

**MEMORY AND POST-MEMORY: THE
CONSTRUCTION OF 'HOME' AND THE TROPE
OF 'RETURN' IN ASIAN-AUSTRALIAN LIFE-
WRITINGS**

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by

SITI NOOR AISYAH BINTI HASNAN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HFD Her Father's Daughter

THR The Happiest Refugee

TFL The Family Law

TM Toyo: A Memoir

**INGATAN DAN PASCA-INGATAN: PEMBINAAN ‘RUMAH’ DAN
MAJAS ‘PULANG’ DALAM KARYA PENULISAN KEHIDUPAN ASIA-
AUSTRALIA**

ABSTRAK

Karya penulisan diaspora dan/atau transnasionalisma, memberi gambaran tentang hubungan antara ingatan dan migrasi, lebih-lebih lagi perihal yang berkait rapat dengan identiti dan pengalaman silang budaya. Namun begitu, penulisan yang membincangkan gambaran tentang masyarakat Asia-Australia masih terhad, jika dibandingkan dengan penulisan migrasi yang lain, walaupun penulisan Asia-Australia bukan lah suatu bidang yang masih baru. Perihal ini disebabkan oleh masa lalu Australia yang telah menyisihkan Asia dan masyarakatnya. Selain itu, penulisan mengenai ingatan sama ada karya fiksyen atau bukan fiksyen terfokus menerusi ingatan Holocaust. Justeru itu, kajian tentang penulisan Holocaust adalah lebih banyak dan menyeluruh jika dibandingkan dengan karya ingatan tentang tragedi yang berkaitan. Kajian mengenai ‘ingatan’ dan ‘migrasi’ (terutama sekali ‘rumah’) masih terhad, khususnya yang melibatkan generasi kedua imigran, dalam konteks karya penulisan kehidupan Asia-Australia. Maka, dengan mengaplikasikan kerangka teori sosiobudaya dan kesusasteraan ‘ingatan’, terutama sekali *collective memory* oleh Maurice Halbwach (1980), terhadap generasi pertama dan *post-memory* oleh Marianne Hirsch (1997, 2001, 2008, 2012), untuk generasi kedua, serta teori diaspora dan/atau transnasionalisma, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti gambaran ingatan (generasi pertama) dan pasca-ingatan (generasi kedua), berhubung dengan pembinaan rumah (generasi pertama dan kedua) dan majas pulang (generasi kedua). Untuk mencapai objektif kajian, saya menggunakan analisis teks, tematik dan generasi

melalui pembacaan secara teliti dua karya penulisan kehidupan oleh generasi pertama: *The Happiest Refugee* (2011), karya Anh Do, dan *Lion* (2016), karya Saroo Brierley, serta tiga karya penulisan kehidupan oleh generasi kedua: *Her Father's Daughter* (2012), karya Alice Pung, *Toyo: A Memoir* (2012), karya Lily Chan dan *The Family Law* (2016), karya Benjamin Law. Peran generasi pertama, membawa bersama mereka kenangan setelah mereka meninggalkan tempat asal. Kemudiannya, ingatan tersebut telah diturunkan kepada generasi kedua secara sadar atau tidak, justeru, secara tidak langsung, mereka terlibat dengan pasca-ingatan dan migrasi. Intihanya, rumah dan pulang bagi peran Asia-Australia dalam karya penulisan kehidupan, merupakan ideologi atau konsep yang mereka senantiasa fahami dan alami, sering kalinya dari jauh, melalui ingatan dan pasca-ingatan. Kajian ini mengusulkan tafsiran dua generasi yang berbeza, berdasarkan unsur 'ingatan' dan 'migrasi', menerusi gambaran dalam karya sastera, khususnya, karya penulisan kehidupan Asia-Australia.

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ABSTRACT

The literatures of migration or diaspora and/or transnationalism portray memory-migration nexus, particularly pertaining to identity and cross-cultural experiences. However, even though Asian-Australian literature is not a relatively new field of study, there is still a paucity of literature discussing the representations of Asian-Australians in literary writings, compared to other writings on migration, considering Australia’s past which has excluded Asia and Asians. Apart from that, it is believed that writings on memory, whether fiction or non-fiction are sparked by the memory of the Holocaust, hence, studies on Holocaust writings are more immense compared to other writings of such atrocity. In the context of Asian-Australian life-writings specifically, the study of ‘memory’ and ‘migration’ (exclusively ‘home’) is still limited, especially so with regard to second-generations. Hence, employing the frameworks of sociocultural and literary theory of ‘memory’, particularly Maurice Halbwach’s (1980) ‘collective memory’ for first-generation and Marianne Hirsch’s (1997, 2001, 2008, 2012) ‘post-memory’ for second-generation as well as theorisation of diaspora and/or transnationalism, this study aims to locate the representations of memory (first-generation) and post-memory (second-generation) in relation to the construction of home (first- and second-generation) and the trope of return (second-generation). To achieve the objective, I use textual, thematic and generational analysis as I closely read two life-writings of first-generations: Anh Do’s *The Happiest Refugee* (2011) and Saroo Brierley’s *Lion* (2016) and three life-writings of second-generations:

