

## Tasting Tales: Food and Place Attachment in Selected Poems in *Malchin Testament: Malaysian Poems*

Mohd Fadhli Shah Khaidzir<sup>1</sup> & \*Mafarhanatul Akmal Ahmad  
Kamal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Pusat Pengajian Citra Universiti, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,  
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Authors Email: mafarhanatulakmal@uitm.edu.my

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### Abstract

Food is more than just a physical need and basic necessity for individuals. Food goes beyond creating a memorable experience of a place or destination; making gastronomy as a powerful cultural symbol that embodies memory, identity, and emotional connection to a place, and significantly influences tourism attractions. While food has long been studied in tourism and cultural contexts, its representation in literature, particularly in literary texts like poetry, offers a unique perspective into how individuals experience and articulate their attachment to place as it stimulates emotions and feelings, helping to convey a strong message and establish a connection to the place where the food is being represented. Thus, this paper explores how selected Malaysian poems from *Malchin Testament: Malaysian Poems* (2017) use food imagery to evoke place attachment, memory, and cultural identity. In doing so, the study emphasizes how food serves as a narrative device that goes beyond the physical palate to evoke deeper emotional and symbolic meaning. While the selected poems are set in Kuala Lumpur, the experiences and memories associated with food and the meaning they represent vary, especially among individuals and over time, representing the Malaysia's multicultural society. Consequently, this literary analysis offers valuable insights for scholars of literature, cultural geography, and heritage studies, and reinforces the importance of local poetry in the preservation of cultural heritage and identity.

**Keywords:** Food, Place Attachment, Malaysian Literature, Cultural Identity, Heritage

### Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in how emotions and memories are tied to physical and symbolic spaces, leading to the concept of **place attachment**. Place attachment refers to the profound emotional connection that individuals have with specific places, encompassing various aspects such as culture, society, psychology, and the

environment. Mohd Fadhli Shah and Mafarhanatul Akmal (2023) emphasised that a strong sense of place is developed through a strong relationship and sense of belonging towards a particular environment. This relationship goes extensively beyond the physical characteristics of a place, covering the intangible aspects such as memory, emotion, taste, feelings, and other senses that influence individuals' experiences and perspectives. Subsequently, this profound sense of place develops place attachment, which is critical because it establishes a connection between the location and an individual's emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, which are the result of their exploration and discovery of the location (Mohd Fadhli Shah et al. 2022). Furthermore, Abukarki et al. (2023) defined place attachment as the emotional connection that individuals develop with a location or environment as a result of personal experiences, including those associated with cultural explorations.

This phenomenon is crucial in influencing human experiences and interactions with their environment. In the same way, food, a fundamental human necessity, is not merely sustenance; it is a significant cultural property that embodies community, tradition, and identity. The intricate relationship between place attachment and food presents an exciting field of research, shedding light on how food and food-related experiences contribute to the establishment and further development of place attachment. Furthermore, the sensory perceptions linked to food are deeply embedded in memory and emotion, encompassing the taste and smell sensations, as well as the process of preparing and consuming food. These sensory relationships can elicit intense emotions of nostalgia and comfort, establishing a bond between individuals and certain locations and situations from their own life experiences. Baez (2021) stated that food frequently serves as an avenue for individuals to their homeland, providing a concrete link to their cultural heritage and a sense of place within unfamiliar surroundings. Therefore, this demonstrates that food functions as a tool for establishing identity, representing the cultures of a particular location, and fostering a deep sense of place attachment.

The relationship between food and place attachment is profound, not only in the study of places like landscape, tourism, or urban spaces, but also deeply rooted in literary works, particularly poetry. In the context of literature, especially in poetry, food is often depicted as more than its physical traits. Poets use their words to convey to their audience about the literal taste, shape, or colour of the food. More importantly, they often use food as a symbol within their literary text. Food typically symbolises or represents the landscapes, traditions, and people that shape human lives, evoking powerful emotional responses. Despite the prominence of food in shaping cultural narratives, the role of food as a medium for place attachment has been underexplored in Malaysian literature, especially poetry. Thus, it is imperative to explore the connection between food and place attachment in selected Malaysian poems to highlight the uniqueness of the local food and expand its visibility, considering that literature serves as a reflective medium through which individuals express belonging, memory, and identity. In doing so, this study explores selected poems in a compilation of poems over the past six decades by Malaysian poets, featured in *Malchin Testament: Malaysian Poems*, compiled by Malachi Edwin Vethamani in 2017. The anthology of poems contains writers from various decades and eras of time ranging from Wong Phui Nam, Muhammad Haji Salleh, Ghulam Sarwar Yousof to the most current writers in today's literary landscape. By including 57 local poets and their literary works, this anthology offers a diverse and rich collection of Malaysian poetry across different time periods. This is also a valuable resource for understanding the cultural and historical context of

