CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature in the areas of research found relevant to the aim of this study, which is the design and development of the Zen-based Conflict-to-Insight Reading Procedure. The literature review following this introduction (2.1) is divided into four sections. Section 2.2 reviews literature relating to the Malaysian quest for local, tradition-based critical theories. Section 2.3 reviews literature on Zen philosophy, focusing on discourses on *prajna* and the approach to texts. Section 2.4 reviews the literature relating to western approaches to texts, focusing on identifying approaches that resemble the Procedure in concept or design. Section 2.5 reviews the two Malaysian novels analysed in this study and past readings of the novels.

2.2 THE MALAYSIAN QUEST FOR LOCAL, TRADITION-BASED, CRITICAL THEORIES

The reading done in the area of the Malaysian quest for local, tradition-based, critical theories represents the "gap-identification" part of the research. The purpose is to determine what has been done so far in terms of local theory, any gaps that my study can help to fill, and the most useful way to fill the gap. The focus of the research is on reader-oriented theories, and the emphasis is on reading strategies.

The quest for local, tradition-based, critical theories is linked to the postcolonial discourse of resistance. This discourse of resistance has been led principally and most consistently by Peninsular Malay writers, who have played an active role in promoting the study and development of the Malay language and its literature.[1] This explains why, among Malaysian literatures, Malay literature has both the longest continuous tradition and the largest corpus. This, together with the fact that Malay is the national language, is the main

reason that Malay-language literary works have been officially categorised as "national", works in other indigenous languages (e.g. Kadazan) as "regional", and works in non-indigenous Malaysian languages (e.g. English) as "sectional" since 1971. The classification is based on language and not ethnicity; "national" literature includes works by non-Malays. However, since the literary contribution by non-Malays to the national literature has been relatively minimal, the discourse on local theory is conducted almost exclusively by ethnic Malays and centres mainly on Malay-Muslim literature.[2]

At the point of writing, *Teori dan kritikan sastera Malaysia dan Singapura* (Mana Sikana, ed. 2005) is the most comprehensive book on Malay literary theory and criticism to date. It appeared after most of the research for the present study had been done. However, the 1985 article by Abdul Rahman Napiah[3], "*Perkembangan kritikan sastera di Malaysia dan hubungan dengan pembinaan sastera kreatif*" (*Sari* 3 (2) 1985: 85-111) gives an overview of the development of Malay literary criticism in relation to the development of creative literature up to the early 1980s. A useful aspect of this article is that it outlines the polemical debates and controversies among the literati during the period 1950-85. According to Abdul Rahman, Malay literary criticism did not exist before the 1950s, and western literary theories and critical approaches were introduced into the study of Malay literature by individual writers and critics: New Criticism and Social Realism in the 1960s; Freudian psychology, structuralism, semiotics, linguistics and stylistics in the 1970s; and poststructuralism and postcolonialism from the 1980s onwards.

Abdul Rahman notes that the general response to western theories was pragmatically selective rather than negative. Linguistics and stylistics, for instance, found fertile ground in the academic institutions. Efforts to develop Malay literature's own critical approaches have their roots in the reaction of local writers to western literary-critical standards. In the 1960s, Malay critics and scholars, who were influenced by New Criticism (e.g. Yahya Ismail), felt that literary criticism is about judging the quality of writing. A critic therefore has to be well-read, perceptive, sensitive, honest, and courageous in expressing his views. This concept, which implies the imposition of western literary norms on local works, met with resistance from modern Malay writers, who felt that local works deserve to be judged by local criteria. Notably, Abdul Rahman concludes his historical survey by advising critics and scholars not only to be judicious in their use of western theory, but also to develop their own critical approaches, expressing the view that Malay literature had reached the stage of maturity where it should have its own critical approaches and methodologies.

The poet, Muhammad Haji Salleh, has been a particularly active proponent of the view that local literature has to be judged by local and not western criteria. He had studied English literature in the 1960s at the University of Singapore where he began writing poetry in English. Since the 1970s, however, he has written his poetry exclusively in Malay, and concentrated on studying traditional Malay literature. From then on, he began writing extensively on the need for local criteria in approaching Malaysian and, especially, traditional Malay literature (Fadillah Merican et al. 2004: 130-132). A comprehensive listing of his writings up to 2003 is available in *Critical perspectives on Muhammad Haji Salleh* (Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 327-336). Two papers typical of the issues he addressed in the 1970s are "*Masalah kriteria dalam kritikan sastera Malaysia*" (1975) on the criteriological problems encountered in critiquing Malaysian literature, and "Cultural justice" (1976). As he explains in "Reclaiming worlds: theories in the text" (Fadillah Merican et al. eds. 1996: 1-14), the quest for local literary theory is not only an act of "reclaiming what is our own, or theorizing back", it is also an act of "literary redress" because the local criteria for literary evaluation, which are part and parcel of the worldview of local writers, have been "marginalised and humiliated" by western standards and approaches to literature. In listing the factors responsible for the marginalisation of indigenous standards of literary judgment, Muhammad Haji Salleh includes not only "colonialism" and "colonial literary scholarship", but also "the new contemporary passion for theories out of Europe and America, and … all of the teachers and critics influenced by western literary concepts who have prolonged and given them local life" (*ibid*, 1).

Muhammad Haji Salleh's express identification of local teachers and critics as those who give western theories "local life" is an indication of how strong, pervasive, and enduring the influence of western literary theory and practice has been on local study of literature. Indeed, Umar Junus, one of the earliest scholars to use poststructuralist theory in Malay literary studies, is quoted by Kassim Ahmad (1992) as saying,

> *Kalau kita jujur terhadap diri sendiri, kita akan akui bahawa kita berada dalam penjara teori kesusasteraan yang berkembang di Barat. Penjara ini tidak akan pernah hilang meskipun kita berusaha menolak teori itu. Bahkan penolakan terhadapnya adalah pengakuan akan diri kita yang berada dalam penjara teori yang dikembangkan oleh sarjana Barat.*

> (If we were honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we are imprisoned by western theories. This prison will not disappear even if we reject the theory. Furthermore, to reject it is to admit that we are imprisoned by western theory.) (My loose translation)

In view of the early and intensive intervention of western literary criteria and critical approaches in the modern study of Malay literature, it is difficult at the current stage of the discourse to ascertain to what extent Abdul Rahman Napiah's historiography (1985, *op. cit. supra*) of the development of literary criticism in Malaysia has been influenced from the start by western literary and social critical theory. A case in point is his explanation for the view that Malay literary criticism did not exist before the 1950s. One reason he gives is that until that decade literature was not perceived as material (*bahan*) with its own artistic values. The other reason he gives is that traditional texts were written in feudalistic times by court scribes who would not have dared to be critical in case they were charged with treason (*derhaka*). Both reasons given suggest that literary criticism and the use of literature for critical purposes are not part of the Malay literary tradition. Yet, one can argue that the perception of literature as an object of art may already be influenced by western theories of literature (e.g. New Criticism). And certainly, the view that traditional Malay literature is non-critical has been interrogated in the intertextual study of the *Sejarah Melayu* by Umar Junus (*Sejarah Melayu: Menemukan Diri Kembali* 1984). The view is also problematised by my reading (see Ch. I. 1.2) of the Tun Makhdum-Tun Hasan episode in the version of the *Sejarah Melayu* translated by C.C. Brown (1976).

The suggestion that literary and social criticism are not part of traditional Malay literature may have to be re-examined in the light of Muhammad Haji Salleh's *Puitika Sastera Melayu* (2000) (henceforth *Puitika*), the first systematic explication of the various genres, categories, principles and concepts of traditional Malay poetics. However, in *Puitika*, "criticism" is absent from Muhammad Haji Salleh's list of the 6 functions of literature, namely: repository of communal or national knowledge, vehicle and image of wisdom, therapeutic entertainment, role model of excellence, meaningful expression, and aesthetic expression. Yet one must assume that some form of literary criticism underlies the rules and principles governing the functions mentioned. Indeed (see 2.2.1.3), Abdul Rahman Napiah (in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 153-70) is able to derive a "theory of literary criticism" from *Puitika*. It would be reasonable to hypothesise that the art of literary criticism and the art of using literature for the purpose of social criticism are embedded in traditional Malay

texts. The critic-scholar, Sohaimi Abdul Aziz (in Zawiah Yahya, *ibid*, pp. 193), may have had this hypothesis in mind when suggesting that the work done in *Puitika* "should also be extended to the study of the true nature of Malay literary criticism". The following gives an overview of what has been done so far in terms of local literary theories and critical approaches.

2.2.1 Local literary theories and critical approaches

The literary theories and critical approaches that have been developed locally fall into three categories: (a) Islamic theories, (b) critical approaches based on western theories, and (c) traditional Malay literary theory.

i. Islamic theories

In the 1970s there was a resurgence of Islamic consciousness in Malaysia. A historical and political background to the Islamic resurgence is provided by Hussin Mutalib (1993) in *Islam in Malaysia: from Revivalism to Islamic State*, where he discusses briefly its impact on literary discourse (*ibid*, p. 114). An examination of Shahnon Ahmad's critical essays, written from the 1960s to the 1980s, provides an insight into the influence of Islamic resurgence on Malay literary discourse from the perspective of the literary writer and critic. These essays have been collected, translated into English, and published as *Literature as a Seismograph of Life* (1994). In essays written in the 1960s, Shahnon Ahmad often cited writers of the European "canon" (e.g. Shakespeare and Tolstoy) as models for aspiring Malay writers. In essays written from the mid-1970s onwards, however, the emphasis is on the importance of producing literature reflecting Islamic values.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a number of Islamic literary theories published. These focused on ethics (Shahnon Ahmad's *Kesusasteraan dan Etika Islam* 1981), aesthetics (Mohd Affandi Hassan's *Pendidikan Estetika dari Pendekatan Tauhid* 1989-90), principles of writing (Shafie Abu Bakar's *Teori Takmila* 1993), and Malay-Islamic methodology (Hashim Awang's *Teori Pengkaedahan Melayu* 1997). Islamic theories tend to be perceived as guides for writers rather than for readers and are discussed as playing a defining role in the development of "Islamic literature" (*sastera Islam*) as a genre. This is reflected in the newspaper article, "*Tentang sastera Islam: sastera Islam berasaskan Teori Takmilah*" (*Utusan Malaysia*, 1 Aug. 2006)[4], where the journalist Zunaidah Zainon discusses Shafie

Abu Bakar's *Teori Takmilah* in connection with the development of Islamic literature and then gets views on the subject of Islamic literature from five Malay authors known for works reflecting their religious commitment. It is evident from the writers' responses that they think of themselves as "Islamic writers" who are guided by Islamic teachings. But it is less clear whether the production of their literary works is guided by specific Islamic literary theories. Significantly, one of the writers interviewed, S. M. Zakir, is particularly vocal about the contradiction he sees between Islam's spirit of universalism and the exclusionism implicit in promoting a genre that discriminates between Muslim and non-Muslim writers. Two other writers interviewed, Faisal Tehrani and Shamsudin Othman, point out that there are non-Muslims who write knowledgeably about Islam, or whose writings are infused with values that can be shared with and by Muslims.

