Image-i-nation and fictocriticism: rewriting of the Malay myth

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IMAGE–I–NATION AND FICTIONCRITICISM: REWRITING
OF THE MALAY MYTH

NASIRIN BIN ABDILLAH

This thesis is presented as required for the
Award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

of the

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Declaration

I, Nasirin Bin Abdillah, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, of the School of the Arts, English and Media, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Nasirin Bin Abdillah, June 20, 2016
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Abstract

The premise of this study centres upon the examination of rewriting the Malay myth in a critical and creative context. The main focus is on the way myth rewriting can reconfigure the notion of ‘nation’. In the scholarly component of this thesis, two of Fatimah Busu’s short stories, “Al-Isra’” (“Night Journey”) and “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” (“50 Years of Independence: A Gurindam Jiwa”) are the main materials for analysis. Fatimah Busu’s works has been chosen as she primarily and consistently draws upon the idea of myth rewriting in many of her short stories. I intentionally chose these two particular short stories because they are referential to the two main Grand Narratives in Traditional Malay Literature: Hikayat Hang Tuah (Story of Hang Tuah) and Sulalat al-Salatin (Genealogies of the Sultans/Kings). “Al-Isra’” is based on Hikayat Hang Tuah whilst “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” is based on Sulalat al-Salatin, respectively.

This thesis uses the theoretical framework of mythology to support the textual analysis and a close-reading approach. In this study, I propose the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. This concept is loosely taken from the word, ‘imagination’ from which I have broken down into three words: image, I and nation. This is my way of offering a new critical analysis in investigating myth in the context of rewriting. The central argument in the concept is that myth, as I believe, originates in the collective consciousness of human imagination, then it is translated into tales and later is reproduced in various forms that has its origins in oral traditions, leading to the writing system and culminating in cinematic expressions. In the retelling of myth, I proffer that the tale retold carries within it, consciously or unconsciously, “image(s)” of the self/individual (“I”) and the other/society (“nation”). Furthermore, this concept aims at opening up discussions on the nation as delineated in the socio-cultural, political and historical contexts of Malaysia.

The creative component of the thesis will also deal with the idea of myth rewriting. The notion of nation will serve as the main theme in which the creative work will explore this notion using the genre of fictocriticism. The creative component consists of a collection of micro-fictocritical writings that addresses issues pertinent to the nation by focusing on issues such as identity, self and other. Fictocriticism produces a dual narrative: one, which employs a fictional voice and the other, a critical voice. The critical voice in the format of fictocriticism is dominant in the narrative and allows for further personal commentaries on the negotiation between self and the other as seen in relation to the notion of nation. The use of fictocriticism further helps to explore how myth can be exploited to expand the notion of nation as explicated in the relationship between the self and the other.

The use of myth in new writing and contemporary setting may engender a wide spectrum of new meanings and interpretations. It is hoped that the inclusion of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in this research and the use of fictocriticism in the creative component may contribute to the development of a new ‘way’ of approaching or looking at the Malay myths.
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PART 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review
Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of Malay myths in a twenty-first century context. Its main focus is on the way rewriting myths can reconfigure the notion of ‘nation’. The notion of nation, as seen through the context of myth rewriting is scrutinised in both the critical and creative components of the PhD project. Two of Fatimah Busu’s short stories, “Al-Isra”\(^1\) and “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”\(^2\) are the main materials for analysis in the critical component. Fatimah Busu’s works have been chosen as she primarily draws upon the idea of rewriting myths in her writings. Two sources of Malay myths from traditional Malay texts are also discussed as she bases her short stories, “Al-Isra” and “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” upon *Hikayat Hang Tuah*\(^3\) and *Sulalat al-Salatin*\(^4\), respectively. In conjunction with this, selected English translations of two sources of Malay myths will be cross-examined in comparison to the traditional Malay texts written in its original language of the classical Malay.

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1 “Dark Night of the Soul” (Harry Aveling’s translation, 1991).

2 “50 Years of Independence: A Gurindam Jiwa” (My translation).


4 *Sulalat al-Salatin* is an Arabic phrase which literally means ‘Genealogies of the Sultans (Kings)’. However it has been widely translated as *Sejarah Melayu* following John Leyden’s first English translation, *Malay Annals* (1821). A recent version calls this ancient text ‘Hikayat Melayu’ as in *Hikayat Melayu atau Sulalat’us-Salatin* (1998) edited by Muhammad Yusoff Hashim.
In the critical analysis chapters, textual analysis is employed in which I use a 'close-reading' strategy in examining selected works of Fatimah Busu. The central discussion focuses mainly on how myth expands the notion of nation. In other words, the critical chapters of this thesis will look at how Fatimah Busu uses Malay myths in the context of rewriting to discuss issues related to nation-building in Malaysia. In this light, the nation, Malaysia, becomes the major highlight as seen through the socio-cultural, political and historical contexts. The thesis component of this PhD project thus probes the rewriting of Malay mythical stories in Fatimah Busu's selected works: “Al-Isra’” and “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” so as to demonstrate how rewriting of mythology can be used as a form of political commentary and satire, hence such act is seen as liberating. Other works either from Fatimah Busu or from relevant writers or artists will also be discussed but only in comparison to the two selected short stories.

The discussion will also highlight translation as a form of rewriting. In this sense, Harry Aveling’s translation of “Al-Isra’” entitled “Dark Night of the Soul” becomes the primary source of reference in the first analytical chapter concerning the discussion on this particular short story. Currently, there is no English translation for the short fiction, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” therefore, I will use my own translation. In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Fatimah Busu acknowledges that she adapts the three episodic stories: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa, from W.G. Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu (1975) which is written in the Malay language. Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of mythical stories will then be discussed in comparison with the Shellabear version. The English translations of Sulalat al-Salatin referred to in the discussion are C.C. Brown’s The Malay Annals (1952, 2009) and John

The creative component of the thesis will also deal with the idea of myth rewriting. This is where I will rewrite my own versions of Malay myths from either *Sulalat al-Salatin* or *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Nation-building will serve as the main theme in which the creative work will attempt to explore such a notion using the genre of 'Fictocriticism'. Fictocriticism, according to Amanda Nettelbeck, is a 'hybridized writing’ moving between two poles, 1) fiction and criticism and 2) subjectivity and objectivity (Nettelbeck in Kerr & Nettelbeck 1998, pp. 3-4). Fictocriticism is ‘hybridised’ because it “is free to make use of narrative modes and of the rhetorical strategies available to them, including anecdote and (or as) allegory which stage the singular encounter between the writer’s emergent, embodied subjectivity and what is written about” (Gibbs 2005, p. 2). The “I” in my fictocritical writing corresponds with the ‘subjectivity’ in which it is a form of ‘self-reflection’ but not necessarily an autobiography. In *Joe in the Andamans* (2008), Stephen Muecke calls his stories that use first-person viewpoints as ‘self-portraits’ rather than an autobiography or a memoir (pp. 12-13). Furthermore, according to him, self-portraits “are about distortion and expression. They are meant to make you think of the figure of the individual, sure, but there is always a different background” (Muecke 2008, p. 13). Following this line of thought, the "I" that engages me to use the first person narration should be viewed as ‘self-portraits’ in which the "I" as the figure (Muecke’s italics, p.
13) is ‘relatively interacting’ with ‘a different background’ or field (Muecke’s italics, p. 13). Using the personal “I” as the main narrator’s voice, the nation in myth will be examined critically and creatively in the fictocritical format that combines facts and fictions in the narrative. By exploring myth within the context of fictocriticism, I aim to demonstrate the connection between the rewriting of myths in fictional and critical contexts by following the idea of the ‘Iterative Cyclic Web’ (Smith & Dean 2009) in which the research ‘informs’ the creative and vice versa. In this manner, my thesis falls under the category of ‘research-led practice’ in which I begin with the critical part of the whole project which will then be followed by the creative.

The question of whether practice informs research and vice versa has been an ongoing debate in the disciplines of Creative Arts. There exists the question of which comes first, the creative or the research and the research or the creative, when someone, being a practising artist is also an academic. In other words, which influences which? Is the work of a scholar-artist informed by his or her research? Or is it the other way round? These questions have been subjects of discussion by some scholars examining both activities of research and practice. In Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts (2009), Hazel Smith and Roger Dean suggest that both practices are in ‘iteratively-cyclic’ relation to one another. This is what Skoglund means when she remarked that research and practice “can inform each other” (Skoglund 2011, p. 6). According to the model of ‘Iterative Cyclic Web’, the iterative relationship between the research and creative is shown in a circular motion. This can mean that the direction between practice-led research and research-led

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5 In her PhD thesis, “Residing between Languages: Writing Fiction in a Second Language, a Theoretical and Practical Approach,” Linn Skoglund claims that the activities of research and practice ‘can inform each other’ (Skoglund 2011, p. 6).
practice is ‘fluid’ as they can both shift back and forth within the process. Such iteratively-cyclic movement can lead to a similar path, or be directed to an opposite way or engender a totally new direction (Smith & Dean 2009, pp. 19-21). In this thesis, the idea behind the model of ‘Iterative Cyclic Web’ is put into application through the use of fictocriticism. The ‘fluidity’ between ‘research’ and practice’ that results in the ‘research-led practice’ and vice versa, can be seen in application through the genre of fictocriticism. In fictocriticism, the ‘fictional’ element can be seen as corresponding with the ‘practice’ whilst ‘criticism’ may serve a function that is similar to the ‘research’ in the conundrums of ‘research-led practice’ and ‘practice-led research’. In the context of my project, with the focus on issue or theme of the nation, both the critical/criticism/research and the creative/fictional/practice conform to each other. The combination of fiction and criticism in the creative component opens up a new way of looking at Malay myths. Looking at it in this light, the use of fictocriticism is very much in line with the ‘Iterative Cyclic Web’ model as both the critical and the creative inform each other. In the fictocritical creative, the critical is an essential part of the genre. Therefore, the ‘iteration’ or ‘reverberation’ of the critical and the creative is further enhanced with this technique of writing. Further elaboration on this will be discussed in the following section on the research framework.

1.2 Critical Placement: Myth

This section briefly surveys the main issue of this study, which is myth. In order to discuss the function of myth in the Malay context, it is important to look at myth in its literal or denotative context. The broader definitions of myth are outlined in Segal’s and Coupe’s introductory books on the study of myth. Robert A. Segal’s Myth (2004) and Laurence Coupe’s Myth (2009) can only serve as general guidelines in
approaching myth as they briefly survey the scholarship about myth. In the chapter on literature review, methods and approaches will be further investigated following claims made by myth scholars: the malleability of myth and the ‘timelessness’ of myth. For now, let us have a look at how myth can act as a representation of human experience.

Answers to the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ myth emerges, are linked to the starting point of humanity itself. Myth as a representation of humanity is reiterated by Karen Armstrong in the preface of her book, *A Short History of Myth* when she remarks that: “Myths are universal and timeless stories that reflect and shape our lives – they explore our desires, our fears, our longings, and provide narratives that remind us what it means to be human” (Armstrong 2005, p. iii). In other words, although myth seems to portray immortal deities, its supernatural elements only make sense if ‘humanity’ is included in the narrative. A myth therefore is not just a story about gods and goddesses but also a rendering of mortality – the quintessential human flaws and foibles. This claim again parallels Armstrong’s statement: “mythology will not succeed if it concentrates on the supernatural; it will only remain vital if it is primarily concerned with humanity” (Armstrong 2005, p. 21). For Armstrong, mythology is a study of the way early humanity attempted to comprehend itself and its surroundings. A certain myth may have pointed to a specific culture or people in a specific time and place in the past, but it keeps ‘emerging’ even up to now because it brings to the fore the ‘essence’ of humanity by using supernatural narratives. This idea is paralleled to Joseph Campbell’s view that “[m]yths are clues to the *spiritual* potentialities of the human life” (Campbell & Moyer 1988, p. 5, my italics). The word ‘spiritual’ is seen corresponding to the word ‘essence’ here that a myth emerges due to its intrinsic
nature of finding the answer to the question of what is human. According to mythology, seeking ‘an experience of being alive’ (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 5) is the answer to the question of what is human. It is all about seeking the meaning of life. There is a need for us to feel and experience ‘the rapture of being alive’ (p. 5) according to Campbell and Moyers (1988) because such feeling will keep us connected to our ‘innermost being and reality’ (p. 4). In short, meanings and significance of the origin of myth have resulted in the understanding of the origins of humanity itself. I will discuss the roles of myth in detail in the next chapter.

1.3 Key Concept 1: ‘Image–I–Nation’

In the thesis component of this PhD project, the analytical chapters will examine the rewriting of Malay mythical stories in Fatimah Busu’s fiction so as to demonstrate how rewriting of the myth can be used as a form of political commentary and satire, thus such acts are seen as liberating. The study will first discuss the importance of the two main reading strategies of myths in the field of Malay Literature. There are generally two conventional approaches to reading Malay myths: ‘classical’ and ‘traditional’. This thesis then argues that reading myths as ‘traditional’ will open up new meanings as this is a way of ‘freeing up’ or liberating the myth. This is the focal point in which it differs from Ismail Hussein’s “The Study of Traditional Malay Literature” (1966) and Harun Mat Piah et al.’s Traditional Malay Literature (2002). Ismail Hussein and Harun Mat Piah et al. have put forward that the term, ‘traditional’ be used as the replacement of the term, ‘classical’ as proposed by Richard Olaf Winstedt. This study expands on this notion of using the term, ‘traditional’ as a reading strategy in the analysis of the myth, instead of merely replacing the term, ‘classical’. By applying the term, ‘traditional’ as a style of reading, the research then argues that such process is seen as
a way of challenging temporal and spatial encumbrance in the study of Malay mythology. However, I found the need to expand upon these conventional readings, therefore I propose that the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in the analytical chapters be utilised and the genre of fictocriticism in the creative chapter of this thesis be used. Thus, there is a need of contextualising the ‘traditional’ as delineated through the newly developed concept of ‘image–I–nation’. The inclusion of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in the analysis and the use of fictocriticism in the creative component of this thesis will contribute to the development of a new ‘way’ of looking or approaching Malay myths.

The concept of ‘image–I–nation’ is aimed at filling in the critical gap on the study of Malay myths in the context of rewriting as seen both from the Western and Malaysian perspectives and further delineated in the creative component. This thesis also extends the topic ‘research-led practice’ as it attempts to bring together theory and practice into the project. Further Sulalat al-Salatin, one of the finest works of Malay literary history, will be featured as an important cross-reference as it is also a significant source of Malay myths. Other relevant folktales and traditional literary works, in particular, Hikayat Hang Tuah will also be referred to in this study. This is pivotal because the story of Hang Tuah also appears in Sulalat al-Salatin. In conjunction with Fatimah Busu’s fiction, she rewrites this particular tale in her short story, “Al-Isra” (1985) thus both the traditional oral narratives, Sulalat al-Salatin and Hikayat Hang Tuah, are relevant in the analysis and discussion of the short story. In addition, Fatimah Busu’s Aduhai (Oh Dear, my translation) is the most important material for analysis in this project. In Aduhai (2009), in a manner of rewriting the myth, some of her short stories are an ostensible response to the current political
circumstances in Malaysia. In analysing all these, the ‘traditional’ reading strategy will become the main method with the explication of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’.

The need for a new method or approach is timely needed in the study of the Malay myth as a part of the larger scholarship on Malay Literature, as pointed out by Muhammad Haji Salleh (2008b) who claims that “[t]o write a theory of Malay literature is also a declaration of independence and the fact that for at least 2000 years we already have our own concepts and now want a return to them” (p. ix). However, the project is not necessarily a ‘comeback’ to the ‘original’ concepts of Malay Literature but rather it infuses both Western and local approaches, thus positioning the Malay myths in the general myth scholarship. This concept of ‘image–I–nation’, in particular, is ‘contextualised’ within the theoretical framework of both Western (particularly Myth theories and relevant Nationalist discourses) and some relevant Malaysian scholars’ approaches. In the context of this research, two major methodological approaches could be taken: one which looks at the topic through post-colonial theory and second, through nationalist theory. Post-colonial theory would offer significant insights as it “cover(s) all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonialization to the present day” (Ashcroft et al. 2002, p. 2). Thus, the post-colonial narrative often emphasises the role of colonialisation: the interplay between the coloniser and the colonised. For the purposes of this thesis, nationalist theory has been chosen as the methodological framework as the focus is on the myth narrative that reconfigures the notion of nation. I argue that the project of rewriting of the myth does not necessarily entail the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised although both theories involve the idea of the past ‘constructing’ the present. However, it is noted that the nationalist discourse is part of the larger
methodological framework of post-colonial. According to Ashcoft et al. (2002, pp. 14-36), post-colonial literatures consist of the ‘national’ model, one of the four major models that can be applied when discussing post-colonial narratives. Thus, this thesis employs a more specific approach by using the nationalist discourse although some other relevant post-colonial ideas will be discussed, but only in the context of myth rewriting.

1.4 Key Concept 2: Fictocriticism

In fictocritical sense, the binary opposition of the “I” and “nation” parallels Amanda Nettelback’s argument that fictocriticism ‘oscillates’ between fiction and criticism. Further she maintains the idea that fictocriticism moves ‘back and forth’ between “the poles of fiction (‘invention’/‘speculation’) and criticism (‘deduction’/‘explication’) of subjectivity (‘interiority’) and objectivity (‘exteriority’)” (Nettelbeck 1998, p. 3). In this light, myth in the context of rewriting ‘oscillates’ between the story of the “I” and the “nation”. The idea that myth expands the notion of nation becomes the central argument in the critical part of the thesis. In the creative, in my own rewriting of the myth, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ is to be put into practice between the continuums of fiction and criticism, subjectivity and objectivity. The inclusion of the personal/self “I” forms the writing style with nation-building as a theme that can be seen in various perspectives through the context of retelling myths. In addition, Nettelbeck also suggests that the “irregular intrusion of a slippery subjectivity” (1998, p. 5) obscures the boundary between fiction and criticism. This is to say that with the use of subjectivity by using the first-personal pronoun, the “I” ‘intersects’ with literature and theory resulting in the emergence of something new. In the creative
chapter, the use of “I” in fictocritical sense ‘mediates’ the idea on how myth expands the notion of nation fictionally and critically.

Through fictocriticism, I will contemplate my capacity to ‘assert the personal’ with regard to the notion of nation. I see myself belonging to the post-independent generation of Malaysia who only learned of the struggles for independence through history and literature. At the same time, I am able to offer some ‘different’ personal views from the ethnic point of view as I belong to one of East Malaysia’s (Sabah) ethnic groupings. In Malaysia, the Malays, the Orang Asli (indigenous/aboriginal peoples of Peninsular Malaysia) and the ethnic groups of Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) belong to the ‘racial category’ called the bumiputera (‘Son of the Soil’). Other races are identified according to their ‘ancestral heritage’ such as Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and so on. Although the Orang Asli, Sabahan and Sarawakian ethnic groups are recognised as bumiputeras, they are however not viewed as ‘pure’ Malays. The term Malay points loosely to the Malay community of Peninsular Malaysia; thus the other races and ethnicities are still considered as the ‘others’. In this regard, by bringing in the personal through fictocriticism, I will speak of the nation from these two levels: understanding Malaysia through history, literature and culture in post-independence and understanding the ‘self’ as being the ‘other’ in the context of ethnicity seen in relation to the notion of nation.

As a writing practice, fictocriticism allows me to explore the personal in a creative and experimental way. My inclination towards poetic expressions, at first, has put me in a dilemma as I thought I had to abandon this type of genre in the creative part of the thesis. If I were to write poetry for the creative, it does not seem to be
parallel with the analysis, unless Fatimah Busu’s poetry is made central in the scholarly discussion. I was then tempted to propose the form of narrative poetry to be incorporated into the project. The problem with writing in this specific genre would seem to be at odds with the analysis in the critical part. In the critical section, I am mainly analysing the genre of short story written by Fatimah Busu. Upon further investigation, her short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” is ‘somewhat’ written in fictocritical format albeit it is in Malay. I would say somewhat because I believe that Fatimah Busu does not consciously write fictocriticism. Although she may never refer to her work as fictocritical, her “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” includes ‘criticism’ as a part of the narrative. For instance, at the close of ‘Ceritera III’ (‘Story III’) in the short story, Fatimah Busu uses direct quotes from William Stanley Morgan’s scholarly book, *The Story of Malaya* (1956) to justify her commentary on the fall of Singapura/Singapore. By quoting Morgan, she further strengthens her claim on the gradual loss of one of the great Malay kingdoms to the immigrants, especially the Chinese. I will later return to the discussion of this issue and her writing style in Chapter 5.

Fictocriticism is the best choice for me, given the circumstance that my earlier training was in literature particularly in the undergraduate and master’s degrees. To me, fictocriticism is the ‘ideal’ platform or training ground to cultivate my interest in writing creatively. At the same time I can still engage with theoretical postulations combining my own ‘personal’ views with regard to issues of nation-building from the perspectives of myth rewriting. This is also the perfect environment for me as I am submitting the thesis to an Australian university as fictocriticism has been proliferating in the country since the 1990s (See Brewster 1996, Smith 2005 and Dawson 2005).
This particular new form of writing is almost unheard of in Malaysia. As far as I am concerned, in Malaysia, those who are studying literature are often ‘conflated’ with having the creative writing talent. I can safely say that creative writing degrees have not been as popular as literature, linguistics or TESL in Malaysia. Further I choose to write fictocritically in the creative component of this project as opposed to writing autobiographically albeit the inclusion of the personal “I” because I feel there is a need to provide substantial and proper referencing for my views on the nation so as to create a ‘reliable’ narrativity in my version of Malay myths. The use of fictocriticism allows me to put into perspective or juxtaposition between critical/cultural/myth theories and my own creative writing in a combination that has the elements of an autobiography. In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Fatimah Busu may not have written fictocritically ‘consciously’ as the term, ‘fictocriticism’ sounds alien in Malaysia, but her writing style has inspired me to yeer into the ‘experimental’ in my creative writing. I eventually stumbled upon the genre of fictocriticism, which incidentally was partly suggested by my supervisor. Upon further investigations, I find it intriguing as I can carry out all sorts of ‘experiments’ as I would be able to combine discursive, prosaic, poetic and dramatic voices into one genre. Fictocriticism also allows me to engage in the ‘space between’ (Kerr & Nettelbeck 1998) in which the critical/discursive elements may occupy the middle ground or ‘liminality’ of narratives between the “I” and the “nation” in the creative component of this thesis. Further the use of fictocriticism depends on the friction between different voices and registers. In the fictocritical chapter of this thesis, I maintain the deployment of colloquialisms so as to emphasise the variety of writing styles of fictocriticism thus not restricting to the ‘rigid scholarly voice’ merged in the narratives. I will return to discuss more on the use of fictocriticism in this project in the exegetical section of Chapter 6.
1.5 Outline of Project

There are seven chapters in this PhD project. This is a thesis that slightly modifies the conventional structure of PhD in Creative Writing. The conventional structure of PhD in Creative Writing consists of the two main divisional components of creative and exegetical sections. The structure of this thesis seems to adhere to this kind of arrangement with three analytical chapters (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and one creative chapter (Chapter 6). However, the analytical chapters are not the exegetical part of the thesis. Instead the creative chapter has its own exegesis that will analyse the fictocritical writings in Chapter 6. This PhD project also contains an in-depth literature review in Chapter 2. This particular chapter discusses relevant theoretical postulations in analysing myth in the context of rewriting and the establishment of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. The following paragraphs will review each chapter of this PhD thesis.

Chapter 2 deals with the literature review which is divided into eight important sections. It mainly discusses the scholarship of Malay myths and the relevant approaches or strategies adopted in the study, especially with the implementation of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. The literature review of the research will first survey and discuss relevant scholarship on myth and literature. The discussion begins by looking at myth definitions within the context of larger myth theories. Secondly, the literature review discusses the relations between myth and literature where relevant key Myth theories and Nationalist discourses are examined. It will then position the Malay myth in the context of general myth theories before narrowing down the discussion scope to myth theories within the study of Traditional Malay Literature. Finally, the review of literature identifies the rewriting/rewriting of the myth in
contemporary Malaysian Literature, generally so that it paves the way for further analyses especially with regard to Fatimah Busu’s selected short stories in the subsequent chapters using the specific analytic tool of ‘image–I–nation’.

In Chapter 3, Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Al-Isra” is used as the main material for reference and analysis. “Al-Isra” will be examined in this chapter with reference to *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, from which Fatimah Busu has based the story of Tuah and Jebat. Harry Aveling’s English translation of the short story, “Dark Night of the Soul” will be used in the analysis. The premise of how myth expands nation is also discussed through the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ as the heroic tales of Tuah and Jebat may provide the grounds for the discussion about heroism and nationalism in the context of rewriting.

Chapter 4 will examine the first three ‘episodic stories’ of Fatimah Busu’s “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” and will apply the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in the discussion. The analysis will scrutinise the use of three ‘mythical’ stories in the short story – Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa. The concept of ‘image–I–nation’ will be applied so as to examine the idea of myth rewriting as a way to open up discussions on satires and comments in contemporary socio-cultural and political settings of modern Malaysia.

In Chapter 5, the analysis continues with the examination of the remaining ‘stories’ in the short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” In the previous chapter, the first three stories in the short story ‘exclusively lend’ themselves to three ‘episodes’ in *Sulalat al-Salatin*, thus the rewriting of the myth underlies the entire
narration. In the remaining two stories, Fatimah Busu retells a story of Malaya in which the Malays were ruled by the British and in the final story, Hang Nadim is ‘resurrected’ to witness the impending ‘fall’ of the Malays in their own country. Myth in the context of rewriting can still be seen in the resurrection of Hang Nadim in which Chapter 5 will analyse these stories using the concept of ‘image–I–nation’.

Chapter 6 is the creative chapter of this PhD project where there will be forty-two micro-fictocritical sections aimed at rewriting the mythical Malay characters fictionally and critically. This chapter will further explore the idea of how myth expands the notion of nation by rewriting myths based on *Sulalat al-Salatin*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and other relevant Malay myths in the format of fictocriticism. This chapter ends with an exegesis examining some of the micro-fictocritical writings.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter serves as the thesis introduction after it has briefly surveyed and reviewed relevant important points in the writing of this project. The thesis deals with a study of myth in general, but more particularly it explores the idea of how myth is (re)used in the context of rewriting. The use of myth in new writing and contemporary setting may engender a wide spectrum of new meanings or interpretations (polysemy) but this thesis is aimed specifically at examining how myth expands the notion of nation through the application of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. In using fictocriticism as a genre in the creative part of the thesis, it demonstrates that the PhD project engages an experimental writing, a writing style that is not popular in Malaysia. Let us now begin the discussion by looking at the review of literature of this research project.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of Malay myths in the context of 're-writing'. The discussions in this chapter are divided into eight sections: 'Myth at a Glance: Functions, Types and Paradigms', ‘Myth and Literature’, ‘Rewriting Myth’, ‘Methods and Approaches in Traditional Malay Literature’, “Image–I–Nation”, ‘Fatimah Busu’, ‘Rewriting of Hikayat Hang Tuah’ and ‘Rewriting of Sulalat al-Salatin’. In ‘Myth at a Glance: Functions, Types and Paradigms’, I will first outline general myth theories within the scholarship of mythology. I will then briefly survey the relationship between myth and literature. In ‘Methods and Approaches in Traditional Malay Literature’ I will continue the discussion with the key point of this research project: rewriting of the myth in its general terms before presenting it within a larger framework of myth theories. In this section, I will further narrow down the discussion, concentrating more on specific myth theories and issues within the study of Traditional Malay Literature. This thesis suggests for a more systematically manageable type of reading myth, in particular ‘traditional’ as a way of ‘opening up’ myth in the context of rewriting. In this manner, the review of literature identifies rewriting or the reworking of the myth within the general contemporary Malaysian Literature as it maintains the idea of reading myth in a ‘traditional’ manner so as to allow for a ‘progression’ of myth that is further delineated in the specific analytic tool of ‘image–I–nation’ in the subsequent section. The next section on ‘Fatimah Busu’ will briefly introduce the rewriting of myth in Fatimah Busu’s short stories. The remaining two sections, ‘Rewriting of Hikayat Hang Tuah’ and ‘Rewriting of Sulalat al-Salatin’ will
look at how the general progression and development of rewriting of Malay myths has taken place in contemporary Malaysian culture. Let us begin the discussion by examining the scholarship of myth in general.

### 2.2 Myth at a Glance: Functions, Types and Paradigms

Some scholars argue that the ‘mystical’ in myth is essential in understanding humanity and its nature. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Joseph Campbell claims that a myth has four functions: mystical, cosmological, sociological and pedagogical. First, the mystical function of myth leads to the appreciation of oneself and the universe as observed by Campbell who claims that “[m]yth opens the world to the dimension of mystery, to the realization of the mystery that underlies all forms” (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 38). Second, the cosmological function of myth is related to science by way of ‘showing the shape of the universe’ (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 39) though the emphasis remains on the mystery of the universe. Next, the sociological function of myth is concerned with its ability to ‘support and validate a certain social order’ (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 39) such as the performance of rituals or ceremonies in order to adhere or conform to the rites of passage in societal life and relationships. The final function of myth is that it is pedagogical as it teaches one about life as it points to ‘how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances’ (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 39).

Myth, which is better understood according to its functions here, can also be well interpreted based on its four types as proposed by Laurence Coupe. The narrative structures of myth offer a systematic grouping of mythical themes and stories. In *Myth*, Coupe (2009) identifies four types of myths: fertility, creation, deliverance and hero.
First, the myth related to fertility is usually about gods and goddesses and rituals are important in the narrative. Fertility myth is also the most important type of myth in the works of James George Frazer. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer (1993) develops the myth-ritualist theory in which ritualistic enactment is deemed essential in understanding the various meanings of myth. Second, Creation myth is usually about gods and goddesses but it focuses more on the making of the universe or the world. Deliverance myth is the third type that usually mixes myth and history or even religion. The final type of myth is hero myth, which usually narrates a difficult journey and adversity in life that a person must undergo to prove his or her great bravery. The hero myth symbolises the difficult tasks and struggles of attaining heroism and becoming a great warrior. This particular kind of myth will be relevant in this thesis as it helps explore the concept of heroism in Traditional Malay Literature. I will discuss the hero myth in the subsequent analytical chapter. Let us now move to the discussion concerning one of the paradigms of the myth – the malleability of myth.

Myth is malleable in its ability to permeate into other fields of knowledge. Myths, according to Segal (2004), can be categorised based on three main aspects: origin, function and subject matter. Seen in this light, myth can be better understood because these qualities help to focus on a wide array of approaches as he asserts that “[t]here are no theories of myth itself, for there is no discipline of myth in itself” (Segal 2004, p. 2). Such claim points to the dynamism of myth itself as it manages to ‘appear’ in many other disciplines. For instance, myth is quintessential to Freud’s theory of the Oedipus Complex and to Psychoanalysis in general. The building up of theories surrounding myth, therefore, is a multi-disciplinary project covering philosophy, literature, social sciences and so on. The malleability of myth can be further explored
through its contents as myth may draw upon two modes of communication: denotative and connotative.

The contents of myths can be understood either as denotative or connotative. In other words, the subject matter of myth can either be literal, metaphorical or symbolical. According to Segal (2004), the ‘subject matter’ of myth points to the ‘referent’ a myth stands for. In Myth, Segal (2004) examines the scholarship of myth against these two opposing poles: literal and symbolic, as well as a combination of the two. The two prominent myth scholars, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and James George Frazer (1854–1941), are the embodiments of the two differing contents of myth; Tylor, on one hand, being the major exponent of a literal approach to myth while on the other, Frazer epitomises the symbolic reading of myth (Segal 2004). In this manner, Segal (2004) places other theorists of myth, directly or indirectly, either adhering to Tylor’s denotative explanation or Frazer’s connotative description or a mixture of these two as seen in the works of Sigmund Freud, Otto Rank, Carl Gustav Jung and Joseph Campbell, to name a few. Frazer’s symbolic interpretation of myth ensures the ‘continuous survival’ of myth as it allows for myth to progress from primitive to modern age, hence transcending time which I term as ‘timelessness’ of myth.

The ‘timelessness’ of myth can be associated with the works of Peter R. Stillman and Claude Lévi-Strauss. In Introduction to Myth, Stillman (1985, p. 6) states that “[a] myth comes from the past without being anchored to a specific point in time.” A myth, that ‘comes from the past’ (p. 6) as described by Stillman (1985), implies its ability to recur and transcend time because temporal fixity is unknown and it is ‘unanchored to
During the process of reoccurrence, myth must undergo changes to allow for adaptability in a different time. In this light, a myth can be characterised as ‘diachronic’ whereby its concern is on the way changes in myth have developed and evolved through time. In addition, timelessness of myth is about reoccurrence according to Lévi-Strauss who remarks that: “Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless they seem to reappear all over the world” (Lévi-Strauss 1979, pp. 11-12). Such changes in myth in its reoccurrence within a time span may give rise to ‘disorderliness’, hence resulting in multiple interpretations of the meaning of myth. Myths, in their ‘universal’ aspect have the advantage of seeming authoritative, but being ‘unanchored to a specific point in time’ allows them to ‘reappear all over the world’, and therefore, take on the appearance of being ‘disorderly’ and ‘chaotic’. Thus seeing myth in a diachronic perspective allows for the analysis of the evolution of myth and its assessment of changes over time.

Scholars have sought to find the underlying rules of myths beneath this ‘apparent disorder’. Lévi-Strauss, in order to understand myth, states that:

To speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak of the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind [sic], as far as they have been recorded all over the world, the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order. If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not a chaos (Lévi-Strauss 1979, pp. 12-13).

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6 The male-gendered language characterises some of the theorists’ use of the ‘man’ as the default position of human beings. However, this is a social construct that is open to challenge where the category of ‘man’ should not conflate women’s experience and cultural production. In the subsequent discussions of this thesis, I will insert ‘[sic]’ indicate the erroneous conflation especially in quoted materials and change other instances of ‘he’, ‘man’ and so on where possible to neutral pluralised ‘they’, ‘human’ and so on.
Despite its diachronic nature myth still needs ‘synchronicity of time’ so as to impose an order or a pattern. Roland Barthes provides a solution to this by setting historical impositions to myth and says that “[a]ncient or not, mythology can only have an [sic] historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things” (Barthes 2009, p. 132). Attaching myth to history is one way of keeping it in ‘persistence’ so as to imply the timelessness of myth. The notion of timelessness to Barthes is about the persistence of the concept of myth through its ability to ‘appear’ in cultural events. A myth, Barthes writes, can be everything. This is because according to him, ‘myth is a type of speech’ (Barthes 2009, p. 131). The speech, in this regard, is a type of communication in which the essential component lies in the message conveyed. In other words, myth is ‘a mode of signification, a form’ (Barthes 2009, p. 131). Barthes’ redefinition of myths as cultural events in *Mythologies* (2009), allows for myth transformations as they ‘persist’ to emerge even as ordinary, everyday spectacles; thus such notion adheres to the idea of timelessness. Cultural events become myths due to their ability to convey ‘meanings’ as a result of the relations between what Ferdinand de Saussure calls the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’ in his linguistic theory of signs. In the structural logic of Saussure, sign is a major notion in language and cultural valuation characterised by its semantic contents (signified) and linguistic manifestations (signifier). In other words, signifier corresponds to the ‘physical’ or ‘content’ form of a sign and signified is its ‘mental association’ (Sardar & van Loon 2001, p. 10). In relation to Barthes’ idea of myths as cultural events, he suggests that any cultural phenomena can acquire ‘the second-order, mythical meaning’ (Culler 2002, p. 24) by social convention. Jonathan Culler comments on Barthes’ definition of myth as “… a form of communication, a ‘language’, a system of second-order meaning...” (Culler 2002, p. 25). I argue that Saussure’s
concept of the signified characterised as the ‘mental association’ of a sign, is similar to Barthes’ ‘second-order meaning’. That Barthes’ cultural events have been redefined as myths because such phenomenon is able to produce ‘second-order’ meanings within the relations between the signifier and the signified. For example, the act of wrestling watched by an audience is a signifier to point to the ‘signifieds’ or ‘second-order’ meanings of suffering, defeat and justice. In this manner, Barthes is making a point that myths will never cease to exist, instead they will keep on surviving from antiquity to modern age in the form of ‘personified signs or symbols’. Timelessness of myth is, thus, achieved through its dual nature of being diachronic and synchronic, apart from its ability to transform symbolically as proposed by Frazer.

Myths keep resurfacing even in the modern age through their manifestations using symbols and metaphors. This view is noted by Stillman: “Myths are metaphors that stand for things other and greater than themselves” (1985, p. 8). For example, a garden is symbolic of the idea of endlessness. Based on the Biblical myth, it can be said that garden as a myth, points to the idea of an earthly paradise that needs to be regained as a result of the loss of the Garden of Eden as implied in Genesis and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667). Such loss is compensated in seeing the garden as a metaphor for paradise regained, thus the act of nurturing the garden perpetuates the idea of the Eternal. This is achieved through the understanding of the cycle of nature in which the birth and death of plants happen at one place and the process is repetitive and ‘cyclical’ that seems never-ending or eternal, hence the garden symbolises the constant renewal of life. This is one way how a myth keeps emerging while the other is through its character of being ‘archetypal’. The idea of the archetypes establishes a connection between myth and literature. In the context of rewriting myth, its ‘basic’
element is preserved through the archetypes. This is further discussed in the subsequent section following Norton Frye's classes of theory in literary criticism.

2.3 Myth and Literature

The mythic in literature is characterised by its ability to carry out storytelling across a variety of times and social spaces while retaining a recognisable core narrative known as ‘archetype’, while at the same time allowing for constant reconfiguring of the elements and reinterpretation of meaning. In Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, Frye (1967) identifies four types of literary criticism which are also the titles for all four essays, as follows: ‘Historical Criticism: A Theory of Modes’, Ethical Criticism: A Theory of Symbols’, ‘Archetypal Criticism: A Theory of Myths’ and ‘Rhetorical Criticism: A Theory of Genres’. These types of criticism can be utilised in the examination of four main modes of narration in literature: comic, tragic, romantic and satiric (Frye 1967). In other words, these modes can also be seen as corresponding to the four main genres of literature: comedy, tragedy, romance and satire. In Frye's literary criticism, as seen above, the key to approaching myth is through the archetypal criticism.

Archetypal criticism is one way of approaching literature by way of examining ‘symbols’ used in the narrative termed as ‘archetypes’. Archetype, the root word for archetypal, is defined by Frye as “[a] symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognisable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole” (Frye 1967, p. 365). I argue that Frye's archetype here is rather ‘personalised’ or ‘individualistic’ depending upon the level of 'literary experience' of a person. Such personalised aspect of the archetype is also associated with Maud Bodkin in her Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (1950) as she defines archetypes as: “themes having a
particular form or pattern which points, amid variation from age to age, and which corresponds to, a pattern or configuration of emotional tendencies in the minds of those who are stirred by them” (Bodkin 1950, p. 4). Examining archetypal patterns in literature is another method of comprehending literary works apart from the traditional approaches of Aristotle which looks at literature ‘externally’ that is based on structure, plot, character and setting. Simultaneously, archetypal criticism offers ‘insightful perspectives’ as the ‘internal’ dimension of reading literature is emphasised here.

Archetypal is also related to the idea of ‘recurrent’ – the ability of occurring often and repeatedly and tied to its ability to connect us to the innermost being, a myth, hence should originate in man or woman, from within, the ‘unconscious’. Carl Gustav Jung’s view on the archetype of the unconscious, with regard to the context of myths, is that myths keep emerging or appearing in different places and times of human history. There are two sets of ideas or the nature of the unconscious: Freudian and Jungian. The Freudian unconscious is personal and biographical and it is an individual’s ‘collection of repressed traumatic experiences’ in life, whereas the Jungian unconscious is collective and biological (Campbell & Moyers, 1988). Furthermore, Stillman (1985) writes that myths “reflect a community consensus – an agreement over centuries that this is the way it is” (p. 6). Mythical stories seem to relate the grandiose aura of the gods and goddesses, but at a deeper level of meaning, myths are stories about understanding human beings and their nature:

... mythology is quite generally supposed to show us the way the human race thought and felt untold ages ago. Through it, according to this view, we can retrace the path from civilized man [sic] who lives so far from nature, to man [sic] who lived in close companionship with nature; and the real interest of the myths is that they lead us back to a time when the world was young and people
had a connection with the earth, with trees and seas and flowers and hills, unlike anything we ourselves can feel. When the stories were being shaped, we are given to understand, little distinction had as yet been made between the real and the unreal. The imagination was vividly alive and not checked by the reason, so that anyone in the woods might see through the trees a fleeing nymph, or bending over a clear pool to drink behold in the depths a naiad’s face (Hamilton 1961, p. 13).

In a Jungian sense, myths can act as symbols or representations of one's own nature and being in their archetypal form. Campbell and Moyers (1985) state that “these mythic images are carried forward from generation to generation, almost unconsciously” (p. 45). For example, an ‘initiation’ ceremony or ritual to mark one’s manhood [sic] or affiliation to a community or group has evolved from tribal rituals such as having teeth knocked out, scarifications through religious ceremonies such as circumcision, baptism to ‘fraternal brotherhood’ [sic] such as hazing, ragging or fagging among college students. These rituals or ceremonies are essential in the concept of the ‘Rites of Passage’, using Arnold van Gennep’s (1960) term, in marking the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood or a full inclusion into a tribe or a social group. Thus, the ‘mythic images’ that can be translated as archetypes are to be ‘carried forward’ in the notion of ‘rewriting myth’ where the retelling of the myth retains a myth’s ‘basic’ element: to understand human beings and their nature.

2.4 Rewriting Myth

Rewriting myth is a continuous repetition of stories handed down from generation to generation via various mediums of communication and transmission. It enforces, maintains and ‘carries forward the mythical images’ (Campbell & Moyers 1988, p. 45). Even before the writing system began, myth had survived largely through oral traditions. Oral traditions are the first transmission devices utilised in conveying
mythical stories as a form of entertainment in society. Jan Vansina equates oral traditions with ‘reported statements’ in the form of ‘verbal messages’ transmitted from past generation (Vansina 1985, p. 27). Oral traditions as mediums of transmission, are ‘narratives’ which ‘appear in all present cultures and past cultures’, hence making them ‘universal’ (Rubin 1995, p. 8). In their transmission of the narrative, myth, which is also a form of narrative, has survived over long periods of time. With the advent of the writing system, the survival of myth has been perpetually ensured. In Frazer’s tripartite cultural development from magic through religion to science, myth’s presence is found to be pervading in each cultural epoch.

Rewriting myth has been continually undertaken by many, even canonical poets, writers and artists from antiquity to present day, especially in literature. Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, as well as Ovid’s Metamorphoses, serve as an example in the preservation of myths. They then perpetually appear in the works of major authors such as John Keats, William Shakespeare, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, to name a few. In this digital era, mythical characters even ‘leap off’ the pages of books and they have come ‘alive’ in films. Rewriting myth, especially in the modern era, is through adaptation and adoption, thus, the new myth variant does not necessarily adhere to its original version. In The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Mythology, Cotterell and Storm (2007) state that “[o]ne of the most striking characteristics of myths is the way they have been adopted and adapted by successive cultures” (p. 8) hence, rewriting myth allows for multiple interpretations in the new rendering of mythical stories in literature, film and art. Rewriting myth also has an impact on the ‘evolution’ of mythic narratives in every culture where characters are redefined so as to provide a way ‘to understand the world’ (Cotterell & Storm 2007, p. 6). Perhaps the appropriation of myth for literary
and artistic effects or in today’s world, cinematic effect, becomes significant because, according to Helen Morales’s statement, “[m]yths are stories that are of psychological importance to a community” (Morales 2007, p. 3). In his observation on the importance of Greek mythology, Glaveanu (2005) says that “ancient Greeks valued equilibrium and psychological normality.” The equilibrium is viewed as a balancing act in order to achieve a ‘universal order’ represented in binary oppositions by the characters of the Greek gods such as Athena (wisdom) versus Ares (folly) and Apollo (order) and Dionysus (chaos). The clash between the opposites balances life according to psychological interpretations of the characters of the Greek gods. Further the merging or union of the opposites engenders a ‘symbiosis’ as in the case of the marriage between Aphrodite (feminine, spiritual) and Ares (masculine, carnal) that begets Harmonia (joining of contrasts) and Eros (passion) (Glaveanu, 2005).

Such symbolic reading of the myth may not be easily accessible to all. Rewriting of the myth in cinematic narratives attempts to reveal ubiquitously the psychological side of the mythic characters. Thor in today’s cinematic representations is a vulnerable god succumbed to his feelings for Jane, the woman from the modern world unlike the brute Thor in the Nordic myth. The exploration of psychological aspects of the myth has tapped into the reservoir of ‘psychological types and universal emotions’ as observed by Ruthven (1976), who contends that mythology is “an encyclopedia of psychological types and universal emotions” (p. 22). Upon ‘rediscovering’ this encyclopedia, they “stimulate writers to take a new interest in the old myths” (Ruthven 1976, p. 22). Rewriting myth will never cease to proliferate in our contemporary world. Apart from the rewriting old myth like Thor, the creation of the
modern myth of superheroes such as Superman, Batman, Spiderman and many more has reinforced the importance of mythical stories to human beings.

If classical mythology, especially the mythical stories of Greek, has been prevalent in Western tradition and culture, rewriting Malay myth has its source from its own rich oral traditions as well as from the written texts originally written in Jawi script, particularly the ones termed, hikayat. Before discussing Malay myths in the context of rewriting, let us take a look at the general overview of Traditional Malay Literature.

2.5 Methods and Approaches in Traditional Malay Literature

This study identifies two types of reading methods, ‘classical’ and ‘traditional’ when approaching Malay myths. I argue that there is a need for a clear distinction between these two terms so as to offer a systematic reading or analysis of Malay mythology. This is because, although approaches in Malay mythology are considerably numerous, they are conflicting and at times, conflating with each other. This thesis suggests that ‘traditional’ is the most appropriate type of categorisation or labelling when dealing with Malay mythology. Thus, instead of calling the scholarship classical Malay Literature, I contend that it should be read as ‘Traditional Malay Literature’.

Although Winstedt is not the first scholar who studied Malay Literature, yet his book, A History of Classical Malay Literature (1996a), first published in 1939, sets the benchmark for the scholarship in Malay studies. Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (2010) comments on the importance of Winstedt in her book, Malay Literature of the 19th Century:
The most important milestone in the history of studies on Malay literature was the writings of R.O. Winstedt (1876–1996). Winstedt was one of the most prolific writers among the scholars of Malay studies and his influence in Malay studies was far greater than that of others (p. 67).

Perhaps the main reason for his wide influence is because he tries to ‘systematically’ examine the ancient Malay literary canons so as to offer better understanding of them. In addition, Winstedt’s *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (1996a), has contributed in perpetuating the study of Traditional Malay Literature as observed by Yusof A. Talib (1996): “Winstedt’s “history” still continues to be the principal reference in English despite the fact that there are other accounts of Malay classical literature in different languages” (p. 2). Subsequently, Windstedt’s effort has engendered continuing interests in the study of Malay Literature and often, his *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (1996a) is treated as an important point of departure in this field of study. However, such a strategy (Winstedt calls his study of Malay Literature as ‘history’) is also seen to be problematic by Yusof A. Talib. In his introduction to Winstedt’s *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (1996a), Yusof A. Talib rephrases Bastin (1964) who states that: “Winstedt’s scheme – the historical model was found to be most unsuitable in the study of Malay Literature and most premature and it limits our ability to perceive Traditional Malay Literature on its own terms” (Bastin in Bastin & Roolvink (1964), cited in Yusof A. Talib 1996, p. 1). Yusof A. Talib sees Winstedt’s ‘historical model’ – as he calls it – to be simplistic in his attempt at trying to categorise traditional Malay narratives systematically. Based on this statement, it seems that Yusof A. Talib (1996) conflates, the two terms, ‘classical’ and ‘historical’ into one strategy called ‘the historical model’. Such conflation of the terms will be further explained in the following discussion.
In recording Malay oral traditions, Winstedt’s *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (1996a), attempts to map out traditional Malay narratives according to historical chronicles which follow a time sequence marked by different periods and influences such as Hindu, Islamic and Javanese. He offers limited analyses of the ancient narratives because his main concern is to collect or record them as he attempts to ‘periodise’ Traditional Malay Literature according to a proper timeframe. What Winstedt has done with Malay Literature is simply to record the myths as ‘classical’ artefacts. Therefore, in this regard, Winstedt is a mere compiler and chronicler of the traditional narratives of Malay Literature. The simplicity of the historical model in Windstedt’s work is further problematised in the following arguments put forward by Harun Mat Piah and others.

