Asian Culture and History
www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
Vol. 1, No. 1
January 2009

Cultural Hegemony in Colonial and Contemporary Literary Discourse on Malaysia

Dr. Ganakumaran Subramaniam
Deputy Director
Office of International Relations
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bangi Selangor 43600, Malaysia
Tel: 60-3-8921-4187 E-mail: tpha@ukm.my

Shanthini Pillai (corresponding author)
School of Language Studies and Linguistics
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: 60-3-8921-6535 E-mail: spillai@ukm.my

Abstract

This article compares the colonial and contemporary canvas of the hegemonic discourse of White Western writers and their portrayal of Malaysia and her people. The first half of the discussion will focus on the figurative elements of classical colonialist discourse through an exploration of *The Soul of Malaya* (1931) a text written by Henri Fauconnier, a French planter of Colonial Malaya. Here, cultural hegemony is revealed mostly through the employment of the Manichean allegory, of what we see as "ideological allegory". The second half of the discussion adopts a more linguistic oriented framework, as it reveals patterns in linguistic selection in the novel, *Borneo Fire* (1995) by contemporary white writer, William Riviere. This latter is what we term "ideological stylistics". The main objective of the article is to compare the underlying ideological constructs of the discursive landscape of the two texts and to determine whether white western superiority manifested in the discourse of the contemporary text has evolved from that seen in its colonial predecessor. The paper concludes that time changes little in terms of the location of the other, for despite its being published in 1995, the discourse of *Borneo Fire* has not moved away from the approach and conventions of the colonial text, *The Soul of Malaya*.

Keywords: Ideology, Discourse, Allegory, Stylistics, Orientalism, Colonialism, Hegemony, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In post-colonial nations much has been said and written about colonialist assumptions implicitly inscribed in discourse. In Malaysia, 51 years (since 1957) after independence, this remains a major literary preoccupation. The argument for this is that writings by white non-Malaysians often present and misrepresent Malaysia and Malaysians. But the preoccupation with colonialist discourse in post-colonial nations is a justifiable one. Said (1978: 58-59) contends that "altogether an internally structured archive [of discourse - our parenthesis] is built up from literature that belongs to these [colonial - our parenthesis] experiences. Out of this come a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception and form the encounter between East and West". In *Black Skin White Mask* (1970:78-82), Fanon argues that the rejection of difference by the colonisers transforms the colonised into an alien 'other'. Such typecasting is false representation of reality through the act of simplification. Bhabha (1983:198) describes colonialist discourse as an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial / cultural / historical differences. It creates "knowledges of coloniser and colonised which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated" and aspires to "construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction". Essentially all the above arguments allege that colonial discourse is impregnated with rhetorical power play and ideologies.

A text becomes comprehensible to the reader through its linguistic description, its reference to the real world, its propensity to deconstruction through reading strategies and its connection to schemas of attitudes, beliefs and ideology implied or explicitly stated, or that which the reader may wish to advance. Transformative-generative principles of grammar suggest that the paradigmatic and syntactmatic capacity of language allows literature to reflect and reveal permutations in ideology. The former, by giving the speaker/writer a multiplicity of linguistic options and the latter through its systematic organisation of information on a linear level. The two combine to present the speaker/writer with myriad ideational possibilities both on the level of surface structure and in their underlying intentions. Hence in reading and listening, it is not only important to recognise what is said and how it is said but also what is omitted or suppressed in choosing what to say.

However in interpretation, the analysis of the language of the text alone is insufficient to provide a holistic interpretation. Butler (1984: Introduction) affirms this in saying that "most texts can be seen to be radically ambiguous and cast in language that is incapable of giving us a consistent picture of reality. The languages available for interpretation are also plural and they cannot be cast into a single overriding system." This suggests that in the study of textual ideology there is a need for an analytical framework that combines linguistic and literary models. Butler (op.cit.) confirms that such an approach will help bring order to the "apparent anarchy of pluralism". This article presents such a combined approach, revealing how literature becomes "a mechanism by which the language and ideology of a particular class establishes its hegemony" (Eagleton: 55). It attempts this through an investigation of two authors of the white expatriate class, the first from the colonial past and the second, contemporary. In the first, the cultural hegemony is revealed mostly through the employment of the Manichean allegory and is thus termed "ideological allegory" while in the second it comes through most strongly through the patterns of linguistic selection, or ideological stylistics.

2. Ideological Allegory

A significant aspect of the discursivity of the colonialist imagination is the the notion of the Manichean allegory, derived from Frantz Fanon's employment of the term to refer to the dichotomy that informs the relationship between colonisers and the colonised, (good versus evil, the adult versus the child etc). This has been further extended by JanMohamed in his concept of the economy of the Manichean allegory, to embrace the economic feature of the process of imperialism:

Just as imperialists 'administer' the resources of the conquered country, so colonialist discourse "commodifies" the native subject into a stereotyped object and uses him as a "resource" for colonialist fiction. The European writer commodifies the native by negating his individuality, his subjectivity, so that he is now perceived as a generic being that can be exchanged for any other native (they all look alike, act alike and so on). Once reduced to his exchange value in the colonialist signifying system, he is fed into the Manichean allegory, which functions as the currency, the medium of exchange, for the entire colonialist discursive system (JanMohamed 2000, 1060)

The issues raised in the passage above will be shown to be doubly executed in the colonial novel *The Soul of Malaya* as it reveals the utilisation of the native Malay of Malaya; whose body becomes fodder for the articulation of the colonial imaginary, as much as the land is likewise engendered within the hegemonic discourse of the allegory of the white planter as savior and the native Malay as the lost sheep.

