Never-Neverland Revisited: Malay Adventure Stories

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Introduction

It is difficult to imagine a human experience more private, yet at the same time more social than an individual's dream. For dreams are personal symbols that carry meaning at the cultural and psychological level simultaneously (Hollan 2003, 169). This explains why dream reports are collected and dissected by psychologists and anthropologists alike. Moreover, dream reports from different peoples across the globe attest to the universal nature of dreaming. Postwar dream research up until the 1970s almost exclusively focused on discovering cross-cultural similarities between the dreams of people living on different continents. But the following decades bear the mark of a significant shift in focus, notably evident in anthropological studies on dreams.[1] Subject of investigation now became the dream in its cultural context, and investigations were aimed at revealing mankind's cultural variety instead of a psychological universal. The premise of this shift is that dreams, dream sharing and dream interpretation are culturally informed. Dreams are collective representations, the format, meaning and function of which is shaped by cultural conventions. Among scholars who work on dreams there is a general consensus that dreams and dream typologies "[...] may illustrate or reveal a number of important cultural themes or processes" (Hollan 2003, 169). They speak of a society's key values, belief system, world view and main cultural dynamics that dreams could give access to

[1] This idea of a relation between dreams and cultural contexts was already formulated in 1952, when Dorothy Eggan contended that dreams reflect their cultural context (see also Lohmann 2003, 3). Only in the late Seventies and early Eighties of the twentieth century was this notion applied on a larger scale in dream research.

(Kilborne 1974, 1981a and b, 1992, 174, 190–191; Lohmann 2003, 9; Siegel 1977; Sutlive 1979, 105–106; Duff-Cooper 1987).

With this promising hypothesis as a starting point, the current chapter examines the fictional dreams that are featured in seven Malay adventure stories.[2] The stories are linked to a world outside the texts and scrutinized for the ways they are related to that world. In line with the argument of the previous chapter, it is claimed that these narratives not only convey a theory of consciousness and an ontology, but also a theory on dreams.

Although dreaming is a universal phenomenon that crosses ethno-cultural boundaries, some societies attach more meaning to dreams than others. The former often supports an elaborate classification system of dreams that indicates the importance that is accorded to dreams (Kilborne 1992, 171–173). In the Malay World people also paid attention to dreams, and still do. But not to all dreams. In contrast to dreams that were viewed as either an expression of the deep, private emotions of the dreamer or the residue of the dreamer's mental activities during the day, there were nightly visions that were believed to contain significant information. They were stereotyped dreams that were similar in format, content, mode of interpretation and meaning. They can be found in so-called Malay dream books, or *kitab takbir* (*mimpi*): lists of symbolic dream images and matching interpretations. The fictional dreams in the Malay adventure stories correspond, to a large degree, to the dreams listed in the dream books. It is this particular type of dream that this chapter addresses. It will be referred to as a 'type dream.' The term is borrowed from Charles Gabriel Seligman (1924). But, whereas Seligman used this category as a tool for his search for cross-cultural, universal human traits; it is used here to investigate the cultural specifics of Malay dreams (Seligman 1923 a and b, 1924).

Beside these similarities, the dreams and related assumptions the dream books speak of also differ in several of their aspects from those that are encountered in the Malay stories. These discrepancies, as will be shown, are related to the narrative function of the dreams in the stories. One striking difference, though, resists an explanation in these terms. It concerns the gendered nature of the dream typology that is presented in the narratives. Fictional dreams are categorized along the line of gender; they form part of a textual world characterized by a strict division of space along this same line.

Although 'real' dreams and fictional dreams are obviously two different categories, it is argued that the assumptions about a link between dreams and society can be extended to fictional dreams. Like narratives, fictional dreams are cultural representations that are, by their representational nature, bound to their 'ground': a world outside the text. To put it differently, fictional dreams in stories have to display a minimum of characteristics of a real dream to be recognizable to the readers as a dream. This basic structure is then embellished by the author in various ways, depending on the effect he intends to achieve.

[2] Their titles and bibliographic details can be found in the Appendices.

