a vision. The UPM Vision is to become a university of international repute, and the UPM Mission is to make meaningful contributions towards wealth creation, nation-building and universal human advancement through the exploration and dissemination of knowledge. These two key elements act as the backbone of UPM as a Research University (RU) bearing in mind also the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) which seem to foreground science and technology at the expense of the social sciences. Indeed, Malaysia is among the countries forging ahead with it and, as we know, one of the core technologies of the 4IR is Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Through AI, a system is created to learn from its surroundings and use that data to connect humans, physical tools and the digital world.

However, we, in the arts and humanities, are in a direr and rather dismal state as our research and conceptual works related to the areas of English and World Literatures are truly diverse and far-reaching, and are not founded on physical tools and the digital world in its tangible form although they do appear as themes and issues as literary manifestations. For instance, our own areas of specialisation cover regional works of literature in the form of African and Caribbean Literature, American Literature, Australian and Canadian Literature, Malaysian Literature in English as well as South and Southeast Asian Literature to name but a few. In addition, our literary concepts and theories related to the areas of English and World Literatures consist of, but are not limited to, Cultural Studies, Eco-criticism, Gender Studies, Marxist Criticism, Postcolonial Criticism, Psychoanalytical Criticism, Sociological Studies, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism as well as Trauma Theory.

My own research students have conducted research and published studies within a broad range of literary themes and issues: identity (Alkarawi & Ida Baizura Bahar, 2013; 2014; Farahanna Abd Razak, Ida Baizura Bahar & Rosli Talif, 2014; 2016; Ida Baizura Bahar & Farahanna Abd Razak, 2017; Ahmad Zufrie Abd Rahman & Ida Baizura Bahar, 2018; Syamsina Zahurin Shamsuddin & Ida Baizura Bahar, 2018; Ida Baizura Bahar, Kamariah Kamarudin, Pabiyah Maming, & Farahanna Abd Razak, 2019), gender studies (Nur Fatin Syuhada Ahmad Jafni & Ida Baizura Bahar, 2014; Chua, Ida Baizura Bahar & Rohimmi Noor, 2016), Foucauldian concepts of madness, power and resistance (Dashti & Ida Baizura Bahar, 2015a; 2015b), Muslim Malay worldview (Ida Baizura Bahar & Nor Kamal Nor Hashim, 2018) and, most significantly with regards to the 4IR, Science Fiction and the issues of posthumanism and transhumanism (Mirenayat, Ida Baizura Bahar, Rosli Talif & Manimangai Mani, 2017a; 2017b).

In actuality, such diversity surely makes it a lot more difficult for us to be more current and relevant but our relevancy in terms of research can be bridged when we steer our research towards addressing also the niche requirement of available research grants, namely to give impact to the socio-economy aspect of nations in view of the 4IR. It is with this statement problematised that my own two research grants obtained from the UPM Putra Grant have been a successful one; one with my own doctoral student on the Asian female identity and another with my co-researchers from the Department of the Malay Language and the Department of Foreign Languages, scholars in Malay and Arabic Literatures respectively, on recollections of national identity through memory studies.

I am sure you are asking yourselves, how is this possible? The answer is rather simple: our own research objectives were formulated also with the Malaysian National Culture Policy as its backdrop, namely to foster and preserve national identity created through national culture. The innovative stance my co-researchers and I posited here is that it is also highly possible to foster and preserve national identity created through works of literature which contain elements of national culture, in this case we chose a pre-independence text written by the contemporary English author, Anthony Burgess (1917-1993), more well-known in English Literature as the author of *A clockwork orange* (1962).

