UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

Speaking About Ghosts (Cerita Hantu Melayu):

Malay Narratives-In-Interaction

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Norman, Oklahoma
2004

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SPEAKING ABOUT GHOSTS (CERITA HANTU MELAYU):
MALAY NARRATIVES-IN-INTERACTION

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR
THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to

My Advisors:

Dr. D. Lawrence. Wieder Dr. Clemencia Rodriguez

For your mentorship, support, encouragement and care.
Without you, this would not be possible.

Heidi Mau

For the past, present and future.

My Family

For your unconditional love.

My Committee Members:

Dr. Sandra Ragan Dr. Todd Sandel Dr. Courtney Vaughn

For making a tough journey enjoyable and memorable.

And to everyone else who has helped make this process possible.

You are in my heart.

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Abstract

My interest in Malay cerita hantu (ghost stories), for purposes of this dissertation, holds primarily to the way these narratives are used in everyday conversation by Malaysia's Malay community as a way to talk about their social reality. I choose to examine cerita hantu holistically – my exploration into ghost stories does not only attend to these stories' content or their semiotic, but also of the performative, interactive and contextual elements in the telling of the story.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. In Part One I discuss the literature associated with narrative to make a case for how narrative influences social reality. I find the monologic view of storytelling problematic as it tends to essentialize culture and regard reality as a fixed entity. My intention is to observe how social reality is exhibited in the intercises of performance, setting and interaction. The contribution of this study is to recognize the functional and organic associations between the monologic, interactive and performative spheres of storytelling. I also provide background information on the Malay world view along with accounts of Malaysian history and belief systems.

In Part Two, I discuss my research findings. My analysis is based on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (particularly his concept of the working consensus) and frame analysis. For my analysis, I use strips of talk from cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu which I collected from interactions while in the field. I show how in interactive sequences, the interactants' working consensus (as situated in a particular interaction) and (in some cases keyed) primary frameworks operates both, as 1) a sense-making device for the interactants, and 2) an intervention for meanings as formulated in interaction. I found

that items such as time and spatial arrangements; socio-cultural organizations such as age, locality and identity and belief systems; along with normative constructs around socialization; and, remnants of the colonial experience are all parts of the Malay world view that are constituted in talk. Such exhibitions of social order are made around and about (in many cases with extreme seriousness) the accounting for the presence of hantu in the Malay world.

For my parents,

Nicky & Christabel

PART ONE:

THE RESEARCH AGENDA

CHAPTER

1

Growing Up with Hantu

Hantu Pontianak
Mati beranak
Mati ditimpa tiang tombak
Racun buloh panjang pendek
Aku nak tikam hantu pontianak

Hantu Pontianak
Died in childbirth
Killed by the thrust of a spear
Of long or short poisoned bamboo
I will stab the hantu pontianak

After recital of which, if you throw something at the apparition, "she will surely flee in terror."

(McHugh, 1955)

"Do you think ghosts can travel far … I mean, like fly across continents or travel in planes?" I ask Heidi as I turn away from the computer screen to look at her. Heidi looks as though I just grew feathers out of my ears. "I … I don't know." She looks at me incredulously, "isn't that *your* research?" I sigh as I respond, "No, it's just that … when I'm in Malaysia, I can *feel* the ghosts. I grew up with them – people were always talking about them. It was as though they were everywhere; the stories were everywhere." "Well ..," Heidi was curious. "We have ghost stories here too." I shake my head. "Yeah … but it's different. The ghosts here are so … separated from life, from living … spirits in Malaysia were part of our day-to-day activity." "You saw spirits?" she asks, as she smiles at me. "Noooo," I respond, "it's the *idea* of ghosts and spirits … it was a part of our language, and by extension, part of our worldview."

Heidi's brows are furrowed. "So, is that your focus in the dissertation?" I shrug, "Well … kinda … yes and no. What I am trying to do is to break away from the idea of oral tradition, storytelling as a disembodied form – stories are not just monologues. My

concern in the dissertation would be to go beyond conceiving storytelling as free standing oral text. I want to explore storytelling contextually and ethnographically, so that I can understand the social realities that give storytelling its form and meaning, and I'll do this by observing storytelling behaviors in the social sphere. I also want to examine how the telling of the Malay ghost story, in the Malay context, can be instrumental in understanding the relationships between communication and social organization. So, I will also examine how participants talk about storytelling in the context of the story. In a sense I am trying to see how the situated use of language functions as a component and apparatus of social reality."

Heidi had still not lost her thoughtful look. She shakes her head, "But you grew up in Malaysia … you heard the stories, lived them. How are you going to bring that same flavor to Western audiences; especially those who have not been to the Far East?" "Ohhh ..," I sigh, "that is what I'm working on right now. I'm starting with something like a collage of my experiences, an autoethnographic slant … umm ... I'll try to present my memories about growing up in Malaysia and being surrounded by stories about hantu (ghosts). I'll also talk about popular Malaysian hantu, you know, the ones I heard most about when collecting data in Malaysia."

My Memory, My Narrative

"So this is based on just *your* memory?" She leans back on her chair casually. "Well, it is based on the memories of my experiences, not the experiences themselves." Heidi nods, "Obviously." "So I really want to stress how my writing is not of the actual experience, it is just an echo of that experience in the context of everything that has transpired since. Who I am today, how I think, how I rationalize, how I feel – all this is

part of my memory of yesterday." "So, in a sense, you are working in a space where the past is simultaneous with the present?" Heidi adds. I nod as I respond, "Yeah, I read this bit by Andreas Huyseen (1995) who said just that." "But what about the writing itself - the form that carries the meaning, the story structure as a vehicle?" Heidi wonders. "Oh, that's important too because the structure of the story itself influences the meaning. In fact, the moment meaning is perceived, it is put together in some form and later recollected as a story. Hayden White (1990) said a lot about this in his work on what he calls 'deep structural forms.' Basically, he says that the content within the narrative form structuralizes memory into making the past an object of desire by generating a similar coherence as that found in stories."

"So you are saying that some of these memories are fictional?" Heidi questions, she looks pensive. "Well...if they are, it is not intentionally so. Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner (2000) tell us how stories are not an unbiased way to re-create the actual experience of the past. Well, I will tell my story as honestly as I can remember it. There is such a thing as narrative truth. Narrative truth has nothing to do with some free standing meaning outside of the story or meaning situated in a sort of pre-narrative experience. The meaning is comprised in the narrative, and the narrative is constituted in the meaning. Both these things are an extension of the other."

I pause for some air. Heidi looks at me. I know what she's thinking. Graduate students have to talk like this as they explore the concepts they are learning. I continue. "So yeah, my memory and my stories – like anyone else's – carry a semblance of fiction. I think Arjun Appadurai (1990) described this type of fiction well when he described 'nostalgia without memory.' He said that it was our desire for something out of a world

that was never lost as it had not been at all." I laugh, "Kinda like how the nuns made us sing 'It's a small world after all' – or some other Western folk song – on Friday morning assembly. We were nostalgic for something we never had. The British had left Malaysia over twenty five years ago. I was twelve. I did not experience the British occupation, yet in assembly we tried to capture something we never knew to begin with, that colonial feel, you know." Heidi nods.

"My memory could be nostalgic, fusing the resonance of experience with a desire for something else. Maybe this desire is rationality; the modern mind has been so well trained to rely on reason. Maybe it is closure, or a desire for love. I dunno. Maybe the idea of finding nostalgia is nostalgic?" I shrug. "Well," Heidi says as she pulls herself off her chair, "So, you'll plug in a few stories and maybe some photographs as well? The ones you took when you were in Malaysia. That'll be good."

Hantu in My Hometown

I grew up in a small town in the state of Perak in Malaysia. The town, known as Taiping,[1] along with its surrounding territories,[2] boasts a population of a little over two hundred thousand. Taiping is located about 50 miles south of Pulau Pinang (Penang Island) and 30 miles north of Ipoh, the capital of Perak. Taiping is known as one of the 'prettier' Perak towns as it houses the Lake Gardens (Taman Tasik Taiping) and Bukit Larut (also known as Maxwell Hills). The Lake Gardens is a 163 acre park with large lakes and hiking or walking trails. The lakes in the Lake Gardens were formerly used for tin mining as the area used to be rich with this mineral. A small zoo is situated in the Lake Gardens. Bukit Larut is 4101 feet above sea level. It was founded in 1884 as a British hill station. Today it is known for the tropical virgin rain forests that fringe the

Figure 1: Perak Map

Taiping town is highlighted in the box

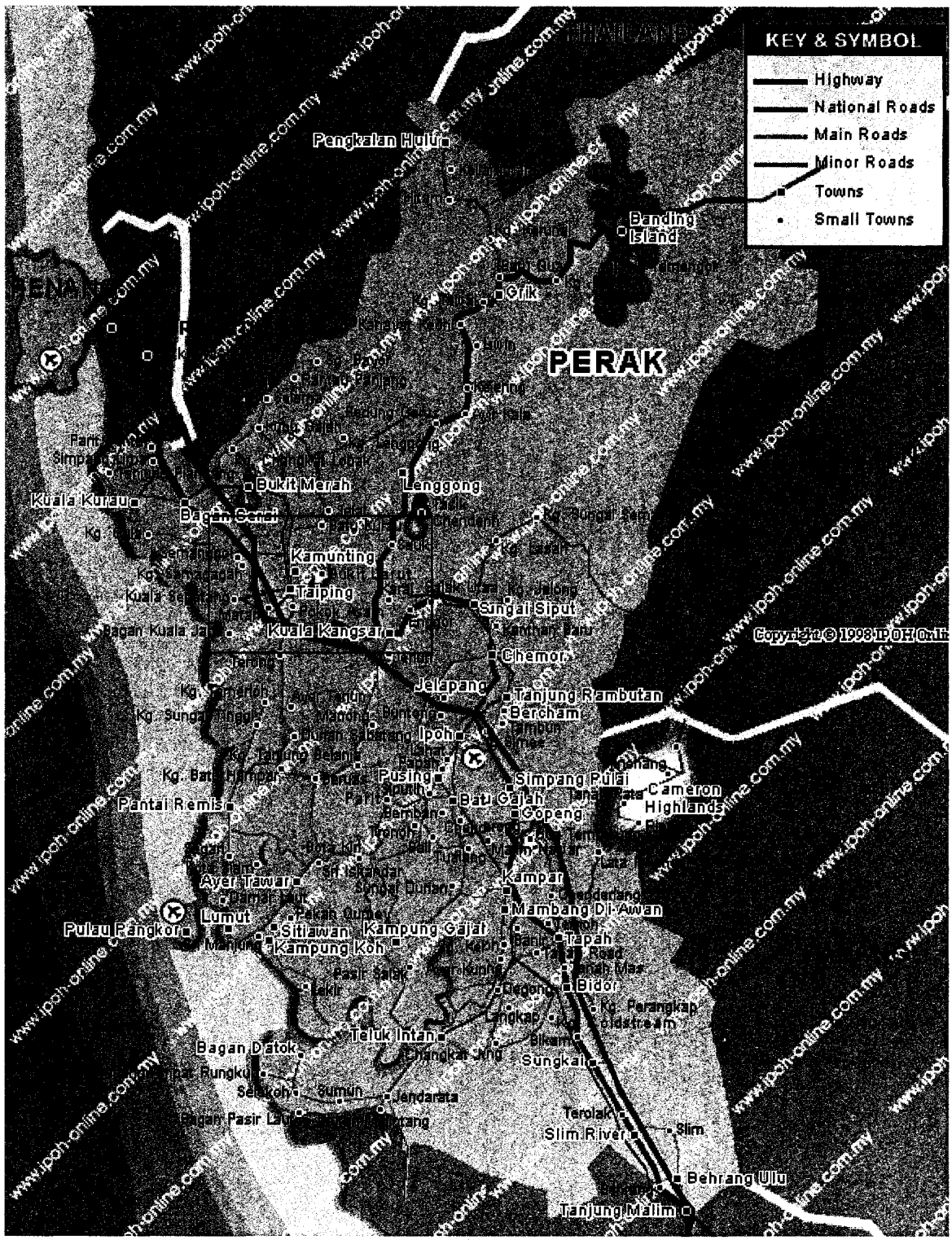


Image used with permission. Courtesy of Ipoh-Online Sdn. Bhd.

winding private road leading up to old colonial bungalows. Bukit Larut preserves 'colonial' ambiance along with cool tranquility. It is a resort that is mainly used for rest and relaxation. It also claims to have the highest rainfall in Peninsular Malaysia.

Figure 2: Taiping: Bukit Larut and Lake Gardens

View from Bukit Larut

Jeep service for going up Bukit Larut

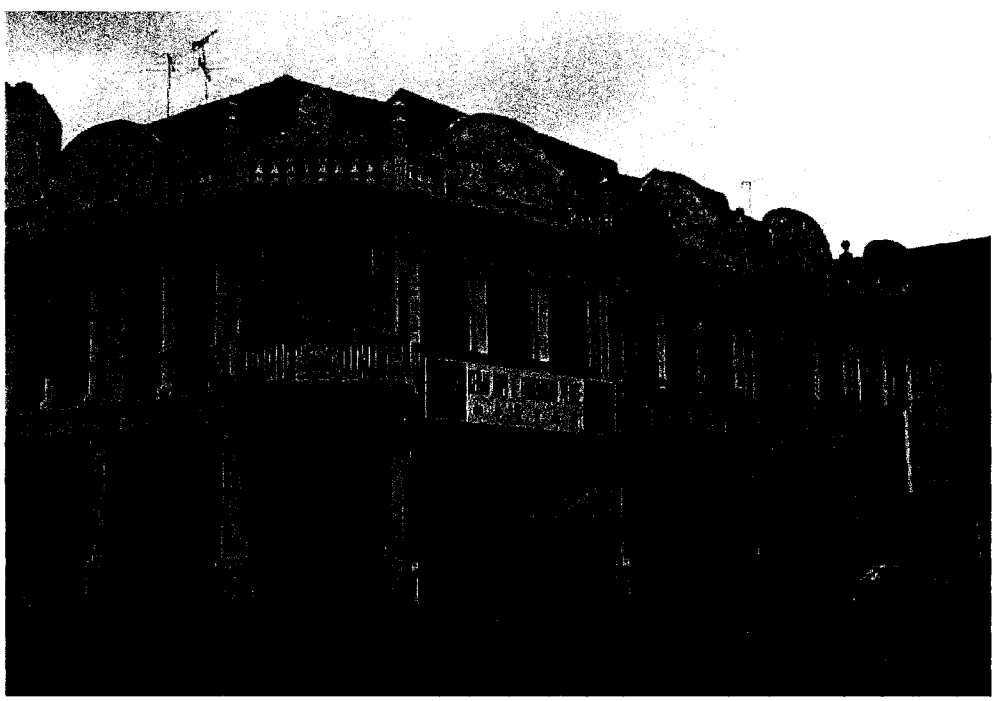
Bukit Larut images are courtesy of Ben van Winjen.
http://www.malaysiasite.nl/malayhouse.htm

Taiping Lake Gardens after a rainfall (Dec. 2002)

Taiping town itself is very small. As children, we used to joke that if we drove in any one direction for over ten minutes and did not reach our destination, we were lost and probably on our way out of town. On weekends, Taiping transforms into a busy, bustling hot spot as people from surrounding kampongs (villages) and smaller towns swarm into

Figure 3: Taiping Town

Shop houses and homes in the fringe of the downtown area (July 2003)



Shops in the main downtown area (July 2003)

Taiping for shopping and recreation. Areas that are popular on weekends are the Supermarkets in the downtown area, the Lake Gardens, Bukit Larut and the local zoo.

Hantus were part of a terrain that was familiar to me, my family and my friends; part of our natural landscape. Hantus did not merely live in cemeteries or haunted buildings. Hantus hung around in kitchens, houses, forests and streets. Hantus were owned by neighbors and family acquaintances. Hantus were part of our social milieu, and we acknowledged their presence in our stories and everyday talk.

My goal in this chapter is to provide the reader a little bit of an idea of what it was like to grow up talking about and living with cerita hantu in Malaysia. In doing so I present a collage of my own memories and experiences as well as of stories collected as part of this research to give an impression of what is cerita hantu, or for that matter, what is hantu or talk about hantu in the Malay world. While I admit that my presentation may not directly reflect every Malaysian's experience of hantu and cerita hantu, I have organized my presentation to display some of the themes that emerged out of my research on cerita hantu (these themes and findings are discussed in Part Two). It is not essential, at this juncture, that the reader is able to retrieve or comprehend the thematic significance of this part of the work in relation to the thesis of the larger enterprise. All I hope for chapter one is simply, though experiencing the stories and talk about the stories, that the reader gets a glimpse as to what it was like to live and grow up with such stories in the Malaysian context.

I organize the rest of this chapter differently from the rest of the dissertation. While I conform to conventional writing standards[3] in the overall writing of this text, in this chapter I use the visual display of words to help tell my story. That is, the way paragraphs, tabs and spaces are used to help 'situate' my collage of stories such that they

aesthetically represent a whole (storied) piece with disjunctured memories and stories that represent connected parts.

It may be helpful at this stage to note that many of the stories and talk about stories (in this dissertation) are either in the Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) or are a mix of Malay, English and other colloquial expressions that incorporate words from other languages (such as Tamil and Chinese). I have translated these sequences. Translations are marked by brackets and tend to follow the translated sequence. Translations for other idiosyncratic markings in the talk sequences (such as a series of periods, like ...., or an underlined part of the story) are either noted in the text or as an endnote.

'Keras' Locations

Through the stories about hantu and references to hantu in conversation, I came to know of the different places in my hometown that were regarded as *keras* (rough), which means places with bad spiritual energy. These are places where hantus not only dwell but also abound. While, as I noted earlier, hantus could be anywhere, these 'keras' places were particularly susceptible to hantus. A place is known as 'keras' if events in its past made it such, hence it becomes viable to hantu. Usually, a place is keras if its past was marked by macabre happenings; for example, former execution grounds (such as during World War II's Japanese occupation), a murder site or home of a black magic practitioner. Hantus also like natural environments such as jungles, caves and lakes.

There are many hantu varieties in the Malay world view (see Hantu Glossary). A number of informants have claimed to have actually *seen* these spirits or corporeal versions of them, interacted with them or touched them. Others merely informed that they knew a hantu was around from sounds, smells and other sensory stimuli picked up

from a particular environment. There are a variety of ways a person could 'know' a hantu.

As a teenager, one of my favorite things to do would be to ride my 150cc Honda motor scooter around the Taiping Lake Gardens. My friends and I would also go to the gardens to feed the long-tailed macaques[4] that frequently ventured out of the jungle in search for food. The Lake Gardens is also an ideal place for dating couples or for people who simply want to be left alone. I remember going to the Lake Gardens quite frequently with my first love.

Figure 4: Macaques in the Lake Gardens

Photograph of me feeding the monkeys at the Lake Gardens (Dec. 2002)

W rarely went to the Lake Gardens after dark and we never swam in the lakes, particularly the large lake in the middle. First, it was not safe; my father repeatedly told me that the Lake Gardens after dark was a place for drug addicts, prostitutes and hantu. Second, strange things happen in the Lake Garden, predominantly at night.

> So," my aunt turns to look at me, "every year at the same time someone drowns in the lake." My uncle responds, "It's the weeds in the water lah – their legs get tangled with it and then *habis* [over] lah." "Hai yah!" My aunt retorts. "If that is all it is, then why does someone drown there the same day every year? It's true!" she looks at me. "Same day, I don't know what day it is but ...I don't know ... there must be something going on with spirits there!"

Figure 5: Hantu Tree Residence

Angsana Trees form a mystical canopy as they droop towards the lake surface. Using their long nails, Hantu Pontianaks are believed to cling on to these trees' lush greenery.

Excerpt from an interview with a 60 year old Malay cook:
The old woman I was interviewing leans forwards and whispers, "Pontianak ...[5] dekat Lake Garden banyak tahu."
[Pontianak ... there are many in the Lake Gardens]
"Ah .. pokok tu dia suka duduk. Dia duduk dalam pokok tu. Hantu Pontianak, orang panggil, kuku paaaanjang. Ahhhh ..."
[In the trees they like to live. They live in those trees. Hantu Pontianak, people call them, loooong nails ... Ahhh.]"

Figure 6: Pagoda by the Large Lake

I am sitting on a bench by the large lake at the Taiping Lake Gardens. (July, 2003)

From an entry in my field notes:
There's a hantu that lives in the large lake; in the deep waters, near the pagoda. Sometimes people look into the water for a long time and then they just fall in because

the hantu lures them into the lake. Her long silvery white hair wraps around the victims legs and she pulls them into the dark depths. That is how the *pondan* (transvestite) died when he fell into the lake. There, you read about it in the papers, what!

An excerpt from a taped conversation between my parents and two friends:
And when I was working there, the spirits affected me also … I told him you know Nicky, every time when I have to go there for meetings, when I drive the car … the car … if I am driving on this side of the road [she points in one direction], is always pulling to the Lake [she points in the opposite direction], to the Gardens [Taiping Lake Gardens] you know. To the Lake itself – I have to drive, I have to turn … I'm going on this side of the road, instead of holding the wheel straight, I have to keep turning the wheel always to the right to keep the car this side. He told me … what did he tell me … your imagination. You imagine … he'd tell me that. You'd imagine it. So one day I was going there for a meeting and he happened to .. normally I'll go and I'll come back, he wanted the car because of the children or something like that. So he said, okay I'll follow you, you drive. When I'm driving, he's asking me why you are always turning your handle [steering wheel]? Why must you turn your handle? Keep your handle straight. Keep the handle straight, going into the Lakes!

Hantus were also known to reside in my high school. I went to Sekolah Mengenah Kebangsaan Convent Kota. The school was established by La Salle Catholic missionaries in the early 1900's, and is located right next to the St. Louis Catholic Church. The school, particularly the women's restroom on the ground floor and the area surrounding the nun's billet was known as 'keras' due to ghost sightings or 'unusual activity.' The school was said to be used as a prison camp by the Japanese during World War II.

I remember being afraid to use the women's restroom by myself. I would always ask a friend to accompany me, and my friends would do the same. We had heard random flushings in empty toilets, signaling ghostly activity. Rumor also had it that the toilet hantu could make a woman go 'amok.'

Figure 7: Women's Toilet in SMK Convent, Taiping

This photograph was taken in Jan. 2003. The women's restroom is highlighted (box).

During recess one time, one of my friends took me to a blocked out area adjacent to the nun's quarters. She pointed at a concrete structure protruding from the ground. It was an old well that was filled up to ground level with concrete. "This was where they chopped off their heads," she said flatly, as we looked into the flat sealed bottom. "The *jaga* (grounds keeper) says sometimes [he] can see people walking around – with no heads!" I wondered if the nuns saw the spirits as well. One day I asked Sister Maria, my catechism teacher, if she saw any of those restless spirits. She said there was no such thing as ghosts. There were only bad angels, spawn of the devil.

Hantus Around Me

While places known as 'keras' were particularly marked for their association with hantu, other parts of everyday life was also privy to hantu inclusion. I often heard stories from relatives and friends who have had their share of close encounters with everyday hantu. These hantu can either be sinister, such as the Langsuyar (vampire), Pelesit or

Polong (both, tiny ghosts) who can inflict harm or death; chaotic tricksters, such as the Hantu Dapur (Kitchen) who blows on the charcoal cooking embers to make large unruly flames, and Toyol, a ghost that steals money and other possessions; or protectors such as the Harimau Keramat (Sacred Tiger) that protects hallowed grounds, and Hantu Songkei (a type of gremlin) that releases animals that are ensnared by humans. It was commonplace to hear stories or talk about hantus in my everyday activity.

A memory:

I waited longer than usual for her. She finally came out of her house, pushing her bicycle. "Hai yah … we'll be late for school lah!" I was irritated. Charlene looked at me, shaking her head, "I waited for that neighbor to go to work before I came out." She looks at a house down the street and continues, "my mother said he has a love charm – got it in Thailand. That's why he brings home a different girl every night." I was curious. "What does it do?" "Ahh …" she replies, "this thing, playing with spirits lah. He has a small bottle of something, like a cream that he puts on a girl." "And then what?" my curiosity is further pricked. "And then she go home with him lah – next day she forgets where she is."

At the end of the interview I shut off my recorder and pack to leave. Kak Maimun, however, is already walking to her front gate. "Come and see!" She calls out to me. I walk out quickly. She points to an area just outside the gate. "Here is it." I see a cluster of two to three flower pots filled with soil and plants. "Here lah they put the thing. They put the hantu here."

During the following interview, Makcik Yah looks at me intently as she tells me there is a vampire in her neighborhood:
And Pontianak …sini ada … this area ada, this area ada. I tak pernah tengok tapi ada orang dah biasa tengok; from there to there dia bunyi tau, Siiuuupp …siuuup … siuuup ..like that, and then burung eh, krikkrik krik, you dengar.
[And Pontianak …here have … this area have, this area have. I have never seen but others have seen; from there to there, it makes a sound, know, Siiuuupp …siuuup … siuuup ..like that, and then bird eh (which accompanies the Pontianak) , krikkrik krik, you hear].

Another memory:

"Ehh? Why like that one?"
"No lah, my mother is angry. She lost some money."
"Lost it?"

"Ya lah, she thinks we took it but we never touch her purse."
"Maybe she just spent it and forgot."
"Nooo, I think it is a Toyol. That's what! Like that day
that woman said, this area here, someone is keeping a Toyol!"
"Are you sure?"
"Yes! Same thing happened to some other neighbors.
Must be a Toyol."

Institute Jantung Negara (National Heart Hospital)
July, 2003, Field Note Entry.
My mother leans over and whispers in my ear. See those two men in the beds across from daddy's bed? The doctor came in this morning to see them. They also have blockages but they are putting off the surgery. Apparently they are going to see a *Bomoh* (spirit mediator or medicine person) first.

A memory:
A young man, a distant relative, came to visit us one day. After he left, my father commented on how glad he was that this young man was doing so well. I asked my father what was the problem with him. My father said that he would eat raw chicken, pull the hair out of his head, and act like a lunatic. It later came to be known that he was inflicted with a spirit, which was meted out by some people in his kampong who wanted him to convert to Islam as the rest of his family members had done so. He left the kampong to live with an aunt, and soon got better.

Nescafe-time Hantu

Many of my memories about ghost stories were related to "Nescafe-time." My parent's friends, Aunty Jaqleen, Uncle Tuan, Aunty Liza and Uncle Peng would stop over at our house or we would go over to their homes for coffee and chit chat. To us, coffee was Nescafe, and Nescafe was the only type of coffee we drank – except for the occasional dip into 'local' coffee when eating at hawker stalls. Malaysian local coffee is thick, smooth and black, usually heavily sweetened with heaping spoonfuls of condensed milk. We drank Nescafe.

Joanne, my youngest sister made the Nescafe when my parents friends visited us – they said she had the 'right touch.' She knew the right amount of instant coffee and

milk to put into steaming hot water. We joked that it was the clanking sound she made when stirring coffee that made it so good. Some of my most vivid memories of cerita hantu are associated with Nescafe-time – that was the time we told stories.

Figure 8: Nescafe-time in December 1989

My uncle, you know, had the third eye. He could see the spirits around us. That's why he never liked to go to the hospital – until the day he died, refused to go to the hospital – he said he could see ghosts walking around, two, three people sitting on the bed at the same time. (A memory)

From a taped family talk session with Uncle Peng and Aunty Liza:

Uncle Peng: I still remember when, once I was young eh, that time, is small, used to play eh .. this police and thief you know ...like hide and seek ah. So last time we were staying, at the hospital quarters ... the barracks y'know. Err, behind there's one row of toilets one, know like that, not the attachment...

Aunty Liza: Public toilets

Uncle Peng: So at night time we go and hide behind the toilets and all that lah. Myself and my friendlah, one Malay boy lah ... went and hide near the toilet ah. When we approached the toilet, suddenly a ball of fire, from the back ... the, the opening there, last time have bucket system eh?

Cheryl: Hmmm ...

Uncle Peng: Ahh from there it shhhooot out you know. That fire, got tail one you know. Phhoooo ... fly like that ... and my friend got sick.

Ahh ... my school ... my student, went and played .. a group of them lah ... played with the coins. Spirit of the coins. He died! (remark taken from an interview with Aunty Liza)

Your classmate Annabel, I spoke with her mother after Church. It seems there's a Datuk that lives in Annabel's house. These ghosts are house protectors. Her mother is very sensitive to these things so, they converted one of the rooms to a prayer room and he has not disturbed them since. (A memory)

From a taped family talk session:
Malays also believe ahh .. there's another world running parallel with ours, you know. A very holy man – and every evening, of late, they found that he is missing from the house. Couldn't find him, you know. Then he come back the next day. And then eh, the wife eh, suddenly suspected something you know. It seems eh, they followed him eh ... he walks ..walks towards the jungle fringe ... and then he gets lost. He juuust .. hilang (disappeared) lah. Then we can't see him anymore. ... they believe ah that he has gone into the ... they say ah... this one eh .. dunia putih, you know. Where ah .. the place all white you know. The trees are white, the people are very good. All those are holy people. Otherwise they keep him in the house, he feels very restless, he wants to go only. They say eh .. if he goes there, and you meet a girl, and you get married there, you won't come back.

Figure 9: Hantu in a Jar

Picture shown in a local Malaysian Newspaper (New Straits Times) in 2001.

From a Memory:

Audrey: Did you see it?
Cheryl: See what?
Audrey: In the paper today, there's a picture of a hantu someone caught. It is in a bottle – they are going to throw it in the sea.

From an interview with Aunty Jaqleen who now lives in Kuala Lumpur:
Aunty Jaqleen leans back and takes a deep drag from her mentholated cigarette before she continues, "What they discovered was that my mother, that time, had a boyfriend .... see. That was the second husband lah. So she, apparently, was playing charm, you know. She used to go to the Chinese temple and get some kind of this ..talisman or whatever. This is my aunty's story lah. So, how .. somehow it must have backfired, I do not know. So, when she was with this charm, the Christians would call it what, unclean what, right? So just before we went for the holiday, the bungalow [by the beach], she went next door, to the next door neighbor's house to do some sewing. This next door man is actually a Bomoh. Uncle Ali, he's actually a Bomoh. But he's a good Bomoh. He cures people's sickness and this and that. His wife had just delivered a baby, and the wife apparently was going like, was already going like a bit hysterical ... with this Pontianak (vampire) in her. So he was at that time processing ... trying to push the spirit out of her. And my mother passed [the house], so they say the first person [it encounters], the spirit will hang on. So that's how it went to my mother.

Divinations and Warnings

Inasmuch as I heard and spoke of hantu, I was also taught the proper etiquette to deal with hantu, so as to not incur the attention of the hantu that proliferated my social landscape. I learned to treat large trees and objects such as rocks and landscapes with respect. I knew to avoid areas that were 'keras' and to not insult hantu by making fun of them or speaking of them flippantly. When living in Malaysia, I followed my father's mantra, which was simple, "Don't play with them and they won't play with you."

A relative once *warned* me:
Eh … you know ah, if you go somewhere and the road is really really unusually gelap (dark) – that means there might be a Hantu Raya there!

"Hello?"
"Hello, is this Cheryl."
"Ya, what's up?"
"Ayy, my father is angry with me lah."
"Why?"
"He knows we went swimming at Mah Ko Tiong one lah."
"How did he know? Who told him?"
"No one told him. He just knew! He said he dreamt of it."
"What!"
"Ya lah. He said he saw us swimming and he saw spirits in the water trying to pull our legs so that we will drown."
"Really ah?"
"Ya, he said if we were not wearing on our crucifixes, gone case lah, you know that area is very bad one – got a lot of bad energy lah."
(Memory of a conversation with my best friend)

(Another memory)
It's a good thing Uncle Billy had his rosary in the pocket. If not, he would have died, the Bomoh said. He got sooo sick … high fever, shivering, and the doctors also could not find out what was wrong with him. That's what, when you go into the jungle, be careful where you step.

(A memory of a conversation with a relative)
"What?"
"Shhh … don't say anything?"
"Why … I .."
"Hai yah … just keep quietlah. After I tell you."

(Later)
"When you feel got something one, like got something unusual, must not say anything. If you say something, then that thing will come to you. Just keep quiet, act like don't know only."

(An excerpt from my field notes)
"Hey," I nudge my brother, "it's a hot day. Let's go swimming. I haven't been to Burmese Pool (hillside stream and waterfall area) in years. Baby (my two year old god daughter) will love it and we can bring a picnic." My brother does not look excited. He shakes his head, "I don't like bringing her to these types of places lah. You know what happened to Raymond right?" Raymond was one of my brother's closest high school friends. They were both altar boys at St. Louis Catholic Church. "Nooo, what happened to Raymond?"
"Well, he went swimming ... I think to Burmese Pool lah, or maybe the other one. I'm not sure but anyway, he went quite high up into the hill. Then when he came back, his legs started getting bengkak (swelling up). So big lah they became, like tree trunks!"
"Really ah? What happened to him?" I wondered, as I tried to not smile over a mental image of Raymond with large legs.
"He went to Taping Hospital but they could not find anything wrong with him, went to the private clinic, also don't know what's wrong. He could not walk. His father had to carry him around."
"Then what happened?" I wondered.
"Oh, some neighbors told his father that bengkak legs like his happen a lot to people who make spirits angry. So the father finally went to see a Bomoh. It seems when he went swimming, Raymond went and peed in the jungle, by a tree. The tree spirit, this is a jungle hantu, got angry with him."
"So ... how was he cured?"
"They did some kind of kenduri (offering or celebration) and his father had to carry him up the hill to apologize to the jungle spirit[6]. Next day, the swelling was gone. Ahhh ... you ask him lah, when you see him in Church this Sunday. He'll tell you."
"Ai yo," I shake my head, "he should know better than to do that in the jungle."

Hantus were all around us and we acknowledged them in our talk and in our stories. Our stories operated as a way to attend to and organize our experience about hantu and their part in our surrounding everyday world, as well as socialize others on how to deal with hantu. Through talk I came to know the different types of hantu, along with their unique stories; these I will share in the following section where I talk about of some of the more popular hantu in the Malay world view.

Getting to Know Hantu Melayu

The next section is primarily based on information gathered through the course of my research on hantu Melayu (field notes, interviews and secondary material such as colonial writings and magazines featuring cerita hantu).[7] Hantus in the next section were chosen because they kept surfacing as protagonists in my notes and research material. The selection does not reflect, either my personal disposition towards these hantu, or any specific preference for a particular characteristic, such as the hantu's sex or temperament.

Hantu Raya

Hantu Raya is known as one of the "great hantus" or hantu associated with the elements such as land, jungles and seas. Hantu Rayas are summoned to function as "replacements" for their (usually male) owners. The Hantu Raya will take on the form of the owner to do plantation work and to make it appear as though the owner is at a particular place at a particular time. The Hantu Raya also guards the owner's property (spouse(s), home and plantation).

Figure 10: Hantu Raya Magazine Cover

The Hantu Raya wreaks illness on trespassers and people who aim to harm its owner. The Hantu Raya feeds on eggs and human blood (usually the owner's blood).

In its ghostly form, it is known for its blood red eyes. When a Hantu Raya is not under a human's ownership or is not appeased by human ownership, it becomes a malicious wandering spirit who can inflict harm on those who cross its path. Hantu Rayas are known to transform into a person and perform all of that person's duties, including sexual relations with that person's husband or wife. Rootless Hantu Rayas tend to settle in jungles and deserted places such as empty houses.

Pontianak

Figure 11: Pontianak Effigy

Photograph taken at the Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara, Malaysia, July 2002

The Pontianak is one of the most popular ghosts in the Malay world-view. She is a female vampire who either sucks humans' blood with her long fangs, or tears out their stomach with her long fingernails (she feeds on the blood that streams out of the wound). She is a ghost that was formerly human but had an unhappy death during childbirth. In her ghost form, she is usually garbed in white robes and has long flowing black hair. She looks malevolent: her face is

marked by scars and she constantly wears on a snarling expression.

The Pontianak is known for the sound she makes when she is in the vicinity. When she is flying over places, people hear a "swooshing" sound (like leaves rustling). Malay storytellers claim that the sound is made from the swirling of her hair and robes; The Pontianak flies facing the sky. Her hair and robes tend to flap against each other, trees, rooftops and other tall objects, making a rustling sound. When she is close by or about to attack, she makes a loud shrieking sound, "Nnnyahhh ..hah..haha.." In order to stop women from becoming Pontianaks when they die in childbirth, Malay people place glass beads into the corpses' mouth (so that she cannot shriek), eggs under the corpses armpits and needles into their palms and joints (so that she cannot fly).

The Pontianak can transform into human form. If the Pontianak is caught, a nail driven into the nape of her neck can easily make her human. In human form the Pontianak epitomizes female beauty and behavior ideals. She is not only beautiful but can be the perfect wife, mother and daughter to anyone who owns her (ownership occurs during the nail piercing). Some storytellers tell me stories of children who find a nail in the back of their mother's neck while combing her hair. Since the Pontianak cannot direct a person to remove the nail, the child or person who discovers the nail has to take the initiative in its removal, thus releasing the Pontianak from her human form.

Hantu Penangallan

Hantu Penangallan lives in the human body. It is docile by day but becomes active at night. To perform its ghostly duties, the hantu separates the head (of the body it possesses) along with the entrails, and goes in search for blood – not ordinary

Figure 12: Penangallan Effigy

Photograph taken at the main entrance to
Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition),
Museum Negara, Malaysia, July 2002

blood but "dirty blood" – placenta from childbirth, and menstruation blood. Informants have claimed to have either seen a floating head with strings of entrails billowing behind it, or a bright ball of light that frequents places such as maternity wards in the local hospitals and public toilets. When Hantu Penangallan sucks your blood; you go under its spell. Many of the Malay kampong folk plant pineapple and *mengkuang* (screw-pine) bushes under their homes (these houses are usually supported on stilts) to ward off the Hantu Penangallan, which would lurk under kampong homes when a pregnant woman is due to deliver. Pineapple and mengkuang bushes have large thorny leaves that tend to get tangled with the hantu's entrails, and so these hantu avoid

Figure 13: Malay Kampong House

Image used with permission.
Courtesy of Ben Van Winjen.
http://www.malaysiasite.nl/malayhouse.htm

such environments. Young women are taught to stomp on their sanitary napkins while having a bath or shower, before disposing of those napkins, to prevent the Hantu Penangallan from possessing them.