The same issues are discussed by the critic, Mohd Dahri Zakaria (2004), in "*Sastera Islam hanya tinggal teori*"[5] or, loosely translated, "All that remains of Islamic literature is the theory". He even suggests that Islamic theories are superfluous as guides to the writing of Islamic literature, arguing that if a writer has to depend on Islamic theory to produce a literary work, he/she cannot have internalized the teachings of Islam and should not be explaining them to others. In his view, an Islamic writer is an authentic Muslim (*pendakwah*) who uses literature to teach others; and a literary work is Islamic not by virtue of the theory used but by virtue of the writer's conviction. He concludes with the observation that it is probably because of all these issues that despite the availability of Islamic theories, writers still depend on western theories.

Using writer-oriented theories as reader-oriented critical theories can present a problem. Since the principles set down by the theorists are normative prescriptions for production, when used as reading strategies without some kind of conversion or modification, they may have the effect of bringing both writer and reader to conformity: the way one should read is also the way one should write. Reading Shahnon Ahmad's essays on literature and Islam (*op. cit. supra* 1994: 381-441), for example, one cannot help thinking that if all writers were to follow the principles set down in the essays, there would be no need for critics because the triad of Islamic ideals—truth, beauty, and goodness—would be achieved by limiting one's subject matter and use of language to what can be understood by the reader: not vague or ambiguous; not given to wordplay and hyperbole; and not imaginative to the point of being fantastical. It is easy to see why Abdul Rahman Napiah (in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 155) characterises Islamic theories as being "based on the idealism

of Islam", and Anuar Ridhwan (in Zawiah Yahya, *ibid*, 2003: 173) describes them as being "created from 'the top'".

Zawiah Yahya (in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 151) suggests, in her review of *Puitika*, that literary-theoretical concepts have to be converted into critical-reading tools if the theory as a whole is to "stand alone as a critical procedure"; otherwise there would be "a gap between theory and methodology". Whether this strategy alone can address issues of comprehension in cross-cultural readings remains an open question. An example of how an Islamic theoretical concept is converted into a critical tool for cross-cultural reading is found in Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf's "Making the bard bardable: an Islamic approach in reading Shakespeare's tragedies" (in Fadillah Merican et al., eds. 1996: 515-522). In the paper, Nor Faridah explains how she uses Al-Ghazali's "elaboration of the 3 states of self" as a teaching tool to help Malaysian students understand the concept of tragedy in Shakespeare's plays. Her description of the application leaves me with the impression that the student using this approach will probably end up with a better understanding of Al-Ghazali's concept of the self and the Islamic concept of tragedy than Shakespeare's (Christian) concept of tragedy. Further, confronted with the "otherness" of Shakespeare's presentation of tragedy, the student may intentionally or unintentionally use the Islamic concept of tragedy to negate the validity of the Shakespearian or Christian concept of tragedy, as Nor Faridah in fact does in her paper (*ibid*, p. 519). In short, due to the normative nature of religious principles, the approach has the effect of using Shakespeare's tragedies to explain al-Ghazali's teachings rather than the other way round. The same effect is found in attempts to apply Buddhist/Zen value-frameworks to the analysis of Shakespeare and Wordsworth (see 2.4.3).

More promising as a basis for the development of reading strategies is Hashim Awang's *Teori Pengkaedahan Melayu* or "theory of Malay methodology" (Hashim Awang, 1984 and in Mana Sikana, ed. 1997). Hashim Awang's theoretical work is often included in discussions of Islamic theories; but as I understand it, it is perhaps better described as a theoretical systematisation of the general principles guiding Malay-Muslim evaluation of literary texts. The theory defines six main approaches to texts and divides them into two types of methodology, "worldly" and religious. Classed under worldly methodology are: (a) the "utilitarian" (*gunaan*) approach, which evaluates a literary work in terms of whether it is of extrinsic and intrinsic benefit to the reader, the community, and humanity; (b) the moral approach, which evaluates the work in terms of whether it enriches the reader's experience

and knowledge and provides a life-improving model for the reader; and (c) the deciphering (*firasat*) approach, which assumes that a literary work has both an exoteric and an esoteric meaning, and focuses on deciphering its esoteric meaning, which is "larger", so to speak, than the sum of the parts of the work. Deciphering is done through a critical and open-minded thinking process, which involves observation of the empirical world, reflection, and reasoning, guided by intuition (*gerak hati*) as well as acquired knowledge. This approach, according to Hashim Awang, is in line with the teachings of Islam, which exhorts human beings to use their God-given intelligence and intellect.

The religious methodology is based on faith in Islam as taught in the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*. Classed under this methodology are (a) the missionary (*dakwah*) approach, which evaluates the literary work in terms of whether it brings the reader not only to a better understanding of himself, of God, and the relationship between himself and God, but also to a greater feeling of love and respect for human beings, who are dear to God; (b) the communal (*kemasyarakatan*) approach, which evaluates the work in terms of whether it helps to promote a more virtuous and peaceful society living in accordance with God's laws; and (c) the art (*seni*) approach, which focuses on the aesthetic aspects of a work, where aesthetics is understood in terms of a harmonious coming together of ethical values, order, truth, meaning and service, reflecting the beauty of God's creation or the universe.

Most of the evaluative principles discussed by Hashim Awang are useful as yardsticks to measure whether a work meets Malay-Muslim standards of literary and moral excellence; but it is uncertain whether they will help the reader to understand the work's discourses if the work as a whole fails to meet those standards. The one exception may be the deciphering (*firasat*) approach, which encourages the reader to probe below the surface meaning with a critical and open mind in order to discover the inner or hidden meaning. This deciphering method is important for the present study and I shall discuss its significance later.

ii. Critical approaches based on western and non-religious theories

The critical approaches reviewed in this sub-section are those created by scholars who have used western and non-religious theoretical concepts and critical tools to develop their reading strategies. On the whole, in their encounter with western literary theories and approaches, Malay literary scholars are pragmatically selective. The main criterion for

accepting or rejecting a given theory seems to be whether it comes into conflict with the Malay-Muslim worldview and Islamic values. One notes that theories perceived to be in contradiction to Islamic teachings and values are likely to be viewed with reservation. For example, in "*Kemelut yang berpanjangan kritikan sastera di Malaysia kini*", a lecture given at The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1992, Kassim Ahmad identifies postmodernist literary theory and the passion for its development as one of the factors contributing to the continuing crisis in local literary criticism. He seems particularly critical of Deconstructionism, which he perceives as going against local conventions about knowledge because it treats knowledge, long held to be a serious matter, like a game.[6]

More readily accepted are critical methodologies and tools, which are (or can be rendered) culturally and ethically neutral. These are usually used in tandem with appropriate Islamic value frameworks. Thus, despite Kassim Ahmad's criticism of postmodernist theories, scholars have made use of the critical vocabulary and tools of poststructuralism to gain new insights into traditional texts. As mentioned earlier, Umar Junus (1984) has used Rifaterre's theory of intertextuality together with Islamic value frameworks to re-read the *Sejarah Melayu*, arriving at a new point of view that challenges the prevailing view in Malay literary scholarship that the *Sejarah*'s author was a subservient, uncritical court scribe in a feudalistic social system. More recently Ruzy Suliza Hashim (*Out of the shadows: women in Malay court narratives* 2003) has triangulated feminist theory, social exchange theory, and Islamic value frameworks to reclaim the political importance of women muted and marginalised in Malay court narratives.

Scholars have also used western theories and critical tools to design reading strategies capable of general application. In *Resisting colonial discourse* (1994), Zawiah Yahya presents a reading strategy that makes use of Marxian theoretical frameworks and poststructuralist Deconstructive techniques to bring an ethnocentric perspective to fictional works set in British Malaya by colonial writers, specifically Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham, and Anthony Burgess. The result is a critique-of-ideology reading strategy enabling the reader to detect, deconstruct, and resist ideologies embedded in the narratives. Theoretically, the strategy is capable of being used for the deconstruction of ideologies in all kinds of narratives. Zawiah Yahya's approach is a confrontational approach. The reader is encouraged to bring his/her ethnocentric perception of reality like a diagnostic tool to the author's fictional representation of reality, and then to infer from the differences between

the two versions of realities the author's conscious or unconscious ideological agenda. As an approach to make the reader aware of how his/her self-image is manipulated by the author's representation of the reader's reality, it is useful. But it is essentially a variation of Nor Faridah's Islamic approach (see 2.2.1.1). It reinforces the reader's sense of the validity of his/her own ethnocentric construction of reality by negating the validity of the author's (right to his own) fictional construction of reality. But that is precisely Zawiah Yahya's intention. As she states (*ibid*: 94), "Our job is to dismantle [the author's misconstruction of the reader's reality] and reconstruct our own."

