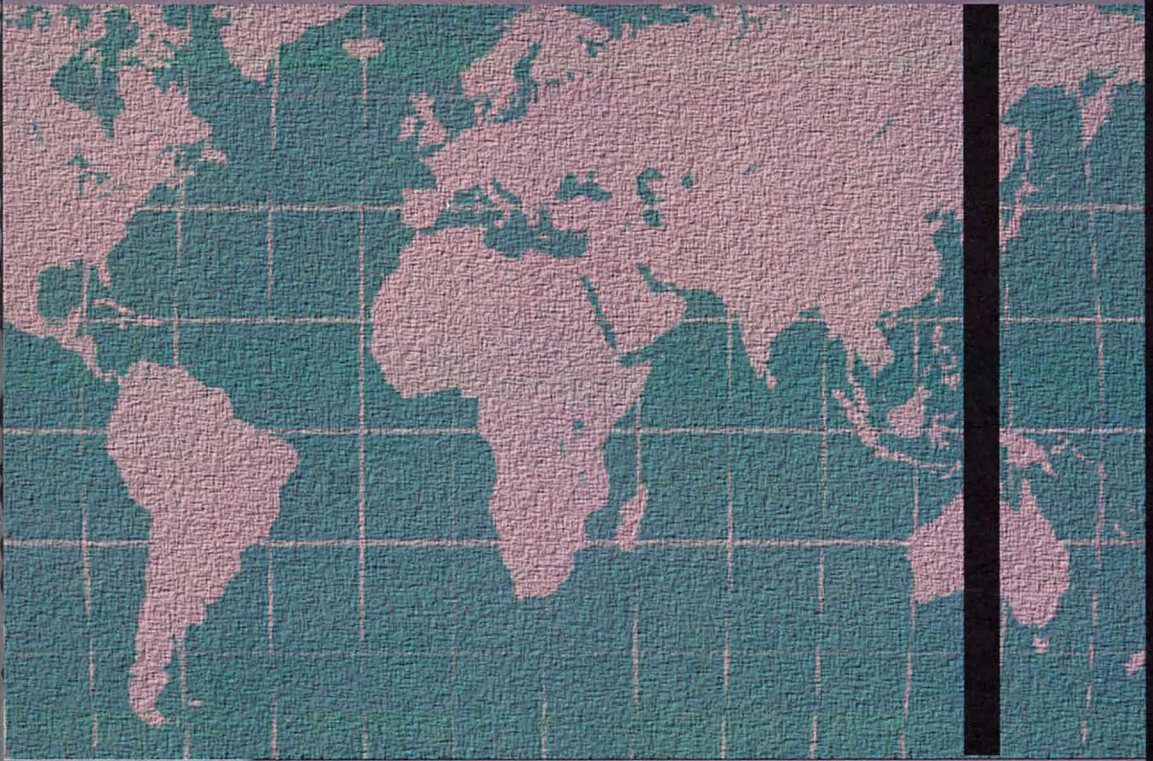


CROSSING BOUNDARIES



**Musings on Language, Literature
and Culture**



IIUM Press

Edited by Md. Mahmudul Hasan

Crossing Boundaries

Musings on Language, Literature and Culture

Edited By

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CHAPTER 2

The Almost Enforced Mingling of Cultures: Anthony Burgess' Depiction of Races and Race-Relations in Pre-Independence Malaya

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Abstract: Anthony Burgess began his literary career as a writer in the Federation of Malaya where he wrote the three novels, such as: *Time for a Tiger*, *Beds in the East*, and *The Enemy in the Blanket*. These novels were later published as *The Malayan Trilogy* and *The Long Day Wanes*. The first two novels are set in the Malay Peninsula (Malaya) while the events in the third novel take place in Brunei. The current essay is a study of the first two of these. This paper touches upon the conflicts between the British civil servants and planters on the one hand, and the local populations on the other, focusing mainly upon the Malays on the one hand, and the Chinese and Indian on the other. The action of the novels is set in the times of rising tension before Malaya became an independent country in August 1957 and the years immediately following independence. Apart from independence, two major issues serve as the backdrop: the unease between the British plantation owners and civil servants on the eve of the former's departure for England, and the condition of the underground Communist Party of Malaya. Characters representing various communities, including the British citizens working in the country and the members of the Communist Party of Malaya, are shown in situations where they have to face the reality of an independent Malaya. Eventually, the British are the most affected of all, as most of them decide to return home. The sole exception, Victor Crabbe passes away in Malaya and in a symbolic manner is absorbed into the spirit of independent Malaya through his death.

Keywords: Federation of Malaya, Expatriate writing, British in Malaya, Malayan independence, Malayan races, Malaysian novels

Introduction

Anthony Burgess' three novels - *Time for a Tiger* (1956), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) and *Beds in the East* (1959) - were written in the fifties during the years before and immediately after the Federation of Malaya gained independence in 1957. These three titles, originally published as independent novels were republished as *The Malayan Trilogy* in 1972 and as *The Long Day Wanes: A Malayan Trilogy* in the same year.

Burgess served in the Colonial Service; he was a teacher at the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, Perak as well as at the Malay Teachers' Training College at Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The novels are based upon experiences Burgess himself gained during the years in Malaya. Yet, they are not "autobiographical" even if the character of the unorthodox teacher, Victor Crabbe, is based on himself. Nor are they "historical" in the true sense of the term. There is not much history in the novels