Toyol

The Toyol is a ghost thief. It is said to be a dead baby that has been revived through some demonic ritual. This small creature, which serves the person who has revived it, is said to be greenish or brown in color with red eyes. This hantu feeds on small amounts of blood – usually out of its owner's big toe, when the owner is sleeping.

Figure 14: Toyol Effigy in a Glass Case

Photograph taken at the Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara, Malaysia, July 2002

The Toyol is also believed to be somewhat mischievous. If commanded to steal, it will only take half of the victim's treasure (money, gold, jewelry). Some informants tell me that most people either 1) inherit the Toyol from a friend or family member or 2) buy the Toyol. Interestingly, some folk claim that Toyols are bought in Mecca – there's a point during the Haj, when the pilgrim will have to remove all his or her evil possessions. Many Toyols are left in these particular places in Mecca. These Toyols are then caught by ghost-experts, only to be re-sold.

The Toyol only steals up to the amount that was used to purchase it, and will not steal everything (it will always leave some treasure behind). To ward off the Toyol, Malays leave out green peas and marbles since the Toyol loves to play with these items, and will be distracted from stealing.

Orang Bunyian

Orang Bunyian are spirits that live in an unseen dimension of the human world. Orang Bunyian are also known as Hantu Bunyi-Bunyian (making sounds) as these ghosts are often heard but not seen. Informants claim to have heard hordes of people moving around and chatting around them, but no one is present. When people go missing in the jungle, some Malays believe that they have been taken by Orang Bunyian who have transported them into their dimension. Orang Bunyian can either be benevolent or wicked. They have been known to help people find their way out of jungles, give travelers treasures or leading people astray in jungles and causing road mishaps.

A number of my informants told me of an occasion when Orang Bunyian were upset with the Malay government for building a major highway over their village. They responded by causing a number of accidents leading to death on a specific stretch of the highway. A Bomoh was called in to negotiate relocation with the Orang Bunyian.

My informants claim that empty school buses were sent out to a designated area to pick up the Orang Bunyian for transfer to Pahang. The bus drivers reported that they could feel the Orang Bunyian climb on board, and so a number of empty *but heavy* buses made their way to Pahang.

Figure 15: Orang Bunyian Sighting

Bahrul namun sedikitpun tidak dihiraukan oleh Saleh.

"Alah, biar ajelah. Dia nak gi buang air kot," kata salah seorang teman Bahrul yang turut berada di situ.

"Eh! Kalau nak gi buang airpun, buat apa ke sana? Kat kantin ni kan ada tandas," jawab Bahrul kehairanan.

Melihat Saleh yang sudah hilang di sebalik blok asrama tersebut, Bahrul terus berlari menuju ke tempat Saleh berjalan tadi.

Hati Bahrul tertanya-tanya ke mana tujuan Saleh. Dia syak ada sesuatu telah berlaku kepada kawannya itu kerana apabila dipanggil, Saleh seakan tidak mendengari. Lagipun, apa pula tujuan Saleh pergi ke belakang blok asrama itu? Bukankah di situ hanya ada longkang.

Sampai di tepi blok asrama itu, kelibat Saleh sudah tidak kelihatan.

Bahrul berjalan menyusuri longkang di tepi blok asrama tersebut. Semak semua separas dada terpaksa diredah oleh Bahrul.

Selepas beberapa minit berjalan, akhirnya dari jauh kelihatan Saleh sedang duduk berjuntai kaki di kawasan empat sagi pertemuan dua laluan longkang itu.

Bahrul menghampiri Saleh. Namun, dia berhenti seketika memerhatikan gelagat temannya itu. Bahrul lihat, Saleh seperti sedang bercakap. Tetapi, suara Saleh tidak kedengaran. Hanya mulutnya yang terkumat-kamit.

"Saleh, kau buat apa kat sini?" tanya Bahrul tetapi Saleh tidak menjawab pertanyaan itu bahkan, langsung tidak memandang ke arah Bahrul.

Melihat keadaan itu, Bahrul merapati Saleh.

"Jom, kita balik," ajak Bahrul sambil menggoncang bahu Saleh.

"Balik mana?" tiba-tiba Saleh bertanya.

"Balik rumah kitalah, di Puchong."

"Eh! Aku sekarang dah ada kat rumah. Nilah rumah aku," jawab Saleh.

Matahari sudah mula terbenam. Sebentar lagi, hari akan gelap tetapi

A local magazine reports that an Orang Bunyian Princess tried to lure a young Malay man (red cap) into her world. She was speaking with him near the monsoon drain in the picture above. He escaped her prowess when his friend (in the black cap) intervened.

An adaptation of the Orang Bunyian is the Jinn Islam (Islamic Djinn) who appears as a holy and respectable person, having completed the haj pilgrimage. The Djinn Islam reprimands Muslims who do not behave according to Islamic teachings.

Dissertation Overview

My interest in Malay cerita hantu, for purposes of this dissertation, holds primarily to the way these narratives are used in everyday conversation by Malaysia's Malay community as a way to talk about their social reality. I choose to examine cerita hantu holistically which is to say that my exploration into ghost stories does not only attend to these stories' content or their semiotic, but also of the performative, interactive

and contextual elements in the telling of the story, which situate these stories as reality navigators.

This dissertation is divided into two parts. In Part One I discuss the literature associated with narrative as a way to make a case for how narrative influences human social reality. This discussion culminates with a rationale for doing a study such as this. My argument emerges at the intersection of monologic and interactive perspectives to understanding storytelling. Specifically, my intention is to observe how social reality is exhibited in the intercises of performance, setting and interaction. In my writing, I stress how both the monologic and interactive perspectives should be understood in terms of each other. The contribution of this study is to recognize the functional and organic associations between the monologic sphere, the interactive sphere and the performative sphere of storytelling. In Part One I also provide background information on the Malay world view along with an account of Malaysian history and its belief systems. What I have discussed so far sets up the argument I make related to the study of cerita hantu in association with Malaysian social reality. I finally discuss my research agenda which methodically utilizes ethnography and critical analysis.

In Part Two, I discuss my research findings. My analysis is based on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (particularly his concept of the working consensus) and frame analysis. For my analysis, I use strips of talk from cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu which I collected from interactions while in the field. I show how in interactive sequences, the interactants' working consensus (as situated in a particular interaction) and (in some cases keyed) primary frameworks operates both, as 1) a sense-making device for the interactants, and 2) an intervention for meanings as formulated in interaction. In my

analysis I demonstrate how talk can be used to situate social reality for the Malay community in terms of Malays' relationship with the environment, each other, their belief systems, and with hantu. I conclude by summarizing this study and addressing future directions of both the phenomenon at hand, as well as of academic application.

Author's Notes

1. I used pseudonyms for all participants in this research with a few exceptions: I do not use a pseudonym for myself, my partner, and members of my direct family (parents, brothers and sisters) who approved the use of their real names for this project.
2. Throughout the entire text I use gender-fair language; however, in quotation the original language will be maintained. This is not to be taken as an endorsement of their gendered text approach, but rather a decision to leave the authors' work in the authors' original words and context so as not to misrepresent the author or the content of his or her work. Many of these authors completed their work before the acceptance of gender-fair language within academic writings. It is my hope that should these works be revised, the authors will choose gender-fair language in their new editions.

CHAPTER

2

Why Study Malaysian Cerita Hantu?

In this chapter I provide an overview of the (predominantly Western) literature on narrative, particularly in terms of how narrative is associated with social reality. I also explore the way Malaysian scholars have studied Malay narrative and everyday talk. These efforts by Malaysian scholars are important as they give introspective academic attention to the operations of folklore and oral narratives from the Malay perspective. While Malaysian scholars offer a good foundation on storytelling tradition and mechanics within Malay society, their work (principally in the classification of cerita hantu as memorates, which I discuss at length in this chapter) tends to be entrenched in the literary tradition, which is to say that storytelling is positioned as monologues transmitted by a storyteller to a presumably inactive audience. I argue here that such a view is problematic as it tends to essentialize culture and regard reality as a fixed entity. Further, as I note in the onset of this chapter, storytelling as community activity is a collaborative venture between audience and storyteller. My discussion of these limitations in existing research on Malay narratives underlines my rationale for my research on cerita hantu. I conclude the chapter with the research questions.

Narratives, Identity and Reality

Early Western linguistic anthropologists (Boas, 1940; Sapir, 1985; Whorf, 1956) linked language to humans' perception of self and culture, emphasizing the significance of language (and communication) within the formation, negotiation, disruption,

maintenance and reification of human social reality. This scholarship, as well as the work of Wittgenstein, Austin and others (Mandelbaum, 2003), propelled communication scholars to embrace the idea of language as a central axis to the workings of communication in the negotiation of the human self and social world. Mandelbaum (2003) explains that this focus on language created interest not only toward the study of structure and syntax in language, but also of language formations such as narratives, and how narratives interact with culture and frames of "reality."

The idea that "reality" is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966) provides the groundwork upon which communication scholars have suggested communication's centrality to the construction of human social identity. Embedded in our talk are different texts of identity (Shotter & Gergen, 1989) that situate and construct realities about self, others as well as the surrounding environment.

I define social reality here as that which a particular group considers "real" or part of their perceived truth of their world. I argue that social reality is constituted in communication, and in turn communicative behavior is constituted by social reality. World views, cultural belief systems, social truths and what is represented as a "natural" part of being are synonymous to social reality.

Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation helps convey the relationship between communication and a social reality around identity: By "hailing" someone (communicating something to or addressing a person), we not only "situate" him or her into a particular identity category (based on our relationship with that person, or the language we use to acknowledge him or her, such as Sir, Professor, Miss, Mum, hey you; including paralinguistic cues and nonverbal gestures such as facial expressions and

gestures) but we also establish and reify that person's existence (because I have been hailed, I exist). Althusser's theory of "hailing" clearly connects to communication's association with human identity.[8]

Mead (1934, see also Blumer, 1969; Manis & Metzler, 1972) contends that the human self within any given culture is shaped by the group's communication processes. Symbolic interactionism, according to Mead, is reliant on the notion that a social unit is comprised of individuals who make indications to themselves, that human action is constructed in interaction and group or collective meanings arise from the consensus of meaning around individual action made available through the interpretation processes. In Goffman's work[9] (1974, 1981), I find trajectories which seem similar to Mead's theorizing: that social interaction is a formulating propeller of the social self and in consequence, constructive of society. Goffman shows how the use of language is dependent on the interaction structure and context. Speech behavior "fits into" the interaction organization based on choices of behavior as well as of syntagmatic[10] and paradigmatic[11] dimensions that are accessible to the people involved in the interaction.

The speech resources available in a speech community as well as how interactants use such resources in their pattern of interaction are important issues in how participants derive meaning from everyday behavior; therein outlining what Hymes (1974) considers layers of language contexts[12] where meanings take shape within a speech community. These (Hymesian) contextual layers define the narrative act and shape the overall meaning that derives from a particular talk sequence. Communicators are recognized as "competent" members of the group on the basis of visible communication patterns recognized by the group as synonymous to behavior typical of group members.

Wieder's (1974) research on "telling the convict code" helps convey this idea of how, to use Hymesian terminology, a *speech community*[13] uses the hermeneutic of its communication system to organize its shared experience.[14] In traditional ethnography, normative constructs (such as rules) operates as an explanation for human behavior. Wieder takes his inquiry a step further than the conventional. He shows how normative constructs not only operate to describe human behavior (usually by making such behavior visible for retrieval) but also how ethnographers can better explicate their own understanding of such behavior, by making sense of how normative constructs are accounted for in the context of a particular talk occasion.

Wieder (1974) examined the behaviors in a halfway house for paroled narcotic offenders and found references to something called a "code" (of conduct, known also as the "convict code") which sketched out an array of behaviors in which residents should and should not participate. References to the code as well as references to deviance from the code were visible in everyday interaction. Wieder found that not only was the code used as an interpretive device for residents, but invocation of the code came with consequences. By talking about the code residents and staff 'persuasively' used the code to both, deliberate about and devise the code. In this case, the code was used as an accounting device for formulating social realities around conduct among staff and residents at the halfway house.

Wieder (1974) also recognized that as a participant in a social situation, and keeping in mind the framework where normative constructs operate as a directive for social behavior (i.e. how social actors are inclined to respond to an action in a particular

situation), the researcher actively comprises his or her observations out of "reflexive and indexical features[15]" made available in the research situation.

Wieder's (1974) work has been very influential in my own research undertakings (aside from this last discussion on the role of language in the construction of social reality, I also discuss his influence on my epistemological stance as ethnographer, see chapter four). His theoretical perspectives have helped provide the groundwork that paved the path of my attention to the works of Erving Goffman, which I use extensively in this writing. Goffman's works are mainly discussed in Part Two of this manuscript. In the next section, I focus my attention on the literature on the subject of storytelling in general, and of the Malay world-view in specific.

Social Reality in Storytelling Context, Performance and Interaction

Within the context of everyday talk, narratives (Langellier, 1989) are used to reflect the social organization of both, the community and the individual's cultural reality. Membership (social) reality is negotiated in forms of talk, such as narratives. Similar ideas were developed by symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists (see earlier discussion on Mead and Wieder's elucidation on language and reality). That is, we come to understand ourselves, our actions and our world as stories.

The narratives used by individuals within a particular speech community can give the researcher a unique insight into the cultural organization of that community. The idea that language is a semiotic system that not only tells us about, but also influences a culture's organization of beliefs, values and norms is the position I take in this study to come to terms with how narratives in general, and *cerita hantu* (Malay ghost narratives)

in particular, create, negotiate, disrupt, maintain and reify a/many reality/ies in and around identity and the Malay world view.

Carr (1986) explains that personal and cultural identities are both based in narrative. Narratives operate at the intersection of self and group identity in processes of constitution and negotiation. Carr notes how identity is negotiated in myths (such as origin myths) and stories that have extended through time. Carr stresses that a perceived reality around a particular "existence" of a group or individual depends on self-constituting narratives that tend to have a constant and consistent viewpoint, revealed in the way people re-narratize events through time.

Similarly, Fisher (1985, 1987) states that in spite of social sciences' epistemological preponderance on rationality[16] humans know what they know via the act of "telling" or communication (hence, his description of humans as *homo-narrans* or storytellers). In his extrapolation of the "Narrative Paradigm," Fisher explains how people evaluate their world on the basis of the coherence (does the story make sense?) and fidelity (does the story correspond with my own experiences?) negotiated in their stories about their world. The world, in a sense, is comprised of different sets of stories from which people choose. People evaluate the meanings of the many or different narratives they encounter; often comparing narratives to each other. In their negotiation of reality, people accept or reject narratives on the basis of the perceived coherence and fidelity associated with those narratives. In short, the interpretation of stories influences the way those stories impact world view. Therefore, narratives cannot be simply didactic or descriptive; instead, the narrative paradigm favors reasoned interpretation of culture, history, human values or belief systems, and, aesthetic conditions.

Arnett and Arneson (1999) note how the narrative paradigm adds a dimension of rationality to storytelling; that is, if a story has the features of coherence and fidelity, and if it had been used by a large number of people who agree that the story is reasonable, the story is communal property, and becomes "real." Hence, they add, these narratives can be considered negotiated constituents of social reality.

In her review of communication literature associated with reality construction and narratives, Mandelbaum's (2003) notes that storytelling can be used as a methodology to come to terms with how humans understand themselves and their world. Mandelbaum draws from Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory and others (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Mishler, 1995) to explain how narratives have come to be closely linked to the manner in which humans' organize their culture, social knowledge, and experiences (see also Ellis & Beatty, 1986). Thus, narratives can be analyzed to observe how people talk about their social reality. Mishler (1986), for example, shows how a narrative framework comprised of four criteria (orientation, abstract, complicating action and resolution) can be accessed in accordance to the conventions of literary methodology.

Mandelbaum (2003) points out that "Metanarratives," "Grand Narratives" or "grand récits" are typically used by societies to describe the way norms, social rules and ways of living are organized. She references Czarniawska (1997) who stated that the idea that we see our lives as stories (which corresponds with Fisher's 1987 and Gergen's, 1991 claims) can be found in a number of texts throughout history. Campbell's (1988) research on myth in general and of the "monomyth" particularly, is an example that shows how myth (stories) intersects with both history and cultural reality. These

theoretical proposals shed light on the crucial role of storytelling on human identity and the processes by which social reality is produced.

While "stories" are typically located as a "talk sequence" or talk formation usually based on "past experience" (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) or what Polanyi (1985a) notes to be a course of time in a particular context - the "telling" of the story occurs within a "current" or "occasioned" temporal-spatial plane which is usually marked by the presence of interactants (speaker and audience). Mandelbaum (2003) laments that current scholarship gives little attention to the distinction between the "telling" of a past event and audience "interaction" within a present storytelling event: According to Mandelbaum (2003), some scholars argue that narratives seem to be "structured by the experience they recount" (Fisher, 1985; Georges, 1969; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Polanyi, 1985b) or "structur*ing* the experience they recount" (Ong, 1982) as opposed to being constructed within the interaction through which they are produced.

Mandelbaum (2003) examined an array of work on narrative in different social science[17] traditions to find that narratives were predominantly viewed as "monologues" in both colloquial speech and within academic writings. Monologic conceptions in narratives arise from an academic tradition that emerges from the literary paradigm. Mandelbaum explains that while narratives are a useful and powerful metaphor for understanding human behavior and cultural realities, the monological approach to the study of narratives has two major limitations: First, narratives are viewed as a speech sequence created by a speaker or author for one or many listener(s) and audience, often prior to the occasion of its telling; and second, narratives are considered an activity primarily conducted by a teller to a somewhat passive audience or listener. In both these

cases, narratives are regarded to flow primarily in a unidirectional mode, from speaker to listener.

More recently, language and communication scholars (Brenneis, 1984; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Hill, 1995; Koven, 2002; Langellier, 1989) have explored the complexity surrounding the study of narratives, particularly of the role of narratives within the interactive process. These scholars, along with Mandelbaum (2003) agree that the focus on narrative primarily as a monologic text over-simplifies that way in which narratives are construed.

The storytelling occasion is marked by the presence of people involved in that particular "storytelling" interaction. In other words, stories are typically told *to* someone, in the *presence of* someone, or *with* someone. As such, the mere act of storytelling would be, in terms developed by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967), a *communication activity*, where all parties involved in the storytelling event are, in some form or other, interacting with each other. In short, as long as there are interactants (listeners, recipients, audience, storytellers), stories cannot be monologues.

When we regard storytelling as a communication activity, we position storytelling as a collaborative venture between tellers and listeners (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). Mandelbaum (1989; 2003) notes that stories structured within the interaction do not function only as an entertainment tool or a narration of past events. Instead, stories are produced as a method for possibly taking on a variety of other activities.[18] Goodwin (1984) explains how during the storytelling occasion, the story structure can be used by participants to organize themselves in relation to each other while Wilson (1989) adds that collaborative storytelling can be used to maintain topic preference and speaking

rights. Moerman (1988) and Gumperz (1995), along with Sacks, Jefferson and Schegloff (1995) and other conversation analysts pay particular attention to the organization of the beginnings and endings of stories, and the way that beginnings and endings are facilitated by and fitted to the preceding and succeeding interaction.

Written Accounts of Malay Magic and Hantu

A considerable number of "pioneering" texts related to Malay spiritual beliefs and magical systems were written in the nineteen and early twentieth century; a time where science or the "quest for knowledge" was romanticized by European nations, especially the British (published books include works by Annandale & Nelson, 1903, 1904; Cuisinier, 1936; Gimlette, 1929; Skeat, 1900; Skeat & Blagden, 1906; Swettenham, 1895; Wilkinson, 1906; Winstedt, 1925, 1961). The people who wrote these texts were, as Barzun (1975) notes, thirsting for new (scientific) knowledge and new conquests, where the values driving such pursuit were pragmatism and industry. Endicott (1970) states that aside from the published books, reports detailing Malay "magical" beliefs were mainly published in journals such as *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (see Ahmad, 1922; Annandale, 1903; Blagden, 1896; Maxwell, 1883; Winstedt, 1922, 1924). This period was termed the *Romanticist Movement* (Barzun, 1975; Sweeney, 1987). After the Romanticist Movement, studies on Malay magic and Malay ghosts were not as numerous. The works that have been generated post-1930 have come mainly from Malay scholars[19] (Haji Mokhtar, 1979a, 1979b; Hamid, 1964; Kasimin, 1997; Moain, 1990; Osman, 1972, 1982, 1991, Sweeney, 1987) and Western anthropologists (Benjamin, 1979; De Danaan, 1984; Endicott, 1970; Firth, 1967, 1974; Laderman, 1991; McHugh, 1955; Paletz, 1996; Provencher, 1979). In most of these

writings, hantu and cerita hantu were not directly addressed. These topics were only used in relation of how they interacted with the phenomenon with which the writers were dealing.[20] Further, few address the association between cerita hantu and Malay social reality, and the works that do acknowledge some connection between these two phenomena tend to treat cerita hantu in literary terms, that is, as monologues.

McHugh's (1955) seminal work detailing hantu in Malaya proved to be one of very few studies that have focused on ghost beliefs (and the account of ghost beliefs) without treating these beliefs as peripheral matter within the larger "magic" or "supernatural" framework. McHugh provides a comprehensive report on the different types of ghosts in the Malay world. His differentiation between the different types of Malay ghosts is based on the ghosts' association with a place, function, or role. His ghost classification can easily be summarized in Table 1. Aside from these spirit-classifications, McHugh also discussed the role of *Pawangs* and *Bomohs* who are mediators between the spirit and human world. In their writings McHugh and others

Table 1:

McHugh's Classification of Hantu

Types of Hantu	Description
1) The Great Hantus also known as *the Elementals*	These are hantus that are linked to the earth, jungle and sea. They are powerful, forceful and can be malevolent. If not cared for with fitting ceremony, they can inflict harm and tragedy on humans. They can take on various forms, which McHugh explains, "from a blackened tree-stump which may suddenly assume human form to others which appear as human beings 10 or 15 feet high. There are those which

	appear as heads alone, without feet or hands, others half animal half human, others which materialize as monkeys or as fire (p. 23-24)" Some examples of elementals are Hantu Pemburu, Hantu Lembong and Hantu Rimba. (See glossary for a description of these hantus)
The Personal Hantus	These hantus are smaller in stature and tend to operate in close proximity with humans, yet these hantus can be as evil as the elementals, and in many cases, as powerful. These hantus are usually "created" by humans and are argued to project human malice and cruelty. These hantus are more common than the elementals. Hantu Pelesit, Hantu Polong, Hantu Penangallan and Langsuyar are all Personal Hantus.
Village and Household Hantus	Hantus that haunt villages and homes are included in this category. Some of these hantus are also regarded as Personal Hantus. These hantus can be evil but many are also tricksters and are known for their acts of chicanery on humans. Some of these hantus may also be good spirits that work to help humans. Some examples of village and household hantus are Hantu Dapor, Hantu Keramat, Pontianak, Puchong, Hantu Songkei and Toyol.

Source: McHugh (1955)

(Endicott, 1970; Evans, 1970; Laderman, 1991; Osman, 1972; Skeat, 1900; Sweeney, 1987; Winstedt, 1961) have acknowledged the significant role played by this "medicine person" or shaman in the Malay world view. Through the course of my research, and by

extension of my inquiry, I too found the institution of Bomoh or Pawang to be inextricably wound into Malay ideas of spirituality, reality, and culture.

McHugh asserts that hantu belief is a way of life among Malays and admonishes those who regard these ideas as backward or non-modern. While McHugh's work is a significant contribution to the literature on hantu in Malaysia, his study is mainly descriptive and didactic, as its primary focus is on the classification of hantu-types. He views cerita hantu in literary terms and does not attend to the nature of interaction and performance in the context of storytelling.

Cerita Hantu as Malay Memorate-Narrative

A large portion of the Malay cultural heritage is molded by oral traditions such as storytelling (Sweeney, 1981). As an intense oral society, the early Malays used stylized forms of talk (see Table 2) as a way to perpetuate ideas associated with the Malay world view. The influence of oral narratives on the Malay world view is passed from parent to child. Osman (1991), a Malay academic, explains this generational impact of folk-storytelling on the Malay psyche:

> ... cerita rakyat merupakan satu ciri zahir dalam satu-satu budaya. Cerita itu sendiri mungkin merupakan satu simpanan dalam akal fikiran orang yang menuturnya, tetapi tetap wujud dan zahir kerana ia diceritakan berlang kali dan manjadi tradisi yang dipunyai bersama oleh masyarakat. Bahkan ia bukan menyerupakan satu ciptaan (mungkin ciptaan pada sal munculnya), tetapi satu warisan yang diturunkan daripada satu generasi kepada generasi yang lebih muda. (p.1)

> [... folk stories are a birth characteristic of a culture. The stories themselves may represent a collection of [construction from] the author's mind; however, the stories exist [are real] and are reified because they have been told many times and have become a tradition shared by the collective. Therefore, it [the stories] is not just a composition, but a heritage that survives from generation to generation].

Here Osman accentuates the role of communication in perpetuating the Malay world view. In a different segment, Osman also differentiates between active and passive 'carriers of tradition' (p. 1). He states that professional storytellers and traditional medicine practitioners play active roles in continuing storytelling traditions, while the general members of a community tend to have a more passive role, and usually operate as 'message receivers.' In spite of this distinction, Osman contends that by telling their stories, all parts of the Malay community play a role in preserving their cultural heritage and world view.

In a report released by the Southwest Asian Regional Seminar on Oral Tradition, held in Kuching Sarawak in 1974, (Malay) oral traditions were classified as either *Narratives* or *Non-narratives* (Osman, 1982). Malay narratives are verbalizations that feature story-like components; with a clear beginning and conclusion (for more information on narrative frameworks, see Labov & Watletzky, 1967; Polanyi, 1985a; Van Dijk, 1980) while non-narratives are distinguished as not having storytelling features. Drawing from the Sarawak report, Osman explains that Malay narratives include five different forms of talk: 1) Folk tales or *marchen,* 2) Myths, 3) Legends, 4) Epics and Ballads, and 5) Memorates; as expressed Table 2:

Table 2:

Types of Malay Narratives

Type of Narrative	Description	Primary storyteller(s) and/or talk community
Folk-Tales or *Marchen*	Could be a written story (usually a written work circulated for many years) which is read out or relayed from memory to audiences (usually in villages, schools, bazaars). Malay folk tales are considered to be a storytelling-par-excellence, featuring stories of royalty, fools, animals, anecdotes or moral-stories. Ordinary (less elaborate) folk-tales are known as *Marchen*. Sometimes folk-tales are sung or spoken in a particular tune.	Usually a distinct "storyteller" who weaves the tale for a particular audience. Storytellers (known as *Penglipularas* or Soothers of Woes) are not only entertainers but are also bestowed with wisdom and clarity; often serving as teachers of morality. Folk-storytellers in some Malay communities are known for particular performances while telling their stories. For example, Kedah and Perlis storytellers, known as "Awang Batil" or "Awang Belaga" tells his or her story while rhythmically beating a metal pot. (see Table 3)
Myths	These are stories about Gods, Goddesses, spiritual entities and/or other forces that are part of a community's belief or religious system. These stories are very ritualistic and are regarded as "sacred." Myths tend to be regarded as a "folk-belief" in	While Campbell (1991) argues there are only select groups that can be "hearers of the myth," Osman (1982) explains that myths can be told by just about anyone who "knows" of them. Myths are treated as "folk-beliefs" by members of a community whose belief system

	regions dominated by religions such as Islam and Christianity, yet myths can easily be linked to these "great" religions (see Campbell, 1991, for further discussion on "myths").	incorporates that mythic perspective. As such, any member of a community can spin a mythic tale based on his or her knowledge of the belief systems of that community.
Legends	Legends are historical accounts of events, objects and people in the context of their locality. Similar to myth, legends are entrenched in the "realities" or socio-cultural perspective of the people from which the legend(s) emanate. Genealogies, stories about the origins of villages, heroic travels .. etc. are examples of legends.	Legends of a particular place are usually "told" by the folk who inhabit that place. Anyone in that locality can tell of the legend associated with that locality, yet, what constitutes a "locality" as a physical space varies according different Malay socio-cultural groupings.
Epics and Ballads	Both Epics and Ballads are forms of narrative poetry which are often sung while accompanied by a musical instrument. Epics tell tales of heroic deeds or of a hero's biography. Ballads, are similar to folk-tales. A popular Malay ballad is the *syair;* prose that is sung to a particular tune.	Also usually a distinct "storyteller" who sing the stories, or recite the poetry within which the story is embedded. See folk-tales category in this table.
Memorates	The term "memorate" is used for accounts of people's own experience. Such experiences are usually associated with the	These stories are found in everyday talk. Memorates are told by anyone (in a community) who has knowledge of or experience with

	supernatural or spiritual dimension. Memorates have "no fixed content" as they deal with each individual's recounting of his or her own experience, yet the telling of the story is confined to conventionalized talk around cultural beliefs as practiced by the speech community. *Ghost stories are classified as memorates. The telling of the memorate is an expression of the belief system of the speech community regarding the supernatural or matters of "unusual" activity.*	ghosts or ghost sightings. The telling of the memorate does not require "formal" or "stable" speech conventions as found in other categories of narratives.

Source: Mohd. Taib Osman (1982)

Based on the Sarawak report, Malay ghost stories were classified as memorates. Memorates are a narrative organization that allows for stories which incorporate the storyteller's personal or individual experience. Osman (1982) explains the function of memorates to be unlike other narrative structures as memorates have no "fixed content" since the telling of the story is structured around the recollection of a personal experience. Yet, while memorates are defined by their loose storytelling organization, the storytelling content is not random. Osman acknowledges that memorates such as Malay ghost stories carry shared cultural codes because the storytellers originate from the same cultural milieu:

> Two different people may have entirely different experiences arising say from different situations in which they encountered a ghost, but the nature and the characteristic of the experiences share a great deal in common as dictated by the belief-system or culture to which both subscribe. (p. 37)

Thus, while Malay ghost stories may be told by different storytellers or at different storytelling occasions, these stories tend to share similar cultural features, as they stem from the same cultural belief system. Here though, I take Osman's conjecture a step further by maintaining that telling the stories serves as a marker for cultural competence and community membership. My earlier discussion of Wieder's treatment of normative constructs as resources for patterned behavior that allow group members to recognize or constitute shared meaning supports this idea.

Sweeney (1987) recognizes similar linguistic schematics in everyday Malay storytelling. He claims that while the Malay vernacular is subject to mnemonic patterning and rhythms of stylized speech,[21] talk in non-stylized forms still remains a predominant communicative feature. Stylized speech is closely linked to formal occasions of storytelling as in "professional" storytelling or storytelling "created in" performance; some examples include Malay *dalangs'*[22] presentation during a *Wayang Kulit*[23] performance, or *Penglipulara* tales. Penglipularas, for example, are professional traveling performer-storytellers. Penglipularas, according to Isa (1987), tell tales that would typically fall under the *folk romance* genre. They are expert storytellers who weave their tale using a conventionalized style, often accompanied by different forms of

Figure 16: Wayang Kulit

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traditional music. Isa explains that the Penglipura's performance is often tailored to a particular audience. Different regions produce different styles for Penglipularas as described in Table 3:

Table 3

Types of Penglipulara Presentations

Genre	Region	Performance	Music
Tarik Selampit	Kelantan Pattani Perlis	Singing Religious Verses Regular Talk	Viola
Selampit	Perlis Langkawi	Religious Verses	Drums Keling (An ensemble with aerophone, drums and gongs) No Music
Awang Batil	Perlis Langkawi	Religious Verses Poems Regular Talk	Aerophone
Jubang	Kedah	Songs Religious verses	No Music

Ahli Cerita	Pahang Terengganu	Songs Religious verses	Membranophone (Single-headed drum) No Music
Kaba	Selangor	Religious verses	Violin

Source: Isa (1987)

Tales told by Penglipularas occur under formal conditions. Isa (1987) notes how it is necessary to make arrangements such as time, location and payment method, among others, for a Penglipulara performance.

Non-stylized speech, on the other hand, is informal and typically found in everyday talk (Sweeney, 1987). In spite of making this distinction, Sweeney argues that both stylized and non-stylized talk employs similar ideas around "schematic compositions" related to story features (such as plot, type of character, etc.). As such, non-stylized talk, like stylized talk, can be similarly retrieved for analytic inspection.

Language, Narratives and Malaysian Reality

Asmah Haji Omar (1987) drawing from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Sapir 1985, and Whorf, 1956), acknowledges that the Malay language reveals, as well as influences, the way the Malays perceive their world and themselves. In other words, the different cultural realities perceived by the Malays are reflected in their language, and in turn symbolic matter available in language influences the way reality is perceived. Similarly, Tham (1977) asserts that in Malaysian communities, "linguistic development and cognitive development are mutually interacting processes" (p. 135). He argues that the Sapir-Whorf position puts accent on the way language is associated with cognitive *style*; specifically, people undergo similar underlying cognitive processes (such as thinking, categorizing and reasoning) but may differ in the way they *interpret* the

information. Tham's analysis on the functions of Malay language points to how (the language user's) cognition is influenced by eco-cultural binary-opposition features that manipulate linguistic categories for meaning accessibility. Tham adds that the uses of symbolic forms to convey meaning are an invasive feature of the Malay language:

> Much of the meaning or lexemic elements [of Bahasa Malaysia that] are in the realm of human behavior and human behavioral forms are observations made of the animal or plant world and vice versa. Hence, order as perceived implies a stability in behavioral structure between man and not-man (animal and plant world). (p. 18)

Given these associations within the language, humans perceive themselves in terms of their conception of the animate and in-animate world, and perceive the animate and in-animate world in terms of their perception of humanity (such as human behaviors and traits).

Tham finds that Malay cognition consists of a "plurality of unequal, yet mutually inter-locking parts" (p.138) that serve a binary paradigmatic linguistic structure around "focus" and "attribute." Focus is the sign (for example, a root-word) that precedes other conceptual attributes (such as cognate-words) with which it is associated. Tham explains how the Malay word *rumah* (house) in the similar string *rumah sakit* (hospital), *rumah persinggahan* (hotel) and *rumah tangga* (household) serve to preserve the cognate word *rumah*. Tham also notes that Malay cognition is reliant on linguistic formations that contrast two opposing characteristics of a phenomenon. Such dichotomies are found in many Malay linguistic structures. In the following *peribahasa* (sayings that carry philosophical meanings), for example; *air dalam berenang, air dangkal bercebuk* (If the

water is deep, swim. If the water is shallow, walk - Adjust your expenditure or outflow according to your resources), a contrast is set up between shallow and deep water as a way to draw parallels with good vs. bad ways to manage resources.

Asmah Haji Omar (1987) also recognizes how the Malay language incorporates structural linguistic systems to construct meanings. While she finds many linguistic variations to the root word, unlike Tham (1977), she contends that the level of complexity surrounding the attribute signifier can create signification which could influence the semantic of the root or "focus" word. Still, she finds grammatical sequences to generally conform to the way Malays think. She also notes that there are distinct binary associations around the concepts of gender and humanity (human vs. object) in the Malay linguistic world-view.

While Tham's (1977) and Asmah Haji Omar's (1987) exegeses stress structural oppositions as a starting point for the analysis of language and Malay cognition, Laderman (1991) notes that language dichotomies tend to be misleading. She acknowledges that binary structures are products of Western influences. She explains that distinctions in Malay talk tend to be based on incidence instead of etiology; for example, instead of dividing illness into "natural" and "supernatural" categories, as typically found in Western medical theories,[24] the Malays from the East provinces of the Malay Peninsular use terms such as "usual" and "unusual," and there are varying levels in the rubric of that which is considered "usual." or "unusual." Further, the spirit dimensions, along with its manifestations are regarded as a natural part of the Malay world. Laderman's treatise shifts the analysis of language and its influence on human cognition from static syntactic structuration into the more dynamic and fluid territories of

reality as negotiated in interaction and performance; where context, talk arrangement, participants and cultural frames intermingle to create meaning.

Sweeney (1987) explains that in telling a story, what a Malay storyteller says depends on the talk format available to the storyteller as well as the arrangement expected by the audience. The talk sequence can easily be changed to accommodate the speaker's intention, yet the speaker can only operate within the boundaries of that speech community's organized speaking behavior: "The mental state of the teller is shaped by his medium and style, by the composition of the audience and his standing with that audience" (p. 139).

Sweeny (1987) accents the role played by the "teller" in a Malay storytelling occasion, yet Sweeney also points to the influence of the audience on how the story is told. Sweeny (1987) stresses that the examination of any (linguistic) text should incorporate a contextual study that includes a grasp of the "constraints imposed," as well as of the "scope offered" (p. 3) by the medium in which the talk is in use. As such, Sweeney contends that the context of discourse has to be studied as a whole, which includes both compositional scripts (as found in performance content) and meanings that emerge from the interaction between audience, context and speaker.

Research Rationale

Taken together, the literature and theoretical perspectives on language, social reality and narratives clearly shows how talk (or storytelling) interacts with a community's sense of reality around matters such as identity, belief systems and world views. It seems clear that Malay cerita hantu have been examined using monologic approaches. In this report of my research on Malay cerita hantu and Malay social reality

I argue that narratives should be understood holistically, that is, in terms of how multiple influences, such as storytelling content, context, performance and interaction, intersect with Malay identity and world view. While Malay narratives, like other (oral) Malay literary traditions,[25] may serve the more inert function as that of an oral text, they also feature interactive and performative elements that formulate, reify, disrupt and/or negotiate reality frames.

Moreover, storytelling as monologues is often "explained" by researchers as a way for others to understand the characteristics, properties and ethos of a story sequence from a particular standpoint. By focusing on the interactive qualities of storytelling, I am able to account not only for my role as researcher and constituent of the storytelling occasion, but also, as "accounting-for" storytelling behavior, such that, my storytelling, as Wieder (1974) explains, "makes that occasion, the behaviors in it, and the normative order 'behind it' observable and reportable as patterned, recurrent, and connected instances of motivated actions in socially standardized situations (p. 224)." As such, I feel my exploration into interactive features of storytelling is certainly warranted.