The assumed link between dreams and narrative will be addressed first. After that, the scholarly publications on dreaming and dream interpretation – fictional dreams included – relating to Southeast Asia will be discussed to create a comparative framework. Dreams and narrative are two sides of the same coin. Without narrative a dream would be no more than a sequence of images that appear to lack any internal relation, and thus an illogical and incomprehensible event. It is only after awakening that these images are linked together in narrative format. Analogous to the construction of narrative, the human mind establishes links between the images comprising the sensory dream experience by connecting them both logically and chronologically, producing a history. This history can be either narrated to oneself or to other people to make the dream known: the dream report. It is narrative that "tells the dream into existence" (Doniger O'Flaherty 1984, 127).

Many cultures stress the choice a dreamer has between sharing a dream with others and keeping it to herself. Amongst the Toraja of Sulawesi, for example, it is advised never to tell a dream that is believed to bring luck to its dreamer. The reason for this is that as soon as the dream is told, it exists and is liable to be taken away from the dreamer (Hollan 1989, 172). An early Indian text on dreams warns people who have dreamt a bad dream, not to relate their dream to somebody else and to pass three nights in the temple to honour the ghosts. This exercise will safeguard the dreamer against any negative effects of the dream. By not informing others of the dream, the dream is not brought into existence (Doniger O'Flaherty 1984, 23).

The Malay story *Panglimo Awang* contains several fictional dreams, but it is foremost the lifestory of its storyteller that illustrates the close connection between dreaming and storytelling. One of the storytellers who regularly performed the *PA* started off his career after having had a dream. He was only seventeen years old when a beautiful woman appeared to him in a dream; she urged the young man to learn the *PA* by heart to save it from extinction (Derks 1994, 10). A similar example is referred to by Amin Sweeney in *Professional Malay Story-telling*. A Malay storyteller from Perlis, Malaysia, claimed to have had a dream in which an old man, clothed all in white, appeared to him and granted him the power to perform (Sweeney 1973, 12). In the *PA*, the words *riwayat* and *curito*, both meaning 'tale' or 'story,' refer to one of Panglimo Nayan's dreams: "Father came down from heaven. To tell me a story." A dream as a story, a story as a dream. And finally, there is the mysterious last part of *Pak* Taslim's version of the *PA* that gives evidence to the relationship between dreams and stories. It discloses the origin of the story on Panglimo Awang, the dreams of a woman named Mai Bonsu:

If we want to tell the story Panglimu
From the beginning until the end
We study first with Awang Lobieh
O Bang Sulong Awang Panglimu Awang

> We want to study; there is no teacher to ask
> We want to ask, there is no capable one
> Except Mai Bonsu when she dreams (*PA* 578–581).

Before embarking on an exploration of non-Western ideas on dreaming, we must first examine the historical basis of our own Western assumptions on dreaming. Contemporary notions on dreams are influenced by the mainstream Christian doctrine that claims that only waking experience is truthful and therefore all dreams are deceitful. This view stands in sharp contrast to Islamic tradition, where, for Muhammad, dreams were a vehicle for the revelation essential for his role as prophet and visionary (Kilborne 1992, 184–185). Additionally, the dominance in the West of the notion of dreams as expressions of man's unconscious anxieties, wishes and desires does not have a long history; it owes everything to Sigmund Freud's seminal work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).[3] In Western popular culture the dream is seen as a series of images that originates in the subconscious of the human mind. Culturally sanctioned emotions and desires, or painful emotions that the waking and conscious mind represses, (re)surface in man's dreams. Dreams offer us a glimpse of that part of us that would otherwise remain unknown. As dream images are believed to spring from the subconscious' imagination, the world we see in our dreams is just that, a dream world. It is not considered 'real,' like the world that surrounds us in our waking life.

Freud's claim that certain elements of dreams typically correspond with certain latent meanings of the dream piqued the interest of anthropologists. British anthropologists Charles Gabriel Seligman, for example, wondered whether Freud's dream symbolism was applicable across races and cultures. If this was indeed the case, it would not only suggest that the unconscious of different races was 'qualitatively alike,' but also that man's unconscious constituted a "[...] proved common store on which fantasy may draw" (Seligman 1924, 41). As an example of what he called a 'type dream,' he presented the dream in which the dreamer sees himself losing a tooth. This dream image or symbol is found in dreams of different peoples living on different continents and is either interpreted as predicting the death of the dreamer or one of his relatives, or general misfortune (Seligman 1923a and b, 376–377; 1924, 41).[4] A decade later, another anthropologist, Jackson Stewart Lincoln, gathered and scrutinized dream reports collected among five different Native American peoples for the presence of recurring dream images. His *The Dream in Primitive Cultures* pioneered the study of dreams in relation to society. Although he failed to take into account indigenous dream theories and typologies, his contribution

[3] However, Nabulsi's (1641–1731) Islamic dream categorization that precedes Freud by several centuries also includes a category of dreams that are rooted in individual wishes, ambition or sexual desires (Kilborne 1992, 192).