Abdul Rahman Napiah has developed and published under his pen-name, Mana Sikana, a theory of "Textdealism". His book, *Teori Sastera Textdealisme* (2005), appeared after the following research had been done. In "Authorship of Muhammad Haji Salleh" (in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 106-126), Abdul Rahman explains and demonstrates his theory with an analysis of Muhammad Haji Salleh's poem *Aksara Usia* ("Poetic Memoirs"). The theory is based on the idea that an author, at the start of his/her career, has an "ideal" of his/her "authorship". The initial stage is termed "pre-language", and the point when the ideal is realised is termed "individualism". According to the theory, a reader can trace an author's development from "pre-language" to "individualism" by analysing his works according to four principles, namely, "presence", "contradiction", "reinforcement" and "individualism". The claim made for the Textdealism theory is that in tracing an author's development, it differs from the method of "traditional literature analysts" who would "study the history and background of the author, his status and his writing techniques before looking into the text" (*ibid*: 106). The Textdealism theory, on the other hand, draws on Lacanian psychology, semiotics and the Kristevan idea of the self-in-process for its strategy of tracing the development of an author through his texts. However, in Abdul Rahman's reading of *Aksara Usia*, this difference is not demonstrated; a great deal of the discussion consists of generally known facts about the poet's life. Assuming that the reading exemplifies the application of the Textdealism theory, I find that it tends to focus more on the poet than the poem, and to make assumptions about aspects of the poet's life and thoughts that are difficult to prove. A better demonstration might have been the analysis of a text that is not as autobiographical as the poem under study, and by an unknown or lesser known writer.

Mohamad Mokhtar Hassan's "Conceptual Keyword Theory" (*Teori Konseptual Kata Kunci*, 2005) is based on the view that every individual has his/her own conception of things and issues, and that the formation of these conceptions is influenced by his/her

background and ideologies, as well as the effects of time (e.g. aging, change). Mohamad Mokhtar Hassan's theory is that these conceptions are reflected in an author's choice of words when referring to an issue or event, and that the choice of words in turn has an effect on the reader. Therefore, a reader who wishes to understand an author's conception of a given issue (e.g. poverty) would have to identify "key words" used by the author to express his/her conception of the issue and then relate the use of these key words to events and circumstances in the author's personal background. The examination of the text thus hinges on three principles: (a) "influence", which refers to the author's background; (b) "choice of words", which refers to the text; and (c) "effect", which refers to the effect the words have on the reader. The reading aim is to arrive at the point where the reader is satisfied that the effect the key words in the text have on him corresponds to the effect they have or had on the writer at the point of writing. The theory can be considered a critical approach in that it encourages the reader to focus on the text. What I find problematic is whether and how the reader can ever be certain that his/her conception of an issue corresponds with the author's, especially if the author is dead or otherwise unavailable to provide the necessary confirmation.

iii. Traditional Malay literary theory

In 2000 a major milestone was reached in the quest for local theories when Muhammad Haji Salleh's *Puitika* was published, marking the culmination of research that began in the 1970s (see 2.2). As the title of the book indicates, Muhammad Haji Salleh's study is about the poetics of traditional Malay literature. Muhammad Haji Salleh advances no theory or reading procedure of his own. Instead he describes the Malay theory of literature, poetics, and aesthetics, basing his descriptions on his analyses of traditional literature, both written and performed. It is the first systematic exposition of the principles and concepts underlying the use of language, imagery, and stage props and other paraphernalia involved in performance rituals, in the production of traditional Malay literature and orature. Scholars agree that it is the most important work done so far on local theory because it redefines key literary concepts (e.g. genre, text, audience, and aesthetics) on the basis of actual texts and oral performances. They also agree that *Puitika* is only the first major step in the effort to retrieve and reconstruct traditional Malay literary theory. As Zawiah Yahya (in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 151) points out, *Puitika* is "more about a theory of production than it is a theory of reception", and there is still work to be done on developing critical tools for reader-oriented approaches to texts.

One valuable aspect of *Puitika* is that it is a descriptive rather than prescriptive presentation of traditional Malay literary theories. It thus leaves the field open for future reading strategists to convert the principles and concepts into critical tools. As was noted earlier (2.2), Abdul Rahman Napiah has derived an approach to texts from *Puitika* ("Reading theory: *Puitika Sastera Melayu* by Muhammad Haji Salleh", in Zawiah Yahya, ed. 2003: 153-70). The approach consists in analysing four aspects of a text: selection, technique of delivery, analysis of language, and function. "Selection" refers to how an author selects his ideas, materials and other resources for his text, while "function" refers to the "objective and intention" of the author. Since a sample reading is not included, no assessment can be made of it as a critical approach.

Another valuable aspect of *Puitika* is that it provides a comprehensive "new" literary vocabulary, which can help in defining or redefining literary aspects of local works written from non-European cultural standpoints. An example is the word "*dalang*", one of the many Malay terms for "author", which, based on my analysis of *Flowers in the sky* (Chapter VII), could be used to explain Lee Kok Liang's Zen "puppet-kill-puppet" method of presenting his fictional reality.

2.2.2 Significance of research findings

My assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of some local literary theories and critical approaches has been given in the above review. Here I shall focus on the significant findings relating to my conceptualisation and design of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. The most significant finding is Hashim Awang's description of the Malay-Muslim deciphering (*firasat*) approach. To an extent, it validates my inference from my reading of the Tun Makhdum-Tun Hasan story in the *Sejarah Melayu* that in the Malay-Muslim tradition there is an approach to textual interpretation requiring open-minded, critical thinking as well as insight. Of greater interest is that these hermeneutic requirements are also important in the Zen approach to texts. It would be interesting to find out whether and how the introduction of Zen analytic tools might broaden the critical scope of the *firasat* approach.

The second significant research finding relates to how critics and scholars respond to western literary theories. It was observed that critics tend to reject theories perceived to be in conflict with their own belief systems, but will use critical methodological tools that are culturally and ethically neutral and can be used with the value frameworks of their belief

systems. These observations have an impact on the design of the Zen-based Reading Procedure; an important criterion in my selection of Zen analytic concepts and critical tools for use in the Procedure is that they have to be value-free and trans-ethnically acceptable.

The third significant research finding relates to two fairly common practices in local approaches to texts. One is the practice of beginning the reading by selecting aspects of the text that are alien to or in conflict with the reader's worldview (e.g. Nor Faridah's Islamic approach to Shakespearean tragedy and Zawiah Yahya's ethnocentric approach to colonial discourse). The other is the practice of selecting a particular aspect of the text and then investigating it closely (e.g. Mohamad Mokhtar Hasan's Conceptual Key Words theory). The incorporation of these common practices in the Zen-based Procedure would facilitate use of the Procedure.

2.3 EXPLORING RESOURCES: BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

The research in the area of Buddhist philosophy represents the "search-for-solutions" part of the present study. The scope covers discourses from the four main philosophical schools: Early Buddhism, Madhyamika, Yogacara, and Hua Yen. The focus is on understanding the epistemological foundations of *prajna*, determining the connection between the development of *prajna* and the Zen approach to texts, and identifying analytic concepts and critical tools used in the development of *prajna*. The desired outcome of the research is a theoretical framework and a set of hermeneutic aids (e.g. reading guidelines, critical concepts and analytic tools) for the Zen-based Procedure.

Buddhism has a vast corpus (for a more detailed overview, see Kenneth Ch'en, 1968: 211-35). The primary literature is divided into the Pali Canon and the Mahayana texts. The Pali Canon is associated with the Theravada School, traditionally dominant in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Laos. It consists of the *Tripitaka* ("Three Baskets"): the *vinaya* or monastic rules, the *sutras* (*suttas* in Pali) or the Buddha's dialogues, and the *Abhidharma* (Pali *Abhidhamma*) or "higher teachings". The Mahayana is the branch of Buddhism that spread from India to China, Tibet, and Central Asia; and from China to Japan and Vietnam. The primary Mahayana texts consist of *sutras* and *shastras* (commentaries on the *sutras* by later philosophers).

The usual approach taken by western Buddhist scholars is to focus on a particular Buddhist text, philosophical branch, concept or doctrine. These studies fall into distinct sub-disciplines: philology, history, comparative religion or philosophy, and so on. The approach taken in the present study deviates from this practice. It is guided primarily by my study aim, which is to look for solutions in Buddhist discourses that can be useful in meeting a perceived need in local literary-critical practice; namely a theoretical framework and a set of critical tools for a reading procedure. Therefore, although the scope is large, the close research is limited to discourses pertinent to the design and development of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. General histories of the development of Buddhism and Buddhist studies were read first, to identify the key areas of my research. Subsequent research focused on discourses in my key areas of interest, identified as Buddhist cognitive theory; insight or *prajna*; perception; hermeneutics, and critical methods and tools. The literature includes relevant *sutras*, *shastras*, modern commentaries, and modern scholarly studies. In selecting modern commentaries, I have preferred those of translators who base their commentaries on the Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, or Japanese translations of the teachings. I shall first give a brief overview of Buddhist studies available in English, and then review the literature pertinent to my research.

2.3.1 Survey of Buddhist studies in English

In modern times, the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, is usually given credit for arousing western interest in Buddhism with his book, *The World as Will and Representation*, first published in 1819. Subsequent interest in Buddhism was sustained by the translations and commentaries of European Indologists[7], and since then the western contribution to world Buddhist scholarship has been immense. W Peiris' *The Western Contribution to Buddhism* (1973) has a comprehensive, country-by-country account of the western contribution, with historical overviews of the development of Buddhist scholarship and practice in each country followed by biographical sketches of individuals who have played key roles in the development.

Buddhism's encounters with the west is characterised by a two-way flow of ideas and influences. A. Wickremereratne's *The Genesis of an Orientalist: Thomas William Rhys Davids and Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (1984) is a critical study of Rhys Davids' career as an active translator of Pali texts and proponent of Theravada Buddhism in England. It is also a case study of the impact of western interest in Buddhism on the "native" Buddhist's attitude

to his own belief system. By the early twentieth century, Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka had acquired many indigenous, pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices and evolved into a ritual-bound religion; only a few learned monks understood Pali and the essence of the teachings. English translations of the Pali texts by scholars like Rhys Davids not only brought to light Buddhism's dogma-free insistence on rational inquiry rather than blind faith as the basis of practice; they also made the teachings available to the native literati. As elsewhere in the colonised world, this western appreciation gave the westernised, native practitioner a new perspective of his own belief system, and a desire to return it to its "original" form. Today, Theravada scholarship is characterised by its emphasis on the rational, ethical, non-dogmatic, non-ritualistic, and ethnicity-free nature of Buddhism as a way of life, not as a religion (see, for example, the 1958 UNESCO publication, *Buddhism and the race question* by G. P. Malalasekera & K. N. Jayatilleke).