The paucity of academic literature that attends to Malay social reality and Malay narrative also necessitates that studies such as these be conducted. This study will contribute to the existing body of work related to how Malays negotiate their social reality as well as help substantiate the scholarship on narratives as identity texts.

Osman (1991) argues that further research on Malay folk literature such as storytelling is necessary as it would provide in-depth knowledge in areas where mainly cursory or surface-level information is available. Such knowledge can serve as a foundation upon which the Malay government can root its programs and projects that

deal with cultural understanding, information, education and conservation. Osman also argues that the culture around storytelling in Malaysia seems to be dissipating in light of more efficient and sophisticated forms of communication such as mass and electronic media. He quotes a participant from a 1983 seminar on folklore:

> Generasi kita sekarang mungkin menyerupakan generasi terakhir yang dapat menyaksikan dengan mata kepala sendiri Tuk Selampit atau Awang Batil menuturkan cerita mereka. (p. 11)
>
> [Our generation may be the last generation to witness with our own eyes *Tuk Selampit* or *Awang Batil* [expert storytellers] tell their story].

While this view may appear an oversimplification of the issue at hand, it tends to echo my own lament on the situation of storytelling in the Malay world view. Storytelling in Malaysia seems not to be the way I remember it to be. Groups of people no longer flock to see expert storytellers weave their tales in village centers, grandmothers do not seem to sit around telling younger people how to 'needle' a corpse so that it will not turn into a Pontianak, and storytellers seem to have lost their 'storytelling flair' – it seems that the appreciation for and practice of storytelling as communal activity and stylized performance is ebbing away.

Through the course of doing this research though, I have come to realize that my perception of storytelling, insofar by saying that storytelling is or should be a certain way, not only essentializes it and reduces it to a static category, but also strips from it its capacity to transform over time. The diachronic tendency of language allows that storytelling as a "particular form" only holds to the extent it is recognized as such by members of a speech community.

Still, as I find myself on the cusp of what seems to be a new wave of storytelling, I cannot help but to pause and wonder what it is like to be a storyteller in Malaysia today. Is storytelling as I know it fading away or changing into something else? How do we manage our social reality in terms of our storytelling? After all, the only thing constant about culture is change.

I strive to explore the relationship between cerita hantu and Malay social reality. Therefore, the research questions driving this study are:

RQ1) How does cerita hantu operate within the Malay world view?

RQ2) What do cerita hantu reveal about Malay social reality?

RQ3) What are the themes, issues and topics associated with Malay social reality that underlie cerita hantu?

RQ4) Who gets to tell the stories and under what circumstances?

RQ5) How does the story content, performance, context and interaction impact Malay world view? (Malay social reality and identity)

In short, it is within the content, interaction and performance of Malay storytelling that Malay people define their spiritual, communal and self identities. Therefore, by understanding behavioral codes associated with storytelling, it will be possible to get glimpse of the manner in which members of the Malay community perceive and construct their social reality.

CHAPTER

3

Historical Influences, Belief Systems and the Postcolonial Condition

There is little archeological information related to the first inhabitants of the land we know now as Malaysia (Andaya & Andaya, 2001; Bellwood, 1997; Ministry of Information, Malaysia). Bellwood (1997) explains that archeological digs have unearthed signs of human habitation dating back to 35,000 to 40,000 years. The discovery of stone-age tools and other implements dating back to 10,000 years have led archeologists to believe that the earliest settlers of the land were the predecessors of the *Orang Asli Negrito* or Negrito Aborigines.

Figure 17: Early Malay Map, circa 3 AD

Bellwood (1997) informs that around 1000 B.C. E. a group of technologically progressive travelers (mainly seafarers and farmers) from South China migrated into the Malay Peninsular. These people were known as the proto-Malays.[26] Over time, a second wave of settlers migrated to these lands. People from the second-wave migration, known as Deutero-Malays, consisted of immigrants from Indochina who moved southward down the Malay Peninsular into the Malay Archipelago. They intermarried with people from India, Indonesia, China, Cambodia, Siam and different Arab nations (Winstedt, 1951). The Dutero-Malays were ancestors of the ethnic group we know today as the Malays.

Indian influence in the Malay Archipelago began in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, and lasted over 1,000 years (Bellwood, 1997). The Indian traders brought their goods and culture to the Malay lands. Brahmanism and Mahayana-Buddhism became pervasive, especially in the Northern regions of the Malay Peninsular (Endicott, 1970). Hindu and Buddhist influence reigned through political control, trade and travel by the Buddhists and Hindus from Funan, an empire in the Mekong Delta, Java and Bali. Small Malay kingdoms integrated Indian governmental processes into their political structure. At the same time, trade routes were also established with China.

McHugh (1955), acknowledging the impact of Hinduism on Malay hantu beliefs, informs that elements associated with the Hindu pantheon can still be found in Pawang or Bomoh (explained earlier as spirit-mediators) incantations as well as in the different sacrificial and ceremonial procedures used by spirit-mediums during séances, or in rituals performed to appease hantus.

Figure 18: Map of Trade Routes

Source: Rome Project for The Dalton School (www.dalton.org)

In 1400, migrants from Srivijaya (a kingdom in Palembang, Sumatra) led by Prince Parameswara established a commercial state known as Melaka on the central western fringe of the Malay Peninsular (Andaya & Andaya, 2001; Bellwood, 1997). Parameswara secured Chinese protection for his small kingdom. Melaka's location along the Malay Straits (now known as the Straits of Melaka) promoted it as a key shipping route between the Middle East and the Far East. By the mid-1400's, Melaka gained control of many smaller Malay kingdoms in the Malay Peninsular as well as much of Sumatra. At this time, Melaka's ruler, who was influenced by Islamic teachings, brought to Melaka by Arab traders, declared Melaka an Islamic state. Melaka's rulers now took

on the label "Sultan." Soon, the spread of Islam across the Malay Peninsular helped obliterate Hindu-Buddhist influence. Islam's influence in Malay culture still prevails.

McHugh (1995) states that the Muslim religion also had an impact on the practices associated with hantu beliefs:

> With its [Islam's] advent came the addition of Allah and the Prophet, and the names of a number of eminent Islamic personages to the existing incantations, charms and spells. With it, too, came the Djinns, or evil spirits, references to Sheitan (the Devil), to angels and to sheiks. (p. 22)

McHugh defends, however, that the effect of the different religious influences on the belief in hantu and practices associated with such belief is cumulative. The inclusion of new religiosity only influenced longer and more potent charms and spells. Now the Bomoh had "a more formidable assortment of heavenly forces, drawn from the religions and races of Malaya's immigrant visitors (p. 22)." Interestingly, McHugh notes, the Malay pagan-animistic belief of hantu is much older than the assortment of new myth and creed that was now used to counter it.

Melaka's golden age was short lived. Andaya and Andaya (2001) explain how the need to access the spice route and advance the Christian mission brought European colonialism to the Malay Archipelago in the early 1500s. In 1511, the Portuguese attacked and conquered Melaka. In 1641, the Dutch overthrew the Portugese securing their commercial investment in the spice route. The British slowly began colonizing northern Malay provinces in the late 1700s. By 1819, the British had secured three of the Malay States' key commercial hubs: Melaka, Penang and Singapore[27] (Andaya &

Andaya, 2001). The British ousted the Dutch and occupied Malaya until they awarded Malaya its independence in 1957.

Winstedt (1951) explains that Malay cultural systems are rooted in a complex conglomeration of various civilizations. Cultural matter from these many different sources has, over history, weaved its influence into the fabric of Malay beliefs, so much so that attempting to create some kind of chronology of such influences is a daunting task. Winstedt does, however, note that a fusion of pagan, Hindu and Muslim influences had significantly impacted Malay belief systems since prehistoric days.

Language Influences

The Malay language is part of a family of the Melayo-Polynesian or Oceanic, or Austronesian linguistic system, which spreads from the Pacific Islands such as Samoa and Tonga, to India and Madagascar (Winstedt, 1951). Asmah Haji Omar (1993) adds that the Malay language had been regarded as the *Lingua Franca*[28] of the larger Malay Archipelago throughout history and especially during Melaka's dominance of spice trading.

Knappert (1980) tells us that the Malay language is well known for its flexibility as well as its "beauty and sweet melodiousness" (p. 1) which she claims is derived from the many different linguistic influences that have flowed into the Malay language system. Asmah Haji Omar (1993) notes complex associations in the Malay language, which she claims are also due to the absorption of linguistic strains from Malaysia's many settlers throughout history. Similarly, Tham (1977) states how the Malay language system – like its belief structure – incorporated within its organization elements of the linguistic structures of the different cultures with which it came in contact.

Interestingly, Tham states, the effect of the linguistic and cultural streams appear to be restricted to particular parts of the Malay vocabulary: Sanskrit influence can be found in linguistic structures around kingship, religion and philosophy; Perso-Arabic language is pervasive in Malay vocabularies that deal with religion, philosophy, jurisprudence and astronomy; and, Portuguese and Dutch linguistic structures encroached the Malay language in areas that are associated with warfare, trade and administration. Chinese and Javanese linguistic forms also had an impact on the linguistic structure and conceptual systems of the Malay language.

In the late 1950's the Malay government subjected its language to various phylogenic transformations, and established Bahasa Malaysia as the country's national language. Isa (1987) states that in 1957 the Malaysian Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Federal Language Organization) began collecting and recording professional Malay storytelling such as Penglipulara tales as part of a maneuver to preserve oral culture. The Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka still strives to conserve and record Malay linguistic traditions, especially those which are deemed rare or that require special skills.

Asmah Haji Omar states that while Bahasa Malaysia is well entrenched in Malaysia's nationalistic ideology, the different racial and cultural groups in Malaysia tend to include their own linguistic slant in everyday use of Bahasa Malaysia. Therefore, it is not uncommon for two people speaking Bahasa Malaysia to either use colloquial simplifications in talk or to pepper their Bahasa Malaysia conversation with liberal doses of words or sentences in English, Chinese or Tamil (Indian language).

Spiritual Foundations: Malay Magic and Belief Systems

In the last section I briefly discussed Malaysian history and language influences over time. In this section I shift my discussion from Malay historicity to traditional spiritual beliefs and magical persuasions that have shaped the Malay belief system over the years. While these accounts of early Malay magical systems are copious and varied, I choose to discuss three items (animism, semangat and Islamic humoralism) that I feel are important foundational features of the Malay spiritual psyche. I follow this discussion with Osman's (1972) classification of contemporary Malay beliefs.

Animism, Semangat and Islamic Humoralism

According to Laderman (1991), Malays believe that a person comprises his or her organic form (body) that eventually disintegrates, and a spiritual essence (soul) that moves into a heaven or hell dimension. In order to live, humans must inhale *nyawa* (the breath of life) when born. Further, inner winds (*angin*) shape that human's projection of self (personality, character, traits etc.). These elements remain in the personhood; the presence of the winds, for example, can sometimes be felt when that person is in a trance.

One of the earliest forms of religious belief in the Malay Archipelago was pagan animism. Winstedt (1951) draws parallels between Malay pagan animism with forms of paganism in the larger Asian continent; from India to China. He writes, "What has been written by every Dravidian village is true of every Malay village. It is believed to be surrounded by evil spirits, who are always on the watch to inflict diseases and misfortune ... They lurk everywhere, on the tops of palmya trees, in caves and rocks, in ravines and chasms. They fly about in the air like birds of prey, ready to pounce down upon any unprotected victim ... (p. 4)." Moorhead (1957) notes that practitioners of early Malay

animism, ingrained in the idea that nature is presided by malevolent spiritual forces, practiced cannibalism and head-hunting as a way to preserve life energies. Moorhead adds that early Malays worshipped a Sun-God and considered mountains as sacred places.

Skeat (1900) portrays Malay animism, to which he later referred as 'Universal Animism,' as the common incidence of anthropomorphic ideas about nature, which included humans, animals, plants, as well as inert objects such as rocks, ornaments, water and the like. Cuisinier (1951) describes this animistic existence as a life force, known as *semangat,* which she says is an extension of the human soul, yet absent from material and spiritual supports. According to Cuisinier, semangat is an "over-all fluidity of thought shown mainly by the ambiguity of concepts" (Endicott, 1970, p. 34). Semangat is also described as spirit of life (Laderman, 1991) and soul substance (Endicott, 1970). Endicott (1970) later explains how interpretations of these early beliefs varied in these early colonial writings of Malay spirituality.

Winstedt (1951) clarifies that pagan religiosities practiced among the early Dutero-Malays were analogous to pagan practices in Khasi, Assam and of the Moi people of Indochina, particularly in this principle of semangat. Semangat infuses humans, animals and objects. Semangat is a soul that freely traverses in areas outside of a person's body when that person is sleeping (Knappert, 1980). Knappert notes how "those who do not know" refer to the experiences of semangat as 'merely dreams.' A person's most valued possession is his or her semangat. The semangat is so important that people remove it and keep it in a safe place when they are about to embark on a dangerous

mission or journey. Laderman (1991) adds that semangat is timid and can easily flee when threatened. Therefore, semangat ought to be prized and guarded.

Semangat can bring into existence that which has expired: Knappert tells us a Malay story of a princess who had died from a snake bite but came to life when a magic stone restored her semangat. Semangat has also been described as a "personal soul that may persist after death as an ancestor-ghost or malicious demon" (Endicott, 1970, p. 2). Understanding semangat claims Knappert (1980), is essential toward coming to terms with any Malay mythic system.

Laderman (1991) shows how traditional Malay beliefs are closely related to the prevalence of Islamic humoralism, which defines personhood or health as a "balance of universal and opposing elements (p. 20)." She explains how different cultural groupings, via trade, had collectively influenced Malay beliefs in this manner:

> By the fourteenth century, when Greek-Arabic medical theories reached Malaya along with Islam, its inhabitants had more than a thousand years of exposure to similar traditional Hindu Ayurvedic theories, tempered by contact with Chinese medicine. Over the following centuries, Islamic humoral theory has been shaped by and integrated into Malay thought.

Laderman notes that Hindu Ayurvedic and Chinese medical theories were absorbed into early Malay culture through the sharing of medical and magical remedies. These early influences, she says, carry surprisingly similar concepts with Islamic humoralism regarding equilibrium as associated with the cosmos. Her conjectures on these early influences are based on ethnographic accounts of Orang Asli (Malayan Aborigines).

These early diffusion, she says, had set the stage for later widespread influence of Islamic humoralism.

Orang Asli groups prescribe to *hot* and *cold* forces that impacts a person's health and spirit. Laderman (1991) explains how the high temperatures associated with the sun are reflected in "excrement, blood, misfortune, disease and death (p. 23)" and are the main grounds for human mortality. Coolness and dampness bring positive forces such as healing, harmony, health and life to the Orang Asli world. Health is attributed to "cool breath, colorless blood, and cool bodies (p. 23)." Carnivoristic tendencies, aggression, drunkenness and forbidden sexual relations are regarded as hot, while cold water and jungles that provide cooling herbal remedies are considered cool. The Orang Asli's idea of hot and cold forces tends to be ingrained in temperature qualities as opposed to Islamic humoralism, which Laderman claims added first, a rational or 'scientific' slant to troubles in the natural sphere that advanced calculated precision for humoral levels and, second, a reversal of roles played by heat and cold respectively.

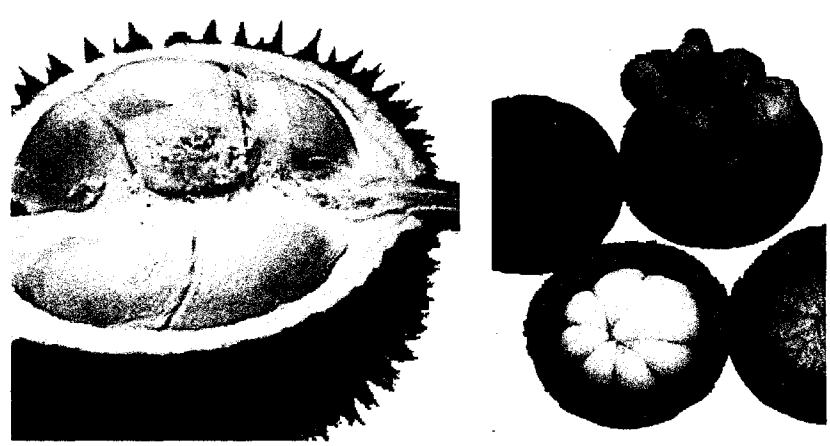
Laderman (1991) discusses how medieval Islamic humoral theory is based on the idea of balance. Islamic humoral theorists had scientifically classified items such as food, medicines, behaviors, illnesses etc. on a scale that measures different degrees of hot vs. cold. Unlike the Orang Asli, this classification is not centered on temperature values. Different items rank differently on the basis of its corresponding hot or cold degree. Items of a particular degree category are used to 'neutralize' other items or heal a person who has slipped into an extreme opposing degree level. Laderman explains how this works:

> Cucumbers, which are cold and humid in the third degree, are useful in cooling fevers, but may cause pain in the loins and stomach. They can be neutralized by the addition of honey and oil (both 'hot'). Spinach, cold and humid in the second degree, should be fried with 'hot' salt and spices to balance its humoral qualities. (p. 26)

Laderman informs that the ideal human humoral condition is in the second degree of hotness or moistness. This ranking was used to give recognition to 'natural' body heat.

While, as Laderman (1991) notes, not all fractions of Islamic humoralism was adopted by contemporary Malays society, the concepts of heating (*panas*) and cooling (*sejuk*) prevailed. These ideas around hot and cold extended mainly to eating habits and illness. For example, while growing up in Malaysia, I remember being told that after consuming the "heaty" durian, it was good to eat the "cooling" mangosteen (see Figure 18), and that eating too much pulp from the young green coconut could give me weak knees (joints) as it was "too cooling for the body."

Figure 19: Durian and Mangosteen



Durian Mangosteen

According to Malay beliefs, illnesses are caused by an unbalanced humoral system. If illnesses cannot be cured using the usual 'balancing remedies, the illness would be attributed to spiritual influence (Laderman, 1991). Laderman tells us that most 'unusual' illnesses are believed to be caused by interactions with hantu; for example, if a hantu were to blow its hot breath on a victim, that person's humoral balance would go askew. Charms and divination that are used to cure this person afflicted with 'unusual' illness usually invoke the humoral system.

Laderman (1991) also tells us that the Malay distinction of *panas* and *sejuk* is manifested in the Malay language such that panas carries the connotation "angry, aggressive and destructive" while "sejuk is calming, healthy and cool." Terms such as *naik panas* (get angry), *panas rezeki* (ill-fated livelihood) and *hati sejuk* (calmness) reflects this association.

Ideas related to animism, and its progeny, semangat, along with Islamic humoralism have filtered into, and helped shape Malay conceptions of spiritual reality; however, as Osman (1972) notes, the Malay belief system has also been profoundly influenced by Western empiricism and contemporary Islamic theology. Before discussing Osman's theses, I will briefly discuss Malaysia's current Islamic perspectives, particularly in terms of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism since the mid 1970s.

Islamization in Malaysia: Contemporary Issues

Nasr (2001) and Stauth (2002) tell us that in the decades following its independence from colonial rule, Malaysia underwent a tumultuous upheaval in its attempt to develop its identity as a nation.[29] The resulting challenge to discern its identity as well as avoid Western individualism (which was regarded a source of decadence and

social chaos) guided Malaysia into Islamic resurgence. The Islamic impetus impacted Malaysian society, and its growth gained momentum through political influence, particularly through the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the primary and current ruling Muslim-Malay political party, and oppositional radical-Islamic political groups such as Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS, Malaysian Islamic Party). Stauth expresses how Islamization in Malaysia was a "concerted government programme of co-opting and sponsoring Islamic intellectuals from a strong socio-religious movement of anti-establishment groups into recently-founded state educational and cultural institutions (p. 187)."

Nasr (2001) states that the 1970s saw Malay identity as an ideological struggle between Islam, nationalism and traditional beliefs such as customs or *adat*. He adds that Malay identity was soon distinguished on the basis of religion – Islam – as an inadvertent consequence of the government's enactment of the New Economic Policy (NEP), an affirmative action[30] program designed to enhance the social and economic standing[31] for mainly Malay peasants. The relationship between the Malay government and its Malay constituents was strengthened due to both parties' programmatic association with the NEP. Along similar lines, the distinction between Malay and non-Malay identity was further delineated.

In the 1970s, Islamic revival was propelled by activist Islamic groups such as the *Dakwah*[32] movement's *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM, the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia) and al-Arqam. The fundamental Islamic opposition political party, PAS, was also gaining political edge (Barton, 2002; Nasr, 2001). Nagata (1997) explains how organizations such as ABIM would criticize UMNO for its 'un-Islamic'

liberal attention to ethnic-inclusion which breaches the Islamic ideal of a community united by Islam. Malaysia's Muslim socio-political core were also influenced by international events and occurrences, particularly in the Arab world,[33] such as the ending of Pakistan's Bhutto regime in 1977, the emergence of the Sadat administration in the late 1970s onwards and of the Iranian Pahlavi conflict of 1979 (Nasr, 2001).

Stauth (2002) states that in the 1980's Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahatir developed the "Look East Policy," based on an ideological construction of Malaysia's projected future – Malaysia was to become a model Islamic-growth society.[34] Mahatir's rhetoric was rooted in the 'capitalist' principles of Islam. Stauth notes that Mahatir's policies advanced the institutionalization of Islam in Malaysia:

> At first glance this was symbolized by the rise of the former ABIM-leader, Anwar Ibrahim, who was first installed in the Prime Minister's office and then became Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, and after that Agricultural Minister. In 1986 he was appointed Minister of Education and soon after Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister. Government policies was to rely on what is now a common word in Malaysia: "think-tanks." The "think-tank" policy had the double effect of job creation for oppositional intelligentsia and of Malay representation. It filtered militant and non-militant opposition groups and organizations into an ideological machine designating the official standpoint in intellectual, cultural, educational, and legal matters. The idea was to follow the latest "Islamic Thinker" to establish alternative paradigms in both natural and the social sciences in order to be able to develop the proper outlook for the constitution and development of a contemporary Muslim society ...

> Second, Mahatir indeed sponsored a reinforcement of Orthodoxy and "clerical" traditions. To this end, Pusat Islam, the Islamic Center, hosted scholars of classical Islamic education (*ulama*) who proposed and discussed measures of legal responses according to the *Shari'a*, the Holy Law ...
>
> Third, the government supported a strong overall internalization of the Islamic discourse, claiming a new position in the Islamic world and claiming a pioneering role in adopting the Islamic path for progress and development. International representation became a key issue of the Islamic policies. (pp. 205 – 207)

Stauth shows how Mahatir's (and UMNO's) program for socio-economic development in the 1980's included heavy emphasis on Islamic invigoration, in part as a way to challenge oppositional Islamic based political parties such as PAS.

The 1990s witnessed a slow decline of the promotion of Islam in legal and political matters in Malaysia. Nasr (2001) claims that state-controlled Islam and Islamic policies stifled Islamization among Malaysia's Muslim communities: "there was a direct correlation of power between Islamization and expansion of state power. Religious politics had been successfully used by the state to lessen resistance to its projects of power and growth (p. 129)." Nasr adds that while Islamization aided the increase of state power in the 1980s, it did not provide political stability or grounding for government-constituent relations. In 1998 However, in spite of what seems to be a lull in Islamic development in the 1990s, the consequences of the 1970s-80s Islamiticization can still be felt.

Malay Belief Systems

Osman (1972) argues that the possibilities of locating structural and conceptual organizations of belief systems in otherwise seemingly disparate Malay cultural matter can be difficult. Osman acknowledges that while such a task can be daunting, several scholars have attempted to map out Malay belief schemas. He makes a note of Endicott's (1970) contribution, which had attempted to structure the world-view of Malay supernatural beliefs and practices and argues that while Endicott's historical analysis is seminal, it lacks an "insider's perspective." Osman offers his own perspective, which, like Endicott's assumes that Malay cultural components, even when they represent opposite trajectories, are reified into some kind of meaningful order within the overall backdrop of the Malay world-view. Endicott used the writings of people such as Skeat, Annadale and Robinson, and Cuisinier to demonstrate how Malay magical systems were rooted in the way Malays managed the borders between the spirit and material worlds.

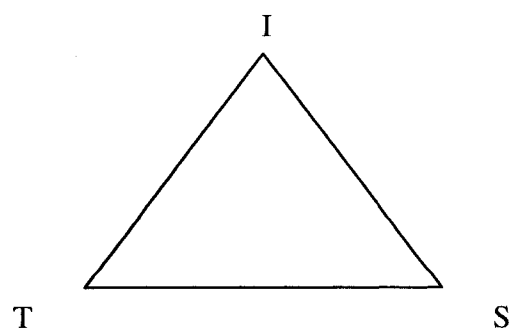
The Malay belief system, according to Osman (1972), is based on the interactions between three fundamental forces: 1) Islamic ideals, 2) inherited traditional beliefs, and 3) scientific knowledge.[35] While Osman claims that ideally, a Muslim culture should prescribe to an Islamic based world-view, Malysia's Muslim Malays find their culture emerging from the tensions among all three contingencies. Traditional beliefs that stem from animistic religiosity as well as Western influences through colonialism and globalization influence the Islamic world view in the Malay world.

Osman (1972) sets up these three factors as a hypothetical triangle (Figure 20). He claims that the Malay belief system is ingrained in the negotiation of tensions between these three factors. Osman explains:

An example of the interaction between Islamic ideals and westernization [line I-S] can be shown in a situation where the modern banking system, which is an essential part of the economic development of developing countries, comes into conflict with the Islamic law on interests. Such a conflict may be resolved by an interpretation given as *fatwa* (ruling) by a consensus of scholars. The interaction between Islamic ideals and local traditional beliefs [line I-T] is a constant feature of a Muslim community. An injunction may be made in the name of Islam prohibiting the practice of a certain local custom; or certain reinterpretations are made so as to give "Islamic" meaning to a local belief; or it is possible that traditional local beliefs and rites continue to live on as an "informal" belief system, fulfilling the pragmatic and immediate needs of day-today living side-by-side with the "formal" religion which serves the more transcendental needs. (p. 221-222)

Figure 20: Fundamental Influences in the Malay Belief System

I = Islamic ideals



T = inherited traditional beliefs

S = Empirical or scientific knowledge

Similar to Festinger's (1957) dissonance theory, the Malay belief system relies on symbolic activity to come to terms with the tensions that collectively comprise their belief system.

Through these secondary sources, as well as my own research (interviews and findings are discussed in Part Two), I too have noted these significant contributions (Osman's conjectures of tradition, Western empiricism and Islamic ideals) to the Malay world view. In my own understanding, however, I tend to not reduce these factors into three separate 'entities.' By reducing these influences into three disconnected spheres, we strip them of their capacity to evolve and develop, not only as extensions of each other but also in their own trajectories. Further, what we understand as a 'traditional belief' or 'Western science' is based on multiple perspectives, influenced by many histories, and is constantly in flux, as it is produced by a particular discourse, in a particular community. For example, as noted in earlier parts, long-established Malay traditions have roots in both, pagan animism and Islamic humoralism, which in turn are influenced by scientific notions of precision. Therefore, I believe Malays construct reality through symbolic processes that support, disrupt, reify, break, negotiate and display the tensions between discourses of tradition, religion and science.

The Postcolonial Condition

Someone once told me that a person is a result of his or her history. At the time it made sense; after all, we are shaped by particular incidents that happened in our past. Yet now I look at that which is "our history" and see it through different lenses. Do we share the same history? Whose version of history is ours? Is it mine? Does our history

really "tell" us from where we came, or is it a construction of a particular type of reality brought about by those doing the telling?

In Sweeney's (1987) exploration of Malay literary studies he echoes this perspective, arguing that the predecessors' "shoulders" upon which Malay literary studies stands are writers who "construct" reality on the basis of how they understand such reality. In showing how historical writing is "creation," similar to art, Sweeny draws from Gombritch's (1969) metaphor:

> There could be no history of art: The artist has a stock of mental stereotypes, which he adapts to suit his needs. When the artist does not actively seek to overcome the natural pull toward the schematic by correcting his schema, his art will tend to return to the minimum stereotype of the conceptual image. He must be able to construct a schema before he can be able to adjust and correct it to fulfill a specific purpose, and he will naturally see the unfamiliar in terms of familiar schemata. (p. 18)

Writer-storytellers, like artists, are products of a particular society; and it is through the norms, values and hegemonies of those societies that writers tell their stories. When someone writes about something, he or she tells us as much of the histories that produce such stories as well as of his or her historical position. It becomes problematic when such stories, especially historical or cultural accounts are taken as *fact*. Historical accounts that later become part of history books and the like, are suddenly transformed into "truth" without thought that other versions of that same story may exist. Such is the case of Malay history in general, and of Malay accounts of spirituality or mysticism in

specific. Such ideas on 'how we know what we claim to know' have been addressed in studies associated with social constructivism:

> Social constructivism has roots in Kant's idealism, which claims that we cannot know things in themselves and that knowledge of the world is possible only by imposing pre-given categories of thought on otherwise inchoate experience. But where Kant believed that the categories with which we interpret and thus construct the world are given a priori, contemporary constructivists believe that the relevant concepts and associated practices vary from one group or historical period to another. Since there are no independent standards for evaluating conceptual schemas, social constructivism leads naturally to relativism. (Audi, 1999, p. 855)

The research I conduct here attempts to knead-out this subject-object dichotomy in discourse that relate to Malay culture in general and of Malay storytelling in particular. As I explore concepts related to "Otherness[36]" and "exoticism[37]" of the object within colonial writings of Malay spirituality and magic, I find it necessary to begin my discussion by contextualizing how these writings emerged and flourished in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The period termed the *Romanticist Movement* (Barzun, 1975; Sweeney, 1987), saw British writers preoccupied with that which they did not yet know. This preoccupation led their writing to foreign lands; many of these places, like Malaya, were part of the British colonized states, and as such were not difficult to access. Barzun also explains that at this time, "history" was considered a paramount intellectual quest:

> As against the assumption that no civilization had existed since the fall of Rome, they [the Romanticists] rediscovered the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century and made history their dominant avocation. (p. 60)

The 19th century zeal behind European historical writing did not necessarily arise from the intention to outline that which is the "Other." Instead, these writings were a response to "classify" the plethora of information streaming in from quests to distant exotic lands (Sweeney, drawing from Ong, 1977). These European writers felt that the knowledge they acquired was a way to document history, thus, history became the paradigm upon which narrative accounts of the "Other" were based (Said, 1979).

Post-colonial scholars show that as a result of (the Western) historical colonial fixation, history written by representatives of Western colonial powers shaped both world and local histories. Further, the impact of the romanticist movement can be felt within the structures of academia. Academic units such as anthropology, art history, ethnology, literary history and philology grew out of the momentum of this endeavor.

The way in which the Western quest for "writing history" marked academia is well noted in the work pioneers of anthropology such as Boas (1911). This scholar's critics (see for example, Asad, 1973; Fanon, 1967; Jones, 1988; Rosaldo, 1980) have lamented that early anthropological studies have omitted the voice of the people studied. Further, the writings of early anthropologists essentialized the people studied on the basis of "primitive" characteristics, omitted voices of women as well as of those of lower class status, and showed a disregard for other versions of histories such as that which would be told by indigenous groups.

The manner in which British colonizers depicted the Malays in their writings reflects a similar myopic vision. British writers who regard the writer's role as scribes of history told their tales on the basis of how they understood it; often through an ethnocentric lens.

Malay Social Reality and Orientalism

The British in Malaysia have had a long tradition of what Said (1979, 1994) terms "Orientalism." This term is used to describe the manner in which people came to terms with the locale known as "The Orient" and of its location in the Western experience. Said (1979) explains Orientalism:

> "that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient--and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist--either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she says or does is Orientalism. (p. 3)

The Orient, as noted by Said, is the place of Europe's richest colonies. It is also defined as a "contrast" to the West (which is known as the Occident). Because it is defined in terms of what the West is not, the Orient represents Europe's vision of the "Other," as states Said, "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (p.43).

Said's (1979) views lead us to see that the ability to position the self as the template upon which other peoples are constructed is based on Europe's imperialistic stance, brought about by its recognized power-base. As Foucault (1994) argues, power brings about the ability to construct reality out of particular regimes of thought. He states, "... there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse (p. 93)." It is power that allows one group of people to use discourse to construct the "Other."

Post-colonial scholars also recognize how the colonized experience impacts not only those colonized but also the colonizers. Rao (2002), a postmodernist scholar who draws from Foucault, explains how "Self and Other are constructed through colonial discourse mechanisms," such that postcolonialism "becomes a way of being" (p.85). This is to say that within the self-other dichotomy, the way of understanding self (whether one is colonizer or colonized) is in reflection of the other half of the dualism. When one part of the duality interacts with the other part, the interaction in itself produces a particular reality. Along similar lines, Derrida develops a more abstract view of this matter.[38]

Western Accounts of Malay Spiritual and Mystical Culture

Incidents related to spirit-raising (séances) first appeared in Western texts as "demon worship" which was linked to (the Malay's) primitive indistinct existence "not known to Englishmen" (Laderman, 1991, quoting Maxwell, 1883). Laderman also reports of how in subsequent colonial writings, Malay medicinal practices were referred

to as "black arts" (Maxwell, 1883), Malay beliefs as "quaint notions" (Blagden, 1896) or "downright heathenism" (Maxwell, 1883), and Malay rituals as "superstitions found among the lower races" (Skeat, 1898). Laderman concludes that the (British) colonial student's impression of Malay culture was that of misguided chaos. She quotes Annadale and Robinson (1904) who claims of Malay culture: "it is evident ... that these ideas do not form a system, being rather a jumble of confused and sometimes incongruous superstition." In a different text, Wilkinson (1908) compares Malay culture to a poorly maintained "museum of ancient customs," where nothing makes sense.

These stories and others (see also Kloss, 1908; Gimlette, 1913; Swettenham, 1895) served to bring the rituals of Malay "magic-related life" to English reading audiences who, as Laderman (1991) notes, relished the "colorful tales of colonial exotica" (p. 8). These writings highlighted how shamanistic and other "magical" practices, such as the belief in "hantu" or ghosts represented a "primitive" way to deal with life's day-to-day events. The reason of this "primitiveness," as Winstedt (1925, as cited in Laderman) concludes, is that the Malay's primordial ways of thinking made it such that Malays could not come to terms with abstract theories and systems.

Malaysia Today

Malaysia is a multiracial, multireligious and multicultural society, which comprise of three main racial groups: the Malays, Chinese and Indians. According to 2003 estimates by the office of the US Director of Central Intelligence, the Malaysian population measures at a little over 23 million. The Malays represent approximately 58% of the population while the Chinese make up a little over 24%. The Indians comprise 8%

of the population, and the rest of the population consists of small groupings of other racial or ethnic clusters.[39]

In the early years of Malaysia's independence, each racial group was separated in terms of geographical area (Roslan, 2001). This territorial-based segregated characteristic was inherited from the British who colonized (then) Malaya from 1786 to 1957. The Malays resided in the North and Eastern parts of the Malaysian Peninsular, which was predominantly rural, while the Chinese and Indians occupied the more urbanized Western portion of the region. The main racial groups in East Malaysia were the indigenous peoples such as the Iban, Murut, Kadazan and Bajau.

The Malays were mainly engaged in agriculture and fishing. The Chinese were involved with the (tin) mining industry as well as commerce. The Indians were either employed on (rubber) plantations or worked for the government (Crouch, 1996; Dorai, 2000; Snodgrass, 1980). Roslan (2001) notes that the Malays were left out of economic modernization due to their traditional subsistence agricultural economy.

Dorai (2000) explains that most of the Malays are Muslim and speak Bahasa Malaysia, which, in spite of variations among spoken dialects, is the National language and is the most common in its standard and written form. The Chinese practice Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. A small number of Malaysian Chinese are Christian. The Indians are mainly Hindu and a few are Christian. The Chinese speak a number of different Chinese dialects, which include Hokkien, Cantonese and Hakka while the Indians, who are mainly from South India, speak Tamil and Malayalee.

Differences among racial factions in Malaysia do not only apply to race and ethnic difference, but also to class, culture, religion and language (Crouch, 1996). The

different races and ethnic groups in Malaysia practice cultural, religious and linguistic autonomy under a governing unit, which describes itself as a Federal Parliamentary Democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy. Shastri (1993) states that communication among racial and ethnic groupings in Malaysia is typically conducted by each group's political leadership: These leaders operate as spokespersons or brokers for their respective groups.

As Malaysia defines its identity now in the 2000s, it is urgent to take stock of how Malaysian history has been written and how it can be re-written to reflect histories of the Malaysian people, from their point of view. I contend that the postcolonial condition is inextricably wound into Malay identity and the Malay world view, and should be taken into account when doing research on Malay cultural processes. Due to being taught to see their own culture from a Western point of view, as well as to describe their culture using Western categories, Malaysians conceive of their culture (social reality) according to Western hegemonies.

In my own writing, I recognize that I too am influenced by Western thought paradigms. My metatheoretical considerations are couched generally in Western hermeneutics and more specifically in the area of Language and Social Interaction, and, my academic endeavors (this project included) conforms to Western disciplinary conventions (for example; my writing methods, language use and argument style). Indeed, my erudition has been cast in a Western mold. I find this to be the case with many of the other Malaysian scholars I cite.

Yet it was through my Western educational experience that I have come to better understand what it is to be 'Other' through the colonizing occurrence. Prior to this, I was

shrouded by my own hegemonies, brought about by the local (familial and community) discourses that were produced by that same experience of being colonized. This is not to say that I have been able to step outside all the hegemonies that persist in my world view, surely that would be an impossible feat for anyone; rather, the education afforded me in the Western context has made me realize how important it is that scholars such as myself start addressing (and in consequence making visible) the issues related to the colonizing experience and its impact in multiple venues (academia, world view, history etc.).

Inasmuch as I am a scholar produced by Western discourse, I am also part of the community to which Said (1979) refers as the "Orient." I feel this gives me a unique vantage point[40] to study communication systems and their influence on human social reality (especially that of my Malaysian community). My hope is that my voice can be united with the voices that emerge from the non-West, so that talk about the world and its inhabitants can include the perspective of the 'Other.'