Alice Pung's *Her Father's Daughter* (2012), Lily Chan's *Toyo: A Memoir* (2012) and Benjamin Law's *The Family Law* (2016). First-generation characters carry a baggage of the past when they have to go through migration and, the baggage is later passed on consciously or unconsciously to the next generations who are then embedded with post-memory and migration. Therefore, this study concludes that home and return for Asian-Australian characters in selected life-writings, are rather ideological or a concept they keep making sense of, usually from afar, through memory and/or post-memory. This study offers interpretations of two different generations, of 'memory' and 'migration' which are represented in literary texts, specifically life-writings of Asian-Australians.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Introduction

In the past, Australia's 'Immigration Restriction Act' has discriminated migrations from Asia. Considering Australia's past, it has led to the scarceness of representations of Asian-Australians including their portrayals in literary writings. This thesis aims to examine the representations of memory (first-generation) and post-memory (second-generation) in relation to the construction of home (first- and second-generation) and the trope of return (second-generation) in five Asian-Australian life-writings. As selected Asian-Australian life-writings discuss migration journey, migrants and immigrants experiences, the concepts of 'migration', 'home', 'return', 'diaspora and/or transnationalism' are prominent. Apart from that, studying 'migration' is also often linked to the study of memory as one traces the history of migration and past events. The nexus of migration and memory is relevant especially in current cross-border world.

Assmann and Conrad (2010) and Creet (2011) examine the relationship between migration and memory as they believe that 'memory' is not related to just one specific place or space. Associating 'memory' to one specific place and space is complicated for those who are subjected to diaspora and/or transnationalism. Creet (2011) in her introduction, clarifies, "...contemporary theories of memory have mostly considered memory *in situ*, and place itself as a stable, unchanging environment" (p. 3). She finds it limiting to consider place as 'fixed' to a certain location especially so for those who belong to various precarious places. As much as memory itself is fluid,

changing and fragmented, migrants' and immigrants' relationships to certain place or places are also flexible and complex.

Likewise, Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004), in relation to narratives, call for the interpretations of 'memory' for one to understand migration, migrant and immigrant experiences especially those which are connected to 'transnational family' in current cross-border world. This justifies that it is relevant to look at the connection between memory and migration or specifically of 'home' and 'return' in relation to Asian-Australian migration which is represented by authors of Asian-Australian. Hence, for the background of the study, I have divided it into three subtopics, Asian-Australian migration, memory and/or post-memory and Asian-Australian literatures.

1.1.2 Asian-Australian migration

Australia has witnessed several waves of migration since the country was established. The 'White Australia Policy' or Australia's Immigration Restriction Act was established in 1901 when Australia aimed to discourage migrations from non-European countries especially Asia. 1901's 'White Australia Policy' or 'Australia's Immigration Restriction Act' disrupted migration processes and affected migrants and immigrants from Asia (on migration policy in Australia, see Collins, 2002; Jacobs, 2011; Reeves, 2010; Smith et.al, 2011). 'White Australia Policy' has made it challenging for Asians to migrate to Australia through strict language test and other implementations as Australia prioritised migration from European or Western countries. Then, it has led to the fear of 'Asians' especially 'Chinese'.

In the book, *ASEAN: Australian Immigration and the Demise of 'White Australia'* (1985), Pope and Shergold narrate further regarding Australia's government's immigration policy, the 1901's 'White Australia Policy'. They reveal

several transformations after WWII. For instance, the government abolished short-term admission for Asians and, in July 1956, they accepted some 'distinguished' Asian immigrants as well as removing the policy where non-European immigrants could not be given citizenship status. Later the 'distinguished' Asian immigrants' category was broadened to accept immigrants who were highly skilled or those who were educated. Keith Jacobs (2011), believes that, the policies involving migrants and immigrants were enhanced after Gough Whitlam, the succeeding Labour Prime Minister officially professed that aspects like colour, race and belief should not become the determinants of immigration jurisdiction, in 1972. Later, when the Act was replaced by the latest migration policy, Australia has imposed the need for immigrants to assimilate for the sake of establishing an identity as Australian.

Elsa Koleth (2010), justifies that, during the 1940s and 1950s, Australia's government initiated the need for migrants and immigrants to assimilate; it was necessary for them to learn English and to embrace its heritages as well as becoming just like mainstream Australians. On the other hand, towards the end of 1960s, government later realised the necessity to 'integrate' instead of 'assimilate' as a response to migrants' hardships. It was possible for migrants to integrate well without the need to forget their ethnic identities or their differences. Additionally, Australia's recognition of 'integration' and 'tolerant', marks the beginning of Australia's multiculturalism. Koleth further discusses multiculturalism and multicultural policies in her paper. She mentions that, in the last spans of the twentieth century, multiculturalism was seen as a concept which enunciated the growth of society's plural ethnic and cultural differences since its emergence as a foundation to act upon immigrants' necessities.

Multiculturalism has facilitated diverse aims and objectives such as, searching for shared integrity, grasping diverse identities and accepting differences, uniting the migrants, developing a 'nation' and endeavouring to succeed in sustaining a community. Nevertheless, multiculturalism and its connotation of diverse ethnic and cultural distinctions are often exposed to arguments. For instance, as multiculturalism replaces the need to assimilate, Ien Ang (1996), disapproves the idea of multiculturalism's aspiration, suggesting that it accepts and tolerates multiplicity of culture. The reality is that, multiculturalism, more often than not, further complicates racial differences.