Western ideas and perspectives have also had an impact on the development of the both western and eastern studies of Mahayana Buddhism. During the nineteenth century, European, and especially Anglo-German, interest was focused on the Theravada because the Pali texts evince an approach of rational inquiry that was in tune with the science-oriented, positivistic worldview then dominant in Europe. Most Europeans at the time were convinced that the Pali texts contain the "original" teachings of the Buddha because they read very much like well-ordered and structured teaching modules, each *sutta* devoted to a specific topic; and generally they give the impression of historical realism. In contrast to the Pali texts, the Mahayana texts are voluminous, often untidy, compilations of dialogues not only between Buddha and his interlocuters, but also among his senior disciples.[8] The tone and style, which vary from volume to volume, range from the paradoxical and the auto-nugatory to the parabolic and the fabulous. To most westerners of the time, these bewildering characteristics were an indication that the texts were apocryphal corruptions of the original teachings (see B. L. Suzuki's 1938 discussion of this issue in *Mahayana Buddhism*, 1981: 21-25). Consequently, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only a few French scholars engaged themselves in translating Mahayana texts from Sanskrit and Chinese (Peiris 1973: 162-166).

According to J.W. de Jong (*A brief history of Buddhist studies in Europe and America*, 1997), there is little evidence of Anglo-American interest in the Mahayana before the Second World War. In the pre-war period, contributions to English-language studies of the Mahayana came mainly from Asian scholars. Indian scholars focused on the extant

Sanskrit texts of the Indian Mahayana, producing works such as J. K. Nariman's *Literary history of Sanskrit Buddhism* (1972, first published in 1919); Surendra Nath Das Gupta's "Philosophy of Vasubandhu in *Vimsatika* and *Trimsika*" in *The Indian Historical Quarterly* (1928); and Satkari Mookerjee's *The Buddhist philosophy of universal flux: an exposition of the philosophy of critical realism as expounded by the school of Dignaga* (1980, first published in 1935). Far Eastern Mahayana, especially Zen, teachings were made available to the west mainly by Japanese proponents like D. T. Suzuki. Western interest in Zen grew in the immediate post-war years, perhaps because the Pacific War experience aroused curiosity about Japanese and Chinese culture. This interest was to reach a more popular level during the Hippie movement in the 1960s, but there was generally a great deal of confusion about Zen. As Chen-Chi Chang noted in "The nature of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism" (*PEW* 6 (4) 1957: 333), "Most of the Westerners who have become interested in or are followers of Zen, after reading a few introductory books on the subject, treat Zen as a pastime and as a topic of casual conversation."

In large part, the confusion was caused by some Asian Zen propagators themselves. On the one hand, writers like D. T. Suzuki emphasised the unorthodox, "scriptureless", and "irrational" nature of Zen. An example is his book, *An introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1964, first published in 1934). On the other hand, writers like Lu K'uan Yu advocated an orthodox and even religious attitude. In his translation of the *Surangama Sutra* (1978: 178*fn*), Lu warns the reader, "Modern commentators who do not understand the Mahayana and Ch'an transmission are sincerely urged to think twice before foolishly vilifying or damning the holy teaching." Chen-Chi Chang's article mentioned above, and Hu Shih's "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: its history and method" (*PEW* 3 (1) 1953: 3-24) were written to counter this religio-mystical trend and place Zen in its philosophical, intellectual, and historical contexts.

Listings of articles by Anglo-American scholars in *Philosophy East and West* (*PEW*), the journal published by the University of Hawaii, suggest that until the 1970s, the main area of interest was Theravada Buddhism. There were, however, a few western scholars who wrote articles about aspects of Indian and Tibetan Mahayana in the 1950s, among them Edward Conze (e.g. "The ontology of the *Prajnaparamita*", *PEW* 3 1953: 117-129), Alex Wayman (e.g. "The lamp and the wind in Tibetan Buddhism", *PEW* 5 [2] 1955: 149-154), and Richard H. Robinson, (e.g. "Some logical aspects of Nagarjuna's system", *PEW* 6 [4] 1957: 291-308). This apparent dearth of Anglo-American scholarly articles on

the Mahayana may be explained by the fact that during this period, western scholars were engaged in building up the corpus of English-language Mahayana texts by translating *sutras* and *shastras* preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Japanese and Chinese, as well as earlier translations made in other European languages (e.g. French, Russian, and Polish). Evidence of this is that many translations of primary Buddhist texts, usually accompanied by explanatory commentaries and notes, were published in the first four decades after the war. By the mid-1980s, most of the major *sutras* and *shastras* used in the present study had been translated into English.

A survey of scholarly articles published from the mid-1980s onwards shows that Saussurian and Wittgensteinian linguistics, poststructuralism, intertextuality, Derridaean Deconstruction, Husserlian phenomenology, and post-Heideggerian hermeneutics, which have dominated European thought since the second half of the twentieth century, have also influenced the study of the Mahayana. With the availability of English translations of the major primary texts and the guidance of Tibetan *lamas* and Zen masters, western scholars were able to gain a better insight into Mahayana philosophy, and to perceive similarities between Mahayana philosophy and postmodern theories. Thus D. Loy's "The deconstruction of Buddhism" finds a place in Coward and Foshay's volume, *Derrida and negative theology* (1992: 227-253). To a significant degree postmodern theories gave Buddhist scholars the conceptual tools, vocabulary, and frames of reference to approach the Mahayana texts. Scholars have compared Nagarjuna's critical dialectics with Derridaean Deconstruction (e.g. I. W. Mabbett, "Naagaarjuna and Deconstruction", *PEW* 45 (2) 1995: 203-225), and his discourse on language with Wittgenstein's theory of language (e.g. N. Katz, "Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein on error" in Katz, ed. *Buddhist and Western philosophy* 1981: 306-327). Western hermeneutic frameworks have been used to evaluate the interpretive strategies used by traditional Buddhist philosophers in the past (e.g. Lopez, ed. *Buddhist hermeneutics* 1993). And Husserlian phenomenology has been used to mediate the philosophy of Vasubandhu (e.g. Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist phenomenology* 2002).

Today, the study of Buddhism is a global endeavour. In *The state of Buddhist studies in the world 1972-1997* (2000), the editors, Donald K. Swearer and Somparn Promta, divide the field of Buddhist studies into three main groups, classified according to the style of scholarship. In the first group, mainly associated with scholarship in Germany and Britain, the study of Buddhism is characterised as "an empirical, objective, critical, scientific field of inquiry grounded in the texts, languages, and traditions of a particular,

historical field of study". In the second group, usually associated with Asian Buddhist countries, Buddhist studies is characterised as "an examination of Buddhist texts and traditions by adherents of the tradition or scholars who approach the study of Buddhism primarily from the perspective of its normative truth claims". In the third group, associated with scholarly approaches in North America, the study of Buddhism is characterised as "a dynamic, methodologically eclectic, and context-sensitive field that includes normative, descriptive, analytical, and comparative approaches to a broad range of subjects" (p. ix).[9] In "Buddhist studies, Buddhist practice and the trope of authenticity" (2006), J. L Garfield raises the issue of the attitude among some Asian Buddhists that the western approaches are "inauthentic", reminding his readers that "we are in the midst of the transmission of Buddhism to the West". And Martin Baumann (2001) points out in "Global Buddhism: developmental periods, regional histories, and a new analytical perspective" (*Journal of Global Buddhism*, 2: 1-43), that the division of the study and practice of Buddhism into "postmodern" and "traditional" along geographical lines may no longer be valid since Asian Buddhist scholars are as likely to take a "postmodern" approach to Buddhism as their European counterparts, while "traditional Buddhism" is practised in the west by people of both Asian and European ancestry.

Leaving out the issue of authenticity (since no one can claim to know what the Buddha "really" taught), it has to be said that there are differences between western and eastern approaches to Buddhist studies. As Jong-in Kim (2002) argues in his essay, "The divergent understandings of Wei-Chin Buddhism and Western Buddhism", different cultures (and individuals) in different ages have tended to interpret Buddhism according to their philosophical concerns and needs (see Ch. I, 1.5.3). Thus, whereas early Chinese comparative studies of Buddhism focused on its transcendental aspects, early (i.e. nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century) western studies were concerned with its empirical and rational aspect because in the west, interest in Buddhism began as a "purely scholastic curiosity on the part of a small number of scholars concerned with its theories rather than with a wider concern of society in general". In the same way, late twentieth-century western interest in Madhyamika philosophy has focused on Nagarjuna's discourses on language rather than on his discourses on transcendental wisdom or *prajna* because of the dominance of Saussurian and Wittgensteinian linguistics in contemporaneous European thought. My own survey shows a similar Eurocentric trend in western studies of most areas of Buddhist philosophy, especially hermeneutics. An outcome of this trend is that there is relatively little English-language literature on *prajna*, hermeneutics, and epistemology, the

three areas of Buddhist thought that are of central importance to the present study. This means that there is little in Anglophone literature on Buddhism that can be directly appropriated for the theoretical framework of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. The following is a record of the research strategy I adopted to arrive at my theoretical framework.