2.1 Constructions of Sovereignty

The Soul of Malaya, set in the wake of World War I, reflects the responses of two colonialist planters, Rolain and Lescale, to the aftermath of that war, embodiments of the changing features of the colonial planter, Lescale the new, Rolain the old. The subjects that are employed to facilitate this engagement are similarly viewed through a bifurcated lens, in the figure of the native Malay and the alien Tamil. The former is allowed a wider space in the course of the narration as he is connected to the land of vast jungles that the planter uses to seek answers to his metaphysical inquisitions. The latter, connected to the material production of the imperial enterprise that the planter is part of and that he wishes to escape from, is confined to a compounded space, reflective of the space that he inhabits in the plantation itself. When Lescale, newly arrived in Malaya, follows Rolain to his plantation, he is surprised to find that the latter does not live in his plantation but rather in a house fashioned in the Malay style, at the edge of the jungle. As he (Rolain) explains,

I left it a little while ago. The war sickened me with orders and discipline. I could no longer give an order without thinking it futile or unfair. I half thought of selling the plantation, but it would fetch so little just now. Besides, I had a feeling that I should be selling the coolies as well (16).

While the estrangement of the war-weary soul alluded to leads him to seek a form of sanctuary in the terrain of the Malayan rainforest, the last line points to the dilemma that accompanies that decision. Leaving the plantation meant leaving not only the physical structure for its very fabric of existence was threaded into his sense of self, where shirking the role of the planter meant shirking his responsibility as protector of his coolies, that garb of paternalism that all planters adorned when dealing with their labour force. The narrative can thus be seen as shifting between two frames, one within which the planter finds himself the subject within a landscape that is unfamiliar and unnerving, where the aid of the native Malay is employed to facilitate his penetration into its interior, and the other, the self-fashioned familiar territory of the

plantation to which he periodically returns to re-collect the unhinged self through the utilisation of the body of the subordinate Indian migrant coolie to prop itself up again.

Rolain's abode by the edges of the jungle is noted by Lescale to be one "such as is still owned by the older fashioned rajas", an intimation of royalty (the planter as ruler of his kingdom) a fact that Fauconnier himself articulates in the extract of an article he sent to the publishers of the 1965 edition of the original novel, where the pioneer planter of Malaya 'lived all day among his coolies, learning their language and their customs, incorporating the functions of king, judge, and doctor, self-reliant in his loneliness, all-powerful, and abandoned'. However, every so often, the eye that is trained on the material set up of the plantation strays to the edges of its frame of vision and is reminded of the omnipotence of the ancient rain forest that dominates outside the guarded boundary:

The plantations that seemed so large, looked, as I now saw them, like little deserts in a limitless oasis. Rolain was right; a few years of neglect and the jungle would confiscate the stock-in-trade of man, heveas from Brazil, oil palms from Africa; she would include the vanilla plants in her collection of orchids, and the bourgainvilleas and poinsettias would add to her adornments. (36).

What we witness in the lines above is a subterranean acknowledgement of the invincibility of the force of the jungle, as it could at any given time encroach upon and occupy the land that they have sequestered for themselves and the foreign crop they transplanted on her bed, for she has no notion of their self-imposed boundaries. Thus, total control of the landscape was never theirs to begin with. Where most early imperial narratives present the colonial gaze as an all seeing and all conquering one, here the blurry edges are shown intermittently. The colonial has to work incessantly at remaining steadfast sentries at the outposts of their guarded compound. Lescale is constantly drawn back to the coolie world which serves to legitimise his sovereignty as what lies beyond its borders threatens to unhinge the frame of control. Sounds from the coolie lines filter into the circumference of his reverie and draw him back to the site of his sanctuary:

The sounds of humanity came like brief intervals in nature's concert. From the plantation, which lay in a bend of the river, arose every morning the call of the muster horn that awakens the women to cook the rice. A little later a second call summoned the coolies to work. Sometimes, when their labours were over, they beat their tom-toms and sang until it was dark. (36)

The pattern of imagery, laced with the domestic and cultural rhythms of the coolie life, infuse a sense of comfort to the wandering consciousness, a shield against the overpowering lure of the forest and its own ethereal sounds, in particular that of the cry of a bird that falls upon Lescale's ears in the form of the sound "takut-takut-takut' (afraid-afraid-afraid) (39). Such is the ebb and flow of the narration until Lescale meets Rolain again and is urged by the latter to attempt to familiarise himself with the Malay land through the figure of the native Malay. His (Lescale's) response below reaffirms the capitalizing of colonised bodies in an equation of maximum profit as imperial currency:

What interests us is what serves our interests—and the Malays are not servile. Obliging, certainly: but that is little. We are too practical to be content with that. We refer to the population of a country as "labour", just as we should like to describe the entire animal kingdom as "cattle". But the Malays do not at all wish to be considered in this light. (59)

What does not serve the greater purpose of empire does not serve the coloniser, and in Lescale's view, the body of the Malay does not serve his purpose for it does not take its place on the feeder belt of the imperial economic enterprise. However, Rolain's counsel offers a portal into commodifying that body to gain insight into the land and by so doing, the native Malay becomes yet another currency of exchange for the discursive profiteering of the *plantocratic* imaginary. The edgings of the colonial gaze kept intact thus far are unravelled to permit its incursion into the circumference of the elusive jungle. What transpires next is the insertion of the Malay body into the narrative sphere as the 'colonial seeing eye' proceeds to gain clarity of its previously cloudy vision by using the former as a bifurcating optical aid.