This is also one of the strategies and implementations of the Malaysian National Culture Policy which is to restore, preserve and develop culture towards strengthening national culture through joint research, development, education and cultural expansion and connections. In this case, we expanded our contributions by aiming also to present and share our findings with The International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester, United Kingdom; an independent educational charity that encourages public and scholarly interests in all aspects of the life and work of Burgess. By doing so, we then addressed the UPM Mission and Vision we have outlined earlier; here, to raise the profile of UPM as a university of international repute by sharing meaningful contributions towards nation-building through the exploration and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to Burgess (United Kingdom) and his Malayan trilogy (Malaysian setting, characters as well as themes and issues).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Scholarship on Anthony Burgess and the Malayan trilogy

The text we chose for our research was *The Malayan trilogy* (1964), consisting of *Time for a tiger* (1956), *The enemy in the blanket* (1958) and *Beds in the east* (1959). It is set in pre-independence Malaya and is believed to have been overlooked in the Malaysian literary context although its themes of religion, ethnicity and nationhood are aspects which frame the lives of the Malayan society in its struggles towards achieving independence in 1957. Burgess used to live and work in Peninsular Malaya from 1954 to 1959, which in turn had shaped his perceptions and understandings of the nation, especially on the practices of Islam and the culture by the Malays. His experience then can be categorised as a form of individual memory; a personal interpretation of an event from one's own life, which is a binarist concept to collective memory. Although the term

'individual' implies that Burgess' experience is the only one contributing to his memory formation of Malaya, we contested this view as we hypothesised that, as social beings, the social group in which he identified with, namely the Malays, may have influenced his opinions, beliefs, and attitude. We explored how Burgess' own individual memory of Malaya in his trilogy is significant in relation to the national collective memory of Malaysia.

As his biographer Roger Lewis (cited in Byrnes, 2007) describes it, "John Wilson went to Malaya and came back as Anthony Burgess". Burgess (cited in Byrnes, 2007), in acknowledging his dues to Malaya, states, "The Malay language... changed not just my attitude to communication in general but the whole shape of my mind". Indeed, such nostalgia can be found in his one and only Introduction to *The Malayan trilogy* where he shares his views on Malaya and the Malays: "Malaya consisted of a number of sultanates or *rajahdoms* which, except for Negri Sembilan, professed Islamic law and, in a somewhat eccentric way, subscribed to the Islamic religion. The Malays, a brown, handsome, lazy, wholly attractive race, had been converted to Islam by Arab traders" (Burgess, 2000, p. viii). The beauty of Malaya, according to Burgess (2000, p. viii), lies in its multiracial territory and the profusion of race, culture and language. This most attractive aspect of Malayan life is one that he tried to capture in the trilogy covering the time from 1955 to 1957, which is the year of independence. Burgess (2000, p. x) highlights the role played by Islam in Malaya, by stating that one also needs to understand the nature of Islam in trying to understand the nature of the East. Without a doubt, Burgess has, in the past, admitted to a certain allure about the religion as it is practised in the Malay World: "... there's a charm about Islam in a country like Malaya or Borneo, where it has to stand on its own and jostle up against other religions. See how it gets on. And it's very amusing. It's very touching to see how it gets on. You know, up against Shintoism and Buddhism and Christianity and what you will" (Burgess cited in Coale, 1981a, p. 439). As pointed out by Coale (1981b, p. 38), "[t]he overriding culture of Malaya is Islam, and Burgess was particularly fascinated by Malayan Islam". This aspect of the trilogy has indeed been recognised in most studies but, in our opinion, only in brief.

But, who is Anthony Burgess? Anthony Burgess was born John Anthony Burgess Wilson in Manchester, England on 25 February 1917. Burgess was teaching at the Banbury Grammar School (1950-1954) when he was offered a job as a teacher and an Education Officer in the British Colonial service in Malaya (Coale, 1981a, p. 433). Burgess' period in place Malaya (1954-1957) is notably that of a historical and monumental change. He arrived in the middle of a conflict and, occasionally, warfare between the Malayan

Government and the Malayan Communist Party where the Government had declared this particular period as the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960). Burgess was initially posted to the Malay College which was located in Kuala Kangsar, the royal town of Perak, a state on the west coast of the Malay peninsula. This public school, called the 'Eton of the East', is the one upon which the Mansor School in the first volume of *The Malayan trilogy*, *Time for a tiger*, was based. While in Kuala Kangsar (1954-1955), Burgess incurred the wrath of then principal, J. D. R. Howell, in a quarrel over accommodation for himself and his wife. As a result, he was transferred to the Malay Teachers' Training College in Kota Bharu, Kelantan (1955-1957), a state on the east coast of Peninsular placeMalaya. It was his experience in Kelantan that formed the backdrop to the second instalment of his Malayan trilogy, *The enemy in the blanket*.