local poetry, particularly connected to food and place attachment, as well as upholding and celebrating local literary texts.

By examining the descriptions of food in the selected poems, this study attempts to comprehend the link between food and place, and how they serve as reference points that form and define their experiences and attachments between the two. The selected poems in this anthology use places as their landscape settings while including food as part of their creative narratives. Five poems were selected for the purpose of this study; Fan Yew Teng's *Kuala Lumpur! Kuala Lumpur!* (1999), C.P. Hew's *Bak Kut Teh at Pudu Market* (n.d), Ghulam Sarwar Yousof's *The Midnight Satay-Vendor* (1982), Malachi Edwin Vethanami's *One Christmas Morning* (2014), and Eileen Lian's *When I was Small* (2014). These poems collectively reflect the image and identity of the place through descriptions and representation of food, dishes and other forms of delicacies. By selecting poems that include allusions through food to represent the identity of places, this study helps to analyse and comprehend the identity of places and its attachment towards certain food that is recognised and shared by the locals. This study also emphasises the importance of literature in preserving cultural heritage within Malaysia's multicultural, showcasing how everyday element like food serve as powerful tools to express belonging and identity, thereby influencing one's attachment or rootedness to place. Consequently, the integration of food and place, and how it impacts individuals' both tangibly and intangibly, makes this study a valuable contribution to broader discussion on identity, heritage, and place attachment in multicultural context.

### Literature Review

Tuan (1977) identifies a place to have meanings due to the fact that people invest into an emotional or valuable relation to it, in which Fournier (1991) later continues on how it results in an emotional relationship between the person and the place. This perspective emphasises the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals attach to places which explore how human emotions and experiences shape the way people perceive and interact with places. Many researchers study the relationship between people and places to understand how individuals behave and react to their surroundings, including their sense of place and attachment to it. Kuo et al. (2021) emphasised that individuals' relationships and encounters with places establish cognitive and emotional connections, which can positively or negatively influence their attachment to the location. This is because they perceive the place as memorable due to something they want to remember or forget. As they engage in various activities or experiences, they develop a deep connection or meaning associated with the place.

### Place and People

A place can be defined as a point of location that ranges from a small piece of land to a larger area like a city or country that could be verified by coordinates or boundaries. However, defining the concept of place solely based on its literal meaning may not be relevant, as it encompasses multilayer meanings that include geographic, physical, social, and psychological dimensions. Mohd Fadhli Shah et al. (2022) emphasised that in the context of psychogeography, place refers to something that goes beyond physical characteristics but more into aesthetic interpretation of how individuals experience and interact with their surroundings and make meanings out of them. Activities and experiences involved in the particular settings evoke the emotional connections people eventually associate with, which

later influence their sense of place in that particular setting. In addition, from a social perspective, a place can be looked at in terms of how people utilise the space for any activities and practices throughout their existence. This also encompasses how individuals form significant connections with others through the establishment of relationships and interactions within the physical space. These relationships, whether sweet memories or something they do not want to remember, will eventually create a sense of place and belonging in a specific setting (Kuo et al. 2021). Not only that, but traditions and cultural practices also contribute to the aesthetic elements and uniqueness of a place, providing significant meaning to individuals. All of these factors affect how individuals feel about themselves and the place connected to them. The places they have experienced shape their sense of place, attachment, and identity, shaping their interpretations and associations with the specific place.