In *Traditional Malay Literature* (2002), Harun Mat Piah et al. claim that the historical aspect of Traditional Malay Literature is not influential enough in this particular field of study. This is because the mapping out of Malay myths ‘historically’ like what Winstedt did seems to be too simplistic in understanding the complexity of traditional Malay narratives. They claim that “the historical development of Malay Literature is not its most significant intrinsic feature” (Harun Mat Piah et al., 2002 p. xv). Further they seem to negate the chronologically linear progression of Traditional Malay Literature:

> The major historical approach which has commonly been used to date, has involved an emphasis on a succession of eras characterised in a very general way by their cultural content. These approaches seem to suggest that the history of Malay literature and culture is buried somewhere in Hindu and Islamic culture and literature, and can be defined simply in terms of Pre-Hindu Period, Hindu Period, Transition Period and Islamic Period (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. 24).
Many Western scholars such as Winstedt, Wilkinson and Bausani, have similar views with that of T.S. Eliot’s element of historicity which should prevail in any text. Due to the absence of the elements of history in Traditional Malay Literature, Winstedt concludes that, “[t]he gem of every Malay Romance is a folktale or cluster of folktales, nearly always Indian and manipulated by men [sic] wildly ignorant and intolerant of the unities of place and time and of historical truth” (Winstedt 1996a, p. 50). Such emphasis on the ‘historical’ element is echoed in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” as T.S. Eliot (1921, p. 2) writes that:

...historical sense...is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together (and) is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his [sic] place in time, of his [sic] contemporaneity.

In this regard, Eliot sees the traditional as ‘open-ended’ in a sense that historicity occurs in the ‘fluidity’ of timeless and temporal thus pushing further the element of the traditional to be characterised as ‘contemporaneous’. I will return to this argument of the traditional being open-ended in the subsequent discussion. Further I argue that Winstedt, in *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (1996a), proposes a reading of myths as ‘classical’ artefacts. Such strategy is achieved through the process of ‘periodisation’. In this sense, by categorising Traditional Malay Literature into certain periods, Winstedt tries to impose ‘order’ and ‘structure’ so that it can be studied systematically. This ‘periodisation’, which is derived from its root word, ‘period’, entails time, thus it is related to history or being historical. In this manner, Winstedt conflates the term, ‘classical’ with the term, ‘historical’. Here I proffer that these two terms are not to be conflated with each other.
Perhaps in using the term, ‘classical’, Winstedt views that Traditional Malay Literature has achieved a ‘system’. In this system, the form of traditional Malay narratives is ‘ordered and controlled’ which is similar to Western Classical Literature. This kind of reading of the term, ‘classical’ is parallel with Secretan’s (1973, p. 2) statement:

[O]ne could call nearly all Western European literature classical, for classical means first and foremost ordered and controlled, and all literature is an attempt at putting experience, large and small, in some sort of order, at rationalizing feelings, at systematizing random thought, at embellishing nature. Literature should help us understand nature, that is the world we live in, and ourselves.

Seeing Winstedt in this light, I put forward that Winstedt has applied the Western paradigm in his attempt to offer a better understanding of ancient Malay literature. Based on this, reading myths as ‘classical’ can be seen to be ‘closed-ended’ in which the myth is regarded as predetermined and having a fixed extent. Such tendency for ‘systematisation’ has thus constricted methods in deciphering the value and purpose of Traditional Malay Literature. Therefore, this type of reading limits critical engagement in the study of Malay Literature. Let us now move to the discussion of the term, ‘traditional’.

Ismail Hussein is the first who introduced the term ‘traditional’ in his article “The Study of Traditional Malay Literature” (1966), but Harun Mat Piah and his co-authors further develop this term in their book, *Traditional Malay Literature* (2002). In the article, Ismail Hussein (1966), argues the need for using the term, ‘traditional’ as opposed to the terms, ‘classical’ and ‘ancient’ when dealing with traditional Malay narratives (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002).
Disappointed with the treatment by the Western scholars, a considerable number of reactions that sought to offer suitable approaches in reading the scholarship of Traditional Malay Literature have been put forward. In *Traditional Malay Literature* (2002), Harun Mat Piah et al. reiterate that it is a failure by Western scholars to comprehensively understand Traditional Malay Literature:

The works of the western scholars, or “orientalists”, are often one-sided, racially prejudiced, and tend to deny the intellectual originality of indigenous Malays. Their successors have, at times, continued to use the earlier orientalist categories of knowledge. Or, in their more intensive studies, they have focused on only a few narrow topics (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. xiii).

Harun Mat Piah et al. view that the term, ‘traditional’ as very much related to the features and structural composition of the Malay literary body of works based upon the idea of ‘tradition’ which is viewed as “…continuous…[thus], it stands outside the specific historical periods” (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. 6). To them, the term, ‘classic’ fails to encapsulate a truer meaning of Malay Literature that is continuous, never-ending as “this tradition has continued from the distant past down to the present day” (ibid) unlike ‘classic’ or ‘classical’ which connotes the idea of ‘adhering to a certain period of time’. Furthermore, according to Holman (1972), “it (classic) may mean literature that has gained a lasting recognition, or it may mean literature that exhibits the qualities of classicism” (cited in Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. 6). In this respect, the idea of classicism points to a long or well-established idea or theory, thus making it ‘closed-ended’ as opposed to the term ‘traditional’ which is more ‘open-ended’. The idea of identifying Traditional Malay Literature as ‘open-ended’ lies in its ‘functionality’:

Traditional literature, especially poetry, is intended to be functional; each work exists to be used in the everyday life of the society which created it. And this tradition has continued from the distant past down to the present day…[s]ince tradition is continuous, it stands outside the specific historical periods.
Traditional literature is still being created today, extended and appreciated by ordinary people in their everyday lives (Harun Mat Piah et. al. 2002, p. 6).

Seeing myths as ‘traditional’, and which is characterised as being ‘open-ended’ can be seen as liberating because in this way, it frees up the myth from the confines of temporal imposition as opposed to the ‘classical’ method. Hussain Othman (2008) makes a distinction between ‘historical’ and ‘non-historical’ in the concepts of ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Indianisation’. Such differentiation can be seen as a way of categorising Malay myths as either ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’.

In Hussain Othman’s (2008) article, “Conceptual Understanding of Myths and Legends in Malay History” he states that “…many scholars who study the content of the texts have always misunderstood them. These scholars specify on [sic] the superficial aspects, instead of functional and historical aspects of the mythical and legendary stories” (p. 91). In his specific selection of three texts: Sulalat al-Salatin (Genealogies of the Sultans/Kings), Hikayat Raja Pasai (Story of King of Pasai) and Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa (Story of Merong Mahawangsa), Hussain Othman (2008) argues that there exists ‘historical truth’ despite the texts being heavily characterised by out-of-this-world superheroes and supervillains armed with the elements of the fantastic, divine attributes. In this regard, the ‘historical truth’ is claimed to be an integral part of these stories although they fail to adhere to modern conventions, thus resulting in the suggestion that these stories be interpreted, in Hussain Othman’s words, ‘symbolically’. This is a territory where many Western scholars of Traditional Malay Literature are said to be unable to penetrate its deeper meanings as a result of their “failure to understand the symbolic meaning of the myths and legends contained in the classical Malay historical texts” (Hussain Othman, 2008 p. 104). In this sense,
the mythical elements found in these *hikayats*, though they seem “non-historical,” demand to be scrutinised using a mixture of approaches particularly based on the concepts of ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Indianisation.’ In his application of an Islamic approach, Hussain Othman (2008) further contends that the aspects of myth in the *hikayat* should be regarded as *mutashabihat* - a type of verse containing meanings which are not well-established as opposed to *muhkamat* (well-established meanings of verses). By well-established and not well-established meanings, he adopts two types of verses from the Qur’an that is either *muhkamat* or *mutashabihat* in nature. Thus, as suggested by Muslim scholars, when dealing with *mutashabihat* verses, there are two methods to be employed in interpreting the meanings: *tafsir* (exegesis) and *ta’wil* (symbolic interpretation). This is due to the fact that ambiguities resulting from the illogical and fantastic elements of myth are abundant in the canon of traditional Malay literary and historical texts. In addition, with regard to ‘Indianisation’, Hussain Othman (2008), suggests that Hindu elements in the *hikayat* should be deciphered using the cosmological perspectives of Hinduism. In the concluding part of the article, following his application of the approaches of ‘Islamisation’ and ‘Indianisation’, Hussain Othman (2008), treats the *hikayat* as ‘Malay historical texts’ and the mixture and interpolation of the ‘historical’ and ‘non-historical’ can be distinguished using these two particular methods as seen in this statement:

> There is always a clear line drawn between what was “historical” and “non-historical” in Malay historical texts. Many historians claimed that they had dealt with the “historical” aspects of the texts in their so-called “proper” historical writings. They unfortunately neglected the “non-historical” aspects and rejected them because of the mythological and legendary contents. This study however proveds [sic] that what was claimed to be “non-historical” aspects represented by the mythological and legendary stories and are embedded within them historical values (Hussain Othman 2008, pp. 103–4).
In this manner, Hussain Othman makes a clear demarcation between ‘historical’ and ‘non-historical’ but calls for more applicability of the ‘non-historical’ concept, hence the ‘historical’ aspect is seen as not suitable for the reading of Malay myths. If a historical approach is not applicable in the study of Traditional Malay Literature, perhaps such strategies by focusing on form and content as adopted by Harun Mat Piah et. al. (2002), can pave a better way in understanding the intricacy of this tradition. Another fundamental strategy suggested here could be found in an attempt to answer the basic question of what the purpose of myth is. In asking this particular question, it entails a process involved in making sense of the significant goals of mythological stories as pointed out by Campbell 1968 (cited in Hussain Othman 2008, p. 96): “to foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity in accordance with the mysterious phenomenon around his life, the universe (the macrocosm), his culture (mesocosm) and himself (microcosm).” The process of “centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity” points to the idea of maintaining the well being of the community, thus resulting in the preservation of the (cosmic and metaphysical) psyche of the Malay (Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin 2009).

In other words, the individual microcosm becomes the total sum of the Malay cosmology having been heavily influenced by various forms of beliefs such as animism, Hinduism, Islam, Javanese and many others. Such blends can be demarcated distinctively through the conceptual understanding of the Malay psyche, characterised as “angin or semangat which represents the energy for communicating with the spiritual world” (Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin 2009, p. xv).

Hussain Othman (2008) also emphasises that many scholars of traditional Malay literary texts tend to overlook the “…functional and historical aspects of the
mythical and legendary stories” (p. 91). In other words, he proposes that history and mythology are both essential didactical elements in many traditional Malay literary texts especially in *Hikayat Raja Pasai, Sulalat al-Salatin* and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangssa* as he explains that “[h]istory from one side could most possibly explain the mythologies of the people and likewise the myths from another side could most possibly explain the history of the people” (Hussain Othman 2008, p. 92). Perhaps this is another unique feature of Traditional Malay Literature as it is susceptible to foreign elements, yet it has also been able to sustain its own tradition amidst heavy impositions and influences from other cultures. Furthermore, many scholars of Traditional Malay Literature deal with the difficulty of chronicling its development in a linear narrative of events. Scholars, particularly Winstedt, have come under attack for failing to understand the Malay psyche embodied in Traditional Malay Literature as they only focused on the superficial level in their analyses and surveys pertinent to its history, structure and content (Harun Mat Piah et. al., 2002; Yusof A. Talib, 1996; Mohamed Ghouse Nasuruddin, 2009; Hussain Othman, 2008; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008b).

Malaysian scholars as mentioned above opine that the Western scholars are unable to fully comprehend the Malay mind, soul or spirit, thus resulting in the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the mental or psychological structure of the Malay people. Khoo (2006), in her book, *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature*, argues that Malay psyche is best represented by the characters of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat as she insists that “Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat may stand as opposites in the Malay psyche, representing the rational ego that is always in control and the emotional, sensual, excessive id” (Khoo 2006, p. 23). Khoo (2006) further
suggests that the rational ego of Hang Tuah is linked to his attribute of self-effacing (merendah diri) whilst the emotional Hang Jebat is described to be rebellious, capable of running amok. These differing traits form the Malay psyche in which "Hang Jebat is to Hang Tuah what Mr. Hyde is to Dr. Jekyll: both represent opposite extremes of the same Malay psyche" (Khoo 2006, p. 43). In seeing myth as a way of examining the Malay psyche, the discussion can be further directed to probe into the idea of how myth (re)defines the concept of ‘nation’. As a whole, this thesis argues that in studying the old Malay narratives, scholars should use the term, ‘traditional’ thus referring to the entire scholarship as ‘Traditional Malay Literature’ instead of ‘Classical Malay Literature’. Further I argue that the word ‘traditional’ may extend to ‘describe, evaluate and support the examination of myth in the context of rewriting. In contrast, although the ‘classical’ can ‘describe and evaluate’, it can also ‘reject’ the fluidity of ‘timeless and temporal’ ‘contemporaneity’ (Eliot 1921) of the myth, thus disallowing the ‘progression’ of the myth in the context of rewriting. In this manner, the ‘traditional’ can be seen as diachronic while the ‘classical’ is synchronic. In pushing further the element of ‘traditional’ as diachronic, I proffer that the notion of ‘rewriting myth’ can be scrutinised through the concept, ‘image–I–nation’. Having synthesised some key points of differences in the methodology of studying old Malay tradition, I hope to posit a new reading strategy called, ‘image–I–nation’ which will be discussed in the following section.

2.6 ‘Image–I–Nation’

In relation to myths sustaining national identities, Carl Jung’s archetype of the unconscious is relevant here because of its character as being collective which entails the idea of belonging or relating to a community. This is because, as pointed out above,
the origin of myth has resulted in understanding the origin of humanity itself, which is
the core of community, whilst the core of humanity, I propose, is ‘psyche’. Campbell
and Moyers (1988) define psyche as “the inward experience of the human body, which
is essentially the same in all human beings, with the same organs, the same instincts,
the same impulses, the same conflicts, the same fears” (p. 60). I suggest that before
one’s affiliation to his or her ‘nation’ – achieved through the formation of national
identities, ‘the inward experience of the human body’ needs to be realised through the
notion that I call ‘image–I–nation’, rooted in the word, ‘imagination’.

Human imagination is the point of departure for the emergence of myth. The
imagination can be translated in the form of mythical tales. These tales are then told in
various forms from oral traditions through artistic endeavours and writing systems to
cinematic expressions. In the retelling of myth, I suggest that the tale or story retold
carries within it, consciously or unconsciously, “image(s)” of the self or individual (“I”)
and the other or society (“nation”). Based on the model of ‘image–I–nation’, I posit that
rewriting of the myth is related to the idea of narrating the ‘image’, the ‘I’ and the
‘nation’. These three instrumentalities of myth are the pivotal components of the
concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in this study. In the linguistic logic of grammar, the term ‘I’
is a pronoun that can act as an agent, subject or doer in a sentence. The other two
terms, ‘image’ and ‘nation’ are nouns that can either be subjects or objects. Through
rewriting or reproduction, myth, directly or indirectly, points to the idea of ‘narrating
image, I and nation’. In narrating all these, myth in the context of rewriting, is
susceptible to changes or shifts. First, myth is reassessed as it is subject to being
compared to the original myth from where it derived. In this manner, myth is
compelled to maintain its ‘basic core’ in the new retelling otherwise, it is completely a
new different myth or story altogether. Second, myth, when it is rewritten or reproduced, goes through changes by ‘adapting’ itself in the new narrative form because the original myth is used in a different way, not necessarily adhering to its original renderings. In this sense, myth ‘changes’ to produce new variants or versions. Third, myth needs to adjust to a new context in which it is rewritten. In this light, rewriting of the myth produces a polarity: it is an abstraction separate from reality that nonetheless points to reality. Myth is always in constant interaction or dialogue with its original form. This is because myth, in the context of being rewritten, ‘resurfaces’ as an “image” to represent or reproduce or retell the agentive “I” heroes, together with the ‘collective unconscious’ of people (“nation”) who had created the myth.

In my earlier discussion, I made a point that Roland Barthes’ ‘second-order meaning’ is similar to Ferdinand de Saussure’s ‘signified’ and based on this parallel, I proffer that rewriting of the myth produces multi-level modes that permit different emphasis or applications as well as multiple meanings or interpretations. The concept of ‘image–I–nation’ maintains the idea of myth in its reproduction, hence the emergence of newly interpreted myths, is a form of narration. Myth works to hide the “I” (self or individual) and promote the “nation” (other or collective). Rewriting of the myth, firstly, narrates the ‘image’, followed by the ‘I’ and then the ‘nation’. It is argued here that rewriting of the myth begins when, using the writing system, people began recording folkloric or traditional oral narratives, thus making them seemingly the authoritative sources of myths. The advent of the writing system only helped ‘preserve’ or record myths based on oral traditions. In this manner, I believe that ancient texts consisting mythical and legendary stories such as Homer's *Iliad* and
Iliad, Odyssey, Metamorphoses, Bibliotheca, Sulalat al-Salatin or Hikayat Hang Tuah and many more are not the ‘original’ sources of myths.

The original source of myths lies, using Carl Jung’s term, in the ‘collective unconscious’ as well as human consciousness originated in oral traditions. Although Iliad, Odyssey, Metamorphoses and many others are not the original sources of myths, they have, however, inspired many canonical writers and artists especially in the Western tradition, from Chaucer to Shakespeare to Keats, through to modern writers like Rushdie and Dan Brown or from Botticelli to Mozart, through to DC and Marvel Comics and even films such as Wachowski Brothers’ The Matrix Trilogy (1999, 2003), Petersen’s Troy (2004), Singh’s Immortals (2011), Branagh’s Thor (2011) and Taylor’s Thor: The Dark World (2013), just to name a few. These are all examples of myth reproduction. According to Coupe (2009), literary works like Shakespeare’s The Tempest, can be treated as ‘mythopoeic’. A ‘mythpoeia’ inclines “to create or re-create certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial to their understanding of their world” (Coupe 2009, p. 4). I also emphasise here that the writings of Homer, Ovid, Apollodorus or even Tun Seri Lanang or Tun Bambang (said to be the copyists of Sulalat al-Salatin) are all mythopoeic, hence their works are not the original source of myths. In this sense, I view them all as myth compilers or chroniclers, from Homer to Chaucer to Shakespeare down to modern writers. However, in the hands of authors like Shakespeare, Joyce, T.S. Eliot and many others, the use of mythical references (thus still making them myth compilers), helps myths to be re-created and given ways
of new expressions, thus resulting in multiple interpretations or meanings (polysemy) of myth.

I draw a distinction between rewriting of myths by writers like Homer and rewriting of myths by writers like William Shakespeare and James Joyce. In *Poetics*, Aristotle declares that there is a ‘single unified theme or action’ in the Homeric epics (Aristotle cited in Dorsch 1965). Perhaps the ‘single unified theme’ of myth rewriting in Homer’s works is characterised by the inclusion of some historical renderings in the tales of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In a work that is tinged with historical impositions, such work is bound to tell stories in a chronological manner that forms ‘linearity’ in the narratives. According to Paul Stapfer, in his book, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity: Greek and Latin Antiquity as Presented in Shakespeare’s Classical Plays* (1880), Homer is both “a Greek poet and a great historiographer” (Stapfer 1880, p. 210). In this light, Homer, being a historiographer, his rewriting of the myth may have offered some historical and factual events which were trying to reflect the real occurrences in some of the tales told in the epic poems. Shakespeare’s rewriting of the myth, on the other hand, is derivative of works of myth compilers or chroniclers like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, though in turn, Shakespeare himself becomes a myth compiler whose works may have been drawn from the myths about the ancient Greek and Roman heroes and divinities. In the hands of authors such as Shakespeare, however, the treatment of the myth does not necessarily adhere to any factual or historical patterning in the story telling. Though dramatisation is the main feature in the work, rewriting of myths seems to serve a specific purpose. In “Mythology in Shakespeare’s Classical Plays” (1948), Isabel Storch identifies two distinctive characterisations that are pertinent to the narration of both Greek and Trojan characters. Storch (1948) observes that in
Troilus and Cressida (1602), Shakespeare views Greek heroes as corrupt when she remarks that "[h]e (Shakespeare) seems to wish to strip them (Greek heroes) of all greatness" (p. 9). For example, in quoting Shakespeare, she comments that Achilles is stripped off 'his manly qualities' (Storch 1948, p. 10) and instead is portrayed as possessing traits of 'effeminancy [sic] and swollen pride' (Storch 1948, p. 10):  

At this fusty stuff  
The large Achilles, on his pressed bed lolling,  
From his deep chest laughs out a loud applause;  
Cries, 'Excellent! 'Tis Agamemnon right;  
(Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, 162-165)  

Storch (1948) further notices that Shakespeare's treatment of the Trojan characters is totally opposite to the way he portrays the Greeks: "...even a cursory reading of the play will also reveal that Shakespeare favors the Trojans at the expense of the Greeks" (Storch 1948, p. 15). She then points out in her study that Shakespeare intends to glorify the Trojans as the British were said to be descendants of the Trojans.  

I call Homer's rewriting of the myth the 'first-phase mythopoeia' and Shakespeare's rewriting of the myth as the 'second-phase mythopoeia'. In the 'first-phase mythopoeia' of rewriting the myth, the purpose of myth reproduction here is to compile and chronicle the myth as closely as possible to the original form originated in the 'collective unconscious' of people who created mythical tales in the form of oral traditional narratives. In chronicling myth, the element of 'chronological progression' or historiography is intrinsic so as to provide a 'truer' compilation of myths collected

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7 See Isabel Storch, 1948, "Mythology in Shakespeare's Classical Plays" for Shakespeare's further 'nasty' treatment of other Greek characters such as Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor, Patroclus and so on.

8 Storch (1948) quotes Lawrence (1916) who remarks that the medieval versions of the Troy myth "... exalted the Trojans at the expense of the Greeks in deference to the old notion that the sovereigns of Western Europe were descended from Aeneas, the Trojan, through Brutus" (p. 16). It is said that Brut or Brutus, who is celebrated by Britain, is a great-grandson of Aeneas.
from oral traditions. The myths are then recorded or transcribed in the writing form and this is evident in the ancient texts of the Western tradition such as the *Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid, Metamorphoses, Bibliotheca* and so on. Similarly, in Traditional Malay Literature, old texts based on the oral and folkloric traditions such as *Sulalat al-Salatin, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Hikayat Raja Pasai, Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and many more, function as compilers of the Malay myths that have originated in the ‘collective unconscious’ or imagination of the Malays. In the ‘second-phase mythopoeia’ of myth rewriting or reproduction, the chronological feature of the myth ceases to be of significant value or factor. In this second phase, rewriting of the myth can take the form of ‘mythography’. According to Coupe (2009), ‘mythography’ is “the interpretation of myth, given that the mythic is an important dimension of cultural and literary experience” (p. 4). Works such as Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1602) and Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) and many others can be said to have ‘mythographical’ characteristics in which the myth in such works demand new interpretations or multiple meanings (polysemy) and challenges the ‘linearity’ of historiography in the ‘first-phase mythopeia’ of myth rewriting or reproduction. Similarly, in the case of contemporary Malaysian Literature, authors like Fatimah Busu rewrite or rework myths so as to open up new interpretations and meanings in the ‘dimension of cultural and literary experience’. To sum up, in the first phase, authors such as Homer, Tun Seri Lanang or Tun Bambang are chroniclers or compilers of myth who track the collective unconscious that engenders the emergence of mythical stories whilst authors such as Shakespeare and Fatimah Busu reuse or rework myth as a symbolic representation in their works.
Through both phases of mythopoeia of myth rewriting, tradition is sustained in which the transference of myth from the oral stage to the first and second phases of mythopoeia, carries within the transmission, the notion of ‘narrating the ‘image’, ‘I’ and ‘nation’. Through the model of ‘image–I–nation’, I proffer that myth in the context of rewriting, contains the notions of ‘image’, ‘I’ and ‘nation’. These notions are expressed in two forms: explicit or implicit. In other words, they can either be implied in the literal or symbolic, and the denotative or connotative forms. The basis for these forms originate in Mircea Eliade’s statement: “It is through symbol that man [sic] finds his [sic] way out of his [sic] particular situation and opens himself [sic] to the general and universal” (Eliade cited in Leeming 2005, p. xi). In this manner, the model proposed here can be further explained using the above claim. The term ‘image’ is similar to Eliade’s ‘symbol’ that both can act as signs to point to the signification of myth. In the hands of Northrop Frye, ‘image’ is an ‘archetype’. Archetype is defined as “[a] symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognisable as an element of one’s literary experience as a whole” (Frye 1967, p. 365). The ‘I’ in the model is similar to Eliade’s ‘man’ [sic] that both become the centre on which myth acts upon. The term ‘nation’ is paralleled with Eliade’s ‘the general and universal’ that both point to the external myth signification forming what Benedict Anderson terms as ‘imagined communities’. Ashcroft et al. (2007) remarked that “[t]he idea of the nation is now so firmly fixed in the general imagination” (p. 134). From this concept, I posit that the nation is imagined in the ‘collective unconscious’ of the ‘I’ in which the mythic in the ‘image’ is translated into new contexts. In this sense, rewriting myth allows for the imagining of the nation as it further conceives the binary oppositions or the duality of myth: “I”/“Self” versus “Nation”/“Other”. Using the
polarity of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, the mythic in the context of rewriting points to or ‘dualise’ two opposites: the good and the bad, the powerful and the weak, male and female, the master and the slave, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the coloniser and the colonised and so on.

As argued earlier the origin of myth is from the collective unconscious of individuals or communities that functions as a ‘tool’ to disseminate the imagination that consists of recurrent structures, motifs or archetypes. In rejecting Freud’s model of the unconscious, in addition to the ‘personal unconscious’ (almost similar to Freud’s concept of the unconscious that it contains repressed feelings), Jung adds another dimension by expanding the concept of collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is “identical in all men [sic], and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which present in every one of us” (Jung 1953 in Ruthven 1976, p. 20). This explains the uniqueness of myth where communities remote in place and time from one another could nevertheless ‘create’ similar stories. The myth of dragon is a case in point. The portrayal of a dragon is astonishingly almost similar in many societies – a serpentine-like chthonic creature that spouts fire and steam that exists in the imagination of various cultures; from ancient Babylon in the form of Tiamat (later slain by Marduk), the Anglo-Saxon mythical creature that challenged Sigurd and Beowulf, through the religious myth where Saint George

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9 Rahimah A. Hamid (2010, p. 30) reports that it was Gayatri Spivak who introduced the concept *Other/*other. *Other* with the capital letter, ‘O’ refers to the colonisers and their countries – the metropole as the ‘centre’, while *other* with the small letter, ‘o’ applies to the colonised people living on the ‘peripheral’. Further Rahimah A. Hamid (2010) maintains that *Other* is a postcolonial discourse that points to the ‘exclusiveness’ and superiority of the colonisers at the centre and at the same time, the *Other* looks at the *other* who occupy with disdain as the latter is viewed to be unable to develop themselves unless they are helped by the former (Hall, 1996; Young, 1990; Bhabha, 1994). However, this thesis does not align its readings in this manner as the term, ‘other’ used here simply refers to someone or a group of people who are different or distinct from one/s already mentioned, particularly in the context of ‘self’ versus ‘other’, not *Other* versus *other*. 
defeated the dragon that symbolised the satan, to the ‘positive’ representation in the Chinese myth where a dragon is the yang while phoenix is the yin, two opposites that complete the source of being, tai-chi in Chinese philosophy (Leeming 2005). According to Ruthven (1976), in 1919, Jung used the term ‘archetypes’ to refer to the contents of the collective unconscious. The archetypes then produce the ‘archetypal images’: the “universal images that have existed since the remotest times” (Jung 1953 in Ruthven 1976, p. 20). Such claim supports the idea of narrating the image in the concept of ‘Image–I–nation’ that in the context of rewriting, myth transmits itself in the form of an archetype that crosses boundaries of time and space. In other words, while myth does seem to rest on the archetypes that transmit themselves across communities and time, they are also historically contingent narratives.

Of course, it must be recognised that these myths are always historically contingent. Myths are ‘historically contingent’ in such a way that they carry “an inherited component of everyone’s unconscious” (Rycroft 1995, p. 10) from the ancient time to the modern retelling or rewriting of the archetypical image of a story. The ‘inherited component’ of the myth can be extended to the idea of the past ‘constructing’ the present. Myths traverse past, present and future and this explains their ‘historically contingent’ nature. In relation to the notion of nation, myths contribute in the formation of a nation through the ‘Story of a Nation’ – a common tale shared by members of a community. I will discuss this idea further in the following discussions. In modern societies, in particular nations that have come through the process of ‘colonialisation’, myth rewriting is important in realising the national consciousness. Colonialisation can be viewed as a process in which the indigenous
people having to interact with the ‘outsiders’, the myth as a tool of tradition can emerge in order to produce a new, modern national identity.

One characteristic of post-colonial societies including Malaysia is their ‘decolonised national belonging’. Ashcroft et al. (2002) maintain the idea of ‘imperial-colonial dialectic’ (p. 28) where decolonised countries speak of their national belongings or cultures in terms of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. In establishing a post-colonial nation’s own national culture, Ashcroft et al. (2002) outline two different processes of decolonisation that it encounters: first, as argued by Ngugi (1986) that there is a need to bring back the pre-colonial traditions without considering the impacts of colonialisation and second, as put forward by Williams (1969), there exists a ‘cultural syncreticity’ (p. 29) that utilises the colonialist discourse even after political independence – an important feature for a post-colonial nation in the process of decolonialisation. In decolonised nations, including Malaysia, cultural syncreticity implies the gradual acceptance of the colonisers thus contributing in the formation of nationalism. India as a decolonised country is a case in point. Sadarangani (1997) in Mohamad Saleeh Rahamad (2014, p. 42) remarks that “[t]he British left behind not only a railway system and a postal system, but also a British system of education and a significant number of Indians who had been educated in British literature and law, either in England or in India.” Further Mohamad Saleeh Rahamad (2014) observes that such acceptance of the former colonial influence is expressed in a number of literary works by Indian authors such as Bharati Mukherjee (Jasmine), Salman Rushdie (The Satanic Verses), Anita Desai (Bye-bye Blackbird), V.S. Naipaul (A Bend in the River) and many others. In other words, all these have given rise to the positive impacts of nationalism. Similarly in Malaysia, the return of the
British to Malaya in 1945 after the period of Japanese occupation (1941-1945) was seen as an important factor in saving Malaya from communism. Mohamed Mustafa Ishak (2014, p. 64) reiterates this view in his comment: “Indeed, colonial Malaya has been widely acclaimed as the ‘success story’ of British colonialism.” Further with the support of the British and the introduction of education and law systems, the Malayan people (the Malays and other races particularly the Chinese and Indians) then realised their sense of nationalism that eventually culminated in the declaration of Independence in 1957. Seeing nationalism in a positive light parallels Anderson’s affirmative view on nationalism: “I must be the only one writing about nationalism who doesn’t think it ugly… I actually think that nationalism can be an attractive ideology. I like its Utopian elements (Anderson in Khazaleh 2011). In other words, Anderson (2011) believes that nationalism brings about goodness in people thus contributing to a better society.10

As pointed out by Anderson in his interview with Khazaleh (2011), Anderson advocates a feeling of shame in order to be a nationalist. This kind of feeling ‘unites’ people together as they feel the need to ‘protect’ their country and its people. This can be viewed in the recent financial scandal of 1MDB in Malaysia.11 With the advent of modern technology such as telephone and Internet, especially through social media like Facebook and Twitter, Malaysians share their concern over the unresolved financial crisis of 1MDB involving the prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Razak. This

10 I also believe that cultural syncreticity gives rise to the emergence of the three ‘cultural subjectivities’ of post-colonial conditions according to Homi K. Bhabha: hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence. However, these issues are not pursued further as this thesis does not align its readings with any particular post-colonial scholar. The nationalist discourse used here remains in its deployment of the myth and the importance of myth in the context of re-writing through the reconfiguration of the notion of ‘nation’.

11 For further details on the issue of Malaysian 1MDB, see Chapter 6, the creative components of the thesis below.
scandal has become a contentious topic with regard to monetary issue. Many Malaysians expressed their shame and disgust in the lackadaisical handling of this case. Any resolution is yet to be achieved but the ‘positive’ side of this economic debacle has boosted nationalism among Malaysians by sharing the feeling of shame. A more relevant idea by Anderson in this thesis is his notion of ‘nation as an imagined community’.

In Anderson’s (2006) words, the nation “is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). In this light, nation as ‘a deep horizontal comradeship’ can be read as a ‘national ideology’. According to Ashcroft et al. (2007): “Modern nations such as the United States, with their multi-ethnic composition, require the acceptance of an overarching national ideology (in *pluribus unum*)” (p. 136). In this study, I contend that, the ‘national ideology’ is forged in the rewriting context following the argument that myth is a way of ‘narrating the nation’. I argue that, Malaysia, being a relatively new emerging nation, is able to sustain its national identity through the rewriting of the myth. Such notion is appropriated from the need for the ‘Story of the Nation’ for new nations like Malaysia, as described by Ashcroft et al. (2007, p. 137): “These new ‘national’ entities demanded a new national narrative, the ‘Story of the Nation’ and it gets disseminated through ‘imagined communities’ of speakers and listeners (or writers and readers)” (Ashcroft et. al 2007, Anderson 2006). Thus, rewriting of the myth can be used as a tool in narrating Malaysia’s ‘Story of the Nation’. I will further discuss this issue in Chapter

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12 ‘Story of the Nation’ can also be expanded in the reading of the formation of national identity in the other type of European colony, the ‘settler colonies’ such as USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Earlier I briefly discussed India – an example of ‘colonies of occupation’, similar to Malaysia (Ashcroft et
3. Now, let us briefly look at the rewriting of myth by Fatimah Busu whose select works is important in the case studies in this thesis.

### 2.7 Fatimah Busu

In contemporary Malaysian literature, in terms of the project of reworking of the Malay myth, Fatimah Busu has been consistent in portraying mythical stories from Traditional Malay Literature in her works, particularly in her short stories. To date, she has seven collections of short stories: *Lambaian Tanah Hijau (The Call of the Green Land)* (1980), *Yang Abadi (The Everlasting)* (1980), *Al-Isra' (The Night Journey)* (1985), *Keajaiban Alam (The Miracles of Nature)* (2004), *Bunga-Bunga Pulau (Flowers of the Island)* (2005), *Aduhai (Oh Dear)* (2009) and *Kelopak Bunga Pahit (Petals of a

This thesis examines two of Fatimah Busu's short stories: “Al-Isra’” (“Night Journey”), from *Al-Isra’* (1985) and “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” (“50 Years of Independence: A Gurindam Jiwa”), from *Aduhai* (2009). Fatimah Busu's rewriting of Malay myths in these short stories, is drawn from the two traditional Malay texts: *Hikayat Hang Tuah (Story of Hang Tuah)* and *Sulalat al-Salatin (Genealogies of the Sultans/Kings)*, respectively. Furthermore, Fatimah Busu has recently shifted her inclination towards reworking stories from Malay folktales, fables, history, myths and legends, introducing a new style of writing in her short stories (Safian Hussain et al. 2006, p. 493). The most significant work of Fatimah Busu is her short story entitled, “Al-Isra’” that looks at the reworking of stories or tales that has its roots in Malay traditions. In this regard, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* has been reinterpreted with emphasis on the character of Hang Jebat. “Al-Isra’” is also considered to be an important literary work as pointed out by Khoo (2006), who posits that Fatimah Busu's short story has

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enriched the reworking of the *hikayat* in Malaysian literature, especially from her position as a female author:

Fatimah Busu's version, a short story entitled "Dark Night of the Soul," first published in 1985 and translated by Harry Aveling into English in 1991, is the only reconstruction by a woman writer, yet it is not mentioned by critics examining the various Tuah and Jebat narratives. If Fatimah's version of the Tuah/Jebat debate has been excluded before by scholars such as Abdul Rahman Napiah (1994), it is only because its Arabic title, "Al-Isra," does not refer to Tuah or Jebat but instead points to Prophet Muhammad's night journey to Jerusalem. Another possible reason could be that these critics are interested in analyzing only plays and films rather than short stories that feature Hang Tuah or Hang Jebat. Fatimah Busu brings to her retelling her experience as a Malay woman who recognizes the limitations placed on women in a patriarchal system (Khoo 2006, p. 25).

Fatimah Busu's "Al-Isra", thus, offers a female perspective in reinterpreting tales from the Traditional Malay Literature and this has enriched the project of reworking the Malay myth in contemporary Malaysian literature. A thorough discussion on Fatimah Busu's rewriting of the myth will be offered in the next three chapters. Meanwhile the following sections will have a cursory glance at the two sources of the old Malay tradition, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sulalat al-Salatin*. In the discussion of each traditional Malay narrative, I will briefly survey other works by Malaysian writers who have dealt with rewriting of the mythical tales. Let us now take a look at *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and its rewritings.

### 2.8 Rewriting of *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

*Hikayat Hang Tuah* is a well-known Malay grand narrative in the scholarship of Traditional Malay Literature. The term, *hikayat* can literally be translated as 'story' hence we can simply say that *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is the 'Story of Hang Tuah'. Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (2010) suggests that scholars such as Brakel, Jones, Liaw Yock Fang and Sulastin Sutrisno term the category, *hikayat* literature, so as "... to overcome the
problem of determining type or category in traditional Malay literature” (pp. 174-5). In this manner, the term, *hikayat*, despite its simple literal meaning, has become a special term to indicate the type of narratives in Traditional Malay Literature. This is perhaps due to the use of this term in many traditional narratives, such as *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, *Hikayat Ismayatim*, *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah*, *Hikayat Parang Buting*, *Hikayat Banjar*, *Hikayat Johor*, *Hikayat Misa Perabujaya*, to mention but a few. Most *hikayat* texts are important sources for Malay myths including *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sulalat al-Salatin*. The rewriting of the Malay myth in modern Malaysian literary scene largely uses narratives from these two particular texts.

Many writers, artists as well as filmmakers have reinterpreted the relationship between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat in their works ensuing from the duel between the two.¹⁵ Most of the rewritings based on *Hikayat Hang Tuah* deal largely with this particular clash between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. Kassim Ahmad (1958) identifies the character of Hang Jebat as ‘enigmatic’ in which such characterisation creates a debate of who the true ‘Malay hero’ is. I will deal with the concept of heroism in the following chapter. Furthermore, in *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature* (2006), Khoo Gaik Cheng presents a list of ‘cultural representations of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat’ (pp. 207-8). The list of ‘cultural representations of Hang Tuah

¹⁵ In the episode, Hang Tuah has been accused of adultery with one of the palace maids resulting in the death sentence imposed by the sultan to be carried out. It is a false allegation made by his jealous opponents and rivals. However, the *bendahara* (prime minister) does not kill Hang Tuah, instead, the former puts the latter into hiding. Hang Jebat is then promoted to replace Hang Tuah’s position in the palace as the *laksamana* (admiral). Hang Jebat is aware of the fact that Hang Tuah has been punished unjustly. Eventually, Hang Jebat rebels against the sultan and runs amok, resulting in the death of many innocents. It is later discovered that Hang Tuah is innocent and the sultan regrets making a hasty judgment of the death sentence upon him. The *bendahara* then reveals that Hang Tuah is still alive and Hang Tuah is immediately granted an official pardon. He is then instructed to kill Hang Jebat. In the end, Hang Jebat dies at the hands of Hang Tuah.

In *Sejarah Kesusaateraan Melayu/History of Malay Literature* (2006), the following plays have been regarded as important in the early modern cultural

representations of Tuah-Jebat: *Tuah dalam Sejarah/Tuah in History* (n.d.) by Hamidy Anwar and the two plays by Izhab Alang Ismail: *Laksamana Melaka di Inderapura/The Admiral of Melaka in Inderapura* (1962) and *Hang Tuah Membuat Jasa/Hang Tuah Renders Good Deeds* (1962). According to Safian et al. (2006), all three plays glorify Hang Tuah’s bravery and chivalry, thus making them pro-Tuah. Other works that can be considered are the following films: Anwardi Jamil’s *Tuah* (1989) and Aziz M. Osman’s *XX Ray II* (1995). Both films can be viewed as pro-Tuah. Two other films, S. Roomai Noor’s *Puteri Gunung Ledang/The Princess of Mount Ledang* (1961) and Saw Teong Hin’s *Puteri Gunung Ledang/The Princess of Mount Ledang* (2004), though they focus on the tale of the princess, both films make references to the character of Hang Tuah, thus making them pro-Tuah. Hang Jebat is nevertheless absent in both films. After the publication of Khoo’s *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature* (2006), the recent development of the Tuah-Jebat cultural representations appear in U-Wei Shaari’s play (pro-Jebat), *Wangi Jadi Saksi/Wangi, the Witness* (2006), Farish A. Noor’s public lectures (pro-Tuah), compiled into a book entitled, *What Your Teacher Didn’t Tell You: The Annexe Lectures (Vol. 1)* (2009), Jalaini Abu Hassan’s *Dendongeng* (2010), a body of artwork compiled into a book with each artwork being accompanied by a poem originally written in the Malay language with an English translation by Alfian Sa’at. This work is neither pro-Tuah nor pro-Jebat, but in the artwork and poem entitled, “Limau dan Kasturi”/“Lemon and Calamansi”, they address the lack of cultural representations of the other three Malay warriors from the *hikayat* – Hang Kasturi, Hang Lekir and Hang Lekiu. In addition, Mohd Yusoff Hashim (2008) considers A. Samad Ahmad’s *Laksamana Tun Tuah/Admiral Tun Tuah* (1954) as an important creative work that justifies the killing of Hang Jebat by Hang Tuah,
thus making this rewriting pro-Tuah.\textsuperscript{17} It can be surmised that the debates surrounding the clash between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat have been ongoing as they appear in many cultural, literary and cinematic representations of modern Malaysia. In contemporary Malaysia, Hang Tuah becomes a symbol of total loyalty to the state while Hang Jebat symbolises justice and truth (Khoo, 2006; Kassim Ahmad & Noriah Mohamed, 2008; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2011). We will take a look at the other source of the Malay myth, \textit{Sulalat al-Salatin} and its rewritings. The rewriting of mythical stories from \textit{Sulalat al-Salatin} is, however, only limited to three specific myths rewritten in Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” Further analysis of these tales can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.9 Rewriting of \textit{Sulalat al-Salatin}

In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Fatimah Busu rewrites three specific mythical tales drawn from \textit{Sulalat al-Salatin}. The myths are the tales related to the story of ancient Singapore or Singapura: Mythical stories of Tuan Jana Khatib, the boy who saved Singapura (Hang Nadim) and Sang Rajuna Tapa and his daughter. I call these tales the ‘Singapura myth’ as they all build on the myth based on the fall of Singapura. This section will only survey the rewritings of these particular myths in accordance with the examination of the rewriting of the myth by Fatimah Busu. The myths of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa may not have been as popular as the myth of Tuah-Jebat in the context of rewriting. In the 1960s, the retelling of the Singapura myth only appeared in the film, \textit{Singapura Dilanggar Todak/Swordfish Attack on Singapore} (1962), directed by Omar Rojik and based on Abdul Jalil Haji

\textsuperscript{17} See \textit{Hang Tuah Wira Melayu/Hang Tuah, the Malay Hero} (2008), edited by Mohd Yusoff Hashim.
Noor’s novel, *Hang Nadim Pahlawan Kechil/Hang Nadim, the Little Warrior* (1964). In the film, the rewriting of the myth is limited to only retelling the mythical tales of Tuan Jana Khatib and Hang Nadim. The tale of Sang Rajuna Tapa and his daughter is absent in this film, thus the rewriting of the Singapura myth is incomplete. The film portrays a different depiction of the character of Tuan Jana Khatib in which he survives the attack of the swordfish but in *Sulalat al-Salatin*, Tuan Jana Khatib dies before the attack of the swordfish. Similarly, the novel presents a different idea from the original version of the myth in *Sulalat al-Salatin* where Hang Nadim is the son of the rebellious Jebat. In this sense, Abdul Jalil Haji Noor’s *Hang Nadim Pahlawan Kechil* (1964), mixes myths from two different sources, *Sulalat al-Salatin* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. The rewriting of the Singapura myth has been ‘selective’ in the sense that most of the rewritings only rewrite one or two of the three mythical tales from the Singapura myth. I argue that what makes a complete Singapura myth is the three mythical tales of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa. Thus, in retelling only one or two of the myths, the rewriting of Singapura myth is incomplete. Looking at it in this light, *Singapura Dilanggar Todak* (1962) and *Hang Nadim Pahlawan Kechil* (1964) have engendered the tradition of ‘incomplete’ retelling of the Singapura myth. Of all mythical stories in the Singapura myth, the tale of the boy who saved Singapura (Hang Nadim) is more popular than the other two in the context of rewriting. In the following discussion, I will only look at two rewritings of the myth of Hang Nadim: Muhammad Haji Salleh’s poem, “Chapter Ten” taken from *Beyond the Archipelago* (1995) and Ralph Modder and Aeishah Ahmed’s short story, “When Garfish Attacked Singapura” taken from *Myths and Legends of Malaysia and Singapore*

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18 For further analyses on these two works, see Sim Meijun, Sophie 2005, ‘Fishy Tales: Singapura Dilanggar Todak as Myth and History in Singapore’s Past’, Master’s dissertation, National University of Singapore, Singapore.
These rewritings will be compared to Fatimah Busu's treatment of the myth in her short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The main reason of comparing Fatimah Busu’s work to other rewritings of Malay myths is to trace the changes made to the myths in modern Malaysia especially in the twenty-first century. By bringing in other rewritings into the discussion, I aim to scrutinise the relevance of myths in contemporary Malaysian Literature: how authors have manipulated or exploited myth to achieve certain purposes such as the political agenda, preservation of tradition among others. Thus, it is worth looking at other rewritings of this specific mythical story and contextualising them according to Fatimah Busu's version of the myth. Later, this particular myth will be further discussed in Chapter 4 in which it will offer a more detailed analysis by a closer examination of the way Fatimah Busu has dealt with myth.

Muhammad Haji Salleh’s “Sajak-Sajak Sejarah Melayu”/ “Poems from Sejarah Melayu” in Beyond the Archipelago (1995), is a rewrite of the entire narrative of Hang Nadim in poetry which is presented bilingually (Malay and English). The poem is entitled “ceretera yang kesepuluh”/“chapter ten” which corresponds to Shellabear’s placement of the story of Hang Nadim as the “Tenth Tale” or “Alkisah Cetera yang Kesepuluh” and Fatimah Busu’s structure of the narrative in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” In the poem, the rewriting of the tale is divided into three in which each division begins with a direct quotation from the Shellabear version of Sulalat al-Salatin. While Hang Nadim is an orphan in Fatimah Busu’s short story: in the poem, he has a father with whom he is portrayed to be having a conversation in the third division of the poem:
“When the child was killed, his pain and suffering was borne by the state of Singapore.”

Hang Nadim: I speak words that grow from thought, you said that we must always move along the groove of the mind speak the plain language and act out the right.

You have said, father, that I must dare to speak, that’s more manly than the warrior, for to think brave is to risk the difference from elders and offices of the state.

Father: Hold my hand tight, now, Nadim, I’ll go with you. You are my son, and child of my beliefs.

Your voice has fallen on ears that have not heard of truth they are not unaccustomed to intelligence.

Let your words explode in their eardrums, that they may begin to speak in another voice, bring them news of those outside the palace.

Each drop of your blood will be paid in history that knows its lessons.

The country will bear the sins of the raja, Singapura will disappear with its folly.

Hold my hand tight now, Nadim, this is also our country. (Muhammad Haji Salleh 1995, pp. 109-11)
In this rewriting by Muhammad Haji Salleh, there is a foreshadowing of the fall of Singapura: “Singapura will disappear/with its folly.” The conversation between Hang Nadim and his father only takes place imaginatively, which incidentally is a portrayal of an obedient child who merely does what his father has advised him to do: “you have said, father, /that I must dare to speak.” However, unlike Fatimah Busu's rewriting, it seems that Hang Nadim is only given voice after he is killed. The conversation is less dramatic compared to the rewriting of the story of Hang Nadim in Fatimah Busu’s short story.