1.1.3 Memory and post-memory

First, generally, as a term, 'memory' refers to one's remembrance of first-hand experience or information of certain event that has happened in the past. Zimmermann (2014), signifies that, "For us to recall events, facts or processes, we have to commit them to memory. The process of forming a memory involves encoding, storing, retaining and subsequently recalling information and past experiences" (para. 1). Commonly, 'memory' denotes how a person 'memorises' or 'remembers' things and how he or she recollects them later. Zimmermann also believes that, people form remembrance through senses, and it is usually 'stored' within 'short-term' capacity first before it moves to 'long-term' memory through recurrences of one's actions and sometimes, stimulus, which assists one to remember certain things better than others. As a subject, memory is usually examined within interdisciplinary frameworks.

Basically, when 'memory' came to mind especially in the past, it was always associated with science, cognitive, human's brain and laboratory experiments (see Habib et al., 2003; Sweatt, 2010; Bauer, 2012). Researchers locate 'memory' within

the circumference of the complicated system of the brain. Those who try to theorise ‘memory’ deduce that memory is stored within a slate or within a specific place in the brain and individual can visit or re-visit his or her stored memory whenever he or she feels the need to. In short, through neuroscience or neuropsychology, it is believed that, there is a storage-like part of the brain where memory is stored and re-stored or kept.

Conversely, discussing ‘memory’ and ‘brain’ complicates social and cultural researchers as they believe that memory is socially and culturally constructed, and it can be shared or experienced collectively throughout generations. Brockmeier (2010), states that, in a conventional sense, memory is a discrete capacity and it is a storage of the past. However, people’s conceptions and thoughts or philosophies with regard to memory, recollection and disremembering have altered. He justifies that,

With victims of individual and collective trauma such as the Holocaust, war, colonialism, or apartheid—have unearthed complicated narrative ways of mnemonic reconstruction and construction, the traditional model of memory as a static and stable place of storage, where past perceptions and experiences are retained and from where they can be retrieved, proved increasingly to be inadequate—in fact, obsolete (p.10).

Memory could not be treated the way it was treated in the past as a result of the aftermath of such historical and tragic events. It becomes more intricate and complex and it is flexible or fluid as it changes to suit contemporary nature of its formation and reformation.

Memory is no longer constructed on the basis of a storage where the data can be saved and recovered whenever it is needed. Thus, as for those in the social sciences and humanities, memory is more than its science and scientific values. It is socially and culturally constructed (Assmann, 2011; Brockmeier, 2010; Confino, 1997;

Halbwachs, 1980; Hirst & Manier, 2008; Kansteiner 2002). In this sense, one's remembrance is influenced by his or her surroundings and practices. Hoffman (2000) declares,

After a wave of interest in individual forms of memory and its distortions—false memory, recovered memory, post-traumatic memory—we have entered a phase of fascination with collective or group memory, which is nearly always equated with remembrance of traumatic historical events (p. 1).

She believes that there is an increasing interest in memory studies which are related to 'collective' or 'community' especially so after war and atrocity. Scholars whether social or cultural or literary usually study memory within the framework of war narratives especially prominent memories or histories from Second World War (WWII), American-Vietnam War, The Holocaust, and others, and most of the studies focus on Western conception of memory and trauma in relation to Western survivors or those who involve in the war.

Meanwhile, Bennett (2017), clarifies 'memory' as portrayal of one's past experiences. In other words, memory is more often than not, a play of representation as well as continuous construction and re-construction of past events and experiences. It is not one's exact experience or exact past event but, a construction or perhaps 'imagination' as one makes sense of 'memory' in the present instead of the past (Halbwach, 1980). One represents his or her past experiences differently as one is influenced by one's present and a lot of other factors like social, cultural, background, knowledge and, it is enhanced by the fact that memory changes throughout time and space. Similarly, Albano (2016) argues that memory is flexible since it is a 'mental representation' which is constructed when one 'remembers'. Memory requires constant construction and reconstruction and, one recollects one's memory and represents it not as it is but, as what is remembered and what is interpreted in the

present. The past and the present are thus, juxtaposed in order for one to represent or re-narrate one's memory.

Maurice Halbwach's (1980) 'collective memory' is useful when it comes to studying memory within social and cultural constructs. Halbwach believes that, more than individual or personal or autobiographical, 'collective memory' is significant as one's memory is always influenced by others. At the same time, Halbwach himself believes that memory is first and foremost, always one's own, hence, suggesting the significance of individual memory and, it is complex to distinguish between individual memory, familial memory and collective memory. Nevertheless, with the influence of sociocultural theory, memory studies are developed further through studies of memory within literary works. As sociocultural theory of memory believes that memory is socially constructed, it is somehow expedient to literary works which usually discuss social, cultural and humanity as a whole. Erll and Rigney (2006), propose the significance of literature in narrating cultural memory:

...we see literature as having three roles to play in the production of cultural memory. These roles comprise 1) literature as a medium of remembrance; 2) literature as an object of remembrance; and 3) literature as a medium for observing the production of cultural memory (p. 112).

Thus, literature and literary works are seen as central to the construction and re-construction of memory. This implies the need to examine the presentation and representation of memory in literary works whether fictions or non-fictions.

Furthermore, when it comes to 'memory' within literary works, Hirsch (1997, 2001, 2008, 2012) develops the usage of 'post-memory' instead of 'memory' as 'memory' seems to be inadequate to describe the remembrance of second-generations when she studies the life-writings of the second-generations, after the Holocaust.