My analysis on cerita hantu will provide a dialogue on power relationships that have situated the Malays into a dialectic that disempowers them. My research, as noted in the preceding chapter, will primarily examine cerita hantu in terms of its content, context, performance and interaction. I find that a research agenda that incorporates an interpretive as well as critical analysis to be suitable for my research goals. This research plan is discussed next.

CHAPTER

4

Research Protocol

My research questions as well as philosophical orientation, which are grounded in epistemic justification around ideological or social constructionist processes, make it such that methods associated with hermeneutic empiricism provide the most suitable research applications for this study.

Epistemological Considerations

As a Malaysian, I am able to participate as a member of the group studied – I also reported findings on the basis of my observations as competent member of the community. I am not necessarily looking for claims that are inherently true; rather, I seek what in terms of the pragmatists (Mead, 1934; or more recently Rorty, 1991) are claims constructed as true due to the nature of their interaction in the world; or what James' (1908) calls "belief-in-action." Wieder (1974), drawing on the work of Garfinkel (1967) explains how claims about the social communication world are embedded in that world:

1) Somehow, members of societies are doing something that makes it possible for social scientists to observe their affairs as 'regular', i.e., as uniform, reproducible, repetitive, standardized and typical, and that their affairs have these properties of 'regularity' independently of particular production cohorts. By and large, what members are doing that makes their affairs observable in this way is talking, not only for social scientists but among themselves as well.

2) While social scientists talk of members' affairs as showing 'regularity', members also talk about their affairs as showing regularity. Just as social scientists engage in explaining members' conduct by reference to rules and rule-like constructions, members also explain their conduct in this way.
3) By treating members talk as 'expressing' an underlying, shared, cognitive order; the social scientist disregards the fact of that talk as an essential feature of the setting in which it occurs. He disregards the reflexivity of that talk – that members' accounts are constituent features of the settings (and objects in them) that those accounts make observable. (p. 42)

Wieder demonstrates how the ethnographer accounts for familiar, mundane activities as identifiable order to ongoing accomplishments by participants of a speech community. The ethnographer's experience of the normative culture, in this case around storytelling, can be understood in terms of meaning produced in the context of the ethnographer's interactions with the participants, along with their account of their social world made observable through ethnography. The ethnographer's experiences then can be used as primary data as the ethnographer operates as an 'object in a social world (p. 43).'

Critical inquiry is also necessary to come to terms with the ideological or hegemonic structures that guide the way reality is manifested in Malay communities. In earlier segments of this document, I have discussed how humans come to know what they know on the basis of how information "fits" into preconceived mental categories; and some of these categories are constructed from power-based ideological forces. Therefore, trying to understand how we arrive at meaning by looking at these classifications certainly makes sense as a preliminary step towards a critical analysis.

I sprinkle this writing with critical introspection, much of which based on Malay post-colonial influences that surface from discursive representation of Western depictions of Malay culture, beliefs and lifestyle. I use this analysis as a way to demystify the hegemonic hierarchies inherent in how the Malay construction self is based on Western accounts of Malay social reality, such that Malay social reality is, in part constructed through a Western lens.

My research on Malay cerita hantu and social reality is grounded in a hermeneutic epistemology shaped around humanism and critical theory. I use qualitative methods as a way to access the layers of meaning that emerge in and around storytelling as human interaction. Further, as a methodology that is typically classified as exploratory and inductive, qualitative research is suitable for research topics where there is little or no information readily available. Qualitative methods will provide what Geertz (1975) terms "thick descriptions" of particular elements in a communication environment or interaction in a way that no quantitative survey or instrument can capture.

While my primary goal for this chapter is to report the research strategy I employ in this study, I also feel it important to discuss my negotiation of epistemological considerations around ethnographic authority (how do I claim to know that which I know), polyvocality (an ontological support of multiple perspectives) as well as of dilemmas that emanate over data collection or analysis, such as struggles discerning hegemonic and ideological frames[41] that may shape my examination and interpretation of the data collected.

Ethnography: Fieldwork and Interviews

I was born in Georgetown, Pulau Pinang (an island in the Northern Malay Peninsular) in the late 1960s and lived in a small town called Taiping, near Ipoh, in the State of Perak (see Figures 21 and 22). I lived in Malaysia for twenty-five years before voyaging to the United States to pursue higher education. As a teenager I traveled extensively around the Malaysian Peninsular due to sport participation[42] and work.[43] In my years in Malaysia, I had journeyed to all the different territories in Malaysia (known as states) with the exception of Kelantan (located in the northeast part of the Peninsular) and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). Given my background, my travel experience and familiarity with the terrain, it was not difficult to conduct fieldwork in different parts of Malaysia.

Setting: Research Sites

I collected data in three different geographic locations in Peninsular Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital; Taiping, a small town in the Perak state; and Georgetown, Pulau Pinang, a large city on an island west of the Peninsular. The primary research location was Taiping, my hometown. These research locations are labeled in the map of the Malaysian Peninsular in Figure 22.

While accessibility into each location played an important role in my selection of research sites, these locales were also deemed ideal for other reasons. Carrying out the research in at least four geographic areas enhanced the generalizability of the findings, especially when attempting to draw conclusions about the Malay culture at large. These locations are somewhat different from each other in terms of their demographics and

experiential culture. These differences can provide the variability to strengthen the premise of the research.

Figure 21: Map of Malaysia

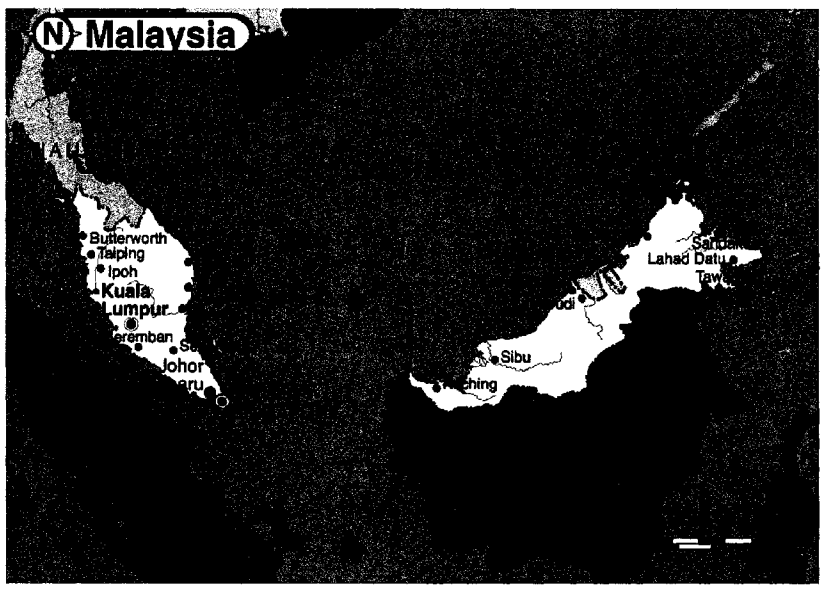


Figure 22: Peninsular Malaysia

Fieldwork began in June 2002 and continued through August 2003. I was able to go to Malaysia to conduct research during the different school break periods in 2002 and 2003. I carried out fieldwork in Malaysia for two months during the summer breaks

(June-July) and a month during the winter holiday (December) in 2002. I spent two and a half months (June-August) conducting fieldwork during summer 2003. I actively spent a total of six to seven months in the field.

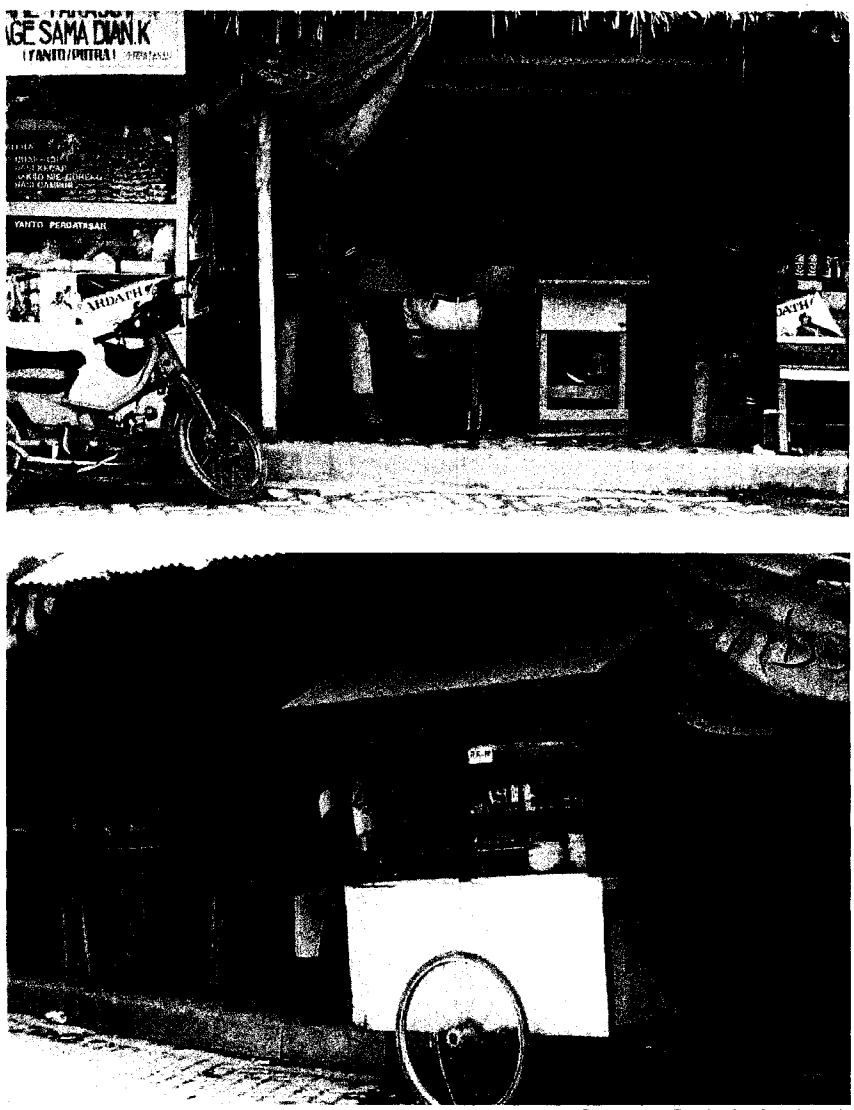
The data I recorded in Malaysia are field notes recorded in diary format, long and short interviews, as well as a collection of media and cultural artifacts. Media and cultural data includes: colonial texts or manuscripts written by Western colonizers; popular texts such as magazines, newspapers, and films; photographs and exhibition data; websites; and, material culture such as items used in séances, items described in stories heard, or items used in ghost-related incidents. Appendices A, B and C provide information regarding the research data (interview participants, interview questions and media and cultural material collected).

Participant Selection: Interviews and Ethnographic Data

I mainly used two methods of participant selection, that of convenience and snowball sampling. I would "hang out" mainly at different Malay *gerai makanan* (eating stalls, see Figure 23), but would also sometimes frequent establishments such as Malay fruit stalls, hawker centers and bazaars. I found gerai makanan to be ideal places to conduct short interviews as the patrons at such places would often use those places to simply 'hang out' or talk among friends. It was also not unusual to approach a stranger in those places to seek information as those places were regarded 'open to the public' and therefore, open for interaction. Access to patrons at gerai makanan was generally smoother if those patrons regarded me as a member of their community. Often, this distinction was made when I introduced myself (as someone who spoke Malay and was

from the same town) or when introduced to the patrons by the shopkeeper or by other patrons.

Figure 23: Malay Gerai Makanan



Source: Buletin Malaysia

I asked the people frequenting those areas to spend some time talking with me about Malay ghosts. I also made the acquaintance of the shop owners who then introduced me to their clientele or served as interviewees themselves during break time or when business slowed down. Oftentimes, I developed friendships with the owners of the establishments within which I situated myself for conducting fieldwork. These owners

were always curious over my family ties in Malaysia. More often than not, their consent to participate in the study was based on the realization that I was Malaysian as well, and that my parents (and other family members) were still part of the Malaysian social landscape, in spite of my absconding to pursue a lifestyle with the *Orang Putih* (White folk).

When I conducted interviews in my hometown, almost all my informants were curious as to where my parents lived. Some even claimed to know my father (who has been living in Taiping for the past sixty years or so), yet upon closer inspection, I found their association fictitious. I believe this "constructed familiarity" was a way for the informant to reduce anxiety towards his or her interactions with me.

In most cases, I always introduced myself first as a fellow Malaysian, or as a fellow village-person, and talked about my family, before soliciting research participation. If the informant was eating or having a drink at the food establishment where I was doing fieldwork, I often paid for their meal. This was a necessary act demonstrating Malaysian *sopan santun* (politeness as a way of life) to establish my credibility and to show my appreciation for their participation.

I also conducted interviews in my home as well as in the homes of participants. The people I interviewed in my home were mainly Malay family friends and acquaintances my parents had recruited for my study. Conducting the interview in my home was a fascinating experience. Almost always, my parents would join the interview and add their own information (such as ghost stories) to the interview. Many a time, my parents would repeat the same stories in different interview sessions. My role as merely researcher and competent participant became more multifaceted in the company of my

parents; here, I was also daughter and child. They would often interrupt me, take over the interview session or tell stories of my childhood during the interview process.

The interviews I conducted in participants' homes were done primarily for the participants' comfort and convenience. Participants for these interviews were selected out my (and my family or acquaintances') social network. Interview candidates were also contacted through invitations using the word-of-mouth technique. I did not know many of these people as well as those I interviewed in my home. While these interviews tended to be more formal than the home-based interviews, the interview atmosphere was usually quite casual; for example, one Malay mother began breastfeeding while I was interviewing her, and towards the end of a different interview a young man sought my advice on how to woo women. Some interviews though, made me feel uncomfortable; for instance, the same breastfeeding case,[44] as well as an occasion where an informant proceeded to squeeze my little toe with her thumb and forefinger as a way to show me how Bomohs find spirits prowling in the human body. She pressed the toe with such force that I wanted to yell aloud in pain but did not do so as I feared it would disrupt her storytelling. Instead, I gritted my teeth and politely managed a quiet 'ouch' when she paused for air.

Some informal interviews were conducted on the campuses of two local Universities. I went to the Malaysian University libraries to conduct secondary research and while I was on campus, I interviewed students with whom I struck a conversation. Interviews were also conducted at the hospital. During my last field trip, my father had a heart attack and I spent much time in both the Taiping General Hospital as well as the Kuala Lumpur National Heart Institute. The hospital waiting room was, ironically, an

ideal place for interview sessions. A number of the people visiting their relatives or loved ones at the hospital were from the surrounding rural areas.[45] These visitors often spent the entire day at the hospital as transportation to and from their homes were problematic. Many of these hospital visitors had little to do and were more than happy to tell me ghost stories.

The interviews I conducted were unstructured, which is to say that the interviews were open ended and informal. Participants answered the questions in their own words, often having the flexibility to include information that was not necessarily directly addressing the question posed. Lofland and Lofland (1995) describe unstructured interviews as "intensive interviewing" used to "elicit from the interviewee, rich, detailed information that can be used for qualitative analysis" (p. 18). This type of interview format also allowed me to respond to various issues raised by the participants which I had not considered in my own extrapolation of the phenomenon at hand. Mishler (1995) tells us that interviews in general can educe participants to narratize information or accounts of their experiences.

I believe that using unstructured interviews and participant observation to be appropriate because of their unobtrusive nature. The Malay community is a cohesive (and sometimes private) cultural group that may frown upon strangers' attempts to characterize their culture, spirituality and identity. This wariness could stem from the many years of being "objectified" or "exoticized" during colonial occupation and in colonial writings.

I have collected about eighty long and short interviews (see Appendix A). Long interviews were usually conducted in formal interview sessions, such as in my family's

home or at the interviewee's homes. The interviews I included in the "long interview" category are those that last over twenty minutes. Most long interviews ranged between twenty minutes to two hours. The long interviews were tape recorded. I also collected informal interviews and opinions as I operated in the field as participant observer. Field notes were taken to document these ethnographic interviews. Many of these interviews were also tape recorded. I carried a Sony Mini Disc recorder[46] with an attached clip-on lavaliere microphone. The recording device is about the size of my palm, and weighs less than five ounces. Its size and portability allowed for frequent ease of use while in the field.

The questions that loosely guided the interview process were based on a Conceptual Net (Appendix B) I devised prior to the data collection. The interviews were conducted both in English and Bahasa Malaysia.[47] In most cases the interviews incorporated a mix of English and Bahasa Malaysia, along with colloquial and regional Malay dialects.

While I have discontinued observations in the field to work on the manuscript at hand, I still receive notations and research material from contacts and family members in Malaysia. These contacts have been sending me newspaper clippings as well as emails detailing cerita hantu they have heard. I try to maintain my relationships with non familial informants by occasionally sending correspondence via email or surface mail.

Media and Cultural Artifacts

I am also observing and analyzing the print and electronic media circulated within the Malay community. I obtained items such as Malay community newspapers, magazines and, video and movies for analysis (Appendix C). At this point, I have

collected fourty-four books and popular magazines, four films or videos and an assortment of newspaper clippings associated with Malaysian hantu and hantu stories. I am also observing messages and information on different Malaysian Internet sites. Many of these electronic sites are personal webpages that serve as information conduits which detail general information about Malaysian ghosts as well as of ghost encounters. Photographs and documents associated with exhibitions have also been collected for analysis. I took a number of photographs at the National Museum's Ghost and Spirits exhibition, as well as of cultural matter (such as Malay cemeteries and Frangipani trees) that were discussed in the interviews.

Cresswell (1998) explains how materials such as artifacts, physical trace evidence and myths serve as referential signs of social reality. Cresswell draws form Fetterman (1989) who notes how cultural material can thematically direct the ethnographer to come to understand the structure and function of social organization. One goal of ethnography is not only to observe behaviors and talk of the members of the Malay community, but to also understand how the cultural artifacts that Malays make, use and talk about are also representative of their world view (Spradley, 1980).

Data Analysis

I transcribed and analyzed my field notes, interview transcripts and media or cultural artifacts according to the different characteristics (such as verbal and non-verbal behavior) found to be multiple and relevant. I then read though and examined all collected material at one time, so as to acquire a sense of the overall work (a process ethnographers conduct to get an initial impression of the data at hand; see, for example, Cresswell, 1998; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Tesch, 1990; and Wolcott, 1994).

Finally, I coded (Wolcott, 1994) the data according to representative categories of themes that surface in the analysis. These data categories were constantly revamped as new and different patterned regularities emerge during the progress of the data analysis. My analysis was based on the substantiveness of the data contained in each category as well as its thematic relevance. I also critically evaluated the emerging themes so as to come to understand how hegemonic forces operate within the cultural belief framework. I do this as a way to reveal the postcolonial narrative.

It is important to note that while it may seem that my goals were to analyze talk rituals which spans the gamut for those who tell cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu in the Malay community; such an undertaking would be very difficult to achieve as the Malay culture is speckled with diversity in terms of its storytelling. Many different variations of storytelling and talk are used in the different Malay provinces. This diversity is partly due to linguistic differentiation (the different Malay dialects that are used in different regions of Malaysia) and cultural mixes (for example, the northern part of the Peninsular is strongly influenced by Thai culture and East Malaysia has its own indigenous uniqueness). With this in mind, it is important to highlight that a majority of my research participants came from the Western portion of the Malay Peninsular.

Therefore, as a caveat, while my research attempts to draw out the features of cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu as a display of social reality, it does not closely attend to the many sub-cultural differences that are inherent in cerita hantu in Malaysia. Other considerations for this study include issues I regard as common challenges of ethnographic study that emerge when attempting to understand cultural meaning, such as

translation difficulties and recording restrictions (such as what people would not say because the recorder was turned on).

To summarize, for my research methods, I utilize ethnography as well as critical analysis as a way to come to understand how cerita hantu is associated with Malay social reality. My ethnographic inquiry incorporates participant observation, unstructured interviews as well as an analysis of media and cultural artifacts.

PART TWO:

MALAY GHOST STORIES AND THE MALAY WORLD VIEW

CHAPTER

5

Goffman's Dramaturgical Metaphor and Frame as Theoretical Device

In traditional ethnography, researchers mainly use talk-content as data. In doing so, they tend to not pay attention to matters such as meanings and realities that are generated in the talk context and via the act of interacting; these include the meanings emerging between ethnographer and participant(s), along with meanings gleaned by ethnographers about such matters as normative constructs that guide interaction. In Part Two of the manuscript, I not only report my findings on the basis of what was said, a' la traditional ethnography, but also account for "meaning frames" that emerge from within and through the course of interaction, inside and around the contextual framework. In my examination of cerita hantu, I use Goffman's (1959, 1974, 1981) dramaturgical metaphor and frame analysis to facilitate accessing meanings that make up the Malay world view. In Chapter five, which I consider an introduction to Part Two, I explore these theoretical constructs, along with other theoretical applications that helped channel my attention to these constructs.

Narrative Sequence and Temporal Order

The narratives I encountered while in the field typically recapitulated a past event. Most stories had a beginning, middle and end, established in linear sequence. The sequence in which the story was told generally succumbed to the temporal order of events, as recalled by the storyteller. These characteristics are observable in the

following story, which, as I noted in my field notes, is a 'typical' story – of an experience with a hantu – found in situ.

The storyteller, Aunty Nor, is my mother's sister who married into the Malay community.[48] She first tried to tell me about the different types of ghosts but then told the story as a way for me to better understand Hantu Pelesit:

Cheryl: What other hantu do you know of Aunty Nor?

Aunty Nor: Then you got … errr …Hantu Raya …ah that one, then you got … see lah you got … Pelesit ya girl? [she asks her daughter who is sitting nearby]

Cheryl: What is Pelesit?

Aunty Nor: Pelesit usually, if I'm not mistaken is reared by ladies you know .. or men also .. ladies who don't want their husbands to go out, who want their husbands to stay at home …

Cheryl: Mmm hmmm ..

Aunty Nor: Ah .. that is Pelesit.

Cheryl: And what does the Pelesit do?

Aunty Nor: Supposed to keep the husbands in .. [pause] I .. I'm not very good … but I'll tell you a story okay?

When Lia [my cousin] was born … this is a real story you know, not a bohong-bohong [bluff or fake] one know. When Lia was born, I had a maid, know, elderly lady lah, she was looking after .. she was cooking for us all lah .. doing housework and everything. So when Lia was born, we wanted to you know, cukur the rambut [shave the head[49]] you know. So my mother-in-law came. But three days before that, this lady became very lazy, you know. She will sleeeeeep, and then she will get up and do house work and then she will go back and sleeeep. Went on like that you know. So, my mother-in-law came, my mother-in-law told me, she said, why is your maid so lazy? Everytime sleeping only, you know. That .. the next day we wanted to do this kenduri [celebrative feast] you know, and a lot of work to do what, you must cook the chicken and the pulut [glutinous rice] and all these things kan? So .. the day of the kenduri itself, she was sleeping the whole day. My

mother-in-law had to do work .. y'know. So a friend of ours came. Happened that evening, about six o'clock or what, the friend came. The friend came and er.. Uncle Ishak [her husband] told the friend, I don't know what's wrong lah with my maid .. this lady, you know. Sleeping the whole day. He says. Never get up … So, this man, this friend of our said, come let me go and see, he said, you know. So they went to the .. the maid's room, she was with her sarong up to her bra here [she points to he upper chest], no other clothes, only the sarong, and she was reaaallly sleeping. So this man says, this is nothing … you know, this is not sleeping you know, this one has been … has … this Hantu Pelesit has gone into her you know. You see how she sleeps, her mouth opeeeeen like that all know. But that time I was in confinement, so they won't let me go. And before that, a few days before that, this Lia was crying the whole day, you know. Morning, noon, night she will cry. Morning, noon, night she will cry. Ah .. and then emm.. so, he said, he told Uncle Ishak, he said give me one pepper you know, the pepper seed. Hmm .. you bring some pepper seeds. So he took the pepper seeds ..

Cheryl: The black pepper is it?

Aunty Nor: Ah, the black pepper. So he took the black pepper seeds, then he went and press on her …her ..what do you call that, toe .. toe, the big toe, you know? Pressss… press.. press… press pres …then he prayed eh, he said some prayers eh, and the she .. and then he told, he asked her lah, where are you from? He said like that, you know. And then she answered, you know. I'm from across the road. [pause] He said like that .. she said, she answered! I'm from across the road, she said like that. And then he asked her, he said, what are you doing here? How come you come to this house, he said. This house is a very good house. No .. I just .. I came because there is err.. sweet blood.

Cheryl: Ahhhhh …

Aunty Nor: There's sweet blood. So I .. ah.. this friend of ours, Kak Rasiam's husband eh [she nods at her daughter], emmmph .. he said, you cannot disturb people like that. Where are you from? Across the road. Where are you from? From the Customs – know my house is here, the road is here, the custom quarters are here [she gestures with her hands] you know.

Cheryl: Ohhh ..

Aunty Nor: I'm from the Customs quarters. And he [their friend] was in the

Customs! So he said, alah celaka lah, he said, I know where you're from, he said. He said, you better go back, he said. No, I don't want to go back. Here very nice, she said. My owner doesn't feed me at all. My .. the maid you know is talking like that. My owner doesn't feed me at all. He says, you better go back – if you go back he says .. if you don't go back, I'm going to call your owner here and ask .. ask your owner to dance naked. You know, he said. I'll call your owner here ...and make the owner dance naked. And then err... little while later, she got up. She got up y'know, puuuul up her sarong all. She felt so bad what cos Ishak and Karim was in the room what. Pull up .. ayyy what's wrong? She was perspiring all ... what is wrong, what happened to me, she said. Like this and that. Then we told her lah. She said. Then she told us lah, she said, few days before that, one lady came to the house. You see, I made a mistake. When she was born, that time got no nap... err.. what do you call that - pampers you know. So all her nappies I used to hang in front of the house, you know. When you hang in front of the house, people can see. Once you have a lot of nappies, means you have new baby.

Cheryl: Ohhhh .. so Lia's .. baby-blood is sweet lah.

Aunty Nor: Ahhh ..[agreeing] baby what. Sweet blood lah. So ahhh .. she ..she ... she .. what do you call that .. she .. came to the house. But if .. if they have that thing [spirit] with them, when you talk to them, they wouldn't look at you straight you know. Like now I'm talking to you we look straight in the eyes. They won't look you know, they'll look up, they'll look down .. they won't look at you straight. Cos they want to..

Chris: Pass it on.

Aunty Nor: Pass it on you know. Ahhh ... so they won't look at you straight.

Cheryl: If they look at you straight?

Aunty Nor: They cannot pass it on.

Aunty Nor: So she said lah. She said, that day one lady came, ask for work, she said. So I told the lady got no work, she said ...[pause]

Cheryl: Passed it to her lah.

Aunty Nor: Ahhhhh....

Chris: Which person in the customs was having this one?

Aunty Nor: Ah lah .. this one when the husbands fool around all they don't want the husbands to go out ...know.. ahhh.

The purpose of Aunty Nor's narrative was to *tell* a ghost story, and Aunty Nor did so by using what Labov and Watlezky (1967) would regard a fully developed narrative.[50] As the primary storyteller, Aunty Nor also incorporated an evaluative function, transforming the overall syntax of the story which accentuated her narrator-slant. She also told the story in a temporal sequence (from her memory of those events) which outlined the unfolding of events in its chronological order, with clear markers as to the significant properties in the story such as the hantu when the story started and ended.

While a structuralist analysis (such as a Labovian inquiry) may be helpful in providing guidance as to how to evaluate the sequential order that preserves the ethos of a narrative such as this, such analysis tends to be deficient if the focus is on understanding the role of context and audience which seems paramount in the case of this story told in situ: For example, it was clear to me, as the interviewer, that by telling her story, Aunty Nor was informing me that there was another way to talk about ghosts, which was through the storytelling apparatus. I found Aunty Nor's rejection of Western linear and categorical interrogation to demonstrate what I understood as the Malaysian way of giving information. I asked her specific questions about Hantu Pelesit (such as: 1) What is Pelesit? 2) What does the Pelesit do?) – This line of questioning positioned Hantu Pelesit as a 'category' open for discussion. The appropriate response to such categorical sequencing (based on Western/rational terms) would be to provide an abstract definition or answer to each question posed in the temporal order in which the question was asked. However, Aunty Nor resisted my colonizing interrogation which boxed the hantu into a

generalized classification, and instead discussed the hantu in her terms – that is, as a story of one Hantu Pelesit in one particular occasion.

Further, Aunty Nor's use of the terms 'you know' and 'lah' were included as part of the interactive strategy. 'You know' was used to reinforce the key elements in the story, while 'lah' served as a paralinguistic feature that softened or accentuated a particular verbal message.

The stories told to me in the field, like Aunty Nor's story, carried both, performative and interactive elements that were socially significant. As performer, Aunty Nor's account of the events in the story emphasized her role as "storyteller." Her story was part of her experiential reality, considered 'story worthy' and ideal for retelling. This performance within a particular temporal-sequence, lends itself to traditional, more formal oral-storytelling measures, or stories as monologues.

In the same vein though, the interactive characteristics of Aunty Nor's story were based on the community standards of 'telling' the story. In Aunty Nor's case, the story was selected to achieve a particular purpose, to tell a cerita hantu in a way a Malaysian would tell such a story to another recognized Malaysian; placing the semantic weight of the story in *contextual* frames. Further, the relationship between Aunty Nor and myself was shaped by the way the story was told. Aunty Nor told me that story as a way to tell me about hantu because the story was the only route to express what she knew of hantu. It was through the telling of the story, in the context of a familial relationship, that Aunty Nor was able to relay the significance of the semantic properties made available in storytelling.

As such, Aunty Nor's story, in interaction, bridged the (Labovian) gap between text and context. Overlooking the interactive component has been recognized as a shortcoming of the Labovian analytic model. Post-Labovian narrative analysts (such as David Herman, 2000; 2001; 2002) have acknowledged that narrative is based on interactional accomplishment, and that storytelling is a collaborative effort between storyteller(s) and audiences, to produce a folk discourse model. The discourse model, in turn, helps interactants develop a 'reality' regarding material in their social world.

In his study of ghost stories in North Carolina, Herman (2000) notes that an emergent discourse model helps interactants refer to material in stories (agents or people and, objects) using indistinct yet implicit *referring expressions* (such as anaphoric terms) that are understood by interactants as 'informational updates' on the story world. In doing so, the folk discourse model facilitates interactants' construal of: 1) people and objects in the storied world, 2) how those people and objects operate in each context, and 3) how those people and objects are situated relative to each other and with people and objects in other contexts. Herman's work shows us that interactants rely on shared expressions made in order to make sense of what is going on in a story. Therefore, referring expressions and other normative constructs in talk operate as a communicative strategy among a group of people or community to service their narrative aims. In this sense, semantic properties of Aunty Nor's story, or any other cerita hantu for that matter, would depend on the social uses of narratives by a particular *speech community* (Hymes, 1964), (or in this case, the Malaysian speech community), a concept I discuss in the next section.

Malaysian Speech Communities

There have been many definitions as to what is a speech community (see for example: Gumperz, 1972; Labov, 1972), and while Bloomfield (1926) has been a prominent forerunner in discerning shared meanings stemming from utterances in particular communities, it is the work of Dell Hymes (1960, 1990) that generally receives credit in this regard and generally is employed as a point of departure.

Hymes (1964, 1990 and also in Gumperz and Hymes', 1972) argues that the semantic properties and functions of language cannot be separated from the study of language as understood within a recognized social collective, or what he calls a speech community. Hymes notes that by being a "competent communicator" in a speech community, a person would understand the meanings behind talk sequences or conversation within that community. By participating in talk, a person serving as competent communicator would perform particular speech acts that are recognized (based on particular contexts) as 'competent' talk sequences. Hymes also states that there are layers of language contexts wherein meanings take shape. He defines these contexts as the act, situation, event and community. He also developed an analysis of talk on the basis of what he labeled *SPEAKING* (S=setting, P=participants, E=ends or purpose, A=act(s), K=language key, I= instrumental ties, N=norms, and G=genres, which is a mnemonic device that isolates the different levels in which a speech act can be understood. Hymes' speaking model can be applied to many kinds of discourses, and the model itself provides a composite for understanding and working with the different components that constitute it, however, followers of Hymes' work in any particular study tend to only focus on certain components (as represented by the mnemonic letters) of the SPEAKING arrangement.

As a speech community, Malaysians generally (and Malays specifically) are able to operate as competent communicators and achieve their communication objectives through and within communication acts. The Malay competent communicator is able to select, from a myriad of competing "correct" behaviors available, the action which best suits that communicator's expert[51] perception of norms expected for that occasion.

Hymes' work is helpful toward understanding the role of a speech community in the talk context. Another area where communication in general (and narratives in specific) can be understood as articulators of reality is in the work done by symbolic interactionists in the tradition of G. H. Mead.[52] Symbolic Interactionism posits humans as active, creative participants of a constructed social world. Humans, in this sense, are not passive or simply conforming objects of socialization.

Narratives and Symbolic Interactionism

Blumer (1969), who was associated with the University of Chicago, was noted for coining the phrase "symbolic interactionism" and further developing the theory. He states of this perspective:

> The term "symbolic interaction" refers, of course, to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or "define" each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their "response" is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's

actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior. (p. 180)

Blumer explains how individuals in society understand their world from organized and patterned interactions made available to them in everyday events. Peoples' definition of themselves, their roles, the situation, event and context are defined within the interactive process.[53]

Here, I argue that a Malay social reality relating to identity emerges through particular identity texts in and around storytelling. In my inquiry I attempt to explore identity texts in Malay storytelling by studying both the performative and interactive processes associated with telling a cerita hantu. While I find symbolic interactionism to be a generally a useful perspective to come to terms with how social reality intersects with storytelling, it is within Erving Goffman's (1959, 1963, 1974) work that I find a more suitable base upon which I can conceptually ground my findings. Goffman has sometimes been classified by others as a symbolic interactionist yet his later works reflect strains of ethnomethodology (for more information see Garfinkel, 1967) and phenomenology[54] (see Husserl, 1965). Two of Goffman's contributions provide the theoretical framework upon which I base my assessment of performance and interaction associated with Malay storytelling; that of the dramaturgical metaphor and frame analysis.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Metaphor and Frame Analysis

Osman (1982) explains that Malay narratives are typically recognized by its *dramatis personae* (characters of the performance), which I use here to springboard into Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor, an appropriate conceptual device for

discerning performance in storytelling. The employment of Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor is an aid in understanding how cultural texts (in Malay ghost narratives) associated with identity can be made visible to a competent audience, in this case, the interviewer or ethnographer.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor situates everyday social interactions as performances in which humans participate. Goffman explains performance as "activity of a given participant on a given occasion that serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p. 26). Goffman's focus is on how the individual presents him or her *self* via performance.

The dramaturgical metaphor has been described as a "device for locating a methodological orientation to the visible world of daily life" (Wieder, 1993, p. 1). That is, the dramaturgical metaphor helps us see the panoply of things that situate what could be described as "ordinary events." According to Goffman (1959), we live in a "visible" world. As social actors we are able to observe and account for human actions (along with their meanings) from "within" the scene or context. We (and our behavior) are embodied within these contexts. Wieder explains that proper employment of the dramaturgic metaphor allows for awareness of the visible world, attention to its perspectival accessibility as well as access to phenomenal spatialization.

Goffman (1959) notes that the way oneself is presented influences the others' (audience's) responses toward the presenter. What Goffman suggests, as Wieder (1998) clarifies, is that "who" is a person, is offered in the form of a sign (performance) and not necessarily presented in person. In order for a person to become recognized in a particular way, he or she must "do something" during an interaction so that a specific

meaning is conveyed. The act of "doing something" includes a repertoire of behavior[55] (both verbal and non-verbal) that collectively (or in some cases individually) create an impression on a knowing audience. Therefore, by "doing" being a storyteller[56] a person leads others to act in such a way that would be in accordance to the presenter's performance as storyteller.

Meanings are made accessible to the different participants of a social interaction due to an organization of social concord Goffman labels (1959) the "working consensus." The working consensus is an unspoken 'agreement' about a situation. Wieder (1998) explains how the shared definitions around the working consensus "define the public operative reality," that is, we come to share an opinion or belief about what is "real" or, as "true" of a situation or person.

A Malay storyteller being recognized as a storyteller (in a working consensus) hinges on how well others in the storyteller's presence respond to the performed self, within the context in which the performance plays out. Goffman (1959) writes of performed identity and scene in the working consensus:

> A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a product of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it. The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specified location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented. (p. 253)

Goffman notes here how the working consensus is not reliant on the performer's actions alone. As Wieder (1998) explains, the working consensus is:

> An unspoken 'agreement' about whose claims and which unspoken but projected claims will be recognized, claims concerning identity, concerning the cast of characters, the props, what is going on here, what this occasion is, what place or territory is this, i.e., what this apparently shared surrounding word is. (p. 11)

It is the performance within a "scene" that collectively contributes to this agreement over "what is going on" or "who is this person." Wieder continues:

> When we allow that the individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him. (p. 12)

Therefore, as we study Malay storytelling occasions, it is crucial to note that the interaction among all participants is what brings about the working consensus.

In later works Goffman (1974, 1981) turned his focus to social processes that underlie the performance structure. He contended that the key issue was around how participants' conceptualized the structure within which they were operating. In doing so, Goffman expounded on the idea of "frames" which situates operative realities.

Goffman's (1974) notions regarding "reality frames" were influenced by William James[57] (1950) and Alfred Shutz[58] (1945). Yet it was in Bateson's (1955) exegesis on seriousness and un-seriousness that Goffman found, and on the basis of which he later developed, the idea of frames. Frames, in Bateson's terms, are the basic elements used to identify definitions of a situation. Goffman (1997) writes:

> I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase "frame analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience. (p. 155)

Goffman claims that a frame is a viewing lens through which we shape and compartmentalize part of our experience or our reality of a situation. Frames include how all participants are involved in a situation.