2.2 Scaling the margins of Knowledge

The journey begins with a foray into the mind of the Malay as Lescale familiarises himself with the rhythm and imagery of the language that they speak, through the medium of the *pantun* or Malay rhyme and before long what he at first thought was amusing reveals 'a very sure and very concentrated art' and the colonial self is reinforced by this garnering of knowledge. The discourse however is astutely intent on maintaining the boundaries of the superior and inferior as the natives are referred to as "the two little Malays'(82). The barrier that he encountered before is slowly broken down as the colonial 'seeing eye' is able to penetrate its brickwork. As Rolain puts it,

Scrape the wall … There is also firm ground under our feet, and a shifting sky above. We use our senses, but only to serve our logic and our intuition. Then we too, write and draw, as well as we can, and the record remains." (83)

His words contain the seeds of the imperial vocation to scale the boundary walls of its Others, for to do so was to gain not only access into their grounds but more importantly to gain that leverage of power as the gained ground is charted through. The two Malay characters, Ismail (Rolain's cook) and his brother Ngah facilitate this incursion by brushing aside the webbed curtain that screens its entryway, uncovering and naming the otherworldly beings that shape its protective

pattern, an act that lays them out in the open and exposes them to the searching and translating imperial gaze. Rolain's eyes perform the latter act for Lescale, breaking down the native system and placing it into a mould that captures it in occidental terms:

Smail's notions are vague. He embodies emanations as demons and is satisfied. But what are those emanations that he compares to the smell of carrion? They are born of decomposition of the 'ego'. The individual is only the vessel for a mixture called personality. When the glass is broken, the cocktail evaporates. The glass is thrown among the refuse but the vapours trouble Smail's brain. What the Malays fear in the dead is their thoughts, their passions, their deeds, freed at last and self-existent… (88)

Each line lays out the thought process of the Malay, bringing its covert messages out into the open and by revealing and analysing their fears of the other world, the European gains his entry into that world. What is incomprehensible to the Malay is made comprehensible to the colonial mind by re-calibrating its insignia in European terms. Thus what was initially feared because not accessible to the imperial eye is now laid out in the open:

The Malays are interesting. So is the jungle… One enters it-I feel I am nearly asleep-and finds the enchanted forest. What new and vaster landscapes are ever opening out, as one advances! Yes, again that river ... My banks are no longer sheer and narrow, the water spreads and swirls, eddies and flows back (90).

However, the colonial mind is still not at ease with a thorough crossing over into the open sea that lies at the mouth of the river, for his reverie ends thus:

First traces of salt: a brackish, uneasy savour. The little fishes wonder how it will all end … These comparisons are absurd. But they help me get back to myself, or to lose myself entirely. After all need I so dread the sea?'(90-91)

The river indicates visible boundaries by its banks, a guide back to the world that is left on either side, while the sea could result in an endless drifting away from the sandbanks of his identity. Hence, the narrative flows back into the shores of the plantation, where the self is secure and clearly defined and boundaries are well within the colonial grasp.

Though back in seemingly secure grounds, the encounter with the larger native Malay realm appears to have carved an indelible mark on the colonial psyche and the plantation does not offer refuge. In fact, Rolain now desires the familiar European landscape left behind:

I'm beginning to loathe the plantation … In the first place it's the wintering season. Winter, when the thermometer stands at 90 degrees; and the absurd trees all looking moribund, their trunks covered with canker and mould, their corrugated bark… Black men who look like tormenting devils dash about among those trees and probe the wounds with little expert stabs. Poor trees, with their bare appealing arms! (99)

The heat of the tropics at a time when his senses are accustomed to the cold of the European winter creates an environment of absurdity and what proceeds in his mind is a theatre of the absurd, as the coolies are metonymically displaced into scurrying black demons (what could also be seen as a farcical image to counter the more malevolent imagery of the demons of the Malayan forest that he was introduced to earlier) and the rubber trees are rendered defenceless victims of the former (again a counter image to the invincibility of the mammoth trees of the Malayan rain forest). They are images shaped to downplay his feelings of vulnerability when he stood at the edges of an increasingly overpowering Malay world. However, the pull of the jungle is rather overpowering and Rolain soon ventures out of his secure territory into the depths of the Malayan forest and is determined to bring Lescale with him this time, wanting him to journey into the abyss that he fears: 'You must know how to turn over the page. The world, even the smallest corner of it, is a Book of the Thousand and One Nights … There will always be a unit to add to the infinite' (105), words steeped in images of the power of the possessing colonial grip and gaze as it turns the pages of the books of its Others.

As they move further into the region that lies beyond the plantations, the colonial gaze peruses the Malayan countryside like so many leaves of a text and renders the landscape and its subjects in its infancy, working to defuse the foreboding primordial force that is overwhelming for the colonial sensibility.:

As we crossed the first few hills, a new and unexpected Malaya was disclosed, and yet one that answered to the expectations of my heart; Malaya in her youth .. we were entering into spring … I recall a group of naked children round a guardian buffalo, pink, like a fat angel.

Then we began the ascent of those celestial heights that for hours had loomed ahead and now sank slowly to receive us.

Images of infiltration follow as the road they travel on 'cut into the mountain side, swept sharply up the hollow of the gorge'(116). However, the depths of the mountain still remain unassailable to colonial infrastructure and the two men break journey at the colonial rest house 'at the top of the watershed', placed strategically for the gathering of the composure of the colonial self as it prepares for its incursion into unfamiliar territory. There, the figures of the two Malay men, Smail and Ngah, are employed as fodder for its reinforcement: 'We gathered round the hearth dreaming of childhood evenings; and two children lulled us to sleep with grandmothers' tales(118)'. The image of the adult relating the

tale is inverted as the tellers become the children, the listeners the adult. The colonial self must augment the edges of its identity as it prepares to journey into a territory that may prove to unhinge it. Likewise, as they proceed towards the open sea, Lescale holds on to a poem that Smail composes for Rolain, one that eulogizes the colonial's role in the world of the native Malay :

My Tuan is great, his heart is before my eyes,

His eyes see what is above my head.