Hirsch asserts that children of Holocaust victims and survivors receive their parents' and grandparents' traumatic memory of their experiences of past events. Second-generations or the-generations of post-memory or what Eva Hoffman calls 'the generations-after or the hinge generations' seem to embody first-generations' memory and trauma as if they are those who have directly experienced past events. Hirsch (1996) claims:

Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor re-created (p. 659).

She supposes that second-generation children live in close proximity to first-generation parents, hence, when their parents share their remembrances of past events, it seems that their life is then embedded with their parents' experiences and life stories, instead of their own personal experiences. Even though the generations-after are often curious to learn their parents' memories and experiences, more often than not, they are difficult to comprehend yet, those memories and experiences are that of their parents', thus, second-generations cannot 're-invent' those past events.

For Hirsch, as she studies the life-writings which describe 'post-memory' of the Holocaust, 'post-memory' is more often than not, a 'construction' or 'creative investment' instead of memory in its literal sense as she asserts, "Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (1996, p. 662). It means that second-generations receive their parents memory of past events, indirectly and, at the same time, when they narrate the memory, they do not narrate it as it is, meaning that, their post-memory is embedded with their perspectives and imaginations and, they write it in the present, creatively, in their respective life-

writings. As Hirsch's post-memory is related to literary writings or life-writings, it is useful to use 'post-memory' as a lens to explore other subjects and settings which are not necessarily portraying the Holocaust.

For this thesis, as I have mentioned migration specifically 'Asian-Australian', using the lens of memory and post-memory within literary writings, I analyse memory and post-memory which is also related to migration (specifically of 'home' and return' for the diasporic and/or transnational subjects) in the literatures by Asian-Australians.

1.1.4 Asian-Australian literature

Ien Ang (2005) asserts, Australia's xenophobic past has excluded Asians which are seen as 'the others' and, the Australians seem to 'accept' them, only because of their difference. As Australia treats 'Asian' differently, this has also impacted Asian-Australian literature in a way that Asian-Australian writers are less acknowledged and explored (Guntarik, 2013; Madsen, 2006; Ommundsen, 2012; Wan Nur Madiha Ramlan & Maimunah Abdul Kadir, 2021). In discussing Asian-Australian writings, Ommundsen (2012) believes that, "Writing 'Asian Australian literature' into being, today's scholars follow in this activist tradition, arguing that its earlier invisibility has caused critical neglect and misreading..." (p. 8). Their writings seem invisible even when they have started to write before the abolishment of the strict policy against Asian immigrants. Australia's chauvinistic past and its recent idea of implementation of multiculturalism intricate interpretations of writings by authors who are not originally from Australia or those who do not have English or British backgrounds (Khoo, 2013).

Nevertheless, Asian-Australian literature in English is not a relatively new field of study especially considering the attentions Asian-Australian authors begin to

receive with regard to their positions as writers in Australia's literary scene, particularly after the abolishment of 'White Australia Policy'. There has been a growth in the literature of Asian-Australian especially in the twenty-first century. It is growing even though at a slower rate (Khoo, 2003). There has been a significance recognition of contemporary Asian-Australian writings by writers of Asian descent (Guntarik, 2013; Khoo, 2003; Madsen, 2007) or transnational writing or literature (Jacklin, 2009; Ommundsen, 2011), and fictions about Asia and Asians especially by female writers of Asian descent (Broinowski, 2001; Ferrier, 2017). There are also researches which review Australia's multiculturalism, pertaining to cultural values and identity in literary works especially those authors who recount cultural hybridity in their fictions or non-fictions (see Aitken, 2006; Khoo, 2013; Lee, 2006; Madsen, 2007; Morris, 2008; Tan, 2003). These scholars of Asian-Australian and Asian-Australian literary studies examine the increase of diasporic writing as a category of writing by Asian-Australian authors.

Asian-Australian authors whether first-generations or second-generations have been producing literary works, fictions and non-fictions, which usually discuss diasporic subjects living in Australia and their cross-cultural experiences and assimilation into another culture. When first-generation Asian-Australian authors' writings begin to be recognised, most of their works discuss the binary between 'self' and 'other' as their Asian characters who live in Australia represent otherness; they always feel differently of themselves while trying to comprehend their 'being neither here nor there' identity (Madsen, 2006). Their protagonists are those first-generation immigrant parents who face difficulties in assimilating with a new culture or those who still maintain social or cultural ties within homeland and host land while their Australian-born children integrate well as they cannot really comprehend their parents'

past. There are also those narratives which are included under ‘migrant’s success story’ as those immigrants thrive for excellence in the new country, which is at first, always ‘alien’. ‘Migrant’s success story’ or ‘model minority writing’ usually depicts Asian-Australian protagonists who can assimilate well with Australian cultural values.

Adam Aitken (2006), claims Australian market’s demands for Asian’s ‘otherness’ and the discourse of difference since Australians are interested to acknowledge Asians’ unusual traits. For migrant or diasporic writers, they become cultural translators; they use their literary works to resist Australians’ perceptions and stereotypical assumptions of Asian diasporic subjects which are usually seen as ‘displaced’, at the same time, assimilated, yet, somehow still dissimilar to Australian. Aitken clarifies further that, since Asian nationalities and ethnicities are diverse and varied, migrant experiences should be treated differently. Hence, ‘Asian-Australian’ or the use of the hyphen cannot connote a general term as it can put ‘Asian’ and ‘Australian’ in binary opposition to one another rather than as a union.