Burgess himself held very strong views on religion, especially Islam, where he had seriously contemplated converting to Islam at one point when he was learning the Malay language in the late 1950s (Aggelar, 1979: 10). He was struck by the reasonableness of Islam and was initially attracted to the philosophical aspects of Islam for he viewed them to be similar to Catholicism (Coale, 1981a, p. 438). This consideration of embracing Islam was further motivated by his closeness to the Malays. It was well known that Burgess spoke and wrote the Malay language well, which was back then in the Arabic script, *Jawi*. Burgess also socialised with the Malays much to the mortification of his colonial colleagues (Stinson, 1991, p. 10). Nevertheless, this particular closeness with the masses, especially with the Muslim Malays, had exposed Burgess to several flawed characters whose un-Islamic ways of life are modelled upon and recreated in his trilogy, and eventually led to his disenchantment with Islam. Just like the English character, Rupert Hardman, in the second instalment of *The Malayan trilogy*, *The enemy in the blanket*, Burgess soon lost interest in Islam specifically in what he views as the lacklustre appeal of the Muslim holy book, the *Qur'an* (Coale, 1981a, p. 438).

The first of Burgess' Malayan trilogy, *Time for a tiger* (1956), was published under Burgess' two middle names, Anthony Burgess. The success of his first novel soon led to two sequels in his trilogy on Malaya; *The enemy in the blanket* (1958) was eventually followed by the final instalment, *Beds in the east* (1959). The three novels were published as a single narrative entitled *The Malayan trilogy* (1972) in Britain, and was soon published as *The long day wanes* (1981) in America with a subtitle, *A Malayan trilogy*. The trilogy focuses on the experiences of a British character, Victor Crabbe, a history teacher who faces complications in his personal and professional life.

We follow this then with a discussion on why we had chosen Burgess' works as research data. Christie (1986, p. 16) categorises *The Malayan trilogy* under "the literature

of the transitional period, from colonial to expatriate society". According to Christie (1986, p. 17), although there is some overlapping of time periods, this genre of literature can be distinguished from what might be called "the classic literature of decolonisation". It has, as its main theme, the impact on colonial society of the transition from colonial status to independence. The period in Burgess' trilogy which has acted as the historical background to his novels is the British colonial administration of British Malaya (1874-1957). However, a different perspective of Burgess' trilogy has been proposed by Zawiah Yahya (2003).

Identifying racial conflict as the gist of his novels, Zawiah (2003, p. 79) describes Burgess' works as set "in the twilight of colonial rule". Despite showing differences in categorising Burgess' works, we argue that both Christie and Zawiah have achieved an accord in describing Burgess' work, *The Malayan trilogy*, a particularly significant example of English literature on Malaya prior to its independence. Burgess (1963, p. 465) himself wrote of his motive for writing the trilogy, "[j]uxtaposition of races and cultures was the underground stimulus, the thing that wanted to be expressed. I really wrote this novel, and the two that followed, because I wanted to record Malaya". It is also for this reason that we have selected *The Malayan trilogy* for our research purpose.

We also justified the selection of the selected texts for research purposes due to the fact that there have been a limited number of notable studies conducted on *The Malayan trilogy* to date. This is especially disconcerting albeit true in the context of the Malaysian academic studies although the trilogy is set in Malaya. One of the more prominent studies on *The Malayan trilogy* has been conducted by Zawiyah Yahya in *Resisting colonial discourse* (2003), which was published based on her doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. Zawiyah analyses the trilogy for the purpose of "tracing fault-lines of conflicting discourses or slippages from what is perceived to be intended ideological project of the text," (p. 24).

In addition to Burgess' trilogy, she also analysed selected texts by other authors, namely Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) and William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965). Zawiyah selects the trilogy as one of the texts in her study in order to explore the reality of the Malay society as experienced by Burgess. Unlike most writers who are far removed from the realities of the Malay society, Zawiyah states that Burgess is the opposite of it (p. 81). Zawiyah also notes that Burgess views the Malay society and practices through the European eyes and criticises their practice of Islam which he portrays as wayward where he could see the incongruity of mixing animistic and Islamic practices; thus, this leads to his failure of realising that animistic beliefs have already become a part of their lives (p. 168).