My Tuan is great, his wisdom is before my heart,

His heart sees what is beyond my eye (130).

The poem accentuates the figure of the colonial as the redeeming custodian of the native self, in that drama of the imperial rescue mission, to save the natives from themselves. This celestial imagery is built upon as they journey inwards, where Lescale next sees his body 'enveloped in a halo, transfigured, radiant, the body of an angel' (132). What follows next is his discarding of the European manner of clothing and donning that of the Malay, where :

"The absorption of so much heat and light through all the pores, which at first leaves only an impression of fatigue, is an infusion of strength: a beneficent exhaustion from which one emerges to live a fuller life. For the skin must breathe, drink, see, and hear."(137).

There appears to be a total immersion of the colonial self in the world that he has come seeking for, as it is now not only the passive landscanning eye that is partaking of the territory, but rather every part of his body, filling up the pages of the book of knowledge that he holds in his hands. It is this precise moment that we witness the intrusion of an Englishman, the District Officer, into the vastness of this eastern solitude, as Rolain asserts, "the charm is broken" (147) and Lescale sees the Englishman's presence as 'that summons to reality, the cold comment of the little watch that tells us that we are but dreaming'(152).

2.3 Re-collecting the Self

Hence, the solitude is over and they step out of the charmed circle and re-enter the compound of the plantation. There Lescale re-engages with his familiar role as master of his citadel of colonial control:

My own small domain—how vast it was! I walk among the trees I know so well, each of which has its own particular physiognomy, its own little defects. I feel I could almost address them by name (174).

The tenor of possession is clearly evident in his tone and it is further developed when he proceeds to congregate his labour force. Joseph, the penman of adulatory letter we witnessed in the beginning, proceeds in a similar incantation of the grieved for benefactor of their world: "You have been a long time away from your poor plantation, Sir. We thought you were never coming back. We could hardly bear to speak of you … '(174). Once again, the colonial self is aggrandized by such intimations of his cardinal role in the realm of the plantocracy as it employs the coolies as fodder for the fortification of both the imperial project of self and materiality. With regards to the Malay characters (now that he has returned from his site of *seeing),* gone are the cherubic faces that he saw in them earlier, for now he finds an economic use for them, employing them to fell the trees of the edge of the jungle. Just as their bodies were employed to facilitate the extension of his internal boundaries through the journey into the interior of the land, he similarly employs them to extend the boundaries of his abode the plantation. The scene that unfolds is of the battle between the opposing forces of the natural forest reserve of Malaya [and with her the native Malays] and the imported, man-made forest of the rubber plantation is a metaphor for the internal drama of the imperial self against the forces of the native landscape:

I often grew tired of watching the exploits of these gnawing insects, and went away. Here was the plantation; fresh air, and wholesome light. And then suddenly at my back, I would hear the rending shriek of a tornado, then a moaning sound…The earth shook beneath my feet. On a slope of the hill, in a cloud of flying wreckage, a whole stretch of jungle had crashed. (178)

Cached within the passage is the Manichean dichotomy of light over dark, good over evil. Every successful act of annexation of the jungle is a reflection of the victory of the colonial self. It appears as if the pages of the book of knowledge are rapidly filling up, but not all of them have textures that obey the brush of the imperial hand. The new clearing is not wholly within his grasp for in the middle of it, flows 'a torrent from the mountains that dashed' into his terrain and nearby an old tree that the Malays refuse to cut down, believing it to be sacrosanct. His incursions are thus not *faits accomplis*, for he was often 'carried away by the current, and had to clamber up the opposite bank by the precarious aid of lianas' (179). Concurrently, he finds that his understanding of the Malay mind has not been a thorough one either and that like the clearing, there are parts that elude his grasp. The catalytic incident is that of Smail gripped by an unseen force that unhinges him completely, in what is explained by Ngah as a seizure of the soul 'struggling forth to possess another body' (199).

2.4 The Hegemony of the Imperial Redeemer of the Asiatic

What proceeds next is an imperial rescue drama with Rolain in the lead role and Lescale his aid, the European redeemers of their lost Asian subject. :

I saw Rolain grip Smail, drag him away and hoist him into the car; then that diabolic English policeman rushing from the rest house, rallying his men, the wrenching struggle over the body, Rolain gradually weakening, his haggard eyes on me in a silent desperate appeal. Then at last, I leapt, but too late: Rolain tottered and had nearly let go. … And suddenly the kris in his hand rose, dripping blood and plunged into the shoulders of Smail … I saw the back bend and the head droop, and they all fell in a heap upon the corpse (238).

They escape to Rolain's sanctuary in the depths of the jungle, carrying Smail's body with them in the finale of their imperial rescue drama, fulfilling their duty as the benevolent benefactors of their native subjects, returning its subject to its fold. The narrative ends with the allegory of the white savior invested in the figure of Rolain, as Lescale acknowledges his ultimate sacrifice, that he "had acted deliberately, if indeed under the pressure of circumstances, and would not disavow what he had done. I now found justification for a deed which I had at first loathed. And what Rolain had wishes to spare Smail, he would surely spare himself" (244). The white man emerges steadfast in his role as hero in the Oriental world that he presides over.