Moreover, Sun (2018) discusses the space in between ‘Asian Australian’ through her examinations of Asian-Australian writers, including herself who try to figure out what it means to be ‘different’ in Australia. Following Rushdie, she supposes that ‘the space’ is fluid and it requires constant construction and re-construction. ‘The space’ is also a space of entanglement of portrayal, ethnicity and self-searching. Asian-Australian authors depict the ‘in-betweenness’ in their literary works; most of them are very much aware of ‘the outsider’ point-of-view as they contemplate how Australians view their ‘difference’. For instance, Sun illustrates one characters from Isabelle Li’s short stories who recognises her difference and, she keeps making sure that she retains her difference in her own private space. Sun also makes a

point that even though Asian-Australian authors are ‘put in the same box’ as they share the same ‘space’, they still portray their own experiences that are not singular yet, they make sure to acknowledge both ‘Asian’ and ‘Australian’ respectively.

Furthermore, as Asian-Australian literature is categorised under ethnic or migrant literature, one of the significant issues that literary work often depicts is migrants’ or immigrants’ search for identity in a multicultural society. Major protagonists in narratives of migration try their best to construct their own identity for the sake of having a sense of belonging or being accepted by mainstream Australians since Australia has a xenophobic history. For Australia, Pamela Graham (2013) reflects that, issues like identity, sense of belonging and citizenship notably become a centre of discussion among its community especially in the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the past twenty years, studies of Asian-Australians signify the portrayal of cultural prejudices and the politics of identity which interrupt the host country’s major cultures and economics (Kwok & Khoo, 2017). Identity becomes pertinent when those subjects try to assimilate into another culture, at the same time, acknowledging that they are different because of their ancestry. Identity also becomes a motivation for those writers including second-generations, Alice Pung and Benjamin Law; they portray their experiences, living in Australia and the need to make sense of ‘home’ and ‘return’.

1.1.5 Conclusion

In the context of Asian-Australian life-writing, this study locates the representations of memory (first-generation) and post-memory (second-generation) in relation to the construction of ‘home’ (first- and second-generation) and the trope of ‘return’ (second-generation). This study reads and analyses five Asian-Australians’ life-writings respectively: Anh Do’s *The Happiest Refugee (THR)* (2011), Saroo

Brierley's *Lion* (2016), Alice Pung's *Her Father's Daughter* (HFD)(2012), Lily Chan's *Toyo: A Memoir* (TM) (2012) and Benjamin Law's *The Family Law* (TFL) (2016). First-generation Asian-Australians leave their previous 'home' or 'homeland' and, while beginning anew, some of them still acknowledge their past experiences and a place left behind, leading to the difficulties of 'memory' and 'home'. This also causes second-generation Asian-Australians to become curious of their family's past. This inspires them to trace their ancestral and cultural roots and routes as they have accumulated post-memory or a second-hand remembrance which is often embedded with their parents' remembrance of their migratory experiences and a place left behind, especially with regard to personal and familial essence of it. As first-generation parents carry the baggage of the past when they migrate, this study is interested to observe how the baggage of the past also affects second-generation's making sense of the past and 'home', which also prompts their 'return' that is not always physical.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

First, even though Asian-Australian literature is currently not a new field of study, there is a paucity of literature discussing Asian-Australians, compared to the field of Asian-American literature or Asian-British literature. According to Tseen-Ling Khoo (2003) and Wenche Ommundsen (2012), Asian-American writing develops first and, it influences other categories including Asian-Australian writing which begins to be established during or after the 90s. Hence, studies discussing Asian literature in English by authors residing in the U.S are more immense compared to countries like Canada and Australia. Even if authors of Asian-Australian like Mena Abdullah or Chitra Fernando or any other author has begun writing as early as 1950s, only in the mid-1990s that their literary works begin to be discussed or acknowledged

by scholars of Asian-Australian studies and literary studies (see Ommundsen, 2012). In fact, in the same article, she believes that ‘Australian literature’ itself is still a new field of study. Thus, considering that Asian-American literature develops earlier than Asian-Australian literature, fictions by current Australian authors of Asian descent are read in relation to the development of Asian-American writing as a field of study (Ferrier, 2014).

Ommundsen (2011) calls for the attentions towards reading Asian-Australian literatures as ‘Australian writings’; she believes that “‘Asian American’ looms so large in this particular critical landscape that it may obscure other diasporic traditions... we can start to discern a distinct literature that deserves to come out from under the generic diasporic umbrella to be considered in its own right” (p. 503). This means that there is a need to study the interpretations of Asian-Australian writings through the lens of Asian-Australian literature as a field of study instead of following the footsteps of Asian-American writings too closely. In other words, there is a need to differentiate ‘Asian-Australian literature’ from ‘Asian-American literature’.