### *Food and Place*

Food serves not only as part of the sustenance and nourishment, but it is also deeply associated with emotion, providing people with an immersive experience throughout tasting them which offer aesthetic enjoyment, emotional responses, social interactions, and personal satisfaction. The experiences eventually become powerful memories, bridging the connection between the taste and places where the food was enjoyed (Bessière 1998; Ellis et al., 2018; Hsu and Scott 2020; Lee 2022; Sims 2009). In a study by Hsu and Scott (2020), it was suggested that food experience plays a crucial role in positively influencing place attachment in travel destinations. Travellers explore places with the mindset of indulging themselves in the unique experiences that a specific place offers. This exploration often includes engaging the culture and traditions, historical places, as well as the local food. Sthapit and Coudounaris (2017) claimed that food plays an important role in determining the experiences, memories, intentions, and attachment of individuals to a specific place. The quality of food, including the taste and aroma, can evoke powerful emotions and memories that connect people to the place visited. Dewan (2021) stated that despite having their own food preferences, travellers or tourists are keen to taste different types of food and their flavours, satisfying their evolving tastes and preferences. They not only enjoy the flavours of the food, but also the origin, the history, the way it is being prepared. Some places provide assistance in learning the food preparation and host celebrations for the travellers. This may expose the travellers to the local people and allow them to communicate with them. As they immerse themselves in the unique experience, tasting the local food binds their memories to the experience, enhancing their travel experience. As they return to their homeplace, the memory of food, the taste of it may bring them back to the places they travelled, indicating food is essential in building place attachment.

Plunkett et al. (2019) confirmed that place identity and place dependency exert a significant influence on behavioural loyalty. This shows that indulging in experiences, particularly tasting the local food, creates lasting memories and stronger emotional connection to the place, hence establishing stronger place attachment. This is due to the fact that individuals perceive experiences and make meaningful connections to a specific place or surrounding environment through the interaction between senses and spaces (Yildiz and Saribaş 2019). This is consistent with the findings of Mohd Fadhli Shah and Mafarhanatul Akmal (2023) that significant interaction with a place, particularly through tasting the local food, influences the place identity and dependency which in turn supports the reasons for

returning to the visited places. According to Lee (2023), individual recollections of food can significantly influence a person's identity and flavour preferences. Meanwhile, he further explains that collective food memories can symbolise familial values or define a community's identity, creating a shared culinary narrative that transcends time and space, resonating among diverse individuals.

From the context of literary texts, food is one of the elements used in depicting life experiences and the emotional states that the poets intend to share with the readers. Ambarwati et al. (2020) stated that the use of food as a metaphor in literary works has been prevalent since the early 1960s. This includes the representation of food in relation to culture and societal values, as well as the connection of food from different historical periods. They further emphasised that the representation of food in literature and culture offers significant values, as it connects relationships between people and the creator. Whitt (2011) expressed that the use of food imagery and metaphor has immensely influenced postmodern culture by representing complex ideas and deeper meanings in literature, addressing various issues from the standpoint of societal issues including implicit themes about sexual desires and gender relations. Furthermore, he elaborated that writers use food and the act of tasting them in their writing to symbolise cultural issues such as adaptation, acceptance, resistance, and the preservation of culture and heritage. Food also serves as a representation of memory, emotions, narrative, relationships, authority, and consumption. In these ways, food-related images can be used to create a specific mood, offer visual cues for readers, help convey an idea, express an emotion, dramatise a situation, or increase the realism in a specific text. They often help to characterise people in novels, helping readers to understand a character's dilemma, social status, personality, emotions, or even ethnicity, among other factors surrounding a character and plot. All sorts of emotion can be seen in the literary works, making them personal to the writer and the reader. The use of food becomes an effective way to connect the bridges of experiences from one person to another.

### **Food and Place Attachment**

Food is an essential part of human's life, fulfilling the needs and desires of individuals as part of their nutritional needs and meaningful experiences. The experiences tasting and indulging food hold significant impact, particularly in relation to the place of ones' experiencing the food. As a place is unlimited to one specific physical landscape, it extends beyond physical boundaries based on individuals' life experiences, leaving lasting impressions that affect the relationship between people, food, and place.

Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur  
I love your nasi lemak in Gombak  
Your roastduck from Pudu  
Your mutton curry at Brickfields  
Your Bak-Kut-Teh in Kepong  
Your nasi briyani at Kampung Baru  
Your sugarcane water at Cheras  
("Kuala Lumpur! Kuala Lumpur!", p. 67)

Fan Yew Teng's poem '*Kuala Lumpur! Kuala Lumpur!*' (1999) presents various choices of food available in the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. This metropolitan city is like a

melting pot of people as it attracts people from all walks of life to live, work, and explore as there are many interesting places to discover. This has turned Kuala Lumpur into a place of various ethnicities, where people live together, exchange cultures and traditions, and eventually adapt to one another. This is evident in Fan's depiction of six dishes that represent the diverse races in Malaysia, especially in Kuala Lumpur. It is interesting to note that the representation of food mirrors the composition of the main racial population in Malaysia. It began with the *nasi lemak* as a signature Malay dish, followed by *roastduck* and *bak kut teh* as Chinese specialities, and concluded with *nasi briyani* and sugarcane water representing Indian descendants. It is also apparent that each dish has a connection with a famous place where people can visit and taste the food. That is to show how a person makes connections between food and place. Fan, being of Chinese origin, has no issue with liking food of the other races, showing that food has emotional power rather than the differences between races. Using strong words like 'love' shows that Fan is enthusiastic about going places to indulge and taste the food. For people to love something, it has the underlying meaning that they experience going through situations more than once, indicating that Fan has tasted the mentioned food a few times. This is consistent with the findings of Mohd Fadhli Shah and Mafarhanatul Akmal (2023) that when individuals return to previously visited places, their experience demonstrates the quality of place attachment, which includes place identity and place dependency. The experience can be seen through representations of elements such as food which resembles the references of the place by offering a distinctive interpretation from an individual's viewpoint, while simultaneously mirroring the shared recollections of tasting food experiences that transcend the multiracial community.

Before the sun had time to awake  
they have come, these men,  
foraging for meat ribs in herbal soup,  
steaming in hot ceramic bowls.

The waiter in sleeves Pagoda singlet  
prevails from table to table,  
with the ubiquitous pot of Chinese tea,  
chillies and garlic in their proper place.

Mostly men,  
middle-aged customers,  
the loyal members,  
wait to be served.

Prior to the start of the work  
with feet bound in black rubber boots  
wearing a troop of samfoo the market women  
made foul language their main menu  
adding to the smell of meat.

In similar manner  
their words only louder  
a heavy traffic of men



around the marble tables  
fill the vacant seats.

The new arrivals sit in a herd  
peering at the bowls of meat  
attacking them at a hungry speed.

I watch, a distance away,  
with my foreign friend, sipping tea.  
We watch this merry band of men and women  
lapping up their habitual meal  
and bowls of rice ran off  
with a passion seldom seen.

Next moment they have gone  
all but the empty bowls and bones  
so quickly as though in protest,  
against the dawn that came too soon.  
(Bak Kut Teh at Pudu Market, p.93-94)

Interestingly, the second poem by C.P. Hew describes the connection between food and place subtly, without stating the name of place directly. Compared to Fan's poem previously, the places were mentioned specifically one after another; prominent places in Kuala Lumpur such as Gombak, Pudu, Brickfields, Kepong, Kampung Baru, Cheras. Meanwhile, Hew's '*Bak Kut Teh at Pudu Market*' (n.d.), the name of place, Pudu Market, is only mentioned in the title of the poem, yet the circumstances and activities are vividly enlivened by the descriptions. In this poem, the necessity of hot food is described in the way that people come early in the morning to have a good breakfast before life gets busy. Representing the Chinese community, meat ribs in herbal soup are essential to provide nourishment, sustain energy, as well as to boost immunity. Moreover, the vivid depiction of steaming hot ceramic bowls impacts individuals, helping them remember or even imagine and recall the experiences eating the food at the Pudu Market. Throughout the first stanza to eight stanza, the poet describes the place as an essential for meeting and eating, two of many humans' basic needs. The imagery used presents a normal, daily, and simple place of meeting with no underlying meaning than an essential eating place. This is depicted through the imagery of a sleeveless pagoda singlet worn by the waiter, simple table settings with Chinese tea pots, and together with condiments like chillies and garlic to add flavour to the food and to life as well. It is also worth mentioning that the lines, "the loyal members, wait to be served" represent the strong attachment people have to the place. The word 'loyal' suggests that these people consistently return to this place to eat over time, highlighting the strong preference for food and the particular place. This aligns with Plunkett et al. (2019), who found that place attachment is closely related to loyalty. In addition, the poet, writing from the third person of view, can be seen to frequent the eating place too, given the vivid descriptions of the scene. He also pointed out that he observed from a distance, accompanied by his foreign friend, sipping tea while watching the men and women indulging their breakfast passionately. Witnessing and understanding the situation conveys a sense of loyalty, as the poet frequently visits the same food place, demonstrating a deep attachment to it. This regular patronage highlights a strong