The above are more or less the expected articulations of an imagination coloured by the hegemony of imperial ideology. The hope in Malaysia is that after the many years of independence, international relations and economic progress, the western writer's presentation of Malaysia and Malaysians would have ideally changed from the early white-centred, and biased racist discourse. The ensuing discussion of *Borneo Fire* by William Riviere, published, in 1995, 64 years after Fauconnier's *The Soul of Malaya* will reveal how much or little time changes in terms of relocating the Other away from the approach and conventions of the colonial sensibility. While the preceding discussion was framed mainly by the Manichean allegory befitting the time colonial timeframe of the narrative, the ensuing discussion will analyze the more contemporary preoccupations of Riviere with a specific focus on patterns in linguistic selection which establish ideological points of view, based on the view that the narrative tone of the text is one that is self-assured and assertive, as compared to the more introspective and somewhat pensive recollections of Fauconnier's protagonist.

3. Ideological Stylistics

Transformative-generative principles of grammar suggest that the paradigmatic and syntactmatic capacity of language allows literature to reflect and reveal permutations in ideology. The former, by giving the speaker/writer a multiplicity of linguistic options and the latter through its systematic organisation of information on a linear level. The two combine to present the speaker/writer with myriad ideational possibilities both on the level of surface structure and in their underlying intentions. Hence in reading and listening, it is not only important to recognise what is said and how it is said but also what is omitted or suppressed in choosing what to say. The use of Stylistic and other language-oriented models of analysing ideology in relation to exploring point of view, polyphony, narratorial control, modality and transitivity is considered potentially rewarding (cf. Halliday;1970, 1973, 1985, 1994; Leech & Short;1981, Burton;1982, Kennedy;1982, Halliday;1985, Fowler;1986, Fowler;1989, Fairclough;1992, Simpson;1993).

3.1 Stylistic Foundations

The stylistic foundation of the ensuing discussion is principally drawn from the linguistic orientations of Halliday's (1985, 1994) Function Grammar. The analytical model is divided into two primary components, namely the Interpersonal and the Ideational components (refer Halliday, 1985). Ideology within the interpersonal function will be investigated against the backdrop of the modality system. Ideology within the ideational function of language will be revealed by way of the transitivity system and lexical choice. The interpersonal and ideational components disclosed will then be matched to the any one of Fowler's (1986) three categories of point of view; spatio-temporal, ideational and psychological.

The discussion applies the conventional classifications of modality and beyond it to modality functions from a more general sense, considering the capacity of primary modal operators to encode degrees of commitment to, and (un)certainty of, the truth of propositions, and their ability to inscribe degrees of obligation, duty and desire, and also examining other linguistic elements that convey modality, and record attitude and ideology. The constituents of the modality framework are Modal Auxiliaries, Verb forms (private verbs, verba sentiendi, verbs of knowledge, prediction and evaluation,Adverbs, Adjectives, Categorical Assertions and Vague language and Hedges. The analysis of transitivity is conducted through a framework based on Halliday's (1985) model and an adaptation of Berry's (1975:189) framework. Berry's framework has been adapted in the context of the identification of ideology in textual structures. In the analysis of point of view, the discussion engages Fowler's (1986) model of point of view, significant . The analysis of point of view is deemed important to draw conclusions about the presence of narrator-writer ideology.

3.2 The Haze over Borneo

Borneo Fire is set in the island of Borneo which houses the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, the Indonesian province of Kalimantan, and the independent nation of Brunei. There are three main issues in the text. Firstly, the concern of the protagonists'; Philip Blakeney and his son Hugh Blakeney for the rain-forest of Borneo and their conviction to prevent a forest fire that threatens to destroy it. Secondly, is the protagonists' concern for the preservation of the natives of the island and their culture. And thirdly, the tale of Philip Blakeney who is tortured by the love that flares up between his son and his adopted (and illegitimate) daughter. In the first and the second, there are strong echoes of the allegory of the white man as saviour revealed in the discourse of *the Soul of Malaya* above.

The story begins with Philip Blakeney hearing about the forest fire from an "uncommonly quick and reliable" local pilot, Yusof Badawi. He is described as immensely distressed and tries to get the Malaysian authorities to confront the situation, yet the immediate sense of his presumption of local response is apparent in the following discourse in which reverberates the tone of the all knowing colonialist character of imperial lore:

For surely a forest fire, if merely by virtue of its brute size and high temperature and unvanquishable destructiveness, should be a phenomenon difficult to be oblivious of ... And yet already he thought he could see how invisible it would appear. The ruffle of the hair at the back of his head had been grey for twenty years and when he walked it was with a stick; but he had seen fires. In the interior there was a hill where seams of coal had been smouldering for as long as anybody could recollect - once he had reached a scrap from which it could be seen. Of course the logging companies would put the blame for the fire on the slash-and-burn farmers. Who had actually started the blaze- there was a supposedly simple supposed fact never likely to be ascertained. And of course And of course the state governments would back up the companies - ministers granted timber licences to their allies, to their relations, some even held concessions in their own names. The authorities would perhaps declare that the fire was natural, or significantly small, or was an act of terrorism, or, yes, didn't exist. Undoubtedly they wouldn't explain why hills and valleys which had been logged were more vulnerable to fire than primary forest, or why they were taking no measures now to control this one. (5)

The excerpt reveals a high concentration of epistemic modality showing a strong author/narrator presence. The modal auxiliaries found in this excerpt operate between degrees of possibility and probability expressing the author/narrator's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the propositions expressed. The modal auxiliaries, *would* and *should* (positive polarity, median affinity); *could* (positive polarity, low affinity); and *wouldn't* (negative polarity, median affinity) display uncertainty and lack of confidence in the propositions they occur in. The use of modalised verbs (*thought, see, appear*) support the argument of strong author/narrator presence as they convey notions of perception and are private to the author/narrator. The large number of modalised adverbs (*surely, merely, yet, already, of course, actually, supposedly, never, likely, of course, even, perhaps, significantly, yes, undoubtedly, no*) present perform functions of determining polarity, probability, obviousness, presumption, temporality, intensity and degree and create a sense of uncertainty in the propositions in the excerpt. These adverbs and the adjectives (*once, simple, supposed*) perform evaluative functions signalling intrusion by the author-narrator. In the whole of excerpt, only the third sentence can be classified as categorical and this sentence merely describes the protagonist's physical appearance. The vague language present in the excerpt attempts to convert the reader to the ideology of the text by creating impressions of shared and common knowledge.