In a more recent rewriting of the tale, Hang Nadim is named Si-Awang Jambul in the short story, “When Garfish Attacked Singapura” which appears in Myths and Legends of Malaysia and Singapore (2009), compiled and edited by Ralph Modder and Aeishah Ahmed. The short story seems to attempt to retell the complete Singapura myth with the appearance of the three mythical characters: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa. In the short story, however, there is a merging of the characters of Tuan Jana Khatib and Hang Nadim though the latter’s name is changed to Si-Awang Jambul: “Tuan Jana Khatib showed a great liking for the boy (Si-Awang Jambul) whom he found to be very intelligent” (Modder & Aeishah Ahmed 2009, p. 97). Furthermore, there is also another relation to the character of Sang Rajuna Tapa as he appears to be the jealous and villainous bendahara who is responsible for the death of Si-Awang:

There was a big celebration at the palace and Si-Awang became an instant favourite of the king. Everybody seemed to be happy except for one man. He was Bandahara Sang Rajuna Tapa, the Prime Minister (Modder & Aeishah Ahmad 2009, p. 102).
This rewriting of the tale seems to ‘imitate’ the structure of *Sulalat al-Salatin* in which the stories of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim (Si-Awang) and Sang Rajuna Tapa all appear under the ‘Tenth Tale’ especially in the Shellabear version. Shellabear’s *Sejarah Melayu* (1975) is the source from which Fatimah Busu has based her rewriting of the myth. In the Shellabear version, as well as other versions (Samad, Cheah & Rahman and Muhammad – more about this in Chapter 4), there is a clear division of each story. The stories of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim (Si-Awang) and Sang Rajuna Tapa are narrated in sequence and yet seem to be separate tales. For example, during the time of the narration of Hang Nadim (Si-Awang), the king was Paduka Seri Maharaja, whereas during the time of Sang Rajuna Tapa, Raja Iskandar Shah ruled Singapura upon the death of his father, Paduka Seri Maharaja (Shellabear 1975). It seems rather ‘illogical’ that Hang Nadim (Si-Awang) lived up to the time of the rule of Raja Iskandar Shah as he had been killed even before the death of Paduka Seri Maharaja. Clearly, the rewriting by Modder and Aeishah Ahmad has conflated the three distinct tales although all of them were narrated in the Singapura myth. However, naming the boy as Si-Awang is not contradictory because in all *Sulalat al-Salatin* versions, the boy who saves Singapura remains unnamed. Perhaps the name, Si-Awang is more appropriate as Awang in Malay culture serves as a polite ‘generic denomination’ in addressing a boy. Such confusion further distorts the historical aspect of *Sulalat al-Salatin*. The conflation of the three distinctive tales fails to bring out any dramatic effect unlike Fatimah Busu who personalises and contextualises the tale to evoke deeper feelings. Further in the hands of Fatimah Busu, such contextualisation is enhanced through the emotional insights into the characters in “Ceritera I,” “Ceritera II” and “Ceritera III” of her short story and the emotion fuels the implied critique. In short, seeing the three mythical tales: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa as a whole, they
constitute the complete narration of the Singapura myth. In this regard, the Singapura myth can be seen as the ‘Story of a nation’. I will further explore this notion in the subsequent analytic Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed relevant literatures with regard to the study of myth in the context of rewriting. It first discussed a brief overview of the study of myth. The discussion then established a connection between myth and literature followed by the explanation of the notion of ‘rewriting myth’. Relevant theories and methods were used in the discussion and these helped contextualise the role of Traditional Malay Literature as a source of Malay myths. Having contextualised the study of myth in Traditional Malay Literature, the chapter explicated the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ so as to offer new reading strategy in dealing with the rewriting of Malay myths in contemporary Malaysian Literature. Furthermore, the discussion briefly touched upon Fatimah Busu’s contribution in the rewriting of the myth followed by the exploration of the rewriting of the myth based on the two sources of the old Malay narratives: *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sulalat al-Salatin*. The discussions in this chapter have now set us up for further examination of the rewriting of the myth, both analytically and creatively in the chapters that follow.
PART 2
THE RESEARCH

Chapter 3: The Malay Hero and 'Story of the Nation' in “Al-Isra’”

Chapter 4: Rakyat and Raja in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”

Chapter 5: Malay Nationalism and Fictocriticism in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”
Chapter 3
The Malay Hero and ‘Story of the Nation’ in “Al-Isra”

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Al-Isra” (1985), using the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. The discussions in this chapter are divided into five sections; ‘Translations of the Title, “Al-Isra”’, ‘Images of National Heroes’, ‘The “I” in the Narrative’, ‘The Story of the Nation’ and ‘Sisyphus in ‘Al-Isra”. In ‘Translations of the Title, “Al-Isra”’, I will begin the analysis by looking at the (mis)interpretations in the translations of the title of the short story. In this section, the discussion on the translation of “Al-Isra” is limited only to the title of the short story that is related to the phrase, ‘Al-Isra”. It is a phrase because the Arabic word, ‘al’ is able to function in tandem with ‘the’ in English whilst ‘Isra” roughly means ‘a stroll in the night’. In ‘Images of National Heroes’, the central discussion is on the issue related to Malaysian heroism, using the notion of the hero myth. The discussion will examine the positioning of both mythical Malay heroes (Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat) in terms of their clash that has engendered a polarity: loyalty to the state as represented by Hang Tuah versus defending justice as embodied in the character of Hang Jebat. The section on ‘The “I” in the narrative’ will look at the role played by Fatimah Busu as a female writer in dealing with patriarchal issues in her rewriting of the myth. The discussion of the narrator in the short story will further illustrate how myth is used to speak on issues such as ‘self’ and ‘other’. The analysis of “Al-Isra” continues in the section, ‘The Story of a Nation’ where Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the Tuah-Jebat myth is seen as contributing to the idea of the nation, with the main focus being on the cultural representation of the patriarchy. The analysis of Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra” in this
chapter will maintain the use of Harry Aveling’s English translation of the short story, “Dark Night of the Soul” (1991), throughout the discussion. In the final section, ‘Sisyphus in Al-Isra’, I will demonstrate how Fatimah Busu’s use of the Greek myth of Sisyphus has positioned Hang Jebat as an absurd hero, thus offering an alternative way in evaluating heroism in the character of Hang Jebat. The analyses in this chapter will demonstrate how the rewriting of the myth may open up further discussion on issues related to reconfiguring the notion of ‘nation’. Let us begin the discussion by looking at the title of the short story, “Al-Isra’.”

3.2 Translations of the Title, “Al-Isra’”


Aveling’s translation of “Al-Isra’” as “Dark Night of the Soul” is based on the Spanish poem or treatise, “Noche Oscura” or “La Noche Oscura del Alma” by the sixteenth century Spanish poet and Roman Catholic mystic, San Juan de la Cruz or Saint John of the Cross. “La Noche Oscura del Alma” has been widely translated into English as the “Dark Night of the Soul.” “Dark Night of the Soul” is a treatise which
consists of an eight stanza poem that begins with the line, “En una noche oscura”/“On a night of darkness.” The poem was originally untitled in its Spanish version, but later it was titled or referred to as “Dark Night” (Zimmerman 1907, 1973) or “The Dark Night” (Brenan & Nicholson 1973). In the ‘Introduction’ to the Fables of Eve (1991), Aveling said this in regard to his translation of the short story’s title: “The original title of the story is “Al-Isra’”: the English translation is, thus, a christianising based on the work of the great Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross, but seems appropriate enough” (Aveling 1991, p. xxviii). There is, however, no further discussion beyond this explanation. I can only speculate at this point that Aveling, in his translation of the title, attempts to link the ‘spiritual journey’ of Fatimah Busu’s Hang Jebat to the Christian treatise so as to connect Hang Jebat’s experience to the ‘absurdity’ of his travels, culminating in his final encounter with Sisyphus. Brenan and Nicholson (1973) had translated the estribillo of the poem in the treatise, “Dark Night of the Soul” as follows: “Songs of the soul that rejoices at having reached the high state of perfection, which is union with God, by the path of spiritual negation”/“Canciones del alma que se goza de haber llegado al alto estado de la perfección, que es la unión con Dios, por el camino de la negación espiritual.” In this regard, the soul is united with God after having attained ‘the high state of perfection’. I find Aveling’s translation

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19 It is noted in the Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English Vol. 1 that “Dark Night of the Soul” is an unfinished treatise written in two books (“Subida del Monte Carmelo”/“Ascent of Mount Carmel” and “Noche Oscura”/“Dark Night”). These works were usually printed together and was aimed at providing commentaries on the eight-stanza poem as well as covering the four aspects of the dark night according to the philosophy of San Juan de la Cruz: the active night of the senses, the active night of the spirit, the passive night of the senses and the passive night of the spirit (Classe 2000, p. 735).

20 According to Brenan in this book, an estribillo or theme of the poem is written in a verse of two or three lines, which is ‘developed or glossed in the succeeding stanzas’ (p. 104); this is known as villancicos (form and style) of the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz.

21 For further discussion and English translation of San Juan de la Cruz’s poems, see Gerald Brenan’s St John of the Cross: His Life and Poetry (1973); the translation of the poems has been carried out by Lynda Nicholson (pp. 143-221).
of the title to be problematic. This is because Hang Jebat’s journey in “Al-Isra’” is never about ‘a journey towards union with God’ but rather is a spiritual journey towards the acceptance of fate and destiny. Further Fatimah Busu, in the ‘Preface’ to the short story collection, Al-Isra’ (1985), has defined the phrase, ‘Al-Isra’ as ‘night journey’ or ‘Perjalanan malam hari’ (Fatimah Busu 1985, p. xi) in the Malay language. It is clear that the spirit of Jebat in Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” wanders in its attempt to seek truth and justice, whereas the narrator in San Juan de la Cruz’s “Noche Oscura”/“Dark Night” achieves a soul union with God only after the attainment of a high state of perfection and the denial of his own spirit. Thus by translating “Al-Isra’” as “Dark Night of the Soul,” Aveling has fallen into a trap of making a simplistic conflation between the spirit of Jebat and the spirit of the narrator in “Noche Oscura.”

*Al-Isra’* which literally means ‘The Night Journey’ is also a surah (chapter) in the Qur’an that describes Prophet Muhammad’s spiritual journey or vision. According to ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali, this particular surah 17 of the Qur’an begins with “the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet: he was transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Makkah) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) in a night and shown some of the Signs of God” (‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali 2005, p. 276). A reference to this prophetic spiritual journey by Fatimah Busu in her short story, “Al-Isra’” has been alluded symbolically to point out the need for Hang Jebat to experience his own spiritual journey of soul so that he could accept his fate. However, Hang Jebat is never likened to having possessed any similar prophetic personality or quality. Unlike the flawless Prophet, Hang Jebat is described as a traitor in the short story, thus making him ‘ unholy’. Further in the Qur’an, the spiritual journey of the Prophet is completed with the *Mi’raj* (Ascension) experience in which the Prophet was “… then taken through the
seven heavens even the Sublime Throne, an [sic] initiated into the spiritual mysteries of the human soul struggling in Space and Time” (‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali 2005, p. 276). Being a fallible ordinary human being, Hang Jebat can never perform such an exalted spiritual journey; instead, his journey ends with a meeting with Sisyphus. I would like to put forward that Muhammad Haji Salleh’s translation of the title, as “The Rise to Heaven” may correspond more to the second part of the prophetic journey: Mi’raj (Ascension). Perhaps Aveling’s translation, “Dark Night of the Soul” also refers to this second miraculous event, Mi’raj as the use of the Christian doctrine of ‘Dark Night of the Soul’ in his interpretation may point to the idea of equating Hang Jebat’s spiritual travels with that of the prophet’s meeting with God. According to Armstrong (1991), the religious experience of Mi’raj has been influential in Western tradition. For instance, the specific event of Mi’raj (the Prophet Muhammad’s ascent to heaven) has inspired Dante’s account of the imaginative journey through hell, purgatory and heaven in *The Divine Comedy* (Armstrong 1991, p. 139). Karen Armstrong in *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (1991), further claims that this miraculous event has engendered mysticism in Islam especially in Sufism: “The miraj became a paradigm of the mystical strain in Islam: Sufis always spoke of an annihilation (*fana*) in God which was followed by its revival (*baqa*) and an enhanced self-realisation” (Armstrong 1991, p. 140). Armstrong (1991) also suggests that Saint John of the Cross is ‘very close in spirit’ to the thirteenth century Persian Sufi poet, Farid ud-Din Attar (pp. 139-40). Building on Armstrong’s observations, I proffer that, equating the meeting between the prophet and God in Mi’raj combined with the experience of ‘Dark Night of the Soul’, where a saint may feel united with God, is a sufistic interpretation of the prophetic ‘two-fold’ spiritual journey. Fatimah Busu makes it clear in the ‘Preface’ to her short story collection, *Al-Isra’* that the *Isra’* experience is used in the literal
sense which is ‘a night journey’ (Fatimah Busu 1985, p. xi), thus making a restricted reference to point only to the first journey, Isra’. It is clear that the short story, “Al-Isra’” does not delve further into the Mi’raj experience – a ‘prophetic exaltation’ which only occurs to ‘enhanced beings’ particularly the prophets. Hang Jebat in the short story never experiences such ‘exaltation’ thus discounting any sort of prophetic attributes. Moreover, the Mi’raj of the prophet in Islam is not about a union of the soul with God. According to Ibrahim Abdullah (2013), Mi’raj represents the prophet’s miraculous journey from the Aqsa Mosque to God’s place (Sidratul Muntaha). In the meeting with God, Prophet Muhammad received, among others, instructions to perform prayers five times a day. In addition, Ibrahim Abdullah (2013) claims that the meeting with God is related to the prophet’s miracle granted by God to bear witness to the existence of heaven and hell besides, receiving more revelations from Him. Seeing it in this light, I argue that the second part of the prophet’s spiritual journey, Mi’raj should not be read as a union with God. Based on the above arguments, I make a case against the translations of the titles of the short story proposed by Harry Aveling and Muhammad Haji Salleh. I argue that both translations are erroneous. Perhaps they have mistakenly conflated the meaning of “Al-Isra’” with Mi’raj, two separate events that happened in one phenomenon. Therefore, I proffer that the translation of “Al-Isra’” is “The Night Journey” instead of “Dark Night of the Soul” or “The Rise to Heaven.” In this thesis, I suggest that any translation of myth should fall under the project of the rewriting. Looking at it in this light, the importance of a better understanding of the title of the short story is presented because the term ‘al-Isra’” is closely connected to the character of Hang Jebat who is positioned as a national or ‘culture hero’ thus challenging the already established national hero of the Malays, Hang Tuah. In associating Hang Jebat with prophetic or saint-like attributes in line
with the two translations above, his character becomes ‘divine’ thus complicating further the understanding of Fatimah Busu’s Hang Jebat. Fatimah Busu’s Hang Jebat is presented as a simple Malay warrior who has been wronged and viewing him in the context of ‘al-Isra’ may indicate that his character is that of a fallible man. Thus, the rewriting of the mythical character of Hang Jebat in “Al-Isra’” offers a new perspective on the reconfiguring of the nation as seen through the idea of challenging the position of the national or culture hero in the ‘story of the nation’ of the Malays. Now let us look at the analyses of the short story, “Al-Isra’” using the concept of ‘image–I–nation’.

3.3 Images of National Heroes

In “Al-Isra’,” Fatimah Busu uses two mythical images: the Malay myth of Tuah-Jebat and the Greek myth of Sisyphus. In her rewriting of the myth, Fatimah Busu chooses to place more emphasis on the character of Hang Jebat in the short story. The character of Jebat appears in spirit as he is resurrected from the world of death. Jebat is ‘disfigured’ and he has a ‘less-human’ appearance. However, he appears to be ‘more human’ especially in terms of his ability to express his emotions. I will discuss more about his character in the following discussion. Fatimah Busu then makes use of the Greek myth in which Jebat has an encounter with Sisyphus at the end of the story. The examination of Fatimah Busu’s incorporation of the myth of Sisyphus in the short story will be dealt with accordingly in a different section. The discussion in this section will focus, first, on each character of the Malay mythical hero, Hang Tuah which will then be followed by Hang Jebat and second, how images of violence and heroism in the story are used to propagate the idea of the Malay hero. The reconstruction of the image of a Malay hero can be linked to the idea of how ‘the foundational myth’ (Hall
1992 in van der Heide 2005, p. 62), such as the story of Tuah-Jebat can reconfigure the notion of nation.

Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra” is a rewriting of the myth based on Hikayat Hang Tuah. Hikayat Hang Tuah according to Sulastin Sutrisno (1983) is a ‘romantic history’ in which “…the story is able to carry the Malay reader into an imaginary world, a world which in reality does not exist, but the Malay from the servant up to the Sultan can take his place in that world” (p. 384). Sheppard (1964), in his sketch biography of Hang Tuah says this about the impact of the character of Hang Tuah:

Few races in the world today possess a hero who has remained the undisputed paragon of so much that they hold in high esteem for five centuries, and whose reputation and qualities are, if anything, more fervently, admired now than at any time since he fought and won innumerable duels in the fifteenth century. The immortal name of Hang Tuah conjures to the Malay of today, just as it did long ago Malacca, the epitome of courage, courtesy and resource, which has characterised the warrior-leader of the Malay race throughout recorded history. (Sheppard cited in Ahmad Sarji 2004, p. 93)

Both statements attest the high admiration accorded to Hang Tuah by the Malays. In the ‘Introduction’ to his English translation of the hikayat entitled, The Epic of Hang Tuah (2011), Muhammad Haji Salleh remarks that “[t]he protagonist, Hang Tuah, is the nonpareil of culture heroes” (Muhammad Haji Salleh 2011, p. xv). In Hero Myths: A Reader, Segal (2000), roughly lists nineteen types of hero myths.22 ‘Culture hero’, ‘national hero’, ‘absurd hero’ and ‘hero as martyr’ are among the kinds of hero myths listed in the book. I will return to the discussion of the absurd hero, national hero and hero as martyr but for now, let us discuss the idea of a culture hero in relation to the

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22 For a complete list of types of hero myths, consult: Robert A. Segal, Hero Myths: A Reader, 2000, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
character of Hang Tuah. Hang Tuah as the culture hero for the Malays ‘fulfils’ the ‘basic principle of the Malay society’ due to his loyalty to the nation (Teeuw 1961, p. 47).

The identification of the character of Hang Tuah as a culture hero by Muhammad Haji Salleh implies the idea of Hang Tuah as a hero who can be seen as “the agent responsible for creating the conditions that allowed for the development of human civilization” (Carroll 1984, p. 106). Seeing it in this light, Hang Tuah as a culture hero to all Malays in the Malay Archipelago is a hero myth that changes the Malay world through remarkable feats of gallantry and loyalty by a warrior who defends his land, people and king. Muhammad Haji Salleh further extends his classification of the character of Hang Tuah as a culture hero in the following statement:

...[I]t is the idea and description of the culture hero of a cosmopolitan state on the edge of the Straits of Melaka, who was open to opportunities offered by a wider world, which pinpoints his relevance not only for the audience in the Archipelago but also those from other islands and states beyond the region. For Hang Tuah is not only a hero bound by the borders of Melaka alone. He was the international knight and diplomat renowned throughout sprawling insular Southeast Asia and Asia in general (Muhammad Haji Salleh 2011, p. xxii).

In this regard, Hang Tuah has been immortalised as a true culture hero of the Malays and he should be recognised as the ‘national epic figure’ as suggested by Ahmad Sarji (2004, p. 113). In recognising Hang Tuah as the culture hero of the Malay community, and to some extent, to all Malaysians, this may contribute to the realisation of the project of nation-building in Malaysia. According to Grosby (2005), “[a]ll nations have historical antecedents, whether tribe, city-state, or kingdom. These historically earlier societies are important components in the formation of nation” (p. 8). In short,
understanding the position of the Malay heroes perpetuates the idea of the need for a national culture so as to maintain a nation.

Though the central character in the *hikayat* is Hang Tuah, the character of Hang Jebat has equally rivaled the position of Hang Tuah as the culture hero. I will return to the discussion of the national hero in the subsequent paragraphs. In the meantime, let us discuss Fatimah Busu's “*Al-Isra’*” where the positioning of Hang Jebat as the protagonist in the story makes her short prose pro-Jebat (Khoo 2006, p. 208). Let us now move to the discussion of Hang Jebat, as seen in the rewriting of this mythical hero by Fatimah Busu.

In “*Al-Isra’*,” Hang Jebat appears ‘bloody’ throughout the story and it is symbolic as it further ‘intensifies’ images of violence in the short story. The symbol of blood functions in two ways: first, it makes a direct reference to violent images and second, it conveys themes of death, life, punishment, treason and betrayal. In “*Al-Isra’*,” Hang Jebat is simultaneously dead and alive. Hang Jebat remembers well the way he dies: “Blood spurted from the wound like water from a newly dug well. And (he) fell to the ground” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 272). The deprivation of blood kills Hang Jebat as a result of a fatal stab inflicted upon him by Hang Tuah in the duel. However, it is also through the symbol of blood that makes Hang Jebat alive. In his resurrection after hundreds of years, Hang Jebat is now a wounded ghost-like figure wandering in limbo. He is suffering from an injury and his stomach is perpetually gushing blood. His lament can be clearly felt in the first paragraph of the story:
As everyone knows, Hang Jebat was never at peace in the next world. From the moment that the keris Taming Sari pierced his skin and ripped through his flesh, Hang Jebat regretted the cowardly manner in which his death had been forced upon him. So, even though his flesh, skin and bones lay planted in the ground for hundreds of years, a constant irritation to the worms and maggots who tried to tear him apart, blood poured perpetually from the gash of a wound which had been opened in his stomach (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 247).

The continuous flow of blood from his wound is a metaphorical interpretation of Hang Jebat’s never-ending emotional suffering. He lives to physically feel the perpetual pain as a form of punishment. Throughout the story, Hang Jebat is constantly reminded of the treason he commits in the repeatedly sung rhythmic chorus:

Noble wanderer
Wanderer without a name
They call you the Noble Wanderer
They call you ’Jebat the Traitor’ noble wanderer
They would call any man a traitor
Who tried to defend the truth.
(Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 250)

In his life in the fifteenth century Melaka, Hang Jebat was considered a traitor for trying to defy the king’s punishment over Hang Tuah. Once regarded as one of the great Malay warriors alongside Hang Tuah and the other three – Hang Kasturi, Hang Lekir and Hang Lekiu, he then became the state’s public enemy. His punishment for having committed treason is even greater in ‘life’ after death. In a conversation with a skull, Hang Jebat describes the kind of punishment he receives:

You should be grateful that the earth has accepted your torn flesh and crumbling bones. The members of your body will never have to experience the sort of life I lead. When I died, I thought I was free of life in the physical frame. Sand and dirt could not break my bones. The earthworms could not eat my flesh. Perhaps I was too tough for them. So I must endure my after-life in this, my original physical body, forever. Do you know … it is very uncomfortable in the grave if you keep your body, very difficult indeed. I couldn’t stand it any longer! I was bored. I had to get out and wander. I like travelling and it seemed a good idea at the time. Once I lived in the ordinary world as a man who had not
yet died. Now I live in the world of the dead, and I still have my same body (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, pp. 273-4).

Hang Jebat may seem to have accepted his fate thus succumbing to his punishment. Though Hang Jebat appears to be getting accustomed to his gory circumstance, one thing he seems to be unable to vanquish is to receive an apology from Hang Tuah. He assumes that the non-stop bleeding would cease when Hang Tuah apologises to him:

It is strange...but it won't last forever. It will disappear the day Hang Tuah comes to find me, on this beach or wherever I happen to be, and apologises for killing me because I was defending truth, justice and the fundamental human freedoms God gives us at the time of our birth. And most important of all, he will admit that he was robbed of his own self-respect. You don't know this, no one does, but I meet with Hang Tuah often, and he is always sad. He shakes his head, disappointed at having allowed others to steal his dignity, to treat him like a block of wood, to use him as the Sultan of Malacca's beast of burden. He is ashamed of all the stupid and cruel things he did to me (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 273).

Hang Jebat demands an apology from Hang Tuah. However, the apology sought after was not materialised; instead, Hang Jebat was left forever wandering aimlessly in a zombie-like stature. There remains no solution to his problems and suffering. Though in pain, Hang Jebat seems to be able to forgive Hang Tuah. He knows that Hang Tuah must have felt a deep regret at what he had done to him. To surmise, forgiveness seems to be the only ‘comfort’ left for Hang Jebat to console his intense anguish over the feeling of betrayal by Hang Tuah. Further Fatimah Busu’s positioning of Hang Jebat as an absurd hero will be dealt with in the section on the nation. Let us now move on to the next section, ‘The “I” in the Narrative’ where the narrator and the role of Fatimah Busu as a writer will further uncover issues on the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ and her personal response being a female author taking up issue on the patriarchal power structures between the two Malay warriors.
3.4 The “I” in the Narrative

The “I” in the narrative can be examined in terms of the role of Fatimah Busu as the writer of the short story, “Al-Isra’” and the character of Hang Jebat as the “I” in the context of rewriting of the myth. Fatimah Busu, being a female writer, offers new insights and challenges in her interpretation against the ‘patriarchal’ traditional Malay text, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Hang Jebat as the central character in “Al-Isra’” becomes the “I” of the story. In “Al-Isra’,” the portrayal of Hang Jebat can be said to have challenged some old traditions such as issues relating to feudalism, heroism and nationalism.

The “I” in the narrative is not the first-person narrator but the character of Hang Jebat as the central character in the story. In Chapter 2, I proffered that the “I” corresponds to the “self” while “nation” corresponds to the “other” in the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. In the context of rewriting, “Al-Isra’” has turned the myth of Hang Jebat from the ‘other’ to the ‘self’. In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the central character of the story is Hang Tuah thus making him the ‘self’ while the character of Hang Jebat is one of the ‘others’. In “Al-Isra’,” the role is reversed where all perspectives are now seen from the character of Hang Jebat.

Fatimah Busu’s Hang Jebat as the “I” in the story asserts himself more firmly as he is able to justify his wrongdoings in rebelling against the king and in killing the people. In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the only reason given by Hang Jebat is his claim that he is avenging Hang Tuah’s death:

“*Hai* Laksamana, I have embarked on this path to revenge the injustice meted out to you. As far as I knew, you were no longer in this world. Had I have known that you were still alive, in the name of Allah and His Messenger, I would not have taken this course of action” (Muhammad Haji Salleh 2011, p. 348-9).
In the *hikayat*, Hang Jebat as the ‘other’ against Hang Tuah as the ‘self’, appears ‘meek’ as his excuse does not reflect his status as that of an equal to the Malay warrior, Hang Tuah. In “Al-Isra’,” Hang Jebat is able to assert himself with strong conviction: “Because it is time, you learned that your loyalty to the sultan is about as important as a frog’s concern for a piece of cat-shit” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 266). Fatimah Busu’s Hang Jebat is no longer the ‘meek’ Hang Jebat as in the *hikayat*. In addition, when Hang Tuah asks Hang Jebat if he feels sorry for what he has done, Hang Jebat’s reply in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is: “O Laksamana, I shall never regret my deeds nor shall I fear death, for I know my end shall be at your hands. How shall I avoid it?” (Muhammad Haji Salleh 2011, p. 349). In this context, Hang Jebat possesses a weak character, uncharacteristic of a brave warrior. He admits defeat even before he goes to battle. In responding to the same question, Hang Jebat in “Al-Isra’” portrays fearlessness: “A man never regrets anything. And I am a warrior!” … “I would rather die young for the sake of the truth than live a thousand years as a slave” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 266). Fatimah Busu has depicted Hang Jebat to be more heroic in her rewriting of the myth. Now, let us extend the issue on self and the other by examining Fatimah Busu’s position as a female writer in challenging the patriarchal issues with regard to her rewriting of the myth.

Khoo’s (2006) reading of Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” points to a significant observation with regard to the feminist standpoint where she claims that “Fatimah Busu brings to her retelling her experience as a Malay woman who recognizes the limitations placed on women in a patriarchal system” (Khoo 2006, p. 25). Her
discussion also challenges the patriarchal power structures seen through the position of Fatimah Busu as a female author:

Fatimah Busu brings a philosophical modernist dimension that is tinged with Islamic faith and Camusian existentialism to the legend. To complicate things even further, her short story lends itself to a reading of homosocial and homoerotic relations between the king and his subordinates, Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat, nudging the critical reader in the direction of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory of homosocial desire but also reworking the theory in the Malay context (Khoo 2006, p. 18).

Khoo (2006) observes that Fatimah Busu may have hinted at a kind of ‘male’ (dubbed as ‘homosocial’) tension and affection transmitted among the male characters in Hikayat Hang Tuah, which is subtly expressed in the short story. Using Sedgwick’s theory of ‘Male Homosocial Desire’, Khoo (2006) sees a power play implied in the relationships among the male characters, Hang Tuah, Hang Jebat and the king, which are related to ‘male bonding’ both sexually and politically, as maintained in her statement:

The relationships between the king and Hang Tuah, and between the king and Hang Jebat, are represented in symbolic ways that raise questions about power and homosocial and national relations. Thus, Fatimah Busu’s text provides a strategic feminist intervention not by pointing out the exclusion of the gendered other (women) but by focusing instead on the categories of inclusion that bind the men together in the discourse of the nation (Khoo 2006, p. 26).

Sedgwick’s ‘Male Homosocial Desire’ is seen as an ‘inclusion that bind the men together’ instead of an ‘exclusion of the gendered other (women)’ hence Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” can be regarded as a social satire mocking at the decadent feudalism symbolised in complicated relationships among the three main male characters in the story. In Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Sedgwick defines her concept as follows:

“Male homosocial desire”: the phrase in the title of this study is intended to mark both discriminations and paradoxes. “Homosocial desire,” to begin with,
is a kind of oxymoron. “Homosocial” is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with “homosexual,” and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from “homosexual.” In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding,” which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality (Sedgwick 1985, p. 1).

Male bonding particularly between Hang Tuah and the king in Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” seem to be ‘erotically consummated’ in a subconscious way using a food metaphor as the king ‘devours’ Hang Tuah as if he is a piece of snack in the king’s dream:

“I am dead, your majesty. Your majesty pronounced my death sentence. I cannot live again. Do you know what death is? It is the violent separation of a living soul from its body. The soul cannot return to its body ... cannot ... cannot...”

Each time the Laksama [sic] Hang Tuah pronounced these words, he walked backwards away from the king bowing, his face pale, his shaven head uncovered, his two hands still tied behind his back, firmly displaying his eternal and unyielding loyalty, even to the point of death, to a sultan who regarded him as nothing more than a snack to be consumed with a simple fern-bud sauce. After Hang Tuah and [sic] retired, a beautiful concubine, with long ornamented curling hair reaching down to her waist, entered, bearing a shining golden tray with a bowl of steaming fern sauce. Then the naked maiden placed the gold tray and the bowl of sauce in front of the sultan’s feet and left. As happened every night, Hang Tuah lay gracefully on his back and stretched out beside the golden tray and bowl of sauce. The king ate him. And took some snuff. The king gave thanks to god for such a delicious sauce and for the hundred different spices which had flavoured the soul of his admiral, Laksamana Hang Tuah. But a moment later, waves washed over the king’s stomach, big waves, lashed by a fierce typhoon, stirred by one or two or three or forty giant dragons, then the king vomitted, spilling filth, blood and his intestines all over the royal mattress.

“My beloved admiral ... Oh Laksamana,” moaned the king, “Oh Laksamana ... I do love you ....” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 262-3).

The inclusion that binds Hang Tuah and the king is even fortified further by the exclusion of the beautiful concubine as the gendered other and despite her nakedness, she fails to deviate the king’s attention from Hang Tuah. In this regard, male bonding forged between the two lies in the middle of the continuum between homosociality
and homosexuality, thus complicating the relationship between Hang Tuah and the king. Moreover, the unnamed king in Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’,” parallels Sulastin Sutrisno’s examination of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* who observes a similar view. The facts that the king is unnamed may point to the king’s character that can be regarded as less significant (Sulastin Sutrisno 1983, p. 188). Sulastin Sutrisno (1983) argues that such negligence serves its purpose well because the character of Hang Tuah as the king’s servant is then enhanced, not being overshadowed by the mighty power of the king. Thus, in extending Khoo’s observation of the idea of male bonding and further utilising the notion of Sedgwick’s ‘Male Homosocial Desire’, it can be summed up that Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” presents a complex relationship between Hang Tuah and the king: there exists a power play, in which I proffer that the degree of which is measured by a continuum of homosociality stands on one end, and on the other, there lies homosexuality and the killing of Hang Jebat which further strengthens the male bonding between the two. The complication of the patriarchal power structures in “Al-Isra’” challenges the ‘structure of familiarity’ of the nation (Grosby 2005, p. 110) characterised by male dominance in the society. Now we will move to the next section where the focus is on the issue of a national hero.

3.5 The Story of a Nation

In her rewriting of the myth, Fatimah Busu seems to conform to the current mainstream of thoughts in interpreting the clash between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat as a representation of loyalty to the state versus defending truth and justice. Parnickel (1976) says this with regard to the Tuah-Jebat clash: “Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat stand out in that single combat as two parts of one “ego”, which are usually more or less harmoniously combined in one character” (p. 417). This is what Khoo (2006, pp. 42-
meant by ‘the Malay psyche’ where she proposes that the character of the Malays as a nation can be summed up through the characters of both Malay heroes: self-effacing (merendah diri) as portrayed by Hang Tuah versus amok, a trait represented by Hang Jebat. The ‘ego’ or ‘psyche’ of the Malays as represented by the Tuah-Jebat metaphor is shared among members of an imagined community thus forging a ‘territorially bounded tradition’ (Grosby 2005), that is essential in the formation of a nation. Further the confrontation between the two has been reiterated in many rewritings or criticism on *Hikayat Hang Tuah*:

The conflict between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat is regarded by some scholars as a dispute between protagonists who represent the political philosophies upheld by these ancient Malay warriors: the first deals with an undivided allegiance to the king (Hang Tuah’s) and the second is reflected in this phrase, “a fair king is revered, a cruel one is refuted” (Hang Jebat). This interpretation has generated a debate on the concept of the Malay hero: who is the true hero between these two warriors? (Kamaruddin M. Said 2009, p. 234).

In reinterpreting the battle between the two warriors, Fatimah Busu maintains the above idea in a similar way in the short story: “... Hang Jebat fought for truth, human dignity and justice. Hang Tuah fought on behalf of loyalty and unquestioning obedience to the state” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 265). Though Fatimah Busu may have agreed with the interpretations of the Tuah-Jebat conundrum, through “Al-Isra’,” she proposes a new way of looking at the character of Hang Jebat. To her, apart from his fight for ‘truth, human dignity and justice’, Hang Jebat may present an ‘ambivalent’ character of being simultaneously ‘honoured’ and ‘cursed’:

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23 The expression, “a fair king is revered, a cruel one is refuted” is said to have been spoken by Hang Jebat. This expression has been so famous in Malay culture that it is often quoted by many especially by a rakyat (citizen or people) to criticise any ruler – a king, minister or higher authority when the latter is regarded to have treated the former unjustly. However, this particular expression does not originally come from *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. It appears in the rewriting of the myth by Usman Awang in his play, *Matinya Seorang Pahlawan – Jebat/Death of a Warrior – Jebat* (1961, 1992). The expression is a creative invention by Usman Awang (1992, p. 19) in its original Malay: *Raja adil raja disembah/Raja tak adil (zalim) raja disanggah.*
“Are there any other people with bodies living in the world of the dead, Chief?”
“Yes.”
“Many?”
“Not Many.”
“How did they come to be like that?”
“The first group were cursed. The second group honoured.”
“Which group do you belong to?”
“A mixture of both groups.”
(Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 274)

In this light, Fatimah Busu adds another dimension to the character of Hang Jebat where she positions Hang Jebat as an embodiment of the oxymoronic ambivalence: honour/dishonour or revered/cursed. Such claim is further accentuated in the narrator’s voice: “… only man has been created by God to be cursed or reviled, and sometimes greatly honoured” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 275). In placing the character of Hang Jebat between ‘honour’ and ‘curse’, Fatimah Busu attempts to situate the kind of hero myth Hang Jebat is. The depiction of the character of Hang Jebat between ‘reverence’ and ‘damnation’ in the short story can be viewed as a reflection of the ongoing debates pertinent to the positioning of who the national hero is in Malaysian culture. Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth with regard to the tale of Jebat contributes to the formation of imaginative identification of a national identity. The dichotomy of Tuah-Jebat that is characteristic of the Malay psyche is important in ‘the narrative of a nation’ as it ‘becomes the touchstone of nationness’ (Hall 1992, in van der Heide 2002, p. 61) in the construction of a nation.

Further Muhammad Haji Salleh expresses the Tuah-Jebat polemics in his book, Yang Empunya Cerita/The Mind of the Malay Author:

Hang Tuah is the national hero, since the fifteenth century. It is only in the last thirty years that he was slowly dethroned, and his compatriot, whom he killed for the king, instated by influential critics like Kassim Ahmad. However, it must also be said that he is still in the consciousness of the general Malay population and for them Hang Jebat is a smaller character,
intellectual and individual in outlook, not the saviour of the race, as the former was and is seen to be (Muhammad Haji Salleh 1991, p. 116).

Though acknowledging the shift of the status of the national hero from Hang Tuah to Hang Jebat, Muhammad Haji Salleh still maintains that Hang Tuah is the 'real' national hero deserving reverence from the Malay community. The character of Hang Jebat maybe 'smaller' in the hikayat as argued above, but I proffer that Hikayat Hang Tuah climaxes with the death of Hang Jebat. In this regard, though the hikayat may seem to point Hang Tuah as the central character, this particular traditional Malay narrative can be seen as a subtext of the definition of heroism in the Malay culture. Perhaps this is what has prompted Kassim Ahmad to declare that there is no hero in Hikayat Hang Tuah (Kassim Ahmad 1959, 1997). In other words, neither Hang Tuah nor Hang Jebat fulfils the criterion for a 'national' hero. The absence of hero in the hikayat fuels the quest for the ideal Malay hero. Such a claim has also prompted Ahmad Sarji to favour Hang Tuah as the 'national epic' hero over Hang Jebat. In his defense of Hang Tuah as a 'national epic' figure or as a culture hero, Ahmad Sarji (2004) rejects Kassim Ahmad's claim that Hikayat Hang Tuah does not have a hero (Ahmad Sarji 2004, p. 101). What Kassim Ahmad means is that the fatal confrontation between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat is a result of social conflict where the reader needs to interpret the symbolic representations of the characters of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. Hang Tuah is said to symbolise the adoption of absolute traditional ideology whilst Hang Jebat represents the espousal of a new democratic ideology. Ahmad Sarji (2004) reports that Kassim Ahmad views Hang Tuah as “a fighting conservative” who “...fights to preserve an illogical order” (p. 101). To Kassim Ahmad, the world in which Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat live has a system of ‘an illogical order’. Hang Jebat is deemed right to go against the ‘illogical system’ whereas Hang Tuah is said to be trapped in his feudalistic
idealism. Ahmad Sarji (2004) then refutes this by arguing that Kassim Ahmad has looked at *Hikayat Hang Tuah* from the twentieth century perspectives (Ahmad Sarji 2004, p. 101). Such examination may seem plausible but it is not applicable in the fifteenth century context as it was a world of feudalistic society in which any democratic ideology is an alien concept to them (Ahmad Sarji 2004, p. 102). In an attempt to locate the ideal national hero, however, Kassim Ahmad favours Hang Jebat over Hang Tuah: “Jebat is the one whom we should prioritise in our effort in trying to find the hero for this epic of Malaysia” / “Jebatlah orang yang perlu diberi keutamaan dalam usaha kita mencari wira bagi epik Malaysia ini” (Kassim Ahmad 1959, cited in Kassim Ahmad 1997, p. xix). Earlier I argued that the positioning of Hang Jebat as both ‘honoured’ and ‘cursed’ in “Al-Isra’” demonstrates the ongoing debate surrounding the polemics of heroism between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. Perhaps in moving away from the contestation of who is hero between the two, Fatimah Busu offers an alternative as she views Hang Jebat’s suffering as ‘meaningless’, likened to the Western mythical character of Sisyphus who is condemned to perform a futile task. Now let us specifically look at the use of the myth of Sisyphus in the short fiction.

**3.6 Sisyphus in “Al-Isra’”**

In “Al-Isra’,” Fatimah Busu further complicates her portrayal of Hang Jebat by drawing on a Western myth: the Greek myth of Sisyphus. In *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature*, Khoo Gaik Cheng proposes that the inclusion of the Camus’ version of Sisyphus underlies the ambivalence of Hang Jebat as a martyr and absurd hero:

Fatimah Busu’s short story also combines Albert Camus’ essay, “The Myth of Sisyphus,” with Malay myth, positing Hang Jebat as a martyr whose spirit is doomed to wander the land with a perpetually bleeding wound caused by Hang Tuah (Khoo 2006, p. 26).
In bringing in the myth of Sisyphus, it is suggested that Hang Jebat can be viewed as an ‘absurd hero’. I will return to the discussion on hero as a martyr in the subsequent paragraphs. Furthermore, in *Hero Myths: A Reader* (2000), Robert A. Segal provides an example of the tale of Sisyphus in his description of an absurd hero. More specifically, Segal uses Camus’ rewriting of the myth of Sisyphus as an example of an absurd hero, though he does mention Homer’s Sisyphus in *The Odyssey*. In comparing Camus’ Sisyphus to Homer’s, Segal (2000), he observes the following:

> Homer does not say what Sisyphus’ misdeed was, and ancient mythographers differ. For all ancients, Sisyphus was to be pitied, and he was far from a hero as one could get. But for Albert Camus, he is to be admired. Rather than embodying the fate that awaits those who defy the gods, Sisyphus for Camus symbolizes the fate of all human beings in a world without gods. Sisyphus is admirable because he accepts the absurdity of human existence, which is less unfair than pointless. Instead of giving up and committing suicide, Sisyphus toils on, even while aware that his every attempt will prove futile. His is the only kind of heroism that a meaningless world allows (Segal 2000, p. 184).

If Homer’s *The Odyssey* is the source from which, Albert Camus as a mythographer, rewrites the tale of Sisyphus, similarly, Fatimah Busu is a mythographer who rewrites the myth of Hang Jebat from *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. While Sisyphus in *The Odyssey* is to be pitied, Hang Jebat is to be despised in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus admires the character of Sisyphus especially his perseverance; being an absurd hero, Sisyphus ‘consciously’ accepts his fate thus disallowing the satisfaction of the Gods:

> I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step towards the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock (Camus, translated in O’Brien 2005, p. 117).
Just like Camus who suggests that Sisyphus is to be admired, Fatimah Busu does the same as she offers ‘admirable’ traits of Hang Jebat in the short story. Among his admirable qualities is Hang Jebat’s ability to forgive Hang Tuah, as previously discussed. Hang Jebat is also to be admired as he fights for “truth, human dignity and justice” (Fatimah Busu translated in Aveling 1991, p. 265). The positioning of Hang Jebat as an absurd hero also allows for the containment of ‘metaphysical anguish’ (Taylor, cited in Hinchliffe 1969, p. 1) experienced by Hang Jebat as a result of feeling betrayed by his best friend, Hang Tuah. Paralleling Hang Jebat to an absurd hero, Fatimah Busu suggests that Hang Jebat should be contented and accept his fate similar to Sisyphus who is ‘happy’ in his punishment.

In the conclusion of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” Camus says: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, translated in O’Brien 2005, p. 119). It is suggested here that only through contentment, will one find happiness. Sisyphus as the absurd hero is fully aware of his futile efforts yet he feels contented in performing them:

The Gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour (Camus, translated in O’Brien 2005, p. 115).

Similarly, in “Al-Isra’,” the character of Sisyphus seems to be happy carrying out the vain task:

Once there, Hang Jebat watched as Sisyphus contentedly allowed the boulder to roll back down the hill again, into the valley from where he had begun his task. Then Sisyphus ran down the hill to his beloved boulder and once again started pushing it to the top of the mountain (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 281, my italics).
The incorporation of Camus’ “The Myth of Sisyphus” hence heightens the absurd element that points to the idea of ‘hopelessness’ and ‘meaningless’. In other words, Hang Jebat’s meeting with Sisyphus signifies the ‘aimlessness’ of truth and meaning he seeks. Hang Jebat remains trapped in his aimless wandering without getting to any exalted position in his quest for answers. His question remains unanswered even though he finally meets Sisyphus whom he expects to be able to provide answers. Instead, Sisyphus tells him to “go and ask God” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 281). In the end, Hang Jebat’s spirit roams aimlessly, abandoned, all alone:

One by one the skulls took their leave of Hang Jebat and began rolling back into the dark black sea, where they vanished one after the other. A moment later Hang Jebat found himself alone and lonely once more. As the dim bright light on the eastern horizon spread across the face of the ocean, Hang Jebat stood up and resumed his journey into the dark black remnant of the night (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 282).

In Hang Jebat’s ‘aimless journey’, the whole process of seeking truth has been repeated for a hundred years. Hang Jebat’s meaningless travel in finding answers mirrors Sisyphus’ never-ending futile endeavour to succeed in pushing the huge rock up the hill only to let it roll back down the hill again. Fatimah Busu seems to be ‘pro-Jebat’ but to suggest Jebat as an absurd hero is one way of ‘demonising’ his character.

The demonisation of Hang Jebat can be evaluated in the glorification of the character of Hang Tuah. In other words, it is the rejection of Jebat’s character as a Malay hero. This also means that the ennobling of Tuah undermines the character of Jebat thus staying faithful to the tradition. In Hikayat Hang Tuah, the characterisation of Jebat is minimal, almost insignificant, as the focus of the story is on the character of Tuah (Sulastin Sutrisno 1983, p. 184). The subsequent rewritings of Tuah-Jebat myth seem to create ‘imbalanced’ portrayals of both characters. Abdul Rahman Napiah
(1994) observes that in the dramatic representations of Tuah-Jebat, many playwrights 'demean' the character of Hang Jebat so as to dignify Hang Tuah as the 'truer' Malay hero. In his critical readings of Syed Alwi al-Hady's play, *Hang Tuah, atau Pahlawan Melayu/Hang Tuah, or the Malay Warrior* (1965), Abdul Rahman Napiah (1994) suggests that Syed Alwi al-Hady's rewriting of the myth reinforces the concept of patriotism displayed by Hang Tuah's bravery and loyalty. In the play, Hang Tuah's characterisation has been 'demythologised' so that his character appears to be more rational and 'concrete' unlike the mythical figure he occupies in the *hikayat* (Abdul Rahman Napiah 1994, pp. 24-72). Through *Hang Tuah, atau Pahlawan Melayu*, Syed Alwi al-Hady invented one of the most quoted Malay expressions or slogans: *Takkan Melayu hilang di dunia/ Never shall the Malays vanish from the world.* This expression further positions the character of Hang Tuah as the 'truer' Malay hero as many regarded him as the champion for the Malay cause. Further Abdul Rahman Napiah (1994, p. 47) comments that Hang Jebat's sacrifice in the play is no more than his love for Hang Tuah – a personal concern unlike Hang Tuah who acts out of his selfishness for his king and country. Views on the death of Hang Jebat have perpetuated in the recent rewritings of Tuah-Jebat myth (Abdul Rahman Napiah 1994, p. 320). Similarly, Fatimah Busu’s portrayal of Jebat as ‘disfigured’ or ‘deformed’ – a ‘half-man’ can be seen as demonising Hang Jebat thus demeaning his character: someone who does not deserve to be honoured as he fails to keep peace and order in

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24 Many claim these are words spoken by Hang Tuah in the traditional Malay text, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. This expression has been ‘deeply’ imbibed in the Malay culture and consciousness and it is often used to call for a unity among the Malay community. Such sentiment becomes the basis for the formation of the concept, *Ketuanan Melayu (Malay Supremacy)*. I will discuss more about this in Chapters 6 and 7. They, however, do not realise that it is a mere creative invention by Syed Alwi al-Hady.

the society unlike Hang Tuah. Now, let us further examine how the characterisation of Jebat is ‘discredited’ in viewing him in another type of hero myth: hero as a martyr.

In *Reclaiming Adat: Contemporary Malaysian Film and Literature*, Khoo Gaik Cheng makes a case for claiming Hang Jebat as a martyr further underlying the ambivalence of the character of Hang Jebat. Khoo (2006) suggests that the amalgamation of absurdism (the appearance of Sisyphus) and Islam (the experience of *Isra’*) has resulted in the emergence of Hang Jebat as a martyr in the story:

Fatimah Busu’s short story also combines Albert Camus’ essay, “The Myth of Sisyphus,” with Malay myth, positing Hang Jebat as a martyr whose spirit is doomed to wander the land with a perpetually bleeding wound caused by Hang Tuah. Its eclectic weaving of sometimes contradictory philosophies (such as absurdism and Islam) and literary cultures resonates strongly with the complex condition that is Malaysian modernity” (Khoo 2006, p. 26).