emotional bond and familiarity with the location, reflecting the comfort and connection that come from repeated experiences. The poet's consistent return to this place suggests a personal significance and a sense of belonging, illustrating how certain locations can become integral parts of one's routine and identity. Through these visits, the poet not only enjoys the food but also immerses in the ambiance and community, further solidifying the place's importance in their life.

he cuts a sorry figure, the solitary vendor  
among the sleeping bungalows  
pedalling up the stubborn  
aristocratic slopes of jesselton heights

satay  
satay  
satay  
i can see him wiping his sweaty brow  
can smell piquant in the air the aroma  
of chicken and cincang  
as he fans the fire  
beneath the sizzling rows of skewers  
.....  
but life must not stop for the likes of him  
so at pasar malam and along the night's inclines  
wiping his migraines off his forehead  
he returns to the embers,  
his children amidst their kurang ajar yawns  
prepare tomorrow's ketupat and cucumbers.  
satay  
satay  
satay  
(The Midnight Satay Vendor, p.74)

Moving on to the poem '*The Midnight Satay-Vendor*' by Ghulam Sarwar Yousof (1982), this poem, like the previous one, does not mention a specific name or place. However, the entire context of the poem lies in the representation of food and place attachment. The poet reflects on seeing the satay vendor and compares his own fate with that of the vendor. The poem uses *satay* as more than just the name of a dish; it depicts it as a symbol of life, family, and political and economic consequences. The poem does not describe the flavour and deliciousness of its taste but rather the process of sizzling the *satay* and the behind-the-scenes moments—something that most people would overlook and go unnoticed. The irony of the poem is that despite *satay* being one of the most preferred dishes locally and internationally, the story behind it, including the life of the *satay* vendor, never reaches the customers. *Satay* at a *pasar malam* might seem mouthwatering to others, with the enticing aroma of grilled meat and burning charcoal, and the bustling atmosphere of people enjoying the lively *pasar malam*. But the hardship reality behind the scenes can be quite different as the satay vendor works tirelessly to make ends meet. This can be seen from the lines '*wiping*



*his migraines off his forehead, he returns to the embers, his children amidst their kurang ajar yawns, prepare tomorrow's ketupat and cucumbers'. The satay vendor ignores his sickness for the sake of continuing his life, coming home to his family, and preparing the dish to sell for tomorrow. The hardship portrayed in this poem connects the representation of food and place, in which not only it connects to the *pasar malam* but also to the place where satay is being prepared with the existence of the vendor's children. The relationship between food and place attachment in this poem is significant, aligning with Whitt (2011) who claims that food imagery and metaphor are used in literature to present complex ideas and deeper meaning in life, addressing the various societal issues. This is evident from the first stanza, which contrasts the different walks of life led by the poet, who observes from a third person perspective, and the satay vendor. The images of the satay vendor 'cuts a sorry figure' and 'sleeping bungalows' along the 'aristocratic slopes of jesselton heights' illustrate the contrast between the hard work of the poor and the privileges of the wealthy. Interestingly, the depiction of the place in 1982 is still similar to the present days. As time goes by, even after more than four decades, people still live according to their financial status, and their perceptions of struggle continue to differ. Despite these differences in social status, satay is still a popular food that can be found at night markets and enjoyed by everyone, bringing people together through a shared preference of taste, memories, experiences and stories.*

The smell of curries  
and familiar kitchen sounds  
of Pati, Amma and my sisters  
have awakened me.

.....

The smells of curries and ghee rice  
waft through the house  
guests will arrive,  
but not yet.