The majority of the processes in the transitivity of the excerpt are mental and are assigned to the author/narrator (See Table 1). The verbs in sentences in 6, 8a, 8b, 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, 10a and 10b can be analysed as Material Action Intention processes with agency assigned to the respective actors as presented in the table above but the presence of the modal auxiliaries *would* and *wouldn't* before the main verb indicate prediction and projection which leads to assigning the process to the mental capacity of the author/narrator. The key implication that emerges from this analysis is that the centre of all processes is the author/narrator, hence giving the reader a biased and one-sided picture of the context. The analysis of lexical choice (see Table 2) exercised in this excerpt only serves to amplify and consolidate the findings about author/narrator ideology already discussed in the above sections. The analysis shows that positive lexical selection is only attributed to the protagonist. Ideology in this excerpt is explicit.

Faced with the (predicted) inaction of the Malaysian authorities, Philip publishes an article on the fire in the 'Far Eastern Economic review', a magazine based in Hong Kong and writes to his son, Hugh, a journalist fighting for the freedom of the natives in East Timor, Indonesia. The article draws world attention to the fire and Hugh returns to Sarawak to fight the spread of the vast forest fire.

3.3 Constructing the "Hero" of the Natives

The following excerpt accentuates Hugh Blakeney's stature as "hero of the natives" and their land :

The rich like that minister who made a speech Hugh loved to recite about cutting down the dark forest to let in the light of progress. Anyhow, Hugh was all facts, all figures. In the seventies the lowland forests of Sarawak had been logged. Now they were felling the dipterocarp forest of the inner hills at the rate of a hundred and fifty thousand hectares a year, only that figure soon had to be corrected, yes even officially readjusted, to two hundred and fifty thousand. Did anyone know that in the last

twenty years the area of Communal Forest Reserve had mysteriously declined from - but none of his listeners could remember the numbers. And were they aware of what so-called selective felling amounted to, that for every two trees cut down three more were damaged? He had heaps of reports he got this kind of stuff from. And that was the vehement, incisive way he talked. It made your head fuzzy to listen for long. Last year the industry had produced twelve million cubic metres of logs... That even the one in ten of the replanting programmes, which existed elsewhere than in governmental computers were derisory. Hugh Blakeney had sheaves of maps, photographs, apparent facts. The siltation of rivers, the fatal impoverishment of soils - well, at Oxford he was a scientist. (84)

The modal auxiliary *could* (positive polarity, low affinity) in this excerpt suggests that Hugh's listeners have low memory capacity. In comparison Hugh, had a photographic memory, remembering "*all facts*" and "*all figures*". The use of verba sentiendi or personal verbs (*loved, know, remember and aware*) suggests that the propositions are private to the author-narrator. Though ,three (*know, remember and aware*) of the four modalised verbs appear in questions the underlying impressions is that only the author-narrator, *knows, remembers and is aware of,* the answers to these questions. But the truth of these claims cannot be verified because the verbs are private. The modalised adverbs and adjectives are evaluative in nature and function as markers of polarity, desirability, validation and intensity. These markers denote attitudinal and experiential presence of the author/narrator. The excerpt contains two sentences that can be considered categorical assertions. Both sentences convey verifiable factual information which on their own do not perform positive or negative ideological functions. The bulk of the modality elements in this excerpt comes from the vagueness strategy employed by the author/narrator. The primary function of these is to create a "supernatural" personality for Hugh Blakeney. Hugh is, *all facts, all figures, knows* everything, *remembers* everything, is *aware* of everything and most of all *at Oxford he was a scientist*. The analysis of modality in this excerpt shows the presentation of the white western individual as a stereotype of high intellect and all-round capability who stands aloft in comparison to the "natives".

The transitivity in the excerpt (See Table 3) discloses two focal points, Hugh Blakeley's personality and Hugh's perceptions of the timber industry in Sarawak. Hugh's personality is clear from sentences that hold him as the agent (Material Action Intention processes) and sentences where specific qualities are assigned to him through Relational processes. Hugh's views about the timber industry in Sarawak are obvious and negatively coloured. However, a closer examination of the sentences (3,4a,4b,4c) about the timber industry reveals that the agency in these sentences are either not mentioned or stated vaguely, leaving the reader to guess at the author/narrator's intention. The reasons for this can either be that Hugh does not know the agents of the processes or that the statements themselves are inaccurate or false. In any case, these statements give the impression that the author/narrator knows what he is saying and strategically places him in a position of power.

The lexical choice in the excerpt (see Table 4) shows a distinct division between the polarity of lexis assigned to Hugh Blakeney and the Malaysian authorities and Malaysians. Furthermore, for every negative attribute given to the native, the white protagonist is endowed with its positive opposite. Even if some of the arguments and accusations rendered against the Malaysian authorities and timber industry seems questionable, one would surely not dare to question the integrity of *an Oxford scientist who has sheaves of maps, photographs and apparent facts as proof* .