The merging of Islam and absurdism in the story points to Khoo’s interpretation of Fatimah Busu’s "Al-Isra’" as being a parable of Islamic martyrdom. However, it might be possible to offer an alternative reading to Khoo’s (2006). I argue that Hang Jebat does not die the death of a martyr in the short story. In Islam, the concept of martyrdom *(shaheed)* is related to the entire religion of Islam. This relation is best described by Ezzati’s (1986) remarks:

This whole process can be somehow understood if the term 'Islam' is appreciated. This is because being a derivate of the Arabic root *salama*, which means 'surrender' and 'peace', Islam is a wholesome and peaceful submission to the will of Allah. This means being prepared to die (martyrdom) in the course of this submission. Thus the concept of martyrdom, like all other Islamic concepts, can be fully and wholly appreciated only in the light of the Islamic doctrine of *tawhid*, or the absolute unity of Allah and full submission to His will and command. It cannot be fully appreciated in isolation.

In this manner, Hang Jebat’s rebellion is not a *jihad*, which is ‘the means of establishing the truth’ (Ezzati 1986), as his is an individual struggle in trying to avenge his best
friend’s false accusation and death. Thus, an Islamic martyr called a mujahid cannot be applied to characterise him as such in “Al-Isra’.” Hang Jebat seems to be fighting for establishing righteousness and retribution, as observed by the narrator of the story: “...Hang Jebat fought for truth, human dignity and justice. Hang Tuah fought on behalf of loyalty and unquestioning obedience to the state” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 265). However, it is rather obvious that Hang Jebat’s motive is more of a personal vengeance and gratification as he says:

“Who cares what happens after you’re dead?” Hang Jebat insisted. “As long as I’m ready to die, people can do what they like once I’ve gone – it won’t bother me in the least ... I want to start a new tradition. I don’t want a grave when I’m dead, nothing at all” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 259).

Hang Jebat, as seen in the above context is vindictive. Such attitude is uncharacteristic of an Islamic martyr. Although his revenge is leveled against the king's injustice, nevertheless, his act of revenge has cost the lives of innocent people (Amida Abdulhamid 2004, p. 126), as he kills most of the palace maids before his duel with Hang Tuah: “…the naked bodies of the serving maidens, stretched out with wounds on their breasts, bellies and thighs, anywhere Taming Sari had been able to touch before Hang Tuah entered the audience hall” (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 267). Hang Jebat’s motive, thus, may seem to be noble as he is willing to do whatever it takes, even to the point of sacrificing himself, as long as he can avenge Hang Tuah’s death as ordered by the king, but it is also despicable as it is done at the expense of killing others, therefore, in this instance, he does not die a martyr. I argue that the character of Hang Jebat should remain an absurd hero without the extension of making him a ‘martyr’ hero. Fatimah Busu may have inserted an Islamic dimension into the story but it does not necessarily qualify Jebat to be viewed as a martyr hero. The Islamic tradition holds the concept of martyrdom in high esteem in which, Jebat,
in the words of Teeuw (1961, p. 47), “is an offender in the broadest sense of the word” and “…is durhaka..., a ‘public enemy’, ‘a socially harmful man’.” Such traits are detrimental in the construction of a national culture.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter looked at a few issues pertinent to Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth. More specifically, it examined Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Al-Isra’.” The analysis of “Al-Isra’” depended on the English translation of the short story provided by Harry Aveling. The discussion then continued with the analysis of the short story using the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. Furthermore, the contemporary representations of mythical stories based on Hikayat Hang Tuah, have helped sustain the importance of traditional Malay literature and it is hoped that such diversity of ideas either being pro-Tuah or pro-Jebat may instill a sense of appreciation among the new Malaysian generations. In this regard, Fatimah Busu’s “Al-Isra’” can be concluded as having contributed in ‘forging’ a new national narrative which has been achieved through the idea of rewriting the myth. In other words, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth of Hang Jebat offers a new way of looking at Hikayat Hang Tuah. Though she may have positioned the character of Hang Jebat as an absurd hero in “Al-Isra’,” it is through absurdity that Hang Jebat can be fully understood. This is how Fatimah Busu has responded to the polarities of ‘who is wrong, who is right’ and ‘who is the Malay hero’ in which she contends that though Hang Jebat is treacherous enough to have gone against the state and the tale of Jebat reinforces the narrative of ‘truth, human dignity and justice’ (Fatimah Busu, translated in Aveling 1991, p. 265). The following chapter will continue with the examination of the rewriting of the Malay mythical tales by
Fatimah Busu in another short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” using the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’.
Chapter 4
Rakyat and Raja in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the first three ceritera, ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’ of Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The analysis of the ceritera will use the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. Before going further into the ‘image–I–nation’ discussions, the chapter will first look at these two issues: ‘The Structure’ and ‘Transliteration (Transcribing the Myth)’. In the section, ‘The Structure’, the discussion will focus on the structure of ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’. This is to indicate that, in maintaining the structure of traditional Malay narration technique, Fatimah Busu attempts to preserve the credibility of the myth. Fatimah Busu’s structure of the first three ceritera is compared to other relevant works by transcribers of Sulalat al-Salatin, notably W.G. Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu (1975). The next section on ‘Transliteration (Transcribing the Myth)’ will compare the treatment of myth by Fatimah Busu to other transcribers of Sulalat al-Salatin, apart from Shellabear. In this section, the Malay myths will be discussed in terms of their appearances in the context of transliteration. It is argued here that the role of transliteration is to mainly ‘preserve’ the credibility of the myth so as to maintain the tradition, whereas, rewriting is connected with the exploitation of the myth within new contexts. Fatimah Busu may not be a transcriber of the myth, but her manipulation of mythical tales still preserves the credibility of the myth. The discussion will then continue to examine the first three ceritera in the short story.
The analyses of ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’ will use the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ in which they are divided into three: ‘Images of Rakyat and Raja’, ‘The “I” in the Narrative’ and ‘The Nation in the Singapura Myth’. Briefly, in ‘Images of Rakyat and Raja’, the analysis will centre on two groups of mythical characters: the people (rakyat) and the kings or sultans (raja). Further these characters are seen to be representatives of the images of innocence and injustice, respectively. Other relevant images or symbols will also be discussed, such as images or symbols of violence and water. The section on ‘The “I” in the Narrative’ will look at the role of the narrator in the story and the role played by Fatimah Busu as a writer. In this regard, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth can be seen as using the myth as implied commentaries on the Malay monarchs and the people. The analysis then continues on the issue of the nation in the subsequent section in which Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the Singapura myth will be assessed in terms of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ in exploring the theme – the fall of the Malay race as a nation. In this manner, Fatimah Busu’s “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” can be viewed as one of the ‘Stories of the nation’ for the Malays. Before going into deeper discussions of the three ceritera, let us, first have a look at the structure of the short story.

4.2 The Structure

In the short story, Fatimah Busu reworks three specific episodes from Sulalat al-Salatin. These are tales concerning Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa and his daughter. In each tale, the character of the sultan or king plays a significant role. Each ceritera can be viewed as a story of conflict between the raja and his rakyat. All three original episodes form the first three ceritera in the short story. The two remaining ceritera mainly consist of historical anecdotes and a long gurindam
lamenting over the political predicaments faced by the Malays from the period of the ancient establishment of the Malay kingdom right up to modern Malaysia. The first three ceritera serve to set up the ‘causes’ that prepare us for the ‘effects’ in the subsequent ceritera. The first three divisions: ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’ correspond directly to tales from Sulalat al-Salatin, concerning Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa, respectively. Fatimah Busu seems to end her rewriting of the myth in the remaining divisions of story in ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’, but she resurrects the character of Hang Nadim in ‘Ceritera V’. The two remaining ceritera: ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ render the ‘effects’ or consequences of the fall of Singapura. These two ceritera will be further examined in Chapter 5.

In the process of rewriting the myth, Fatimah Busu makes it obvious that her short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” is linked directly to the traditional Malay narrative of story telling. The short story has been structured into five divisions in which each division is sub-headed as a ceritera (tale or story). The word, ceritera, is an archaic form of the modern word, cerita in the Malay language and both words literally mean ‘tale’ or ‘story’. Ceritera is now almost permanently replaced by cerita. In relation to Fatimah Busu’s “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” the use of the term ceritera creates a figurative sense so as to depart from a literal use of the word ‘tale’ or ‘story’. In short, ceritera anchors “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” to the traditional mode of Malay Literature, hence making it ‘referential’ to the original story narrated in Sulalat al-Salatin.

26 Winstedt (1965, p. 71) also gives these other meanings: ‘romance; false report, fiction’.

27 The two words are, however, spelt according to the Za’ba system retaining the grapheme of <ě> for the schwa making them spelt as chěrita and chěritěra respectively (Asmah Haji Omar 1989, pp. 9-13).
Fatimah Busu also chooses to use subheadings to demonstrate that “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” parallels the structure of Sulalat al-Salatin. Before ‘Ceritera I’ begins, the short story has two subheadings: ‘Alkisah Ceritera Yang Kesepuluh’/‘The Story of the Tenth Tale’ and ‘Alamat Akan Binasa Negeri Singapura’/‘Signs of the Fall of Singapura’. Alkisah (‘The Story’) in the subheading also suggests original archaic usage. It is now obsolete in modern Malay language, similar to the word, ceritera. However, the word, kisah (‘story’) without al (‘the’ – from Arabic) in front, is still widely used in modern Malay language. After the first subheading, the reader is told that the story is based on Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu: ‘(Adapted from Sejarah Melayu or The Malay Annals, Volume IIEII, by W.G. Shellabear, the 9th print, Singapura: Malay Publishing House Ltd. 1960)’. The first subheading simply acknowledges that the main source of the story is derived from Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu and the second subheading functions as a form of ‘warning’ hinting at the causes for the fall of Singapura.

The way Fatimah Busu presents the three stories: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa, is different from Shellabear’s, as the latter incorporates all the stories under the section: ‘The Tenth Tale’. In the Shellabear version, all three stories are narrated in a continuous form and are only divided by paragraphs. In the short story, Fatimah Busu rewrites all three stories in which she highlights and dramatises each story and she labels each one of them as ‘Ceritera I, II and III’ respectively. All three stories in both versions may seem to direct us to read them as integrated stories pointing to the ‘causes’ of the fall of Singapura but Fatimah Busu’s

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28 In the original Malay: (Adaptasi dari Sejarah Melayu or The Malay Annals, Jilid IIEII, naskhah W.G. Shellabear, Cetakan ke-9, Singapura: Malay Publishing House Ltd. 1960).
version further hyperbolises the presentation and rendition of the stories. In this regard, she purposely rewrites the three stories as individual stories so as to place significant emphasis on each story. She personalises the stories to stir up feelings or emotions upon reading “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The personalisation of the myth can be felt through Fatimah Busu’s characterisation of the mythical characters and dramatisation of events. For example, the wisdom of Hang Nadim in saving Singapura from the attack of the swordfish can be seen as a subtext of the weakening power of the king whose initial decision has caused the death of many people of Singapura. Further analysis can be found in the subsequent sections when discussing the *ceritera* using the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’. The issue of the structure is further discussed in the following section with regard to other transliterations or transcriptions of *Sulalat al-Salatin*.

### 4.3 Transliteration (Transcribing the Myth)

Fatimah Busu may not be a transcriber of *Sulalat al-Salatin* but her rewriting of the myth builds on the tradition of transliterations or transcriptions of myth. In this section, I shall discuss the major contemporary transliterations or translations of *Sulalat al-Salatin*, identifying their key interests and structures. The original version of *Sulalat al-Salatin* (originally written in Jawi script) has been transcribed and romanised by numerous scholars both local and international. In this study, the main transliteration referred to is the *Sejarah Melayu* (1975), edited by W.G. Shellabear (1862-1947). According to Roolvink (cited in Cheah & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail 2009, p. 24), Shellabear’s *Sejarah Melayu* was first published in Jawi script in 1896. This is the text on which Fatimah Busu bases her rewriting of Malay myths in the short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The other Malay transcriptions or
transliterations discussed in this study are: A. Samad Ahmad’s *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* (1979), Muhammad Haji Salleh’s *Sulalat al-Salatin ya’ni Perteturan Segala Raja-Raja (Sejarah Melayu)* (1997)\(^{29}\) and Cheah Boon Kheng’s and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail’s *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)* (2009).\(^{30}\) In this thesis, I will use my own translations when referring to the other Malay versions of *Sulalat al-Salatin*.\(^{31}\) This is one way of offering ‘new’ perspectives in understanding *Sulalat al-Salatin* in the context of the 21st century within my capacity as an ‘insider’ – the new generation of Malaysians looking at traditional Malay grand narratives. In this sense, this thesis attempts to break the shackles of dependency upon the earlier English transcriptions provided by ‘outsiders’ [Leyden (1821, 2001) and Brown (1952, 2009)] – both belonging to the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively.

Fatimah Busu’s structure signifies the importance of the use of proper subheadings to preserve the credibility of the myth. Fatimah Busu could have discarded the use of these subheadings which are similar to many rewritings of the myth, but the subheading structure serves the purpose of making her rewriting of the myth referential to the tradition. Although her work cannot be regarded as a transliteration or transcription, the structuring of the short story provides a credible use of myth. This is what distinguishes “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” from other

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\(^{29}\) In the ‘Introduction’, Muhammad Haji Salleh suggests that *Sulalat al-Salatin* was first written or copied by Tun Sri Lanang in 1612. However, this claim has been challenged by latter scholars like Cheah Boon Kheng who claims that it was Tun Bambang who was the first writer or copyist. See Cheah’s article, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Melakan Empire: Moral Judgement in Tun Bambang’s *Sejarah Melayu*” (1998) for further information.

\(^{30}\) This version was compiled by Cheah Boon Kheng and transcribed by Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail. It includes scholarly articles/prefaces/introductions by scholars of Malay Studies such as Winstedt, Roolvink and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail.

\(^{31}\) For brevity, each transliteration or translation is addressed as follows: Shellabear version, Samad version, Muhammad version and Cheah & Rahman version.
rewritings of the myth. The significance of the sub-heading: ‘Alamat Akan Binasa Negeri Singapura’/‘Signs of the Fall of Singapura’ is evident in the Shellabear version. Of all thirty-four cetera or ‘tales’ in the Shellabear version, only ‘Alkisah Cetera yang Kesepuluh’/‘The Story of the Tenth Tale’ has the above subheading. Such emphasis is continually maintained in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” as shown earlier in the discussion.

The careless use of the subheadings may lead to confusion in chronicling the myth. For example, in the Samad version, mythical stories related to the fall of Singapura appear in the fourth section. There are fifteen sections altogether in the Samad version. Under the fourth section, the Samad version uses a different subheading: ‘Singapura Dilanggar Todak’/‘The Attack on Singapura by Swordfish’. The two subheadings in the rewriting by Fatimah Busu, form the first sentence in the Samad version: ‘Alkisah diceriterakan orang empunya cerita – alamat akan binasa negeri Singapura’/‘Thus began the tale as it was told by the story teller – the signs of the fall of Singapura’ (A. Samad Ahmad 1979, p. 67). It seems awkward that A. Samad Ahmad introduces a new subheading: ‘Singapura Dilanggar Todak’/‘The Attack on Singapura by Swordfish’ in which the story or episode of Tuan Jana Khatib does not occur during the attack of the swordfish. Furthermore, there are only two mythical tales: Tuan Jana Khatib and the boy who saved Singapura (Hang Nadim) that appear under the subheading: ‘Singapura Dilanggar Todak’/‘The Attack on Singapura by Swordfish’. The myth of Sang Rajuna Tapa is delegated under a different subheading: ‘Akibat Khianat, Singapura Dialahkan Majapahit’/‘Due to Betrayal, Singapura Was Conquered by Majapahit’. The placement of the three mythical stories under different
subheadings breaks the linearity of the myth in pointing out the causes of the fall of Singapura.

Fatimah Busu’s structure maintains the linearity of the myth as the reader is led to see that the three myths: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa are the main ‘causes’ for the fall of Singapura. It is clear in Fatimah Busu’s rewriting that the mythical stories can be read as signs leading to the fall of Singapura and they form a cohesive sequential narration of the myth. First, the story of Tuan Jana Khatib should be read as one of the signs (if not the first one) leading to the fall of Singapura, due to an unwise judgement by the ruler. It is followed by the second sign, whereby in the story of Hang Nadim, he is ordered to be put to death despite having saved Singapura from the swordfish attack. Third, the sign of the fall of Singapura appears in the story of Sang Rajuna Tapa whose daughter is also ordered to be put to death due to false accusations as a result of a hasty decision. The theme of death in all three stories in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” thus corresponds to the fall of Singapura as it is then narrated that Singapura is attacked by Majapahit, leading to the ‘death’ of Singapura thus resulting in the end of the Singapura Sultanate. In this thesis, I call these mythical tales as the Singapura myth where all three myths are narrated concentrating on the fall of Singapura. Further we will look at how these myths are ‘disintegrated’ in the other versions of Sulalat al-Salatin.

The division of the mythical tales into three ceritera in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” also marks an important distinction to Shellabear’s continuous narrative technique. The continuous technique of narration seems to pose some problematic issues especially in the Cheah & Rahman and Muhammad versions. Both
versions relate to all episodic tales in thirty-one ‘sections’ unlike the Shellabear version that has thirty-four sections. Both Muhammad and Cheah & Rahman versions place the episodes on the fall of Singapura in the sixth section. In the Muhammad version, the term, alkisah forms the first sentence in all sections (II-XXXI) except the first section, whereas the same term, though slightly spelt differently, alqisah becomes a subheading in the Cheah & Rahman version. It seems that all versions (Shellabear, Samad, Cheah & Rahman, Muhammad and Fatimah Busu) agree that the term, alkisah should form a ‘distinctive’ feature in the narrative technique. In both versions of Cheah & Rahman and Muhammad, however, the three tales: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa look like ‘subsidiary’ episodes in support of a larger story appearing in the sixth section of each version. In this sense, the three stories seem to be ‘lost’ in a larger narrative in these two versions, similar to the Samad version as discussed above, thus undermining the importance of the story of the fall of Singapura. In the Shellabear version, although the narration of the myth is rendered in a simple linearity manner, there is still a clear ‘flow’ of the story that points to the signs of the fall of Singapura. In Fatimah Busu’s rewriting, such signs are further given significant values as they direct the reader to see the ‘causes’ that lead to the fall of Singapura.

The brief survey on the selected transliterations of Sulalat al-Salatin proves that these writers are mere transcribers of ancient Malay texts. The role played by such authors is almost similar to copyists who try to ‘imitate’ the original version so as to ‘preserve’ the originality and credibility of tradition. Thus, dramatisation may not be a part of the narrative technique in the transcription. However, I argue that the labeling of the tales into sections (or perhaps chapters), as in the case of the Shellabear version that has thirty-four sections, followed by the Cheah & Rahman and
Muhammad versions with thirty-one sections respectively, and the Samad version with fifteen sections; it points to the fact that these narrative ‘divisions’ may influence the way we perceive the ancient tales in Sulalat al-Salatin. Perhaps this is the reason why Fatimah Busu has incorporated the structural divisions of the myth in her rewriting in order to maintain the original formatting of Malay traditional techniques of narration so as to ‘preserve’ the credibility of the myth. Further the use of subheadings can also indicate the author’s purpose in directing the reader’s attention on certain stories in the text. The use of subheadings is pivotal as it sets a ‘direction’ for the reader to help ‘contextualise’ tales or events in the text. In the Shellabear version, in all the episodic sections in the text, only the sixth section has the above subheading32 as pointed out earlier. In this regard, the subheading functions to contextualise the tales of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa as these are crucial events that lead up to the fall of Singapura. There are other transliterations but this research is limited only to the above texts as the focus is not on the entirety of Sulalat al-Salatin as a scholarship, but mainly to examine the three Malay mythical tales: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa presented in different versions. Now, let us move on to the examination of ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’, which is analysed using the concept of ‘image–I–nation’.

4.4 Images of Rakyat and Raja

In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” the retelling of the mythical characters concerns these three characters: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna

32 Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu has the longest division of stories with thirty-four sections. Each section is marked by headings such as ‘Cetera yang Pertama’ (‘The First Tale’), ‘Cetera yang Kedua’ (‘The Second Tale’) ... ‘Cetera yang Ketigapuluh Empat’ (‘The Thirty-fourth Tale’). Notice that Shellabear uses cetera instead of ceritera as in the case of Fatimah Busu. According to Kamus Dewan (4th edn.), cetera is listed as another word for cerita or ceritera (pp. 276-7).
Tapa; these myths are from the ancient Malay text, *Sulalat al-Salatin*. Specifically, the rewriting of the mythical character of Tuan Jana Khatib occurs in ‘Ceritera I’, followed by the tale of Hang Nadim in ‘Ceritera II’. The king, Paduka Seri Maharaja appears in both ‘Ceritera I’ and ‘Ceritera II’. ‘Ceritera III’ concerns the myth of Sang Rajuna Tapa and his daughter. The daughter is also the king’s gundik, defined as a ‘secondary wife’ (Andaya & Andaya 2001, p. 51). The king in ‘Ceritera III’ is Raja Iskandar Shah, the son of the previous king in ‘Ceritera I’ and ‘Ceritera II’, Paduka Seri Maharaja. The mythical characters of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa represent the rakyat (people) whilst the mythical royal characters of Paduka Seri Maharaja and Raja Iskandar Shah represent the raja (king). Though these ceritera may seem to focus on the rewriting of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa, the retelling of the myth can be viewed as a subversion of the idea of glorifying the king as traditionally constituted in old Malay tradition. In this section, I will first demonstrate how the innocent image of Tuan Jana Khatib has been presented in ways that it undermines the image of the ruler, Paduka Seri Maharaja. I will also compare the rewriting of the myth of Tuan Jana Khatib to a few versions of *Sulalat al-Salatin* both in Malay and English. The Shellabear version will be the primary source of comparison as this is the text on which Fatimah Busu bases her rewriting of the myth in the first three ceritera of “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”. Other Malay versions (Samad, Cheah & Rahman and Muhammad) will be referred to when key points of interpretation are in question. To support this further, other English versions will be at times consulted, and they are by John Leyden and C.C. Brown.

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33 Leyden’s *Malay Annals* is the first English translation of *Sulalat al-Salatin*. It was first published in 1821. The version used in this chapter is the 2001 version published by the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS). It includes an ‘Introductory Essay’ by Virginia Matheson and M.B. Hooker.
‘Ceritera I’ begins with the introduction of the character of Tuan Jana Khatib. At first, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting seems to follow the simple depiction of the character similar to other versions in which Tuan Jana Khatib is described as a man who is originally from Pasai, Sumatra:


His name was Tuan Jana Khatib. A man from Pasai. He came from the land above the wind. His knowledge was bountiful. He was truly holy as he was a learned man with knowledge of the oneness of God in all His sovereignty [My translation].

Fatimah Busu’s portrayal of Tuan Jana Khatib’s character seemingly imitates the depictions in other Malay versions of Sulalat al-Salatin:

Ada seorang hamba Allah orang Pasai turun dari atas angin ke Pasai tiga bersahabat, Tun Jana Khatib namanya, memahirkan ilmu khayal lillah lagi tauhid duabelas alam (Shellabear 1975, p. 50).

There was this servant of Allah, a man from Pasai who came from the land above the wind, he went to Pasai, the three of them were good friends, his name was Tun Jana Khatib, a learned man with knowledge of the oneness of God in all His sovereignty [My translation].

Maka ada seorang hamba Allah, orang Pasai, turun dari atas angin ke Pasai tiga bersahabat, Tuan Jana Khatib namanya; memahirkan ilmu khayal lillah lagi tamam dua belas alam (A. Samad Ahmad 1979, p. 67).

There was this servant of Allah, a man from Pasai who came from the land above the wind, he went to Pasai and the three of them were good friends, his name was Tun Jana Khatib, a learned man with knowledge of the oneness of God in all His sovereignty [My translation].

Maka ada seorang hamba Allah di Pasyai, Tun Jana Khatib namanya. Maka ia pergi ke Singa Pura. Setelah datang ke Singa Pura maka Tun Jana Khatib pun berjalan di pekan Singa Pura. Ketika itu ia bersahabat dengan di Bunguran dan tuan di Selangor (Muhammad Haji Salleh 1997, pp. 54-5).

34 Brown’s Malay Annals was first published in 1952 in JMBRAS 25 (2-3). The version used in this chapter is the 2009 version published by the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS).
There was this servant of Allah in Pasyai, Tun Jana Khatib was his name. He then went to Singa Pura. While in Singa Pura he went for a walk in the town of Singa Pura. At that time, he was a good friend of Tuan di Bungoran and Tuan di Selangor [My translation].

Maka ada seorang hamba Allah di Pasai, Tuan Jana Khatib namanya; maka ia pergi ke Singapura. Setelah datang ke Singapura, maka Tuan Jana Khatib pun berjalan di pakan Singapura; ketika itu ia bersahabat dengan Tuan di Bungoran dan Tuan di Selangor (Cheah & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail 2009, p. 117).

There was this servant of Allah in Pasai, Tun Jana Khatib was his name; He then went to Singapura. While in Singapura, he went for a walk in the town of Singapura; at that time, he was a good friend of Tuan di Bungoran and Tuan di Selangor [My translation].

Fatimah Busu’s introduction of the character almost looks like a replication of the Shellabear and Samad versions as all three hints at the religiously ascetic character of Tuan Jana Khatib in the foreground. In the remaining two versions of Muhammad and Cheah & Rahman versions though, Tuan Jana Khatib is introduced as a commoner, a humble servant of God. Such simple depiction is also a characteristic of the following two English versions of Sulalat al-Salatin:

It is related by the author followed in this work, that there was a man of Pasei, named Tun Jana Khateb, who went to Singhapura with two companions named Tuan de Bongoran, and Tuan di Salangor (Leyden 2001, p. 82).

Now there was a man of Pasai called Tun Jana Khatib. And he went to Singapura. And when he was come to Singapura, he walked through the streets accompanied by Tuan (?) di-Bungoran and Tuan di-Selangor (Brown 2009, p. 49).

There is a difference in the portrayal of the character of Tuan Jana Khatib between Fatimah Busu’s rewriting and the others, though there is a slight similarity to the Shellabear and Samad versions in terms of the depiction of holiness in the character. Fatimah Busu’s rewriting may be closer to the Shellabear version on which she has based her rewriting, but the latter’s version falls short in dramatising the religious
attributes of the character. The following discussion, in this section and the subsequent sections, will now be limited to the comparison of Fatimah Busu's rewriting to only the Shellabear version. There exists a gap between Fatimah Busu's rewriting of the myth and the Shellabear version. In ‘Ceritera I’ of “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Tuan Jana Khatib is depicted as a true religious man whose divinity justifies his ability to cause a miraculous event leading to the queen falling in a swoon, whereas Shellabear simply describes him as an ordinary man of religion, commoner. This particular scene will be further examined in the following discussion.

The way the character of Tuan Jana Khatib is introduced is much simpler in the Shellabear version as it is only written in a few lines, thus leaving no room for any dramatisation of the character. The ascetic quality of Tuan Jana Khatib's religious practice is further dramatised in ‘Ceritera I’ thus characterising him not just as a simple religious man, but also as a pious sage who possesses ‘divine power’ that makes him almost superhuman:


Thus Tuan Jana Khatib was not an ordinary man. He could walk on water. He could cross a river just by walking on it. He could fly just like a bird from the sky. He could be invisible in a breath. These were all his superpower abilities endowed with divinity as a result of complete submission, pure mind and soul to the ultimate power of Allah, the Almighty God [My Translation].

In the above quotation, which is a continuation from the first quote from ‘Ceritera I’ earlier, the omniscient narrator now moves on from just merely reporting about the character: “His name was Tuan Jana Khatib. A man of Pasai...” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p.
271) to passing judgement on the character: “Thus Tuan Jana Khatib was not an ordinary man...” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 271). The narrator’s judgements on the character will be further discussed in the next section. Furthermore, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth may elicit an additional subtext to the reading of the short story: the killing of a pious man can be translated as ‘the rejection of the religious institution’ during the rule of Paduka Seri Maharaja in Singapura.

Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth of Tuan Jana Khatib clarifies ambiguous matters in the earlier versions of the story especially in the Shellabear version. The mysterious death of Tuan Jana Khatib, though it may have been dramatised, is made clear in the short story. Acting upon orders by Paduka Seri Maharaja to sentence Tuan Jana Khatib to death, the Prime Minister commands that Tuan Jana Khatib is to be arrested immediately:


After his arrest, the commander dragged him to the place of execution. It was unfortunate, however, that before his arrival at the place, while passing through, he was getting close to the town, Tuan Jana Khatib was stabbed by someone. The blood of Tuan Jana Khatib spilled onto the soil of Singapura. However, the body of Tuan Jana Khatib simply vanished, nowhere to be found. All commanders frantically looked for his body all over the place. All corners of town were searched but to no avail. They even searched for his body in the entire state of Singapura. In the rivers, on the hills, in the swamps, in the forests, all were in vain [My Translation].

Fatimah Busu dramatises the mysterious disappearance of Tuan Jana Khatib to further accentuate the idea of ‘killing the religion’ as epitomised by the character of the pious
man. In comparison to the Shellabear version, such chaotic moments are never felt as
the death of Tuan Jana Khatib is rendered in a simple manner:

Maka Tun Jana Khatib pun dibawa orang kepada tempat pembunuhan, hampir
tempat orang berkedai bikang, serta ditikam orang akan Tun Jana Khatib,
darahnya titik ka-bumi, badannya ghaib tiada berketahuan (Shellabear 1975, p. 50).

Then Tun Jana Khatib was brought to the place of execution, near a cake shop, someone then stabbed Tun Jana Khatib, onto the ground his blood spilled, his
body vanished without a trace [My Translation].

The simplicity of narration in the Shellabear version contributes to making the story
seem unclear as many events are rendered in just one sentence. All events are only
separated by commas, hence Shellabear’s narration is much less dramatic. Fatimah
Busu’s version of the story manages to elevate the status of Tuan Jana Khatib as a
pious man, undeserving of such a cruel punishment. The following discussions will
analyse the other two mythical characters: Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa.

Fatimah Busu dramatises the fate of Hang Nadim, another image of the rakyat
in ‘Ceritera II’. Unlike the Shellabear version, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth
involves the feelings of collective consciousness of the people. Though this is a further
exaggeration based on the brief episode in Sulalat al-Salatin, Fatimah Busu manages to
heighten intensity and suspense in the story by utilising the concept of dramatic irony:

Penduduk kampungpun datang berlarian berkumpul. Mereka sangat-
sangat gembira raja perintah Hang Nadim datang ke istana. Tentu raja mahu
jadikan Hang Nadim anak angkatnya! Beginilah mestinya anugerah yang sesuai
untuk Hang Nadim yang yatim piatu itu. Kalau tidak kerana akalnya, tentu
separuh dari rakyat Singapura mati ditikam todak! Mujurlah ada Hang Nadim
yang cerdik! Tentulah sudah patut raja membalas jasanya yang sungguh besar!
(Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 280).

The village people then came running and gathered around. They were
so pleased to learn that the king had summoned Hang Nadim to have an
audience with him at the palace. Certainly the king wanted to adopt him as his
son! Befitting such a high recognition to reward the orphaned boy accordingly! If it was not because of his wisdom, half of the people of Singapura may have perished in the swordfish attack! Thank God for the wise boy, Hang Nadim! Surely the king will give him the biggest reward ever as he truly deserves it! [My Translation].

Such dramatic irony is further intensified as Fatimah Busu uses another powerful symbol, water as seen through the act of shedding tears by Hang Nadim:

"Engkau ini Hang Nadimkah?" Tanya bentara.
"Ya." Hang Nadim berpaling.


"Kenapa hamba diperintahkan meng-adap?" Tanya Hang Nadim.


"Are you Hang Nadim?" asked the herald.
"Yes." Hang Nadim turned around to face him.

The heralds and commanders noticed that Hang Nadim was crying. His cheeks were wet. His expression was sad and gloomy. "Come with us to the palace. The king summons you to come see him right away."

"Why have I been summoned to see the king?" asked Hang Nadim.

"Certainly the king wants to reward you. You have contributed greatly to Singapura, haven’t you? You have saved many lives of the people of Singapura from the swordfish attack, haven’t you? Let’s go."

Hang Nadim then rose. He then wiped away his tears with the back of his hand. They then walked through the village. Many villagers came to see that Hang Nadim being escorted to the palace. They were all very happy thinking that he would receive rewards from the king [My Translation].
In this dramatisation, Fatimah Busu draws the reader's attention more sympathetically towards the character of Hang Nadim. This further intensifies dramatic irony as readers already know of his impending fate. Generally, if water is seen as a symbol of ‘origin’ or ‘continuation of life’, Fatimah Busu situates the symbol in tragic irony, as later in the story, Hang Nadim’s tears are mixed with the Singapura sea:


Splaaassssh! It was rather loud. The sea water was splashing. And Hang Nadim was then pulled down to the bottom of the sea by the heavy blocks that were chained to his whole body. His tears mingled with the sea of Singapura. The flesh and blood of Hang Nadim were mixed with the sea of Singapura. Then the burden was borne by Singapura [My Translation and Italics].

The drowning of Hang Nadim is Fatimah Busu’s own dramatisation of the death of Hang Nadim. In almost all versions of Sulalat al-Salatin (Shellabear, Samad, Muhammad, Cheah & Rahman, Leyden and Brown), such a dramatic death of Hang Nadim does not exist at all. Fatimah Busu further highlights the final line: ‘Then the burden was borne by Singapura’ at the end of the whole story:


The commanders did not realise that the outcome of their deed was being borne by Singapura. The Prime Minister and his ministers too did not realise that the outcome of their green-eyed monstrous jealousy was being borne by Singapura. Even the king did not realise that the outcome of his command was being borne by Singapura [My Translation].
The reiteration can be understood as a form of criticism questioning the ‘supposedly’ wise decision and judgment made by the lawgivers of the state of Singapura. This emphasis on the general political effects of personal emotional decision is made clear when we compare Fatimah Busu’s repeated mention of ‘burden’ or responsibility to Shellabear’s single line right at the end of his version: ‘Adapun tatkala budak itu dibunuh, maka hak rasanya tanggungkannya atas negeri Singapura’ (Shellabear 1975, p. 52)/‘As the execution was carried out, the burden was then borne by Singapura’ [My Translation]. In this manner, Fatimah Busu has reemphasised this particular line as seen in the above excerpt as a way of heightening her satirical commentary on the foolishness of the rulers of ancient Singapura. The image of the rakyat as victims of the king’s cruelty continues in ‘Ceritera III’ where the unnamed gundik of the king, who is also Sang Rajuna Tapa’s daughter, dies mercilessly when the king, Raja Iskandar Shah orders her to be executed, a punishment brought about by false accusations.

Through the portrayal of the innocent rakyat as represented by Sang Rajuna Tapa and his daughter, the gundik, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” speculates that injustice is one of the factors that brought about the devastation of Singapura at the hands of Majapahit. The dramatised impalement of the gundik allows for further comments on what may have caused the fall of Singapura thus leading the reader to become aware of the ‘real’ factors that contributed to the decline of the Malay race. I will return to the dramatisation of the punishment in the next section. Further through the character of Sang Rajuna Tapa, in his vehemence, he betrays the country. He commits treason by asking Majapahit to attack Singapura. It is with the help of Sang Rajuna Tapa that Majapahit manages to launch an attack on Singapura which resulted in devastating the entire country. Consequently, the king and his ministers have to
escape and they first end up in Johor, then in Melaka. With the absence of the king, Singapura has been left neglected, even Sang Rajuna Tapa and his wife are turned into stone and for many hundred years, Singapura became a forsaken island occupied only by pirates: “Berkurun-kurun Singapura menjadi tempat persinggahan lanun atau ‘water gypsy’ [sic] yang bermaharajalela di sekitar perairannya” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 291)/“For centuries Singapura had been a meeting point for pirates or water gypsies and they lawlessly ruled the land and its waters” [My Translation]. Such description of the desolate land is not mentioned in the other versions. This is Fatimah Busu’s own interpretation of what might have happened to Singapura after the attack of Majapahit and she further uses historical facts to her support her arguments. The following section will illustrate Fatimah Busu’s political criticism against the raja in which the “I” in the narrative – the narrator and the role of Fatimah Busu as a writer will further uncover the foolishness of the kings in their lack of giving wise judgements – one of the central themes in the short story.

4.5 The “I” in the Narrative

I will examine the “I” in the narrative following these analyses: First, the narration and dramatisation of the myth and second, the role of Fatimah Busu as the writer of the short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” In Sulalat al-Salatin, the use of myth aims to present the “I” story of the king in which his character is depicted as infallible. The king as the “I,” stands in as the ‘self’ against the ‘others’ in the old tradition. These ‘others’ are embodied in the characters of Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa. On the other hand, Fatimah Busu as the writer has ‘subtly inserted’ her political commentary and satire in her rewriting of the myth. Further in Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth, the character of Tuan Jana Khatib as the ‘other’
challenges the ‘self’ of the king in which the dramatisation of his piousness undermines the ‘holiness’ of the king.

The character of Tuan Jana Khatib has been highlighted and ‘hyperbolically ennobled’ in the rewriting of the myth. The dramatisation of the character, which is absent in the Shellabear version, continues in a form of an exaggerated status of the character described as:

Dia dari kumpulan ahli zuhud yang hanya memakan tujuh biji bertih sehari semalam. Justru sekali wuduk boleh disimpan sampai 40 hari 40 malam (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 271).

He was from the group of all the pious ones who only ate seven grains of corn in a day. Hence when he was in ablution, the grains remained uneaten and could be kept up to 40 days and 40 nights [My translation].

Such an elaborate description of the character of Tuan Jana Khatib is an invention by Fatimah Busu. Fatimah Busu, through the narrator, becomes the “I” who offers a commentary as the narration progresses. This form of rewriting offers a new perspective on the character of Tuan Jana Khatib. In a subtle way, Fatimah Busu advocates the idea of revering such holiness in a pious man as he willingly sacrifices his life to seek God’s blessings. The character of Tuan Jana Khatib is elevated from that of a legendary figure of credible historicity to that of a miraculous ascetic of mythic nature.

Though the story of Tuan Jana Khatib is central in ‘Ceritera I’, I proffer that the character of the king is presented significantly, if not presented with great importance. In dramatising the character of the king, Paduka Seri Maharaja, Fatimah Busu chooses to exaggerate the anger expressed by the king. As Tuan Jana Khatib stares at the betel
tree, he causes it to split into two. The queen is then shocked and she faints upon witnessing such an unusual occurrence. Paduka Seri Maharaja is very angry when he finds out that Tuan Jana Khatib has frightened the Raja Perempuan, the queen:


The king was angry. The king was very angry. Really, really angry. How dare the man show off his magical powers in front of the queen [My Translation].

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He wants to show off his skills to the queen! Very disrespectful! Insolent! A pious man does not behave that way! [My Translation].

The anger expressed by Paduka Seri Maharaja seemed to correspond rather 'logically' to his decision to sentence Tuan Jana Khatib to death. The king feels he has been humiliated by this display of power. In comparison to the version by Shellabear, such anger is not as dramatic as in the prose fiction by Fatimah Busu:

Telah dilihat oleh Paduka Seri Maharaja perihal itu, maka baginda pun terlalu marah. Maka baginda berkata. 'Lihatlah kelakuan Tun Jana Khatib, diketahui isteri kita menengok, maka ia menunjukkan pengetahuannya (Shellabear 1975, p. 66).

It was then brought to the attention of Paduka Seri Maharaja, thus he was very angry. He then remarked: 'look at what Tuan Jana Khatib has done, he knew for sure that my wife had been looking out the window, he purposely showed off his skills’ [My Translation].

In the Shellabear version, it seems that the involvement of the king is kept to a minimum to indicate that his decisions are just. In the context of rewriting, Fatimah Busu questions the king’s definitive power by way of dramatising the involvement of Paduka Seri Maharaja as he is able to express his anger brought about by the
humiliation of the royal family. Fatimah Busu brings to the reader a new way of evaluating the story concerning Tuan Jana Khatib. In a subtle way, she condemns the unjust punishment inflicted upon the pious man by the king. In this manner, Fatimah Busu ironically subverts a bigger role played by the institution of the monarchy as represented by the king, thus making his character ‘insinuatingly’ more important than that of Tuan Jana Khatib. She makes the punishment seem like personal jealousy rather than political wisdom. The character of the jealous king also prevails in the second ceritera.

In ‘Ceritera II’, Fatimah Busu rewrites the tale of Hang Nadim dramatically. This is first seen in the violent attack of the swordfish on the people of Singapura:

“Todak serang Singapura! Todak serang Singapura!”

“Swordfish attack on Singapura! Swordfish attack on Singapura!”
All cried out loud frantically. It was all chaos as the people didn't know from whom they could seek help. Those who could not escape died right away, there in the streets, hundreds of them. Bellies were ripped open gushing out intestines. Some had their necks sliced which were bursting all the veins. Some had their chests pierced through. And the snouts were still wriggling through in the flesh. Blood spilled on sand and soil. The sand and soil were all red [My Translation].

This dramatisation of the gory mayheem sets apart Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth from other versions. The drama then intensifies culminating in the punishment of the boy. In fending off the continuous attack of the swordfish, Hang Nadim suggests ‘kubu batang pisang’ (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 276)/’a fortress of banana stems’ [My
Translation] to be erected, instead of ‘pagar-pagar betis manusia’ (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 275)’a barricade of human shins’ [My Translation]; a strategy that would kill thousands of men. The boy’s plan was successful. The snouts of the swordfish were trapped in the banana stems. The boy’s contribution earned him great admiration and respect: ‘Semua orangpun memuji akan kecedikan Hang Nadim’ (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 277)’All couldn't praise Hang Nadim enough for his cleverness’ [My Translation], as well as envy in the royal court:


Damn it!!! This is very embarrassing! It is as though our faces were pasted with pigskin! This boy is a genius. He is very clever for his age of just over seven years. He will grow up even much smarter. This is a massive disaster. It is far more dangerous than the attack of the swordfish. At least the swordfish only attacked people on the beach. The swordfish do not attack the royal ministers in the palace! If the boy is not beheaded soon enough, all ministers will be ignored by the king [My Translation].

Such jealousy further prompted several individuals in the royal court to instigate calumny against Hang Nadim, giving rise to speculation that there was the possibility that he might even be a threat to their influence when he grows up:


“Your highness...” the prime minister bowed to the king, “in our humble opinions, we cannot keep Nadim, the wise boy. Even before puberty, he has already shown how smart he is. What more when he grows up, there is a possibility that he could overthrow your kingdom, your highness!” [My Translation].
The slanderous accusation against Hang Nadim by the royal ministers is also made central in the Shellabear version of *Sulalat al-Salatin*:


After that Paduka Seri Maharaja returned. The ministers then bowed to him suggesting, ‘Your highness, this boy’s wisdom is beyond his years. What more when he grows up? It’s better to get rid of him’ [My translation].

Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the tale of Hang Nadim seems to faithfully reiterate what Shellabear had written concerning Hang Nadim in his version. In the Shellabear version, there is only a simple portrayal of the king as he nonchalantly agrees to the suggestion, thus he orders the boy to be killed because he is perceived as a future threat to the kingdom:


The boy was then ordered to be put to death by the king, *which he felt to be the right thing to do*. As the execution was carried out, the burden was then borne by Singapura [My Translation and Italics].

In this version, as suggested by his ministers, the king ‘feels it is the right thing to do’ and so orders the execution of the boy. There is apparently no need for a further explanation or description pertaining to this matter. It was ‘generally felt to be right’ hence the whole country takes the blame. However, Fatimah Busu seems to disagree as she feels it is necessary that for the reader to know the inner thoughts of the king.

As a result, Fatimah Busu clarifies that it is due to the embarrassment on the part of the king that he hastily agrees to have the boy killed:

Raja rasa amat gerun dengan sembah Bendahara. Tidak mustahil bila besar nanti si Nadim akan berbuat seperti itu. Bagaimana kalau nanti takhtanya


The king was terrified at what had been said by the prime minister. It was not impossible that such things could take place once Nadim grew up. What if his throne were to be usurped by the boy? Where would he and his family go? That would be the end of the lineage of Sang Nila Utama. It could also mean the discontinuation of the lineage of Nisruan Adil, the just and mighty king, the descendant of the Mount of Siguntang Mahameru! Ah, he could not think of such misfortunate befalling him. Death is much better than getting dethroned.

However one thing that pierced his heart was an unspeakable embarrassment. He felt utterly humiliated in front of all the ministers of Singapura. He felt indescribably ashamed before all the people of Singapura. Because of his idea, thousands of men in Singapura died, having been pierced by the swordfish! Yes, how stupid his idea was compared to Nadim's. It was completely moronic! Such a suggestion put forward by the ministers felt like true illumination. He was very happy [My Translation].

In dramatising the king's feelings, Fatimah Busu not only makes the story more interesting to the contemporary reader as a personalised agon but also allows for critical evaluation of the kind of judgement. The dramatisation of the king's feelings is a complete change from the character of the king in Sulalat al-Salatin especially in the Shellabear version. In this manner, Fatimah Busu questions the lack of wisdom in the king's judgment in evaluating the whole incident. The foolishness of the ruler of the kingdom of Singapura continues in 'Ceritera III' in the retelling of the tale of Raja Iskandar Shah and the gundik, who is also the daughter of Sang Rajuna Tapa, the bendahara, or the prime minister.
The king in ‘Ceritera III’ is Raja Iskandar Shah, crowned king after the demise of his father, Paduka Seri Maharaja. Despite having married the daughter of Tun Perpateh Tulus (one of the ministers), Raja Iskandar Shah has many gundik (‘secondary wives’). Among all his gundik, there is among them, the most beautiful one, the daughter of Sang Rajuna Tapa. The beauty of the unnamed gundik earns her great admiration and envy in the royal court, especially among the other gundik. She is then falsely accused of committing adultery and consequently she is ordered to be put to death by the king. In the short story version, Fatimah Busu uses graphically vivid violent images to describe the impalement of the gundik:


The two commanders repeatedly pierced the sharp, pointed bamboo, over and over again, into the gundik’s stomach. They kept ramming the bamboo until it reached the breast. They kept plunging it in until the tip burst out of the left neck of the gundik with pieces of red meat stuck on the tip of the bamboo. At this moment, the gundik’s head tilted to the right. Yet again and again, they kept stabbing and pushing the sharp object until it was slightly higher than the position of the head. Only this time, the commanders stopped the whole ordeal. They left few metres of the remaining bamboo at the bottom, protruding in between the legs of the gundik [My Translation].

The above illustration of the impalement process is meant to criticise the injustice and bigotry of the people of Singapura and his king during that time. Such diversion is necessary to provoke anger, rather than blame the king and his people directly. Fatimah Busu chooses to narrate the ugliness and horrifying effects of the king’s unwise decision upon an innocent human being. On the contrary, the impalement as a
form of punishment received by the daughter of Sang Rajuna Tapa is only mentioned in passing remarks in the Shellabear version:


Now there was a treasury officer of Raja Iskandar Syah, Sang Rajuna Tapa was his title and he was a Singapura man himself. He had a very beautiful daughter. She was then used by the king, a great favourite of his. Then the other _gundik_ spoke ill of her and accused her of misconduct. Then Raja Iskandar was very angry and ordered her to _be impaled_ at the end of the market [My Translation and Italics for the transitive verb, ‘be impaled’].

There is a discrepancy of this sort of punishment when comparing Fatimah Busu’s and Shellabear’s versions to the others. Fatimah Busu’s adaptation, which is based on Shellabear’s _Sejarah Melayu_ (1975), is similar according to the use of the word, _sulakan/disula_35 (‘impale’):


"Dear prime minister!” Raja Iskandar Shah shouted angrily. “I command you to kill the _gundik_. Impale her at the end of the market. Let all see the contemptuous two-timer!” [My Translation and Italics for the word, ‘impale’].

It is interesting to note that, apart from the use of the word, _sula/’impale’_ by Fatimah Busu and Shellabear, as shown above, only the Leyden version uses the same word (Leyden 2001, p. 86). The other English version by Brown uses the term, ‘publicly exposed’, instead (Brown 2009, p. 51). The other three Malay versions employ

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35 The root word is _sula_. _Sulakan_ is an archaic form of the word. In modern context, the word is usually used with a prefix, _di_ as in _disula_, turning it into a transitive verb, ‘(be) impaled’.