As the element of religion is one of the core themes in the trilogy, Zawiyah states that the trilogy contains conventional Western generalities on the Muslim Malay characters, and these generalities are seen as forms of conspiratorial attack on Islam. The Muslim Malay characters in the trilogy, according to Zawiyah, are depicted as religious hypocrites and sinners in Islam, which in a way mock their beliefs as Muslims (p. 174). Zawiyah also explains how Victor Crabbe's Muslim Malay mistress is portrayed by Burgess as defying the myth of the submissive Oriental woman. Rahimah, (written as Salmah in her study) represents a strong character who does not meet the stereotype of a Malay woman, "dumb and romantic" character who keeps her suffering to herself, without making an effort to conduct a vendetta against Crabbe (p. 176). Zawiyah concludes that, although Burgess displays a more superior knowledge of the Malayan society in his trilogy compared to Maugham and Conrad, he fails to present other aspects of their lives, except what is already seen as the obvious and common, such as the ritualistic features of Islam - the fasting, the call to prayers, the prohibition against gambling and consumption of liquor and pork - aspects which are already familiar to the West (p. 187).

Aside from Zawiyah, I myself had conducted a study on the trilogy in my unpublished doctoral thesis for the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom, *The paradigm of Malayness in literature* (2010). In my thesis, I analysed nine works by three authors, namely Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham and Anthony Burgess, to validate my own hypothesised paradigm of Malayness as an everyday-defined social reality, comprising of six elements: the Malay language, Islam, the Malay rulers, *adat*/culture, ethnicity and identity. In my study, I focused only on the Muslim Malay characters; namely Rahimah of *Time for a tiger*, 'Che Normah Abdul Aziz and the Abang of *The enemy in the blanket* and Syed Omar, Syed Omar's son, Syed Hassan, and Nik Hassan of *Beds in the east*.

I addressed issues concerning dilemmas of the Malay characters not only as Malays but also as Muslims. For example, Nik Hassan, demonstrates the pressures of being judged by what he does and what he does not do in his capacity as a Muslim. The conundrum for him comes when he is told of his transfer to a Christian country, Australia, especially in the form of applying the Islamic practices for him which he ponders might lead to two different views from two different communities; the Muslim and also the Australian community (p. 109). I suggested that the trilogy portrays how the teachings of Islam and modernisation work side by side as exemplified by the closing chapter of *Beds in the east* which depicts that the villagers, in comparison to the town dwellers, believe in animism as they live closer to the jungle thus making them prone to be more devoted to pre-Islamic beliefs.

More importantly is the dilemma of the Muslim Malay characters who feel entrapped by their responsibilities to the nation, of either prioritising being a Malay or a Muslim first. Being a Malay is understood as embracing the Islamic faith; thus, in order to marry, a non-Muslim has to *masuk Islam*/enter Islam (convert to Islam). This is shown in *The enemy in the blanket*, where an albino white character, Rupert Hardman, has to go through the process of conversion to Islam as he is to marry a Muslim Malay widower, 'Che Normah. This process then not only entails a change in the religious faith but also a change in identity, from a Christian to Muslim and from a white man to a Malay. In addition, I also brought up the issue of the art of the *wayang kulit*, which falls under the Malay *adat* (Malay culture). In the novel, the *wayang kulit* is described by Crabbe as an art formed under a mixture of various beliefs, namely Hinduism and Islam.