2.3.2 Literature on ontology, function and development of *prajna*

In order to understand why *prajna* (insight or wisdom) is so important in Zen philosophy, I had first to understand the fundamentals of Buddhist cognitive theory. To do this, it was necessary to refer to Early Buddhist texts; and since Mahayana texts on Early Buddhist cognitive theory are either no longer extant or not yet translated, recourse had to be made to the Pali Canon. Indeed, according to Sungtaek Cho (2002: 429), it was through British scholarship of the Pali texts that Japanese and Korean scholars learned about Early Buddhism. The core discourse I used for my study is the *Maha Nidana* ("Great Links") *Sutta*. In the Theravada tradition, it is generally used to explain the coming into existence of all phenomena. I have used it as an explanation of the cognitive process, using for guidance Bhikkhu Nanananda's *Concept and reality in early Buddhist thought* (1971) and *The magic of the mind in Buddhist perspective: an exposition of the Kalakarama Sutta* (1974). For background information I read C. P. Ranasinghe's *The Buddha's explanation of the universe* (1957) and W.F. Jayasuriya's *The psychology and philosophy of Buddhism: an introduction to the Abhidhamma* (1976). But Nanananda's volumes were preferred because they gave me an insight into the relationship between cognition, conceptualisation, and perception. More importantly, Nanananda's study of *prapanca* (conceptual proliferation) in *Concept and reality* (1971) enabled me to understand the impact of *upadana* (the subjective, appropriative drive) and *prapanca* on reasoning, which in turn helped me to understand why *prajna*-wisdom is the preferred means of knowledge in Buddhism. Nanananda's books do not, however, explain the ontology and epistemology of *prajna*-wisdom.

The word *prajna* appears frequently in Mahayana *sutras* and *shastras* as well in modern commentaries, and it is generally acknowledged by Buddhist/Zen scholars and practitioners that it is central to Buddhist thought and practice. Yet there is relatively little scholarly literature in the English language on the ontology and epistemology of *prajna*, a situation complicated by the fact that the word *prajna* is translated in many and sometimes contradictory ways (see Ch. III, 3.4.1). Mahayana texts themselves are vague on the subject

of *prajna*. For instance, the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*, acknowledged by all scholars as the *locus classicus* of Mahayana discourse on *prajna*, offer no definition of *prajna* in terms of what exactly it is, how it works, and why it works. The philosopher most closely associated with the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* is Nagarjuna, but western scholars of Nagarjuna's philosophy have on the whole either focused on his discourses on language and his critical dialectics, or engaged in defending him against accusations of being a nihilist (e.g. V. Fatone 1981). Relatively little attention has been paid to his discourses on *prajna.*

Since I shall be discussing how I arrived at my understanding of *prajna* in Chapter III, 3.4.1 & 3.4.2, I shall briefly review the works that I consulted here. The most succinct explanation of *prajna* is given by Chr. Lindtner (1987) in *Nagarjuniana: studies in the writings and philosophy of Nagarjuna* (pp. 269-70), where it is described as basically a critical faculty that transforms into non-discriminating wisdom as soon as the subject-object polarity is destroyed. Alex Wayman's essay (in Elder, ed. 1984: 193-213), "Nescience and insight according to Asanga's *Yogacarabhumi*" is an overview in outline of the different kinds of *prajna* listed by Asanga, a fourth-century Yogacara philosopher. His contribution to the present study is his very brief explanation that *prajna* is an inborn faculty, which in its undeveloped or "natural" state is basic intelligence or the ability to discern. The explanation given by K. Venkata Ramanan (1978) in *Nagarjuna's philosophy* (pp. 115-128) is the most extensive, though somewhat disorganised. The disorganised nature of the presentation may have to do with the fact that Ramanan's book is a translation and commentary of the Chinese translation of the *Maha-Prajnaparamita Sastra*, Nagarjuna's commentary on the *Prajnaparamita Sutras,* which is not extant in Sanskrit. The usefulness of Ramanan's explanation is that it gives a clearer picture of how *prajna* is related to non-discriminating wisdom on the one hand, and yet functions with discriminating reasoning or logic as a critical faculty on the other.

D.T. Suzuki's *An introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1964) and Chen-Chi Chang's "The nature of Ch'an [Zen] Buddhism" (1957) gave insights into the experience of *prajna* in meditation. To get a better idea of the role of *prajna* in meditation, I consulted the following books: Minoru Kiyota, ed. *Mahayana Buddhist meditation: theory and practice* (1991), Nyanaponika Thera, *The heart of Buddhist meditation* (1962), Paravahera Vajranana Mahathera, *Buddhist meditation in theory and practice: a general exposition according to the Pali Canon of the Theravada School* (1975), and Wayman, Alex (trans.) *Calming the mind and discerning the real: Buddhist meditation and the middle view*. *From the Lam rim*

chen mo of Tson-kha-pa (1979). This survey of meditation methods from the various Buddhist schools showed that analytical and critical thinking is an important aspect of *vipasyana* or insight-meditation. Dan Lusthaus' discussions on *prajna* in *Buddhist phenomenology* (2002: 116-118) provided insight into the different types of mental activity involved in the development of *prajna*, for instance, analytic scrutiny, the validation of inferences, and penetrating insight. Also useful was Lusthaus' discussion (*ibid*: 244-272) of the importance of *prajna* in the various Buddhist traditions.

Nevertheless, a great deal of the information needed to complete my understanding of *prajna* had to be sourced from articles on the Internet. The most useful are recorded here. A. Low's "Waking sleep Zen and the Cloud of Unknowing" (1998: 7) provided the etymology of the word "*prajna*". Judy Lief's "The sharp sword of *prajna*" (2002) drew my attention to its illusion-cutting capability, enabling me to see its connection to the so-called Diamond Sutra, translated by Lu K'uan Yu (*Vajracchedika-prajna-paramita sutra*, 1985*)* and Thich Nhat Hanh (*The diamond that cuts through illusion* 1992). Khentin Tai Situ Rinpoche's "The six *paramitas*: *phar-phyin-drug*" (no date) on http://www.rinpoche.com/teachings/paramitas.htm [1 March 2006] contributed greatly to my understanding of the stages of *prajna* development. His explanation, given in a matter-of-fact way, enabled me to place all the different descriptions of *prajna* in the framework of the three stages he outlined.

In addition to Buddhist discourses on insight, some books on Sufi, Christian, and western "secular" experiences of insight were read for comparison. These include C. W. Ernst (1994) *Words of ecstasy in Sufism*, I. Almond (2003), "The shackles of reason: Sufi/Deconstructive opposition to rational thought", *PEW*, 53 (1): 22-38, K. Armstrong (1993) *A history of God: the 4000-year quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, H. J. Eysenck (1995) *Genius: the natural history of creativity*, E. De Bono (1979) *Practical thinking*, and H. Simon and K. Gilmartin's (1973) "A simulation of memory for chess positions" (*Cognitive Psychology* 5: 29-46).

2.3.3 Literature on the Zen approach to texts

For an understanding of the Zen approach to texts, I turned first of all to western studies of Buddhist hermeneutics. Western scholarship in this field is a relatively recent development. Nathan Katz noted in "*Prasanga* and deconstruction: Tibetan hermeneutics and the yaana

controversy" (1984) that the sum total of Western studies of Buddhist hermeneutics consisted of three journal articles: a pioneering study by Etienne Lamotte first published in French in 1949; a study by Robert A. F. Thurman in 1978[10]; and an analysis of tantric hermeneutics by Professor Steinkellner in 1978[11]. Katz's article seems to mark a turning point in western interest in Buddhist hermeneutics, however. In the same year that it was published, a conference on Buddhist hermeneutics was held, leading to the publication of *Buddhist hermeneutics* (first published in 1988, reprinted in 1993) which has become a basic text for scholars interested in the subject. As the main title of Katz's article ("*Prasanga* and deconstruction") suggests, an important factor contributing to the interest in Buddhist hermeneutics in the 1980s was the impact of poststructuralist Deconstruction and post-Heideggerian hermeneutics on European thought.

Buddhist hermeneutics (Donald S. Lopez, ed. 1993) is a collection of essays on the various hermeneutic strategies traditionally and historically used by different Buddhist schools in India, Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea. In his introduction Lopez speaks of the "relative dearth of hermeneutical strategies in Buddhism when compared to the Jewish and Christian traditions" (*ibid:* 2) and explains that the book is "devoted to an evaluation of the dynamic relationship that existed between Buddhist scriptures and their traditional exegetes" (*ibid:* 10). Lopez' remarks not only reveal his Eurocentric perspective, but also reflect the basic western approach to Buddhist hermeneutics. The *sutras* are viewed as "scriptures" or religious texts (comparable to the Bible), and the traditional commentaries are viewed as the "interpretations" of the texts by past Buddhist scholar-practitioners (comparable to Bible scholar-clerics). The term, "Buddhist hermeneutics", is thus defined as the interpretive strategies used in traditional commentaries; and the study of Buddhist hermeneutics is the evaluation of these strategies. The object of study is not the "scriptures" themselves, but the interpretive strategies, which are basically critiqued from the perspectives of a variety of western critical and hermeneutic theories.

Although scholars like M. Kapstein (see next paragraph) have noted that Buddhism is "fundamentally a hermeneutic endeavour", most western scholars seem reluctant to embrace the view. M. M. Broido (in Lopez, *ibid:* 83), for instance, asserts that a distinction has to be made between the subject-matter being interpreted and the method of interpretation "for otherwise there will be nothing to prevent the study of Buddhist hermeneutics from becoming the study of absolutely anything within Buddhism". The same view is expressed by Katz in the 1984 article mentioned above (*"Prasanga* and

deconstruction"). He acknowledges that Buddhism is "a very unique case in the history of religion" in that the founder "is himself aware of exegetical and hermeneutical difficulties regarding his own doctrines" (Katz 1984: 192), but argues that to accept that hermeneutics is "the essence of the Buddhist path" would amount to "reducing discrete fields of inquiry such as psychology or epistemology into hermeneutics" (*ibid:* 189). The current trend in the west seems to be towards comparative hermeneutics. J. P. Kimber's "Actualizing the fundamental point of interpretation in hermeneutics & Zen Buddhism" (2006), for example, compares a Zen master's use of the *koan* with Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion".