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different descriptions altogether although they all point to the same form of punishment or humiliation: *perjenggikan* (Cheah & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail 2009, p. 118), *percanggaikan* (A. Samad Ahmad 1979, p. 69) and *diperjangkangkan* (Muhammad Haji Salleh 1997, p. 56). *Perjenggikan* is defined as *didedahkan*/*(publicly) exposed* by Cheah and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail in the footnote but *percanggaikan* by A. Samad Ahmad is not defined. Muhammad Haji Salleh lists two different words; *diperjangkangkan* as being the one used in his version whilst the alternative term, *diperjangkikan* is mentioned in the ‘Catatan Teks’/*Notes on the Text* (p. 285). He defines *diperjangkangkan* as *dikangkangkan* which literally means ‘to spread one’s legs’. He does not define the word, *diperjangkikan* though, but he states that it is used in the M.S. Raffles No. 18 *Sejarah Melayu* (Muhammad Haji Salleh 2009, p. 285). However, there is a gap in Muhammad Haji Salleh’s claim that *diperjangkikan* was used in the Raffles manuscript because Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, whose transcription is based on the same manuscript, uses the word, *perjenggikan*, instead (Cheah & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail 2009, p. 118). The meaning of the word defined as ‘publicly exposed’ also corresponds with the Brown version as noted earlier. In most versions, particularly by Malaysian scholars with the exception of the Brown version, the act of impalement as a form of punishment is implied as using ‘non-violent’ descriptions or imageries. I proffer that this is a strategy used to ‘subdue’ the cruelty of the ruler. In other words, the image of a king is typically conjectured up

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36 Based on the rule of inflection in Malay grammar, *per* and *kan* are a prefix and a suffix, respectively, thus making *canggai* the root word. According to Kamus Dewan, the term, *canggai* means “kuku (jari tangan) yang dibiarkan panjang” (p. 243) which simply means ‘long nails’ in English. Perhaps it connotes the idea of using a sharp object to pierce through the flesh, an act of impalement.

37 The word is not listed in Kamus Dewan, therefore no further definition can be sought as Kamus Dewan, by far, is the only Malay-Malay dictionary making it the most authoritative Malay dictionary in Malaysia. However, I speculate that the word, *diperjangkikan* is derived from *jangki*, perhaps an archaic form for the word, *dengki* which literally means ‘grudge’, thus *diperjangkikan* can be translated as ‘begrudging’.

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as a saint-like figure and it is always the people to blame for any wrong decision he makes. Leyden and Shellabear may have used the word, ‘impale’ to justifiably describe the punishment but it is Fatimah Busu who elevates the emotion so as to further intensify her criticism of the character of the king. The ruler-subject relationship, the rakyat and raja, can be further scrutinised through the notion of nation.

4.6 The Nation in the Singapura Myth

The mythical tales in the first three ceritera of “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” which I call the Singapura myth, may speak little for nation-building in Malaysia. One may argue that, Singapura or now widely known as Singapore, has nothing to do with Malaysia since it seceded from the Federation in 1965. This can be viewed as one of the reasons why the three mythical stories related to the ancient Singapura period, may have not been prominent within the context of rewriting. However, perhaps there is one exception; the mythical tale of the boy who saved Singapura from the swordfish attack has reappeared in numerous rewritings. Apart from Fatimah Busu, a few Malaysian and Singaporean writers have dealt with this particular myth in their works. Brief analysis on selected rewritings of the myth have been covered in Chapter 2. In the above discussion, Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the Singapura myth opens up political commentary and satire with regard to the Malay race as a nation. Further Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth from Sulalat al-Salatin has shed new light in which she changes and challenges the readers’ perspectives demanding that they reassess the implied meanings behind many stories or tales found in traditional Malay texts. The clash between the rakyat and the raja can be further seen through the notion of nation.
Fatimah Busu's rewriting of tradition has made it clear that the Singapura myth is the point of departure in the disintegration of the Malay nation. The unjustified killings of the innocent rakyat – Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and the gundik, break the ‘covenant’ between the ruler and his subjects in the tradition of the Malay kerajaan (kingdom). It is reported that in Sulalat al-Salatin, there was an established agreement between the ruler, raja and the ruled, rakyat:

If any ruler puts a single one of his subjects to shame [memberi aib], that shall be a sign that his kingdom will be destroyed by Almighty God. Similarly it has been granted by the Almighty God to Malay subjects that they shall never be disloyal or treacherous to their rulers, even if their rulers behave evilly or inflict injustice upon them (Andaya & Andaya 2001, p. 47).

The ruler-subject relationship has been manifested in Sulalat al-Salatin in which the ruler and the ruled are bound in a ‘sacred’ covenant (waadat). Dishonouring the waadat by either the raja or the rakyat may result in an ill-fated end. In the previous chapter, we saw that Jebat, the ruled, meets his tragic death due to his treachery against the ruler. Similarly in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” all mythical characters from the innocent rakyat are ordered to be killed by the raja (Paduka Seri Maharaja and Raja Iskandar Syah) except for Sang Rajuna Tapa. Though there is no royal order to execute Sang Rajuna Tapa, he is transformed to become stone in the end. This is said to be due to his betrayal to the raja and the land as Sang Rajuna Tapa secretly invited Majapahit to invade Singapura as a result of dissatisfaction over his daughter’s unjust death. According to the covenant in the ruler-subject agreement, the fatal end of the rakyat in the ceritera can be considered as a sumpah (‘curse’) against the daulat of the Malay king. I will discuss more about the sumpah in the following chapter. Khoo (1991) defines daulat as ‘an aura of sanctity’ or ‘the ideology of
legitimacy’ (p. 23). The *daulat* as a concept has been firmly established in the tradition of Malay *kerajaan* (kingdom):

*Daulat* was the supreme expression of the quality of the “majesty”, and its possession of a ruler constituted divine sanction of his reign. It was a stable, impersonal quality, beyond the influence of its holder’s character or abilities. It could act arbitrarily and offensively to protect the ruler, his command and his dignity, and enabled him to accomplish acts of great magic. In short, *daulat* was a foundation of the ideology of legitimation (Moy 1978 cited in Khoo 1991, p. 23).

A Malay ruler is believed to have the ‘divine’ sanctity or legitimacy to rule his subjects thus to rebel against the *raja* equates the rejection of the divine orders. The rejection of divinity is believed to engender grievous results as seen in the mythical characters above, especially Jebat and Sang Rajuna Tapa who ostensibly rebelled against the kings. Furthermore, the ideal of the infallible prepotency of *raja* has been the main characteristic of the ‘political culture’ of the Malay society (Khoo 1991, p. 25). In other words, in the Malay-Islamic tradition, the *kerajaan* is central in the formation of the nation. The word, *kerajaan* (literally means kingdom), also translated as ‘traditional rulership’ (Kahn 2006), is used in modern Malay language to mean ‘government’. Following the Malay grammar of inflection, the base word for *kerajaan* is *raja* with ‘ke’ and ‘an’ function as a prefix and a suffix, respectively. Seeing in this light, I proffer that *kerajaan* or ‘the state of having a *raja*’ is inherent in the Malay polity up until today. The recent defense of the king’s *daulat* by some Malays is a case in point where a lawyer was threatened as a result of expressing his opinion against the king’s decision. More of this and other related political issues are explored in the creative project of this thesis in Chapter 6. Further in the rewriting of the myth, Fatimah Busu exploits the characters of the rulers (*raja*) and the ruled (*rakyat*) and advocates that the Singapura myth is an important part of the ‘story of a nation’ for the Malays. The
retelling of the three mythical stories is emphatic that the Malay race as a nation has gradually grown weaker after the fall of Singapura. Fatimah Busu’s rewriting of the myth is a lament over the nation that is seen ‘collapsing’ due to the breach of the *waadat* by either the ruler or the ruled within the concept of *kerajaan*. These devastating effects are illustrated in the aftermath of the Majapahit attack on Singapura as can be seen at the end of ‘Ceritera III’.

The remaining part of ‘Ceritera III’ in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” introduces a new shift in the narrative technique as it incorporates scholarly historical accounts of Singapura. Fatimah Busu even uses direct quotes from a book entitled, *The Story of Malaya* (1956) written by William Stanley Morgan where the quotes included in the short story are in the English language:

The ordinary Chinese immigrant was [a] penniless cooli [sic] who landed with no more than a thin coat and a pair of blue cotton trousers. He was driven forth from his overcrowded village by poverty, and he came intending to go back as soon as he could. Usually the Sinkheh had to spent [sic] his first year working for a tawkay on a mine or plantation to pay off the cost of his passage (Morgan 1956 cited in Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 292).

In quoting Morgan, Fatimah Busu extends her lament over the loss of one of the great Malay kingdoms, Singapura, first to Majapahit and then to the immigrants, especially the Chinese as shown in the above excerpt. In this sense, the direct quote provides a new ‘scholarly’ voice that further strengthens Fatimah Busu’s claim on the gradual loss of Singapura. This is particularly true in the contemporary political climate of Singapore that the Malays are no longer rulers of the country. The inclusion of these scholarly writings at the close of ‘Ceritera III’ also indicates a new form of writing style as the remaining part of the *ceritera* utilises the fictocritical narrative technique in rendering stories related to the fall of Singapura. Further the inclusion of factual data
in the fictionalised renderings of stories from *Sulalat al-Salatin* can be seen as an ideological tool in confirming that the traditional narratives of *Sulalat al-Salatin* contain historical information from which Malaysians, especially the Malays, should learn and take note of their own fate or risk losing control of their own country. The story of the fall of Singapura serves as a reminder that such a fate could possibly happen again. Fatimah Busu's dramatisation of myth in relation to the story about the fall of Singapura can be seen as a way to instill a sense of belonging among the Malays. Furthermore, the loss of Singapura at the hands of foreigners, especially the British: (‘Lalu pada tahun 1819, Singapurapun menjadi hak milik Kerajaan Inggeris’ (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 291)/’Then in 1891, Singapura became the property of the British’ [My Translation], is seen as the root of the problems related to themes of colonisation and alienation in the remaining two *ceritera*. These issues will be looked into on a deeper level in Chapter 5. The use of direct quotes especially from literary sources continues in the remaining two *ceritera* particularly in ‘Ceritera V’.

The defeat of Raja Iskandar Shah in ‘Ceritera III’ is the turning point in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” in which Fatimah Busu surmises that the loss of Singapura is the point of departure in the history of the decline of the Malays in the Malay Peninsula. Though Raja Iskandar Shah manages to escape during the attack of Majapahit and later, according to history, he could have established the Melaka sultanate, Fatimah Busu continues to mourn the loss of Singapura: ‘Dan sejarah Singapurpun [sic] terus berubah-ubah. Hingga akhirnya Singapura bukan lagi diperintah oleh keturunan raja-raja Melayu’ (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 293)/’And the history of Singapura keeps on changing. Until, alas, Singapura is no longer ruled by any descendant from the Malay kings’ [My Translation]. This is the final line of ‘Ceritera
III,’ implying that the changing fate of the Malays ensued from the loss of Singapura as seen in the next two ceritera in the next chapter.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with issues related to techniques of narration and characterisation in the context of rewriting. It is noted that the purpose of the transliterations or transcriptions is to preserve the tradition whilst the role of the rewritings is to exploit tradition. The discussions in this chapter made a clear distinction between the two. Furthermore, in the case of Fatimah Busu, her manipulation of the myth opened up further examination in terms of commenting on issues of nation-building. Following the concept of ‘image–I–nation’, I analysed the rewriting of the mythical characters: Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim, Sang Rajuna Tapa, as well as the kings, Paduka Seri Maharaja and Raja Iskandar Shah in all three ceritera. The examination of innocence versus cruelty (injustice) has opened up a discussion on the images of the rakyat (people or the ruled) and the raja (king or the ruler). These then led us to further explore the implied commentaries and criticisms levelled against the characters of the institution of the monarchy. Finally, this chapter advocated that the three mythical tales analysed here formed the ‘story of the nation’ called the Singapura myth. In the context of rewriting, Fatimah Busu has utilised the Singapura myth to retell a story of the ‘fallen’ Malay race as a nation. The collapse of this nation takes full effect in ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ as can be seen in the following chapter.
Chapter 5
Malay Nationalism and Fictocriticism in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines issues on Malay nationalism through the exploitation of historical and literary information in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The information is used as a tool to ‘fictionalise’ and ‘criticise’ or dramatise characters and events, believed to have contributed to the fall of the Malay race. The chapter specifically discusses the remaining two stories: ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ in the short fiction. Although these two stories do not directly draw upon the Malay myths like the three previous stories in Chapter 4, the use of the character of Hang Nadim is still evident enough to claim that Fatimah Busu is appropriating the myth within the modern context. In this regard, there is a continuation of the use of the myth in the short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” The discussion of nation-building in relation to the short story will be dealt accordingly based on the two ceritera. Before going further into the ‘image–I–nation’ discussions, the chapter proceeds with the section: ‘The Structure’. In the section, ‘The Structure’, the discussion will highlight the structure of ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’. The full use of historical information, especially in ‘Ceritera IV’ marks Fatimah Busu's experimental writing style as she ‘blends’ mythical stories with historical anecdotes. Such experimental narration technique is also characteristic of the fictocritical style of writing in which some historical events have been dramatised so as to ‘fictionalise’ and ‘criticise’ issues related to the notion of nation.
The analyses of ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ will use the analytic tool, the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ and they will be divided into the following three sections: ‘Images of Malay Nationalists’, ‘The “I” in the Narrative’ and ‘The Nation in the Appropriation of History’. Briefly, in ‘Images of Malay Nationalists’, the discussion will focus on the characters of some Malay heroes – especially the ones who are lesser known to the younger generation in Malaysia. The images of these past Malay warriors will be compared to the images of the Malay kings. It particularly focuses on the Malay predicament during the colonial era up to the independence of Malaya. The section on ‘The “I” in the Narrative’ will examine the role of the narrator in the story and the role played by Fatimah Busu as a writer. The “I” is seen through Fatimah Busu’s own perspectives or view with regard to the notion of nation expressed throughout both ceritera. The manipulation of historical information further strengthens Fatimah Busu’s criticism of the folly of the Malay kings or sultans and her lament over the fall of the Malay race. The discussion on the use of historical anecdotes continues in the next section, ‘The Nation in the Appropriation of History’. In this section, the discussion will centre upon Fatimah Busu’s further appropriation of history in narrating and dramatising characters and events related to Malay nationalism. Before concluding, the chapter will devote a section analysing the use of other literary genres in the ceritera. The section is called ‘Analysis of the Gurindam and Other Literary Genres’. Apart from using myth and historical information in the ceritera, there are other styles of writing embedded in the narration thus pushing further the element of fictocriticism. The genres ‘blended in’, particularly in ‘Ceritera V’ are Malay proverbs, a gurindam, two Qur’anic verses, scholarly quotes and lines of poems. In this section, I will deal with these different genres as they form significant pieces aimed at producing a cohesively unified story – the story of the predicament of the Malays struggling to be
united as a nation. The final discussion in this section looks at the reemergence of the image of Hang Nadim, the role he plays as an observer of the fate of the Malays succumbing to self-destruction. Through all these analyses, I will demonstrate how the transition from the exploitation of myth in the previous analytical chapter to the manipulation of historical information and other literary genres allow for thorough discussion on the notion of nation.

5.2 The Structure

In the beginning of ‘Ceritera IV’, Fatimah Busu maintains the use of a heading to signal a different set of ‘distinctive’ stories. The heading: “Alamat Terjajahnya Semenanjung Tanah Melayu” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 294)/“Signs of the Fall of the Malay Peninsula” [My Translation] sets a direction in which the remaining ceritera in both ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ are now dealing with stories not based on mythical tales as in the first three ceritera. The heading serves as a summary of the whole story aimed at narrating how the failure of having not learned from history may contribute to the fall of the Malay race in the modern era. There is, however, no heading used in ‘Ceritera V’, but it is clear that this final ceritera is a continuation of ‘Ceritera IV’. Thus both ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ form a set of distinctive stories based largely on the exploitation of historical facts whilst the first three ceritera: ‘Ceritera I’, ‘Ceritera II’ and ‘Ceritera III’ are a set of different stories based mainly on the exploitation of the Malay myth.

Although ‘Ceritera IV’ seems to be the shortest ceritera in the short story, it serves as a ‘transitional’ link from the use of the myth to the exploitation of historical evidence. The elements of mythical and historical accounts, as well as literary references come together cohesively in maintaining the idea of narrating the new
‘Story of the Nation’. The use of history in ‘Ceritera IV’ marks Fatimah Busu’s full engagement in writing fictocritically. This style of writing is a continuation of the narrative technique from the previous ceritera. At the close of ‘Ceritera III’, the use of direct quotes from Morgan’s scholarly book, *The Story of Malaya* (1956), introduces the reader to a new direction in the style of writing. This fictocritical writing style is then seen in the remaining two ceritera analysed here. The dramatisation of some significant historical facts allows for a commentary on politics and the educational system, leading up to the independence of the Malay Peninsula which witnessed the culmination of the establishment of the Federation of Malaya (*Persekutuan Tanah Melayu*). The fictocritical writing style continues in ‘Ceritera V’ where it is even more prominent where historical anecdotes are dramatised in a *gurindam* with further supports using direct quotes from various genres, such as Malay proverbs, scholarly articles and the Qur’anic verses.

In ‘Ceritera V’, Fatimah Busu infuses the structure of the short story with the inclusion of some Malay literary genres, in particular the *gurindam*. The use of other literary genres in ‘Ceritera V’ showcases Fatimah Busu’s utilisation of fictocriticism in which she incorporates into her writing, a wide range of different genres from traditional to modern writing styles of Malaysian Literature. I will discuss the use of the *gurindam* in detail in the section below. This is because though the *gurindam* is an essential part of the narrative structure of the short story, it can also be treated as an entirely ‘independent’ genre deserving a thorough analysis. The inclusion of the *gurindam* amidst the narration is indicative of Fatimah Busu’s consistent adherence to the use of tradition. Furthermore, as the short story is entitled “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” thus the *gurindam* plays a pivotal role in the narrative structure of
the short fiction. Now, let us move to the discussions of ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’, and examine them using the concept of ‘image–nation’.

5.3 Images of Malay Nationalists

‘Ceritera IV’ compels the reader to make a connection between the myths rewritten in the first three ceritera and the use of historical references. In ‘Ceritera IV’ the use of the myth may have ceased but Fatimah Busu seems to suggest that the history of the fall of the Malay Peninsula builds upon the mythical stories concerning Singapura. The criticism levelled against the institution of the monarchy continues in this particular ceritera. In the first three ceritera, images of the kings are shown to be cruel, irrational and subject to be manipulated by others, especially by the ministers. Similarly, the commentary on images of the kings or sultans is also subtly criticised in ‘Ceritera IV’. However, the kings in ‘Ceritera IV’ are no longer the kings of Singapura. They are now different kings (but of the same Singapura royal lineage) who rule various states in the Malay Peninsula. It has been established earlier in ‘Ceritera III’ that during the attack of Majapahit, Raja Iskandar Shah managed to escape to Muar, a place in the state of Johor in the Malay Peninsula: “Setelah Singapura kalah, Raja Iskandar Shah dan keluarga lari menyelamatkan diri ke Muar, Johor, bersama-sama pengikutnya” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 290)/“After the defeat of Singapura, Raja Iskandar Shah and his family escaped to Muar, Johor, together with his followers” [My Translation]. According to history, Raja Iskandar Shah became the first king or sultan of the Melaka Sultanate.38 The use of myth in the first three ceritera has presented ‘causes’ that paved the way for Fatimah Busu to comment further on the political and historical

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38 See Andaya and Andaya’s A History of Malaysia (2001) on the account of the founding of Melaka (pp. 33-8).
development of the Malay community in ‘Ceritera IV’. Before discussing images of the Malay nationalists – the true defenders of the Malay community, let us take a look at the criticism levelled on the images of the Malay rulers.

If in the first three ceritera, Fatimah Busu uses myth to excoriate the ancient Malay kings, in ‘Ceritera IV’, she uses history to continue criticising the Malay rulers in modern contexts – from the early intervention of the British colonial power to the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957. The narration in ‘Ceritera IV’ employs these historical references which is clearly seen in the opening paragraph:


In the year 1824, the British government signed a friendly treaty with the Dutch company. The Dutch handed Melaka over to the British and in return, the British had to give away Bencoolen with the promise never to interfere in any area in Sumatra. Thus began the full authority of the British over the Straits Settlements. These were states that were hire-purchased from the Malay rulers. Singapura was bought from Sultan Husin, Johor and the Temenggung of Singapura; Melaka was obtained in exchange for Bencoolen which was handed over to the Dutch; Pulau Pinang and Province Wellesley were hire-purchased from the Sultan of Kedah [My Translation].

The exploitation of some historical evidence may seem to point to the chronological events in the history of Malaysia. Fatimah Busu further extends her criticism levelled against the Malay monarchy, first from the exploitation of mythical stories as can be seen in the first three ceritera, to the manipulation of historical information in making a point that the Malay kings were to blame for the fall of the Malays. In other words,
they were not the real Malay nationalists whose duty was supposedly to protect the people.

The rewriting of the myth continues in ‘Ceritera V’ in the form of the resurrection of the image of Hang Nadim. As indicated earlier, Hang Nadim dies due to the unjust death sentence brought upon him as a result of calumny and jealousy. ‘Ceritera V’ opens with a narrator telling the reader of the possibility of Hang Nadim preventing the gradual loss of Malay lands to foreigners:


Today Hang Nadim was out of his grave gnarled with anxious feelings. If only he was still alive when Stamford Raffles bought Singapura from Temenggung and Sultan Husin, he could have prevented it although he might have ended up being thrown into the ocean one thousand times more. Try to imagine this. If at that time Hang Nadim succeeded in preventing the selling of Singapura, surely Singapura would now still belong to the Malays [My Translation].

It is interesting to note that the narrator seems to be directly addressing the reader in the above quotation. In doing so, the narrator invites the reader to look more closely at the story thus establishing a two-way ‘interactive’ communication. The effect of this second-person narration is that it offers an emphatic reading of the story. Moreover, the reader is drawn to the emotions expressed by the angry voice of the narrator and this is further demonstrated in the second paragraph of ‘Ceritera V’:

Begitu juga kalaulah Hang Nadim ada waktu Sultan Kedah menjual Pulau Pinang kepada Francis Light, tentu dia akan menghalangnya juga walaupun dia diikat dengan batu seberat Gunung Tahan! Dan tentulah Inggeris tidak berpeluang menjajah seluruh Tanah Melayu. Dan seluruh Tanah
Melayupun menjadi hak bangsa Melayu hingga ke hari Kiamat tanpa berkongsi kuasa dengan orang-orang mendatang! (Fatimah Busu 2009, pp. 298-9).

So the same thing could have happened if Hang Nadim was around when the Sultan of Kedah sold Pulau Pinang to Francis Light, he would have of course prevented such thing from taking place although he might risk being tied to a stone as heavy as Mount Tahan! And surely the British would not have had the chance to colonise the entire Malay Peninsula. And the entire Malay Peninsula would then be the property of the Malay community until the end of the world without having to share power with the immigrants! [My Translation].

It can be noted that, from the above two opening paragraphs, Fatimah Busu creates an ‘emphatic temperament’ on the part of the narrator talking in the second-person point of view, thus, ‘evoking from the reader the sense of participation with the prose’ (Abrams & Harpham 2012, p. 104). In this regard, the reader is further invited to empathise with the narrator’s anguish over the docility of the Malay community, hence resulting in the conquest of Malay lands by foreign powers. The role of the narrator to pass comments and judgments is noticeable throughout all ceritera but specifically the narrator in ‘Ceritera V’ attempts to sound more ‘authoritative’ by addressing the reader so as to gain the reader’s empathy and sympathy. Such a voice of authoritative conviction on the part of the narrator can be markedly felt in ‘Ceritera V’ but at the same time it relates to Hang Nadim’s encounters with past Malay warriors and nationalists.

The character of Hang Nadim parallels the role of the reader as both are mere observers of events unfolding in the ceritera. The purpose of resurrecting Hang Nadim from mythical tales is to establish link to old Malay tradition, hence maintaining the idea of rewriting of the myth. Though the resurrection is more spiritual than material, the figure of Hang Nadim serves as a reminder of the ancient ‘covenant’ (waadat)
between the rulers and their subjects. Andaya and Andaya (2001) note that in *Sulalat al-Salatin* (referred to as *Sejarah Melayu* in their discussion), the Malay community are abide by their loyalty to their rulers: “Minister and king then conclude a solemn covenant which ensures that Malays will always remain loyal to their kings, who must repay them by just rule” (p. 35). The unjust death of Hang Nadim can be translated as a breach of the *waadat*, thus resulting in the fall of the Malays. The resurrection of Hang Nadim in modern Malaysia reminds the reader of the disastrous consequences of unjust punishment decreed on the innocent. The royal tyranny in Malay culture usually entails the destruction of a nation. Such themes resonate in Malay tradition and can be seen in the first three *ceritera*. The unjust death of Tuan Jana Khatib triggers a *sumpah* (curse), upon Singapura in which it is attacked by the swordfish and the killing of innocents like Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa’s daughter which then resulted in the ruins of Singapura. The *sumpah* in Malay culture is particularly connected to issues on disloyalty and betrayal, usually resulting in the death of people.39 In the following discussion, we will embark on Hang Nadim’s journey to meet Malay warriors and nationalists from ancient times to years before and after the independence of Malaysia.

The colonisation of Melaka, Singapura, Pulau Pinang and Province Wellesley by the British marks a significant point in the history of Malaysia. As a result, one by one all the states in the Malay Peninsula gradually fall into the hands of the British colonial power. The fall of other Malay states is also attributed to the weak ruling of the Malay rulers in the short story:

39 In *The Malays* (2011), Anthony Milner traces the concept of *sumpah* (curse) to the seventh-century inscriptions found in south Sumatra upon which the phrase: ‘you will be killed by the curse’ sets as a reminder to all Malay rulers and their subjects (pp. 28-9 and p. 51). See also other discussions on the curse in Malay culture in de Casparis (1956), Nik Hassan Shuhaimi (1990) and Drakard (1999).

Di negeri Selangor juga berlaku perebutan kuasa di kalangan keluarga raja yang masing-masing mahukan hak pemerintahan. Akhirnya terpaksa meminta jasa baik Kompeni Inggeris campur tangan.

Di negeri Sembilan, turut berlaku perebutan kuasa ke atas jajahannya yang banyak yang terdiri dari Sembilan buah jajahan.


And the situation in Larut and Matang were really a worrying issue for the Perak government. Thus they gladly accepted the British company's suggestion to station a British Resident there. With the consent of the government of Perak, the British company placed a British Resident, J.W.W. Birch in Perak. Unfortunately J.W.W. Birch was later murdered by a local.

In Selangor, there was also a dispute over the power to rule among the royal family members, as each demanded the right to rule the state. Alas the British company was asked to intervene.

In Negeri Sembilan, a similar tension brought about by quarrels over the control of power among the royal families in wanting to rule the nine districts erupted.

Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu were under the rule of the government of Siam. In the year 1902, the British company signed a treaty with the Siamese government. By this treaty, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu were to become parts of the territory of the British company. A few areas in the south of Siam over the River Tabal were handed over to the government of Siam.

In Pahang, there were some rebellions by the locals, Dato’ Bahaman, Mat Kilau and Tok Gajah. This paved the way for the British company to intervene into the administration of Pahang [My Translation].

The above excerpt may look like a linear rendering of historical events but the narration points to the failure of the Malay rulers in administrating the states: hence the subsequent result was the full conquest of the Malay Peninsula by the British. In
this regard, the manipulation of history in ‘Ceritera IV’ influences the way the reader looks at the history of Malaysia as a nation.

In ‘Ceritera V’, past Malay heroes received due recognition for their bravery compared to the characters of the kings or rulers who have been undermined since the beginning of the ceritera. In describing Hang Nadim’s encounter with past Malay heroes, the narrator in ‘Ceritera V’ romanticises all warriors to have been rewarded accordingly in the afterlife:


At first Hang Nadim met up with Admiral Hang Tuah and his four friends, Hang Jebat, Hang Kasturi, Hang Lekir and Hang Lekiu. Then Hang Nadim saw Dato’ Dol Said, from Naning, Tok Bahaman, Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau, from Pahang. Then Hang Nadim managed to see Dato’ Maharaja Lela from Perak, Tok Janggut from Kelantan, Ishak Haji Muhammad from Pahang, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Prof. Zulkifli Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Aminuddin Baki, Dato’ Onn Jaafar and other Malay nationalists whom he did not know. All of them sat on a smooth lustrous green carpet, on the velvety green grass under a big heavenly, luscious, flowery-perfumed tree. They all leaned against the jewelled silver columns with their legs hanging in relaxed positions. Their arms, rested on the silk pillows [My Translation].

The empyrean, dream-like description of the resting place of the past Malay heroes, implies that they deserved such rewards due to their noble acts of defending the
nation. Though it seems that they were all basking in such glory despite being dead, they seemed to be perturbed about the fate of the Malays:


All of them were garbed in gold-embroidered silky green garments with beautiful laces. And in front of them there was a flowing crystal clear river. There was a group of ravishing nymphs singing while serving them with mouthwatering food put on trays of gold and silver. However the nationalists looked worried and troubled in their resting place [My Translation].

The concern of the Malay nationalists as indicated above, points to the lament over the attitude of the Malays who seem to have not learnt any lesson from their history. To their dismay, the Malay community seems to be unappreciative of what the heroes have fought for in defending the nation:


“Ah, the Malay land that we have defended with heart and soul...” Leftenan Adnan sighed, “look at what is happening now. The Malays are so generous they easily give away the lands for free to the immigrants...” [My Translation].

Fatimah Busu, through the voices and images of the dead warriors, expresses her worry over the fate of the Malays having to gradually lose control over their own land. This anxiety is further expressed in a variety of writing styles culminating in the gurindam entitled, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” This gurindam will be examined later but let us now move to analysing the “I” in the narrative.
5.4 The “I” in the Narrative

In ‘Ceritera IV’, Fatimah Busu as the “I” makes a pertinent point that there is a need for the reassessment of the way history is told. In many scholarly books on the history of Malaysia, the story of the Malay community, their heroes and their fall, all begin with the golden age of the Melaka Empire (1400–1511). In the earlier writings on the history of Malaya, during the colonial era, particularly in Winstedt’s *Malaya and Its History* (1966b), there is no mention of the ancient kingdom of Singapura, assuming that the Malay civilisation started with the rise of the Melaka Empire. Other scholarly writings in the 1950-60s, similarly leave gaps in pointing out the tale of Singapura, for example, Dartford’s *A Short History of Malaya* (1956) and Kennedy’s *A History of Malaya* (1962). Through “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Fatimah Busu challenges the way Malay history has been presented.

At first ‘Ceritera IV’ seemed to look like a piece of historical writing but later Fatimah Busu dramatises her exploitation of the use of historical evidence. For example, in criticising the educational system of teaching the history subject in the 1950s British Malaya, Fatimah Busu creates a classroom scene to dramatise historical accounts pertinent to stories of Malay nationalists who died resisting and fighting the British colonial power:


"Hari ini kita belajar nama-nama pendurhaka kepada kerajaan di Tanah Melayu," Kata cikgu Aishah, “siapa yang boleh jawab angkat tangan...siapa nama pendurhaka yang menjadi musuh kerajaan di Kelantan?"

“Saya, cikgu!”

“Ya, Fatimah ...”
“Tok Janggut!”
“Betul! Bagus!”
Cikgu Aishah tulis nama Tuk Janggut di Papan hitam.
“Siapa pula pendurhaka di Pahang?” Tanya Cikgu Aishah lagi.
“Saya cikgu!”
“Ya, Hasnah ...”
“Tok Bahaman! Tok Gajah! Mat Kilau!”
“Oh, bagus!”
Cikgu Aishah menulis lagi nama-nama para pendurhaka di papan hitam.
“Siapa pula pendurhaka di Naning?”
“Saya cikgu!”
“Ya, Rafeah ...”
“Dol Said!”
“Betul!”
Cikgu Aishah tulis lagi nama pendurhaka berderet-deret di papan hitam.
“Siapa pula pendurhaka di Perak?”
“Saya cikgu!”
“Ya, Karimah ...”
“Tok Maharaja Lela ...”
“Ya. Bagus,” dan sekali lagi Cikgu Aishah tulis nama pendurhaka di papan hitam. “Ingat semua orang! Nama-nama ini kena hafal. Mari kita baca bersama-sama Pendurhaka negeri Kelantan, Tok Janggut, pendurhaka negeri Pahang, Tok Bahaman, Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau ... pendurhaka Naning, Dol Said ... pendurhaka di negeri Perak, Tok Maharaja Lela ... boleh ingat semua?”
“Boleh, cikgu!”
Jawapan murid-murid darjah IVA bergemuruh dalam bilik darjah. (Fatimah Busu 2009, pp. 295-7)

In the 1950s the Malay schools (at only up to the primary level) in Kelantan were instructed to teach the History subject as one of the schools’ syllabuses. One of the topics was about the names of the traitors in the Malay Peninsula. And the teacher, Aishah bt. Abdullah was teaching history to her class, Year IVA at the Malay School of Pasir Pekan, Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

“Today we are learning about the names of the traitors of the government in the Malay Peninsula,” said teacher Aishah, “Whoever can answer, please raise your hand...what is the name of the traitor who became the enemy of the government of Kelantan?”
“Me, teacher!”
“Yes, Fatimah...”
“Tok Janggut!”
“Correct! Good!”
Teacher Aishah wrote the name of Tok Janggut on the blackboard.
“Who was the traitor in Pahang?” asked teacher Aishah further.
“Me, teacher!”
“Yes, Hasnah...”
“Tok Bahaman! Tok Gajah! Mat Kilau!”
“Oh, good!”
Teacher Aishah wrote the names of these traitors on the blackboard.
“And who is the traitor in Naning?”
“Me, teacher!”
“Yes, Rafeah...”
“Dol Said!”
“Correct!”
Teacher Aishah wrote the names of the traitors, all of them in a row
on the blackboard.
“And who is the traitor in Perak?”
“Me, teacher!”
“Yes, Karimah...”
“Tok Maharaja Lela...”
“Yes. Good,” and once again teacher Aishah wrote the names of the
traitors on the blackboard. “Remember, all of you! These names are to be
memorised. Let us all together read the names of the traitors: in the state of
Kelantan, Tok Janggut, the traitors in the state of Pahang, Tok Bahaman, Tok
Gajah, Mat Kilau...the traitor in Naning, Dol Said...the traitor in the state of
Perak, Tok Maharaja Lela...can you all remember all these names?”
“We can, teacher!”
The answer was a resounding yes from all pupils of Year IVA in the
classroom.
[My Translation]

In the above satirical dramatisation of the historical information related to modern
Malay heroes, Fatimah Busu, as the implied “I” is making a point that there is
insufficient recognition of the Malay heroes during the British colonial period. This is
the way Fatimah Busu exploited historical information and turned it into a dramatic
historical anecdote, thus allowing her to convey political commentary through the
simple means of satire. The Malay teacher as an assumed authoritative figure is
implied to have disseminated false information to her students with regard to the
early Malay fighters before the 1957 independence of Malaya. The so-called traitors in
the dialogue: Tok Janggut, Tok Bahaman, Tok Gajah, Mat Kilau, Dol Said and Tok
Maharaja Lela are Malay fighters who resisted the British rule in Malaya. In this
classroom dialogue, Fatimah Busu highlights the contribution of these nationalists in
an ironic manner where she depicts them as ‘traitors’. It is ironic in a sense that these
warriors fought against colonial rule such as the British and Japanese, yet, they failed
to receive due recognition for their struggles and fight. In today's Malaysian culture and history, we rarely refer to these patriots; instead, the mythical figures such as Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat and even the past prime ministers such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Mahathir Mohamad and others are abundant in many references. Though these ‘unsung’ heroes are ironically depicted as traitors in the short story, Fatimah Busu subtly proposes the need to recognise other Malay fighters. The theme based on the fall of the Malays is further made central in the remaining paragraphs of ‘Ceritera IV’ in which Fatimah Busu returns to lament over the loss of Singapura. This can be linked to the discussion on the notion of nation in the following section.

5.5 The Nation in the Appropriation of History

In the current Malaysian schools where History is taught as an important subject, the idea of nation-building is suggested to have begun with the rise of nationalism which was propagated by the nationalists in the 1940s and 1950s which eventually culminated in the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957. However there is still a lack of details concerning the lives of the nationalists.40 Further the mention of early Malay kingdoms in the syllabus mainly centres upon the golden era of the Melaka Sultanate (1400–1511). In the treatment of the earlier Malay kingdoms, particularly in the history and narration of Singapura, there is a lack of emphasis that should be rightfully accorded in the Malaysian school syllabuses for the History subject. Fatimah Busu, through her short story, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” challenges the way history has been written with regard to the idea of the nation in

contemporary Malaysian history. Perhaps the separation of Singapura (now widely known as Singapore) from Malaysia in 1965 marks a different treatment of history as each nation is still ‘struggling’ to define its own ‘Story of the Nation’. Similarly, in the history of Singapore, the emphasis has been focused on the founding of Singapore by Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1819 rather than tracing the history further back to the times of the ancient kingdom of Singapura. Even the seminal works by Constance Mary Turnbull: *A History of Singapore, 1819-1975* (1977), *A History of Singapore, 1819-1988* (1989) and *A History of Modern Singapore* 1819-2005 (2009) do not begin with the tale of Singapura as depicted in *Sulalat al-Salatin*. Notice that in the first two works, the word ‘modern’ does not appear in both titles. This is indicative of an erroneous assumption claiming that the history of Singapore begins in 1819. It is only in the latest updated version of the book that it uses that particular word to rectify the mistake. These works have influenced how the history of Singapore is perceived today.

In a more recent research, Andaya and Andaya’s *A History of Malaysia* (2001), they observed that “[t]he Singapore period...receives considerable attention in the *Sejarah Melayu* and is attributed a length of hundred years, yet no evidence of a great city such as that it describes has yet been found in any other source” (p. 36). Fatimah Busu’s “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” can be seen as the ‘Story of the Nation’ resisting the colonial narration of the history and nation of the Malays.

The dramatisation of the myth is pertinent to the issue linked to the loss of Singapura in the previous three *ceritera* which has now had its full ‘effects’ in ‘Ceritera IV’. In order to fully exploit the annals of history, Fatimah Busu provides thought-provoking interpretations and assessments of Malayan history. In ‘Ceritera IV’ the loss
of Singapura is largely attributed to the ‘conniving grand plan’ of the British in dividing the Malay nation:


Alas the entire states of the Malay Peninsula: Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor, were all subjected to the rule of the British company. At that time, Singapura was headed by an English Governor. And when the plan of the Malayan Union was mooted in 1946, Singapura was turned into a self-governing colony, a total break away from the Malay Peninsula [My Translation].

Such well-planned segregation of the Malay nation by the British scrutinised in the above quote can be seen in the way Fatimah Busu has resisted the colonial impact on the history of Malaysia. Further the subtext of the self-governed Singapura under the rule of the British, instead of the Malay rulers, can be interpreted as a comment on the racial issues whereby the Malays who were once owners of the land were now treated as the ‘insignificant’ other in the political scene:


The majority of the population of Singapura at that time comprised of the Chinese immigrants who came from mainland China. It was the same case in Pulau Pinang. They dominated all sorts of fields such as technology, businesses and agriculture. Unfortunately the Malays never learned to emulate
the Chinese immigrants, absorb the characteristics of working hard and being diligent. Thus when the British government established the 'Legislative Council' in 1951 none among its members represented the Malay community. The members consisted of three Chinese men, three Indians, one European, one Eurasian and one Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) [My Translation].

Fatimah Busu could easily be accused of being a racist, based on the above excerpt, but through her writing, she criticises the nonchalant attitude of the Malays who failed to defend their land and nation. It seems that the loss of Singapura is vital in the narrative of the Malay nation. In the previous analysis of the first three ceritera, particularly in ‘Ceritera III’, Singapura was lost to foreign powers when Sultan Husin and Temenggung 'leased' Singapura to the British in 1819. The Malay race as a nation is seen to be further falling apart in ‘Ceritera IV’ when they lost Singapura for the second time when it became an independent colony, controlled by the British after the 1946 Malayan Union. Here, Fatimah Busu attempts to 'appropriate' historical information which is rarely dealt with in the works of fiction. Through the appropriation of history, Fatimah Busu attempts to 'rewrite' not only, the myth, but also the history of the Malay community so as to offer new ways in promoting solidarity among the Malays. From ‘celebrating’ the unsung Malay heroes to the tale and history of Singapura, Fatimah Busu sheds new light on the narrative of Malay nationalism. Such reading can be further translated as a concern in the current twenty-first century Malaysian political scenario, where the Malays are now further divided based on their support for the three Malay political parties namely the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and People’s Justice Party (PKR). Further such melancholia on the fall of the Malays is dealt with largely in the examination of the gurindam, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” and some Malay proverbs and the poem, “Melayu Oh Melayu.” Now let us look into
issues or themes brought up in the *gurindam* and other literary genres used in ‘Ceritera V’.

### 5.6 Analysis of the Gurindam and Other Literary Genres

The inclusion of the *gurindam*, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” some Malay proverbs and the poem, “Melayu Oh Melayu”/”Malay Oh Malay” in ‘Ceritera V’ further characterises the short story as fictocritical. “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” which is also the title of the short story, is a *gurindam* written in twelve stanzas. Before we discuss the *gurindam* in the short story, let us take a look at the term, *gurindam*.

*Gurindam* is a type of poetry in Traditional Malay Literature. In *Traditional Malay Literature*, Harun Mat Piah et al. (2002) list twelve different classes of traditional Malay poetry: *Pantun*, *Syair*, *Gurindam*, *Seloka*, *Nazam*, *Teromba*, *Talibun*, *Mantera*, *Dikir*, *Teka-Teki* (Riddles), *Peribahasa* (Maxims) and Rhythmical Prose (Prose-Lyric). According to Harun Mat Piah et al. (2002), *gurindam* is a non-narrative form of traditional Malay Literature. This is a type of oral literature in which it ‘does not tell stories’ (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, pp. 11-12). *Gurindam* is defined as “[a] loose form of indefinite structure... (it neither) bears magical connotations... (nor) deals with genealogies or the dominant behavioural codes of a particular society” (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, pp. 19-20). Moreover, *gurindam* is said to share a similar

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41 In the English translation of the famous nineteenth century *gurindam*, Aswandi Ariyoes translates Raja Ali Haji’s *Gurindam 12* as *The Twelve Aphorism* (2002); Wandly Yazid, a composer and music arranger in the 1940s and 50s Malay films, translates the title of the film, *Gurindam Jiwa* (1966) as *Sonnet of the Soul*, see: <http://wandlyyazid.com/>. I, however, maintain the use of the term, *gurindam*, throughout the thesis.

42 See *Traditional Malay Literature* (2002) for detailed definitions of each class of traditional Malay poetry (pp. 16-23); *Traditional Malay Literature* (2002) is the English translation by Harry Aveling of Harun Mat Piah et al.’s *Kesusasteraan Melayu Tradisional* (2000).
quality to its counterparts such as seloka, teromba and talibun in which all are “[a] loose form of free verse, with no definite rules about the use of stanzas, the number of words to the line, or lines to the stanza (if there are stanzas), or even the need for rhyme” (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. 119). The emphasis on the ‘loose form’ of the structure of gurindam speaks volumes for its extrinsically ‘independent’ nature as it can be characterised as ‘free verse’ – breaking away from the traditional form of Malay Literature, particularly the pantun, which has been very dominant since ancient times and even up to today. Perhaps pantun (known to Western tradition as pantoum), is the most famous type of traditional Malay genre that has its influence in Western Literature, especially among French poets, such as Victor Hugo’s Les Orientales (1829), Leconte de Lisle’s Poèmes Tragiques (1884) and even Charles Pierre Baudelaire’s poem, “Harmonie du soir” which appeared in Les Fleurs du mal (1857).

Fatimah Busu’s “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” that includes gurindam as a ‘loose free verse’ serves as a device of expression insofar as it is able to ‘freely express’ varied emotional tensions, unrestricted in its form, unlike the pantun. In this manner, Fatimah Busu employs the traditional form of the ancient Malay verse to metaphorically escape the constraints imposed upon the narrative voices, especially in Sulalat al-Salatin. The use of gurindam seems to suit her purpose as the ‘stifled’ voices of characters like Tuan Jana Khatib, Hang Nadim and Sang Rajuna Tapa in Sulalat al-Salatin find new ways of expressions in rewriting about these characters in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” Its departure from the usual traditional Malay oral literature like the pantun also marks gurindam’s adaptability to modern expressions:

The earliest form of modern free verse was a form of the gurindam. Most of this work moved outside the constraints of set structures and subject matter,
but remained bound to traditional poetic values, rhyme patterns, metre, and other aesthetic characteristics (Harun Mat Piah et al. 2002, p. 20).

Seeing it in this light, the use of the ‘unrestricted’ form allows for the transmission of ‘free voices’ commenting on the Malays. Fatimah Busu as the implied “I” in the short story, not only retells Malay mythical stories, but also offers commentary on the fate of the Malays woven through the fictocritical narrative. In this section, I will further explore the narratorial “I” of Fatimah Busu in the form of the “I” of subjectivity. The “I” of subjectivity refers to Fatimah Busu’s ‘indirect’ commentary implied in the *gurindam* albeit it uses the third-person point of view, instead of the first person narration. I will delve further into this matter in the subsequent discussions below. For now, let us have a look at the phrase, *gurindam jiwa*.

*Gurindam Jiwa* as a term offers a new perspective on the way Fatimah Busu uses the *gurindam* in a short prose. The word *jiwa*, which literally means ‘soul’, functions as an adjective describing the type of the *gurindam*. In this manner, a *gurindam jiwa* is a kind of *gurindam* that is soulful, hence connoting fervent emotions – a stirring of passionate intensity. *Gurindam Jiwa* can also be attributed to the film, *Gurindam Jiwa* (1966), directed by M. Amin. The film basically tells of a passionate love story. In an interview with the film director, Ku Seman Ku Hussien (2009) quotes M. Amin’s views on *Gurindam Jiwa*: “Aku suka kata-kata dari bahasa orang Melayu. Aku nak tunjuk orang Melayu bukan sentiasa mengangkat senjata untuk menikam musuh, orang Melayu tikam dengan kata-kata”/ “I like words from the language of the Malay community. I want to show that the Malays, when they get riled up, do not necessarily
stab their enemies, instead, they ‘stab’ them with words” [My Translation]. The film is said to be the only classical Malay film that does not have fighting or killing scenes thus challenging the stereotyping of classical Malay films that usually features fights between a hero and a villain ending with a ‘bloody tragedy’ (Ku Seman Ku Hussein 2009). The film has been considered as the best in the portrayal of the Malays’ customary courtesy. Most of the dialogues in the film are expressed in pantun form, thus indicating the ‘high culture’ of the Malay community. In fact the song from the film, which is also entitled, “Gurindam Jiwa” has been one of the most evergreen Malay songs. Perhaps in using gurindam jiwa, Fatimah Busu as the implied ‘I’ intends to sound ‘soulful’ so as to appear more emphatic to the reader. In the gurindam, the reader is no longer presented with violent images as in the previous ceritera; instead, in her lament over the folly of modern Malays, Fatimah Busu unravels challenges faced by them in the new nation, called Malaysia. The “I” of subjectivity in the gurindam – Fatimah Busu’s position as the ‘implied’ narrator further elucidates her personal commentary on the fate of the Malay community.

“Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” consists of twelve gurindams. Each gurindam can possibly be identified as a stanza. Twelve can be viewed as significant as it may reflect the 1847 Gurindam 12 of Raja Ali Haji. The traditional gurindam is usually written as a pair of rhymed lines. The first line states a condition known as syarat (protasis) while the second line provides the answer known as jawab

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A *gurindam* can be written in as many lines as the writer wishes and is not restricted to two lines. There is no limit to the number of lines per one stanza of the *gurindam*. The following is the fifth *gurindam* from Raja Ali Haji’s *Gurindam 12*:

Jika hendak mengenal orang berbangsa,  
Lihat kepada budi dan bahasa.  
Jika hendak mengenal orang yang berbahagia,  
Sangat memeliharaan yang sia-sia.  
Jika hendak mengenal orang mulia,  
Lihatlah kepada kelakuan dia.  
Jika hendak mengenal orang yang berilmu,  
Bertanya dan belajar tiadalah jemu.  
Jika hendak mengenal orang yang berakal,  
Di dalam dunia mengambil bekal.  
Jika hendak mengenal orang yang baik perangai,  
Lihat pada ketika bercampur dengan orang ramai.