The storytelling situation is organized around principles of behavior which governs perceived reality as well as humans' subjective involvement with that perceived reality. In storytelling, the act of "telling" a story is perceived by all participants on the basis of the rules associated with that activity, its social organization, or some premise of a primary framework. Primary frameworks, according to Goffman (1974) are those that portray "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful by offering a point of comparison, or a conceptual structure, through which people can digest information (p. 21)." There are two types of primary frameworks that are used by each community or culture: 1) natural frames and 2) social frames. Natural frames come about from solely physical experiences, which, as Goffman notes, are understood to be caused by "natural determinants (p. 22)." This framework differs from a social frame or experiences wherein people recognize a deliberate agent (usually a person) that has the ability to and desire for influencing some part of that experience.

The frameworks in storytelling are not only a matter of the mind but correspond in some fashion to the way the activity in itself is being organized. In other words, cognition somehow "arrives" from and within the behavior organizational patterns. It is important to also note that a strip of activity such as storytelling can offer differently framed experiences of different reality classifications, depending on the participants involved.

Goffman (1981) explains how when individuals enter into each others' presence, they *key on* (or stage) particular features of the interaction to appropriate their behavior into patterns that consequently provide shared meaning. Keys impersonate primary frameworks; however, they do not entirely duplicate primary frames. Goffman (1974) explains that people construct and use keying devices to serve a number of different functions: First, keyed items allow carrying out behavior for a potentially 'real' performance of that behavior (such as children 'playing' doctor-patient); second, keyed rituals confirm and re-confirm cultural knowledge, or reality; third, keying not only provides observations and indications of what is considered real (in relation to people, objects and events), but also ties together information into transmittable and retrievable bundles; and fourth, keying can be used for deception, as in a keyed fabrication (one person deceives another or others) or keyed illusion (a group of people deceiving themselves).

"Keying," allows for mutual awareness of shared realities. Establishing or shifting "keyed" behavior unfolds or realigns a ritual that reflexively supplies the interaction's structure. In storytelling, "keying" behavior initiates the expectations

participants hold for themselves and for others involved in the interaction, in one or many storytelling (reality) frame(s).

Reality frames are based on activity that organizes matters for the interpreter and are associated with the actions of the interpreter *and* other participants. These behaviors are made available in the physical, biological, and social world. Given this requisite, it is imperative that interaction is included for examination in any research endeavor that attempts to comprehend the organization of reality frames.

Constructing Social Realities from Cerita Hantu Melayu

In my discussion of Goffman's concepts of dramaturgy and frame, I have tried to show how an analysis of Malay storytelling should include a focus on both, performance and interaction. While Malay narratives, like other (oral) Malay literary traditions[59] may serve the more static function as that of an oral text, they also feature interactive and performative elements that formulate, reify, disrupt and/or negotiate reality frames. In my role as ethnographer, I account for how the storytelling occasion, the behaviors in it, and the normative order 'behind it' are made observable and reportable for participants as patterned, recurrent, and connected instances of motivated actions in socially standardized situations.

In short, it is within content, interaction, and performance of Malay storytelling that Malay people define their spiritual, communal, and self identities. Therefore, by understanding behavioral codes associated with storytelling, it is possible to get a glimpse of the manner in which members of the Malay community perceive and construct their social reality.

CHAPTER 6

Telling the Cerita Hantu

In this chapter I examine the storytelling occasion, which is the collection of events and behaviors that constitute the telling of a Malay cerita hantu. In my account of the telling of the cerita hantu, I explore the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that support the dramaturgical metaphor as device, thus making visible how Malaysian interactants organize social reality via storytelling. I also discuss how I encountered Malay reality frames in and around my observation of and participation in storytelling in the Malay context.

Activity During the Interaction: The Talk Setting

When a cerita hantu is being told in face-to-face interaction (such as within the interview), it usually occurs when all the participants (the storyteller(s) and listener(s)) are mutually aware of each others' orientation and when the storyteller or listener is "within range" of the other and, there is possible facilitation of feedback. This co-presence is felt by both participants. One of the two (or more) is usually positioned as storyteller and this occurs within a particular temporal sequence, even though both may "do being storytellers" at different talk intervals during the interaction.

How a person manages his or her doing-being storyteller depends on a number of interactive features in the direct environment, or the situation in which the story is told. The talk location and circumstance (such as how the interview came to be), for example, were important contributors to how talk was conducted in the Malay talk occasion.

In street interviews or situations where I encountered interview participants for only a short time, I found that the information presented was often succinct and very dependent on how my interactions drew out conversation. I found that I had to keep prompting the interview participant by asking questions or nonverbally signaling for feedback (for example, raising my palms upward and pointing to the other person, or cocking my head a certain way). More often than not, fully developed narratives, in the Labovian sense, were not told under these circumstances. Informants in these short interviews (I labeled these interactions as interviews lasting less than 20 minutes) mainly told me their impression of storytelling and/or their ideas of hantu in the Malay world view.[60]

Participants were reluctant to present the full narrative because they felt that the circumstances did not warrant the telling of the story. Many informants would simply say, *susah nak cakap disini* (difficult to speak here) or that they could not present a story on demand. Some informants also claimed that they were not 'expert' storytellers. I understood their response to reflect their world view around storytelling as intended performance. In other words, a story told merely for the sake of telling the story would be an activity of what Malays have, for generations, understood as 'expert performance' or a storytelling presentation generated for the ethos of performance (such as stories told by Penglipularas and professional storytellers).

When a story emerges as a natural consequence of talk (such as telling a story when warning children not to play near a cemetery, telling a story after someone else has talked about a particular hantu, or telling a story when the topic of hantu surfaces in a

group conversation), the 'reality' around performance is not accentuated. Therefore, when I asked someone I met on a street to tell me a story, it is quite likely that that person understood my request as wanting what would seem to him or her a 'skilled performance' of a story. Further, as a couple of informants note, telling a story well, in the Malay world view, would require that the storyteller not only have background information of the topic at hand but also a panache for telling stories: Good delivery qualities include skillful use of paralinguistic cues and body movement (I discuss *Malay storytelling flair* in a later portion of this chapter).

While some longer interview participants (those interviews that last between 30 minutes to 2 hours) also claimed to be non-experts, they eventually did tell me a cerita hantu or two. Longer interviews usually took place in homes of the participants or in my house, or at an eating stall where we were all comfortably seated at a table. Shorter interviews were mainly 'convenience interviews' where I interviewed the informant while he or she was engaged in something else (such as waiting at the bus stop or cooking *goreng pisang*[61] at a roadside hawker stand).

Many of the longer interviews were pre-planned (I made appointments to have the interview prior to the interview), and so what ensued was a situation where participants felt they were in a more 'formal' talking arrangement, and as such drew upon the repertoire of behavior that was appropriate for that kind of event, as initiated by the working consensus. Such behavior included the telling of stories, since the participants had been aware that my interest was in cerita hantu. Some of these stories included using Malaysian flair for telling stories and others did not. In cases where the participants did not quite bolster their storytelling with Malaysian flair, they would usually apologize,

saying that they *tak pandai cakap* (not good at presenting or talking). It was clear to me that the talk setting played a vital role in how the talk (primarily within the interview) was managed.

I found that during most face-to-face interviews, especially the longer interviews, the activity of "telling' the story became "situated" within the gathering as the participants were typically held to particular physical boundaries or spaces (as in the interview site). In such cases, the persistence of other social realities (such as breastfeeding while telling the story, scolding other children, having another person join the interaction ... etc.) did not compromise the situated nature of the storytelling within the interview.

Goffman (1963, pp. 33-35) states that interactants use a 'body idiom,' (a conventionalized discourse) brought about by the interview process where participants were expected to convey certain information based on their role as interviewee, which I treated as informant or storyteller. The conventionalized discourse in the interviews in my research would warrant 'performing' storyteller as part of the interview working consensus.

Telling Stories in the Interview

Participants involved in the telling of the story during the interviews I conducted were usually (in Goffman's, 1963, p. 18, words) part of a 'gathering' within a larger social occasion (such as a planned visit to someone's home to conduct a formal interview). Within the interviews, the telling of the story was limited to the ethos of that interview. In this sense, I began the interview sequence by inviting the interviewee to tell

a ghost story. By asking the interviewee to tell a story, I asked him or her to "do being storyteller."

Oftentimes, my asking the informant to tell a story preceded or followed a lengthy introduction where I introduced myself and informed the participant about my research and what I was doing. On a number of occasions, I was compelled to make 'small talk' while the informant prepared a story to tell, or while we oriented ourselves to each other in the talk setting. Such behavior is quite apparent in this following talk sequence taken from my field note transcriptions. This conversation occurred late one morning in July 2002, when I was doing fieldwork at a *bazaar makanan*[62] located in the heart of Taiping town. Here is the snippet from my field notes:

> *Atmosphere: 10: 30 a.m. Noisy, sunny – smell of market in the air (this place is a dry market*[63] *earlier in the morning), folding round tables with plastic red and white chairs are set up in an open courtyard area that used to be where people placed their vegetables, fruit & other market products. I walk from table to table asking people if I can speak with them – many avert my gaze and do not pay me attention. There are many college-aged people here. There is a junior college just next to this eating venue and students tend to come down here to have coffee breaks, lunch etc. I walk up to two women who look at me with welcoming smiles. I introduce myself and talk about my research.* [Request for story to be told] *<u>They agree to participate. I ask them if they minded that I turned on my recorder, as I would like to record their stories.</u> They were shy at first but agreed. I fiddle around with the mini-disc recorder – I check the sound levels on the mic input*
>
> C: All the levels are good [pause] What's your name? You can give me a different name if you like ye ..
>
> Z: Different name …
>
> C: Not your real name

Z: I think, just, you panggil (call me) Zah aje lah

C: Zaah ..

Z: Ya ..

C: How old are you Zah?

Z: I'm nineteen years old.

C: Nineteen ya? [she nods] And have you lived here a long time?

Z: Err.. not a long time – tak terlalu lama tapi asal dulu sini lah. Pernah datang sini ..
(Not very long, but used to be from around here. Been here before).

C: Dari mana? (Where from)

Z: Saya (I) .. Kuala Lumpur

C: Ohh

Z: Saya hijah ke Sabah and then balik Mala.. semenajung balik, so exposed banyak benda ya..
(I migrated to Sabah and then came back to the Peninsular, so exposed to a lot of things ya)

C: Bagus lah (Good lah)

We laugh together, acknowledging the "good" response that she had traveled so much. A vendor walks up to our table, looks at me suspiciously and places two plates of Nasi Ayam (chicken flavored rice with roasted chicken), one each in front of Zah and her friend

C: Zah.. [pause] I'm sorry to interrupt you lunch.

Z: No, no, no its okay, its okay [they both shake their heads,, smiling]

C: But this is the best place lah – sit down where people have time to talk ...about hantu.

[They nod and smile, but are a little preoccupied with the arrival of their lunch. As they arrange the food and drink in front of them I keep talking]

C: I went to the Museum Negara. There's a whole exhibition about hantu there ... verrry nice. I enjoyed that immensely [I smile at the both of them

and they smile back]..

Z: [All of a sudden, Zah begins telling the story] Okay ada satu cerita, ini masa ini di Kedah, Sungai Petani. Then saya dalam ummmurr ...about whaat fourteen or thirteen years old like that.
(Okay, here's a story. This is in Kedah,Sungai Petani. Then I was age ... about whaat fourteen or thirteen years old like that).

I had asked them to tell me a story prior to turning on the recording device (see underlined sentences in the italics section in the first paragraph). My request set up the setting in which one of them could "do being storyteller." The small talk in the above talk sequence 'cushioned' the interaction and helped set up the relationship between interactants before the task (telling a story, see underlined section at the end of the talk strip) began. The small talk was done as a way to generate comfort and familiarity among the participants in that interaction. As part of the small talk in this conversation, I also noted (to the interactants) that the setting was conducive for storytelling, and they agreed. This indicated their acknowledgment that the talk situation was based on a more 'formalized' talking arrangement. In this sequence, the story was told as a response to my asking for a story.

In other social occasions, "doing being storyteller" may emerge from different stimuli from the immediate environment or from memory: For example, a person may begin telling a story if he or she observes an animal or hears another story which triggers a particular memory (in relation to the story at hand). In this following field entry I note how one such incident took place during an interview session:

I was interviewing *Makcik*[64], a rotund lady in her fifties who sells *nasi lemak*[65] in the Green House Area morning market. As we chat about ghosts and ghost stories, the owner of the newspaper stand (which was situated next to her nasi

lemak stall) ventures over to listen to the stories. He is a middle-aged burly Indian Muslim man with a scruffy moustache. When Makcik pauses after telling of a ghost that frequented a particular area, the man pipes in saying, "Eh, Swettenham road there, there is a ghost you know." He then begins telling a story of how one of his acquaintances "met" this ghost of Swettehham road.

The interaction (between the Makcik and me) triggered this man's memory about a story he heard. As such, he participated as storyteller by inserting himself into the conversation sequence via his performance of "doing storytelling." His interruption did not disrupt the social order[66] of the interaction as he participated in such a way that allowed what Goffman (1963) terms "fitting in" to conventionalized talk.

In this conversation I also noted the way Malaysian social order is different from Western social order. In most Western contexts, the interruption would have disrupted the occasion (such as 'making a scene'); however, in most Malaysian interactions, such interruptions would not only be regarded acceptable but also routine. In this instance, the interruptions were part of social order. Interaction in Malaysia tends to be fluid (people move in and out of conversations freely and without resentment from other interactants) and is inclined to not be fragmented into separate units of interactants.[67]

A story is also used when an informant finds it difficult to talk about hantu without placing his or her association with them into a storied form. We see this tendency in the Aunty Nor entry (see Aunty Nor's story in chapter five). A number of times I found informants having difficulty in merely talking about hantu, and so what they did instead was tell me stories about their hantu experiences. I found this to be the case particularly in an interview with Makcik Yah, a grandmother in her sixties who

worked in her son's food stall as a cook. I conducted the interview with Makcik Yah in her kampong house[68] in Kampong Pinang, Kemunting, Perak. The interview lasted approximately two hours, much of which was spent by Makcik Yah telling me stories about different types of hantu. I would ask her about a particular hantu to which she alluded in an earlier talk strip, and she would briefly introduce the ghost and then start telling me a story associated with that hantu. Her telling the story was a way to inform me about a type hantu and how that hantu operated in the human world. Makcik Yah, like Aunty Nor, used the story as a vehicle for talk about hantu. In doing so, she told the story as a way to talk about how stories are used in the Malay world.

Performing Identity in Interaction

In order to make the "telling" of the ghost story significant to the audience or interviewer, the narrator "does telling the story" in such a way that it can be recognized that a story is being told. The narrator signals the beginning, end and interruptions to the story so that the listener can interpret the temporal and sequential events surrounding not only the story's content (e.g. the events described) but the implied meanings behind the telling of the story (e.g. why this particular story was being told at that particular occasion). In this way, the narrator uses dramatized or pre-performed repertoire of behavior (not necessarily intentionally done) in order to "perform" the story. As such, the narrator exists through his or her performance as narrator. The narrator is a narrator because he or she participates in "doing being storyteller," which is clearly understandable and analyzable through the employ of Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor.

The use of a recording device was a helpful tool in isolating the different performative elements of storytelling. I carried a mini disc recorder with an attached clip-on microphone. I would usually ask the person whom with I was speaking for permission to turn-on the recording device. On many occasions the interviewee would "switch" speaking styles once the recorder was turned on. Many a time, the interviewees asked that I wait a moment so that he or she could collect his or her thoughts before speaking, such as observed in this scenario:

> I walked into a Malay bazaar store. I was surrounded by beautifully embroidered *kain songket*[69] hanging from hangers along a ledge, gold plated ornaments on different shelves, framed jawi (Arabic) inscriptions, bright colored *baju kebayas*[70] on headless mannequins, gold and silver plated artificial flowers, and sarongs in little packages tucked away neatly in a glass case. The shop keeper was reading a local paper. He looked up at me curiously over his thickly framed glasses which were perched low on his nose. I smiled at him and introduced myself. I explained how I was researching ghost stories and asked if he had any stories to tell. It was then that I noticed two young children, both boys, playing behind the counter. They looked up at our interaction and began getting excited as I mentioned ghosts and ghost stories. The shop keeper kept quiet for a moment and began to talk (about ghosts). As he started I quickly interrupted and asked him if he would mind if I recorded the conversation. He looked at my device and nodded. I began to turn the Sony MiniDisc recorder on. He put his hands up, stopping me. "Wait" he says in English. He takes a deep breath, looks upward as though in deep thought. As he opens his mouth I quickly turn the recorder on.

He stops, "Wait, wait" he says again, "saya belum sedia, (I'm not ready)." I wait for his cue as the young boys begin to giggle as they watch him. He waves his newspaper at them in a "shooing" motion, looking annoyed. He takes a deep breath, and nods to me to turn on the device. I nod at him and he begins to speak.

I noted how during his recorded monologue, the shopkeeper's tone changed into what Sweeney (1987) would call a schematic of everyday (non-stylized) talk, yet performed in such a way that it could clearly be recognized as performing storytelling. The shopkeeper spoke with flourish, his hands gestured while he talked, his words were well articulated and he added pitch, intonation and pauses to make the talk more melodic and less monotonous. The shop keeper's talk was distinctively different while the recording device was turned on compared to when it was off. Goffman (1959) would say that the shop keeper was "doing being storyteller" via the "expressions given" in the talk sequence produced for the recorder.

The working consensus allowed me (and the two little boys) to recognize that the shopkeeper was telling a story. The start of the story was signaled by the pause and the nod, followed by my tuning on the recorder. When the shopkeeper finished speaking he looked pointedly at the recorder gesturing me to turn it off. "Okay?" he said, checking to see if his story was agreeable. I assured him that it was very nice. He then leaned back, raised his paper, and switched back to perform as shopkeeper.

The participants within this interaction comprehended their positions (such as narrator or listener) based on the *shared* recognition of identity among the participants. The way in which each participant reacted to the other (such as my turning on and off the device) reified the working consensus around the interaction.

Using Verbal and Nonverbal Cues in Interaction

In earlier parts of this chapter, I made reference to a behavior I called the 'Malaysian flair' for storytelling. I feel it is a good time to now to explore this behavior as it well follows my discussion on the visible behaviors of a presentation role (e.g. performing narrator vs. audience) in the context of cerita hantu. Here I emphasize again that my delving into such behavior and remarks that proceed from such observation is rooted in my treatment of Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor. As discussed earlier, the dramaturgical metaphor helps me find the procedural application of verbal and nonverbal cues in interaction that displays the visible world of everyday behavior.

A Malaysian 'Flair' to Storytelling

The behavior I call 'Malaysian flair' is simply a method of performance in everyday talk unique to the Malaysian speech community. As a participating member of this speech community, I was able to recognize the way members used a range of verbal and nonverbal behavior to accentuate a certain style of talk. In some cases, talk sequences were keyed (Goffman, 1974) to produce a particular result. As noted in the preceding chapter, keying (or staging) occurs when participants duplicate primary frameworks.[71] Participants in a Malay storytelling scene would comprehend these verbal and nonverbal cues (or keyed behavior) as those which are part of what it takes to 'do being storyteller,' or in cases of different talk occasions, 'doing being parent,' 'doing being leader,' 'doing being schoolteacher' or even 'doing being a manly man or macho.[72]'

Sweeney (1987) found similar principles of narrative composition in both, stylized presentation and narratives told in everyday talk. The presentation schematics to

everyday storytelling which I call the Malaysian flair however, usually involves a heavy dose of (sometimes keyed) dramatic modulation; that is, the repertoires of verbal and nonverbal communication collectively present an accentuated (perhaps even exaggerated) slant of the account of the events at hand. Such dramatic overtures, as Sweeney also finds in his analysis of everyday talk, are clearly noted in vocalic presentation.

Many of the paralinguistic cues were often accompanied by facial expressions, body movement and gestures that served to facilitate the verbal message in some way or other (see, for example, some interview sequences coming up in this chapter). The 'message' in itself, could be one of two things: a certain verbal or non-verbal sign, in singular form, such as a spoken word or sentence, or a gesture; or, a collection of verbal and non-verbal signs working simultaneously to show a specific meaning, such as a hantu's disposition, or working to regulate the temporal sequence of the narrative. Both, the combination of signs and the singular sign indicate a cultural object, or behavior that can be easily retrieved (by a competent participant of the speech community).

When presenting a story with a Malaysian flair, storytellers used nonverbal communication to facilitate the verbal message. I found the combination of verbal and nonverbal communication to act as an overarching sign – a performative slant that would indicate "doing being storyteller," in the Malay context.

In what follows I present the connotative implication of paralinguistic and kinesic cues used in talk sequences by Malay speakers. I will start by presenting some extractions from my interviews, and then I will retrieve the meanings that participants use to access information made available through nonverbal cues. Distinctive paralinguistic features (such as pitch or rate changes, intonation and inflections) are underlined and

kinesics (body movement, facial expressions and gestures) are noted in brackets. Here are some interview talk sequences:

> Polong is the ... polong yang kepala::a [she places her hands around her neck calling attention to her head] keluar perut, macam itu, macam itu, macam itu itu .... [she nods as she says macam itu, I nod in return}
>
> Polong is the ... polong the hea::d [she places her hands around her neck calling attention to her head], comes out the stomach, like that, like that, like that that ... [she nods as she says macam itu, I nod in return}

In this first sequence the speaker inflected the word *kepala* (head) and used gestures to direct me to the activity that sprung from that focal point, which was the hantu's head.

Figure 24: Hantu Polong (also known as Hantu Penangallan)

Photograph taken at the Museum Negara Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), July 2002.

The head of the hantu was the principal starting point for my envisioning the hantu. While the entrails (that are joined to the head) were a secondary point of focus, they were an equally important component of the hantu. Both the head and the flowing entrails collectively comprised the idiosyncrasies of this type of hantu. The words *macam itu, macam itu, macam itu itu* (like that, like that, like that that) demonstrated that the speaker could not find the proper words to describe the guts and lungs that suspended from the hantu's head; but, when we both nodded as the sentence was spoken, the speaker understood that I knew what was going on in spite of what would seem a lack of clarity.

In this next talk sequence, a female informant in her mid-twenties responds to something said earlier by her male friend. He claimed that the tunnel (*terowong*) along the Taiping-Ipoh highway was a hantu hot-spot. He then talked about how difficult it was to describe the hantus at the tunnel when one had not seen a hantu. After he spoke for a minute or so, she interjected with the following:

> Ah .. haaa nak cakap pasal terowong tu tak berapa erti lah kan. Tapi kalau ikut saya punya experience kan, sebab saya suka pergi camping ...[then she begins telling her story]
>
> Ah haaa ... to talk about the *terowong* I'm not very sure lah kan. But using my own experience kan, because I like going camping ...[then she begins telling her story]

In this sequence, she used the *Ah haaa* ... to signal her interruption. She also used pitch and intonation to emphasize the words *lah* and *kan*. Both these expressions are non-word sounds which are mainly used to accentuate, regulate or soften a particular talk strip. *Lah* in this sense was used to reduce the effect of her not knowing about the hantu at the

tunnels, such as an 'unfortunately' or 'alas,' while *kan* was used as a way to solicit understanding, such as 'know what I mean?' or 'see what I am saying?'

In this next example, I show how an informant embodied a particular experience as a way to talk about that experience. The informant, Kak Maimun is a close family friend. She is in her fifties and works as a social worker in Taiping. In our interview Kak Maimun told me about how a hantu once possessed her sister-in-law. The hantu, which behaved like a tiger, took over the sister's body mainly during *waktu maghrib* (evening prayer time, usually right after sunset). To illustrate the incident, Kak Maimum rolled on her back while clawing the air and growling like a tiger. Kak Maimum then twirled around and crouched low on all fours while she continued to growl while telling me the story.

The performance by Kak Maimun is a good example of the dramatic tendency of the Malaysian flair for presentation. Performance is a keyed[73] physical endeavor that utilizes the whole body to achieve the desired 'emphases for character and scene as told in the story. Performance, in this sense draws from the organic association between storied events and talk about those events. Highly dramatized actions are 'typical' in performances that utilize the Malaysian flair for storytelling.

The spatial distance and physical contact between storyteller(s) and other interactants is negotiated through and within participation of the interaction, derived from the community's understanding of 'character performance' and delineated by the working consensus. Later in that story, Kak Maimun described how a Bomoh used a black pepper seed to extract the hantu from her sister-in-law: The Bomoh kneaded the black pepper seed into the woman's toe, while chanting spiritual verses and challenging the hantu to

show itself. As Kak Maimun relayed this part of the event to me, she jumped out of her tiger position and assumed the Bomoh's stance. She grabbed one of my toes and began rotating her thumb on it. This move did not surprise me as it was part of the ethos of her presentation, however, the pressure of her finger on my toe increased as the storyline escalated into its dramatic conclusion. I merely gritted my teeth and bore the pain as I did not want to interrupt the flow of her presentation.

The employ of the Malaysian flair of storytelling does not have to include kinesic behaviors. Informants using the Malaysian flair of speaking could merely use distinguishing inflection characteristic of telling the cerita hantu. This is often done in such a way that the presentation would sound melodic or poetic. In such situations in the field, I found the prose-like quality to be mainly due to the incorporation of alliterative phrases (duplicating and similarly inflecting the sounds of initial consonants in a phrase or sentence) and forms similar to alliterative and repetitive phrases in talk strips. Such vocal maneuvering is evident in the following excerpt from an interview. The informant here is telling me how a dukun (Bomoh) attempted to remove a Hantu Raya from an acquaintance:

> Ha! Suara laki-laki lah.... Aku nak balik, aku nak balik rumah mak aku ...mana mak hang? Lepas aku, hang pi balik lah. Ha! Dia bangkit, dia bangkitlah ... kita ikutlah. Dia bangkit, kita ikut ... debuk [onomatopoeiac figure of speech].. dia jatuh.
>
> Ha! Man's voice lah ... I want to go back, I want to go back [to] my mother's house ... where is your mother? Let me go, you go back lah. Ha! The person got

up, the person got up … we followed lah. The person got up, we followed … debuk [onomatopoeiac figure of speech] .. the person fell.

The word *bangkit* (got up) was used repeatedly in this short talk sequence, as were the words *nak balik* (go back). When using these words in repetition, the informant placed similar intonation throughout the repeated parts, for example, the word *balik* was stretched and the *a* was intonated (inflected in a higher pitch), such that what was heard was *baalik* (underlined indicates intonation). The *a* in the beginning of the word *aku* was also inflected at a high pitch, thus what I heard was:

Aku nak baalik, aku nak baalik rumah mak aku.

The alliterative or alliterative-like style (intonating the *a*'s in *balik* and *aku*, added melodic intonation to the presentation. Further, the exclamation *Ha!* was used to mark a significant change in the story line. In this case, *Ha!* was an anaphoric[74] sequence that signaled story development to the audience. By using alliterative and repetitive talk sequences, the storyteller dramatized her storytelling performance in a way that was recognized to be part of the storytelling schema in the Malay world view.

Using onomatopoeic language (such as the "*debuk*' sound for someone falling – for Malays, "debuk" sounds like someone falling, see how it was used in the previous example) also helped add dramatics to the presentation. Language strategies such as alliteration, repetition and onomatopoeia not only appeals to interactants' senses but also helps generate a shared feeling around what was going on in the story.

According to Sweeney (1987), by using paralinguistic cues, Malay speakers are able to exploit the syntactical rules around simple grammatical juxtaposition. Sweeney expresses this tendency:

> By means of [such as using intonation in] a series of utterances simply juxtaposed, he [the speaker] is able to provide description, commentary and explanation, while continuing steadily to advance his narrative, and at the same time indicating the relationships between situations and events; whether, for example, they are to be understood and arising and/or happening according to the sequence in which they are recounted.

Sweeney states that by changing the intonations in certain parts of a speech, the speaker can comment on (audience) responses to the talk or responses brought about by the interaction. These comments would ordinarily not be available in the explicit code (denotative meanings of words). Similar ideas were developed by Edward T. Hall (1977) who distinguishes between high and low use of contextual features that influence language semantics. That is, paralinguistic features such as intonation are used in the interaction to organize meanings that emerge from the telling of the story, in the context of interaction.

The idea that nonverbal cues are used to reinforce, negate, emphasize and regulate verbal messages, and in some instances stand-in for verbal messages, has been well articulated by nonverbal scholars such as Birdwhistell (1970) and, in a very different way, Ekman and Friesen (1969).[75]

Verifiability: Negotiating Competence in Talk

In the previous section I noted how storytellers and interactants organized talk (along with its semiotic properties) by keying or using talk sequences that display and rely on their recognized competence as storyteller. As I listened to my informants narrate different accounts around hantu sightings and specter encounters, I also observed how

they continually add that their story is "true" or that "the ghost was real." Stressing the validity of the story in the storytelling sequence helped frame the account as true and the speaker as competent. Oftentimes, the word "true," "real" or any word alluding to the verifiability of the story was stressed using different vocal and nonverbal registers. One informant stretched the word (for "true" in Malay), "Behtoo:::ll ," to signal authentication. Another took on a serious facial expression while he nodded to express the "reality" of the apparition in his story about hantu sightings. One informant's voice raised into a shrill pitch as she stated the word "real" in this sequence, "Don't play, play with these things, these are 'real' one you know."

These words around authenticity tend to be expressions that help frame a reality about the storyteller's competence. Another phrase is "I saw it with my own eyes." This statement relied on the speaker's expectations that the audience would find her (and her saying this) credible, such that the story should be true because it came directly from the source and the source is credible. Credibility here is based on an already established frame (of trust or believability) between the speaker and other interactants.

If a ghost story did not relate to the storyteller's own experience, the verifiability was suspect. An experience with a ghost told by a second party frames the second party as a mere "carrier" of the information, thus lacking the inherent credibility idiom that would couch the authenticity of the hantu's existence. Oftentimes, in such re-storytelling occasions, the storyteller said that he or she is either not sure if the story is true, or that he or she believed the story to be true due to the established relationship between the initial storyteller (whose experience is being conveyed) and the secondary storyteller.

I also found that when storytellers got no acknowledgement (over hantu authenticity) from other interactants, they sometimes asserted that a story was true because someone else (usually a person who was known to the other interactants) could verify the story's legitimacy. While talking with some friends in a group interview in my home, my mother Chris, a sixty year old retiree, tells us the following story about *Orang Bunyian* (spirit folk who live among humans but in a different physical dimension). Her story is told in Malaysian English:

> She [a family friend, Aunty Latifah] was traveling near Grik side, Kuala Kangsar … the Grik area, coming through from there. So as they were coming, some of them didn't have dinner, so these two cars came and as they came along, they saw some stalls. They all saw these stalls – people moving around you know. Malay stalls and people moving around and all that. Remember this story Nicky, she was saying? [Nicky shrugs] So when they came, they said, okay, we will stop there, and we will go down and eat. So before they went down, they asked two of their people, the two front cars, go out and check out these stalls lah, what they have to eat, and then you call us and then they will go down. So they were in the cars, they stopped there; these two people had to go down by the roadside to the stalls. So the people [can see] from the car there were people moving around, children playing and all that. A few people there. As these two went down, and as they went nearer and nearer to the stalls, the lights of the stalls all were closing. All close, close, close, close ,close ,close … when these people reached the stalls, there's nothing there at all. Empty. Deserted place with old stalls like that you know. Closed up stalls, deserted. Theese two people turned, they ran back to the

cars and they cabut [dashed] she said. Now she said I'll never stop, where I see lights also, I'll make sure I eat before I travel – I'll never stop there.

[The group next starts talking about Grik, the town]

In the story Chris asked her husband Nicky to corroborate the accuracy of the story as he also heard the story from one of the people who experienced the events. In the talk following the rendition of the story, Chris turned to me and noted that story was indeed true. "You ask Aunty Latifah, she'll tell you the story," she said. In this instance,

Figure 25: Orang Bunyian

Digitally manipulated image of people (as dissolved superimposions) in a jungle landscape.

Chris brings in a third party (the person who witnessed the event) to verify the truth of the story to her interactants. The third party was announced when Chris realized, via the lack of acknowledgement (their response was unclear as they began talking about the town to which Chris referred in her story), that the interactants may have been indifferent to the authenticity of Chris' story.

The working consensus around this sequence is simply a management of the frame around "believability in numbers." In other words, the more people are available to verify the occurrence of something, the more likely the event happened. This frame, made available in the interaction sequence, guided Chris to state the next sentence in such a way so that it was recognized as an attempt to accomplish verifiability.

Using the dramaturgical metaphor as a device, we can surmise that competent participants in the storytelling interaction recognize that they are participating in such an occasion from the way the talk is conveyed or performed within the interaction. Further, information about storytelling is often made available in the context in which those stories are told. Recognized verbal and nonverbal performances (including keying devices) within interactions are based on, and extend to, the working consensus which serves as a way all interactants manage the frame(s) that allow(s) shared meanings which signify parts of conventional behaviors, storytelling competence or social reality.

CHAPTER 7

Social Reality in Cerita Hantu: What Does Cerita Hantu Do?

On the surface, Malay cerita hantu, like its counterpart in Western countries, may seem simply talk used as a way to "scare" people in different particular interaction occasions (such as, in Western terms, ghost stories told around a campfire or at a sleep-over). Indeed, this tendency has been reported by some of my informants, yet, beyond this surface function, Malay cerita hantu were also reported to serve complex social associations.

Cerita hantu are typically told as a response *to something*. Certainly, the intention of "scaring" another person suffices as a trigger mechanism for the telling of the story, yet the underlying objective as to why a person should be scared is not as straightforward. Ghost stories in Malaysia's Malay community are told as a way to teach, inform or socialize (often by way of sanctioning), and to situate interactants into spatial-temporal and social arrangements. Moreover, by accounting for these social associations to which cerita hantu alludes, in the context in which cerita hantu is told, interactants shape and/or re-shape the reality frame within which cerita hantu is implied. I use Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (particularly in terms of the working consensus) and concept of frame to explain how reality is constituted through talk in interaction.

Stories that Socialize or Teach

Stories around and about Malay cerita hantu are reported to mainly be told in response to some kind of behavior considered dangerous, immoral, wrong or simply

inappropriate. The telling of the story here is used as a moral lesson. One of my informants, Selena, a Malay house-wife in her thirties explained to me how stories are typically passed down from older folk as a way to 'tell' younger folk how to behave. She explained how an older female neighbor warned her about inappropriate behavior, in this case, sitting out in front of her house late in the evening:

> Cheryl: She is the one who comes and tells all these stories, is it?
>
> Selena: Ya ... [voice trails]
>
> Cheryl: Ahh ... how does she tell it? She just comes and and says? [I shrug my shoulders]
>
> Selena: No, just talk, just talk and say, you senja, senja [sunset] duduk sini [sit here] memang tak percaya hantu [really don't believe in hantu] eh? [Selena laughs]
>
> Cheryl: Ahh ... like that ah.

According to Selena, the caution about ghosts was done as a way to sanction Selena from a particularly improper mode of behavior (that of being a young woman sitting out at dusk[76]). The "warning" then leads into talking about ghosts or the telling of the story.

The "warning" here serves as a device that structures the interaction frame so that it revolves around a mutual understanding of that which is considered inappropriate behavior. Collins (1988), extracting from Goffmanian concepts of frame, explains that interaction frames that emerge from situations not only guide behavior but also constrain behavior according to social norms. Collins says that social constraints arise from the way a situation unfolds, and that participants in a situation that describes restriction feel

they have to behave in a certain mode or make amends for earlier behavior, thus they develop a new frame out of the older one.

To elaborate, by telling Selena "You senja, senja [sunset] duduk sini [sit here] memang tak percaya hantu [really don't believe in ghosts] eh? [You sit here during sunset, really don't believe in hantu, eh?]," the neighbor formulated the talk strip to engage a working consensus around the following primary frameworks that situated the talk situation: A) that Selena was sitting outside her house and that the neighbor who was passing by addressed Selena, B) that it was sunset, and C) that the neighbor posed a question about Selena sitting outside the house. The frames that were also enacted situated Selena's relationship with her neighbor and the role relationships therein: A) that she knew this person was her neighbor, B) as her neighbor, this person had access to talking with Selena in this manner, and C) it was the role of the older person to address a younger person about her safety.

This surface analysis may be sufficient to come to terms with reality frames as enacted within interaction but a closer inspection can reveal how reality frames are constituted and altered (or reformulated) through the consequence of interaction. In a sense, what occurs in interaction is that the frame is altered in the process of its enactment (as a result of talk). Wieder (1974) explains the 'convict code' along these lines:

> As a move in the field of action which it [talk strip] formulated, it pointed to the contingencies in that field as they were altered by *this* move. Furthermore, the utterance as a move obtained its sense and impact from those altered contingencies. (p. 169)

As such, when the neighbor talked about Selena sitting outside her house at sunset in spite of the hantu, the reality frames around that talk situation allowed for reality contingencies that could emanate because those frames were enacted. So, by saying, "You sit here during sunset, really don't believe in hantu, eh?," as an older woman giving advice or warning to a younger woman, the neighbor also signaled that a) the neighbor was negatively sanctioning Selena for sitting outside of her house, b) that hantus did exist, c) that sunset was the time to be fearful of hantus, d) that Selena's response (or lack thereof) could solicit more talk about hantus, and f) that this talk could influence future behavior about sitting outside. Hence, future actions of sitting outside are sanctioned by the shifting of the frame within the initial interaction. I also find that the ritual of "warning" (about hantus), as a way to lead into stories about ghosts, clearly points to either reifying an older sanctioning frame or creating a new one about social restraint, or both.

Children are a group typically targeted for this kind of frame negotiation, as this form of talk is often used in the socialization process. Malay cerita hantu are often utilized to instruct children of their behavioral limitations, their need to adhere to social norms, or their place in the framework in relation to such norms. I remember how as a child I was told stories of the "oily man" or oily maniac, an entity that kidnapped naughty children. The oily man is a dark skinned pseudo-human male who smears oil all over his body so as to not get easily captured. Every time I misbehaved I was told that I would be "taken away" by the oily man. I found variations of this same story in the field. Informants noted how they were told that the oily man (also called *Orang Minyak*) would eat them up or make them slaves in his dimension. A recent Malaysian documentary on

Orang Minyak explained how the oily man cuts off children's private parts to gain magical powers. The documentary also explores the origins of this entity as well as his tendency to victimize adults (by casting spells, stealing and raping women).