Of the essays in *Buddhist hermeneutics* the only ones useful for the present study were E. Lamotte's "Assessment of textual interpretation in Buddhism" (*ibid:* 29-46) and M. Kapstein's "Mi-pham's theory of interpretation" (*ibid:* 149-174). Lamotte's essay is a translation and an explanation of the *Catuhpratisaranasutra* (Sutra of the Four Refuges or Reliances), which presents the four basic guidelines to reading *sutras*. Kapstein's essay is a presentation of the discourses on interpretation of texts by Mi-pham, a nineteenth-century Tibetan scholar and philosopher, and, as mentioned, it concludes with the observation that Buddhism is "fundamentally a hermeneutic endeavour". Neither of these essays shows how the traditional theories of interpretation are applied in practice; the focus is on the theoretical. However, they are important for the present study for two reasons. First, they gave me a new perspective on my personal approach to the *sutras*. In my previous reading of *sutras*, I had routinely found in them analytical methods and critical tools that I used to help me analyse, deconstruct, and come to terms with my personal experiences and problems. I now realised that this practice can be regarded as a hermeneutic practice. Secondly, Lamotte's essay gave me an insight into the connection between the reading of *sutras* and the development of *prajna*. These insights led me a closer examination of the *sutras* as treatises on hermeneutics.

The four main Mahayana *sutras* I read were the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* (henceforth *Prajnaparamitas*; trans. E. Conze, 1979), selected because they are closely associated with Nagarjuna and the Madhyamika school; the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra* (henceforth *Samdhinirmocana*; trans. J. Powers, 1994), selected because it is often associated with Vasubandhu and the Yogacara school; the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (henceforth *Avatamsaka*; translated by T. Cleary as *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, 1996), selected because it is closely associated with the Hua Yen school; and the *Lankavatara Sutra* (henceforth *Lankavatara*; trans. Suzuki, 1978), selected because different aspects of its doctrines have

been associated with all the above schools of thought. All these *sutras* contain more or less the same teachings, but with different emphases. Based on my reading, I would say that broadly speaking, the *Prajnaparamitas* emphasise the "emptiness" or indeterminacy of language; the *Samdhinirmocana* emphasises the workings of the mind; the *Avatamsaka*, especially the last book or chapter, the *Gandavyuha*, emphasises the buddhic wisdom that underlies, unifies and identifies the seeker of enlightenment with the diversity of beings who guide him on the path, including the final Buddha who is found; and the *Lankavatara* emphasises how one should approach the teachings (or texts). Most students of Buddhism find a particular *sutra* or set of *shastra* that seems to answer their questions; and this single work then forms the core of their study, from which the research spreads out. In my case, I found the *Lankavatara* most suitable for the purpose of the present study.

The *Lankavatara* is one of the most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism. D. T. Suzuki is credited with bringing it to the general attention of western scholars with his full[12] English translation of the *sutra*, first published in 1932, and his commentary on it, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*, which appeared in the same year. Compared with the *Samdhinirmocana*, which contains more or less the same teachings, the *Lankavatara* is an extremely untidy piece of work. In the Introduction to his translation (Suzuki 1978, xi), Suzuki states, "…the *Lanka* is a memorandum kept by a Mahayana master, in which he put down perhaps all the teachings of importance accepted by the Mahayana followers of his day. He apparently did not try to give them any order." According to Suzuki, the *sutra* is representative of the "Mind-Only" philosophy which is understood by many scholars as a form of "idealism" in that it asserts that consciousness is the only reality, and that all external reality as well as the names and forms of experience are only perceptions, or manifestations of consciousness. The *sutra* has received much scholarly attention, but scholars who study it are generally more interested in doctrinal matters, e.g. B. E. Brown's *The Buddha nature: a study of the tathagatagarbha and alayavijnana* (1991).

From my perspective as a student of literature, there are many aspects of the *Lankavatara* that reinforce my impression that it is a discourse on how to approach texts. The *sutra* is particularly rich in auto-commentaries giving the "authorial" view of how the *sutra* should be read; and a recurring theme is that of language, especially in terms of words and their meanings. However, its most striking feature is the opening narrative, which reads to me like a discourse on the phenomenology of reader response (my reading of the narrative is provided in Chapter IV, 4.2). On encountering what I considered the narrative's

core message, namely that intersubjective understanding is achieved through the dissolution of the subject-object polarity, I turned to Vasubandhu's philosophical investigations of perception, the subject-object polarity, and the impact of language on consciousness and intersubjectivity to fill the gaps in my understanding of the relationship between the Zen approach to texts and the development of *prajna*.

Subsequent to my reading and exploration, I was able to find confirmation for my impressions of the "literary" nature of the *Lankavatara* in Edward Hamlin's article, "Discourse in the *Lankavatarasutra*" (1983), in which he approaches the *sutra* from a phenomenological standpoint and with the intention of examining its "internal semantics", focusing on its "linguistic strategies", its "methods", its "philosophical style", and "ultimately, … its implicit assumptions about the uses of language" (*ibid*: 270). Hamlin begins his examination, as I did, with an analysis of the opening narrative. He arrived at more or less the same conclusions I had reached through my reader-response approach, namely that the *sutra*'s linguistic or rhetorical strategies "directly condition our reading of what they have written" (*ibid*: 268), suggesting that the *sutra* is not meant to be regarded as "a collection of Mahayana theories … but as a unique linguistic *production* [sic], with all the subtleties and rhetorical nuances entailed by that word" (*ibid*: 270)[13]. Where we diverge is that he relates the narrative to the teachings in the rest of the *sutra*, and I relate it to Vasubandhu's discourses.

Vasubandhu was a fourth-century Yogacara philosopher. Compared to the Madhyamika, the writings of the Yogacara have received less scholarly attention, although there is evidence of growing interest since the 1990s. One reason for the lesser—and later—interest among western scholars may be that Yogacara philosophical explorations are both complex and diverse. Within the Yogacara tradition, there are several prominent thinkers, chief among them are Vasubandhu, Asanga, his older half-brother, Dignaga, Vasubandhu's disciple, and Dharmakirti, Dignaga's disciple. The common theme running through their writings is the study of the mind and consciousness, which is why the Yogacara is sometimes referred to as the Vijnanavada ("Way of Consciousness"). However, the trends of their explorations are sufficiently different for scholars to speak of three Yogacara "sub-traditions" or "schools" (e.g. Mookerjee, 1935). The Russian scholar, Evgueni Tortchinov (1999), defines the Asanga sub-tradition as "psychological idealism"; the Vasubandhu sub-tradition as the "Buddhist phenomenology of consciousness", and the Dignaga-Dharmakirti sub-tradition as the "logico-epistemological branch of the Yogacara".

Another possible reason for the relative lack of progress in western Yogacara studies is that Yogacara theories, especially those of Vasubandhu, have attracted controversies among Chinese scholars in the past and among scholars today. Yoshifumi Ueda's article "Two main streams of thought in Yogacara philosophy" (*PEW* 17 1967: 155-165) provides useful insight into the nature of these controversies in Chinese understandings of Yogacara. A major controversy has to do with Vasubandhu's unusual theory that what we perceive is not the "thing-in-itself" out there but only an ideated "impression" (*vijnapti*) constructed by our minds (see Chapter IV, 4.2.6). This theory was interpreted by early modern scholars as a form of "idealism", by which they mean that Vasubandhu denies the existence of things outside our mind (see, for example, S. N. D. Gupta 1928). This interpretation has been challenged by scholars in more recent years; among Wayman (1965 & 1996); Kochumuttom (1999); and Lusthaus (2002). An outcome of these divergent views is that contemporary literature on Vasubandhu tends to centre on the controversy.

As in the case of the Madhyamika, developments in twentieth-century European thought, especially phenomenology, have made Yogacara texts more accessible to contemporary readers. In *Buddhist phenomenology* (2002), Dan Lusthaus uses the vocabulary of western phenomenology to mediate Yogacara philosophy, but is careful to emphasise that similarities do not indicate identity. For the student of western literary theory, Lusthaus' volume is useful in that it explains basic concepts of western phenomenology and the theories of phenomenological thinkers such as Levinas who dealt with the issue of intersubjectivity. Lusthaus' book is a study of the *Ch'eng Wei Shih Lun*, a Chinese translation of Vasubandhu's *Trimsika* (Treatise in Thirty Verses), but it also provides a comprehensive survey of Buddhist doctrines, and offers very erudite and useful expositions of the development of philosophical ideas in the main schools of Buddhism. A brief survey of western studies in Yogacara is given in the Preface to *Buddhist Phenomenology*; but Lusthaus has also written a more comprehensive retrospective of western Yogacara scholarship in the twentieth century (in Shen V. and Wang, W. S. eds. *Chinese philosophy beyond the twentieth century,* 2001).

In view of the different interpretations of Vasubandhu's ideas, it is necessary to get a more determinate picture by studying his philosophy from the perspectives of his disciples (principally Dignaga and Dharmakirti) who examined his ideas and developed them into more formal theories in later centuries. In this area, Satkari Mookerjee's *The Buddhist philosophy of universal flux: an exposition of the philosophy of critical realism as*

expounded by the school of Dignaga (1980) remains a useful reference, even though it was first published in 1935, because it painstakingly explains later-Yogacara theories of perception, language and logic. Lin Chen-kuo's two articles on aspects of the Yogacara, "The magic of consciousness: an inquiry into the concept of object in Yogacara Buddhism" (1991) and "Encounter with the imagined other: a Yogacara-Buddhist critique" (1996) provide scholarly insights into the Vasubandhu's theories of perception. The 1991 article has been particularly helpful in contributing to my understanding of Vasubandhu's and Asanga's theory of the store-consciousness and the nature of the habit- and memory-seeds, theorised as being the contents of the store-consciousness (see Ch. IV, 4.3).

Scholars agree that many Yogacara texts have yet to be translated. To date, Stefan Anacker's *Seven Works of Vasubandhu* (1984) is the only English translation of all Vasubandhu's shorter writings, and I have used it as the basic text for my study, comparing his translations when necessary with other English translations of Vasubandhu's shorter works, a number of which are available on the Internet, as well as Thomas Kochumuttom's translations of four of Vasubandhu's works in *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience* (1999). My reliance on Anacker's work is based partly on its larger number of translated works, which enables a more comprehensive view of Vasubandhu's thinking; and partly on Anacker's explanatory notes, which clarify points that are important for my understanding of Vasubandhu's views on the impact of words on consciousness and intersubjective influence. As I shall be discussing Vasubandhu's philosophy in some detail in Chapter IV, 4.3, I shall not review it here.