If the well born you would identify,  
Look for their kindness and courtesy.  
Those who are happy and prosper,  
Waste and idleness do forswear.  
If the noble you would perceive,  
Look you at how they behave.  
If it’s ones with knowledge you require,  
Of questions and learning they never tire.  
As for the wise, it’s easy to tell,  
In this world, for the next they provide well.  
If the good natured are whom you seek,  
When they’re with company you must peek.  

In each pair in the fifth *gurindam* from *Gurindam 12* above, it shows the ‘cause’ in line 1 and ‘effect’ in line 2: if you want to identify kind people (line 1) then look at their kindness (line 2), if you want to know happy people (line 1) then look at how they stop wasting time (line 2) and so on. Fatimah Busu’s *gurindam*, though it adheres to traditional structure by having the *syarat* and *jawab* or the ‘cause’ and ‘effect’, it also suits the convention of modern poetry. Instead of writing the *syarat* in a single line followed by the *jawab* in another, Fatimah Busu sets the ‘cause’ in three lines followed

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by the ‘effect’ in several lines in each stanza of the *gurindam*. Let us have a look at the first stanza in the *gurindam*:

50 tahun merdeka
orang Melayu putih mata
masih bercakaran sesamanya
negeri-negeri Melayu hilang di dunia
bangsa Melayu hilang di dunia
bahasa Melayu hilang di dunia
sekolah Melayu hilang di dunia
tengoklah mykadmu ada tertulis bangsa apa?
yang tercatit hanya agama dan jantina
Melayu sudah tidak ada identiti
tamadun Melayu semakin lenyap dari muka bumi
adat resam Melayu sudah mati
ramai orang Melayu bukan Melayu lagi!
(Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 303)

50 years of independence
Malays with white eyes
are still clawing at one another
Malay states vanish in the world
Malay race vanishes in the world
Malay language vanishes in the world
look at your mykad, what race is written?
all that is written is only religion and sex
Malays have lost their identity
Malay civilisation is gradually vanishing from the earth
Malay customs are dead
Malays aplenty but many are no longer Malay!
[My translation]

The first three lines in the *gurindam* states the condition of the Malays: They are at a loss even after fifty years of independence from the clutch of British colonial power. The line, ‘orang Melayu putih mata’/’Malays with white eyes’ is based on the Malay proverb, ‘biar putih tulang jangan putih mata’.45 The proverb can literally be translated as ‘let your bones turn white but never let your eyes turn white’. The word, ‘putih’/’white’ is a symbol of surrender or death. That is to say, that it is better die fighting than succumbing to defeat. In the *gurindam*, the eyes of the Malays have

45 In *Kamus Peribahasa Melayu-Inggeris/Dictionary of Proverbs Malay-English*, Shamsuddin Ahmad (2006) notices that there is no English equivalent for this proverb; he defines the meaning of the proverb in English as follows: *To fight to the last* (p. 38).
turned white, thus implying that the Malays are already in a state of loss or defeat. To make matter worse, they are fighting against each other. The remaining nine lines provide answers as to why such conditions have been imposed onto the Malays: The Malays have been defeated as they are ’culturally' dead. The first three lines: '50 tahun merdeka, orang Melayu putih mata, masih bercakaran sesamanya’/’50 years of independence, Malays with white eyes, are still clawing at one another’ appear as the first three lines in all stanzas. In other words, the three lines are repeated in all twelve gurindams. In Raja Ali Haji’s gurindam, each pair of the rhymed lines can stand independently from the other pairing lines of the stanza. However, all pairing lines in the stanza contribute to a theme. For example, in the case of the fifth gurindam above, the theme in this stanza is the significance of good manners and courtesy. Other stanzas explore various themes such as the importance of knowledge, obeisance to religion and culture. All the gurindams function as a book of wisdom advising one about how to lead a better life. In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka,” Fatimah Busu is similarly didactic. She advises the reader to take heed of the fate of the Malays. All these have been conveyed indirectly where the role of Fatimah Busu as the implied narrator functions as the narratorial “I” of subjectivity in the narration. Now let us move on to discuss how Fatimah Busu has incorporated elements of satire and dramatisation in the gurindam.

Fatimah Busu as the implied “I” in the narrative further inserts her commentary and criticism on several social and political issues through the gurindam. The traditional gurindam has the purpose of ‘educating’ the reader or audience through the transmission of wisdom, as seen in the fifth gurindam from Raja Ali Haji’s Gurindam 12. Though “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” maintains the traditional
form, Fatimah Busu’s *gurindam* has been modified to suit the structure of modern poetry. The repeat of the first three lines in all twelve stanzas in the *gurindam* serves as a kind of refrain, albeit it occurs in the opening lines of each stanza, instead of at the end line(s) of a stanza. The traditional *gurindam* is a ‘straightforward’ rendition in rhymed lines aimed at offering some advice without giving any commentary. In Fatimah Busu’s *gurindam*, however, there are some inclusions of different genres such Qur’anic and scholarly quotes. There remains the implied “I” throughout the *gurindam* that offers some insights with regard to several socio-political issues in Malaysia. The fifth *gurindam* from “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” is a case in point where Fatimah Busu as the “I” ‘indirectly’ comments and dramatises the issue on ‘Islam Hadhari’:

50 tahun merdeka  
orang Melayu putih mata  
masih bercakaran sesamanya  
di parlimen Islam dicabar kewibawaannya  
negara Islam hadhari pertama muncul di dunia  
dengan perdana menteri menjadi ‘nabi’nya  
menidakkan kewibawaan Rasulullah s.a.w. penyibarnya  
dan meminda kalam Allah SWT dalam al-Quran yang mulia  
(Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 305)

50 years of independence  
Malays with white eyes  
are still clawing at one another  
Islam’s credibility is challenged in the parliament  
the first *Islam hadhari* country emerges in the world  
with the prime minister as its ‘prophet’  
egrating the authoritative messenger of God  
and amending the words of God in the holy Qur’an  
[My Translation]

The narrator in the above stanza voices an opinion that criticises the government policy termed as ‘Islam Hadhari’. Through the narrator, Fatimah Busu makes an implied mockery on Malaysia being the first country in the world that professes ‘Islam
Hadhari’. In this stanza of the *gurindam*, ‘Islam Hadhari’ is viewed as a new religion.

The prophet in this country is the prime minister himself, instead of the Prophet Muhammad. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia (2003-2009), proposed the concept of ‘Islam Hadhari’. *Hadhari* is an Arabic word, which can be translated as ‘progressive’. Thus ‘Islam Hadhari’ may refer to ‘Progressive Islam’.

Fatimah Busu, through the *gurindam*, can be seen as being among those who rejected this particular government policy. The basis for rejecting such a principle was because Islam as a religion is already complete and perfect:

> terjelas dalam sebahagian ayat ke-3 surah al-Maedah
> mafhumnya
> “... Pada hari ini aku telah sempurnakan bagi kamu agama kamu dan aku telah cukupkan nikmatku kepada kamu, dan aku telah redha akan ISLAM itu menjadi agama untuk kamu ...”

Allah SWT didak kata Islam hadhari. Hanya Islam saja
Jadi ia adalah satu kelaknatian, mafhumnya

> “Sesungguhnya orang yang menyembunyikan (meninda atau mengubah) apa-apa keterangan kitab suci yang telah diturunkan Allah dan membeli dengannya keuntungan dunia yang sedikit faedahnya, mereka itu tidak mengisi ke dalam perut mereka selain dari api neraka. Dan Allah tidak akan berkata-kata kepada mereka pada hari qiamat dan Dia tidak akan membersihkan mereka (dari dosa) dan mereka pula akan beroleh azab sengsara yang tidak terperi sakitnya.” (al-Baqarah ayat 174)
>Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 306

it is clear in parts of verse 3 of the chapter, al-Maedah in their translation (‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali 2005, p. 110)

> “...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion...”

Allah the Almighty does not say that it is Islam Hadhari. It is simply Islam
Thus it is an anathema, in its translation (‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali 2005, p. 44)

> “Those who conceal God’s revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit – they swallow into themselves naught Fire; God will not address them on the Day of Resurrection. Nor purify them: grievous will be their Penalty. They are the ones who buy Error in place of Guidance and Torment in place of Forgiveness. Ah! What boldness (they show) for the Fire!
al-Baqarah, verses 174-5)
[My Translation, except the Qur’anic verses]
The narratorial “I” argues that ‘Islam Hadhari’ is a concept against the fundamentals of Islam by quoting the Qur’anic verses that verify Islam is already perfect – thus there is no need for any other kind of ‘version’ of the religion. Advocating ‘Islam Hadhari’ vilifies Islam itself and those who embrace such ‘deviant’ thought will be punished by God in the hereafter. Further it is claimed in the gurindam that the followers of ‘Islam Hadhari’ are sinners and that they deserve to receive the Punishment of the Grave:

justru pengikut Islam hadhari sudah terpesong akidah. Di dalam kubur, para malaikat saling bertelagah

Malaikat I: Maa-a-rabbuka! Apa agama kamu di dunia?
Malaikat II: Islam hadhari, tuan Malaikat
Malaikat I: Ini sudah sah kes dari Malaysia
Malaikat II: Mahu suruh dia ke mana sekarang?
Malaikat I: Suruhlah dia ikut nabinya
Malaikat II: Orang yang mula-mula keluarkan idea Islam hadharinya
Malaikat I: Okey, sekarang kau pergi sana
Malaikat II: Ke mana tuan Malaikat?
Malaikat I: Ke neraka Jahanam bersama nabi hadharimu!

(Lalu dipukul serta dihentam 70 hasta masuk ke dalam)

Dihimpit bumi yang gelap dan kelam
Dibakar api yang tak pernah padam

Lalu dicungkil dengan kuku yang tajam
Sampai ke atas dia dipukulkan
Pukulnya itu tidak terbilang
Di hari Qiamat barulah hilang
(Fatimah Busu 2009, pp. 306-7)

hence the followers of Islam Hadhari have deviated from the belief in the oneness of God. In the grave the angels are in dispute

Angel I: Who is your God! What is your religion while you were on earth?
The Dead: Islam hadhari, Angel, sir
Angel II: This must be a case from Malaysia
Angel I: Where do we ask him to go to, now?
Angel II: Ask him to go with his prophet
Angel I: Who is his prophet?
Angel II: The person who first came up with the idea of Islam hadhari
Angel I: Okay, now you go there
The Dead: Where to, Angel, sir?
Angel I: To the Hellfire together with your hadhari prophet!
(Then the dead is beaten until he is buried 70 cubits deep)

Crushed by the dark and gloomy earth
Burned in the infernal fire

Then crowbarred by the sharpest nails
Lifted again to be bludgeoned
In never-ending blows
That will only cease on the Day of Resurrection

[My Translation]

The above scene is an imagined scene dramatising the punishment received by sinners in the grave. In Islamic tradition, it is believed that the Punishment of the Grave is real and the dead will be treated accordingly while awaiting the Day of Judgement. The righteous persons will avoid punishment while the sinners will be punished. It is also believed that a righteous person should be able to answer the angels’ questions; the question on what religion one professed during his life on earth is among the questions asked in the grave. In the gurindam, Fatimah Busu dramatises the scene insinuating the ‘exclusiveness’ of ‘Islam Hadhari’ to Malaysia – even the angels of death acknowledge that such belief can only be found in Malaysia. Next, let us take a look at some Malay proverbs used in the short fiction.

The use of Malay proverbs in ‘Ceritera V’ reveals more of the callous attitude of the modern Malays in appreciating the struggles of the past heroes. Siti Zainon Ismail (2010) says this about the Malay proverbs: “These proverbs reflect the way of thinking of the Malays” (p. xvii). Aminuddin Baki, one of the nationalists portrayed in ‘Ceritera V’ cynically comments on the generosity of the Malays that leads to self-destruction by citing several old Malay proverbs:

Dagang lalu ditanakkan
Laki pulang kelaparan
Anak di riba diletakkan
The proverbs used in this ceritera aim at describing the character of Malay community whose unselfishness and generosity can be troublesome at times. By using such proverbs, which are ancient sayings in Malay cultural tradition in the narrative, Fatimah Busu implies that the Malays’ meek character has hardly changed, thus they can be easily imposed upon or manipulated, resulting in the subjugation by others. The subjugation of the Malays by others is wide-ranging: from the attack of Singapura by Majapahit to the conquest of Melaka and later the entire Malay Peninsula by various colonial powers. All these contribute to the fall of the Malays even up to today according to the short story where nowadays the Malays are ‘third-class citizens’ in their own country as commented by Ahmad Boestamam, another dead nationalist who is given voice in the ceritera:

... [O]rang Melayu berada di kelas ketiga di belakang orang mendatang di negaranya sendiri. Orang-orang Melayu sedang dalam proses menjadi musafir di negaranya ... Orang-orang Melayu sedang tertindas oleh bangsa pendatang di bumi pesaka datuk-neneknya ...Tidak ada siapa lagi yang mampu menyelamatkan orang-orang Melayu dari kepupusannya (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 302).

... The Malay community now belongs to the third class lagging behind those who migrated to their country. The Malays are in the process of turning into vagabonds in their own country ... The Malays are being oppressed in the land of their ancestors ... No one can ever save the Malays from extinction [My Translation].
The above excerpt summarises the ‘effect’ of the Singapura tales in the first three *ceritera* as they have a profound effect on the fate of the Malay community. The lament over the fate of the Malays continues further in the poem, “Melayu Oh Melayu”/“Malay Oh Malay” in ‘Cerita V’.

The inclusion of the poem, “Melayu Oh Melayu” in “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” provides another reminder that the Malays need to pay attention to what has happened to their race. It is revealed in the early lines of the poem that the Malays themselves have contributed to the fall of the Malay race as a nation:

Melayu oh Melayu! Kaulah pengkhianat negaramu!
Melayu oh Melayu! Kaulah pengkhianat bumimu!
Melayu oh Melayu! Kaulah pengkhianat bangsamu!
Melayu oh Melayu! Kaulah pengkhianat bahasamu!
Melayu oh Melayu! Kaulah pengkhianat agamamu!
(Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 312)

Malay oh Malay! You are the traitor to your country!
Malay oh Malay! You are the traitor to your land!
Malay oh Malay! You are the traitor to your race!
Malay oh Malay! You are the traitor to your language!
Malay oh Malay! You are the traitor to your religion!
[My Translation]

The betrayal by the Malays is inferred in their disunity. This can be further seen in the current political divides in Malaysia. In the 1990s the two Malay political parties, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) contributed to the traditional-modern dichotomy of the Malays (Malhi 2003). The Malays at the end of the twentieth century have been polarised according to the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad:

... Dr Mahathir repeatedly argued that there existed two kinds of Malaysian Muslims – those who advocated a “traditional” and narrow understanding of Islam and its role in society and politics, and those who hold a commitment to a “modernist” and rational interpretation of Islam’s teachings (Malhi 2003, p. 237).
The political divides characterised either by being traditional or modern have hindered a cultural integration among the Malays. Malhi (2003) further claims that PAS reflects the ‘traditional’ side of the Malays while ‘modernity’ is represented by UMNO. The gap among the Malays grew wider in the twenty-first century Malaysia with the emergence of another political Malay party, People’s Justice Party (PKR). The poem can be seen as a cry that calls for solidarity among the Malays. It ends with a reminder to all Malays that their fate remains in their own hands:

Melayu oh Melayu!
Ingatlah! Tanah ini nasibnya di dalam tanganmu!
Di dalam airmatamu!
Di dalam darahmu!
Di dalam kekuasaanmu!
(Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 314)

Malay oh Malay!
Lest you forget! The fate of this land is in your hands!
In your tears!
In your blood!
In your power!
[My translation]

It can be concluded that the poem functions as a kind of invocation – a desperate voice summoning the racial sentiment needed for Malay unity. In the end, in wrapping up the retelling of the myth, the character of the boy who saved Singapura – Hang Nadim is seen to be returning to his burial place at sea in the final line of “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka”: “Hang Nadimpun kembali ke dasar lautan abadinya” (Fatimah Busu 2009, p. 315)/“Hang Nadim then returned to his ocean of eternity” [My Translation]. Hang Nadim becomes the last image seen in the short story thus enabling the rewriting of Malay mythical tales in the short story come full circle.
5.7 Conclusion

Looking at “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” as a whole, all five ceritera can be seen as a cohesive integral part of the ‘distinctive’ stories aimed at ‘narrating’ the nation. In Chapter 4, I put forward the suggestion that the first three ceritera served as ‘causes’ for the fall of the Malay race. In her criticism on images of the kings, Fatimah Busu as the narratorial “I” in the short story, ‘directly’ (first person narration) and ‘indirectly’ (third person narration) condemns the role played by the monarchs in building up a strong Malay nation. Consequently, the effects in ‘Ceritera IV’ and ‘Ceritera V’ – the invasion of the Malay Peninsula by foreign powers from Majapahit to the colonial powers, particularly the British, are seen to be the cause of devastating consequences to nation-building which incidentally was also the result of the failure of the Malay royal leadership. The use of the myth, thus, directs the reader to ‘reassess’ the history of the Malay nation. Furthermore, the resurrection of Hang Nadim, particularly in ‘Ceritera V’ implies the need for a continuity in maintaining tradition. This can be translated as seeing the predicament of the Malays by using the myth tradition and historical aspects so as to offer a deeper understanding of the nation in terms of the Malay racial positioning in the socio-cultural, literary and historical contexts. In short, through the rewriting of the myth, the notion of nation can be explored in new lights.
If, like me, you happen to be a writer somewhat alienated by your education from the dominant values of your ethnic kind, a writer who stubbornly persists in trying to see through and beyond the inherited blinkers of race and religion, what you call ‘loyalty to truth and beauty, justice and freedom’ can be considered a betrayal... People like me, bilingual and untroubled by sentimental pieties, are particularly vulnerable.

(Salleh Ben Joned 1994, p. 49)
Chapter 6

Lost and Found in Transnation: 
A Collection of Microfictocritical Writings

1

I’m not trained in politics but I’m sure I’m right to say that the notion of ‘nation’ is a political issue – particularly the idea of ‘organising’ people and creating a sense of belonging to one country that is unified usually by a common language and a government body. In the 1882 Ernest Renan’s essay, “What Is a Nation?” he declares that ‘a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle’.46 Perhaps that’s the idea of ‘organising’ people together. In other words, it’s an ‘abstraction’ that unifies people. No wonder Benedict Anderson claims that nation is ‘imagined’ as a community, together with the concept of race, also is ‘imagined’, they unite people as well as distinguish them from other groups. A nation is the ‘soul’ of the community ‘conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’.47 I think nation ‘symbolically’ bind people together. I have learnt what a nation is through literature and history. My early acquaintance with the tale of Hang Nadim didn’t immediately get me thinking of what is supposedly a nation. It was more of a curiosity on my part as I wanted to know more about Malay heroes. It turned out that the most celebrated Malay hero is a man called Hang Tuah. The kris grazed Tuah’s right shoulder. Few drops of blood from his wounded shoulder landed on the palace’s


white floor. He leaped to his left to avoid another blow, then Taming Sari\textsuperscript{48} staggered, losing his balance as he missed his target. In a split second, Tuah grabbed his opponent’s arm and knocked off the kris from his hand. He snatched Taming Sari’s kris, then stabbed him in his right eye causing immediate death. Nadim could never have gone through such an ordeal. He could never amount to a Malay hero. He is simply regarded as that little boy who saved Singapura\textsuperscript{49} from the attack of the swordfish. The fact also remains that Nadim died at a very young age as compared to Tuah who fought many battles; the latter is even considered to be the greatest Malay warrior in the history and literature of the Malay community. A well-respected scholar in Malaysian Literature, Mohammad A. Quayum writes that ‘nationalism implies idealisation of the nation...and it also creates a sense of conviction and loyalty among members to certain shared artefacts of the nation’.\textsuperscript{50} Literature is a form of artefact, a shared cultural item that further enhances the idealisation of the nation. Tales of Nadim and Tuah could be a culturally shared artefact in which members of a community could claim that such myths expand the notion of nation. It’s important that people who belong to the same community share the same common heroic stories. It’s through myths, legends and fairytales that people are bound together symbolically. It’s through the sharing of tales that gives strength that creates a sense of solidarity among them. Tuah may have fought many battles but Nadim also embodies the spirit of ‘the nation’ – a little hero who saved many lives of the people of Singapura.

\textsuperscript{48} Taming Sari is the name of the fearless Majapahit warrior and he was invincible because his kris was believed to have magical powers. However, Hang Tuah defeats him in a duel using Taming Sari’s own kris. The kris is then rewarded to Hang Tuah by the king of Majapahit and it was named Taming Sari ever since.

\textsuperscript{49} Singapura is the name of Singapore in Malay. Temasik is the ancient name of Singapura/Singapore and the name, Singapura is still widely used especially among the Malays.

\textsuperscript{50} Mohammad A. Quayum, 2009 ‘Introduction’ in Mohammad A. Quayum and Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf (eds), \textit{Writing A Nation: Essays on Malaysian Literature}, IIUM Press, Gombak, p. 5.
from the attack of the swordfish. Can ancient texts such as *Sulalat al-Salatin*\(^\text{51}\) and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*\(^\text{52}\) help define nationhood in Malaysia? Aren’t they all tales about the golden ages of the Malay kingdoms? Can other non-Malay races relate to these mythical and legendary stories?

2

Being non-Malay, sometimes I question myself where I fit in literarily. My parents are both immigrants from different countries. They met in Sabah, a state in East Malaysia on the island of Borneo. Dark-skinned, tall and handsome my father surely had attracted many women wherever he went during his youthful days. But his eyes were fixed only on the ravishing lady whose skin was as fair as the ripe yellow *langsat*. The olive skin tones were further adorned with slightly slanted eyes, accentuating her demure appearance to onlookers. Those little eyes of my mother’s must have captivated my father’s attention. They must have fallen in love right that instant. There and then! My father’s foreign accent must have added another pull factor that my mother, without realising, was instantly drawn to the man, soon to be her husband within a short period of just two months after their first meeting. Sabah is also one of the important habitats of the orangutans and home to Mount Kinabalu, possibly the highest mountain in the Malay Archipelago. But I don’t know any Sabahan tales of heroism apart from the legend of Mount Kinabalu which was once guarded by a huge dragon. I was more exposed to Western literature as I was a student of English Literature at one of the public universities in Malaysia. While studying English Literature at bachelor’s and master’s levels, it had always kept me wondering if I

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\(^{51}\) *Sulalat al-Salatin* is an Arabic phrase which literally means ‘Genealogies of the Sultans (Kings)’.

\(^{52}\) *Hikayat* is a Malay word derived from the Arabic language which literally means ‘story’. Thus, in its literal translation, *Hikayat Hang Tuah* means ‘Story of Hang Tuah’.
would ever have the opportunity to study Malay Literature. Essentially I knew tales such as Hang Tuah, Hang Jebat and Hang Nadim only because they are famous and there have been efforts in reviving them especially through cinematic expressions. Wong Phui Nam, a prominent Malaysian poet-scholar says that: ‘a classical text such as Sejarah Melayu, a text that came down from the original ethnic core, should be recognised and taught as a founding document of our nation (or nation-to-be) in schools in the country’. But he also questions the rationale of the distinction between National Literature and sectional literature. In the Malaysian literary context, works written in the Malay language can be considered as National Literature whilst other works in different languages fall under the category of sectional literature. The use of Malay language is then seen as the deciding factor to determine the nationalistic features in one’s works.

How funny it is that the Malay language does not have its own word for ‘nation’! It still uses the word but in its derivatives such as nasional, nasionalis, nasionalisasi, nasionalisir, nasionalisme and nasionalistik. The five terms: nasional, nasionalis, nasionalisasi, nasionalisme and nasionalistik may correspond, respectively, to the English terms: ‘national’, ‘nationalist’, ‘nationalisation’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘nationalistic’. The word, nasionalisir is synonymous with nationalisasi which means ‘nationalisation’.

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53 Sulalat al-Salatin is widely translated as Sejarah Melayu following John Leyden’s first English translation, Malay Annals (1821).


In *Kamus Dewan*, *nasional* is defined as ‘related to race’.\(^{56}\) Thus in the Malay vocabulary, ‘nation’ corresponds to race. Such conflation is rather problematic to me. Can we then use them interchangeably? So if someone is a racist, does it mean s/he is also a nationalist? Looking at it in this perspective, is therefore the reason why the concept of ‘race’ predominantly defines who a Malaysian is. It doesn't begin with the ‘nation’ but rather the starting point is the ‘race’. *I noticed that you ticked ‘others’ then wrote Sabahan in the race section when you filled out the form. Aren’t all Sabahans bumiputera? If they are bumiputera, aren’t they Malays, too?* Ashraf, my roommate at uni once asked me as he was curious as to why I did not declare myself a Malay. I look very Malay and I speak the Malay language fluently. And I’m Muslim too. According to the Constitution of Malaysia: ‘“Malay” means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and - (a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (b) is the issue of such a person’.\(^{57}\) Thank God both of my parents were ‘domiciled’ and granted citizenship before I was born. But it wouldn't matter I guess because I’m Malaysian-born so that makes me a Malaysian. *Bumiputera*, literally means ‘son of the soil’ and is used widely for the people of Sabah and Sarawak, two Malaysian states located on the island of Borneo. The Malays and *Orang Asli* (Aborigines) in Peninsular Malaysia are also categorised as *bumiputeras*. So all Sabahans, Sarawakians, Malays and *Orang Aslis* are basically *bumiputeras*. I could understand Ashraf’s confusion. Perhaps he was right. I reckon he was right too but

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\(^{56}\) Ibid., berkaitan dengan bangsa (in its original definition in Malay language).


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only constitutionally though. If not a *bumiputera*, at least I would like to see myself simply as a Malaysian.

4

Yesterday, I changed my timeline cover on Facebook from a self-taken picture of Wollongong Head Lighthouse to a picture of Malaysian flag with a caption: *Malaysia Day – 16 September*. I also added this description to the picture posted on the Facebook: ‘The joining together of Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore to form Malaysia back in 1963 but later Singapore was expelled in 1965. Thanks Najib for making 16 September a public holiday since 2010, though the people of Malaysian Borneo have been celebrating this day since 1963. Happy 50th Malaysia Day!’ Yes, it was 16 September 2013 yesterday – exactly 50 years ago a small country named Malaysia was born. I wasn’t even born yet. However many Malaysians especially the younger generation, are not aware of this significant part of our history. Some Malaysians may find it puzzling as to why Malaysia only started celebrating Malaysia Day in 2010. Why haven’t we celebrated this auspicious day since 1963? A man, looked not older than 40, folded the newspaper and put it into his bag. What’s the need for *Malaysia Day* if we have *Merdeka Day* every year? The man remarked, as if he wasn’t satisfied with what he’d read in the paper. He was sitting next to an old Chinese lady in the train. The lady responded saying: *31 August 1957 only marks the independence of the federation of Malaya. It wasn’t called Malaysia then. Not until 1963 when Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore joined the federation.* The man then asked her a question: *Why then in only 2010 that we started to celebrate this, why not before?* The lady responded with a big smile on her face: *Because Malaysian history has always been busy with the glory of the Malay sultans during the Melaka empire.* Many have not
realised that Sabah and Sarawak as well as Singapore, were all invited to join the formation of Malaysia by the then Federation of Malaya. They could have gone separate ways, just like what happened to Singapore. Imagine if Sabah and Sarawak merged with Brunei and Kalimantan to form a country named Borneo. Being the third largest island in the world, to form a big island nation like Australia, certainly it would have been entirely different, perhaps an interesting episode in the history of Malay Archipelago. Maybe I would never know who Hang Tuah is. Not that I don’t like him as a Malay hero but I feel he is only representing one side of Malaysia – the culture and literature of the Malay community in the Malay Peninsula. Now that we’re celebrating Malaysia Day yearly, perhaps it’s time we celebrate other mythical and legendary heroes from the East.

In “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka” Fatimah Busu selectively rewrites the myth of Singapura. This is to show that she believes that the history of the Malay kingdoms should begin with the tales of the kingdom of Singapura. Instead, most history books concerning Malaysia places emphasis on the glory of the Melaka Empire and Malaya’s struggle for independence. Even in Singapore today, the Singapura tales in Sulalat al-Salatin do not receive due recognition either for history or literature, except perhaps for the myth of the attack of the swordfish on the island. The 2005 Discovery Channel’s The History of Singapore traces the beginning of Singapore with the arrival of Thomas Stamford Raffles. The three-part documentary chronicles the progression of Singapore as the story is divided into ‘Part 1 – Raffles’ Little Child’, ‘Part 2 – The Accidental Nation’ and ‘Part 3 – Lion City, Asian Tiger’. Part 1 of the documentary begins with this narration: ‘200 years ago, Singapore was a jungle, an obscure tropical island barely
inhabited’. There is no mention of Malay rulers such as Paduka Seri Maharaja and Raja Iskandar Shah that we may find in Fatimah Busu’s short fiction. Raffles was contemplating either to negotiate with Tengku Abdul Rahman or Tengku Hussein Shah. He thought Tengku Hussein would be more appropriate as he had been a respectable ruler with strong support from the Temenggung. Tengku Abdul Rahman would pose some issues as Raffles heard that he had established a political ally with the Bugis and the Dutch. Raffles did not want the Dutch to ever learn of his grand plan for Singapura. He then summoned the Temenggung and requested for a meeting with Tengku Hussein Shah. I will proclaim you Sultan of Johor and Singapura if you allow my people to build a trading post in Singapura. The British company will guarantee your safety from Abdul Rahman and the Dutch and you’ll be rewarded with a handsome amount of money yearly, both of you. To be a sultan would truly be a dream came true and he would no longer be afraid of Abdul Rahman as the British would protect him. 

Great, yes I agree. And so did the Temenggung who thought that it was the wisest decision ever by Tengku Hussein Shah. The idea that the history of Singapore ‘begins’ in 1819 seems to be popular nowadays. Even an outstanding history book on Singapore by Mary Turnbull, first published in 1977, is erroneously entitled A History of Singapore: 1819-1975. Shouldn’t it be aptly entitled ‘A History of Modern Singapore: 1819-1975’ if the book only begins charting events from 1819 onwards? The same book was then republished in 1989 with more extended periods from the history of Singapore added to the new volume: A History of Singapore: 1819-1988. Still the chronology begins with the year 1819! Perhaps realising the mistake, in 2009, the third volume was entitled A Modern History of Singapore: 1819-2005. The ‘BBC News
Asia: Singapore Profile\textsuperscript{58} will tell you, again, not surprisingly that, 1819 has been marked as the first key event in the history of Singapore.

There's one Malay myth I that can't forget. I remember when I first heard it I was too petrified to go near a beach. Once I even refused to go for a family picnic. That was the tale of a boy who saved Singapura from the attack of the swordfish. Its Malay name makes sense to me. The word, 'Singapura' is a combination of two words: ‘singa’ and ‘pura’. Both come from the Sanskrit words, ‘simha’ which means ‘lion’ and ‘pura’ which means ‘city’. Thus ‘Singapura’ literally means the ‘Lion City’. The only word that has meaning in the name, Malaysia is Malay. I kind of like names of countries like Singapura or even Australia, from the word, ‘australis’ which means ‘south’. I still love Malaysia though. I could imagine if Singapura was really once attacked by a school of swordfish. Imagine while sunbathing and suddenly out of nowhere, you scream out in pain as the swordfish's sharp snout pierced through one of your eyes. The snout stuck in the eye. Blood squirting out with the big fish still wagging its tail. As your friend next to you try to help, another razor-edged snout cut through her stomach. She collapses on top of you with her intestines gushing out while the swordfish frantically wriggled its tail that is still stuck in your eye. I was terrified the swordfish might attack me if I went swimming in the sea near my home. I also remember feeling sorry for the boy as he was ordered by the king to be killed. I failed to understand why. I never asked anyone about it. I was all alone in my study room when I finished reading this particular episode. I was only eight years old. I stopped reading it right away. Why

didn't he run away? I wished the boy had managed to escape and somehow when he
grew up, he became the king. He would have made an awesome king, I am sure. I did
not even remember the boy's name back then. And I did not remember the rest of the
tales in the book. That was my first exposure of tales from the Malay culture and
traditions.

7

I didn't learn about Malay fairytales, myths and legends from my schooling days:
primary and secondary. Primary school was a big playground for me. I went to a
Chinese school but I never paid any attention in my Mandarin class. I had always been
the half-caste dark-skinned Chinese boy just because my mother was half Chinese. One
day, some of my mates dared me to ‘race’ eating to see who would be the fastest to
finish off the noodles in the bowl using chopsticks. I didn't win. Of course I was only
quarter Chinese. Only pure Chinese would be able finish his meal quickly using
chopsticks, that's what they said. Then I entered a boarding school but my friends
were no longer Chinese. They were all Malays. Most of them came from the peninsula as
their parents were either teachers or in the army stationed in Sabah for a few years.
I entered the school with a poor command of Malay language. To them, I was the
‘Chinese’ boy who was just lucky to be able to enter the prestigious Malay school. I was
even called the ‘infidel Malay’. Maybe they only accepted me because I was excellent in
English and Mathematics. To top it all, the English teacher was Chinese. So there was a
bit of connection there. Oh yes, I was a teacher’s pet. Then I befriended a Malay boy
from Melaka. His name was Iskandar. We became good buddies though we didn't stay

59 Peninsula is the Peninsular Malaysia or Malay Peninsula also known as West Malaysia. It is formerly
called Malaya or Tanah Melayu (the ‘Malay land’) before 1957 when it was a British colony. Isabella Bird
refers to this land as 'The Golden Chersonese' in her travel book, The Golden Chersonese and the Way
Thither (1883).
in the same dormitory. But we were in the same class and we sat next to each other even during the prep hours after classes. He often laughed at the way I spoke Malay. He said I had a funny accent. I usually imitated the way he spoke, because I thought I wouldn’t sound so funny if I did. We taught each other languages. He taught me proper Malay language and I helped him with his English. **How do you become good at English?**

**Do you speak English at home?** I smiled. **No. I speak bits of many languages all at once.** **In a sentence, I used words from languages spoken by my parents.** He looked confused. **My father is Filipino-Spanish and my mother is Bruneian-Chinese.** He stared in disbelief. **So I speak bits of Tagalog, Spanish, Hokkien-Mandarin and Malay-Bruneian in my daily conversations.** His jaw dropped. **You’re kidding, right? What language do they use when talking to one another?** A blob of red chili sauce dribbled down my freshly-washed white uniform. **They simply use Sabahan dialect.** He was quiet for a while as he handed me a tissue. **Thanks!** We both had chicken burgers in the school canteen that day. Our conversation was cut short when the school bell rang. It was a bit cloudy that day and I was wondering if we could play tennis later in the afternoon.

8

I was seventeen when I started my English matriculation programme. It was my first time that I would go to the peninsula. My parents decided to come two days before the registration day. I was so excited during our stay in Kuala Lumpur. It seemed to be constantly busy, night and day. The night market lived up to its name as it stayed open all night long. People kept coming. Almost all sorts of things you could think of were sold there – from farm produce such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, freshly slaughtered chicken or meat and fish, clothes, shoes, toys, household appliances and even pots of plants and fake designers’ bags. We literally bumped into a lot of people. I could even
feel someone breathing down my neck. Smoke coming from nearby food stalls floated in the air bringing with them pungent smells of spices, chilies and curry invading your nostrils. My mom held my hand the whole time. There wasn’t a moment where the number of people seemed to be dwindling. It was always crowded. On the third day in the big city, we had tour of Kuala Lumpur before we went to register for my matriculation. There were some wooden blocks amidst the concrete buildings. I was shocked to discover that the matriculation centre was rather small. After the registration I had to stay one more night with my parents in the hotel. I saw my mother crying when we said goodbye the following day. Then I got settled into my room at the matriculation centre. It was a shared room. I noticed my roommate wasn’t there yet so I quickly chose the bed next to the window. The sky was cloudless outside. It was stiflingly hot in the room. I opened the window to let fresh air in. I took a chair and sat near the window. I was imagining myself as the lonely cloud in “Daffodils” when the door opened and a Malay boy entered the room. His name was Ashraf. He was a psychology student. Oh, you’re an English major?! Your English must be very good then. I chuckled. I invited him to have some drinks in the hostel café. We had a long chat talking about our families and schools. I found out that he was from Kedah, a state up north in the peninsula. The next day I entered my first class. It was a poetry class. Mr. John, a very energetic funny English man was our lecturer. I looked around and I noticed that most of my classmates were Malays but I was the only one from Sabah, a state in East Malaysia. I also found out that I wasn’t the only one who went to the Science stream in the class. So when Mr. John asked a few of us who our favourite poet was, I couldn’t give him any answer. Instead I simply read the first four lines of “Daffodils” I remembered by heart. Aha, we have a Wordsworthian scholar among us here. He seemed to be pleased with what I read.
At first I struggled to understand what literature was all about. I was only armed with the knowledge of reading comprehension, writing simple narrative essays and close passages which I had learnt during my school days. I faced difficulty in trying to understand the literary terms that were thrown at me. Reading between the lines? That was a challenge as I did not even know what it meant! I was able to appreciate most of the literary works simply because I liked stories. But I found myself to be always drawn to poetry. Magnetically. I thought my admiration for “Daffodils” would never be surpassed but then along came another English poet by the name of John Keats. ‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever: Its loveliness increases; It will never pass into nothingness’. How can someone not instantly fall in love with these lines? Right there, right then, I felt so lucky to be enrolled as a literature student. But then Mr. Geoffrey Chaucer almost spoiled it for me. My God, the language sounded awful to my ears. Was it even English? Then entered Mr. William Shakespeare! We started with one of his famous tragedies, Macbeth. I wasn’t sure if I liked Macbeth but I remember I had a strong dislike for Lady Macbeth. Very manipulative. A bossy lady. She wore the pants, for sure! I could not bring myself to appreciate Shakespeare’s language. I saw it as a kind of beat-around-the-bush language. Get to the point, will ya! During my two years at the matriculation centre, I learned a lot about Western culture and literature, especially English literature. Over time, my English improved tremendously too. I felt even more confident in English than in Malay. I didn’t give it much of thought really as I felt Malay wasn’t really my first language. In fact when I think of it, I did not really have a ‘real concrete’ language that I could call my mother tongue. It was always bits and pieces here and there. A little bit of this and a little bit of that. I felt like I was a bowl of mixed salad with Malay and English added as dressings to enhance the flavour.
Yet the strange thing was that I was not even fluent in any of the languages spoken by my parents. Even up to now, I thought my first language was Malay then came English, where I felt it almost took over my Malay language. I think my positioning of language, which is neither here nor there has left a hollow space in me: creating a need to search for that ‘identity’ so that I may fill in the gap. I swear I have the ability to acquire languages rather quickly. I even picked up the Arabic language during my uni days. I was really good at it and I won a public speaking competition in this difficult language.

I thought it was funny when Mr. John called me Wordsworth. I also found it strange. Because of this some friends called me Woody. I never answered to this name, except in Mr. John’s class. He explained to the class that he liked to address his students using the names of important literary figures. Since I recited the first four lines of the poem, “Daffodils,” he began with me by giving me the name of the famous poet, William Wordsworth. We had twenty-three different names in the class. Someone who sat behind me was called Yeats and the girl next to him was Dickinson. It was hilarious when later some of us made fun of her name. Some called her Dick and this would be followed by ripples of laughter. Imagine a girl with a dick. A classmate by the name of Shelley whispered to me. I giggled. That’s how we were introduced to the wide world of Western literature. Mr. John was perhaps my favourite teacher. His passion for poetry made me feel as if the poets themselves were talking to me. I was almost certain that Wordsworth would be my favourite poet, as expected by Mr. John and some of my good friends. It turned out that I had developed a deep admiration for Keats’ poems. I was drawn to his poetry as I felt I could travel and meet the Greek gods and goddesses. Keats’ poems made me take up extra reading where I would spend
most of my spare time reading up on Greek mythology. I remember Mr. John said this once in class: *If you want to find the meaning of beauty, read Keats.* At first I thought, Keats must’ve been so obsessed with women’s beauty. *Last week I asked you to read a few of John Keats’ poetry. Now, let’s ask Mr. Keats himself.* He walked towards a boy sitting in the last row. Mr. John stood next to him and he was leaning against the brick wall with crossed arms against his chest. All heads turned to him. The Keats boy seemed to be taken aback by this question and he looked rather nervous with Mr. John being in close proximity, waiting for the answers. *Any phrases that you like from his poems?* Mr. John walked back to the front, as he turned to face his students, his eyes were still on the Keats boy. Still no answer. I could see that his eyes magnified through the lens of his spectacles. By then, he was standing in front of me. He looked down with twinkles in his eyes and I knew instantly that he was now readdressing the question to me. *A thing of beauty is a joy forever.* I said the phrase with a certain degree of uncertainty, not really sure if I had answered his question. *Aah, Endymion. And the beauty of Selene, the moon goddess.* Mr. John then explained how Greek mythical tales had made a huge impact on his poetry. It made me wonder if there were some Malay mythical stories turned into poems. Then I certainly would enjoy reading a poem about the attack of the swordfish.

I would like to think that I enjoyed my undergraduate studies. Really? Well, maybe not quite. Perhaps I didn’t get to study literature as much as I wanted to. There were always other subjects that got in the way or sometimes some college or club activities that I needed to be a part of. Most of my literature subjects were in the B+ and B categories with a minor hiccup of C+ in one, maybe two. But I never got a C for any
literature subjects though, unlike the linguistics subjects and the minor and elective courses. Maybe if they were all literature subjects, I could’ve graduated with a first class honours? Haha, maybe. While enjoying all my literature subjects, I discovered three literature subjects that seemed to be at odds with the rest. Amidst the English and American literary giants, I had the opportunity to study three interesting literary subjects, namely Islamic Literature I, Islamic Literature II and Islamic Literature III. In Islamic Literature I, we studied literature before the coming of Islam. The period is called pre-Islamic or *Jahiliyyah*. *Jahiliyyah* is an Arabic word which literally means ‘ignorance’. It also means a period of ‘darkness’ perhaps similar to the ‘dark ages’ of the Western world. Poetry called *al-Burda* was the dominant genre of this time. The *Burdahs* often praise women’s beauty, wine and horses which incidentally made up their main subject matter and theme. With the coming of Islam, such praises then shifted to praising the prophet while some themes also deal with war and heroism. In Islamic Literature II, we moved on to study some middle-eastern literature especially Persian and Sufism. Here I became acquainted with some of world’s gifted poets such as Rumi and Hafiz Shirazi. Of all the Islamic literature subjects I studied at uni, I found Islamic Literature III to be the most interesting. This is where the focus is on the Malay *hikayat*. *Hikayat*, a Malay word loaned from the Arabic language means ‘story’. It brought back memories of my childhood especially when we studied *Sejarah Melayu*. Of course there was my childhood hero again, Hang Nadim. During one of the class presentations, I even presented my term paper on Nadim in *Sejarah Melayu*. I felt it was important that Nadim should also be recognised as one of the Malay heroes. I even viewed him as a tragic hero but a few of my friends did not agree with me. As did our lecturer. *Just because we feel sorry for the way he dies doesn't mean he is a tragic hero.* Besides, there must be some flaws in his characters that has led to his downfall or death. I
wanted to argue that Nadim might not have been a warrior like Macbeth or a swordsman like Hamlet but his act helped to save a lot of innocent lives. That was what made him noble. I realised I did not say these words out loud. I stood frozen. The only sound in the room was the whir of the ceiling fan blades cutting through the air in that hot afternoon.

12

Only recently I learned that the original title of Sejarah Melayu is Sulalat al-Salatin. The Malay translation seems to be incompatible should we want to ‘metaphorically’ translate the original title to connote the idea that the ancient text is a piece of Malay history. But then, history can be defined loosely as an event of the past. But doesn’t it also strongly entail elements of ‘truthfulness’ and ‘logic’? Sulalat al-Salatin may consist some historical facts in the history of the Malay community but perhaps, only partly. Now try explain this scene ‘historically’ (read: ‘logically’): ‘The bull, which was his conveyance, vomited foam from which emerged a man named Ba‘h, with an immense turban, who immediately stood up and began to recite the praises of Sangsapurba.’

This particular scene doesn’t sound logical or historical to me. Can an animal just spit out a man? I certainly don’t agree with the phrase Sejarah Melayu to be used as the official Malay translation of Sulalat al-Salatin. Clearly it is a direct translation from the English translation initiated by Dr. John Leyden who translated the traditional manuscript as the Malay Annals. The use of Sejarah Melayu may not confuse scholars of Malay Literature. However, it may lead to confusion to others in Malaysia who are not familiar with the ancient text. I was once among the confused ones. I thought Sejarah Melayu was a text about the history of the Malay community as that is

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precisely what its literal translation stands for. The other day I asked a Malay student who is studying at one of the public universities in Malaysia if he ever read *Sejarah Melayu*. He replied saying that he only knew some important facts as he never really liked the history subject when he was at school. I smiled. I explained to him that what I meant was the traditional Malay text by that particular title. Then he responded right away proclaiming that he knew *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. He said that he had never read it but he knew the famous duel between Tuah and Jebat in the story. He was rather surprised when I told him that there exists a Malay traditional text called *Sejarah Melayu* and it is not a history book at all. *You mean *Sejarah Melayu* is not a history book of the Malays?* I was pleased I managed to get his full attention. *It is an ancient text that partly chronicles the history of the Malay community but the original title is Sulalat al-Salatin which literally means ‘Genealogies of the Sultans’.* He just looked at me, blankly. He was a science student at the SPM level. I feel sorry for the younger generation of Malaysia today; many would be doctors, lawyers, engineers etc climbing up the financial ladder and attaining a high status in society but poor in the literary sense.

The version of *Sejarah Melayu* I read when I was young was a simplified version. It didn’t mention the boy’s name. I eventually learned the name of the boy who saved Singapura to be Hang Nadim or Nadim. I was not sure where I learned of his name. Apparently, Nadim’s tale is among the famous ones out of many episodes in the traditional Malay text. I asked Iskandar if he knew a story about the boy who saved Singapura. *Of course I know the story. But I don’t like it.* Apparently he didn’t like it just

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61 SPM is Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or Malaysian Ceritificate of Education (MCE) in English.
because Singapura or Singapore as known today is no longer a part of Malaysia. He told me he didn’t like his Singaporean cousins. Every time they come visit us during raya, they always brag saying they have money and they can buy anything they want in Malaysia. My father said they never realised that they are being controlled by the Chinese in their own country. I was shocked to hear this. The boy shouldn’t have saved Singapura! I never asked why he seemed to be upset about the issue. I simply like the story because the boy was so clever, he saved the entire country from the attack of the swordfish. He saved many lives. There was a smirk across his face. But he said he liked Hang Tuah. He is the true Malay hero. I thought I might have come across him in Sejarah Melayu but I could not remember though. So I told him that I didn’t know about him. Of course you don’t know him, he’s not your favourite tomboy George from the Famous Five stories. Ah, teaser! That was the first time I ever heard of the name of Hang Tuah. Little did I know that those conversations would become a big deal in my life.

14

We never really got any proper exposure to literature. In Malaysian secondary schools, forms 1-3 make up the Sijil Rendah Pelajaran Malaysia (SRP), a compulsory examination to be taken in form three. I was fourteen when I sat for my SRP, a year short of the usual age of fifteen for SRP students. Among the subjects taken for the SRP examination, the closest to literature would be language subjects, Malay and English. There were some bits and pieces in history class from time to time. In the Malay

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62 Raya is a shortened version of Hari Raya which literally means ‘celebration day’. It is the Muslim festival of Eid to mark the end of ramadhan, the fasting month.

63 It is Malaysian Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) in English.
subject, it was always about writing skills. I never learned of any big Malaysian writers in this subject. If it was any consolation, we sometimes watched some classic Malay films especially by P. Ramlee.\textsuperscript{64} At least with the English subject, the teacher tried to bring in simple poems for us. I remember Miss Anne who brought Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” to class. She then recited the first four lines of the poem to us: \textit{I wandered lonely as a cloud/ That floats on high o’er vales and hills/ When all at once I saw a crowd/ A host, of golden daffodils. How do daffodils look like, teacher? Someone in the class asked her. She showed the class a picture of some glorious yellow flowers. \textit{I have never seen them before but they are very pretty.} Miss Anne smiled. \textit{That is because they will never grow in a hot tropical climate like ours. Where can we find the flowers then? England.} It was at those moments that I felt like going to England to see the flowers, just to hold them in my hands. I imagined throwing them up high in the air, some would fly away, blown by the wind, some would land on me – in the hair, arms, my shirt, my pants. I wished I was the cloud looking down on the glittering field of daffodils. For sure I would no longer be the lonely cloud floating around in the blue sky as my heart ‘dances with the daffodils’. \textit{Can we have a class visit to England, teacher?} Miss Anne simply laughed.