Figure 26: Orang Minyak Video CD Cover

My informants told me that the oily man story primarily serves as a way to get children (and some adults) to follow instructions. In short, "if you do not do as I say, the oily man will come and get you." Parents framed children's reality around this mystical being as a way to teach children to behave a certain way. This negotiation is keyed in talk, as observed in the field between this grandmother and her two-year old grandchild:

> Grandmother: Hey, Kimmi ... don't play with THAT [glass ornament]
>
> [Kimmi still plays with the glass object. She looks cheekily at her grandmother]
>
> Grandmother: I said put it back. Girl! Put it back [pause as Kimmi still holds it in her little hand] ... you don't listen to me; I call the oily man ... come and get you [grandmother's voice sounds taunting, Kimmi stares confusingly at grandmother].

Grandmother: Okaaay? ...[long pause] ... oily man ... oily man [Grandmother cups her hands around her mouth and calls out loudly].

[Kimmi still looks confused. She stares at her grandmother]

Grandmother: If the oily man comes, he will take you away, you won't see Mama again [she points to herself while shaking her head] ... oily man.. oily man .. [she calls out while looking at Kimmi]

[Kimmi slowly puts the ornament back on the table and walks away to play with something else].

In this exchange the grandmother does what Goffman (1974) terms a keyed[77] "fabrication[78]," in order to shift a reality frame to accommodate the existence of the oily man (see the explication of this process in the earlier example of the interaction between Selena and her neighbor). Therefore, the oily man exists because he has been recognized in talk (calling out to him).[79]

By keying in what Goffman (1974) calls *astounding events* (occurrences that would not ordinarily be part of a primary framework, such as a UFO or a hantu), when people enter into each others' presence, they appropriate their behavior into patterns that subsequently provide shared meanings. By using keys, interactants manipulate rituals that reflexively supply the interaction's structure (in some cases transforming the primary framework into a more complex framework where that which is considered "natural" is transformed into make-belief, mystical, super-normal). In a sense, what occurs here is a *frame shift* where interactants shift from one reality frame to another.

These same keys confirm and re-confirm cultural knowledge simply though their enactment and re-enactment within the interaction frame. Therefore, by keying

socializing rituals and hantu existence within one or more cerita hantu frame(s), participants initiate the expectations they hold for themselves and for others involved in the interaction.

Stories that "Situate"

I also found cerita hantu or talk about cerita hantu to be used by Malay interactants as a way to 'situate' (usually via frame shifts or reinforcing an existent frame) elements in their primary frameworks. Similar to cerita hantu used for socialization or instruction, talk in these situations involves complex frame shifts as interactants weave their hantu tales, talk about hantu or talk about telling the cerita hantu. Talk in this respect situates a number of different fundamental units of frameworks. In this next section I will discuss three recurrent types of frame 'situating' I found in the field. These frames deal with rudimentary parts of frameworks and include the following: 1) time and space, 2) social arrangements, and 3) social identity. I will limit most of my discussion to mainly describing the behaviors in and around storytelling that situate frameworks -- as such, much of this discussion may sound like findings in a traditional ethnography.

Stories that Situate Time and Space

One of my primary informants, Kak Maimun, whom I introduced in Part One, told this story of the *Hantu Tek Tek* (breast ghost), a ghost that kidnaps children who stay out late to play. The Hantu Tek Tek prowls for children during dusk hours. She has large breasts that hang low on her waist. Kidnapped children are placed behind these large breasts, where they enter the "hantu realm." Once in this hantu dimension, humans cannot be seen by other humans. The Hantu Tek Tek, who wants children herself, keeps

the kidnapped child for two to three days. The child is later found in a place not easily accessed by humans such as in the middle of a thorny thicket or in the core of a hollowed out tree.

Kak Maimun explained how the story of the Hantu Tek Tek was used to make sure children return to their homes during *waktu senja* (when the sun sets). It is during waktu senja, said Kak Maimun, that ghosts typically traverse the human world. The Hantu Tek Tek story and stories like these, as earlier noted, are told to sanction a particular behavior: However, these stories also situate a reality around how humans manage space and time.

What has transpired, or is evidenced through the Hantu Tek Tek story is a reality about temporal spaces that mark mystical zones. In other words, a strip of activity from a primary framework (telling a story in general, framed as "natural" reality) can be transformed into magical reality (telling a story about being taken into a hantu dimension, recreating "supernatural" reality). Further, waktu senja, in the mind of the Malay person, occupies a (framed) reality as that of "hantu time," or time to be careful of hantus and other such beings. Meanings behind space and time are negotiated or reified via the occasion of telling the stories.

Many of my informants said that waktu senja is not a good time for people to be cavorting in *keras* places (spiritually unclean places) or participating in behavior that can be 'inviting' for hantu[80]. Informants also noted other crucial temporalities that are associated with hantu, such as a particular window of time following someone's demise; however, talk about these time frames was not as poignant or frequently occurring in my research as waktu senja (when the sun sets).

Another informant, a Malay shopkeeper in his early fifties, explained how the fear of hantu (and stories that emerge from the idea of hantu) was used to keep Malay villagers within the familiar limits of kampong (village) areas. He noted that many paths leading in and out of Malay kampongs are unlit or unsafe after nightfall. Villagers would tell cerita hantu about 'things that happen' outside of the well-known (and usually lighted) pathways. Hantus and stories about hantus tend to emerge from occasions where a person ventures away from the "familiar known." Stories about meeting *Djin Islam*[81] or *Orang Bunyian*[82] in the jungle or at the fringe of the village serve to situate how the Malays negotiate frames around space. By extension, talking about these frames tells us that Malay social reality revolves around spaces of familiarity and unfamiliarity and that the unfamiliar is considered dangerous and to be avoided.

Still, frameworks about space do not necessarily limit hantu activity to particular geographic locations. As noted in chapter one, not only are there idiosyncratic *keras* (rough) spaces, hantu can also occupy spaces that are in close proximity to human life. The hantu's association with space mimics human's connection with their 'territory.' The culture around 'ownership' and a 'sense of belonging' traverses both hantu and human worlds such that a hantu can extend beyond its territory to wreak havoc on the perpetrator if its territory has been in any way compromised.

When a space is known as a particular hantu habitat, all items associated with that space or environment come under the protection of that hantu. If someone were to remove an object from the place or harm the place in any way, the corresponding hantu can seek retribution. Such is the case of a young man who removed an object from a *keras* location. I heard this story from Mina, a young Malay woman who co-owned a

gerai (food stall) near a river in Taiping. Mina was in her early twenties and spoke with a playful flair. She was very friendly and accommodating, not only telling me different stories but also refusing to accept any payment for my *kopi-o* (black coffee with ice) which I drank while speaking with her and her husband, Mat. They had agreed to talk with me as they were closing down their gerai on a hot July afternoon in 2002.

In her story, Mina told me that she and some friends had gone on a jungle trekking trip to Ulu Kenas in Kuala Kangsar[83] in 1997. Her hiking facilitators (who were the hikers' schoolteachers) told the hikers to not touch anything that looked extraordinary. However, one of her friends got attracted to a rock he stumbled upon and decided to keep it. Later that night, he was possessed by a hantu. The possessed young man screamed and writhed, asked that he be 'taken back.' Speaking in a shrill female-like voice, he also asked the campers why he was taken from his home and got really angry because, as he claimed, he was displaced. The hiking leaders were told about the rock and they immediately took him back to the location from where he had picked up the rock to return it. After putting back the rock, the young man was cured.

At the end of the story, Mina repeated the importance of not removing items from jungles and other places typically known as *keras*. Through the telling of the story and the talk about protocol while in the jungle, Mina used the interactants' frameworks to include not only the existence of hantus but also of behavior practices and sanctions resulting from violations of hantu territoriality.

Many informants agreed that trees and shrubs were popular hantu homes. One informant in specific, a seventy or so year old gentleman who was sipping coffee in a small gerai at Green House Area in Taiping, mentioned that he had seen Hantu Tinggi or

Hantu Galah many times while passing through jungle areas, particularly in areas that were filled with tall trees. The Hantu Galah is a giant hantu who roams jungles and areas that are populated with tall trees. The Hantu Galah has long hairy legs which often get mistaken as undergrowth. My informant, who preferred to not be recorded, said that Hantu Galah were harmless unless humans disrupted their territory. He claimed that if

Figure 27: Hantu Galah

Photograph taken at the Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara, July 2002

one was brave, he or she could grab the hantu by its leg and ask it anything he or she desired, and if so, that person's wishes would be fulfilled. His or her bravery would be rewarded. Stories such as these not only frame hantu existence but also highlight human qualities such as bravery.

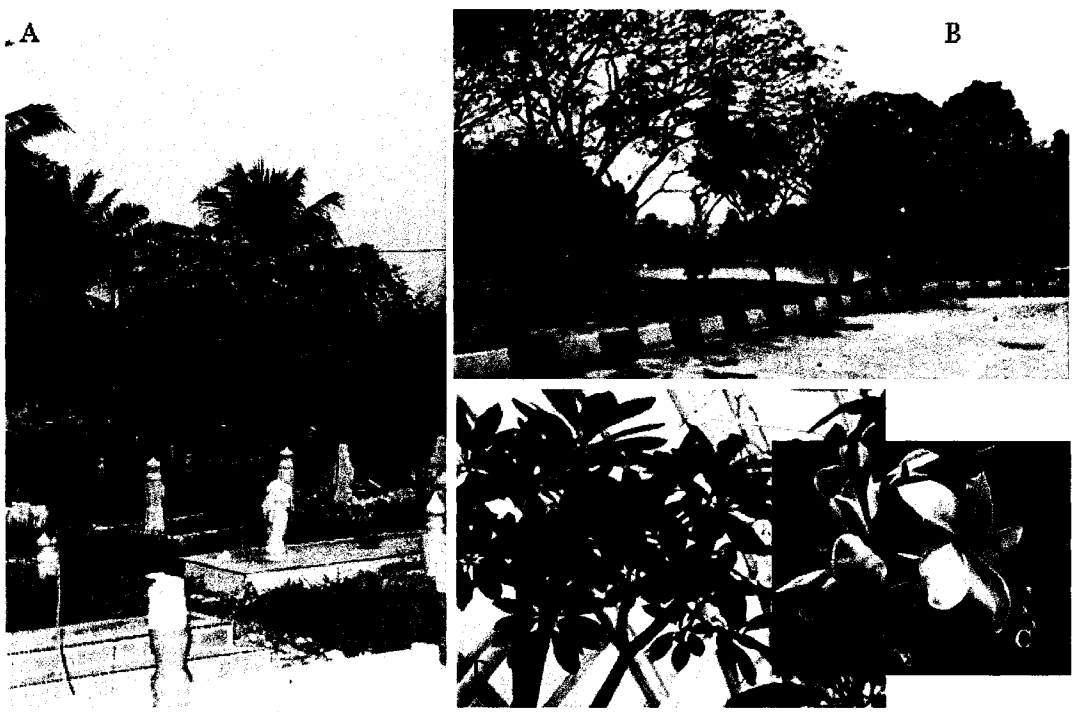
Other popular hantu homes I noted through the course of this research are parasitic ferns, fig trees (both common domains for Pontianak, see Figure 28), banana trees (a Puchong haunt) and frangipani trees (see Figure 29). Frangipani trees were

frequently mentioned by my informants. They claimed that the smell of the flowers signal the presence of hantu, their leaves and flowers look like hantu long fingers and the

Figure 28: Paku Langsuyar or Paku Pandan (Pontianak Fern)

Image of *Asplenium Nidus* used with permission.

Figure 29: Frangipani Trees in *Keras* Locations



From my own collection of photographs: A) Frangipani Trees (background) at a Malay cemetery; B) Frangipani Trees at the Taiping Lake Gardens; C) Close-up Frangipani flower and, D) Close-up Frangipani Tree leaves and branches.

poisonous milk sap is symbolic of how hantu would impair humans.[84] Further, Frangipani trees tend to grow in *keras* locations such as Malay cemeteries. Many areas in the Taiping Lake Gardens, for example, were replete with Frangipani trees.

Informants also told me that hantus can reside in objects owned by humans. Their territory does not essentially have to be confined to a particular geographic area. A number of informants concurred that the Malay *keris* (small knife with a curvy blade and

Figure 30: Keris Melayu

Photographs from the Keris Collection, Terengganu State Museum (top) and Museum Gallery, University Sains Malaysia, Penang (bottom).

ornate handle) is an object habitual to hantu occupancy. In the following story, told by my mother when a couple of their friends stopped by our home for a visit, the keris is depicted as a *keras* item that should be handled properly:

1. Chris: The sister-in-law one day.. the .. the father, Amin had a lot of this keris you know in the house, the old old keris. I dunno, one day she took it out, opened it and she was cleaning the keris .. this.. this knife eh .. when suddenly she was possessed you know .. I dunno ...Nicky ... [she looks at N] - you can remember the story, Nicky, Amin's daughter?

2. Nicky: Yah

3. Chris: She was possessed and the spirit was there for a long time, and they took her to all the Bomohs all, eh .. they couldn't get rid of the spirit. How they finally got rid of it or how she was cured? But she's never very right in the mind after that isn't it?

4. Nicky: She used to jump like a tiger.

5. Cheryl: Yes ah?

6. Chris: I do not know. Aunty Nor used to say that she ..

7. Peng: This Malay ah ...?

8. Chris: The keris you know ...

9. Peng : The keris eh they never clean. Even if it is rusty also they won't clean.

10. Cheryl: Why eh?

11. Nicky: The Malay dagger ...

12. Peng: Cos they believe there's the spirit there ...

13. Chris: It may have been used to kill people.

14. Peng: What it's a Keris ah .. they jampi one. I mean they say prayers one. When you ask them to make a keris for you eh, after making the keris they will say certain like Koran verses you know. And then they put it back into the shaft ...

15. Chris: [She] Cleaned it.

16. Peng: They won't clean one. Even last time I got one short one eh, a Malay man gave me eh .. I also don't know where is it now, that keris eh, the man also told me, say you don't ever clean this he said.

17. Chris: Clean the outside?

18. Peng: Rusty? Never mind. Leave it there. He said ... just leave it inside. You don't clean one. This today that keris ...

19. Chris: [Overlaps] She cleaned it ... she cleaned it [Nods] ...and then she was like that eh .. Nicky was saying eh ... she used to jump then .. all sorts of

funny things ...[happened].

In this talk sequence, Chris introduced the idea of cleaning the keris as potentially problematic (see turn 1: "one day she took it out, opened it and she was cleaning the keris .. this.. this knife eh .. when suddenly she was possessed you know"). What Chris did was to inform the other participants of that interaction that a particular potentially dangerous behavior had occurred. This relaying of information was made possible through shared knowledge around existent storytelling frameworks (note the working consensus: yes, we are talking about hantu and what we all know about them) which presupposed: a) Nothing happened before she took the keris out to clean it and b) her story depended on the idea that 'something happened.' By responding "Yah," Nicky signaled that there is truth in the reality frame depicted by Chris in her story. By continuing to verify events in Chris' story (such as turn 4: She used to jump like a tiger), Nicky signaled both, his corroboration and his collaboration in the storytelling event.

In a later turn (turn 9, when Peng says: The keris eh they never clean. Even if it is rusty also they won't clean) he conveyed information that was understood within that interaction's working consensus but not explicitly noted in talk. In the next few turns (turns 15-19), the interactants talk about the process of keris-cleaning, or limitations associated with such behavior. In this sequence we can see that by framing and re-framing events (in this case the way to treat a keris) through interactions, the interactants reify reality frames that result as a consequence of framing activity (hence, exhibiting social reality) through talk. The occasion of telling the cerita hantu or talking about the cerita hantu in these examples point to strips of activity related to a communal

understanding of temporality and spatiality, including how objects are situated within (time and space) frameworks.

It is important to stress at this juncture that when frames shift or situate to produce a different, new or altered reality, or to reify an existent reality; *multiple* frames work in tandem with each other to produce that particular reality outcome. In many cases, interactants participating in the telling of cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu use many different primary frameworks to figure out 'what is going on here.' Therefore, frames associated with spatiality are easily combined with temporal, sanctioning or socializing frames to construct social reality.

The following section continues my discussion of frames that 'situate.' Here I focus on how storytelling and talk about storytelling situates social organization on the basis of age, locality, race, ethnicity and gender.

Stories that Situate Social Arrangements

The arrangement of socializing rituals around particular groups within the Malay community, made available via talk in general and storytelling in particular, situates a kind of social order that inavertedly imposes social hierarchy around different social roles. In short, *who* has access to these stories, *who* these stories serve to sanction and *who* gets to use these stories as a way to negotiate reality becomes a compelling force of reality management.

Age and Locality

In my research I have noted how reality frames constructed or negotiated in and around Malay cerita hantu are associated differently between people of different social statuses, mainly based on age and locality. In my analysis of these differences I find that

children are typically framed as "innocent bystanders" who get linked to ghosts because of happenstance. A child can accidentally fall or step on a ghost or its path; or, children get associated with ghosts because they do not abide by social norms, such as playing in "bad[85]" areas. In the latter case, it is the parents who are regarded at fault as they did not "check" or "socialize" their children appropriately.

A belief around children's "innocence" appears to be an important idea in the larger Malay community. Laderman (1991) tells us that children are vulnerable to hantu sightings because their *semangat* (which I discussed in Part One as a vital life force) has not 'hardened.' Both Kak Maimun and Aunty Nor tell me how, because they are so harmless and cannot speak, very young children (two years old and under) can "see" hantus and spirits, often making friends with other "child hantus." Interestingly, I have heard stories of children and their 'invisible friends' even in Western contexts. Because children are innocent, they do not offend or disrupt the hantu's world when they stumble upon it, however, if the hantu is an evil one, it may still harm innocent children.

Older folk are reported to be competent storytellers. Many of my younger informants urged me to find older people to tell their stories because, as one informant, a twenty year old Malay college student explained, "orang tua yang tahu pasal benda-benda ini [old people are the ones who know of things like this]." This informant also informed me that older people not only have the experience but also the time to tell the stories the way stories should be told.

Older people are regarded in Campbell's (1988) terms as those who "hear the myth," and can therefore teach it or talk about it competently. In spite of saying this, many younger people appeared to also be competent storytellers. A number of my

informants were fairly young (some were nineteen and in their early twenties) and still were able to not only talk about popular hantu but also 'perform' some stories. Yet these young folk would insist that competent storytellers and those considered knowledgeable of hantu ways are older people.

In the matter of hantu or cerita hantu, older folk are regarded as wise and knowing, thus having the ability to create, change, disrupt or negotiate reality frames. The credibility embodied by the older person is well explained in the Malay film *Momok.*[86] In the *Momok* narrative, the old owner of a village eating stall 'educates' three disbelieving young men about hantu. By telling them hantu stories, the old man transforms their reality so as to acknowledge the existence of hantu. All the stories that were featured in *Momok* represent 'typical' stories found in everyday storytelling in the Malay context.[87]

Figure 31: Momok Video CD Cover

The significance of storytelling as framing device is amplified in this narrative (film) about narratives (storytelling). In true (Malaysian) filmatic kitsch, the older man

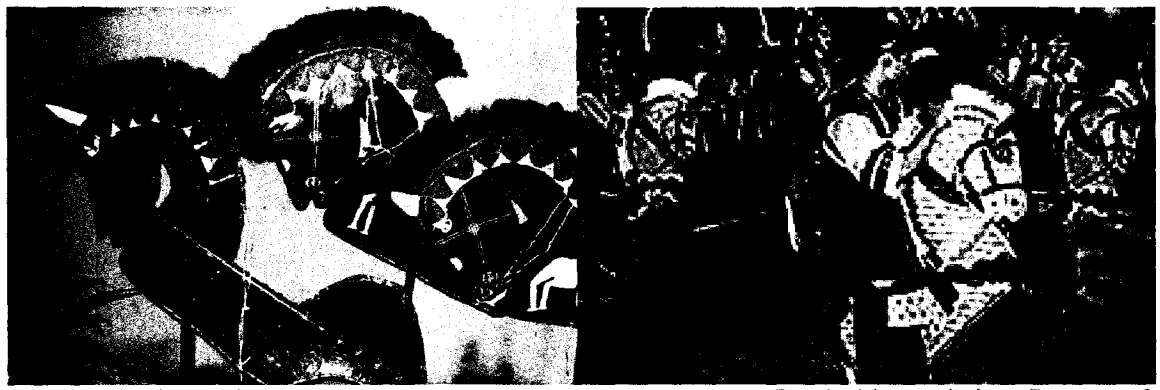
turns out to be a hantu himself. Thus, the media vehicle (film) serves as an apparatus (outside of its commentary on narratives) to produce a reality about ghost authenticity. The stories featured in the film are also used to chastise those who classify themselves as non-believers and to position the old man as competent storyteller (one who 'knows') and the young men as ignorant fools.

While children are a group considered innocent, fragile, and often unknowing victims of hantu, older people are regarded competent storytellers and those with authority to manipulate frameworks associated with hantu reality. Another group known as competent informants of hantu and hantu activity are Bomohs and Pawangs along with people who dabble with the black arts (such as those who own hantus or those who have been in situations where they were possessed by hantus). Their competence is based on the experience picked up while interacting with hantu – because the Bomoh interacted with the hantu, the Bomoh was privy to the working consensus within that situated interaction. Thus, competency is built on knowledge of the working consensus around the framework (interaction between human and hantu)

Other competent informants include professional storytellers, performers and dancers. In tarian kuda kepang (Malay dance with horse cut-outs, see Figure 32), for example, spirits are solicited to guide the dancers through their dance routines. Oftentimes the dancers would get so entranced that they spin off and continue dancing even when the music has stopped.

I spoke briefly with a woman having lunch at the Malay bazaar in Taiping, in January 2003. She was a rotund woman with a kind face and a welcoming smile. Let's

Figure 32: Kuda Kepang



Photograph taken at the Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara, Malaysia, July 2002

Used with permission. Courtesy of Windows to Malaysia (WTM)

call her Makcik Hamidah. Makcik Hamidah said that she knew little about cerita hantu but encouraged me to go into a kampong to look for a Bomoh and/or Pawang, or folk who had some experiences dealing with hantu. She said that the kampong people are the folk who know about these things because they still believe in these things.

Apart for the influence of age-categories, the telling of cerita hantu is associated with particular localities: There is a distinct separation as to how such stories are conceived and talked about within urban versus village areas. Urban folk claimed that they were "out of touch" with such things (hantu). Many of the urbanites I interviewed questioned the existence of ghosts, or claimed that such beings have been obliterated by modernity and reason. "Hantus and spirits are not logical," one informant noted, "they are just old folk tales." A common observation by most urban informants was simply, "I have not seen a hantu, so it must not exist" or "there are scientific explanations for these things."

The idea that 'science' has replaced hantu and magic seems to be surfacing among the Malay people, especially younger people who have had some kind of tertiary

education.[88] During the course of my research I had gone to two different Malaysian university libraries[89] to conduct secondary research. When I was on these campuses, I talked to some students about hantus and about my research. A number of the students whom I spoke with told me that the idea of hantu was *karut* (false) or backward. They claimed that people who believed in such things, which many specified as older folk and kampong folk, were probably not educated and therefore did not know any better. One informant mentioned that it was difficult to believe in hantu because science today had an explanation for what some Malays would believe was hantu activity.

These informants indicated that people in the village were traditional and followed the "old ways," which included talk and beliefs about hantu, while city folk were modern and scientific, thus not believing in that which may be considered "supernatural." The breakdown of their ideas into this binary opposition (traditional vs. modern) situates the Malay community into two social categories not only based on beliefs, but also of the talk about and around such beliefs. In other words, there are notions about being traditional and believing in ghosts, and being modern and not believing in ghosts; and these notions are tied to the worldview of different localities (urban or village areas). I discuss the dialectical interplay between belief systems at length in the next chapter.

The differentiation about belief in hantu around these localities is also important as it produces reality frames around hantus as derived from the recognized *talk* (stories) about hantu. Hantu are still "real" in village areas because villagers hold lingering beliefs about the existence of hantu in these areas, and this belief is constituted within and around talk, the telling of the story and interacting with hantu (I discuss this in chapter

eight, see the section labeled *meneguh).* Malays recognize that the existence of hantu is associated with the stories that are produced about hantu, and vice versa.

A number of informants told me that if I wanted to find ghosts or ghost stories I should go to the kampong. "There are no ghosts here," Makcik Hamidah said in Malay. She explained how hantus do not exist in the city because people in the city do not believe in hantus. "Kalau you percaya, memang ada," [If you believe, then it is] she explained while we drank coffee together. "Orang pekan sudah tak percaya lah ... susah jugak nak cari hantu" [People from the city stopped believing; (therefore) it is difficult to find hantu]. Another informant, a young man in his thirties, who owned the eating shop where Makcik Hamidah and I were doing the interview, came up to the table to talk with us. He acquiesced with Makcik Hamidah and said, "zaman modern ini, dah tak ada (hantu)" [in these modern times, there are no more (hantu)]. Both state that when people stop believing, hantus stop living. According to them, that is the reason why they said it was important to go to the village to find cerita hantu.

The talk strips about where to find hantu can provide significant contribution to the relevance of talk in situating reality. In another interview a different informant noted that the hantu do not exist anymore as (city) people do not believe in them any more. She claimed that we know about hantu through the stories that are told. She stated that when something is not part of our reality, we do not talk about it, and soon it is lost, therefore, when the stories stop existing, the hantus stop existing.

By saying that hantus exist where talk about them occurs, Malays identify the influence of talk in the process of creating, maintaining, altering and disrupting social reality. By telling the story and talking about hantu, people activate reality frames about

hantu. When one person introduces the topic of hantu in the interaction, other participants can either: 1) Draw on existing frameworks or 2) Create new frameworks to accommodate what was said.[90] This is not to say that participants believe in the existence of hantu via the interaction, rather that the interaction in itself keeps frameworks of deadly seriousness[91] associated with hantu alive and present. Hence, as long as people talk about hantu and tell their stories, hantus will not go away.

In this discussion I have attempted to show how the telling of the cerita hantu comes from complex associations around socialization, time and space dimensions, and social organization around age and locality. A number of the stories and occasions of telling which I encountered in the field also pointed to reality frames about gender and sexuality as well as race and ethnicity. In the next section I discuss these frames as constituents of the larger socio-cultural identity frame.

Socio-Cultural Identity

The many years of ethnocultural segregation under the European rule left the newly independent Malaysian nation with marked racial tensions, mainly stemming from income disparities between the Bumiputera[92] and non-Bumiputera (Chinese, Indians and other non-Malay or non-indigenous groups[93]). The racial conflict in Malaysia escalated in the late 1960's and produced the 1969 race riots. This conflict and others were clear indications of tensions within Malaysian race relations. Racial tension in Malaysia has a long history. Race relations have always been a delicate issue in this pluralistic multiracial society that received its independence from Britain in 1957. However, while still tenuous in recent years, race relations seem to not be as volatile.

The Malaysian world view around race is a sensitive topic, but it certainly merits discussion as it represents a central locus to how Malaysians define their social reality around identity. While it would be easy to say, as have some (see, for example, Carlson, 1975; Crouch, 1996; Faaland, 1990; Roslan, 2001), that for Malaysians, cultural identity is based on racial categories (i.e. identity as a fixed state, or essentialized classification), this conjecture is problematic as it tends to overlook the complex social arrangements about social reality that are continually emerging from new and existing frameworks emanating in and around interactions among Malaysians.

And so the question that seems exigent now is how can we understand the Malay or Malaysian world view around race and ethnicity as identity through our exploration of storytelling? Or, more specifically, how do accounts of or accounting about hantu exhibit to us the manner in which Malays and Malaysians situate their conception of social identity?

I was privileged in my research to not only have Malay informants talk to me about cerita hantu but also non-Malays discuss their impression of cerita hantu Melayu. I found that embedded in these different talk sequences were strips of information that not only displayed how people from different socio-cultural ethnic groups would regard hantu (talk to or about hantu or, tell stories about hantu) but also how Malaysians define their ethnic identity. Further, what transpired within interactions between Malay or non-Malay informants and me (non-Malay of Eurasian-Indian descent) is helpful in showing us how social reality around identity operates in the working consensus about the organization of talk across and within the perceived boundaries of cultural grouping.

In this section I will present these findings. I would like to note though that these findings do not necessarily reflect the entire culture around ethnic relations in Malaysia, rather, they tease out the role of interaction (in and around talk of hantu narratives) in creating, maintaining, altering, reifying or disrupting reality frameworks that position social realities that define cultural identity.

In my analysis of talk in interaction, I found that in the same way cerita hantu operates to situate other kinds of social realities (such as location, space and competence), so does it function to situate a reality around ethnic identity. Cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu also creates and re-create reality frameworks around socio-cultural identity. Further, interaction activity within a talk situation is used to account for reality contingencies that could emerge because certain frameworks were enacted in the course of the interaction.

My informants would specify (in their talk) that a certain type of story was a Malay story vs. a Chinese or Indian story. Further, informants would also note socio-cultural groupings inherent in their world view by the way in which they frame such groupings into their talk sequences. By including these socio-cultural classifications in talk sequences, informants exhibited their orientation towards in and out group differentiation. A Chinese informant, for example, told me that the Chinese families who live in Malay villages hang dried pork skin on their doors to ward off Malay hantu – because pork was *haram* (unlawful or unholy for Muslims) for Malays, and so Malay hantu avoided pork at all costs. Chinese hantu, on the other hand, love pork offerings. Other informants would also clearly distinguish between belief systems or practices that

are entrenched in a particular racial/ethnic view, such as, "We Indians believe," or "those Malays like to bela [rear] hantu."

Talk strips are used to frame a social reality around ethnic classification (based on difference) in the Malay world view. Talk such as this is manifested in that interaction's working consensus. When in operation in interaction, talk about ethnicity either reifies existing frameworks of socio-cultural identity or alters the framework to include different realities about identity.

During my time in the field I experienced both, reification *and* shifting of primary frameworks around identity. Reifying or altering frameworks were induced by the way my identity was constituted in the working consensus of interactions about hantu. When I approached a stranger and asked for an interview in English, I was almost always initially regarded as an outsider – someone from the United States (possibly due to a slight North American accent and lighter hair and skin color[94]). In these interactions where the informant believed I was from another country, references to people from Malaysia were not based on ethnic categories. More often than not, those informants would say "We Malaysians" as opposed to breaking down the classification into groupings based on ethnicity. The moment the interactants realized I was Malaysian, they included racial or ethnic information in their talk sequences. In situations where informants knew I was Malaysian as well or that I had grown up in Malaysia, they made distinctions based on ethnic or racial categories.

In these examples we can see that part of the working consensus that depended on who I was, served as the mechanism for frameworks to identify certain socio-cultural identities. The implications of this finding is important as it shows us that socio-cultural

identity construals are not only developed within interaction frames but also exhibited as an organized order of reality constituted by human action. This finding is also important as it tells us that how the social scientist is regarded in the field and how that framework produces other frameworks in the interaction has an influence on the kind of data (research material) that becomes available for observation.

Apart from triggering certain ethnic identity frameworks, the way hantu is appropriated within a specific socio-cultural framework is another way Malay narratives construct social reality around identity. Hantus are also classified on the basis of ethnic groupings in talk. This is to say that informants refer to hantus as either a Malay hantu or Chinese or Indian hantu when they talk about hantu. Interestingly though, when I first ask about hantu or cerita hantu, informants just start talking about hantu in general, or they mention an experience with a hantu in general, without the underlying racial grouping; however, when asked what kind of hantu that was, the informant would generally categorize it on the basis of ethnic terms. Many informants were able to differentiate between hantu as generated by a particular ethnic frame when I asked that they make this distinction.

Many informants noted through interaction that hantu in the Malay world view permeate ethnicity – that hantu did not inherently have ethnic distinctiveness, yet how hantus were characterized in talk included identifying characteristics that could associate those hantu to a particular ethnic grouping. As one informant, a Malay man who owned an eating stall noted, "all hantus are the same, but each race calls them differently." This man conveyed the significance of the framing process as an articulator of social reality. Hantus were characterized a certain way (such as on the basis of racial and ethic

typifications) because they have been included into the interaction's working consensus as such. Still, reality frames around that talk situation can be used to account for reality contingencies that could come about because those frames were enacted: Therefore, hantus could or could not have ethnic properties. This distinction would be made on the basis of how the working consensus in interaction handled the reality frames that were produced through that interaction.

Another classification of social identity that can be examined in this context of telling the cerita hantu or talking about the cerita hantu is gender and sexuality. I found that stories and talk (about hantu) among members of the Malay community by and large displayed frameworks of social reality around gender and sexuality.

While some hantu were regarded in talk as belonging to a particular gender-type (Pontianaks and Hantu Susu[95] are female, and Hantu Galah and Hantu Rimba are mainly male)[96], my informants said that hantus in the Malay world view are generally genderless, which is to say that a majority of them do not conform to gender identity categories.

Hantus that are gendered though tend to be talked about on the basis of their gender roles. For example, Pontianak that has been subdued (by inserting a nail at the nape of the neck) becomes the perfect wife and mother while Hantu Galah and Hantu Rimba are known as a providers and protectors of the jungles.

Some informants told me that certain hantus had a sexual appetite and that their sex preferences are based on traditional sexual roles (i.e. men having sex with women and vice versa). On one occasion in the field, a Malay informant told me that he knew a man who was affiliated with a Hantu Pisang. Hantu Pisang is a beautiful female hantu

who lives in banana tree clusters. Men would tie a long piece of thread around a banana tree and string it to their bedroom in hopes that the Hantu Pisang would visit them for sexual activity that evening. I jokingly asked him what would happen if I tied a string from a banana tree possessed with hantu Pisang to my bedroom. He said that she will not appear to me as I was a woman. He did not seem amused and so I refrained from joking in this manner in future conversations, unless I knew the interactants very well[97], as in this next example.

Figure 33: Hantu Pisang

Photograph taken at the Pameran Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara, July 2002

I was interacting with close family friends (Uncle Peng and Aunty Liza). We were talking about a female hantu that haunted a room at a place called Pelangin Bulgalow in Kuala Kerai, Kelantan. Men who slept in that room experienced what Uncle

Peng referred to as a 'good time;' referencing sexual activity. Here is an excerpt from my transcriptions of the talk following the story:

Cheryl: Interesting eh?

Uncle Peng: So everybody knows… like say the people who work the train there; those who are around my age … sixty plus like that eh? Those who have been there they will experience it [refers to both the ghost and the story]. Everybody, whether Indian or Chinese or Malay, they will experience it. They ask me to try – I dare not.

Nicky: Respective of Nationality lah eh?

Cheryl: Eh?

Nicky: Respective of Nationality – as long as you go there you ..

Cheryl: Must be a boy lah though!

[Everyone laughs]

Uncle Peng: Mostly there men lah go there.

Aunty Liza: Why don't you go in and try! [She smiles at me]

Cheryl: Hahha should eh, see if she'll come or not.

Aunty Liza: She'll come .. then the moment she sees you she'll walk off hehehhe.

[Everyone laughs again]

Nicky: If not take the tempurung [coconut shell] and katok [hit] her head. (laughter in background) why you disturb me! Hahaha …

When I say, "Must be a boy lah though," I use the interaction to account for queer[98] identity frameworks. This frame was absorbed into the working consensus and intervened in the events as formulated by the interactants, which was to joke about the matter. Due to the enactment of those frames, the working consensus now accounted for non-heterosexual activity as a possible contingency for social reality.

In the former example about Hantu Pisang, the person with whom I interacted, as a response to my including a queer frame, signaled the presence of constraint into the reality framework upon which the working consensus was based. The constraint altered my perception of that framework such that similarly framed behavior (behavior that would have included contingencies such as queer frames and other sanctioned talk) was not used in comparable contexts.

In these examples, we see how the working consensus around talk related to gender roles (as displayed within the interaction) influences future behavior for such talk in different interactions. From this example and others, it is quite clear how I both, comprehended and conducted my interactions with other Malaysians – which were simply to learn from the working consensus.

In this chapter I have discussed how interaction in and around cerita hantu 'situates' a reality about socialization, time and space, as well as social arrangements such as age, locality, and socio-cultural identity. In the next chapter I continue this discussion on how interactions associated with cerita hantu exhibits social reality; however, in this next section my focus will be on how Malays exhibit their reality around knowing what they claim to know (i.e. their belief system).

CHAPTER

8

Social Reality and Talk About Reality: Hantu in Malay Belief Systems

In this segment of the chapter I undertake what I feel was an important facet of my research, not only because it is a focal theme in my exploration of social reality, but also because this issue was privileged by most of my informants among all issues they discussed related to cerita hantu and social reality. Almost all my informants in some manner or other discussed their opinion about hantu (and cerita hantu) on the basis of their belief system. That is, the issue of "do hantus exist" and "how does my belief system justify this" became an important concern for the research participants. I found that even when I did not solicit this information, participants would include it in their talk repertoire. As such, I dedicate this chapter to this topic. I begin by discussing how talk accounts for hantu existence.

Meneguh: If You Say It, They Will Come

I found an important facet of talk in the context of cerita hantu or talking about hantu in the symbolic activity of *meneguh* (to hail). Meneguh is a reality frame around the act of *saying* or expressing something such that the action of meneguh permits further communication between hantu and human.

In this next section I discuss the act of meneguh as part of the perceived working consensus within the interactions by members of the Malay community about sanctions in frameworks regarding talk *for* hantu. In this discussion I articulate the significance of

the 'force[99]' of talk, or talk used (whether or not intended) to produce some effect, which in this case would be to solicit some kind of response from a hantu.