Additionally, through the studies of anthologies and national literature, ‘Australian literature’, Wan Nur Madiha Ramlan and Maimunah Abdul Kadir (2021), clarify that even though there are authors of diverse cultural backgrounds in Australia, ‘Asian-Australians’ texts are not present in early national anthology. They assert that by 1985, Australia has already established ‘multiculturalism’ and, there were publications of literary writings in English by Asian-Australians, therefore, it was unexpected when Asian-Australians’ literary writings were not present or inadequate in the anthology. This shows that, Australia encourages multiculturalism and the acceptance of difference yet, the writing field still discriminates writers of Asian

backgrounds even if they have been producing literary texts much earlier than the increasing realisations on diversity. They believe that in the national literature, the focus is still mainstream Australian or ‘whiteness’ that still disregards those who have migrated from Asia. Asian-Australian authors are often left unnoticed. This proves the scarceness of the literatures discussing Asian-Australian writing even though Asian-Australian authors have started writing even before the abolishment of the Immigration Restriction Act in Australia. Nevertheless, as much as Asian-Australian literature is limited, Wan Nur Madiha Ramlan and Maimunah Abdul Kadir reveal its development when an anthology, ‘The Macquarie PEN Anthology’ includes several works by Asian-Australian authors. This shows that Asian-Australian literature is growing, thus, justifying the need to study the field and its discourses.

Asian-Australian literary works whether fiction or non-fiction are usually discussed in relation to migrant experiences in a host country as well as their search for identity as a part of diasporic communities (Guntarik, 2013). Scholars often examine the issue of binary opposition of ‘self’ and ‘other’ between those who are Asian-Australians and those who are included in mainstream Australians (see Lo et al., 2000; Aitken, 2006; Morris, 2008; Ferrier, 2017). Guntarik (2013) asserts, “...literature by Asian Australians, while complex and growing, is still a fledgling market and struggles with questions about its identity and how this identity should be represented” (p. 8). She discusses how ‘Asian literature’ in Australia is labelled as ‘migrant’ or ‘ethnic’ writing and, those labels hinder its growth even though some Asian-Australian writings portray universal themes that are not necessarily related to their Asian backgrounds. Asian-Australian authors are even expected to write their ethnicity, to ensure that their works are relevant with their status in Australia.

As an Australian writer herself, Hsu-Ming Teo (2008), in her article, 'Phantom limbs and cultural ventriloquism: communicating cultural difference as a novelist', argues:

Because of the paucity of ethnic Australian literature, characters, customs and incidents in ethnic Australian novels come to stand as archetypes of ethnicity and culture in a way that would not occur in Anglo-Australian novels. Characters in Anglo-Australian novels are read as distinctive individuals rather than as representatives of different ethnic cultures (p. 528).

Teo reveals that, in relation to Australia's past which has discriminated migrants and immigrants, it has also affected how one perceives Australian writing on migration or ethnicity. She opines that the writing of ethnicity in Australia is often seen as the epitome of ethnicity and culture due to its scarceness, in contrast to literary works by 'Anglo-Australian' which are considered as 'universal' and 'personal'. This suggests that Australian writings on migration are often limited to cross-cultural experiences or migrants and immigrants experiences and their negotiations of identity or a sense of acceptance and belonging, even though they may represent universal themes which are relatable to other subjects or settings.

Apart from that, as migrant writers start telling their own life stories, life-writing especially autobiography or memoir is used in addressing interethnic issues as well as migrant or immigrant and cross-cultural experiences. Similarly, in Australia, authors of Asian descent begin to choose life-writing as a genre to narrate their personal stories and experiences to both Australian and non-Australian readers. Guntarik (2013), believes that there has been an increase of second-generation Asian-Australian authors like Nam Le and Alice Pung who write autobiography or memoir. She mentions that those authors' works are usually categorised under conventional

marker such as ‘migrant’ or ‘ethnic minority’ writing which are accumulated around common themes that highlight their immigrant experiences.

Second, when it comes to ‘memory’ and ‘memory studies’, it is believed that the Holocaust has sparked interests of ‘memory’ and ‘trauma’ (Hirsch, 2012; Sicher, 2000) and, writings on the Holocaust. Efraim Sicher states, “The Holocaust has produced an excess in collective memory, a weighting that cannot be objectively balanced, regardless of quantitative knowledge of the event or available information” (p. 59). The Holocaust is considered as major in the configuration of ‘memory’ and ‘trauma’. This also explains the interests in writing or narrating Holocaust memory. Survivors or authors of the Holocaust or any other atrocity write trauma to fill in the void as traumatic past is often ‘unspoken’ and, they write not only to remember but, sometimes as a means to ‘forget’ (Schwab, 2006). She states “Life writings often emerge from a traumatic core, occupying a space between two parallel universes: daily life and trauma. In real life, it is dangerous for these universes to touch. In writing, they must converge” (p. 95). Writers present their traumatic experiences of past events in their life-writings as a way of making sense of their present life and past trauma. Hirsch suggests that, in the case of ‘memory’ and ‘narrative’ (how people write or describe their ‘remembering’), the focus is on life-writing or autobiography of the Holocaust. Hence, studies on writings of the Holocaust and its memory are more immense compared to other writings on such atrocity.