Going straight to the matriculation level, it meant I skipped the \textit{Sijil Pelajaran Tinggi Malaysia (STPM)}\textsuperscript{65} forfeiting my chance of doing any Literature subject. I did not have

\textsuperscript{64} P. Ramlee (1929-1973) was a household name in Malaysian entertainment. He was an actor, director, singer and songwriter. His film, \textit{Hang Tuah} won Best Musical Score, at the 3rd Asian Film Festival (Hong Kong, 1956) and it was officially screened at the 7\textsuperscript{th} Berlin International Film Festival in 1957. He won the Best Male Actor Award in the film, \textit{Anakku Sazali (My Son Sazali)} at the 4th Asian Film Festival (Tokyo, 1957).

\textsuperscript{65} It is Higher School Certificate (HSC) in English.
a clue that I would end up doing Literature for my undergraduate studies after SPM. I was expected to do some Engineering or Medical degree. I sent in applications for both the Engineering and Medical courses at the IIUM. The reason I applied to do my matriculation at IIUM was simply because it was one of the only two English medium universities in the country at that time. Moreover, it had an international reputation. I had an offer to do a Law programme in one of the UK’s universities too. No, you just study here. Please. I could still remember my mother’s sad voice as she pleaded with me not to go to England. Yes, I thought I would have missed her terribly, thus I accepted the offer from IIUM. I was shocked when the offer letter arrived that day. It indicated that I had been enrolled into the English programme. I thought the panels who interviewed me were not really serious. So you scored A2 for ordinary English and A1 for English 1119? I smiled. Yes. During my SPM, the ‘ordinary’ English was one of the compulsory subjects in the examination, whilst English 1119 also commonly referred to as the ‘July paper’ was optional. The latter was the exact O level English paper in the UK. The fee for this one particular paper was even slightly higher than the fee for the MCE examination for all the nine subjects. The ‘July paper’ was also the Cambridge paper, sent from the UK and marked there. That's strange, very strange. I was not sure if it was a question so I didn’t reply. Would you like to tell us what happened? I knew exactly what they meant. It was rather unusual for a candidate to have scored better in the Cambridge paper when compared to the SPM English paper. It should have been the other way round. I took the English 1119 in July when I wasn’t sick. In October when I sat for the SPM exams, I got chicken pox and it got worse during the English paper. I left the examination hall early as I couldn’t stand it anymore so I didn’t answer the question on the summary. I lost 15 or 20 marks in that section. I noticed the panel members looked at each other and nodded their heads. There were
three of them. *If we offer you an English programme, would you accept it?* I felt a bit strange as I had applied to do an Engineering programme in the application form. But the thought of not getting admitted if I refused scared me so I said yes to the offer.

16

Two days before the 2013 *Merdeka*, the movie, *Tanda Putera (Mark of Princes)* was released, perhaps aimed at coinciding it with the 56th celebration of Independence. Shuhaimi Baba, one of Malaysia’s well-known directors, directed the movie. The movie tells a story of a friendship between Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein, the second prime minister of Malaysia and his then deputy, Tun Dr Ismail bin Abdul Rahman. Tun Abdul Razak featured in the movie is the father of the current sixth prime minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak or Najib Razak. Najib appears in the movie as a uni student pursuing his studies in England. The glasses that cover most of his face make him look like a nerd. He looked rather ordinary and simple in his knit sweater with a long scarf wrapped around his neck. I supposed what made this movie interesting was the way it contextualised the narrative of leaders in the events after the 1969 racial riots. On 13 May 1969, just three days after the general election, a racial violence erupted resulting in the killing of hundreds of Malaysians. The May 1969 incident, also resulted in the appointment of Tun Abdul Razak as the prime minister, replacing Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj. Seeing it in this context, the movie basically narrates the struggle of a newly appointed leader trying to restore peace in the country. Malaysia as an independent nation was just six years old over at that time. Erna Mahyuni’s review of *Tanda Putera* in the *Malay Mail Online* concludes that: ‘Watch “Tanda Putera” if you must, but I fear that if you’re not Malay, all this movie will leave you with is either anger or sadness that
some would consider this film truthful in any way’.\textsuperscript{66} Apparently there is a lopsided representation of races according to the reviewer – while the Malays are well-portrayed, other races, especially the Chinese are viewed to be villainous, causing the May 1969 riots. In the movie, it perpetuates the idea that the Chinese were the ones who initiated the riots resulting in the killing of hundreds of Malays. However, there isn’t enough evidence to prove such a claim. The reality is that both races – Malay and Chinese respectively have lost hundreds of people without any clue as to what had really happened on that day. Further Erna Mahyuni claims that this movie is a ‘slapdash insult to all the people who lived and died for our country – including the non-Malays and yes, the Communists’.\textsuperscript{67} How does the ‘other’ Malay view such a movie? A friend asked me over dinner the other night. I chuckled at his reference of me as being the ‘other’ Malay. \textit{Well, I think I shouldn’t be taking any offence whatsoever as there’s no portrayal of any Malaysian Borneo in the movie}. He took a sip or two of the Diet Coke before asking another question. \textit{Are you saying the movie is not inclusive?} I knew the question required a simple yes/no answer but I said this to him instead: \textit{I want historical-based movies to emphasise the meaning of Malaysian rather than the meaning of Malay}. He nodded, he did not even bother asking me further about what I meant by it. I was sure I would not be able to give answers if he asked me that. We left the restaurant in separate cars. As I was driving home I could not help but think of the answer I had given, that I, honestly, did not know what it meant.


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
The recent statement by mufti of Sabah, Ustaz Bungsu @ Aziz Jaafar to call for the non-Malay Muslims ‘to be made Malay’ sparks controversies in Malaysia especially among the Sabahans. What is even more shocking is the mufti himself is a Sabahan. His remark resulted in the emergence of the idea of ‘Malay-nisation’: ‘We need a programme to *meMelayukan* [make Malay] these Malay tribes... If Sabah and Sarawak did not vote in the last polls, maybe we would have had a change in the government’. This statement came out a few months after the 13th General Election held on 5 May 2013. On 1 October 2013, MP Darell Leiking launched the “I am _____ ” campaign on Facebook encouraging Sabahans to take pictures of themselves with signs proclaiming their ethnicity. The blank space was to be filled out with the names of the Sabahan ethnic groups such as *Kadazan-Dusun, Bajau, Murut* and *Rungus*, just to name a few.

These ethnic groups, including the ones in Sarawak make up what is termed *Bumiputera* – ‘Son of the Soil’. It is reported that in just 24 hours after the launch, a total of nearly one thousand photos were posted on the campaign page. Apparently many Sabahans are proud to be identified ‘ethnically’ without having to ‘convert’ to Malays if they are Muslims. It is almost common knowledge in Malaysia that if you are Malay, you are Muslim. The term, *bumiputera*, however, does not necessarily mean that one is a Muslim. The idea of attempting to ‘Malaynise’ the Muslim *Bumiputera* can be seen as ‘playing a dangerous game of race and religion’ as observed by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, former chief minister of Sabah. The statement made by the mufti

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being a Sabahan himself, confirmed my suspicion that some *bumiputeras* desperately want to be called Malays. I have had this suspicion for a long time since my boarding school days. I noticed that half of my classmates who were Sabahans thought highly of the other Malay students from Peninsular Malaysia. I remember an incident that occurred in a classroom: one classmate said he was a Malay because both of his parents were *Melayu-Brunei* (Malays from Brunei) and another from the *Bajau* ethnic group who claimed that the *Bajaus* were 100% Muslims similar to Malays. The *Semenanjung* (Peninsular) kids in the class did not respond to any of this. A few others remarked that they were simply happy being Sabahans. I did not understand the whole point of some Sabahans wanting to be Malays. The discussion didn’t reach any conclusion as our teacher: Cikgu Malik entered the classroom for the double-period of History. Everyone rushed to his or her own seat. Cikgu Malik, one of the most feared teachers in the school was a lanky man who liked to wear chintzy ties. That day he wore grey slacks and a black-and-white windowpane shirt with a big-knotted yellow necktie of glossy silk brocade and pink-tinted round spectacles.

All this while, I always thought that history of the Malays began with the establishment of the Melaka Sultanate in the fifteenth century. Only recently, when researching materials for Traditional Malay Literature, I began to realise that there are some significant historical or mythical stories that are left out in the history subject taught in Malaysian schools. After a ten-minute break, the History lesson in Cikgu Malik’s class continued into the second period. I couldn’t really give my full attention to what Cikgu Malik was saying in class. I felt slightly sleepy in the afternoon hours of the History class. The sun outside warmed up the brick walls of the class. I loosened
my tie and undid the top button of my shirt. I feel there was too much emphasis on the colonial periods – from the capture of Melaka by the Portuguese, to the British occupation right up to Malaya’s independence in 1957. The way I see it, the history subject taught in Malaysia schools is in dire need of revisions. I think the narratives of the Melaka period have been overly highlighted – not that it is not important to the nation’s history but it feels like too much glory is bestowed on the golden era of the Melaka empire (1400–1511), which may have hindered other significant historical events such as the Sumatran and Singapura periods. I’m not surprised if some Malays don’t even know that some of the sultans in Malaysia were originally from Indonesia, especially from Palembang, Sumatra. Some Malaysians are bold enough and show feelings of superiority over Indonesians. Some even do not see themselves working for menial jobs such as cleaners, house helpers, factory workers and many other odd jobs. In order to support her family back home in Ambon, Tati worked as an *amah* – a house helper who did all the house chores – cleaning up the house, doing laundry, cooking and taking care of the kids. She had to do all these for less than one thousand ringgit per month. I remember a fellow Malaysian who was studying in Australia said that the Malays are not *Indons*. Calling an Indonesian ‘Indon’ by a Malaysian is considered offensive. According to Martin (2012), ‘[h]istorically speaking, the term ‘Indon’ refers to some Indonesians working and living in Malaysia. Language is about usage and context. Originally, the word was used to disparage this group of people. It is then obvious that the term is not used to respect Indonesians’.70 I feel really sorry for this friend of mine – though she is a PhD holder now – but it’s such a terrible shame that she’s historically blind. I have been informed that the History subject had been revised

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that it has been made a compulsory subject at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) level starting 2013. Too little, too late.

It is believed that the Melaka sultans were descended from Alexander the Great. In Malay culture and literature, the name used is Iskandar Zulkarnain, instead of Alexander. Such claim is mentioned in *Sulalat al-Salatin* where it is narrated that a Tamil conqueror of Nagapatam by the name of Raja Shulan came to conquer Gangga Negara (Perak – a state in Peninsular Malaysia). He then killed two kings in Perak: Raja Linggi Shah Johan and Raja Chulin. Raja Shulan married Onang Kiu, daughter of one of the slain kings, Raja Chulin. They had a daughter named Chendani Wasis and it was this daughter who got married to Raja Suran Padshah, the descendant of Alexander. This couple then had three sons: Jiran (Ruler of Chendragiri), Chulan (Ruler of Bija Negara) and Pandayan (Ruler of Nagapatam). Of the three sons, Chulan was said to have descended into the sea and married Princess Mahtabul Bahri, daughter of Aftabul ‘Ard, the king of Basram, the kingdom under the sea. Raja Chulan and Mahtabul Bahri had three sons and further narration indicates that these three princes came to Palembang in Sumatra. There was a river named Melayu in Palembang, on it there was a hill named Bukit Si-Guntang and upstream there was the mountain, Gunung Mahameru. Wan Empuk and Wan Malini, the humble rice paddy owners witnessed the most extraordinary occurrence. One night, Bukit Si-Guntang was gloriously lightened up. The hill shone so bright that it seemed as if the sun just appeared out of nowhere in the middle of the night. The two women were too scared to investigate the

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71 This brief genealogy of the Malay sultans is based on Richard Olaf Winstedt’s ‘An Outline of Malay Annals contained in Raffles MS. No. 18’ in Cheah BK & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail (eds) 2009, *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)*, MBRAS, Kuala Lumpur. Note that spelling of names and places may vary in numerous versions of *Sulalat al-Salatin*. 

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phenomenon. They decided to leave it until the next morning. Wan Empuk and Wan Malini couldn’t believe what they saw the next day. The rice had turned into gold, the leaves turned into silver and the stems turned into copper. The entire rice paddy was luminous in gold and their brilliance radiated all over Bukit Si-Guntang, and further away. They then met the three princes who arrived in Bukit Si-Guntang riding a white cow. The eldest was Sang Sapurba and was appointed ruler of Minangkabau; the second was Sang Meniaka and became the ruler of Tanjung Pura; and the youngest was Sang Utama and was made ruler of Palembang with the title Sri Tri Buana. Thus Sri Tri Buana became the first Raja Melayu (Malay King) adopting the name of the river, Melayu in Bukit Si-Guntang. Sri Tri Buana then married Wan Sendari, daughter of Demang Lebar Daun who ruled over the Muara Tatang river. The couple then travelled to Bentan in Riau where they were warmly welcomed by its ruler, Wan Sri Benian or Permaisuri Sakidar Shah. Sri Tri Buana decided to venture out even further until he settled in Temasik. Temasik was then renamed Singapura and Sri Tri Buana ruled the place for 48 years. Upon his death, he was replaced by his son, Paduka Seri Pikrama (Pekerma) Wira Diraja. He was then succeeded by Raja Muda or Paduka Seri Rana (Wikrama) Wira Kerma. The last king of Singapura was Paduka Sri Maharaja Parameswara, or later known as Raja Iskandar Shah. Raja Iskandar Shah had to flee Singapura during the attack of Majapahit. It is believed that Raja Iskandar Shah ended up becoming the first ruler of Melaka.

Most Malaysians may agree that Hang Tuah is possibly the greatest Malay warrior who lived in the era of the Melaka Empire. Hang Tuah may have overshadowed other important heroes but as a Malay warrior figure, it can be said that he was almost
unrivalled by others. The lesser popular Malay mythical figure, Badang deserves due recognition as he was considered a hero during the Singapura period. The tale goes that Badang who was once a simple slave turned to possess Herculean strength overnight. One day he caught a demon that had been eating all the fish trapped in the net. The demon promised to grant anything Badang wished for if he set him free. He asked the demon to make him a very strong man. The demon agreed on one condition: Badang had to eat the demon’s vomit. Without hesitating, Badang agreed to do it. He then became the most powerful man that ever lived on land. He could simply uproot trees, from small to big, enormous to towering, with his bare hands just like plucking flowers, he could hurl them, easily throw them all into the air. Badang was then summoned to serve the Singapura king, Paduka Seri Rana Wikrama. So far, there has only been one movie that retells the story of this ancient Singapura hero, Badang (1962). In the movie, however, in order to keep his powers, Badang needs to agree to not to get married. If he reneges, he could die dreadfully. Such condition imposed upon him is never rendered in Sulalat al-Salatin. I found this rather interesting as the character of Badang is presented in a new way that he is a man who is challenged to choose between power and love. Sulalat al-Salatin may have presented him as brawny and powerful but the movie allows us get insight into Badang’s character – beneath all the muscurally tough vigour, there lies a deep emotion that is able to feel love, that is when he falls in love with Tengku Manis.

The 2008 documentary, Alexander Bukan Zulkarnain (Alexander Is Not Zulkarnain) attempts to prove that Iskandar Zulkarnain and Alexander the Great are two different persons. In most Malay versions (Shellabear, Samad and Muhammad) of Sulalat al-
Salatin, Iskandar Zulkarnain or referred as Raja Iskandar in the texts, is identified as the son of the King of Macedonia who later became a great king himself. Subsequently, in the English versions (Leyden and Brown), Raja Iskandar is translated as Alexander the Great. In these texts, Raja Iskandar is said to be Muslim and he is responsible for the Islamisation of the Indian King, Raja Kida Hindi. Raja Iskandar then marries Tuan Puteri Syahr al-Bariyah, daughter of Raja Kida Hindi and later they have a son named Raja Arasythun Syah. Sulalat al-Salatin traces the Malay kings’ lineage to Raja Arasythun Syah whose descendants are said to have ruled parts of India. One of the descendants, Raja Shulan or Suran or Chulan is believed to have a direct connection with Malay royalty when he married a daughter of a Malay king. In Alexander Bukan Zulkarnain (2008), it has been revealed that Iskandar Zulkarnain was possibly the King of Himyar or Cyrus the Great, the Persian king who had a large empire that conquered the Middle East, Egypt and India. This idea may not necessarily be new as some Islamic scholars have already suggested that Zulkarnain is Cyrus the Great. One of the purposes of the production is to seek proof that Iskandar Zulkarnain was a pious Muslim king. Thus, being a devout Muslim warrior and ruler, Iskandar Zulkarnain may not be Alexander the Great who was born Macedonian. So far there has not been any reliable evidence suggesting that Alexander was ever a Muslim. However, the production does not dispute the identity of Alexander the Great being the King of Macedonia, who conquered almost half of the world. Perhaps the daring portrayal of Alexander's character as being ruthless and sexually deviant in the Hollywood movie, Alexander (2004), prompted the producers to search for the real identity of Iskandar Zulkarnain. Besides, the story of Iskandar Zulkarnain also appears


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in the Qur’anic verses (18: 83-99), thus this further propels the documentary production to find proof that both are not the same person – Iskandar Zulkarnain being a monotheistic practitioner whilst Alexander the Great might have been a believer of Greek gods. Why hasn’t it been banned in Malaysia? Lim expressed his opinion after watching the movie, Alexander. Devi didn’t understand. Why? Isn’t it a good movie? I like it. Lim took a large gulp of his 100 plus from the tall cup. Isn’t Alexander the Great said to be the forefather of the Malay kings? Now, Devi understood. We don’t want the Malay Kings to be descended from a king who might have been bisexual, if not a homosexual, do we?

22

The head of state in Melaka is no longer a Sultan despite being one of the earliest Malay sultanates. Didn’t the story of most great Malay Kings in Peninsular Malaysia begin with Melaka? The first Western power, i.e. the Portuguese who conquered Melaka indirectly contributed to the loss of the monarchy in Melaka. The capture of Melaka in 1511 resulted in the removal of the last sultan, Sultan Mahmud Shah (1488-1528) from Melaka. The Sultan retreated to Muar, Johor and later became a ruler in Kampar, Sumatra until his death in 1528. His two sons: Alauddin Riayat Shah II went on to establish the Sultanate of Johor and Muzaffar I founded the Sultanate of Perak. Malaysia probably has the largest monarchy system in the world with nine different sultans who are the heads of state in their respective states. The nine Peninsular Malaysian monarchial states are Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Perlis, Pahang, Selangor Terengganu, Perak and Negeri Sembilan. All are called sultans except for two states; the ruler of Perlis is styled as Raja and in Negeri Sembilan he is addressed as Yamtuan Besar. Since 1957, there has been a rotation system of electing a sultan to become
Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Paramount Ruler). In other words, every five years, a sultan from a different state becomes the ‘head’ of other sultans in Malaysia and he is recognised as the Paramount Ruler, thus making him the head of state for Malaysia. On the other hand, there is the chief public representative in each of the remaining states: Melaka, Pulau Pinang (Penang), Sabah and Sarawak where the ruler is called Yang di-Pertua Negeri (literally means ‘Head of State’). The maintenance of the monarchs epitomises the cultural dominance of the Malays in Malaysia. Anas Zubedy (2012) in his article, “What Is Ketuanan Melayu?” argues that all Malaysians should be integrated by adopting one common culture while practicing other ethnic cultures. He suggested that the Malay culture should be seen as a unifying factor that can forge a unique Malaysian national identity. Further he claims that the concept of Ketuanan Melayu (‘Malay Supremacy’ or ‘Malay Preeminence’) is not about Malays being more superior to other races or ethnic groups in Malaysia. According to him, this concept is misunderstood partly due to the word, tuan which can literally be translated as ‘master’. Seeing it in this context, Ketuanan Melayu may connote the idea of the Malays being the masters. To solve this problem, he asserts that it should be translated as ‘sovereignty’ rather than ‘supremacy’ because Ketuanan Melayu is a contraction of Ketuanan Raja-Raja Melayu which is related to the sovereignty of the Malay kings rather than the Malay community themselves. Some ministers from UMNO do not understand what Ketuanan Melayu is. Saadah, a political science student expressed her frustration at how the concept has now been turned into a racist slogan. Ketuanan Melayu has recently gained popularity among Malay ministers who called for the unity of the Malay community. What happens to non-Malays, then? Shouldn’t it be a call for

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the unity of all Malaysians? Saadah was left perturbed contemplating over her country that has increasingly become more racist.

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Have you read the latest news on Chin Peng? A fellow Malaysian who’s studying engineering asked me this while we were having a lunch break. Do you mean, that he died recently in Bangkok? Poor guy, he died in exile. I continued eating my chicken curry. Yes, that...but this one is more sensational. He smiled broadly. He didn’t continue right away. Instead he kept eating his sushi and took a long gulp of his juice. He was still smiling. I was getting impatient. I felt like slapping that silly-grin off his face. Finally he said: Chin Peng’s ashes are not allowed to enter Malaysia for fear they may transmit infectious disease. I almost choked on a mouthful of rice, then laughed. It was loud enough the others sitting closer stared at me. Who said that? I asked. The IGP Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar. He replied. What? The Inspector-General of Police himself? He nodded. So there’s a possibility that Chin Peng’s remains can spread communism, too? He didn’t answer for we both knew it was rhetorical. Our short conversation kept me thinking that stereotypes are still looming in Malaysia. If it’s any consolation especially to his family, at least he died on Malaysia Day. Chin Peng, the former leader of the Parti Komunis Malaya (PKM) or Malayan Communist Party (MCP) died on 16 September 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. He was born in Sitiawan, Perak, Malaysia. He had lived in exile since 1950s specifically after the 1955 Baling Talks where MCP was banned from participating in any democratic electoral exercise. Chin Peng has been hailed as a nationalist by Tommy Thomas in his article, “Obituary – Chin Peng, a Malayan Nationalist” (2013) for his significant contributions that helped expedite the Independence (Merdeka) of Malaya in 1957. In the memoir, Alias Chin Peng: My Side of
History (2003), by Ian Ward and Norma Miraflor, as quoted by Thomas (2013), Chin Peng recalled how the Malaysian government admittedly acknowledged MCP’s role in achieving Merdeka during the 1989 Peace Treaty in Phuket, Thailand: ‘Would Britain have granted independence to Malaya as early as 1957 had the military activities of our guerillas not been a factor in the equation? This was explored at length during the private negotiating sessions. Finally, Rahim Noor, speaking in the Malay language from notes in a fully recorded meeting, made the announcement that Malaysia did not deny or dispute MCP’s contribution to the struggle for independence. As to the extent of this contribution, he went on, there was no need to argue the matter in this forum. It should rightly be an issue left for historians’.74

For the first time since 1969, the ruling National Front coalition or Barisan Nasional failed to obtain a two-thirds majority in the 2008 election or the 12th General Election (GE). The same thing happened in the 13th GE held on 5 May 2013. The Bersih rallies are said to have contributed in the recent shift of the political landscape in Malaysia. Bersih (literally means ‘clean’ in Malay) is a short form for the Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections) established in 2006. Bersih seeks to reform the current electoral process to ensure clean, fair and free elections independent of any political party.75 The first Bersih rally in 2007 attracted more than 10,000 people who gathered at Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square) in Kuala Lumpur. People from all walks of life, regardless of their races and ethnicity wore

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75 See Bersih homepage: <http://www.bersih.org/?page_id=4109>.
yellow t-shirts to show their support for the Bersih cause. They formed a yellow sea of people standing in solidarity demanding for fair elections. Such a bright colour under the reflections of the equatorial sun further accentuated the resplendence of the Bersih peace-loving ralliers. Bersih 2.0 in 2011 attracted more than 30,000 people who turned up in the streets near Dataran Merdeka and Istana Negara (The National Palace). Bersih 2.0 triggered Global Bersih – held by Malaysians overseas with a total turnout of 4,003 in 38 international locations. Bersih 2.0 also resulted in the formation of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) to respond to electoral issues. However, Bersih claimed that many allegations of electoral irregularities or fraud had not been addressed in the report by the PSC. Such dissatisfaction prompted Bersih 3.0 which was held in 2012. The supporters of Bersih had worn yellow T-shirts in all three rallies. Is that a new shirt? The colour is so yellow! That was the first remark I got from my next-door neighbour, instead of the usual greeting: Hello, good morning. I chuckled. Sue, my friendly Australian neighbour never failed to greet me every time we ran into each other. I remember once she offered me a lift home when she saw me in the Coles carrying two big plastic bags full of groceries. I just bought this yesterday. Today I’m wearing this to show my support for a rally in Malaysia. She looked at me blankly; the expression on her face told me that she expected further explanation. She couldn’t possibly know much about what was going on in my country. People in my country are having a rally to call for clean and fair elections. I tried to explain to her in the simplest way possible. The elections haven’t been fair? She wanted to know more. The electoral roll has been tainted with phantom voters and other forms of fraud. I knew she didn’t get the whole picture of the situation. Oh, dear! That’s all she could say. I’m not going to

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join the rally in Sydney though. I’ll be just here doing the usual uni stuff but I wish them the best of luck. I’m just wearing yellow to show my support. She nodded. Then she said she had to go as we both heard her phone was ringing somewhere in her house.

Lim Kit Siang, the leader of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) reported in his blog that the police interrogated A. Samad Said for more than an hour. It was simply due to an innocent act: reading the last two stanzas from his poem, “Unggun Bersih” (“The Bersih Fire”) during the Bersih 2.0 rally.\(^7\) Lim’s translation of the word, ungun as ‘fire’ connotes a perspective in which democracy in Malaysia is raging. However, the word, ‘fire’ in Malay is *api* whilst ungun is ‘ember’. I think the word ‘ember’ is more suitable as democracy in the opening lines of the poem is the glowing coal in a dying fire. Only then will the coal slowly burn and will be further ignited by the free voice of the people until the ‘magical ember’ (*unggun sakti*) catches fire – big enough to turn the flickering embers into a conflagration of true democracy. The involvement of the national laureate, Datuk A. Samad Said or fondly known as Pak Samad in Bersih 2.0 and Bersih 3.0 has led to mixed reactions among Malaysians. Supporters of Bersih welcomed him unreservedly as he is one of Malaysia’s canonical writers, thus, he is seen as a very influential figure especially among the intellectuals. Others who are not in favour of Pak Samad’s involvement in Bersih see him as someone who is against the government, thus accusing him of fomenting political unrest. Perhaps if Pak Samad had not been such a dominant force in Malaysia’s literary circle, many would simply ignore his involvement. I think the real problem lies in the association of Bersih as

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being anti-government. This is seen as such when some politicians from the 
opposition joined the rallies. Wasn’t the main goal for the setting up of Bersih to call 
for electoral reforms? Of course Bersih is seen as going against the government 
because the power lies in the current authorities with regard to any change made to 
the electoral roll. Maybe all politicians should be banned from joining Bersih? That’s 
absurd because Bersih is a coalition, which campaigns for ‘fair and clean’ elections – 
isn’t that how it came about in the first place? Certainly it will defeat the purpose of 
being fair and clean to all if Bersih only allows certain groups of people to join its 
cause. I feel sad that such a revered literary icon like Pak Samad is now involved in 
politics. My friend expressed his opinions in relation to some events currently 
happening in Malaysia. There’s nothing wrong in getting involved in politics. I quickly 
responded to his remark. Of course not, what I meant was Bersih is using him to speak 
against the government. I couldn’t believe what I’d just heard. Is Bersih an opposition 
party now? He was silent, he couldn’t reply right away. Errr… well, maybe. There are 
some PKR people who joined Bersih. I started feeling sorry for him. But it doesn’t make 
Bersih a political party. Isn’t it open to all? The bottom line is regardless of your political 
beliefs, you may want to join Bersih rallies as they aim only for electoral reforms. He 
widened his eyes and stared at me. Are you supporting the opposition? I smiled. I just 
want a better Malaysia. I left him pondering upon the last statement I’d just made.

26

Many forms in Malaysia require you to declare your race or bangsa, in Malay. Often the 
selections will be (usually in this particular order): Malay (Melayu), Chinese (Cina), 
Indian (India) and Others (Lain-lain). Why is this even necessary if all are Malaysians? 
This can be problematic: if a person is from Sabah or Sarawak, or specifically a non-
Muslim Kadazandusun, or a Senoi (One of Peninsular Malaysia’s indigenous groups or Orang Asli), certainly it won’t be right for him or her to tick off ‘Malay’. Then s/he has no choice but to choose ‘Others’. Now, imagine a foreigner, a non-Malaysian filling out the same form. S/he will definitely tick ‘Others’. Are you saying that Sabahans and Sarawkians are others? If they are, then they must be foreigners too. Therefore, they are not Malaysians! Someone suggests that we should use three indicators: Bumiputera, Non-Bumiputera and Others. A-ha, you’re starting to make sense now. The problem still persists, though. In the Constitution of Malaysia (Article 153), the phrase, orang Melayu dan anak negeri mana-mana antara Negeri Sabah dan Sarawak (‘the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak’) prevails in which it clearly indicates that there are two groups: Malays and the natives of Malaysian Borneo. Notice that the Constitution does not use the term, Bumiputera (‘Son of the Soil’). According to Kee (2013), he says that: ‘[t]he classification of Malaysians into Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera is one of the most divisive mechanisms of our society’. In other words, there is no need for this term. It’s not even in the Constitution! Nowadays, it seems that some Malays (not all though, mind you!) are feeling insecure lest they lose their ‘rights’ especially after GE 12 when the Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition failed to retain its two-thirds majority. One of the major components of Barisan Nasional is the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). It is Malaysia’s largest Malay political party and possibly the longest ruling party in the world. Some Malays think that once UMNO is no longer in power, the Malay position as enshrined in Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia and the Social Contract of Malaysia could possibly be abolished. Anwardi Jamil (2008) poses

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this question: ‘...what Malay rights are we fighting for when everything Malay is slowly being shoved aside by the Malays themselves?’ Correctly he points out that Malays should think of preserving their identity as they can be seen now to have started losing their own identity. Here’s my favourite example given concerning the wane of Malay identity: ‘You want to see how strong we Malays defend our language? You go check how a Malay talks to an Indonesian. Chances are the Malay will automatically take on the Indonesian accent so that the Indonesian understands’. This instantly reminds me of at least three of my Malay friends who say they don’t listen to Malay songs. Going back to the first issue about filling out the forms: maybe the bangsa/race section should be changed to warganegara or citizenship with selections of either Malaysian or non-Malaysian, instead?

I’m so proud of you, my son. My mother was moved to happy tears on the day I received my results. What’s with this Grade 2 score on the Malay Paper? My father grumbled. My best friend Iskandar scored almost the same as I did, maybe slightly better with seven Grade 1s and English being the only Grade 2. However, we did not go to the same school as his father was transferred to another district. We promised to stay in touch but I guess we must have been busy studying and we gradually had less and less time to maintain communication. We used to write letters to one another every week. Those days, making calls was an expensive affair, especially for students. Then it was time to enter the SPM alone without my best mate. SPM meant I would be in forms four and five with the SPM examination to be taken at the end of form five. I was


80 Ibid., p. 164.
seventeen when I finished my school, which meant I had completed both the SRP and SPM examinations. In the last letter I received from Iskandar, he told me that he was going to England to further his study then I never heard anything from him after that. During a long break after school – while waiting for offers from the universities, I spent most of my time in the state library. I tried to find a job so that I could earn a little bit of cash if I went to uni. But no one was interested in hiring school leavers like me, as they usually preferred to employ some who would stay longer, if not on a permanent basis. I ended up having a lot of time on my own. Sometimes I spent time with friends, mostly playing games in their homes. But most of the time, I would spend hours in the library, not necessarily reading but usually I would spend time watching movies in the audio-visual room. One day I watched an old Malay movie: *Raja Bersiong (The King with Fangs)* in the AV room. It was a story about an ancient Malay king who consumed too much blood in his meals so much so, he grew fangs. While preparing the king’s favourite dish, the cook accidentally cut himself. Blood began seeping from his finger into the curry. The cook panicked but decided to serve it anyway as there wasn’t enough time to prepare another dish. *Cook, what have you put in the meals, today? They are so delicious.* The cook was so terrified he didn’t dare lie to the king. He confessed. Since then the king ordered the cook to put blood into the food. Many people were killed for their blood. The king with the fangs then terrorised his own people. In retaliation, the people attempted to kill the king but he escaped into the jungle. *Mom, do you know the story of Raja Bersiong?* I asked my mom while she was serving pasta for dinner. *Yes, I do. It’s a famous Malay folklore. I think it’s a kind of vampire story.* I looked at my steamy pasta – it looked sumptuous flooded in white creamy sauce with pieces of chicken meat, mushrooms and pepper. I was relieved to see the colour of my
food, which was covered in white sauce. I knew for sure I wouldn’t be turn into a vampire.

28

I can’t help but keep thinking of her. Asaad confessed his feelings to Iqbal. Have you called her yet? Iqbal already knew the answer to his question. I called her this morning and we’ve been texting each other since morning. Just listening to her voice once is not enough. His lovey-dovey details made Iqbal’s skin crawl. Pungguk, oh pungguk. Iqbal chortled as he teased Asaad. The Malay proverb, bagai pungguk rindukan bulan is often quoted to refer to someone who is longing for his or her lover. The proverb literally means ‘like an owl that sighs longingly for the moon’ in English. The relationship between the owl and the moon in the proverb is based on an old Malay legend. In the legend, the owl fell in love with the moon-princess, so he decided to propose marriage to her. Yes, I will marry you if you just let me finish this betel quid. Please leave me alone for a while. The owl obeyed. He left her enjoying the betel quid feeling hopeful about their impending marriage. The thought of marrying a beautiful princess lulled him to sleep that night. The moon-princess then threw the half-chewed betel quid down to the earth. The betel quid turned into a little bird, as tiny as one’s thumb. The bird was called sepah puteri in Malay, which literally means the ‘princess’s leftovers’ in English. The next day the moon-princess requested the owl to look for the betel quid. I will marry you if you can find the betel quid. It fell off my hand while I was still enjoying half of it. The owl searched everywhere. He flew for miles and miles.

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81 The Sepah Puteri bird is also linked to the Malay fable of Father Limes-stick and the Flower Pecker. See Walter Skeat’s Fables & Folk Tales from an Eastern Forest for the full version of the fable and his notes on the legend of the owl and the moon-princess. The 1901 book is now published by Silverfish Books in 2012.
He asked other animals but they didn’t know anything about the betel quid. *Maybe the earth has swallowed it.* The fox speculated. *Why don’t you ask the shark? It could’ve fallen into the ocean.* Others suggested. The owl’s failure in his attempts to retrieve the betel quid cost him the marriage. The moon-princess decided to call off the wedding. The owl was left broken-hearted. He kept hooting at every full moon. He became a despondent lover, longingly sighing for his beloved, the moon-princess. *Bagai pungguk rindukan bulan* is such a famous proverb in Malay, that I decided to immortalise it in my Malay poem entitled “Maka Berhentilah Cinta” (“When Love Stops”). The relationship between the owl and the moon appears in the first stanza: Love shall end/when the owl stops/longing for the moon/or when the frog stops/partying after the rain. The poem defines love according to Malay culture and tradition in which it uses the legend of the owl and the moon. Love is perceived as pure and its purity equates the owl’s honest and genuine love for the moon. In the poem, the end of the owl’s love for the moon marks the end of love itself.

In October 2006, a Mongolian woman was killed in Malaysia. Her name was Altantuya Shaariibuu. She was shot twice in the head. Her body was then detonated using C4 explosives. Three individuals were charged in the first murder trial: Corporal Sirul Azhar Umar, Chief Inspector Azilah Hadri and Abdul Razak Baginda, a political analyst. Both Sirul and Azilah were Najib Razak’s bodyguards, the then deputy prime minister.

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82 “Maka Berhentilah Cinta” was first published in *Mingguan Malaysia (Malaysia Weekly)* on 23 July 2006. It was read on air by DeeJay Nazrin Nordin on 24 July 2006 for the segment: ‘Gegar Pantai Timur’ on THR. This poem was also translated into Mandarin by Goh Ying Soon entitled: àidāngtingxī. It now appears on these two blogs: <http://networkedblogs.com/IKfYm> and <http://mutiara-cinta22.blogspot.com.au/2013/03/maka-berhentilah-cinta.html>.

83 The first stanza of the poem, “Maka Berhentilah Cinta” in its original language, Malay: Cinta pasti berakhir/ bila si pungguk tidak lagi/ rindu akan bulan/ atau si katak tidak lagi/ berpesta selepas hujan.
Sirul confessed to the murder naming his boss, Azilah as an accomplice. They both went to prison while awaiting further trial and sentencing. The court found Razak, who was said to be Altantuya’s lover, not guilty. He has since left for England.\textsuperscript{84} Razak and Najib were close friends. In 2008, Razak’s private investigator, Balasubramaniam son of Perumal, also known as PI Bala released a statutory declaration implicating Razak and Najib in the murder of Altantuya. It was reported that Najib had an intimate relationship with Altantuya. She was the translator in the negotiation for the Scorpene submarines. She was promised a sum of half a million US dollars as a ‘reward’ in securing the deal.\textsuperscript{85} The USD1 billion deal was reported to have been ‘routed through a firm owned by Razak’ (that) ‘netted him a €114 million commission’.\textsuperscript{86} PI Bala retracted his statement the following day and left the country for India. In 2009, Najib became the sixth Malaysian Prime Minister of Malaysia. In early 2013, PI Bala returned to Malaysia and was involved in political campaigns against the government. Suddenly later that year, he died of a heart attack. In March 2013, the famous French criminal lawyer who also acted for DCNS, Olivier Metzner was found dead, alleged to have committed suicide. The DCNS sold the two multi-billion-ringgit Scorpene submarines to Putrajaya.\textsuperscript{87} The Altantuya murder trial had been going on from 2006 to 2013 with 62 witnesses in 2008 and 162 more were to be called to testify.\textsuperscript{88} In August 2013, Sirul

\textsuperscript{84} See full account on the murder and Sirul Azhar’s confession here: ‘The confession that never was’, \textit{Asia Sentinel}, 20 March 2009, <http://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/the-confession-that-never-was/>.  


\textsuperscript{86} ‘The confession that never was’, \textit{Asia Sentinel}, 20 March 2009, <http://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/the-confession-that-never-was/>.  

and Azilah were found not guilty. The court overturned the 2009 death sentence imposed on Sirul and Azilah. They walked out of the court free men. In the aftermath of the August 2013 trial, P. Ramakrishnan summed up the whole ordeal succinctly on Free Malaysia Today (FMT) online: ‘Convicted, self-confessed, cold-blooded killers are no longer killers! The Court of Appeal has declared so. Their earlier conviction and their death sentence have been set aside and they have been discharged. They are free. They have not committed any crime as of now. They did not kill Altantuya!’

*Has Malaysia ever been a democratic country? Now the whole world is laughing at us. Malaysia, the best democracy in the world? Dream on! The country has been marred by unjust rulers since the first Malay kingdom.* Afzan slammed the newspaper on the table. His cousin, Siti took the paper. She flipped through the pages while drinking her strawberry milkshake. She was looking for the screening times for the movie, White House Down. She imagined having a boyfriend like Channing Tatum. She was delighted at the thought of dating a movie star. That would happen only in her wildest dream. Afzan dug his fork into his remaining New York cheesecake. *Are you ready for the movie now? We have 15 minutes. I’ll take care of the bill. You buy the tickets. I need to go to the ladies. Wait for me in front of the cinema.* Afzan quickly finished off his cake. He drank his cappuccino. It was already cold. It tasted a bit bitter. He grimaced and stuck out the tip of his tongue. He then left the café.

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The recent acquittal of the killers of Altantuya Shaariibuu speaks volumes for the most disgustingly thwarted definitions of justice in Malaysia. Don’t you just love being Malay in this country? Thalia asked Johan. They were on their way to attend their friend’s wedding. What do you mean? Johan demanded further explanation. He needed such interaction to keep on going so as to keep him awake throughout an almost four-hour drive from Kuantan to Puncak Alam. Thalia turned off the radio. I read online that Sirul and Azilah were freed of all charges. A real theatre of the absurd, if you ask me. They were both graduates of English Literature. That’s absurd, indeed. Didn’t Sirul confess to murdering the Mongolian lady in the first trial? But what has being Malay got to do with it? Thalia took a lipgloss and a small mirror out of her bag and touched up her lips. The news calls the acquittal a complete whitewash. It further reports that since the two are part of Malay community forgiveness should be accorded without question. The pair had prayed so hard for their release in the past seven years behind bars, after all. Johan bit his lower lip, eyes still on the road. Apparently there’s a new law in this country. If you confess to having killed someone, you’ll only be imprisoned for seven years. On the 23rd October 2013, Zunar’s animation entitled Hikayat Datuk Nazak & Antutuya: Episod Antutuya Bunuh Diri (Tale of Datuk Nazak & Antutuya: Antutuya Committed Suicide Episode) comically speculates that Antutuya committed suicide and was not a murder victim. It’s too transparent a satire that the caricatures bear striking resemblances to Najib Razak and Altantuya. The Malaysian political cartoonist, Zunar, whose real name is Zulkiflee Anwar Haque, employed tongue-in-cheek wordplay on the names of the characters. Najib Razak is renamed Nazak and Altantuya is Antutuya. The name, Nazak

means ‘dying’ in Malay while the name, Antutuya can be separated into two – Antu and Tuya. Antu is suggestive of the Malay word ‘hantu’ (‘ghost’) while Tuya could be an invented female name. Thus the two main characters are the dying Datuk (a Malay honorific title) and the female ghost named Tuya. In the animation, Datuk Nazak begins with special greetings to the 47% Malaysians. The 47% Malaysians are the people who voted for Najib Razak’s party, the Barisan Nasional (National Front) or BN in the May General Election in 2013. Here’s the full transcript of Datuk Nazak’s recounts of the story of Antutuya (quoted in verbatim): ‘Today I would like to make a confession. From my sincere and shining like-a-ring heart, oops! Actually, nobody killed Antutuya. Instead, Antutuya had committed suicide. I can still remember that night in October 2006 when she drove to Puncak Alam herself. She then took out a pistol and shot her own head. To destroy all evidence, she then lit up the C4 fuse and blow herself up. Then she crawled back to the immigration to delete her name so that she cannot be traced. That was actually what had happened. What? You don’t believe it? Me too! Luckily I still have 47% idiots’. Datuk Nazak ends his confession with a big laugh. Then a hand – that has a flamboyantly massive diamond ring on it – drags him out of the picture. The animation signs off with the words, ‘Be End’ instead of ‘The End’. Johan turned on the radio again. The deejay announced that the title of the next track was explosive by the all-girl violin group, Bond. They both listened to the ‘explosive’ instrumental music.

*I can kill you, Tuah, if I want to.* Jebat says this after he manages to knock off Tuah’s kris, not once, but twice – on both occasions the kris goes darting across the palace hall and straight into the wall. Tuah appears helpless, unarmed expecting a fatal attack from Jebat. *Tuah, what’s wrong if we could just forgive and forget. Let’s be brothers again like we used to, Tuah.* As if trying to console the sobbing Jebat, Tuah seizes the moment in retrieving the magical kris, Taming Sari. Jebat was shocked. Tuah attacked. Both warriors traded feints and parries with lightning speed. Tuah leapt forward. Jebat retreated. He was caught in the curtain. Tuah drove a hard thrust through the curtain. The kris caused a deep wound in Jebat’s stomach. Eventually Jebat died. This is the famous duel scene between Tuah and Jebat depicted in the film production, *Hang Jebat* (1961), directed by Hussain Haniff. An earlier film production, *Hang Tuah* (1956), directed by Phani Majumdar, portrays Jebat’s willingness to surrender the Taming Sari so that Tuah could kill him. In both depictions, Jebat dies in the arms of Tuah. Tuah grabs and hugs Jebat as he was about to fall. Tuah cried. Both men sobbed while hugging each other. These cinematic expressions attempting to rewrite Malay mythical stories have had an influential impact on the subsequent retelling of the myth. For many years, most Malaysians have considered the 50s and 60s film versions of the story of Tuah and Jebat to be the most reliable reference to the Malay mythical tale. Most Malaysians think that the duel between the two Malay warriors was between Tuah and Jebat. However, many are not aware of another version of the duel in which, in *Sulalat al-Salatin (Genealogies of the Sultans)*, the fight is between Tuah and Kasturi. *But the book, Sulalatus Salatin written by A. Samad Ahmad depicts that it is Tuah who fights and kills Jebat, not Kasturi.* Anita explained to Reza as they walked together on the way to meet the others in the library. Anita couldn’t believe that there
exist two different versions of the famous duel between the two Malay heroes. *I don’t think* Sulalatus Salatin *is written by A. Samad Ahmad. It’s written by a man named Tun Seri Lanang in the 17th Century. Wait, no, no it wasn’t him! It’s Tun Bambang. I’m not sure, I don’t really remember, but I know it’s not A. Samad Ahmad. Reza corrected Anita but he himself wasn’t sure who the real author of the Malay text was. *Why do you think A. Samad Ahmad changed it?* They planned to have a study group that afternoon. *That’s a good question. Maybe he is influenced by the P. Ramlee movie. Reza couldn’t really answer Anita. A. Samad Ahmad’s Sulalatus Salatin, first published in 1979 and has been in the list of the Malaysian school textbooks for many years now. The text is used in form six or Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) or Malaysian Higher School of Certificate (HSC). It’s time now for a new redaction that upholds the authenticity of the original 1621 version of Sulalat al-Salatin. People should also know of the other version in which the duel is between Tuah and Kasturi in Sulalat al-Salatin. A. Samad Ahmad shouldn’t have changed it into a fight between Tuah and Jebat. He should’ve rewritten the myth as it was told in the tradition. As they entered the library, Anita noticed that the floor was freshly cleaned and the smell of detergents still lingered reminding her of a hospital.

*The Malays will suffer if the opposition wins the election.* Arif tried to convince Rizal who thought that the opposition needed to be given a chance to form a new government. *Why will the Malays suffer? Aren’t PKR and PAS a part of the opposition coalition? Surely they will look after the Malays. The Malays will never vanish from the earth, says Hang Tuah.* Rizal did not want to enter into another long argument with Arif. He had planned to have a ‘me-time’ involving him watching a movie without any
interruption from his housemate. He quickly retreated to his room with a tall glass of orange juice and a big bowl of popcorn. There are two famous quotes from the film, *Hang Tuah* (1956): *Takkan hilang Melayu di dunia* (‘Never shall the Malays vanish from the world’) spoken by Hang Tuah and *Raja adil raja disemabh, raja zalim raja disanggah* (‘A just king is to be obeyed, a cruel king is to be rebelled against’), a saying uttered by Hang Jebat. However, these quotes do not appear in both the traditional Malay manuscripts, neither in *Sulalat al-Salatin* nor in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. The Hang Tuah’s quote in particular has been used as a rallying cry for Malay nationalism. It’s common knowledge now among Malaysians that these are Hang Tuah’s words; even a bronze mural of Hang Tuah exhibited in the National Museum is inscribed with this particular quote. Again the quote is made famous in the 1995 film, *XX Ray II* (dir. Aziz M. Osman). However, there is a twist in this film as Hang Tuah doesn’t utter the quote. Instead, a 20th-century scientist who travelled through time to the 15th century Melaka is the one who gives him the quote: *Takkan Melayu hilang di dunia*. It comes as a complete surprise that no one has ever brought this up. Not even a Malay Literature teacher, scholar or even a Malaysian student studying cinema. It makes one wonder how many Malaysians actually bother reading *Sulalat al-Salatin* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* or any *hikayat* at all, for that matter. It seems that Malaysians do not even care to check up on any discrepancies concerning the retelling or rewriting of Malay myths.

*Hey Rizal, I love the movie, Puteri Gunung Ledang. It’s a love story between Tuah and the mountain princess. It’s so romantic!* Arif expressed his opinion after watching the film, *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (*Princess of Mount Ledang*). The movie is a recent cinematic adaptation of a tale of a mysterious princess who lived in isolation on Mount Ledang in Melaka. The story appears in both *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and *Sulalat al-Salatin*. *I hate the movie!* Arif was shocked. *Why? Isn’t it a good movie? I read somewhere that Tiara*
Jacqueline won the Best Actress award at the 50th Asia Pacific Film Festival. I also heard it’s Malaysia’s official entry for the Oscar nominations in 2005. Arif defended his opinion in viewing the film as one of Malaysia’s high achievements in showbiz. The movie spins a lie. It’s not Hang Tuah who climbed up the mountain and met the princess. This never took place in traditional Malay texts. Hang Tuah was too weak and old at that time. Instead, Tun Mamat was the one who was sent to propose marriage on behalf of the sultan. There was no response from Arif.