2.3.4 Zen hermeneutic aids selected for the Zen-based Reading Procedure

Four hermeneutic aids used in the development of *prajna* were identified as being useful for the Zen-based Reading Procedure. Two are from Indian Mahayana discourses. They are the *Catuhpratisaranasutra* ("Four Refuges") guidelines for reading *sutras* (see 2.3.2), and Vasubandhu's "Three Natures" tool for arriving at an understanding of the ultimate nature of experience through the analysis of perceptions. The other two are from Hua Yen philosophical discourses. They are the Principals and Satellites and the Ten Time Frames. These concepts and tools are described in Chapter IV, 4.5; and how they are adapted for the Zen-Based Reading Procedure is explained in Chapter V, 5.2 and 5.4.

2.3.5 Significance of research findings

A significant finding from my research in Buddhist philosophy is that there has been hardly any scholarly work done in the specific areas that I am exploring, namely the relationship between the development of *prajna* and the Zen approach to texts. Perhaps the more significant finding is that there are basically two approaches to Mahayana studies. One is the "outsider" approach, where Mahayana texts are studied as "containers" of doctrines, which are then approached from the perspective of western methods of scholarship. The other is the "insider" approach, where the texts are read on their own terms, as types of meta-fiction[14], fictions that deliberately reveal their fictionality to draw attention to the nature of fiction. To that extent, they can be said to teach a system of "reverse hermeneutics" (see Ch. IV, 4.4). In the present study, I have taken the "insider" approach to arrive at my theoretical framework for the Zen-based Reading Procedure.

2.4 FRAME OF REFERENCE: WESTERN LITERARY THEORY

Research in the area of western literary theory constitutes the "frame of reference" for the Zen-based Reading Procedure. The intention of this research is not to compare western and Zen theories and philosophies, but to determine whether there is any western approach similar to what I have conceptualised for the Zen-based Procedure. The research is limited to reading theories in phenomenological hermeneutics and general reading methodologies.

2.4.1 Western phenomenological theoretical approaches to texts

Special attention was paid to post-Husserlian phenomenological hermeneutics because some concepts and terms used in its theoretical discourses seem similar to those used in Zen discourses. Two examples of such similarities are Ricoeur's view, expressed in several of his works (e.g. *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: essays on language, action and interpretation,* 2005: 182*ff*), that reading is appropriative; and Iser's statement (*The act of reading: a theory of aesthetic response*, 1980: 140) that perception is the result of the dissolution of the subject-object polarity. For a general understanding of western traditional and post-Husserlian phenomenological hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and method* (1989) and *Philosophical hermeneutics* (1976) were read; as were Ricoeur's *Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning* (1976), and *Time and narrative, Volume 3.* (1985). Ricoeur's *Oneself as another* (1994) was read to determine how the

issues of subjectivity and empathy are addressed in phenomenological hermeneutic philosophy. Iser's *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (1993) and *The Range of Interpretation* (2000) provide additional information on the importance of the imagination in the making of meaning, as well as various approaches to interpreting texts in the west.

The research shows that the theoretical writings of the phenomenological hermeneutists resemble Zen discourses in that they acknowledge the importance of empathy, insight, and the need to somehow surmount the reader-text polarity. However, unlike Zen discourses, they do not provide a clear methodology to attain these desiderata for textual understanding. The research also shows that similarities in words and concepts are superficial. There are major differences between basic western and Zen assumptions about the mind, how it works, the nature of perception, and the impact of words on consciousness. The same conclusions were drawn from a reading of David Bleich's *Subjective Criticism* (1978). Since it is not the aim of this study to compare western and Zen epistemologies, I shall not go into the details. However, in Chapter IV (4.2.4), I touch on some similar-sounding issues (i.e. subjectivity, imagination, and the subject-object polarity) to highlight the radical difference between Zen and western approaches to texts, with specific reference to aesthetic response and subjective reader response.

2.4.2 Western reading methodologies

A few books and articles on reading methodology were read. These include S. H. Olsen's *The structure of literary understanding* (1978), Montgomery and Martin's *Ways of reading: advanced reading skills for students of English literature* (1992), and David Birch's *Language, literature and critical practice: ways of analysing text* (1993). Most of the books and articles were found to be theoretical. Olsen's book was useful in providing information on common western approaches to texts. Although Birch's volume includes a reading demonstration, it is a reading of a poetic text. On the whole, it was found, as in the case of Iser's *The implied reader* (1978) that the author-critics' reading methodologies and how they arrive at their insights have to be inferred from their sample readings. This alerted me to the possible benefit of having a step-by-step guide to reading a text that can stand on its own without the mediation of its originator.

In connection with step-by-step guides, mention should be made of Hans Robert Jauss's "Three Stages of Interpretation" reading methodology, which has a definite procedure, and which Jauss explains and demonstrates in Chapter 5 of *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (1999: 139-85). Jauss describes the first reading as the "aesthetically perceptual" reading, when one notes and appreciates the "construction of the text, the suggestion of its rhythm, and the gradual achievement of its form" (141). The second reading is the "retrospectively interpretive", which involves making decisions about how to interpret aspects of the text that are ambiguous. The third stage of interpretation is the "historical" reading, which reconstructs the "horizon of expectation" of a text at the time of its first appearance and then follows the history of its reception up to the time of the reading in the present. Jauss's methodology differs from the Zen-based Reading Procedure's 3-Reading Strategy in two ways. First, Jauss's procedure is modelled on the doctrine formulated during the European Enlightenment that the hermeneutic process is a unity of understanding, interpretation, and application; whereas the Zen-based Strategy is based on a synthesise-investigate-validate format. Secondly, Jauss's methodology is for the reading of poetic texts, while the Zen-based Procedure is for the analysis of fiction.

2.4.3 Use of Zen frameworks for western literary analysis

In the 1990s three studies were published that use Buddhist or Zen philosophical frameworks for literary analysis. A brief review of their approaches is given here. James Howe's *A Buddhist's Shakespeare: affirming self-deconstructions* (1994) analyses nine Shakespeare plays from a Buddhist perspective. Pointing out the parallels between postmodern and Buddhist deconstruction, Howe explains that Buddhist deconstruction aims at eradicating illusions about the permanent nature of the self and the world; and then finds evidence of comparable self-deconstruction in Shakespeare's plays. John G. Rudy's *Wordsworth and the Zen mind: the poetry of self-emptying* (1996) aims to demonstrate the "universality" of the Zen experience. In the first two parts the book he uses Zen concepts to provide "a Zen context" for the "spirituality" of Wordsworth's poetry, and in the third part, he uses Wordsworth's poetry to explain the "four dominant moods"[15] of Japanese Zen aesthetic response. Rajnish K. Mishra's *Buddhist theory of meaning and literary analysis* (1999) has a useful exposition of the different theories of meaning in Indian philosophy; but his application of Buddhist structural analysis of cognition to Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* is less than clear. In concept and approach these three applications of Zen philosophy to literary analysis differ from the Zen-based Reading Procedure. The main difference is that

they seem to be making use of the writings of Shakespeare and Wordsworth to elucidate Zen philosophy, an approach comparable to Nor Faridah's Islamic approach to Shakespeare, (2.2.1.1). Another difference is that they use Zen/Buddhist frameworks for the analysis of poetry and poetic drama. To date, as far as I know, no study (apart from mine) has been made to derive a Zen theoretical framework for the analysis of fiction.

2.5 TEXTS ANALYSED IN THIS STUDY

The two texts analysed in this study are Lloyd Fernando's *Scorpion orchid* (1992), first published in 1976; and Lee Kok Liang's *Flowers in the sky* (1991), first published in 1981. These two novels have been selected for analysis for several reasons. One reason is that *Flowers in the sky* (henceforth *Flowers*) is a Zen-influenced text while *Scorpion orchid* (henceforth *Scorpion*) is not. This enables me to demonstrate the trans-ethnic applicability of the Zen-based Reading Procedure. Equally important is the fact that these two novels are critically problematic. They were the first two Malaysian novels in English to appear after the race riots in May 1969 and the subsequent institution of the New Economic Policy, the enforcement of the National Language Policy, and the hierarchical classification of Malaysian literatures into "national", "regional", and "sectional" (see 2.2). During the 1970s, the public discussion of "sensitive issues" relating to these policies was prohibited by law; specifically the special rights for the Malays, the status of Malay as the national language, and the marginalisation of non-Malay cultures and languages. Remarkably, these issues are not avoided in the novels, but are ostensible parts of the narratives. This has led some critics to interpret the novels as contesting the policies; and other critics to interpret them as advocating conciliation and social harmony. The divergence in the responses to the novels is an inducement to study them more closely.

2.5.1 Lloyd Fernando's *Scorpion orchid* and past readings of the novel

Despite its brevity (158 pages), *Scorpion* is a complex, dense, multi-layered, and multi-voiced narrative. The story is set in Singapore in the early 1950s, historically a period of political upheaval during which Singapore had to remain a Crown Colony while the neighbouring Federation of Malaya could look forward to political independence. The story centres on four University students and close friends—a Malay, an Indian, a Chinese, and a Eurasian—and Sally, the prostitute they share. Against a backdrop of political unrest, complicated by fear of interethnic violence, the four friends are forced to examine their

positions, roles, and relevance in the new political system being conceptualised in anticipation of the end of British rule and the rise of Malay dominance. When Peter, the Eurasian, is attacked by unknown assailants for what he thinks are race-related reasons, and when Sally, left unprotected in the city during a riot, is raped by a "multi-racial" gang, the five main characters find their friendship strained. With a growing consciousness of their ethnic differences, they begin to drift apart as one by one they retreat to what they perceive to be their ethnic home ground.