Meneguh as Hailing

In Part One I made reference to the Althusserian (1971) notion of 'hailing.' I feel it would be good to revisit this concept here as understanding Althusser's ideas on interpellation will be helpful in understanding the significance of the act of 'hailing.[100]' When we hail someone, we acknowledge their existence on some form or other: We not only place that person into a particular identity category (based on our relationship with that person, or the language we use to acknowledge him or her, such as Sir, Professor, Miss, Mum, hey you; including paralinguistic cues and nonverbal gestures such as facial expressions and gestures) but we also establish and reify that person's existence (because I have been hailed, I exist). Althusser (1971) says that the relationship between language and human social/self reality is based on ideology. Humans constitute all ideology insofar as ideology in turn, defines constituting individuals as concrete subjects. Althusser (1971) explains how calling out "Hey, you there" to someone interpellates that person as real:

> ... the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the veil was 'really' addressed to him, that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else). (p. 73)

In is in this same vein of Althusserian 'hailing' that the working consensus (in interaction) around meneguh operates. According to my informants, when we say 'something' about hantu at a time when one should not say anything, we 'hail' the hantu

and acknowledge its existence, hence inviting it to interact with us. Aunty Nor, for example, told me and my parents of an experience like this when she and her husband (a Malay police officer) moved to Selama, Perak:

Aunty Nor: We moved in a house, my mother-in-law was there, as usual my mother-in-law was there, so we were sitting in the gard … not garden lah, its like a government quarters you know, the biiig [voice gets loud] windows, glass windows not? So we were sitting there, then suddenly I told my mother snnnnfff [she sniffs loudly] ... about six thirty, that's the time lah, must be careful. About six thirty, seven o'clock. Senja, when the sound goes down. I was telling my mother-in-law Snnnnfff [she sniffs loudly again] "Eh … nice smell eh?" I say like that you know. Nice smell of flowers. I say like that know. My mother-in-law kept quiet. Then about err... few minutes later, exactly the smell of rotten meat, you know. Like meat rotting. Then I said, "Mak, tak bau ah? [cannot smell ah?]" I said. "You can't smell ah?" I said, "Eee yerrr so busuk [smelly]," I said, "what has died around this area!" I said like that. She kept quieeeeeet, she didn't say anything. Three days after that Aunty Nor got sick, my God, I thought I was going to die.

Cheryl: Yes ah?

Aunty Nor: Hmmmm [nods]

Chris: When you get the smell you must not say.

Aunty Nor: Cannot. Ah, don't teguh [hail], whether sweet or bad smell. And I

> kept .. kept, I kept telling her, "why this sweet smell, why that bad smell? Why this sweet smell, why that bad smell?" I didn't know. Three days, exactly three days after that I got so sick.

Aunty Nor told me how she would purge and vomit every evening when the sun sets. She went to see the family doctor who told her that nothing was wrong with her. Her husband finally brought over a friend (Bomoh or traditional healer) from Butterworth, Pulau Pinang who helped remove the hantu influence over Aunty Nor. Their Bomoh friend told them that their home was located at the intersection of a main hantu pathway and as such, there were many hantus around her, one of which inflicted illness.

In this story Aunty Nor tells us the significance of talk in the Malay world view. Communication as a symbolic act extends from human interactional frameworks into the hantu interactional frameworks. Communication in this way operates as a conduit into the hantu dimension – in short, if you say it, they will come. As such, talk does not merely function as a force that sends out a particular semiotic, but also as a force that can create reality or shape reality by nature of its occurrence. In a sense, we talk the hantu into existence.[101]

In a different interaction, a couple told me that when they go into the jungles to collect wood or other items, they do not call out each others names. Instead, to attract the attention of the other, they make animal noises such as bird calls. These informants told me that in doing so; the hantus of the jungle will not learn their names and use those names to then lure the humans into their domain. Here also we see how the act of an utterance can produce a result that is reified as an experience of reality in the mind of its interlocutors. On a purely interpretive level,[102] we can say that through storytelling we

know Malays believe that hantus come into the human realm via the act of hailing. We know this because when an informant says: "We do not use our names, because we do not want the hantu to hear our names," the informant tells us that A) naming carries symbolic matter in the Malay world view, B) by naming (or hailing), a person is brought into the reality frames of others involved in the interaction (including hantu), thus, C) the act of not naming constitutes the informant's solution to the issue and, D) that informants account for the naming framework.

The frame around meneguh hantu extends beyond the mere acknowledgement of the presence of hantu. In my research, I found that frames around meneguh have been reported to be influenced by the competence or disposition of the person doing the talking. Meneguh, for example, is used a lot by Bomohs and Pawang when attempting to draw out a spirit from a person or place. An informant told me that the phrase "I know your origin" or "I know from where you come" is used disable a hantu while bragging or making fun of the existence of hantu are invitations for hantu appearance. In August 2003, I spoke with two young men (one from Kelantan and the other from Negeri Sembilan) who told me that we should always avoid *mulut celupah* (bad mouth) when in places known to be common to hantu. They then told me of an encounter with a jungle hantu while visiting Bukit Putus[103] in Seremban. They claimed that the hantu emerged as they were arrogant and made offensive comments.

The semiotic around the act of meneguh positions it as an utterance that works as a sense-making device for the people who use it. Sanctions about meneguh were expressed in cerita hantu as well as talk around cerita hantu as a way for interactants to develop an understanding about what was going on (the significance of the hailing

utterance in the manifestation of hantu). However, these utterances were not merely disembodied talk that signaled a frame in a particular interaction. Utterances were produced as a consequence of the interaction's working consensus, and in turn produced the frameworks around which the working consensus was (re-)organized.

Framing Social Reality: Meneguh in the Working Consensus

Telling the cerita hantu and talking about cerita hantu is an indeterminate activity. While maxims such as performing the Malaysian flair of storytelling and meneguh provide descriptions of Malaysian social reality, they do not provide specific information about how reality is produced in interaction. In other words, how do we as social scientists know that what is described is actually what we think is being described? And, by extension, how do we account for the dynamic constitution of reality through talk in interactive contexts? I will attempt to tackle this matter in this installment of chapter eight. In doing so, I use the sanctioning behavior around meneguh (hailing) as a template: 1) to apply the working consensus as a way to observe how talk about reality is both observable and reportable in the frameworks through which a particular reality is expressed in specific contexts, and 2) to examine how the organization of reality exists in the manner in which talk (storytelling) in an interaction displays the working consensus that comprises it.

In this following example, Zah (whom I introduced in the beginning of this chapter) told me that a hantu dwelling in her housing area did not bother them until one of her friend's meneguh it:

Zah: You know that's why I cakap kan eh, kawan I, kita orang dah sebulan tau duduk lah situ. Kami dah sebulan duduk situ, takat ni tak ada pernah lah kata … kena kacau kepada dia ke kan. Habis cakap, tapi tiba tiba

> dikeluarkan this sebab mulut you mulut .. inilah [she points to her mouth], you dah bising bising. [Her voice gets louder] You cakap 'eh muka you macam Pontianak' so dia dah terdengar you panggil dia, ah dia akan keluar, dia tengok you nanti. Eh.. cakap macam tu. [I nod throughout her talk indicating that I know what she is saying].
>
> [You know that's why I say kan eh, my friend, we have lived there for a month. Lived there for a month. Up till then no one said anything ... will disturb it kan. Then it is said; but all of a sudden it came out [of] this because mouth you mouth ... this [she points to her mouth], you made noise. [Her voice gets louder] You said, 'eh your face is like Pontianak' so it heard you call it, ah it will come out, it sees you then. Eh talk like that. [I nod throughout her talk indicating that I know what she is saying].

In this sequence, as Zah told the story, she expressed her chagrin over her friend's mistake by hailing the hantu. In the course of telling the story within the working consensus, Zah drew upon existent primary frameworks which she used to produce frameworks that accounted for hantu existence. To demonstrate this process, let's discern some of the more obvious primary frameworks on which Zah's discourse was based.

The interaction in itself conformed to the following primary frameworks. First, our interaction upon a shared understanding of the narrative framework: A) Zah was telling me a story (storyteller-listener roles were developed), B) the talk was situated at an eating shop (there was side activity occurring as we interacted), C) there were three people involved in the interaction (Zah, her friend Lin and myself), D) the story was about a particular event that had occurred in the past (but retold and relived in the present), E) the story incorporated the idea of hantu (as this was the agreed upon topic of

conversation) and, F) the story had to be told in a temporal sequence so that other interactants could experience the unfolding of events as they happened.

Second, we will view the framework about the relationship between Zah and myself: A) I did not know Zah prior to that day, B) I introduced myself to Zah as an academic who was interested in Malay cerita hantu while Zah introduced herself as a student who had lots of experience because of her travels, C) Zah operated as primary informant about cerita hantu while I was the primary information receiver, D) Zah and I knew a little of each others' backgrounds (as such information was shared in the introduction), E) Zah knew that my command of the Malay language was not very good, F) Zah knew that while I was Malaysian, I lived in another country for a number of years (therefore my 'competency' as part of the Malaysian community may not have been well established).

In the third series of frameworks, Zah unfolds the story sequence and the point to telling the story. In doing so, her utterances function as sense-making devices, as noted in the following process. Zah tells me that: A) They lived in that housing area for a month and nothing happened, B) her friend said 'your face is like Pontianak,' while walking in that area C) after saying 'your face is like Pontianak,' the Pontianak haunted them. In this portion of the framework in interaction (and through collaboration of the working consensus), Zah expressed events to reify the following frames: A) That hantus exist, B) that hantus can be brought into interaction via the act of hailing or meneguh and, C) that this was the point she was making by telling her story.

Within these chunks of primary frameworks[104] we find an initial lens through which 'what was going on' seemed to be understood by Zah and myself, however, the

talk that ensued about talk (storytelling) as emerging within these frameworks, manipulated these frameworks to include other experiences of social reality for the interactants. Through participating in frame establishment and frame interventions[105] or alterations, interactants re-defined the working consensus, such that the new working consensus can be used in further episodes of this same interaction or as a primary framework for other interaction within which cerita hantu is addressed.

By saying "We have lived there for a month. Lived there for a month. Up till then no one said anything," Zah provided the following suppositions: A) That she was competent to talk about her housing area as she lived there for an extended time, and, B) the act of not saying anything was a significant semiotic of the story, and one that I should recognize. By nodding, we negotiate the working consensus to reflect that A) I understand and B) that no more information is needed to make this point.

When Zah said, "then it is said; but all of a sudden it came out [of] this because mouth you mouth ... this [she points to her mouth], you made noise," she not only indicated that that which was not supposed to be spoken was spoken, but also that the mouth itself had semiotic weight. What she signaled by her words and her gestures (pointing to the mouth) was that the mouth itself was an (organic) collaborator in the act of calling out to the hantu as it carried the words that were used. This framework draws from other frameworks on Malaysian storytelling flair (which I discussed in an earlier segment of this chapter). I was able to recognize this performance as I had observed it in many different interactions while in the field.

Further, my continual nodding showed that A) I understood what she said and B) I was interested in what she said. I found that on occasion my nods grew more forceful.

Instead of a mere tilt of the head up and down, I nodded such that my whole body was moving with my actions of moving my head. My body, was rocking up and down in my chair. I found that this behavior was part of the working consensus where I used those particular movements to differentiate between knowing what she was saying (what happened in the story) and knowing what she was saying as a competent member of the Malaysian community. I had learned to do this from earlier interviews when informants would seek my feedback in terms of my understanding their talk strips.

In this manner, not only did our interaction produce sense-making (situating reality frames around the storied events) but also helped orient our association with each other (situating relationship frames) within the context of talk. By including certain events in her story (and in my own responses to her story), Zah did not merely 'describe information' for the sake of describing information, but also re-formulated the frames in the interaction. This helped situate the interaction's working consensus for the both of us. What we have here are talk sequences that had embedded directives (open-ended directions for talk), such that reality frames were constituted through common interactive behaviors of all interacting participants.

Belief Systems in Conversations

Malaysia is an Islamic state that tolerates multiple religious and cultural perspectives; however, Hamid (1964, as cited in Laderman, 1991) tells us that the constitution of the Malaysian Federation has made clear how Malays should be defined, according to cultural and religious affiliations. According to this Constitution, the criteria for Malay classification are: 1) routine use of Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language), 2)

behavior should be in accordance with Malay customs, and, 3) being Muslim or following the teachings of Islam.

It is simply 'understood' that all Malays are Muslim. This is not to say that there are no members of the Malay community who are not Muslim or practitioners of Islam. Malays who do not conform to Islam are usually ostracized or marginalized from the general Malay populous, hence being almost regarded a non-member. The social environment also makes it such that not only are Malays regarded as followers of Islam, but social discourse sustains the idea of Islam as *the* religion for Malaysia's Malays.

The traditional beliefs that have infused Malay culture, particularly in the realm of traditional healers and spirit mediators, have for many years been tolerated and even occasionally celebrated as part of the Malay lifestyle. Laderman (1991) explains the prominent role of Bomoh (traditional healer or medium) from the 1800's to the mid 1900's:

> The Ninety-Nine Laws of Perak, compiled in the eighteenth century by a family that claimed descent from Muhammad state that "Muslims must feed the district judge, the officials of the mosque, the Bomoh and the bidan [midwife]. The muezzin is King in the mosque and the Bomoh is king in the house of the sick ..." ... Even in recent times the King and his representatives have not abjured the Bomoh's practices. In 1977, for example, the Bomoh was hired by a district officer in Penang to ensure that the visit of the Yang di-Pertuan Agung and his queen would not be spoiled by rain. (p. 16)

In the late 1980's however, Malay Islamic leaders raised objections to traditional beliefs including the institution of Bomoh, certain forms of *silat* [a self-defense art involving

stylized movement] and cultural performances with "spiritual" foundations such as *kuda kepang*, *ulik mayang*, and *wayang kulit*. Kasimin (1997), a Malaysian scholar, for example has recently discussed the implications of traditional beliefs (such as traditional healing) in Malay society as problematic and detrimental. He claims that Malays are not well aware or are misguided about the association of these traditional belief systems with magic and pagan religiosities prohibited by Islam. The Islamic protest against traditional beliefs and practices that have roots in those beliefs persist even in the 2000s (See discussion on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Malaysia in the section on: Islamization in Malaysia: Contemporary Issues, in chapter three).

As I explore Malay belief systems (including religiosity) through talk around and in cerita hantu, I find it is necessary to revisit an earlier discussion on the different components that comprise systems of belief in the Malay world view (see Osman's Belief System in chapter three). We know that: 1) Malay belief systems have been influenced by the global forces that have come in contact with Malaysia throughout history, 2) Malay belief systems are heavily entrenched in three primary trajectories, that of Islamic ideals, inherited traditional beliefs (e.g. pagan animism, Hindu Ayurvedic and early Chinese religiosities), and 3) Western empirical influence (see Figure 19). I argued that these three forces were not disconnected items; rather they were elements that not only could be extensions of each other, but also had the capacity to evolve and develop in their own right. I noted that these three forces were complex and could not be essentialized as mere categories. With this in mind, we can now explore how interaction in and around cerita hantu situates a social reality with these three trajectories for members of the Malay community.

Syncretism: Dialectical Interplay in Talk

One of my Malay informants, a lecturer, in her forties, at a Malay Teachers College whom I met at a party looked at me intently over the table. She shook her head as she told me how she did not believe in hantu as such belief was prohibited by Islamic teachings. The topic then changed to current events when all of a sudden she introduced the topic of hantu again. She asked that I call her the next time I was making a trip to Malaysia as she wanted to introduce me to her brother who had many experiences with hantu. She told me that a hantu once even possessed him.

In other interactions informants told me that they did not believe in the existence of hantu, or that such beliefs were archaic because science has provided explanations for phenomena believed to be hantu or hantu activity. Later in the same conversation, however, they would mention that someone they knew had reared a hantu or had seen a hantu, or they would even tell me a story where they themselves encountered a hantu.

Many informants would simply just talk about hantu and their beliefs in Islam as though both were natural extensions of the other, such as: "The hantu could not get me because I am a good Muslim, I pray and do my duties." Other informants would simply said that they 'percaya tapi tak percaya' [believe yet do not believe] in hantu or that they do believe because they have not seen a hantu, but still leave room for the possibility that hantu could exist. The multiple dialectical[106] (Bakhtin, 1981) tensions around traditional and new religiosities that color the way people define their belief systems has been classified in theological writings as syncretism. In this section I explore the dialectics in syncretism as an activity that both reifies and intervenes in events as formulated in talk by Malay interactants.

In the talk strips I describe in the previous paragraph, the three main forces of the Malay belief system (Islamic and traditional beliefs, and Western science) are conflated. What I find interesting in terms of talk around belief systems in the Malay context, is that, in most cases informants explicitly told me that they were using syncretic talk (such as 'susah nak kata tak percaya, susah nak kata percaya' [difficult to say believe, difficult to say do not believe]) or references to such talk (particularly in terms of Islamic beliefs and traditional beliefs).[107] By saying that it is difficult to believe and to not believe in hantu, the informant indicated his or her struggle with opposing Islamic and traditional beliefs. Some informants noted that justification of syncretism was a delicate topic while others presented the combination of these trajectories holistically, devising their own social reality for their validation of behaviors. I use the following cases to help us see how frameworks around belief are presented in interaction.

In the following sequence, Mat, who co-owns the gerai (eating stall) by the river with Mina (whom I introduced in an earlier chapter), noted the following to explain the tenuous view of syncretic beliefs:

> Cerita ini ada tapi I tak berapa pasti cerita itu betul atau salah. Pasal...kita pun ... hantu ... kita, mengikut orang Islam tak berapa percaya pada hantu lah. Jadi kita betul ke tak betul pasal kita tak tahu dia betul wujud atau tidak kan, tapi setengah orang kata memang ada hantu lah.
>
> [The stories are there but I am not sure if the stories are real or not. Because ... we also ... hantu ... we, according to followers of Islam cannot really believe in hantu lah. So we, true or not true because we do not know if they [hantu] exist or not kan, but many say that there are hantu lah]

In this talk strip Mat includes syncretic tensions within the primary framework, such that syncretism is recognized in the working consensus (between Mat and myself) as a point of contention in the Malay world view. While he accounts for the possible existence of hantu, he also accounts for the crisis with syncretism.

In my interactions with Mat, I was careful not to assume that all Malays believe in the existence of hantu. Instead I told him that I was raised a Christian and that we have similar beliefs. By saying this, I was able to continue my talk about hantu as I had extended the primary framework to account for my understanding of his situation.

In the next sequence, a retired prisons officer presented the following paradoxical communication: Malays could not own dogs to protect the home (because dogs are *haram* or unlawful according to Islamic teachings), so they rear Hantu Raya for protection instead. In this talk strip, the informant presented a paradoxical claim – after all, both hantu and dogs are considered haram in Islamic teachings. What this informant did was to employ the primary framework to situate hantu as 'acceptable,' while dogs were unacceptable for the Malay belief system.[108] I was able to recognize this maneuver as it was situated in the working consensus between the interactant and myself. I also understood that when he used the primary frameworks to account for "hantu as acceptable while dogs as unacceptable," there were other reality contingencies that could arise because those frames were enacted, such as: I could have called him on his double bind or I could have sanctioned his behavior as un-Muslim. Instead, I responded by not questioning his contradiction and nodded my head to show comprehension. It was my understanding (through the interaction's working consensus) that my response would be the most appropriate response to solicit more information about hantu for my interview.

These examples show us that syncretism and talk about syncretism as associated with hantu belief, is a frame used to situate perceptions of social reality within the belief system of the participants in an interaction. In the last example we can see how syncretic sequences operates both as a formulation of events for the interactants in the working consensus, and as a re-formulation in the way in which events were formulated by the interactants in interaction.

I began talking about belief systems by indicating how current Islamic leaders in Malaysia, since the early 1990s, have been combating the prevalence of syncretism. In this research I show that discourse produces social reality. And so, I cannot help but wonder – what would be the fate of hantu in view of the promotion and expansion of discourse by Islamic leaders that obliterates and sanctions systems within which hantu still exists (see Kasimin, 1997).

Next, I explore the influence of hegemonies associated with the colonial experience as a factor in primary frameworks that are used to also display social reality. Analogous to previous analysis, I examine how the dramaturgical metaphor and framing produces a reality, however, this time I focus on the sets of working consensuses that are based on the colonial experience.

Hegemony and the Postcolonial Frame

During my first research visit to Malaysia in June 2002, to collect data for this project, a friend of my father's stopped over at my home for a visit. It was my second day home, and already I was talking to them about cerita hantu. My father's friend's wife, a prominent Malay businesswoman, told me then that the Muzeum Negara

(National Museum) was promoting their exhibition on hantu. I was thrilled. What luck, or was it divine intervention.

Three weeks later, my mother, goddaughter (who was then a toddler) and I drove down to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, for the exhibition. Kuala Lumpur is a large

Figure 34: View of Kuala Lumpur

Photograph used with permission. Courtesy of Alfred Molon

metropolis which boasts to be one of Southeast Asia's most progressive cities. We went to the "Terokai Hantu" pameran (explore hantu exhibition) which was going on from June 20 to August 20, 2002. The exhibition was very well done – in a way it was eye-candy. Giant visual representations of scenes with hantu effigies and hantu habitats, photographs of cultural practices (such as séances) and cultural artifacts (such as charms and hantu offerings) were presented to large throngs of people who were keen on viewing their cultural heritage.

The museum's "Terokai Hantu" organizing committee described their exhibit as: "historical and contemporary research on the folklore and cultural practices associated with hantu," and that the exhibition "makes scholarly research accessible ... and provides artefactual context." They claimed that their philosophy is based on the idea that "all

knowledge should be recorded impartially for the present and the future" (Terokai Hantu Brochure, 2002, p. 5).

Figure 35: Photograph outside the "Terokai Hantu" Pameran

This event was very well attended. Even the local newspapers reported the popularity and impact of this event in the Malaysian scene. Thousands of people, mainly Malaysians, came to the museum to learn more about hantu and hantu beliefs.

As I walked along the large dioramas and read what was written on the different plaques describing the exhibit into my recording device, I also observed how the people around me behaved in their interactions with the information about hantu and traditions about hantu that were presented to them. A large group of secondary school students (high school students) passed by and I overheard one of them speak as he looked at a wood carving of a hantu. He also made similar comments about other exhibits. I noticed some other people read the information and talked about it as though hearing it for the first time while some others read the information quietly, and either looked thoughtful or did not show any reaction to the presentation.

Figure 36: Newspaper Reports on Pameran Hantu

SCARY PRESENCE A woman dressed up as a ghost (right) startled the crowd inside the foyer of Muzium Negara yesterday where the "Exploring Ghosts: Mystery and Culture" exhibition is being held. At least 10,000 people queued in queues to get into the museum to catch a glimpse of nightmare-inducing ghosts and spirits of Malaysian folklore, such as hantu bunglon, hantu pocong, hantu golek, hantu galah, hungry ghosts and pontianak. Many of those who had come to see the exhibits with their children, however, could not handle the hour-long wait for the RM1 entrance fee and left without seeing any of the horrors. — STARpic by KEVIN TAN

From The Star Newspaper, July 15, 2002

From the New Straits Times, July 27, 2002

It then occurred to me that the information presented on those plaques about hantu was mainly collected from the writings of British and European travelers and anthropologists who wrote about Malaysia during the Romanticist Movement (see discussion of this period in Part One). I looked down at one of the plaques to which the young man referred and recognized the name of a well known European writer, Walter William Skeat (1900, 1906). While Skeat was a prolific essayist and scholar who provided in-depth accounts of early Malay practices and belief systems, he was also known to regard Malays and their beliefs as primordial and primitive. Skeat's accounts of the Malay world were produced by his understanding of that world as viewed through ethnocentric lenses.

The information presented at the exhibition was taken as historical fact (especially having come from the exhibit curators – an expert source). In a later interview with one of the museum curators, I found out that the Terokai Hantu exhibition was put together by an Australian researcher and her team. The museum curator expressed his happiness to me over their acquiring such a credible scholar to do both, the research for and construction of the Terokai Hantu exhibition.

The information that was presented by the National Museum drew from, to use Said's (1979) terminology, "Occidental" representations of the "Orient." What the Malaysians were doing in the museum was learning about themselves on the basis of how they were understood by foreign (colonizing) forces. In Part One, I explained how within the self-other dichotomy, the way of understanding self (whether one is colonizer or colonized) is in reflection of the other half of the dualism. When one part of the duality interacts with the other part, the interaction in itself produces a particular reality.

I use this explanation as a touchstone to discussing how a social reality around the postcolonial experience is displayed through talk in interaction.

When a Malaysian learns about him or herself through certain discursive acts (talk or information presented by an exhibition), he or she draws upon his or her own cultural understandings to come to terms with what is going on. Those who underwent the colonized experience could certainly draw from that experience (along with its hegemonies) as part of their sense-making processes. The hegemonies to which I refer are the ideological structures of social reality as manifested through the experience of being "Other," that is, the political economic and power bases that lock a person (or community) into a disempowering reality.

On a few different occasions, my informants mentioned the 'Terokai Hantu' exhibition and asked if I had the opportunity to see it. In most of these interactions, they indicated that the answers to the questions I posed were probably available at the hantu exhibition at the Museum Negara. My father's friend's wife who had first introduced the Hantu Exhibition indicated that she knew little about cerita hantu but stressed that I should go to the museum's exhibition if I wanted to know anything about hantu. She even suggested that the museum may be the only place to which I need to go to gather information as I would find all I needed at that exhibition. In the working consensus of this interaction, I knew that A) she was trying to help me get information about cerita hantu or matters related to hantu or cerita hantu, and that B) she was making a suggestion as to where I could get information about hantu. In doing so, the working consensus that was enacted in the interaction indicated that C) she was suggesting the museum exhibition because the museum was featuring information on hantu, D) that the museum

provided credible information, and E) that the information from the museum was probably all I needed as it was the authority on such information.

I told her that I would most certainly make it a point to go to the exhibit but would also like to hear cerita hantu from members of the Malay community. In my response to her, and through my understanding of that interaction's working consensus, I acknowledged her claim that the museum was a good place to which to go for purposes of my research. However, by saying that I also wanted to collect stories and everyday talk from Malays, I indicated that there were other routes through which I could get information about cerita hantu. In doing so, I re-formulated the frameworks to account for multiple perspectives for information gathering and to sanction the hegemonic discourse around museum authority.

In a different example, the young man from the museum was fascinated by some bit of information he read about hantu and Malay culture. He told a couple of his friends about this information and they talked about it as though it was factual information. In this interaction, the young man employed the primary framework to validate the information he encountered. He exclaimed that he did not know some information that was presented on the plaque and within the working consensus of that interaction (which I was overhearing),[109] seemed to indicate that the information presented was worthwhile as he now knew something new about hantu. In their responses back to him, his friends appeared to accept this validation, and they seemed to conclude that this information was true.

I read the plaque that fascinated this young man and found that he was reading information about his culture that was constructed by European explorers. In interaction

and using the framing process the interactants reified their social reality about their history based on these writings. By constructing a social reality of self on the basis of the colonizer's experience, these young men also espoused the hegemonies (issues of class, race and all the power hierarchies based on being "Other[110]") that those experiences entailed.

The working consensus in this respect does not merely operate as a micro-structural[111] device for accessing reality frameworks, but as a micro-structural device wherein both micro- and macro-[112] structural realities (such as matters of race, class and gender that interactants bring into working consensuses) are manifested. This is important because it is common that academic endeavors tend to examine micro- and macro- structural elements separately. It is in more recent work on globalization and communication that we see attempts to connect these two forces as constituents of human world views.

In this account of the colonial frame, I am not dismissing the Malay (and non-Malay) scholars and citizens who have attempted to dispel hegemonic social realities emerging from the colonial experience. Many Malay postcolonial scholars start by changing their discourse to resist hegemonies as a way to help dispel those hegemonies. I encountered this rhetoric in the field and noted that it helped compound the colonial experiences. These interactions suggest that the framing of anti-hegemonic rhetoric produces a dialectical struggle between the self-as-formulated through colonial discourse and the self-as-formulated through the interventions of anti-hegemonic framing in the different working consensuses among interacting groups or dyads in Malay society.

When discourses provide a certain kind of representation, the working consensus in that interaction alters or accommodates those contingent realities that could have emerged because the discursive act was enacted: For example, my response to my father's friend's wife or one of those young men in the museum could have questioned the credibility of the information presented, or he could have accounted for the information as coming from a European power-base; instead, due to their own hegemonies concerning the museum as authority (and manifested in their interactional working consensus), these young men agreed that the information was fact.

Continual frameworks that reify hegemonies (in primary frameworks) emerging from the colonial experience, will only serve to continually keep those hegemonies in place. However, by resisting the discourse (to dispel or account for those hegemonic frames), Malaysians can also change their social reality around their colonial experience.

The Researcher and the Working Consensus

What I have found through the course of this research was that the research itself (interviews and talk in the field) helped frame and re-frame my role as member of the Malaysian speech community. By participating in cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu, I learned more, not only about cerita hantu, but also about the working consensus within which talk about cerita hantu was situated. Each interpretation was based on my collective experience (experiences in-common with the others in the focused gathering) at that moment, and each interpretation contributed to my frames within the working consensus.

Interestingly, the more I knew of those working consensuses in which I found myself, the more I felt liberated and constrained by their maxims. The working

consensus afforded me the opportunity to observe how, through interactive behaviors and, corresponding with the working consensus, participants in interaction talk about events in their primary frameworks such that those events are constituted in those frameworks as real. Talk about storytelling, like the telling of the convict code (Wieder, 1974), in this respect, *displays* rather than explains the manner in which interactants organize their reality around storytelling.

CHAPTER

9

Within the context of everyday talk, cerita hantu has been used to tell us about a how a person or community organizes his or her, or their social reality. I found narratives and talk about narratives to be a unique way to observe the Malay community's idea of self, society, natural and socio-cultural environments and, belief systems. That is, cerita hantu is one way we come to understand ourselves, our actions and our world as stories.

In this final chapter, I revisit some of the main themes that have emerged from my research on cerita hantu, and I also discuss some of the research's implications. I do this by summarizing my research and reviewing my findings, and follow that discussion with a brief assessment of some of the research's limitations as well as offer suggestions for possible future directions for the study.

Summary of the Project

In the first part of this endeavor I rationalized the purpose of doing research such as this by drawing on the academic literature on narratives, Malay narratives and language use in the Malay context. I also discussed Malay histories, belief systems and the postcolonial condition, and tried to make a case about how these factors influenced the Malay world view.

I found that Malay storytelling was mainly studied as monologues and argued that we needed to incorporate both, the monologic and interactive perspectives to understanding storytelling, especially in its operation as producer of social reality. My intention was to observe how social reality is exhibited in the intercises of performance,

setting, and interaction. I stressed how both these (monologic and interactive) perspectives should be understood in terms of each other, and that the worth of a study such as this would be to recognize the organic and functional association between these two parts (monologic and interactive) and the whole (the performed narrative in situ). I used ethnography as my main research method and incorporated critical analysis in some parts of my research endeavor.

My analysis was based on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (particularly his concept of the working consensus) and frame analysis. I found that items such as time and spatial arrangements; socio-cultural organizations such as age, locality and identity and belief systems; along with normative constructs around socialization; and, remnants of the colonial experience are all parts of the Malay world view that are constituted in talk. Such exhibitions of social order are made around and about (in many cases with extreme seriousness) the accounting for the presence of hantu in the Malay world.

Using strips of talk from storied events as well as talk around and about storytelling, I explored how Malay interactants 'situated' their social realities by using talk sequences to account for those realities. Malays in a specific interaction (and within that interaction's working consensus) used frameworks as 1) a sense-making device, and 2) an intervention (re-formulation) for meanings as formulated in interaction. The structure and social-fact properties of cerita hantu and talk about cerita hantu, along with the social reality it 'explained' (through sequences in primary frameworks), were made available for analysis because of its occurrence within the different working consensuses wherein those sequences were used. Therefore, from the researcher's standpoint, the identification and recognition of the working consensuses is invaluable: They are a

methodological tool[113] which, for the social scientist, *displays* rather than explains the manner in which people organize their social reality, in this case around and in cerita hantu. Moreover, the researcher's *continual* participation in different interactions (hence exposure to different working consensuses) can give him or her a much better understanding as to 'what is going on here,' which is usually the central question for the ethnographer.

Project Assessment

In my treatment of frameworks in association with cerita hantu Melayu, and in an effort to not clutter the argument at hand, I did not explicate ideas around disagreement in the working consensus,[114] conflict,[115] and consciousness[116] in interaction. These matters are certainly important and would present a good place to which this research can proceed.

Further, I did not address or explore the burgeoning proliferation of virtual sites that provide new avenues for Malaysian narrative, or the implosion of culture around hypercolonialism[117] which makes electronic media as a compelling candidate for the production of culture in society. These areas would also be viable programs of study for future directions of this research. While I treated pop cultural material (magazines, movies etc.) as data to help inform my ethnography, I did not explore their contributions (particularly that of magazines) as ends in themselves. My research did not attend to static textual representations because I intended to privilege the dynamics of performance and interaction in particular talk settings.[118] Further, research can address the role these pop cultural artifacts play in the production of social reality in relation to cerita hantu in Malay society.

Finally, I would like to stress that any one of the features of cerita hantu or talk about cerita hantu (such as the act of "meneguh" or the postcolonial condition) can be further substantiated or can operate as touchstones for other routes of study. One area that I feel deserves more academic attention, or more consideration in this or future research, is the 'deadly seriousness' in which accounts of hantu are conveyed, in similar terms that Native Americans, for example, are 'deadly serious' about such things as spirits and ghosts.

Conclusion: Another Story

I would like to end with a cerita hantu. This is a story from Mohammad Farid, a young Malay man from Johor whom I met while at the heart hospital in Kuala Lumpur. He had curiously asked me if I believed in hantu. I laughed off his question as I did not know the answer. I told him though that I was afraid of hantu whenever I stayed up late into the night to work on my dissertation – did this mean I believe they exist?

We talked about being a scholar and doing research. He was intrigued by academics. Six months after we talked about cerita hantu in Kuala Lumpur, he emailed me this story, which I will use to end this writing:

> Kisah ini berlaku di salah sebuah pusat matrikulasi tempatan. Semoga kisah ini dapat menjadi iktibar kepada kita semua,terutama kepada pelajar-pelajar yang gemar mengulangkaji pelajaran hingga lewat malam. Memang menjadi kebiasaan kepada pelajar-pelajar yang tinggal di hostel untuk mengulangkaji pelajaran mereka pada larut malam. Ini kerana,ia dapat memberikan kosentrasi yang penuh ketika mengulangkaji, kononnya. Ditakdirkan Tuhan, kisah ini terjadi kepada salah seorang pelajar di pusat matrikulasi berkenaan. Kebetulan, memang 'hobinya' untuk mengulangkaji pelajaran hingga lewat malam.
>
> Pada malam kejadian,pelajar lelaki ini seperti biasa membuat ulangkaji di biliknya. Sementara 3 kawannya yang lain sedang nyenyak tidur. Bagi

mengelakkan rasa panas dan mengantuk,si pelajar ini membuka tingkap biliknya seluas-luasnya. Ini supaya,angin malam yang sejuk dapat membantunya untuk terus berjaga. Tiba-tiba si pelajar ini terdengar bunyi deruan motor menuju ke arahnya. Lalu dia memasang telinga. Tidak lama kemudian,muncul 'pak guard' di hadapannya.Dia tersenyum memandang pak guard tersebut. Dalam hatinya terdetik betapa rajinnya 'pak guard' ini membuat rondaan. Kebiasaannya, begitulah tugas pengawal keselamatan.

"Tak tidur lagi...?" 'pak guard' itu bersuara tiba-tiba. "Tak pakcik,nak ulangkaji sikit ni ha!" jawab pelajar itu. "Emmm...baguslah" kata 'pak guard' itu dan terus berlalu. Si pelajar ini meneruskan ulangkajinya tanpa memikirkan keadaan sekeliling. Tiba-tiba dia tersentak!

"Aik?! Macam mana pak guard tu boleh lalu sini?" Rupa-rupanya, dia baru tersedar yang 'pak guard' tadi lalu di hadapan tingkap biliknya. SEDANGKAN DIA TINGGAL DI TINGKAT 4! Cepat-cepat si pelajar ini menerpa ke katilnya dan terus tidur hingga ke pagi!

[This really happened at a local matriculation institution. Hope this story serves as an example for us all; especially those students who like to revise till late at night. It is really common for students who stay at the hostel to revise till the wee hours. This is because, it seems, it gives full concentration when studying. With God's grace, this event really happened to a student at this matriculated institute. It so happened it was the student's 'hobby' to study till very late at night.

On the night of the happening, a male student as usual began studying in his room while his three friends were fast asleep. To avoid the heat that would make him sleepy, he opened the window as wide as possible. This was so that the cool night air could help him keep awake. All of a sudden he heard the sound of a motor [vehicle] heading in his direction. So he listened carefully. Not long after that "Pak Guard" [security employees for the institution] appeared in front of him. He smiled when he saw "Pak Guard." He though how hardworking the guard was to do his rounds, after all that was the job of security personnel.

"Not asleep yet …?" "Pak Guard" asks suddenly. "But sir, need to revise a little more ha!" responded the student. "Emmm …good lah," said the "Pak Guard" and walked away. The student continued to study without paying attention to his surroundings. Suddenly he was alert.

"Aik?! How can "Pak Guard" come by here?" It seems he just realized that "Pak Guard" had appeared at his room window. BUT HE WAS UP ON THE 4th FLOOR. Immediately he jumped into bed and slept till morning.