In 2012, Khoo Kay Kim, the emeritus professor of History shocked the nation when he suggested that ‘there is no written record of the existence of Princess Hang Li Po, Hang Tuah or Hang Jebat and the stories that made into the history text books are just myths’. Khoo’s statement has sparked controversy among Malaysians. Imran, an angry tweeter blasted saying: ‘It’s pathetic that we, Malaysians are arguing about Hang Tuah’s authenticity. Even Indonesians acknowledge his existence. Is this an effort to discredit Malay history?’ Khoo has been accurate in his observations of the impact of films such as *Hang Tuah* (1956) and *Hang Jebat* (1961): ‘We get our view of what Hang Tuah was like from movies portrayed by the late P. Ramlee to the extent that even a painting of the legendary figure at the National Museum bore resemblance to the actor’. 

Have you heard the latest news saying Hang Tuah is just a myth? Salma asked Lina who was busy cleaning up the fridge. She had taken out all contents. The floor

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was littered with all sorts of items from the fridge. Some of the food was expired. There were three big bottles of juice, a carton of milk, a jug of half-drunk tea, some rotten tomatoes, chocolate bars, mayonnaise, peanut butter and a large box of half-eaten pizza. But Hang Tuah has been all over us – in the hikayat, movies, street names, buildings and I don’t know what else. Now someone says he doesn’t exist?! Lina responded as she continued taking more contents out of the fridge. The problem with many people is that being mythical is always equated with being not existence or a fake. According to the myth theory, when labelling a story as a myth, we are expressing no opinion about whether it is true or not. Originally, a myth was used as a religious interpretation or symbolic narrative to explain an event or a phenomenon such as how the world began. A myth was then called an untrue religious story in one’s particular religious conviction but it was deemed as the truth according to the beliefs of others. Religious definition of myth has gone beyond the religious restrictions of generalising a myth as being untrue or as fake. It is therefore not surprising that many people get defensive, assuming that if Hang Tuah is a mythical figure, then he is a fake or he simply does not exist. The story of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat is a symbolic narrative of the Malay views on the monarchy – obedience to the king, sometimes can be blind loyalty like Hang Tuah, versus disobedience and rebellion against the ruler as portrayed by Hang Jebat. The recent incident exemplifies such dichotomy – a law professor having questioned the statement made by the Sultan of Selangor regarding a raid on a church carried out by the Islamic Religious Department which resulted in his suspension by the university and later he received a mail containing a 9mm bullet with a message: Jangan kurang ajar dengan Sultan, maut nanti (‘Don’t be rude with the Sultan, you may die later’).
In a country called Bolehland, there was a sweet innocent girl who drank bleach hoping such an act could get rid of any impurity out of her body. Thank God, she survived the ordeal after a two-day treatment in a hospital. Then it was announced that she got her identity card. She was so excited. Even her mother was exhilarated. The mother even bought her a new dress for the special occasion. She’s now finally a citizen of Bolehland. She was so anxious she thought she might end up being a full resident of no-man’s land. The colour of her skin almost cost her citizenship though.

Earlier in the week, together with her mother, they went to the National Registration Department (NRD) to apply for her identity card. She was already at an age where she was eligible to apply for one and it was time for her to hold that precious document that identified her as a true citizen of the country. It was a rather relaxed quiet morning in the department when they arrived. They went directly to the ‘new application’ counter. The girl’s mother gave some papers to the lady behind the counter. Please take a seat, madam. She felt ecstatic. She knew she would soon hold her own identity card. She would ask her mother to buy her a new wallet. Her identity card placed in a pink wallet that matched the new dress. How exciting! A few minutes later, an officer came out signaling them to approach the counter. Madam, I’m sorry to tell you that you need to do a maternity test. The mother didn’t blink her eyes. What for? She demanded an explanation. So that we know the girl is your real daughter. She was shocked to hear this. She’s my daughter. I have all the complete documents including her birth certificate. She was born in this land! The mother’s teeth were bared. Her voice rose loud enough to be heard by the others in the small department. People started whispering. I’m sorry but you have to come back with the test. The mother snatched the documents from the officer’s hand. As they were exiting the department,
all eyes were cast on them. Curious eyes, mostly. Then she heard someone talking to
her friend next to her. The daughter looks fairer than her mom. The girl didn't
understand what the woman meant. Stereotyping runs rampant at a high rate in the
country. It stems from racial discrimination. Even the fall of a kingdom in old days was
attributed to the betrayal of a certain race in the land. It was immortalised in the oral
traditions and later scripted in the traditional texts. In this land, the way one looks is
of utmost importance. One may get into trouble if one fails to look like one's parents.
You're impure if you look different. They will not grant you your citizenship. Make
sure you come whitened or blackened accordingly to the NRD.

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Sabahan people are not loyal, aren't they? They simply can switch sides anytime they feel
like it. Maybe they get rewards from the other party. Before I could respond, Adam said
he was only joking. He winked at me as he was walking past. He went to the kitchen in
his spongebob-squarepant pyjamas. You want some coffee? I nodded. It was reported
in the news that eleven leaders of PKR in Sabah, a party in the opposition coalition,
quit the coalition and had publicly declared their support for the government
coalition, Barisan Nasional (National Front). Imagine having voted for a candidate in a
general election because the voters were voting for the party only to find out later that
the candidate had decided to join the other party. Where have the votes gone to now?
We may be voting for a particular candidate but essentially we are voting for the party.
Party-hopping or defections seem to be a common practice after a general election.
Some say they have been 'bought', others say it's a sign of a weak leadership within a
party. People should never trust such MPs. Hefty fines or punishment should be
imposed for betraying the trust given to them by the electorate. They are traitors.
They may have not committed treason against the country, but they betray the people's trust. They fail to give due respect to the people. This type of leaders can never be trusted. They are all modern Kituls. It's narrated in Sulalat al-Salatin that there was a man named Kitul who played a significant role in the fall of Melaka into the hands of the Portuguese. This forked-tongue coward was even far more dangerous than the most venomous snake ever known to human beings. Raja Mendeliar was the richest man in Melaka who was also the harbour master. He was never on good terms with Nina Sura Dewana, a chieftain of all the traders in Melaka. Kitul spoke calumny of Bendahara (Prime Minister) to Raja Mendeliar. Bendahara and Nina Sura Dewana are conspiring to get you killed. They are seeking assistance from the Portuguese. Raja Mendeliar settled all Kitul’s debts as a reward for telling him the news. After gaining Raja Mendeliar's trust, Kitul then suggested to Raja Mendeliar that he should report to the king that the Bendahara was rebelling against him. Consequently, the king ordered all the family members of the Bendahara to be put to death, except Tun Fatimah. In the end, the Portuguese captured Melaka in 1511; many people believe that one of the reasons was, the absence of the Bendahara who was skilful in the art of warfare. It was said that the brilliant plan by the Bendahara in defending Melaka was instrumental in defeating the Portuguese attack on Melaka in 1509. Then there are some who believe that Melaka was cursed due to the killing of innocent lives by the king.

Once I asked a friend at uni why he did not like Chinese or Indians. They are immigrants. This country belongs to the Malays. He said this without hesitation. Aren’t you being racist? He looked at me with wide open eyes and I realised I had made him angry. Why is it racist when I’m only expressing my personal view? I love my country. I
don’t want it to be taken over by other races. I want the Malays to rule. If anything bad happens, where would the Malays go? The Chinese can go to China and the Indians can go to India. He said this with a firm conviction. I did not reply thinking any further remark would only provoke him further. Now I knew why he hadn’t had any Chinese or Indian friends at all. I also knew that if I kept asking him questions we might end up exchanging words that we both would regret saying. Then I quickly excused myself saying I needed to go to the library. This little chat happened in the mid-1990s. Fast-forward to the 21st century Malaysia: In 2011, a racial incident occurred in a Malaysian school. A Chinese student was told to ‘go back to China’. Chen Shiming, the schoolboy, together with his family, made a police report against the insult by his history teacher. Such schoolyard racism was fuelled by an incident that happened months earlier where a school principal hurled similar disparaging remarks at his Chinese students. In 2013, Zaharah Sulaiman, a historian and writer stated this in a symposium: ‘The influx of the Chinese into the Malay archipelago, including Malaysia, had been part of a ‘southbound invasion’ from China towards Southeast Asia called ‘Nam Tien’’. Furthermore, she claimed that the Chinese as ‘invaders’ together with other foreigners who grabbed the Malays’ riches, killed them and then took over the tin and gold mines belonging to the Malays. Perhaps we should be reminded again that in Sulalat al-Salatin, Melaka in the 15th - 16th centuries was described as an international trading port with people coming from all over the world to do business and even settled permanently in the city-state. They were Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Portuguese and many others. The Chinese were already here long before the coming of British starting in the 1700s. We

seem to be not moving forward when we still call ourselves Malays, Chinese, Indians, Bajaus, Ibans and so on. Let's call ourselves Malaysians!

Malaysians are well-acquainted with the legend of the man-eater crocodile nick-named ‘Bujang Senang’ (‘Happy Bachelor’). He roamed the Lupar River in Sarawak constantly looking for food, his favourite, of course none other than human flesh. It is said that the vicious beast had terrorised the people of Sarawak for thirty years since the 1960s. He was finally captured and killed in 1992. However, many people, especially the locals, still believe that the 19-foot long crocodile captured in 1992 wasn’t Bujang Senang. Some say Bujang Senang cannot be killed as he is actually a ghost. As tradition has it, Bujang Senang was once a fearless human warrior named Simalungu or Lungu who was undefeated in battle. One day his wife was kidnapped by his enemy. The enemy tortured her resulting in a revelation of Lungu’s weaknesses. They killed Lungu’s wife and later beheaded him. Lungu’s spirit was transformed into a huge crocodile that haunted the Lupar River. The beast was then named Bujang Senang by the locals. The legend of Bujang Senang is now immortalised in the song, “Bujang Senang” (1990), by one of Malaysia’s famous rock bands, Wings and it is a fast-tracked rock narrative of Bujang Senang. The lyrics evoke mixed emotions of terror and veneration: Eerie sounds/ From the quiet valley/ Death awaits/ From the untraced corner/ His mysterious behaviour misconceived/ Bodies snatched afloat or underwater/ The crocodile is named/ The legend crocodile/ Bujang Senang. Many may not be aware that there is another crocodile-related legend, pre-dating the well-

known legend of Bujang Senang. This is the legend of the stone crocodile. It lived during the Melaka period. It's not related in any traditional Malay texts though. As the story goes, the 16-foot long crocodile was a real threat to the villagers especially those who lived along the Melaka riverbank. There are two versions of this legend. The stone crocodile that once was the king crocodile, one day crawled up onto the riverbank. It was so huge so much so it was spotted right away by the villages. People panicked and began running and shouting. The gigantic rogue ran into a Portuguese priest. It was said that the priest blessed the crocodile and turned it into stone. The other version was told by a man named Haji Baba bin Haji Pendek. He claimed that the crocodile lived in the 1300s, during the reign of Sultan Mansur Shah. The Portuguese were not yet in Melaka at that time. The king crocodile was said to be on its way to attack the chieftain of Kuala Sungai Putat when another local chieftain intercepted and killed it with a sword. The carcass was then turned into stone. So far there has been only one small article about this so-called legendary crocodile when a crocodile figure in a form of laterite was discovered in Melaka river in 1967.96

I don’t mind BN as the government as long as they bring progress to the country. Ahmad said when asked about his opinion regarding the current Malaysian government. Define progress. Aisha wanted elaboration. Look at what has happened around us. We have KLCC towers, KL tower, KLIA, Putrajaya and a lot of shopping malls and many, many more. We're doing well. That's why people keep coming to our country. People from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, they're all working here. There was a note of


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certainty in his voice. Ahmad’s answer sounded convincing enough and Aisha did not respond any further. She stirred her iced tea with the straw. There was a sound of clinking ice cubes in the tall glass. *I don’t mind BN being the government of the day either.* She sipped her drink and smiled at Ahmad. *But I’m not happy with some online news stating that the government isn’t transparent with the way they spend the rakyat’s money.* They were both silent. The café seemed quiet with only two other customers. The pavements outside the café were busier – a child ran at some pigeons pecking on crumbs. They scrambled off leaving the child jumping and clapping in his squeals of joy. An MP recently questioned the government on the loss of RM52 billion worth of *Bumiputera* shares. He simply wanted to know what happened to this huge amount of money. It’s the taxpayers’ money, it’s the rakyat’s – it belongs to the people. The MP’s query was dismissed as trivial by parliament: ‘A query cannot contain any argument, thought, accusation, praise or vilification or contain any misleading words, sarcastic or offensive, or regarding anything superficial or requesting information on trivial matters’.

These were some of the contents sent by the parliament secretary, Roosme Hamzah to the Bagan MP, Lim Guan Eng. The opposition has been pressing the government for answers but the latter keeps avoiding the matter. More bizarre incidents ala X-File cases occur at a constant rate in Malaysia today. Another recent issue questioning the government concerned the PM’s wife, Rosmah Mansor. She flew to Qatar on the government’s jet taking along with her the Member of Parliament Azalina Othman, the Prime Minister’s special adviser Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and several other ministers’ wives. One comment responding to this news says: ‘She was invited in her personal capacity. Why didn't she go alone instead of bringing along all those

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people? They are not involved in the summit cause only Rosmah was invited. So, just think how much we have to pay for their holidays’. Another incident is from the Prime Minister himself. It was reported that the recent electricity bill for the official residence of the Prime Minister was RM2.2 million. The PM dismissed all criticisms – being nonchalant about the issue he replied: ‘How to avoid such expenses? That is not my residence but the prime minister’s residence. If heads of government come, are we supposed to dine in the dark?’ What was that all about the government campaign earlier on when all departments were encouraged to help reduce electricity bills by 10% and fix the air-conditioning temperature at 24 degrees Celcius. Yes, some strange happenings indeed. Suddenly Ahmad broke the silence. As they left, Aisha’s eyes caught the newspaper’s headline: ‘PM entertains China’s dignitaries over candlelit dinner’.

How much is Nasi Goreng? Danial asked. Altogether, nine ringgit. Nasi Goreng, six ringgit. Danial’s eyes widened. I’m a regular customer. Last I ate here was two days ago. I had the same menu. They only cost seven ringgit. Two ringgit is a huge difference in price. Danial complained. I don’t know, sir. I’m only working here. The lanky waitress took the money from him and left. The restaurant started getting busier. More people outside were waiting to be seated. Danial preferred to have his lunch break slightly earlier than 1 o’clock. He still had twenty minutes but decided to return to his office early. The recent cutting of fuel and sugar subsidies has contributed to price hikes in

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many goods. This price hike had set off a domino effect.\textsuperscript{100} It set off a chain of price-hike activities – if the petrol price increases, the prices of other goods’ prices would be increased as a result of transportation or delivery charges incurred. It was also announced in the Budget 2014, that Malaysia would implement the goods and services tax (GST) in April 2015. Along with this came the shocking news that fifteen highway roads would increase their toll rates in 2014.\textsuperscript{101} It is said that Malaysia is currently struggling to reduce its debts.\textsuperscript{102} \textit{The restaurant has increased its prices. Nasi Goreng is now six ringgit. Last week it was five ringgit.} Danial told Sandra as she was about to take her seat. She placed a mug of hot coffee on the table. The aroma of coffee permeated through the air in the small office. \textit{You need to bring food from home. It’ll save you a lot of money.} The thought of getting up early to prepare meals did not seem to be appealing to Danial. \textit{The government is to blame for the price hikes.} Sandra sipped her coffee. \textit{While people are reminded to be thrifty, some ministers are flaunting their wealth. Lavish birthday celebrations and weddings. Five government private jets.} 

\textit{Electricity bills up to 2.2 million? Don’t eat chicken, eat fish or meat? What if fish and meat are equally pricey? Eat Kangkung then?} Danial could detect anger in her voice. He did not respond. \textit{The removal of sugar subsidy is to curb diabetes? If you can’t afford to pay toll fares, use different roads? What nonsense are these people talking about? Such lame excuses.} Then they heard loud laughter. Moments later, three of their colleagues entered the office. Sandra stopped talking and went into the pantry taking along her

the mug. Malaysian anger was collectively voiced in the anti-price hike TURUN (DOWN) rally on New Year’s Eve 2013 in Dataran Merdeka. It was reported that TURUN attracted a strong support of 50,000 protesters. Some (surely too much sugar in their heads) said that the rally was planned to topple the government.

Two weeks after the TURUN rally, the Prime Minister, Najib Razak commented on the price hikes in his speech to an audience. His speech was aired on national television with English subtitles. This is what was written on the screen: ‘There are times when the price of vegetables go up and down. Today, I read in the newspapers that there are prices of goods which have dropped. When this happens, they don’t want to praise the government but when it rises, the government gets criticized. It is not fair as it is due to weather conditions’. However, the translation is not complete. There were two other statements in the speech that gave examples of the types of goods that have had their prices reduced. The one that was ‘picked-up’ instantly by the netizens was the vegetable, *kangkung* (water convolvulus): ‘Kangkung, previously had gone up. Now it has gone down’. Minutes after the broadcast of the speech, many Malaysians started posting comments regarding the simple kangkung on social media. It went viral on the internet. The kangkung statement by Najib was ridiculed by all. The jokes and sarcasm were ‘trending’ on Facebook and Twitter. Even BBC News picked up on this matter within 24 hours in its article, “#BBCtrending: Be careful what you say about spinach”: ‘There have been hundreds of thousands of tweets, a Facebook page set up - with 10,000 followers already - a YouTube re-mix of his comments, the lyrics to popular

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103 *Kangkung dulu naik, sekarang ni dah turun* (in Malay).
and traditional folk songs have been re-worked, and "Keep calm and eat kangkung" T-shirts have been made and rushed to market. Kangkung became a global sensation overnight, literally. Can you please translate into English what you’ve posted on your FB? Eleanor requested for further information from Taufik. Taufik, from Malaysia, was in the same class with Eleanor, an Australian, in the last session in spring. They remained friends though they rarely saw each other. A common and cheap vegetable called kangkung is now made popular by our prime minister. Taufik laughed. Why it is so funny? Eleanor didn’t understand. It’s funny because people are being sarcastic and they make fun of his speech using the vegetable. The picture that I posted is about a kangkung thanking the government for making him famous on Facebook. Now the whole world knows what kangkung is. The name kangkung was even mentioned in the BBC News. No more italics when making reference to kangkung. Haha. Eleanor laughed so loud she startled a few ducks nearby. They walked past the duckpond on their way to the UniBar. I bet the folk song about kangkung is getting popular again. It’s on YouTube. I can download it for you, if you wanna have a look. This whole kangkung commotion reminded him of the folk song, Lenggang Kangkung. It’s also one of well-known Malay songs for children. It’s such a joyful song it made him feel warm and fuzzy inside every time he listened to it. He especially loved the version by Sandii Suzuki, a Japanese singer who sang traditional Malay songs. Lenggang Kangkung or Swaying Kangkung is about being carefree, happy-go-lucky without having any worries at all. Lenggang Kangkung is also a common Malay expression to refer to the way someone strolls happily and leisurely with 'hips swaying', an indication of being at ease without having to rush about. Go sing along to the Lenggang Kangkung tune in your 'keep calm and eat

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kangkung’ t-shirt if you need to stress the point about price hikes. Oops, let’s have a break. Let’s go to Artisan Coffee Bar where kangkung is a new currency for coffee. How about a cuppa?

In November 2014, Malaysian academia was stirred up by a controversy concerning a professor who was accused of plagiarism. SuaraTV, an independent online news portal reported a series of stories concerning the issue. SuaraTV began its first report on 5 November 2014, without revealing the identity of the professor. The news portal provided just enough information to stir up the people's curiosity. It was reported in the news that the professor worked at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) and he was also a famous political analyst. It was a clever strategy by the reporter who successfully built up tension as many people in the Malaysian academia began asking questions and making assumptions. What is the name of the professor? The stereotypical question asked by many. I think I know who he is; if I am not mistaken, he was previously an associate professor at University of Malaya. A student speculated that he might know the professor. If this is true, we should call him ‘profesor plagiat’ and certainly he is the king of all ‘profesor kangkung’ in Malaysia. Commented another young lecturer on the issue. Later the allegation against the professor was substantiated with full evidence when SuaraTV published the professor’s PhD thesis alongside the original source from where he had plagiarised. The news portal at last revealed the name of the accused. But the accuser’s name remained unknown.\textsuperscript{105} It was shown in the news that the first several pages of the thesis’s introduction were copied

\textsuperscript{105} From 5 November 2014 to 17 November 2014, SuaraTV had been publishing more than ten news reports on this scandalous academic issue. For a full coverage on the news, see the complete list of news reports by the editorial board of SuaraTV and the journalist, Zulkifli Mat Rawi in the bibliographical section below.
directly from a book entitled, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, written by Viola Shafik. The thesis reproduced almost the entire content of the first several pages of the book with minimal changes. The changes made only concerned changing a few names, words or phrases for example, ‘Arab cinema’ in Shafik’s book becomes ‘Cinema Malaysia’ in the professor’s thesis. Shafik’s book was not even listed in the nearly 50-page bibliography. Razali, a UMK student who read about the issue, found out that there was a trial on this case in August 2015. He went to the trial only to find out that the defendant was his own lecturer. He felt sorry for him as he was charged with defamation. He sneaked into the courtroom through the back door hoping no one would notice him. He was relieved that no one paid any attention to him. The trial began with the plaintiff answering questions posed by the lawyers. *Do you confess that this PhD thesis is your thesis?* The defendant’s lawyer asked the professor. He answered: Yes. When the lawyer pointed out the uncanny resemblance between his thesis and Shafik’s book and the former concluded that the latter had copied in verbatim without acknowledging the source; the plaintiff simply answered that he was not aware of it. Razali shook his head in disbelief. *He lied! That scumbag! Who is he kidding when he said he didn’t know about the similarity? It’s almost a carbon copy!* He protested when relating the court incident to Suzanne later that day. Suzanne listened attentively. She knew best not to interrupt him when he was angry. *Now the one who exposes the serious academic crime may be prosecuted. Neither UMK nor Ministry of Education has taken any action against the professor plagiar! Is this how much we value knowledge and education in Malaysia?* He knew the trial was not over yet but he could not stop equating the whistleblower’s fate to that of Nadim’s – that little boy who met a fatal end just because he spoke his mind. He sincerely prayed to God that the fake
professor would be found guilty of having committed the most heinous crime in the academic world.

The recent political fallout between the prime minister, Najib Razak and his deputy, Muhyiddin Yassin mirrors yet another Malay mythological confrontation of Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat. A similar clash involving the two top government men was between Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim in 1998. On 28 July 2015, the Malaysian cabinet reshuffle was carried out that culminated in the removal of Muhyiddin Yassin. Najib announced that home minister, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi would become the new deputy prime minister: ‘This new cabinet ensures that the Government has the strength and unity to focus on my development plans for Malaysia, and the challenges we currently face,’ said Najib in his address to the nation. The announcement of the cabinet reshuffle raised a furore – mostly an outbreak of anger rather than a chorus of excitement among Malaysians. Anwar is not Jebat anymore. Muhyiddin is now the new Jebat. Celia made a passing remark after the televised announcement made by the Prime Minister. Why did you say that? Omar, her husband, asked her while washing the dishes after dinner. Jebat was brought down simply because he didn’t agree with the establishment. He was even killed for that matter. He was killed by the person who was close to him. Similarly Anwar and Muhyiddin’s political careers were stopped halfway just because they had different views. Celia further explained while cleaning up the dining table. Many Malaysians shared similar sentiments, questioning the need for the formation of the new cabinet members. Malaysia, in the past months, has been plagued

by the financial scandal of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) involving the Prime Minister. Najib is the founder of 1MDB and he is the head of its board of advisors. On 2 July 2015, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that, in 2013, a sum of USD700 million had been deposited into the personal accounts of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Razak. Najib is yet to take any legal action against WSJ for defamation. He has no answers for the allegations. He has been silent for quite some time. Speculations have been strife among Malaysians. Then came the announcement that the USD700 million or RM2.6 billion discovered in the personal accounts of Najib came from some donors from the Middle East. 'Have we pawned our nation to the Arabs?' Omar read the headline. I pray to God that we don't end up like Greece. Celia responded. Let's hope that Muhyiddin will rise and challenge the corrupt leader. More people are now showing their support for him. He even joked the other day saying that he is now more famous than Siti Nurhaliza. Omar put the kettle to boil after washing the dishes. While waiting for the water to boil, he took out two large mugs from the overhead compartment. He knew they were going to have a long chat discussing the future of their nation over tea.

107 '1Malaysia Development Berhad is a strategic development company, wholly owned by the Government of Malaysia. 1MDB was established to drive strategic initiatives for long-term economic development for the country by forging global partnerships and promoting foreign direct investment'. For further information, see: <http://www.1mdb.com.my>.

Exegesis

Introduction

This is the creative component of the PhD project entitled, *Lost and Found in Transnation: A Collection of Microfictocritical Writings*. This particular creative component utilises the genre of fictocriticism. In this creative chapter, I explored the concept of the nation as the main theme using the first-person voice. However, the use of the “I” voice should not necessarily be autobiographical as some scenes or events rendered by the narrator may be fictionalised. In this exegesis, I will first discuss the structure of the creative component in this research project. Second, I will scrutinise the relevance of fictocriticism as a writing genre in which the merging voices of the ‘academic’ or scholarly and the personal, “I” take on the role of the narrator to tell the story critically and fictionally. I will then examine the fictionalisation of some mythical and literary/cultural images so as to talk about ‘self’ and ‘other’ in the context of rewriting myth. Furthermore, the concept of self and the other are aimed at exploring identity issues. Subsequently they will open up the examination of the notion of nation. This can be further seen as a projection of the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ hence perpetuating the idea of research-led practice in this PhD project. Last but not least, I will take a look at the notions of self and other in relation to identity explored through various perspectives such as myth rewriting, culture, literature, politics and so on. The discussions on the self, other and identity can be seen as a form of ‘trajectory’ allowing a projection towards the bigger issue of the nation in the narrative. Let us first take a look at the structure of the creative chapter.
The Structure

In this chapter, I created forty-two sections written in the format of fictocriticism. Each section is confined to a word-limit of 300-600 words with 300 words being the minimum and 600 words being the maximum. I call each section a microfictocritical writing in which, within this limited range of 300-600 words, I set a challenge to write an episode that has a scene/s and exploration of my personal interaction with myth and culture in relation to the expanding notion of nation. The forty-two sections of microfictocritical writings in this creative chapter form a collection of microfictions that deals with ‘serious’ issues such as self, identity and nation. Though the central theme of this PhD project is the nation, in the context of myth rewriting, each microfiction is not necessarily based on a mythical tale. The main aim is to explore the notion of nation in various contexts; one of them being through the rewriting of the myth. The nation in this creative component of the research project is investigated through various lenses such as self, identity, culture, literature, history, politics and current affairs. The intermingling of the voices of the personal and the critical is prevalent throughout the microfictions. Apart from using famous Malay myths such as the myths of Tuah-Jebat and Nadim, the creative component also explores less known mythical stories such as the tale of the owl and the moon and the tale of the stone crocodile. The sequence of narration may not adhere to the linear progression of events but they are all bound in a ‘plot’ centering upon the notions of self and identity that are aimed at probing deeper into the notion of nation.

The plot is an essential element in the creative project. Each microfiction has its own ‘main event or theme’ tackling issues from myth, culture, history, literature or politics. All microfictions are structured in a fictocritical manner with various themes
and events aimed at achieving the ‘unity of action’ in the narration. I begin the story in *medias res*; it is right ‘in the middle of things’ where the quest of the self and identity begin. According to Abrams and Harpham (2012), “[a] plot is commonly said to have unity of action (or to be “an artistic whole”) if it is apprehended by the reader or auditor as a complete and ordered structure of actions, directed toward the intended effect, in which none of the prominent component parts, or incidents, is nonfunctional” (p. 295). Though the arrangement of all forty-two sections are arranged in an apparently ‘disorderly’ pattern, they are ‘directed toward the intended effect’ – that is, to achieve the ‘artistic whole’ of the narrative. At first, I wanted to write the microfiction sections in a chronological order. It was supposed to have started with the narrator’s childhood stories interrupted occasionally by the personal views on the self and identity aimed at narrating the nation as the narrative progresses to narrate the narrator’s days growing up in Malaysia. Reading the sections in that linear form seems to be rigid as the whole story is rendered in a straightforward way. It sounds more like an autobiography. Then I decided to ‘shuffle’ the sections so as to put them in different orders. In this manner, I averted the ‘monotonous linearity’ of the autobiographical-like voice of the narrator. For example, in Microfiction 1, the narrator’s reminiscent of his childhood heroes is linked to the theme of nation. The nation is viewed in relation to the concept of heroism. Though the microfiction is concerned with the narrator's childhood, it does not begin with the unfolding events of the narrator’s childhood. This microfiction begins with a question of what nation is. The narrator’s personal view on the nation is expressed with the support of academic perspectives. Further the ‘disorderly’ structure of events or episodes in the narration may function as a way to ‘disguise’ cohesive personally critical views on the idea of being the ‘other’ – hence in search of the self, the narrator is, consciously or not
consciously, reversibly projecting the idea of being the other. For instance, in Microfiction 3, the narrator points to the problem of the conflation of the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘race’ in Malay vocabulary. The ‘nation’ is defined as having a relation to ‘race’. The narrator views this to be problematic as he does not want to be labeled ‘raster’ if he is being ‘nationalistic’ or a ‘nationalist’: “So if someone is a racist, does it mean s/he is also a nationalist?” Being a native of Sabah, the narrator is ‘constitutionally’ defined as a bumiputera thus putting him in the position of the self along with the Malays and Orang Asli. However, in Microfiction 7, the narrator, being a Sabahan who comes from a diverse ethnic background, feels excluded when mingling with the Malays: “I entered the school with a poor command of Malay language. To them, I was the ‘Chinese’ boy who was just lucky to be able to enter the prestigious Malay school. I was even called the ‘infidel Malay’.” The narrator is now the ‘other’ despite being a bumiputera: “I had always been the half-caste dark-skinned Chinese boy just because my mother was half Chinese” (Microfiction 7). Next, let us have a look at the role of fictocritical writing in this creative component.

**Fictocriticism**

Fictocriticism produces a dual narrative: one, which employs a fictional voice and the other, a critical voice. The critical voice in the format of fictocriticism that seems dominant in the narrative allows for further personal commentaries on the negotiation between the self and the other as seen in relation to the notion of nation. The use of fictocriticism further helps to explore how myth can be exploited to ‘expand’ the notion of nation as seen in the relationship between the self and the other. Through the process of rewriting the myth, alternating between the fictional and the critical or personal, the fictocritical genre used here serves as a tool to speak
for the cultural politics of the centre or margins. In asserting the personal in the narrative, the aim here is at responding to the dichotomy of ‘self’ versus ‘other’. The issue of marginality is addressed through what Stephen Muecke calls an ‘affirmative appropriation’ – a form of a fusion so as to ‘dialogue respectfully across cultural boundaries’ (Muecke 2005, p. 161). Speaking through the narrator’s voice as a Sabahan ethnic (being considered as not ‘pure’ Malay), the ‘self’ is displaced hence turning into the ‘other’, instead. This is the case of the ‘self’ as being the ‘other’ in the context of ethnicity. Most of the narrators in the microfictions seem to be well-versed in Malay myths especially with regard to tales concerning Hang Tuah and Hang Nadim. The narrator’s knowledge of these well-known Malay myths perpetuates the idea of the narrator being the ‘self’ thus ‘aligning’ himself with the other *bumiputera* especially the Malays, who are expected to know his or her culture well. The search for the ‘self’ by the narrator is deeply entrenched in his understanding of his own culture. He even views the value of his own myth and culture to be on par with world heritage and culture. For instance, in Microfiction 11, the narrator attempts to ‘elevate’ the myth of Nadim to be comparable with other tragic heroes in Western tradition and Literature: “I wanted to argue that Nadim might not have been a warrior like Macbeth or a swordsman like Hamlet but his act helped to save a lot of innocent lives. That’s what made him noble.” However, being the other *bumiputera* who comes from Sabah, he comes to a realisation that he knows little about his own ethnic mythology: “... I don’t know any Sabahan tales of heroism apart from the legend of Mount Kinabalu which was once guarded by a huge dragon” (Microfiction 2). In this sense, the narrator is ‘forced’ to accept Malay mythical tales like Tuah and Nadim as part of his cultural heritage. The narrator’s diverse ethnic background complicates his search for the ‘self’. 
The narrator faces a dilemma in terms of his own preference and inclination as to which language he should associate or ‘affiliate’ himself with:

I felt even more confident in English than in Malay. I didn’t give it much of thought really as I felt Malay wasn’t really my first language. In fact when I think of it, I did not really have a ‘real concrete’ language that I could call my mother tongue. It was always bits and pieces here and there. A little bit of this and a little bit of that. I felt like I was a bowl of mixed salad with Malay and English added as dressings to enhance the flavour. Yet the strange thing was that I wasn’t even fluent in any of the languages spoken by my parents (Microfiction 9).

Further he is in limbo with regard to his cultural heritage and identity:

I thought my first language was Malay then came English, where I felt it almost took over my Malay language. I think my positioning of language, which is neither here nor there has left a hollow space in me: creating a need to search for that ‘identity’ so that I may fill in the gap (Microfiction 9).

In this light, the position of the narrator being the ‘self’ is now reversed to being the ‘other’. Hence the narrator’s question of his own ‘self’ may trigger a bigger issue of cultural affiliation and identity.

Furthermore, the use of the myth that does not belong to the Sabahan ethnicity can be seen as an affirmative appropriation in relation to the notion of nation. The narrator challenges the idea of what it means to be Malaysian. In Microfiction 3, the narrator claims that a Malaysian is first and foremost, defined by ‘race’. It means that a Malaysian citizen identifies himself or herself, first, as either a Malay, Indian, Chinese, Bajau, Orang Asli, Iban or any other ethnic group and then only, will he or she be identified as a Malaysian. The current Malaysian political scenario is a case in point where race or ethnicity characterises the political parties in Malaysia. On the Barisan Nasional (National Front) Coalition’s website, it lists 13 component parties that make up the coalition. The three major component parties well-known to Malaysians are: United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)
and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). These major component parties are race-based parties as indicated respectively by their names. It is common knowledge in Malaysia that a Chinese is a member of MCA but not UMNO or MIC. Similarly, an Indian is a member of MIC and a Malay is a member of UMNO though all claim to be members of Barisan Nasional. Thus the use of the myth tinged with narratives of the self and other in relation to ethnicity offers a new way of looking at Malaysian identity. In Malaysia, what it means to be Malaysian has perhaps been defined through its multiculturalism, but Malay as the dominant ethnic group imposing upon others may only complicate further the construction of a Malaysian identity. Now let us briefly take a look at the microfictions using the concept, ‘image–I–nation’.

‘Image–I–Nation’

Rewriting of the myth explicated through the concept of ‘image–I–nation’ can be seen to be in practice within the creative component. All forty-two sections are aimed at questioning issues related to the construction of a Malaysian identity. Issues such as race, language and literature are explored in relation to the myth in which the interpretation of the myth may expand the notion of nation in the current cultural Malaysian politics. In Microfiction 4, the narrator hints at the idea of ‘history and cultural appropriation’ spoken through the old Chinese lady who says: “…Malaysian history has always been busy with the glory of the Malay sultans during the Melaka empire” (Original Italics). This is a criticism leveled against the emphasis placed on the history of Malaya, which is regarded to be ‘lopsided’. It is lopsided in the sense that Malaysian history is predominantly made up of the narratives of the Malays. The case of the glorification of Melaka is constantly repeated throughout the history of Malaysia. Another example is the sarcastic tone of the narrator in showing his
appreciation of the long overdue celebration of Malaysia Day: “Happy 50th Malaysia Day!” Yes, it was 16 September 2013 yesterday – exactly 50 years ago a small country named Malaysia was born.” Malaysia as a nation turned 50 years old in 2013, not 56, unless if you are referring to the 1957 independence of Malaya. Fatimah Busu may have opened up the idea for the need to realise nationhood through rewriting of the myth but her idea of rewriting of the myth may lend support to ‘anticolonial resistance’ (Patke 2013, p. 54) with the implication that there exists a need for ‘racial purity’ of the Malay in the construction of a Malaysian identity and a nation. My rewriting of the myth attempts to breakdown the ‘cultural dominance’ in which myths are interpreted through the point of view of the narrator who can be described as the ‘other’ Malay. This is achieved through the use of images from the dominant culture. Images of mythical Malay heroes such as Hang Nadim and Hang Tuah are from the ‘centre’ yet they are ‘affirmatively appropriated’ by the narrator as the ‘other’ who is from the ‘margin’. This is the purpose of my rewriting of the myth in which it tries to debunk the centre-margin divide. Further the narrator as the “I” offers some personal views with regard to the exploration and interpretation of the myth. The fictocritical viewpoints complement the inquisitive and evaluative voice of the narrator in using mythical, literary and personal stories, allowing for the imagining of the nation. Borrowing Anderson’s (2006) concept of ‘imagined communities’, I proffered that the ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson 2006, p. 7) is the ‘national ideology’ that is needed for a new national narrative of the ‘Story of the Nation’. The mythical stories of Tuah and Nadim are overtly emphasised across all sections in this creative chapter. Both tales can be regarded as Malaysia’s ‘Story of the Nation’. Rewriting these myths create new national narratives where the rewriting may reinterpret, appropriate or offer new ways of looking at how traditions can help shape the national ideology and
identity. For example in Microfiction 5, the narrator comments on the need to reintroduce the tales of Singapura or the Singapura myth as part of the nation’s cultural heritage. Some may argue that there is no point in acknowledging the Singapura myth as Singapore is no longer part of Malaysia. Even Singapore itself seems to ignore the historical events before 1819. The narrator, in quoting Fatimah Busu, proffers the need for this part of history to be integrated into the mainstream of Malaysian culture and history. Rewriting of the myth helps expand the concept of nation as myth that crosses the borders of culture and history.

Conclusion

Rewriting of the myth in the creative component of this PhD project points to nation-building as the main theme. My rewriting of the myth could be similar to Fatimah Busu’s use of the myth in which both writings manipulate the myth to talk about sociocultural political issues in Malaysia. However, rewriting of the myth in Fatimah Busu may also perpetuate the idea of the need to privilege the Malays as the ‘mainstream’ race. Such assumptions parallel the ‘national story’ that upholds the right of the Malays as observed by Joel S. Kahn in Other Malays: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Malay World (2006):

The national story of an indigenous race (the Malays) formed in a traditional society of courts and kampung, disadvantaged and marginalised by the twin forces of colonialism and large-scale foreign immigration, and rescued by a postcolonial state guaranteeing Malay rights certainly suppresses the role of other Malaysians – Chinese and Indians, peoples perhaps more deserving of the indigenous label like the Orang Asli on the peninsula, various tribal groups in Sabah and Sarawak, women and others – in the making of modern Malaysia (p. xv).

In this sense, Fatimah Busu, being a Malay writer, adheres to the idea of writing from the ‘centre’ propagating the ‘imagined nation’ of Malaysia that it should consist of the
Malays as being the ‘self’ and the non-Malays as being the ‘other’. In my rewriting of the myth, I offer views in the form of fictocriticism spoken from the ‘other’ Malay. These views simultaneously act as a counter-discourse to Malay cultural dominance, as well as a way of participating ‘in the mainstream’ (Muecke 2005, p. 157). Fictocriticism can be then concluded as being able to occupy the middle ground or ‘liminality’ of narratives resulting in the participation in the ‘space between’ (Kerr and Nettelback 1998).
PART 4

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Bibliography
Chapter 7
Conclusion

This PhD project has engaged the study of the notion of nation in the context of myth rewriting. The objectives of the research as well as the relevant reviews of literature carried out to fully develop the background conceptual framework of ‘image–I–nation’, are delineated in Chapters 1 and 2. These two chapters form Part 1 of the thesis. The thesis is then developed over several chapters, further categorised into two parts: the Research (Part 2) and the Creative (Part 3). The research part of the thesis consists of three analytical chapters: Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Each chapter discusses issues related to the notion of nation and other socio-cultural and political issues in the context of myth rewriting with the application of the concept, ‘image–I–nation’. Chapter 3 deals primarily with Fatimah Busu’s short story, “Al-Isra’” whilst both Chapters 4 and 5 discuss in detail another short fiction by Fatimah Busu, “Gurindam Jiwa 50 Tahun Merdeka.” Part 3 consists of the creative component of the thesis written in forty-two sections of micro-fictocritical writings and then followed by the exegetical part explicating and discussing some of the microfictions. Finally Part 4 of the thesis consists of the concluding remarks and the bibliography.

The thesis has demonstrated that the interpretation of the myth makes direct parallels to some political events and other social issues in Malaysia, in particular, issues relating to the notion of nation. In this light, this study is pertinent to the project of nation-building in Malaysia. In relation to Fatimah Busu’s works, the project of rewriting the myth reveals the subtext of the idea of Malay privilege. The idea of Malay privilege has gained a new nuance in the recent political climate of Malaysia. Such
notion gets rebranded as *Ketuanan Melayu* by the ruling political power, United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), starting from the era of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Though *Ketuanan Melayu* has been defined as ‘Malay Sovereignty’ (Anas Zubedy 2012), ‘Malay Ascendancy’ (Kessler 2013 in Lemière 2014) or ‘Malay Rights’ (Rosli Dahlan & Mohammad Afif Daud 2015), yet many, especially newspapers in Malaysia use the terms ‘Malay Supremacy’. The idea of Malay supremacy has always been subliminally imbibed in the minds of many Malays claiming that they are the *bumiputeras*, ‘sons of the soil’. In other words, they are the natives of the land thus they should hold more privileges compared to other races. These privileges can be attributed to the implementation of the government policy pertaining to the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was established after the violent racial clashes of May 1969. It had privileged the Malay and other *bumiputeras* in terms of economic advantages.

The emergence of the concept of *Ketuanan Melayu* has been played up especially in these first sixteen years of the 21st Century Malaysia so as to attempt to gain full support of the Malays who are currently divided based on their political beliefs. The sacking of Anwar Ibrahim as the Deputy Prime Minister by the then Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad in 1998, marks a historical turning point in the Malaysian political situation that further divides the Malay community in Malaysia. It was as if we were witnessing the clash between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat epitomised in the Mahathir-Anwar fallout. The Malays were already divided as some of them supported the opposition party, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) especially those who resided in Kelantan and Terengganu. The gap grew wider with the removal of Anwar Ibrahim from UMNO. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi replaced Anwar Ibrahim as
Deputy Prime Minister and in 2003 he went on to succeed Mahathir Mohammad as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Apart from the idea of *Ketuanan Melayu*, during Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's term (2003-2009), the idea of *Islam Hadhari* (Progressive Islam) also gained significant currency as a form of political tool in attempting to win back votes from the Malay majority after the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim and his arrest in 1999. In this manner, Islam is seen as a political and ideological tool that should be practiced as a progressive and forward religion that is parallel with the progress of a modern and developed nation. Such ideology was proven to be fruitful as Abdullah Ahmad Badawi scored a pivotal victory in the 2004 general election.

The return of Anwar Ibrahim to the political scene in 2008 further accentuated the racial sentiments in Malaysia in which Parti Keadilan Rakyat (KeADILan or PKR) (People’s Justice Party) led by him, sought to abolish the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was tangibly seen as giving more economic benefits to the Malays. It also called for a replacement of a new policy that emphasised on a non-ethnic approach in eradicating poverty and correcting economic imbalances. PKR, together with the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) and the Sarawak National Party (SNAP), all formed the *Pakatan Rakyat* (*People’s Alliance*) thus came about the emergence of the official opposition in Malaysia where Anwar Ibrahim became the leader.

Under the leadership of Najib Razak (2009-now), an attempt at forging a national unity seemed to have neatly been wrapped into the package of 1Malaysia.
Ostensibly, taking the idea from ‘diversity in unity’, this concept advocates the coming together of the people of Malaysia regardless of their ethnic background and religious beliefs. Then came the unexpected remark by the prime minister himself when he attributed the loss of many votes in the 13th General Election (GE) in May 2013 to what he called a ‘Chinese Tsunami’. Many viewed this as a racist remark undermining the concept of 1Malaysia. To make matters worse, the pro-UMNO Utusan Malaysia, used this headline: “What else do the Chinese want?” obviously blaming the Chinese for the dwindling number of votes in supporting Barisan National (National Front) or BN. This is a clear case of driving a wedge between racial unity and the socio-cultural diversity in Malaysia. Then many bizarre events took place under Najib’s leadership with many of them remaining unexplained, much to people’s annoyance. One of them is the recent financial scandal of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) where Najib has been implicated and he owes it to the people of Malaysia to provide pertinent answers to this scandal. Many people view him as a master of ‘flip-flopping’ and ‘spinning’ – usually giving lame excuses. When people demand explanations as to why RM2.6 billion was deposited into his personal accounts, his answers are wide-ranging: from a declaration that he never stole from the rakyat’s (which is really just dodging the bullet), to a claim that the money had come from some donors from the Middle East. This has been supported by his newly appointed deputy, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, announcing that it was a token of appreciation by some Arab leaders who value Malaysia’s stand in fighting against terrorism. He had even claimed he had met the donors but up to this point, the donors remain invisible. Then another minister backed him up saying that there was nothing wrong in receiving the ‘donation’ money. Since 2015 (or even earlier), Malaysia has been facing the worst economic downturn and is currently plagued with corruption, political and social ills. In these trying times, all
Malaysians must stand united and fight against tyranny or else Bangsa (defined as ‘people, race, community, nationality, state or nation’ by Ariffin Omar 2015, p. 236) Malaysia will likely meet the same fate as that which Greece has recently experienced. The 1Malaysia concept is now proven to be futile and Malaysians are now walking on eggshells, which are on the verge of collapse before sinking deeper into the dark abyss. These are issues that need to be addressed in future researches when dealing with the theme of the nation in the Malaysian context.

In conclusion, nation-building in Malaysia can be seen as problematic due to its politicised racial divides. Malaysia as a nation is 53 this year but issues of race, ethnicity and religion are still prevalent factors that discourage racial unity in modern Malaysia. Syed Husin Ali (2015, p. 1) says this about ethnic relations in this country: “Ethnic differences exist, which often manifest in stereotypes, discriminations, tensions and conflicts that complicate the process of building national unity.” Stereotypes such as Malays are the ‘masters of the land’ while Chinese and Indians are pendatangs (immigrants) are deemed as racial discrimination thus preventing the realisation of Bangsa Malaysia. Bangsa Malaysia is yet to awake from deepening the divide. Perhaps the return of Hang Tuah in Kelopak Bunga Pahit/Petals of a Bitter Flower (2014), from Fatimah Busu’s latest collection of short stories, may awaken Malaysians to realise that: “…selalunya kegilaan para pemimpinlah, ketololan para pemerintahlah yang menghancurkan sesuatu negara dan sesuatu bangsa”/“...usually it is the craziness of the leaders, the stupidity of the rulers that will lead to the destruction of a country and a nation” (Fatimah Busu 2014, p. 218). It is reported that the 2015 Bersih 4.0 (held on 29th and 30th August) attracted an estimated 500,000 Malaysians, who came from all walks of life, from far and wide to participate in the
peaceful rally, making it the biggest ever turnout of yellow solidarity since the first *Bersih* in 2007 (Syed Jaymal Zahid 2015). The people still want the same thing – change for the better, a ‘cleaner’ Malaysia and to purge the country of any financial or other crises to nationhood. Let us hope that *Bangsa* Malaysia will awaken this year. Building on the spirit of the last *Merdeka* celebration with the theme, *#sehatisejiwa* (*one heart, one soul*) in 2015, let us hope that this will pave ways for the realisation of *Bangsa* Malaysia soon. Let us make the 53rd birthday of Malaysia on 16 September this year a meaningful time in bringing all Malaysians together. Last but not least, I can now drive home the crux of my point in advocating that rewriting of the myth, seen through the lens of ‘image–I–nation’, has contributed in understanding of what nation is in the 21st century Malaysia.
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