Another recent study has been conducted by my Masters student, Farahanna Abd Razak, in her thesis submitted to UPM; *Bangsa Malaysia as a liminal identity in Anthony Burgess' The Malayan trilogy* (2017). In her study, Farahanna examines how the practices of Islam and the Malay culture by selected Muslim Malay characters are reflected by Burgess as part of the liminal aspects of the identity of *bangsa Malaysia* and eventually discovers the emerging patterns of the understanding of the identity of *bangsa Malaysia* through Burgess' portrayals of selected Muslim Malay characters. Using a combination of the concept of liminality (1967) by the British cultural anthropologist, Victor Witter Turner (1920-1989), together with her own understanding of the concept of *bangsa Malaysia*, by focusing on dialogues, scenes and the narrative technique of the author as the omniscient narrator in the trilogy, her findings reveal that the Muslim Malay characters are divided into different conflicts based on each text; the Muslim Malay characters in *Time for a tiger* live in a fusion of animistic and Islamic beliefs although they seem to be both overtly and obliquely aware of the incompatibility of such a way of life. On the other hand, in *The enemy in the blanket*, the Muslim Malay characters are found to be conflicted between living a Muslim way of life and the Westernised lifestyle. In contrast, the Muslim Malay characters in the third and last text, *Beds in the east*, are portrayed as being conflicted between two elements, namely their ethnicity, Malay, and the emerging patterns of a contemporary understanding of a national identity, *bangsa Malaysia*.

By presenting a research gap in scholarship on the author and his selected texts, I have shown the relevancy of our research data in terms of its scholarly merit and currency. I now move on to present our discussion on our chosen conceptual framework which I believe should be able to stand alone in view of the 4IR as a representative of the arts and humanities. This is because we argued that this framework may one day

be expanded to apply in works which are framed by the 4IR; for instance, a collective memory study of the first existence of a human cyborg in Southeast Asian Studies in works set in the Malay World.

2.2. Collective memory studies

We argued in this research that collective memory studies have been overlooked for quite some time with regards to global forces in their analyses of national remembering. While sociological theorising has often shifted to the transnational level, scholars of collective memory have continued with research that is largely 'internal' to the nation-state. Notable studies mainly focused on state-sanctioned commemorations and memorials, reputations of political and military figures, patriotic responses to traumatic events and historical assertions in school textbooks.

The issue of collective memory is closely connected with that of national identity. Linking national identity and social identity, it has been noted that the issue of national identity is a variant of the issue of social identity that provides a justification for group existence. The key issue about national identities is not much to do with debates on their origins but rather about how they emerge in specific instances and are then translated over time, and about their everyday actualisation and promulgation. Collective memory has been defined as a creative and purposeful process that allows for the invention, reorganisation, amplification, and exclusion of details about the past, often pushing aside truth and accuracy so as to accommodate broader issues of identity formation, power and authority, and political affiliation. Collective memory has also been described as an evoking of a past to frame a present but also to conform that past to the present.

What we must state here is that collective memory is not history, but is linked to it and has an effect on the future: history defines us just as we define history. As our identities and cultures evolve over time, we tacitly reconstruct our histories. By the same token, these new collectively defined historical memories help to provide identities for succeeding generations. Collective remembering, thus, is an active process, inherently social and mediated by textual resources and their allied voices, and intrinsically dynamic. Among these textual resources, literary works occupy an important place. However, among the numerous studies on collective memory, few have investigated the topic specifically in connection with literary works.

While cultural historians have focussed on collective memory, drawing upon the original theories of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), the conceptualisation of memory in this body of work either conflates collective and individual memory, or

demotes the individual memory to a position of irrelevance. At the same time, oral historians and literary scholars are increasingly focusing upon the ways in which individual recollections fit, often unconscious, cultural scripts, mental templates or literary works. As a consequence, the interpretative theories of literary works and collective memory studies are uniting. Similar to the concept of Personal Cultural Memory (2004) by José van Dijck (b. 1960), her argument of the individual versus the collective memory further complicates the idea of the ownership of a memory. That is, is a memory one's own, or is it part of a larger community's memory? She defines these two types of memory where individual memory is a straight-forward concept and is one's personal memory of a previous experience. On the other hand, collective memories are the remembering of the same experience, but not necessarily in the same way. For instance, an adult may remember the experience differently than a child. It has also been explained that individual and collective memories are intertwined, depicting memory as spheres that overlap, showing how a memory is part of both individual memory and the collective (community) memory.