3.4 The Epistemic Hegemony of the Crusader Image

The narration continues to embellish this image of the all knowing and all benevolent white saviour and the third excerpt, towards the close of the narrative progression, is no different:

They had both heard Philip Blakeney recollect in his growl that all that was necessary for evil to triumph was that good men should do nothing, and in that sense they had no trouble recognising one another as good - though the priest would have adjoined that evil's final triumph was not possible. But it seemed they could not leave it at that. Once Hugh Blakeney remarked that it would be no bad thing if the Malaysians or the Indonesians locked him up for a bit. Not for terribly long, he hoped. But if report on the fire were written from goal... If his articles on the politics of ecological ruin were also prison letters of a man convicted for taking action against it... Stephen Chai demurred. He was sure Hugh was correct when he said he could get his cause taken up by Friends of the Earth or whoever it was. Doubtless it was correct too that his allies at The Sunday Times or perhaps it was The Observer would rush his testimonies into print. But was there not something cynical about his taste for publicity? That really got the crusader going - on the magnitude of the tragedy, on the need to fight with any weapon you could snatch up. (250)

This excerpt is again highly epistemic. Of the modal auxiliaries found in this excerpt only *should* (positive polarity, median affinity) can be interpreted to mean virtually certain in terms of conviction in the proposition. The 'universal truth' nature of this proposition allows for the high degree of certainty. The other modal auxiliaries, *would* and *could* (positive polarity and median affinity) only manages an overtone of reservation and possibility. The use of personalised verbs (*recollect, recognise, seem*) signal experiential information while subjective reporting verb (demurred) can be viewed as an attempt by the author/narrator to colour the perception of the reader. The evaluative nature of the modalised adverbs and adjectives give evidence to the strong emotive presence of the author/narrator. The vague language with its strong speech-like characteristic, while subverting to some extent the seriousness of the issues in the excerpt, on another level provides the excerpt with realistic features - giving the characters, especially the protagonists their human characteristics. Indirectly this heightens the

'superhuman' endeavour that Hugh Blakeney (a mere mortal) has taken on in dealing single-handedly with the forest fire and the Malaysian authorities.

The excerpt reveals a concentration of mental internalised and externalised processes. The externalised processes represent what is heard by the other character/s. An investigation of the externalised process of the characters exhibits a distinct difference in their cognitive strategies. Philip Blakeney's recollection of, *all which was necessary for evil to triumph was that good men should do nothing,* may be taken to mean that he is echoing something he had said earlier. This is evidently not the case as there is no record in the text of him having said this before. Hence the statement would then represent something he had heard or read but did believe in. Hugh Blakeney's externalised structures are interjected with internalised ones. This means that he is selective and careful of what he says. His outward presentation of strength and courage is betrayed by internalised mental processes such as not wishing to remain in prison too long . Stephen Chai, however, speaks his mind. His internalised thought processes hover between complete trust and gullibility. Even when he decides to criticise, it is not Hugh he criticises but *his taste for publicity.* This is emphasised by not placing Hugh in the position of actor in the clause. Such details of the transivity in the excerpt are especially useful in determining the depiction of Hugh as a good speaker - a skill he uses effectively to propagandise and to gain support. The lexical selection in this excerpt in clearly and explicitly biased against Malaysia. Unlike Hugh who is allowed to defend his actions, Malaysia is condemned as *evil* and left defenceless.

3.5 Western Ideological Impositions

There is thus, in *Borneo Fire*, a distinct difference between the portrayal of the whites and the natives. Their superior social position, intellect and integrity is highlighted and contrasted with the natives who are weak, immoral, deceitful and corrupt. Yet the text is full of contradictions and incongruity. The western ideological imposition in the text crumbles in its inability to hold together a coherent structure and ideological reasoning. The preoccupation in the text is the revelation and condemnation of Malaysia's policy towards forestry and the natives. The catalyst for this discussion is the forest fire. But the fire is not in Malaysia but Indonesia. The Malaysian politician are accused of corruption and of reaping the riches of the timber industry (p.5) but when the forest fire threatens to destroy the very source of their riches, these authorities and politicians ironically remain complacent. The author/narrator claims that Borneo is "an island which from the beginning of recorded history had uncommonly little recorded history" (p.6) but contradicts this later in the text by revealing well recorded histories of the Malay rulers, the Brooke rule, the British occupation, Japanese rule and independence. Examples of such inconsistencies in ideas are many. The examination of not only what is stated but of unstated assumptions, exclusions and marginalization of especially the natives which were uncovered in the stylistic analysis betrays the author/narrator's creation of "rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, between self and non-self" (Eagleton, 1983:132).

Borneo Fire is a biased critique of Malaysia and Malaysians. Its imposition of western theory and ideology is not only a case of disavowing racial, cultural and historical differences that exist between Malaysia and the West but of extreme prejudice and generalization. The analysis of the text has disclosed several features that are alarming yet not surprising. *Borneo Fire* despite being published in 1995 has not moved away from the approach and conventions of texts written during the period of colonialism in Malaysia. The text is prejudicial, racist, and views the natives (Malaysians) and their way of life with disdain. Bhabha's (1983:198) assertion that colonialist discourse aspires to "construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin" is exemplified and consolidated in *Borneo Fire*. It seems amazing, ignorant and arrogant that on the verge of a new millennium Malaysia and Malaysian was still viewed with contempt and dishonour by the white western writer.

4. Conclusion

Juxtapose *Borneo Fire* with its colonial predecessor *The Soul of Malaya* and there is but one conclusion, that time changes little in terms of the location of the Other, for despite its being published in 1995, the discourse of *Borneo Fire* has not moved away from the approach and conventions of *The Soul of Malaya* written during colonial Malaya. In both novels, the rules of compliance and universality remain white and western and as such the cultural hegemony of colonialist discourse appears not to have been unseated from its throne.