Moreover, for Hirsch, writing on ‘memory’ is expanded by ‘the generation-after’ who tells such stories on behalf of those who have experienced direct impacts of war or atrocity. Researches focus on writings in the aftermath of the Holocaust which are usually written by children of survivors of the Holocaust. Hirsch herself studies

the portrayals of the transference of first-generation's memory to the post-memory of second-generations in relation to the Holocaust, in post-memoirs and visual arts. Aarons (2012), discusses the politics of past events and their representations especially so for generations of Post-Holocaust writers, writing in the aftermath of the Holocaust, as 'memory' is more often than not 'fragmented'. She contends that, second-generation writers then, write fragments of memories of experiences they 'receive' only second-handedly. Even though they write memory that is not one's own and while writing, they also 'imagine' the past, they still have to make sure that they adhere to history. For these writers, one of the common themes when writing trauma is 'silence' or the inability to tell or write such stories. Correspondingly, following several narratives of contemporary Post-Holocaust in America by several authors in his article, Sicher (2000) discusses 'countermemory' and 'post-memory' as children of survivors of the Holocaust write the aftermath of the Holocaust through their active search of the past. He mentions further that for the second-generations, their writings or telling of such stories are available through the act of 'imagination' as they do not have direct experiences of past events. These writers write from an 'absent memory' and, they are trying to fill in the gaps and emptiness left by the first-generations through their 'fiction' or 'memoir'.

Meanwhile, Gwyer (2018), touches on 'intertextuality' and Hirsch's notion of 'belatedness' and 'creative investment' in the writings of post-Holocaust; those indirect witnesses of the Holocaust refer to other literary texts on Holocaust as they write 'creatively' in the present. They seem to encounter post-Holocaust writers' fear that their literary texts are imitations of history that they do not have first-hand experiences of. Using two German-Jewish fictions, Lizarazu (2020), describes how characters deal with their 'inherited' Holocaust (post)memory. He follows

‘subjunctive constructs’ and believes that Patrowskaja’s and Menasse’s literary writings offer a new way of interpreting ‘post-memory’ as both of them do not follow Hirsch’s notion of ‘creative investment and imagination’ straightforwardly. In short, while writers write memory narratives, they are able to write fragments as memory itself is obscure; more often than not, people remember images of the past or past events, in the present. The memory that they are able to remember might be incomplete. This further complicates the second-generations’ representations of fragments of memory that is not one’s own.

On the other hand, Hirsch claims that even though she signifies the Holocaust especially with regard to the interpretations of post-memoirs and visual arts of the second-generations, ‘post-memory’ is also applicable to other subjects and settings. ‘Post-memory’ can also be used to decipher migration, migrants and immigrants experiences as Hirsch portrays that most of the Holocaust victims and survivors have to go through exile or migration. Hirsch’s parents are also survivors of the Holocaust who eventually leave their homelands. In her article, ‘Postmemories in exile’, Hirsch (1996) states, “This condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, is characteristic of postmemory” (p. 662). Therefore, this signifies the relationship of ‘memory’ and ‘migration. Moreover, Hirsch and Spitzer (2002) clarifies, “...diasporic—an idea of a city and place less and less connected to its geographical location and ever more tenuously dependent on the vicissitudes of personal, familial, and cultural memory” (p. 256). When one has to move to a different geographical location, his or her connection to ‘diaspora’ and the place left behind is more of a remembrance or memory; this suggests the ‘psychological’ realms instead of physical ones.

Using Hirsch's post-memory and figuring out (diasporic) post-memory, Kim (2007) believes that those who are subjected to (diasporic) post-memory depend on 'memory' including 'imagination' as they are those who are 'temporally', 'spatially', 'linguistically' and 'socially' displaced from their origins. Kim argues that, as a 'phenomenon', 'diaspora' is noteworthy when the generation-after subjects still identify with their 'homeland'. Kim clarifies, "What characterizes and explains the passage from dislocation to diaspora, I argue, are the processes of postmemory and intersubjectivity, in which the familial structure of inheritance is significant" (p. 348). It means that diaspora is remembered through 'post-memory' as family members 'pass' stories of experiences of diaspora throughout generations. This necessitates that memory and post-memory are significant for those who are subjected to diaspora or migration.

In short, apart from the scarceness of literatures of 'Asian-Australian', literatures on 'memory' and 'post-memory' which do not revolve around the themes of 'the Holocaust' are also limited. Thus, for this thesis, I do not use memory and post-memory to study the Holocaust generations but, memory and 'post-memory' are used for first- and second- or subsequent-generations of both 'memory' and 'migration', in the context of representations of 'Asian-Australian'. My aspiration is to fulfil the gap especially in relation to Asian-Australian life-writings as I discuss memory and post-memory in relation to 'home' and 'return' through the perspectives of two different generations; through generational analysis of Asian-Australians as well as 'the generations-after' of memory.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to examine the representations of memory (first-generation) and post-memory (second-generation) in relation to the construction of home (first- and second-generation) and the trope of return (second-generation) through the readings of five Asian-Australian life-writings: Alice Pung's *Her Father's Daughter* (2012), Anh Do's *The Happiest Refugee* (2011), Benjamin Law's *The Family Law* (2016), Lily Chan's *Toyo: A Memoir* (2012) and Saroo Brierley's *Lion* (2016). Thus, these are my objectives:

1. To examine the ways first-generations construct 'memory' and 'home' which are represented in the life-writings of first-generation Asian-Australians.
2. To examine the influences of first-generations' memory towards the representations of 'post-memory' in the life-writings of second- or subsequent generations.
3. To analyse the ways first-generations' 'memory' contribute to the construction of home and the trope of return represented in second-generation Asian-Australians' life-writings.