As I shall be discussing past readings in greater detail after the Zen-based analysis of *Scorpion* in Chapter VI, I shall give only a brief overview here. Since its appearance in 1976, *Scorpion* has been praised by critics for the candour and intelligence with which it presents the socio-political and cultural realities of Malaysia's multi-ethnic society and deals with the issues that inform the nation's discourse on race, culture, language, and citizenship. While the text has been dealt with in scholarly articles and in parts of surveys of aspects of Malaysian literature, there has been to date only one detailed study—a 1996 doctoral dissertation comparing *Scorpion* with K. S. Maniam's *In a far country* in terms of styles of minority discourse. Most critics assume that the novel's setting—socio-political upheaval in Singapore in the early 1950s—is a metaphor for the socio-political situation in post-1969 Malaysia. The critics also assume that the novel reflects the dominant view that social conflicts in Malaysia are rooted in the differences and lack of understanding among the various ethnic groups; and that as a literary work with social critical intent, the novel speaks from the margin, contesting not so much western imperialism as the "neo-colonialism" of the post-1969, Malay-dominated government. From the latter half of the 1980s onward, when Postcolonial Theory became commonplace in the study of Malaysian literature in English, criticism of the novel has been dominated by the theme of marginalisation, which is regarded as the cause of interethnic conflict. Critics are generally divided into two groups: those who derive from the novel a message of guarded optimism, and those who derive from it a message of despair.

Among those who read the novel in a more positive light are Abdul Majid Nabi Baksh (1981), Koh Tai Ann (1986), Zawiah Yahya (1988), Zalina Mohd Lazim (1996), Ganakumaran Subramaniam (1996), and M. E. Vethamani (1996). On the whole, these critics interpret the text as offering "solutions" to the problem of inter-ethnic conflict; and these solutions are seen as reflecting a conciliatory (though not necessarily subservient) attitude toward the problem of marginalisation and its inherent divisiveness. In accordance

with this guarded optimism, the two indeterminate characters, Sally and Tok Said, are perceived as symbols of the land and its spirit respectively, functioning together to remind the people of what is required for true social harmony. Thus Sally represents loving generosity and openness to the ethnic other, and Tok Said represents the awareness that the failure to appreciate the country and its diverse peoples will lead to conflict and violence.

Among the critics who derive pessimistic readings are U. Parameswaran (1979), K. S. Maniam (1987), Shirley Geok-Lin Lim (1988, 1989, 1993), and Bernard Wilson (2000). For these critics the novel offers no solution to the ethnic divisions. Any solution is perceived to lead either to bloody conflict or to a loss of identity for the non-Malays or—in the worst-case scenario—both. From this perspective, Sally and Tok Said are interpreted as symbols of solutions that are in fact not solutions, and therefore part of the problem. Sally signifies the racial fusion (or the loss of the ethnic identities of the marginalised races), the impossibility of which is demonstrated by her rape. Tok Said, on the other hand, represents the irrational force that demands racial fusion regardless of the cost to the individual.

2.5.2 Lee Kok Liang's *Flowers in the sky* and past readings of the novel

Flowers is set in an unnamed city on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia and the fictional present is assumed to be the late 1970s to 1980. The narrative centres on three events that occur over two days in the life of a successful surgeon of Sri Lankan descent, known as Mr. K. The first event determines the time-frame of the narrative's present. It begins at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday, when K. performs a herniotomy on a Chinese Buddhist monk, the Venerable Hung; and ends at 10 a.m. the following Monday when Hung leaves the clinic. The second event occurs on Thursday. A statue of the Hindu god, Ganesh, has been washed up overnight on the shore directly in front Mr. and Mrs. K.'s home, and their garden is invaded by a crowd of devotees who will not leave until the propitious time of sunset. This brings them into conflict with Mrs. K., who wants them to leave immediately. The regular police are called in and later, by mistake, the riot squad headed by Inspector Hashim. After a series of comic incidents, the matter is finally resolved through Hashim's quickwittedness and diplomatic skill. The third event takes place at the clinic on the same day as the Ganesh incident, when Mr. K. performs bowel surgery on Ah Looi, a 30-year-old woman cancer patient, who dies later that evening. The narrative ends with Hung's departure in his Mercedes with the registration number 666, which to Mr. K. is the sign of the devil but to Hung signifies "Joy, Joy, Joy" in Cantonese. The novel thus closes on a note of

reconciliation, but with the ironic reminder that the cultural gulf between Hung and K. is as vast as before.

Flowers has been discussed by critics in short articles and essays, but to date has received little serious critical attention. One of the reasons may be that it is profoundly informed by Zen, and can seem puzzling to readers who do not have more than a passing acquaintance with the thought system. A consequence of this is that the reader who does know something about Zen is often mystified by the comments made by critics. Harrex (1982) and Shirley Lim (1988) note that the author was influenced by Zen, but do not appear to have understood Zen well enough to integrate it in their critiques of the novel. Only Kirpal Singh (in Quayum & Wick, 2001: 204-11) shows an understanding of the novel's "Buddhist or Hindu" vision, which indicts "all who would have us believe that fixed worldviews are necessary for our spiritual well-being" (210); but he does not analyse the novel in depth.

As in the case of *Scorpion*, most readings of *Flowers* are based on the assumption that the novel's ironic treatment of inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-linguistic encounters in Malaysian life implies an acceptance of the dominant view that Malaysian society is divided by communal differences, tensions and conflicts. Critics writing from the mid-1980s onward take on the margin-versus-centre rhetoric of Postcolonial theory and Diaspora discourse. Among them are John Barnes (1985, reprinted in Quayum & Wicks 2001: 184-190), Sharilyn Wood (1988, reprinted in Quayum & Wicks 2001: 191-203), Shirley Lim (1988, reprinted in Quayum & Wicks 2001: 126-135), Wong Phui Nam (1991), Chin Woon-Ping (1991), K.S. Maniam (1993), and Koh Tai Ann (2002). A major problem in many of these readings is that the critics tend to analyse the novel in terms of binaries. The fact that the novel's Zen perspective does not allow this dualistic vision is then judged to be a failing on the writer's part. K.S. Maniam (1993: 192), for example, sees the depiction of Hung and Mr. K. as an exploration of the conflict between "idealism and corruption" and judges that the author "does not successfully resolve this two-way stretch in a man's life". There is also a tendency for critics to approach the novel with preset values and then take the author to task for not living up to those values. Thus Shirley Lim (in Quayum & Wicks 2001: 131): "While it is unfair to ask that a writer be serious when he means to be comic, nonetheless, it must be said that Lee's depiction of Hindu communal faith in action is shallow, glib, and facile." Yet the same incident is viewed by K.S. Maniam (1993: 194) as a "diversion" that is "deliberately sketched in to provide a contrast in the quality of different

men's approach to fame, success and spiritual satisfaction". Such divergences in viewpoint invite a re-investigation of the novel with the Zen-based Reading Procedure.

2.6 SUMMARY

The literature reviewed defines the scope of the study, the problems to be addressed, and the strategies that have to be adopted to address them. The review of the discourse on the Malaysian quest for local, tradition-based critical theories shows there is room in local literary criticism for a Zen-based Reading Procedure, provided that the Procedure can be demonstrated to be culturally neutral and trans-ethnically applicable. The review of the literature on Zen philosophy shows that there is relatively little western scholarship on the ontology and epistemology of *prajna*, the development of *prajna*, and the Zen approach to texts. To derive a theoretical framework for the Zen-based Procedure, I have to adopt an "insider" approach, reading the primary texts (*sutras* and *shastras*) for their meta-fictional intent rather than their doctrinal content. The research into western literary theories and reading methodologies shows there is currently no reading methodology resembling the Zen-based Reading Procedure in concept and design. Finally, the review of the two novels to be analysed and of past readings of the novels suggests that it may be useful and timely to approach the novels with the Zen-based Reading Procedure, to see if it can bring fresh insights and discover new and hidden discourses.

[1] The first pan-Malayan Malay Literary Society (later the *Persekutuan Kemajuan Pengetahuan*—Society for the Advancement of Learning) was formed in 1924 (Roff 1994: 185).

[2] For an English-language overview of the socio-political role of Malay writers in postcolonial Malaya/Malaysia, see Tham (1977, pp. 184-198) and Tham's "The politics of literary development in Malaysia" (1981), reprinted in Quayum and Wicks 2001, pp. 38-59.

[3] "Mana Sikana" is the pen-name of Dr. Abdul Rahman Napiah.

[4] Source: http://tehranifaisal.blogspot.com/2006_07_30_tehranifaisal_archive.html [12 November 2006].

[5] http://www.esastera.com/best/november04/artikel/05.htm [3 November 2006].

[6] "*Barat kini, terutama dalam tahun-tahun 1970-an dan 1980-an, memang ghairah mengembangkan teori kesusasteraan. Bahkan ada teori yang terasa eksotik, sama eksotiknya dengan perkembangan sasteranya sendiri. Ia melanggar konvensi kita tentang ilmu. Ia, sebagai yang ditemui dalam perkembangan dekonstruksionisme, terasa tidak punya sistem lagi. Terasa ada permainan, yang dianggap tidak serius, yang bertentangan dengan dunia ilmu yang selama ini dianggap serba serius*." http://kassimahmad.blogspot.com/2006_01_01_archive.html [3 November 2006].

[7] European interest in Indian texts dates from the seventeenth century (Nariman, 1972: 141).

[8] In the *Vimalakirtinirdesa sutra*, it is a layman who lectures to the Buddha's senior disciples.

[9] From the review by John Powers (2002), *Journal of global buddhism* 3: 36-45. http://www.globalbuddhism.org/3/powers021.htm [3 March 2003].

[10] Thurman, R. 1978. "Buddhist hermeneutics". In *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 (1): 19-39

[11] Steinkellner, E. "Remarks on Tantristic hermeneutics". In Ligeti L. ed. 1978. *Proceedings of the Csoma de Koros Memorial Symposium*. Budapest: Akademiai Kiado: 445-458.

[12] Suzuki has also translated, in collaboration with Dwight Goddard, the "epitomized" version of the *Lankavatara*, which does not include the opening narrative.

[13] Compare this remark by T. Cleary in the introduction to his translation of the Avatamsaka *sutra* (*The Flower Ornament Scripture* (1993, p. 52): "the scripture, like a Zen *koan*, has in itself a quality that forces one to work through it on its own terms or lose the effect altogether…."

[14] "Metafiction" is defined by Patricia Waugh (1993, p.2) as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text."

[15] The "four dominant moods" in Japanese aesthetics are *sabi* ("solitude and freedom"), *wabi* ("poverty"), *aware* ("impermanence"), and *jugen* ("depth").