References

Berry, M. (1975). *An Introduction to Systemic Linguistics*. Nottingham : Department of English Studies. University of Nottingham.

Bhabha, H. (1983). Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism In *The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, July 1982*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iverson, and Dianna Loxley. Colchester: University of Essex.

Burton, D. (1982). Through glass darkly : through dark glasses. In Carter, R. (ed.) *Language and Literature : An Introductory Reader in Stylistics*. London : Unwin Hyman Ltd.

Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary Theory : An Introduction.* Oxford : Blackwell.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. London: Polity Press.

Fanon, F. (1970). *Black Skin White Mask.* London : Paladin.

Fauconnier,H. (1985). *The Soul of Malaya.* 1931. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Fowler. R. (1986). *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1970). Functional Diversity in Language as seen from a Consideration of Modality and Mood in English In *Foundations in Language* 4: 225-242.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1973). *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. London: Edward Arnold Publications.

Halliday, M.A.K. 1985 (1994). *An Introduction To Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

JanMohamed, A R. (2000). The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature in *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* Vol 3 Diana Brydon (ed) London: Routledge

Kennedy, C. (1982). *Systemic Grammar and its Use in Literary Analysis.* In Carter, R. (ed.) *Language and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Stylistics*. London : Routledge.

Leech, G.N. and Short, M.H. (1981). *Style in Fiction*. London : Longman.

Pratt, M L. (1992). *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* London: Routledge, 1997.

Riviere, W. (1995). *Borneo Fire*. London : Sceptre Hardback.

Simpson,P. (1993). *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge.

Table 1.

Sen. Number	**Actor**	**Process**	**Description**
1	The fire	should be a phenomenon	Relational
2	He (Philip Blakeney)	thought he could see	Mental Cognition
3a	The ruffle of hair	had been grey for 20 years	Relational
3b	He (Philip Blakeney)	walked with a stick	Material Action Intention
3c	He (")	had seen fires	Mental Perception
4a	In the interior	there was a hill	Relational
4b	Seams of coal	had been smouldering	Relational
4c	Anybody	could recollect	Mental Cognition
5a	He (Philip Blakeney)	reached a scrap	Material Action Intention
5b	It (the smoke)	could be seen	Relational
6	Logging companies	would put the blame on	Mental Perception
7a	Who	started the blaze	Material Action Intention
7b	There	was a supposedly simple	Relational
8a	The state government	would back companies	Mental Perception
8b	Ministers	granted timber licences	Mental Perception
8c	Some (ministers)	held concessions	Mental Perception
9a	The authorities	would declare the fire natural	Mental Externalised
9b	"	would declare the fire small	Mental Externalised
9c	"	would declare it an act of terrorism	Mental Externalised
9d	"	would declare it didn't exist	Mental Externalised
10a	They (")	wouldn't explain	Mental Perception
10b	"	wouldn't explain their inaction	Mental Perception

Table 2.

Lexical Choice	Polarity	Receiver
brute size	negative	forest fire
unvanquishable destructiveness	negative	forest fire
phenomenon difficult to be oblivious of	negative	forest fire
how invisible it would appear	negative	Sarawakians/Malaysians
for as long as anybody could remember	negative	Sarawakians/Malaysians
Of course	negative	logging companies
never likely to be ascertained	negative	authorities
he had seen fires	positive	Philip Blakeney
of course	negative	state government
their allies, relations	negative	ministers
natural, significantly small, didn't exist	negative	authorities
undoubtedly, taking no measures	negative	authorities

Table 3.

Sen. Number	**Actor**	**Process**	**Description**
1a	The rich minister	made a speech	Material Action Intention
1b	Hugh	loved to recite the speech	Mental Perception /Externalised
2	Hugh	was all facts, all figures	Relational
3	In the 70's Sarawak	had been logged	Relational *
4a	They	were felling the dipterocarp	Material Action Intention *
4b	The figures	had to be corrected	Material Event *
4c	The figures	had to be officially readjusted	Material Event *
5a	Did anyone	know ?	Mental Cognition
5b	None of his listeners	could remember	Mental Cognition
6	Were they (listeners)	aware of	Mental Cognition
7	He (Hugh)	had heaps of reports	Relational
8	He (Hugh)	talked (vehement/incisive)	Mental Externalised
9	It (Hugh's speech)	made your head fuzzy	Material Event *
10	Last year the industry	had produced 12 mil. c.m.	Material Event
11	The replanting prog.	were derisory	Relational
12a	Hugh Blakeney	had sheaves of map	Relational
12b	Hugh Blakeney	had photographs	Relational
12c	Hugh Blakeney	had apparent facts	Relational
13	He (Hugh)	was an Oxford scientist	Relational

Table 4.

Lexical Choice	**Polarity**	**Receiver**
dipterocarp	positive	Hugh Blakeney
officially readjusted	negative	Malaysian authorities
mysteriously declined	negative	listeners/ natives
none could remember	negative	listeners
so-called selective felling	negative	Malaysian authorities
had heaps of report	positive	Hugh Blakeney
vehement and incisive talk	positive	Hugh Blakeney
made your head fuzzy	negative	listeners/readers
derisory	negative	Malaysian authorities
had sheaves of maps	positive	Hugh Blakeney
had photographs	positive	Hugh Blakeney
apparent facts	positive	Hugh Blakeney
fatal improverisment	negative	Malaysia
Oxford	positive	Hugh Blakeney
scientist	positive	Hugh Blakeney