(One Christmas Morning, p.326)

Next, in the poem '*One Christmas Morning*' by Malachi Edwin Vethanami (2014), the theme of two cultures is presented through the setting and food choices. A typical Christmas celebration in the West involves people gathering at homes to celebrate and enjoy Christmas dishes such as turkey and gingerbread. However, Malachi brilliantly highlights his roots, identity, and culture by introducing his menu choices: curries and ghee rice. His menu selection represents his traditions and cultural identity, blending them with the celebration and acceptance of Christmas. Thus, at a glance, the poem accepts and acknowledges the festive season while portraying their identity through the presentation of Indian meals like curries and ghee rice. This supports the notion of Lee (2023) that food narrative in literary texts symbolise family values associated with community identity. This could also represent individuals' standpoints that despite advancements, changes, or ageing over time, the food chosen for the celebration remains the same as it used to be, showing a strong attachment to their roots. It highlights how people hold on to their food traditions as a way to preserve their cultural heritage and maintain a connection to their past. This devotion in food choices highlights the importance of continuity and familiarity, providing a sense of comfort and identity amid the inevitable changes that life brings. Food narratives not only reflect cultural traditions and social bonds within families but also serve as markers of collective identity,

encapsulating shared histories, values, and experiences that connect individuals within a community across generations. In this poem, the poet portrays the ambiance of a family in their safe house, highlighting how significant the place is to its household members and how it fosters shared values throughout one's upbringing. This is consistent with Kuo et al. (2021), who argue that the positive or negative influence of place attachment is largely affected by the relationship between individuals and places, influencing their cognitive and emotional connections. Thus, in this sense, the depiction of 'the smells of curries and ghee rice,' 'familiar kitchen sounds,' and 'have awakened me' represents the harmonious home and tight-knit relationships among family members through food and the setting of the place, leaving a significant place attachment to individuals.

When I was small  
I detested durians  
My family drove miles to Port Klang  
For the best durians of the day  
Nibbling on the noodles they got me  
While they blew durian breath in my face  
Chatting about everything  
And nothing in particular

When I was small  
My mother said  
That if I swallowed jambu seed by mistakes  
A jambu tree would grow on top of my head  
One day I swallowed the jambu seed by mistake  
So I sat in front of a mirror  
And waited  
For the jambu tree to grow  
(When I was Small pp.138-139)

Similar to 'One Christmas Morning' by Malachi Edwin Vethamani (2014), in Lian's 'When I was Small', she focused her writing on a familiar setting from her childhood experiences. *Durian*, known as the king of fruits, is highlighted for its distinctive shape and rich flavours. The poet depicts a situation of detest for *durian* but still follows her family's desire to eat it, to the extent that they drove miles to Port Klang. This shows that the poet recognises her feelings and the relationship of *durian* to her past experiences. The feeling of detest and the long journey to Port Klang transcend the concept of place, making it intangible. According to Mohd Fadhli Shah and Mafarhanatul Akmal (2023), intangible aspects of a place include memory, emotion, taste, feelings, and other senses that influence individuals' experiences and perspectives. This extends the concept of place that only surrounds the physical setting of a place. Next, in the second stanza, the poet describes a belief passed from mother to child about the *jambu* seed. She portrays the consequences of accidentally swallowing the *jambu* seed, making her sit in front of the mirror, waiting for the *jambu* tree to grow. The naivety of the young child who believed in her mother's white lie, eagerly waiting for the actual tree, illustrates the innocence of childhood. The use of local fruits in this poem; *durian* and *jambu* which are indigenous to the local Malaysians, is a recurring image throughout the poem. By associating the depictions of Malaysian fruits with childhood

memories and familiar places, the poem establishes a strong connection between the food and its representation towards the people and places mentioned. Furthermore, these scenarios depict the love and familiarity among family members and their home. This aligns with Abukarki et al. (2023), who claim that place attachment includes the emotional connection that individuals develop with a location or environment as a result of personal experiences. This further strengthens the fact that place is not merely confined within four walls but extends beyond its physical characteristics to include emotional and sensory experiences. These intangible elements such as emotions, memories, and sensory profoundly affect an individual's attachment to a particular place, as they have a strong connection between their upbringing experiences and the place.