Our research, however, considered the relevance of individual and collective memory in works of literature and proposed that Burgess' trilogy can be categorised as a form of individual memory; a personal interpretation of an event from one's own life, which is a binarist concept to collective memory. Although the term 'individual' implies that Burgess' experience is the only one contributing to his memory formation of Malaya, we contested this view as we hypothesised that, as social beings, the social group in which he identified with, namely the Malays, may have influenced his opinions, beliefs, and attitude. We argued for the existence of collective memory and suggested that human beings do not only live in the first person singular, but also in various formats of the first person plural. We also argued that, if literary scholars reject the capacity of individuals to engage critically and constructively with inherited ideas and beliefs, it must be emphasised here that this field has made a paradigmatic shift from the concerns and values that led to its growth and development in the 1960s. More significantly, each 'we' is constructed through specific discourses that mark certain boundary lines and define respective principles of inclusion and exclusion, and suggests that to acknowledge the concept of individual memory is to acknowledge the concept of some collective identity.

We hypothesised here that the issues concerning Burgess' individual memory of the liminoid Muslim Malays can be found portrayed in *The Malayan trilogy* consisting of *Time for a tiger*, *The enemy in the blanket* and *Beds in the east*, where the Muslim Malay characters have to face conflicting decisions regarding their own identities from two perspectives, religion and ethnicity. Aside from the other ethnic groups, the Malays

are the focal point of the trilogy mainly regarding their identity crises, particularly on the religion of Islam and their own ethnicity; as a Muslim who practises what is outlined in the Tenets of Islam and the Tenets of *Iman* (Faith) and as a Malay who practices what is understood to be the Malay *adat* (culture/custom) through their delineations of the Malayness identity. Our research demonstrated how the trilogy, which has long been assumed to be recollections of Burgess' own individual memory, can indeed be identified as a form of national collective memory which can contribute to the ongoing debate on collective memory studies.

3. Discussion

3.1. New theories, knowledge and innovation

A primary projected finding of our research was to build and contribute towards new conceptual frameworks in the face of the 4IR: using literary analyses in English literary texts set in Malaya which is an innovation of methodology in literary approaches. We argued that we need to examine how the Muslim Malay characters in *The Malayan trilogy* negotiate their liminoid identities which reflect Burgess' own individual memory that can then transcend the current discourse into national collective memory studies. This is because our research, so far, had also discovered that scholarship on the Muslim Malay characters in Burgess' *The Malayan trilogy* is still undermined in terms of scholarly value and overlooked in terms of its Islamic and Malay ethnicity discourses. Another new knowledge, therefore, of our research was to respond to the problem of this absence by examining the work of literature by an English author who had, in reality, lived in the setting of his own fictional world. In our opinion, the literary continuation of this group of writers has been ignored for a long time and has not appeared in anthologies or class syllabi in the Malaysian context.

More importantly, a specific potential application which we hoped to generate from our research was in the form of innovation to scholarship on Burgess, whose trilogy is set in Malaya, namely to test the application of the liminoid condition in the literature on Muslim Malay identities in order to discover whether characters will be able to construct balanced Muslim Malay identities reflecting Burgess' own individual memory of Malaya. This then will hopefully be considered as contributing to the current discourse on the national collective memory of Malaysia.

4. Conclusion

As I have discussed earlier, we have implicitly conveyed this important message across: in the wake of the 4IR, researchers in the arts and humanities, more so literature scholars, must “bring back the soul to the academe”, in the words of my esteemed colleague, Noritah Omar (2003), by revisiting our own historical backyards; that the 4IR risks making our future generation lose their spiritual and intellectual path in nation-building and hence their own national identity. Therefore, as a case study, I have shared my own experience of addressing the challenges brought forth by the 4IR in terms of research paradigms. With the Malaysian National Culture Policy in mind and by focusing on the vital aspect of nation-building and national identity, my co-researchers and I made it clear that we should refocus our research paradigms in the 21st century to that of humanity and humanisation. We can do so by focusing on more humanistic literary frameworks, such as the cultural memory studies and the construction of a national identity, using literary texts which are set in the Malay World written by authors who have lived and experienced life in its own fictional settings.

Acknowledgements

The research stated in my paper is financed by the Universiti Putra Malaysia Grant GP/2018/9655500. I would like to extend my gratitude to my doctoral candidate, Ms Syamsina Zahurin Shamsuddin, for her assistance in preparing the paper.

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