1.4 Research Question

The followings are research questions which this study tries to examine:

1. In what ways do first-generations construct 'memory' and 'home' through representations in the life-writings of first-generation Asian-Australians?
2. How does first-generations' memory influence the representations of 'post-memory' in the life-writings of second- or subsequent-generations?

3. In what ways do first-generations' memory contribute to the representations of the construction of home and the trope of return in second-generation Asian-Australians' life-writings?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This thesis attempts to examine the representations of memory and post-memory in relation to the construction of home and the trope of return in the life-writings of Asian-Australians. To achieve the objectives, I focus on memory and migration through the readings of selected literary texts. I use five life-writings: *THR*, *TM*, *Lion*, *HFD* and *TFL*. In studying 'memory' in relation to social, cultural and literary perspectives, I have followed two major theoretical frameworks, Maurice Halbwach's (1980) 'collective memory' and Marianne Hirsch's (1997, 2001, 2008, 2012) 'post-memory' as paradigms to discover the representations of the past in Asian-Australian life-writings and how characters construct the past and the present, in the present. First, Halbwach believes that 'memory' is socially and culturally constructed, and it is shared collectively rather than individually. However, in describing his collective memory, he still emphasises the significance of 'person' and 'family'. Similarly, based on selected texts, memory whether 'individual', 'familial' or 'collective' matters as most authors or characters 'share' their individual memory especially with their family members and, it is difficult to separate between the three types of memory. I have followed Halbwach's discussions on 'memory' particularly for chapter four which discusses first-generations' life-writings: *THR* and *Lion*.

'Memory' is one's experience of the past while 'post-memory' is an indirect memory which is shared consciously or unconsciously by those who have first-hand experiences of past events. One's 'memory' itself is fragmented and fluid; this further

complicates memory which is ‘received’ by the generation of ‘post-memory’. It becomes more complex for those who ‘remember’ parents’ or other people’s memory, suggesting a second-hand remembrance of the past or what Hirsch (1997, 2001, 2008, 2012) terms post-memory: traumatic memory which is inherited by ‘the generation-after’ (as called by Eva Hoffmann when she studies second-generation children of Holocaust’s victims and survivors) subjects of the Holocaust. Post-memory is pertinent to the study of second-generations of both diaspora and/or transnationalism and memory; it is discussed throughout chapter five which examines the life-writings of second-generations: *HFD*, *TM* and *TFL*.

Nevertheless, I use both Halbwach’s notion of ‘memory’ and Hirsch’s notion of ‘post-memory’ as there are similarities within both theories. For instance, both types of ‘memory’ signify memory, which is remembered together, as a family or a community. Halbwach and Hirsch have discussed that family plays an important role in one’s memory tracing. Additionally, both Halbwach and Hirsch (mainly Hirsch) have mentioned references of literary materials especially historical writings, life-writings, memoirs, autobiographical writings and life stories in their respective books. Hence, since this thesis focuses on literature, specifically life-writing, it seems appropriate to follow both Halbwach’s collective memory and Hirsch’s post-memory. In Halbwach’s discussions of ‘collective memory’, at certain point, he does state ‘generational memory’ as memory is shared in between family members or those close-knit communities. The difference is that, while Halbwach emphasises ‘memory’ more broadly in the sense that he does not focus on the idea of ‘generations’ as he has written more of historical or significant memory, political memory, economics and religious groups, Hirsch describes ‘post-memory’ or generational transference of first-hand experiences to second-generation children or the generations of post-memory.

For ‘migration’, my intension is to use it as a lens to look at diasporic and/or transnational subjects’ construction of ‘home’ and trope of ‘return’. Hence, in relation to the realms of social, cultural and literary frameworks, I use theories of diaspora from Agnew (2005), Cho (2007) and Cohen (2008) and, theories of transnationalism which are discussed by scholars like Faist (2010), Garret (2011), and Schiller et al. (1995). For transnationalism, I slightly look at ‘emotional transnationalism’ (Gu, 2010; Wolf, 1997) or ‘symbolic transnationalism’ (Le Espiritu & Tran, 2002) and Christou’s (2011) ‘emotional belongingness’. Additionally, as I discuss ‘migration’ in order to focus on the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘return’, there are various scholars who study ‘home’ and ‘return’ for diasporic and/or transnational subjects. In terms of ‘home’, I mainly follow Ahmed (1999), Giuliani (2021), Rubenstein (2001) and Tay (2011). I slightly refer to Brah’s (1996) ‘homing desire’ and ‘lived experiences’, Bhabha’s (1994), ‘homeliness’ and ‘unhomeliness’ for migrants and immigrants, Lloyd’s and Vasta’s (2017) ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ status in terms of migration and Rushdies’s (1980) ‘imaginary homelands’ for those authors who write ‘outside’ of one’s homeland.

From the frameworks of memory and migration in relation to social, cultural and literary perspectives, I analyse the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘return’. As memory and post-memory are obscure, fragmented and fallible, ‘home’ too is intricate and, it requires a comprehensive understanding and interpretation as it is polysemic in nature. ‘Home’ is not necessarily a physical space but, home is the space one can make sense of and, for first-generation, it can be both homeland and the host land. I discuss ‘home’ for the first-generation in chapter four as I analyse the first objective. Meanwhile, in terms of migration or diaspora and/or transnationalism for second-generations, I refer to Watkins’s (2016) ‘diasporic slide’ as she believes that second-generations ‘inherit’