### Conclusion

As the depiction of a place varies from one person to another, the attachment to that place varies as well. Place attachment transcends the physicality of a place and relates more to the impact that place leaves on an individual. The experiences of going through or exploring the place, including tasting the food in the area, leave a strong emotional impact that may influence a person to return time after time. People associate their attachment to the place by recollecting memories and experience through the representation of food and how it develops, defines and relates to space and place. The focus of this article concentrates on the establishment of food in the selected Malaysian poems compiled by Vethamani as a means to display the poet's attachment to the place. Expanding the definition of food as a symbol of gastronomy, the examination of the selected poems in this article highlights some intriguing aspects. Behind the taste and visual representation of each food mentioned in the works of these Malaysian poets, the use of food has developed a strong basis of attachment to the place, people, and identity of the place. The food itself is a study in divergences; cultural and religious-embedded meanings are interpreted through the display of food based on their placements of the city. Some foods are remembered for their racial descendants while some are reflected for their origins. For example, the poems '*Kuala Lumpur! Kuala Lumpur!*' put forth *nasi lemak* as a dish that represents the Malay descendants, *roastducks* and *bak kut teh* for the Chinese descendants and *nasi briyani* and sugarcane water as the Indian descendants. This indicates that the notion of race, identity and geographical settings are attached to the definition of food and how they are positioned and mapped in the works of the Malaysian poems. It also reflects a collective memory and shared experiences that bind families and communities together, reinforcing their cultural identity through the enduring power of traditional cuisine. Not only that, the use of food in literary text represents societal commonplace and loyalty as portrayed in '*Bak Kut Teh at Pudu Market*' when the poet as the third person in the situation described the situation and activities happening at the food place. The returning of the same people to eat the same food day by day demonstrates the attachment they have towards the particular place.

In addition, the representation of food and the connection between place attachment is also being put forward in the way they actually reflect the bigger picture of societal issues occurring during a particular time frame, as depicted in '*The Midnight Satay Vendor*'. Satay is depicted not only as juicy, tender marinated meat with the hint of burnt charcoal served with peanut sauce but also as a symbol of the difficult lives of satay vendors or hawkers who make and sell it to the wealthy who enjoy their privileges. This contrast is portrayed through the comparison of satay at the *pasar malam* to the '*aristocratic slopes of jesselton heights*'.

Moreover, the attachment to a place is deeply intertwined with the memories created there, the emotions felt, and the sensory experiences that leave lasting impressions. These intangible aspects contribute to a place's significance, transforming it into a repository of personal and communal history, identity, and culture. This can be seen from the last two analysed poems previously which are '*One Christmas Morning*' and '*When I was Small*'. Without stating the exact place, these two poems depict the strong connection between food and place attachment. The familiar smell of curries and the sound of the kitchen portrayed in '*One Christmas Morning*' bring the memories of childhood and their place to stay, in which it transports the current moment back to the past reliving the situations. Despite the change of time and maybe the place of stay, whenever the poet smells curries, it recalls the memories flashing before the eyes as well as the feeling of inside the house. Similarly, the depiction of *durian* and *jambu* in '*When I was Small*' is also much related to childhood memories and experiences. They do not specifically refer to a specific place, but the place associated with incidents revolving around the mentioned food. Such connections reveal that the understanding of place is as much about the heart and mind as it is about physical location, highlighting the profound ways in which places influence and shape our lives. In short, food is presented through fragmented pieces of memories, feelings, connections, and interpretation of the places by individuals. Humans are ignited and evoked by the food that they consume and remember the most, especially the origins and settings of where the food was presented. Food becomes a metropolis of flavour and meanings that are attached with feelings, memories, and personal attachment between the individual and the place.

This study is essential in highlighting the significance of literary texts, particularly poetry in presenting individuals' feelings and narratives that may be untold or offer perspectives that often overlooked, ultimately influencing their attachment to places. By looking at how food is represented in the selected poems to transmit memory, emotion, and identity, the study demonstrates that literature plays an important role in keeping culture alive. In rapidly globalised world, this study contributes to efforts to preserve the intangible heritage, namely literary texts by showcasing how they reflect and revive the multicultural context of Malaysia, while helping people to understand what it truly means to belong to a place.

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