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End Notes

[1] Taiping's etymology = Chinese word Tai-Peng, which means "eternal peace."
[2] Villages and provinces that come under the Taiping district. This includes smaller towns such as Selama and Kemunting.
[3] American Psychological Association (5th Edition) guide to writing.
[4] Also known as Crab-Eating Macaque. This monkey, which is small and grayish brown in color, is found in various warm habitats and is very common in Southeast Asia.
[5] I use three periods (...) to indicate a short pause.
[6] The Malays call this jungle spirit Hantu Lembong (swollen). This hantu is a guardian spirit of trees, particularly the Tualang tree (known for its protruding/deformed trunks and branches).
[7] I discuss my research program at length in chapter three.
[8] Similar perspectives on identity, what Gay, Evans and Redman (2000) call the "subject-of language" approach, not only include Althusserian Marxism but also encompass theoretical viewpoints from structural linguistics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Derridarean deconstruction and Foucaultian discourse analysis. Gay, Evans and Redman explain how these theories collectively operate as a route though which contemporary cultural studies of identity tend to situate itself. They explain the underlying assumptions of this trajectory:

> "... identities are constituted through the reiterative power of discourse to produce that which it also names and regulates; that identities are constituted in and through 'difference' and that, as a result, they are inherently 'dislocated' (that is, dependent upon an 'outside' that both denies them and provides the conditions for their possibility); and that 'subjects' are 'interpellated' by or 'sutured' to the subject positions made available in discourse through the operation of the unconscious. (p. 2)

This idea that the self is manufactured from external and internal forces resists the notion of a person as an "individual subject," what Gay, Evans and Redman (2000) explain as "a given entity, the author of its own acts and centered in a unitary reflexive and directive consciousness" (p. 2). My critique of this essentialized self-sustaining subject (as a way to discern identity) draws from similar comments that emanate from post-Cartesian (Western) metaphysics; that is, the ontological assumption that the "self" is directed by supreme consciousness or an integral logic is an inherently flawed idea.
[9] Especially in his later works.
[10] Occurring sequentially or in the same temporal space.
[11] Occurring in vertical form, or over time.
[12] Discussed in later portions of this manuscript as the *SPEAKING* organization.
[13] Based on Hymes' SPEAKING organization. See Hymes (1974).
[14] Weider initially shows how events within a setting (such as a talk sequence), can consist of a sign assortment that may not alter in its signification within an enclosed set of circumstances, such that those signification (along with possible restrictions) are the same for that speech community. Zimmerman (1974) explains this part of Wieder's trajectory in terms of Morris' (1964) account of sign sequences as normative constructs in social action:

> Keeping in mind that a rule can be understood as a structured relationship of signs and their significata within a sequence, one could speak as well of plurisituational rules known in the same way by a collectivity of actors. Furthermore, rules, in this sense, specify a 'grammar' for interaction by providing for the sanctioned relationship between the situation and an action within it. (p. 15)

[15] Reflexivity occurs where the researcher gleans information from everyday talk, which is devised from the organization of participants' reality, and constituted (or we could say, made observable) within the setting where the talk occurs (Garfinkle, 1967; Wieder, 1974). In other words, and using storytelling as an example, reflexivity is how stories in the social scene are told in the very scene those stories are about. Indexical features are talk strips (or expressions within a talk sequence) that carry semantic properties corresponding with contextual factors. As Wieder (1974) explains, contextual matters are considerations such as: who said it, to whom it was said, on what occasion, where was it said, as well as the relationship between the interactants involved. Weider notes that these indexical features are "pieces" or parts of talk that tends to "have a sense as constituent parts of the setting in the manner that a constituent part of a gestalt-contexture has functional significance (p. 188)." Wieder draws from Gurwitsch (1964) to show

how within the gestalt-contexture, each part supplies a functional significance (meaning) which is based on that part's interdependency with other constituents, such that each part exists through the operation of those other parts. Therefore, the extent to which an utterance is meaningful is based its indexical features.

[16] Stemming from the Cartesian separation of mind-body which produced a centrality around rationality in academic endeavors (i.e. people as "arguers"). Fisher proposed the Narrative Paradigm (people as "storytellers") in opposition to the Rational World Paradigm.

[17] The social science concentrations studied by Mandelbaum include anthropology, folklore, performance studies, education, cognitive science, socio-linguistics, literary theory, cultural studies, and communication.

[18] Mandelbaum (2003) explains some of these activities to be joking, performing delicate activities, complaining, accounting, telling troubles, gossiping, and constructing relationships, social roles, and social and institutional realities.

[19] Malays attending University in Malaysia or overseas.

[20] For example, hantu associated with traditional healing performances or referring to hantu within a stylized performance such as those performances by Penglipulara.

[21] This form of talk, according to Sweeney (1987) is not generated with intention of aesthetic presentation. Instead, mnemonic patterning and such was employed as a way to preserve significant speech markers on the basis of word choice. Therefore, these stylized features were not exclusively used by oral "specialists."

[22] Puppeteer. The leader operating the skin puppets while telling a story during a Wayang Kulit performance.

[23] Shadow puppet performance.

[24] Laderman draws from Foster & Anderson, 1978 to make this distinction.

[25] Like oral genres such as syair, pantun and cerpen (see Osman, 1982).

[26] These settlers' advancement into the Malay lands caused the Negritos to retreat into the jungles and hill areas.

[27] These three colonies were known as the Straits Settlements.

[28] A common language used by people who speak different languages.

[29] Ethnic tensions resulting in the race riots of the late 1960's were part of Malaysia's social bedlam.

[30] Mehmet (1990) refers to the NEP as a 'trusteeship.'

[31] This program, which was implemented in 1971, was achieved in part, through developing a quota system for Malays in areas such as education and employment. More government contracts and investments were also afforded to Malays.

[32] This activist movement, which was entrenched among Malay students, served to promote a strict adherence to an Islamic lifestyle, in both private and public spheres.

[33] Malaysia's religious leaders had strong ties with the Arab nations.

[34] Stauth (2002) reports that many Southeast Asian social scientists were reading Weber's exegesis on the concurrence of Protestantism and capitalism and were beginning to re-evaluate Asian religions in terms of economic development.

[35] Osman equates scientific knowledge to Western empirical influence or Western sciences.

[36] Alterity - as manifested in the Self-Other dichotomy. The term "Otherness" was developed by Lacan (1977) who described it as the image outside of the self, usually perceived in the Mirror-Stage. According to Said (1979), "Otherness" is used to label that which is not "Western" or of the "Occident." Otherness is when colonized people get essentialized as 'different' through the perspective of the colonizer.

[37] Colonized people regarded as "exotic" (hence, difference is not only exaggerated but disparaged) though their classification as "Other."

[38] The problem that persists, as Derrida (1970) would posit, is that hegemony rests in the way the self-other is created, such that the texts/language used to create reality further exploits the self-other duality. In this analysis, drawing on psychoanalysis and linguistics, Derrida deconstructs the multiple layers of meaning at work in language. According to Derrida, humans cannot transcend language/culture, and that texts/words contain a dualism – a particular slant, and it's opposite. This argument is based on the logic of binary opposition, for example, good/bad, man/woman, rational/emotional, mind/body. This binary set-up implies both/and/or logic where one side of the duality is always referenced in terms of the other. Yet, as Derrida contends, one of the two positions always receives more privilege. As such, within the duality, one position is essentialized as the "better" position, in likeness to the other's "lesser" essentialized state. Derrida believes that essentializing entities within dualistic categories are a futile and misleading endeavor.

Derrida's (1970) deconstruction demonstrates the dynamic and fluid character of language/text. Although the realities surrounding the meaning of texts are constructed at the "moment" of interaction, the construction in itself is based on predispositions of the reader. In Derrida's view, meanings of the written word rely on the context within which it is embedded.

[39] Examples of these groups include the Peranakans, Eurasians, Sikhs and foreign expatriates (Dorai, 2000).

[40] Please refer to the social constructionist view of how knowledge is constructed on pages 72-73.

[41] In this case, I refer to Goffman's treatment of the "frame" as a screen for interpretation, which I discuss at length in later parts of the paper.

[42] While I was in secondary school (high school) I traveled to various parts of Peninsular Malaysia with my high school field hockey team and later, with the Under-18 Perak State team.

[43] As a young adult, I worked as a disc jockey with a marketing firm. The company for which I worked contracted with various departmental stores across the Malaysian Peninsular. I traveled to these places to do marketing promotions through music entertainment.

[44] I am not sure if the discomfort was caused by my Western-centric prudishness or because, unbeknownst to the interviewee, I am a lesbian.

[45] The Malaysian government provides free medical care to government employees at all government-owned hospitals. My father is a pensioned government employee. Government owned hospitals are a cheap alternative for medical needs and are used a lot by people from rural areas.

[46] Sony announced MiniDiscs in 1991 as a disc based digital medium for recording and distributing consumer audio that is ``near CD" quality. The MD player converts MP#3, WMA, and WAV files to the ATRAC3 minidisc format and records into the MD from a variety of sources. Sony intended the format as a replacement for the Compact Cassette. It provides a relatively low cost solution to making high quality recordings, and compared to Recordable CDs, it is smaller, cheaper, re-writable and allows non-linear editing. Compared to all forms of tape, it provides random access, meaning that you can quickly select songs with the touch of a button (from www.minidisc.org).

[47] Bahasa Malaysia is the Malaysian national language.

[48] Aunty Nor is of Eurasian descent.

[49] Based the practice of *sunnat* which is a sacrificial celebration usually done on the seventh day after the birth of a Muslim child. A large feast (usually, one or two goats are sacrificed for the occasion) is prepared for the baby's ceremonial shaving. A third of the meat is given to the indigent and improvished. The rest is usually given to relatives. This sacrifice, which emulates similar behavior by the Prophet Muhammad, is believed by some Muslims to be a dutiful offering. Other Muslims regard the ceremony as a good deed. The shorn hair is known as *aqiqah.* The baby's parents usually give alms in gold or silver that is equivalent to the weight of the aqiqah.

[50] Talk is considered here a fully developed narrative, in spite of a few interactional interjections, where the interviewer provided verbal feedback (uh-huh, yes..yes) to the storytelling.

[51] On the basis of said competency.

[52] Peirce, Dewey, and Cooley are also forerunners of symbolic interactionism. Becker, Blumer, Goffman, Denzin, and Hochschild are some of the more well known followers/developers of symbolic interactionism.

[53] Stryker and Burke (2000) use concepts related to symbolic interactionism to theorize human identity. They argue that 1) identity emerges through the interaction of individual selves as well as structural roles; 2) humans have many identities which are organized on the basis of a "salience hierarchy"; and 3) identities are symbolically embodied within interaction. Stryker and Burke show how identity is closely related to (social) positions as well as individual (and social) meaning associated with those positions that people bring into a talk occasions. When telling a story, all participants' identities are linked through the roles around which meanings and expectations evolve, are internalized and shared.

[54] Goffman was influenced by J. P. Sarte and Gregory Bateson.

[55] Goffman's (1959) discussion of expressions given and expressions given off are helpful in understanding this behavior.

[56] By behaving a certain way such as spatially situating oneself away in front of an audience to take on a "presenter's" stance, clearing the throat before one tells the story, dressing up in *dalang* regalia.

[57] James questions, under what circumstances do we think things are real? His answer had a phenomenological twist - what is "real" is based on the different "worlds" that our attention and interest can make for us (orders of existence within which an object can have its proper "being").

[58] Reality is about the "provinces of meanings." Shutz focused on the conditions upon which people generate "one type of reality" or one type of meaning as opposed to others.
[59] Like oral genres such as syair, pantun and cerpen (see Osman, 1982).
[60] In this context, talking about hantu told me a lot of their impression of cerita hantu.
[61] Bananas deep fried in a crunchy batter.
[62] A larger consortium of eating shops.
[63] There are two types of markets in Malaysia: Dry markets and wet markets, which are distinguished by the wetness of the floors in the marketplace. Usually, wet markets are permanent marketplaces while dry markets are temporary arrangements by folks who gather at a particular place (such as an abandoned parking lot) to sell their wares.
[64] Auntie, a polite way to refer to an older lady.
[65] Coconut rice with various spicy side items.
[66] Based on Goffman's (1963) treatment of the Social Order Model (as derived from game theory, a popular theoretical method in the 1950's – 1970's)
[67] This may not be the case in interactions among people of different social statuses.
[68] A Malay house made of wood. Kampong houses are usually raised off the ground by heavy wooden beams. See photograph and description of kampong house in chapter one.
[69] Songket is a Woven material with gold or silver threads making ornate patterns. This cloth is usually worn around the waist.
[70] Baju kebaya is a traditional Malay dress for women.
[71] Noted in chapter 5 as "natural frameworks" or a purely physical experience regarded as true.
[72] Performance of a social role or a social type which are recognized by members of a community as the behavior(s) that would be constitutive of that presented role or type.
[73] This is considered a keyed behavior as it mimics a primary framework.
[74] Repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of two or more successive clauses.
[75] Ekman and Friesen, for example have identified five types of nonverbal function: 1) emblems – nonverbal behavior with precise meanings that tend to substitute verbal behavior; 2) regulators – nonverbal behaviors that mediate communication flow or metacommunicative nonverbal behavior; 3) illustrators – nonverbal behaviors that accentuate or highlight a verbal message; 4) adaptors – habitual, often unconscious, behaviors that are usually not intended as part of a message; and 5) affect displays – nonverbal behavior that presents feelings and emotions. These functions, as clearly seen in the prior examples, were used by participants as part of their talk repertoire that was recognized as part of the Malaysian flair of presentation.
[76] I discuss the significance of this time of day in a later segment of this chapter.
[77] As noted in chapter five, keys impersonate primary frameworks; however, they do not entirely duplicate primary frames (for more information on keys, see page 108)
[78] Keying can be used for deception, as in a keyed fabrication where one person keys on certain information to deceive another or others.
[79] Which is similar to Althusserian (1971) notions of 'hailing' as discussed in an earlier portion of this manuscript.
[80] See discussion on 'meneguh' in the next chapter.
[81] Islamic djinn. These djinns can either be good or evil. They live in certain areas in the forest and are often related to *Orang Bunyian*.
[82] Forest folk who live in a different dimension. Humans are often trapped in this dimension should they venture into it.
[83] A very small town in Perak, south of Taiping.
[84] I gather from my informant that the association between the tree's poisonous milk sap and hantu are based on their similar harmful qualities.
[85] *Keras* places. Spiritually unclean areas/temporal-spaces, such as: At cemeteries, during sunset, in accident-prone areas, or at maternity wards.
[86] A colloquial term for ghost, evil spirit, or something causing fear.
[87] A number of my informants mentioned this film and asked that I go to see it, or get a copy of it for my research.
[88] Malaysia's education system is strongly based on British systems of learning.
[89] I went to University Sains Malaysia in Pulau Pinang and University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

[90] In some cases could include the idea that there is no such thing as hantu.
[91] That is, that the Malays here are 'deadly serious' about the existence or belief of hantu.
[92] "Bumiputera" is Malay for "princes of the earth" or "children of the soil." The Bumiputeras in Malaysia consist of the Malays and the indigenous races, which include the Negritos, Kadazan, Bidayuh, Murut, Iban, Senoi, Melanau and Bajau (Dorai, 2000; Roslan, 2001).
[93] Such as Seikhs, Siamese and European expatriates.
[94] My mother is of Eurasian descent – some of her ancestors were Europeans.
[95] Hantu of a mother who seeks milk for her baby.
[96] I find that ideas around hantu gender to originate from hantu creation stories, such as did a man who did something turn into that hantu? In which case the hantu would then be male; consider the following account of the genesis of Hantu Tinggi (Tall Hantu, see Figure 27) and Hantu Rimba (Jungle Hantu) by McHugh (1955):

> In the olden days a couple lived in a certain country. It came to pass that the woman became pregnant and felt a craving to eat a white mouse deer. Her husband said, "Today I will leave you and travel into the jungle to seek a white mouse deer. On my way I will scatter betel-nut seeds as a guide to our child, so that he can follow should I not return." She took note of what he said, and off went her husband up and down over the hills without ever finding a trace of a white mouse deer. So he never returned, and dwells in the hills or high mountains and is called the Tall Ghost. Well the woman waited for her man to return, and he did not. Eventually she gave birth to a boy and brought him up until he was big. He asked her where was his father and she told him of his father's promise, so that he, too, finally set off through the jungles, following the betel-palms. Until at last he, too, lost his way and never returned but became the jungle ghost who dwells in the deep, deep jungle, the 'Hantu Rimba.' (pp. 35-36)

[97] Such as family friends or people I have known for an extended time.
[98] I use the term queer hare as it represents a dominating challenge to labeling ontologies. Queer is used for any behavior considered non-heterosexual.
[99] Similar to what Searle (1969) would call a perlocutionary act – a speech act that produces an effect (whether or not intended) by the mere act of its utterance.
[100] There is a point to be made here of the association between Althusserian hailing and membership categorization devices in Sacks' pre-sequential analysis.
[101] For purposes of my research, it would be interesting to problematize the implication of the meneguh reality frame via reversal of its semiotic, which is – if you do not say it, they will they not come? Or, by not talking about hantu, will they not exist? I find this an interesting conjecture which, as some informants noted, is more complex that what it appears to be on the surface. I discuss this issue and more in following chapters.
[102] What I mean by this is: As would be portrayed in traditional ethnography.
[103] This location is known to be *keras*.
[104] I cannot say that these were the only primary frameworks that were in operation at this time; however, I can say that these were the frameworks that were made visible to me as part of the working consensus.
[105] It commonly happens that when explanations are offered, a new frame is being proposed for what happened.
[106] These are tensions that emanate from (usually bipolar) opposition. The process of dialectical change can easily be characterized as a struggle that takes on both linear and cyclical/spiraling form.
[107] This is in the same terms where Weider (1974) accounts for reflexive formulation in interaction.
[108] Note that the framework was not about the Muslim religion but a social reality about belief.
[109] I did not get the opportunity to tape record the interaction.
[110] This would include ideas around access to political, economic and intellectual resources.
[111] Small constituents of a large system, such as utterances or an action, (or, for example, minute inspection of components of Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic).
[112] Larger constituents of systemic operations, such as power, gender, and political economy.
[113] Which have epistemological connotations which could be further explored.
[114] A story told in a situation where a person behaves in a way that confuses others – other interactants are not sure what is going on.
[115] Due to possible disagreement in the working consensus.

[116] The extent to which participants are aware they are 'doing' something – an awareness of their performance in interaction.
[117] A situation of heightened electronic media use which carries a similar semiotic to the colonial experience, i.e. regarding representations of social arrangements such as gender and race, and access to political, social and economic resources
[118] Although talk *about* textual materials were included as part of my main research.

Appendix A

Participant Information

Long Interviews (20 mins – 2 hours)					
Participant # Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Occupation	Age/age range	Racial Affiliation	Place of origin
1. Nicky	M	Ret. Gov. Clerk	70	Indian-Ceylonese	Taiping, Perak
2. Chris	F	Ret. Secretary	60	Eurasian	Georgetown, Pulau Pinang
3. Peng	M	Ret. Train Master	60	Chinese	Perak
4. Liza	F	Ret. Teacher	60	Chinese	Pulau Pinang
5. Zah	F	Student	19	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
6. Lina	F	Student	20	Malay	Sabah
7. Makcik Yah	F	Cook		Malay	Perak
8. Daud	M	Ex-Millitary Now Businessperson	30s	Malay	Perak-Kedah
9. Suraya	F	Homemaker	20s	Malay-Javanese	Sarawak
10. Aunty Nor	F	Homemaker	50s	Malay - Eurasian	Pulau Pinang
11. Aunty Jaqleen	F	Homemaker Part-time Administrator	50	Eurasian	Kuala Lumpur
12. Kak Maimun	F	Social Worker	50s	Malay	Pulau Pinang
13. Uncle Ishak	M	Retired Prisons Officer	60s	Malay	Pulau Pinang
14. Encik Samad	M	Eating shop owner	30s	Malay	Taiping
15. Ghazali	M	Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
16. Guard 1 (Hashim)	M	Security Guard	20-30	Malay	Melaka
17. Guard 2 (Zainal)	M	Security Guard	20-30	Malay	Batu Gajah Perak
18. Sulaiman	M	Laksa Seller	40s	Malay	Taiping
19. Omar	M	Chicken Seller	40s	Malay	Taiping
20. Encik Mustafa	M	Museum Curator	30s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
21. Makcik Zainab	F	Nasi Lemak Seller	56	Malay	Kulim
22. Joe	M	Paper Seller	40's	Indian-Muslim	Taiping
23. Makcik Hamidah	F	Homemaker	40s	Malay	Kuala Kangsar
24. Gerai Owner at Bazaar	M	Food Stall Owner	40s	Malay	Taiping
25. Wati	F	Pharmacy Attendant	20s	Malay	Taiping
26. Kak Latifah	F	Rice Stall Owner	30s	Malay	Taiping
27. Kak Latifah's friend	M	Drink Stall Owner	30s	Malay	Taiping
28. Mariam	F	Nasi Ayam Stall	20	Malay	Changkat Jering

		Owner's Daughter			
29. Mariam's friend	F	?	20	Malay	Changkat Jering
30. Ophilea	F	Front Desk Manager (Hotel)	20s	Kadazan-Chinese	Kuala Lumpur
31. Peter	M	Hotel Manager	30s	Indian Eurasian	Kuala Lumpur
32. Encik Salim	M	Batik Salesperson	30s	Malay	Taiping
33. Norhafiza	F	Eating stall helper	20s	Malay	Kuala Kangsar
34. Norhafiza's Friend Hassan	M	Millitary (Army)	30s	Malay	Johor
35. Jack	M	Ret. Police Officer	60s	Eurasian	Taiping
36. Makcik Sabariah	F	Fruit Stall Owner	60s	Malay	Pantai Remis
37. Marina	F	Business Owner (Cloth Shop)	30s	Malay	Taiping
38. Mohd. Farid	M	Contractor	30s	Malay	Gombak
39. Guard 3 (Salim)	M	Security Guard	20-30s	Malay	Kelantan
40. Guard 4 (Johari)	M	Security Guard	20-30s	Malay	Negeri Sembilan
Short/Street Interviews (less than 20 mins)					
41. Man 1	M	?	20	Malay	?
42. Man 2	M	?	20	Malay	?
43. Man 3	M	?	20	Malay	?
44. On Looker 1	M	Shopkeeper	30	Malay	?
45. On Looker 2	M	?	50s	Malay	?
46. Dale	M	Artist/Illustrator	40	Malay mix (not spec.)	Taiping, Perak
47. Joe	M	Student	18	Malay	Taiping
48. Rohana	F	Seamstress	20s	Malay	Kelantan
49. Esah	F	Seamstress Assistant	20s	Malay	Taiping Perak
50. Mat	M	Food Stall Owner	20s	Malay	Perak
51. Mina	F	Food Stall Owner	20s	Malay	Perak
52. Encik Ramly	M	Owner of bazaar cloth shop	30s	Malay	Taiping
53. Daniel	M	Burger seller	20	Malay	Desa Jana Kemunting
54. Young man 2	M	Friend of burger seller	19	Malay	Taiping
55. Young man 3	M	Friend of burger seller	20	Malay	Taiping
56. Zaleha	F	Telephone salesperson	20+	Malay	Taiping
57. Zaiton	F	Telephone salesperson	20s	Malay	Taiping
58. Khatijah	F	Lecturer	40-50	Malay	Pulau Pinang
59. Pak Man	M	? Retired ?	65	Malay	Changkat Jering
60. Makcik at GH Nasi Lemak	F	Professional	50	Malay	Taiping
61. GH Nasi Lemak Seller	F	Food Stall Owner	30s	Malay	Taiping
62. Kak Sara	F	Homemaker	40s	Malay	Bagan Serai
63. Yaz	M	Professional	20s	Malay	Kedah

64. Azmi	M	Cloth Store Attendant	40s	Malay	Taiping
65. Sister 1	F	Food Stall Owner	20-30s	Malay	Taiping
66. Sister 2	F	Food Stall Owner	20-30s	Malay	Taiping
67. Lady at Cloth Shop	F	?	20's	Malay	Taiping
68. Encik Nordin	M	Chicken Seller	40s	Malay	Taiping
69. Woman at Chicken Stall	F	Chicken Seller's Assistant	30s	Malay	Taiping
70. Din	M	Quality Assurance Officer	20s	Malay	Kuala Terengganu
71. Ana	F	?	20s	Malay	Kuala Terengganu
72. Andy	M	Ret. Police Officer	60s	Indian-Eurasian	Johor Baharu
73. Pakcik Yaakub	M	Govt. Service	66	Malay	Melaka
74. UM 1	F	University Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
75. UM 2	F	University Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
76. UM 3	M	University Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
77. UM 4	M	University Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
78. UM 5	M	University Student	20s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
79. Family friend 1	M	CEO, Govt Officer	60s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur
80. Family friend 2	F	Businesswoman	60s	Malay	Kuala Lumpur

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions
English / (Malay)

1. What do you think of when I say, "Malaysian Ghosts?"
   (Apa yang anda berfikir bila saya berkata "cerita hantu?")
2. How did you get this information?
   (Dimana anda mendapat informasi ini?)
   a. Where did you hear this? (Dimana anda dengar cerita ini?)
   b. Who told you about it? Who was involved in the information process? (Siapa yang beritahu?)
      i. Was the information in narrative/story form? (Adakah ini dalam bentuk "cerita?")
      ii. Why did this person/persons tell you this story? (Kenapa mereka bercerita?)
      iii. How was this information (stories) brought up? (Bagaimana cerita ini dipersilakan?)
      iv. How often have you participated in these (talk) activities? (Berapa banyak anda bercerita macam ini? Cerita hantu?)
3. What is a typical Malaysian ghost story? (Apa cerita hantu yang "biasa?")
   a. Tell me some stories/experiences (Tolong beritahu saya cerita hantu yang kamu tahu)
4. What types of Malaysian ghosts have you heard about? (Berapa jenis "hantu" Malaysia yang kamu tahu)
   a. Describe these ghosts – what do they look like? (Tolong beri contoh mengenai hantu-hantu ini)
      i. Are these ghosts associated with any human traits? Based on gender? (Adakah perangai hantu ini serupa dengan perangai manusia? Bagaimana dengan cara perangai mengenai "jantina?")
      ii. What are these ghosts associated with? Types of people? Activities? (Hantu ini berhubung dengan apa? Orang apa? Aktiviti/perangai apa?)
   b. Why are these ghosts here? What is their purpose? Is there a purpose? (Kenapa hantu berada disini? Apa niatnya? Adakah hantu ini berniat sesuatu?)
5. Do these ghosts get involved with people? (Adakah hantu ini melibatkan manusia?)
   a. If yes, what is the involvement? why so? (Tolong menerangkan hubungan ini)
      i. Who are the people who get involved with ghosts? (Siapa manusia yang melibatkan diri dengan hantu?)
      ii. Why do they do this? (Kenapa meraka berbuat begini?)
6. Are these ghosts real? (Adakah hantu ini merupa kenyataan? Benar? Wujud?)
7. Are these ghosts part of the Malaysian spiritual/folk culture? (Adakah hantu ini sebahagian kebudayaan Malaysia?)
8. Do people still believe in ghosts in Malaysia today? (Adakah orang Malaysia percaya dengan kewujudan hantu?)

Appendix C

Types of Media Material Collected for Analysis

Popular Magazines	**Number of Copies**	**Edition 2001-2003**	**# ghost/mystery stories**
Intisari	3	May 03, Jun 03, Jul 03	
Mastika	3	Jan 01, Jan 03, Jul 03	
Fenomena Ajaib	1	July 03	
1001 Manusia & Peristiwa	1	July 03	
Sejoli	1	July 03	
Koleksi Misteri	1	Sept 03	
Persona	3	Jan 03, Jul 03, Sept 03	
Misteri	1	Sept 03	
Emosi	4	Dec 01, Jan 02, Jul 02, Jul 03	
Variasi	2	Jan 03, Aug 02	
Bicara	1	Jan 03	
Madani	5	Nov, 01, Jan 02, Feb 02, Mar 02, Jul 03	
Koleksi Cekal	1	Nov 02	
Sarina	1	Aug 03	
Misteri Artis	1	Aug 03	
Dzul Nurain	1	Aug 02	
Total	**30**		
Popular Books	**Number of Copies**	**Edition**	**# ghost/mystery stories**
Cemaseram Toyol	1	2000	12
Cemaseram Mangsa	1	2000	11
Cemaseram Pontianak	1	2000	10
Cemaseram Hantu	1	2000	8
Cemaseram Kubur	1	2000	8
Cemaseram Malaysia	1	2000	8
Nightmares Malaysia	1	2001	17
Nightmares Pontianak	1	2001	22
Nightmares Malay Ghosts	1	2001	21
Shaitan	1	1996	5
Black Powers 4	1	1997	9
Seram 2000 - Bomoh	1	1999	13
Dukun Wanita Diheret Dan Dipukul Hingga Mati	1	2002	15
Kekasihku Sangat Cantik Setiap Bulan Purnama	1	2002	15
Total	**14**		

Movies	Number of Copies	Producer	Release Date
Jelangkung 2	1	Yan Senjaya	
Orang Minyak	1		
Momok	1		
Pontianak	1	SK Sundaram Muthaliar	2003
Mistik	1		2003

Glossary of Hantu Melayu

(source: Pameran Terokai Hantu (Ghost Exhibition), Museum Negara Malaysia)

1. **Hantu Air** – a water Spirit (air = water), particularly of rivers

2. **Hantu Anak Gua Batu** – the ghost of the stone cave (= gua batu); invoked by the female shamans in Southern Thailand and northern Malaysia.

3. **Hantu Apu** – 'mat ghost', harmless and sociable ghost attracted to any social gathering.

4. **Hantu Bajang** – familiar spirit which generally afflicts children; often assumes the form of a civet.

5. **Hantu Balung Bidai** – evil spirit living in the water; resembles a mat with a mouth at each corner;' enwraps and drowns its victims.

6. **Hantu Bandan** – spirit of the waterfall; its head resembles an inverted copper cauldron.

7. **Hantu Bangkit** – a graveyard ghost (bangkit = to rise up); ghosts of murdered persons are particularly prone to restlessness and malicious intent.

8. **Hantu Batu** – type of poltergeist; throws objects, particularly stones.

9. **Hantu Belian** – the tiger spirit; shaman's familiar; the form taken by the shaman; bilan is an old Indonesian word for shaman.

10. **Hantu Beruk** – sprit of the pig-tailed monkey; may take possessions of dances; familiar of female shamans in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia.

11. **Hantu Bisa** – evil spirit associated with blood poisoning (bias = poison).

12. **Hantu Bujang Sembelih** – ghost of the young cut-throat, familiar invoked by the female shamans in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia.

13. **Hantu Bungkus** – the 'bundle' or 'package' ghost of the graveyard; appears as a bundle of white cloth (the corpse in its shroud) to prey upon the living.

14. **Hantu Bunyi-Bunyian** - invisible hantu; only heard (bunyi = noise) but not seen.

15. **Hantu Buta** – causes blindness (buta = blind); belongs to class of disease causing, Hantu Penyakit.

16. **Hantu Cika** – causes sever colic (= cika) at night time; belongs to a class of Hantu Penyakit.

17. **Hantu Daguk** – ghost of a murdered man in the form of peculiarly shaped clouds.

18. **Hantu Dapur** – the 'kitchen hag' (dapur = kitchen); if in a bad mood she may reignite embers long after cooking-fire is apparently extinguished.

19. **Hantu Denai** – the demon of the wild beast tracks; associated with the jungle.

20. **Hantu Doman** – spirit form survival of Hanuman, Hindu monkey-god; does not appear as a monkey but is horse – or dog faced with a man's body.

21. **Hantu Gaharu** – the powerful and dangerous spirit which protects eagle-wood (= gaharu); eagle-wood is used for making incense.

22. **Hantu Galah** – a very tall ghost (galah = pole); akin to Hantu Tinggi.

23. **Hantu Gerugal** – an evil jungle spirit said to cause dumbness.

24. **Hantu Golek** - a graveyard ghost which moves by rolling along (golek = to roll) as it is constrained by its grave clothes.

25. **Hantu Gulung** – a river hantu that rolls up (gulung) its victim.

26. **Hantu Gunung** – a spirit residing in the mountain (= gunung).

27. **Hantu Hala** – 'directing' spirit, invoked by the ritual specialist (hala = direction).

28. **Hantu-Hantuan** – echo spirit, associated with the jungle.

29. **Hantu Harimau/Hantu Keramat** – 'ghost tiger'; often the guardian of a scared site or shine (= keramat).

30. **Hantu Hitam** – the 'black hantu'; probably derived from the Hantu Kala.

31. **Hantu Hutan** – spirit of the jungle; in some accounts he is considered the oldest hantu; also known as Hantu Rimba

32. **Hantu Jamuan** – the invisible hantu who must be invited to parties lest he wreck the occasion (jamu = entertaining guest).

33. **Hantu Jembalang** – a spirit usually associated with the earth; offering are made whenever the soil is disturbed; often identified as Hantu Tanah.

34. **Hantu Jerambang** – St. Elmo's light taken by seafarers to be an evil spirit; these ghostly lights appears on ships at sea and attach themselves to masts.

35. **Hantu Jerangkung** – 'skeleton ghost', the spirit of a dead person.

36. **Hantu Jinjang** – a familiar spirit attached to a ritual specialist; jang is a Javanese root meaning 'spirit'.

37. **Hantu Kangkang** – the straddling hantu; male counterpart of the Hantu Kopek; he uses a certain part of his anatomy to ambush victims.

38. **Hantu Kayung** – a river hantu (probably derived from kayuh- a paddle).

39. **Hantu Kemang** – an evil and female earth dwelling spirit afflicting newborn children; Kemamang is a Javanese 'fireball ghost'.

40. **Hantu Kembung** – causes stomach-ache and distention (kembung) of abdomen; belongs to class of Hantu Penyakit.

41. **Hantu Keramat** – the 'holy hantu'; considered benevolent and bestows supernatural powers.

42. **(Hantu) Kertau** – evil spirit dangerous at childbirth; said to have the body of a boar and the antlered head of a deer.

43. **Hantu Ketumbuhan** – brings on small-pox; belongs to class Hantu Penyakit.

44. **Hantu Kocong** – the 'shrouded ghost' of the graveyard; lurks in cemeteries in order to devour the soul of a hapless passer-by.

45. **Hantu Kopek** – a huge, old hag with pendulous (kopek) breast with she ambushes victims; related to the old witch Rangda; akin to Hantu Tetek.

46. **Hantu Kuang** – the Ghost with a Hundred Eyes; the argus-pheasant (= kuang) familiar of female shamans in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia.

47. **Hantu Kubur** – the graveyard (kubur) ghost; as with all graveyards ghost it afflicts people wandering near cemeteries after sundown.

48. **Hantu Kuda** – horse spirit (kuda = horse), which possesses Kuda Kepang dances.

49. **(Hantu) Langsuir** – a dangerous vampire ghost; she becomes thus through death in childbirth or through the shock of bearing a stillborn baby.

50. **Hantu Langut/Longgak** – the huntsman hantu with a dog's head on a human body; ascribed human origins; akin to Hantu Pemburu.

51. **Hantu Laut** – the spirit of the sea (= laut); often-termed Hantu Raya, 'great' hantu.

52. **Hantu Lembong** – a spirit (lembong = swollen) that dwells in swollen growths on trees.

53. **Hantu Lenong** – a spirit that dwells between the sky and the earth; moves like an arrow and is just visible at night.

54. **Hantu Lubang** – the spirit of the hole (= lubang) referring to caves and huge; haunted stones.

55. **Hantu Mambang** – ancient spirits of Indonesian origin, associated with natural phenomena.

56. **Hantu Orang/Jembalang Orang** – ghost in human form with a red cap, leaning on a stick and eating earth; origin from dead (probably murdered) man.

57. **Hantu Orang Mati Dibunuh** – the vengeful ghost of a murdered person.

58. **Hantu Pancur** – the spirit dwelling in small streams (pancur = to flow), especially at waterfalls.

59. **Hantu Pekak** – causes deafness (pekak); belongs to class of Hantu Penyakit.

60. **Hantu Pelak** – a malignant spirit that haunts a place where a crime has been committed.

61. **Hantu Pelesit** – a concocted familiar spirit usually kept by women for nefarious purposes; it is fed rice, eggs or blood from the owner's fingers.

62. **Hantu Pemburu** – the huntsman hantu, the Spectre Huntsman; legends ascribe him human origins in Sumatera.

63. **Hantu Penangallan** – a female vampire-ghost, consisting of a head and trailing intestines but no body.

64. **Hantu Penyakit** – a general class of disease-causing spirits.

65. **Hantu Perbuatan** – a hantu created (buatan = made) by a person to afflict his or her enemies.

66. **Hantu Polong** – a concocted familiar spirit, usually kept by men to harm enemies, it must be fed regularly with blood from the master's fingers.

67. **Hantu Pontianak** – a vampire-ghost; often regarded as a stillborn child of Langsuir; called Matianak (mati beranak = died in child birth, stillborn).

68. **Hantu Puaka** – a spirit that frequents natural phenomena; akin to Penunggu.

69. **Hantu Pusaka** – hereditary spirit associated with the ritual specialist (pusaka = inheritance).

70. **Hantu Puteri** – the 'ghost princess'; appears as a beautiful girl and lures men into depths of the jungle where they disappear forever or become insane.

71. **Hantu Raya** – 'great ghost', a power element spirit; may be identified with Hantu Laut, Hantu Hutan, Hantu Tanah, And Hantu Pemburu

72. **Hantu Ribut** – the 'storm spectre'; in some areas considered female in form and origin.

73. **Hantu Rimba** – the spirit of the deep forest (= rimba) that preys on lone travelers; also known as Hantu Hutan.

74. **Hantu Sawan** – a hantu that causes convulsions (= sawan) in young children.

75. **Hantu Songkel** – a spirit that undoes 'snares' to release trapped animals; in some legends he is the grandson of Hantu Pemburu.

76. **Hantu Tanah** – the spirit of the earth (= tanah); akin to Jambalang Tanah.

77. **Hantu Tenggelung** – a headless ghost, Kedah; has some affinity to Penanggalan.

78. **Hantu Tiga Beranak** – an evil family of three who were turned into hantu by their religious teacher; they hunt west coast of Johor.

79. **Hantu Tinggi** – the tall hantu usually associated with tall trees.

80. **(Hantu) To' Kuku Panjang** – 'Grandfather Long Nails', another name for the Spectre Huntsman.

81. **Hantu Uri** – evil spirit of the placenta (= uri), may cause trouble after birth; belongs to class of Hantu Penyakit.

82. **Hantu Wewer** – the invisible ghost that causes travelers to go astray; the Javanese wewe is a ghost that may appear as an ugly old woman.

83. **Jin** – free spirit (not of the dead) from Arabic dijnn, subcategories include jin hitam (= black) and jin putih (= white); jin Islam and jin kafir (= infidel).

84. **Mambang Hitam** – black spirit dwelling on the moon.

85. **Mambang Kuning** – yellow spirit of sunset; thought to cause jaundice and especially dangerous to children; may be summoned by ritual specialist

86. **Mambamg Putih** – white spirit of the sun.

87. **Mambang Tali Arus** – spirit of the mid-currents; akin to Hantu Laut.

88. **Penunggu** – a guardian spirit of a specific place; akin to Puaka.

89. **Raja Hantu** – 'king' of the ghost/spirits applied to Spectre Huntsman (Hantu Pemburu), an avatar of Siva.

90. **Toyol** – a spirit that steals to enrich its keeper.

91. **Zar** – a minor but mischievous spirit in Islam.