[4] This type dream is commonly found in Malay dream books as well, with a similar interpretation. These compendia will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

to the study of dreams and dream interpretation lies in his observation that some societies distinguish between different categories of dreams, and that societies vary in the degree to which they ascribe importance or meaning to different kinds of dreams. He introduced the division between 'individual dreams' and 'culture pattern dreams' that yielded a significant advance in anthropological dream research. Especially relevant to the discussion of fictional dreams in the current chapter is his claim that these culture pattern dreams are constructed with images taken from a "[...] culturally defined field of imagery" (Lincoln 1935, 105). Just like Lincoln's culture pattern dreams, both Malay fictional dreams and dreams listed in Malay dream books turn out be stereotyped in manifest and latent content.

The quest for cross-cultural similarities that took place in the field of comparative dream research lasted until the late Seventies. From then on, scholarly discourse in cultural studies became dominated by the primary importance of contextualization for the understanding of cultural representations. In the wake of this contextual shift, works appeared that revolved around the notion of dreaming as a communicative act, a corollary of the attention for the relation between text and context. Benjamin Kilborne's work on dreams in particular is exemplary for this novel anthropological perspective on dreams.[5] Kilborne contends that dream classificatory principles are bound up with cultural belief systems, and say something about cultural values. The analysis of fictional dreams in this chapter follows his line of thinking. As an example of his approach to dreams, a case study from his article 'On Classifying Dreams' (1992) is presented next.

In this article, Kilborne claims that dream theory is indicative of how a society views the world. To substantiate his claim he presents three case studies. For the third one, on Islamic dream theory, he used data from his fieldwork in 1970s' Morocco and from older Islamic sources. His findings show how the different Islamic dream categorizations express a preoccupation with truth and falsehood. Contrary to what one would expect – that is, that Moroccans value the God-sent 'truthful' dreams more than those considered deceitful and sent by Satan or revengeful *jin* or Islamic spirits – both types of dreams are seen as equally important. Deceitful dreams are treated with care, as they could be sent to harm the dreamer. Such a dream frequently demands the advice of a person skilled in the art of dream interpretation to figure out which part of the dream is not to be trusted. Kilborne explains the importance of these dreams in society by arguing that deceitful dreams are more salient to the people as they "[...] express real, experienced and basic mistrust" in Moroccan society. Also, he contends that dreams sent by Islamic spirits or

[5] A versatile scholar and prolific writer, Kilborne has published articles and monographs on a wide range of subjects, such as anthropology, history, philosophy, and literature. He states that in his writings he has always "[...] sought to integrate literature, anthropology, and psychoanalysis with theories of human tragedy." Www.benjaminkilborne.com/Ben_ Kilborne/Home.html, accessed 9 March 2013. Having studied with Roland Barthes in Paris, Kilborne's work clearly betrays the influence of Barthes' ideas on semiotics and structuralism.

jin, similar to the widespread beliefs in *jin*, function as 'defensive projective mechanisms,' ways of projecting unwanted hostile feelings onto spirits and a manner of dealing with an inner world of suspicion and jealousy. In short, Moroccan dreams do appear to confirm a view that holds that the world is not to be trusted and not to be taken at face value. This chapter intends to look at the fictional dreams of the Malay stories in a similar way to discover more about the key values and main preoccupations of the peoples that inhabited the Malay World.

A search for scholarly publications on fictional dreams in the Malay World and adjacent regions does not yield much. This means that almost all sources that will be subsequently mentioned refer to real dreams. Until the contextual shift of the late Seventies, references to dreams and dreaming in connection to peoples living on the Malay Peninsula or the Archipelago were found only, and sporadically, in ethnographic descriptions. Dreams were mentioned in passing, in an anecdotal way and mostly in connection to 'magic' or 'superstitious beliefs.' Dreams never became an object for study themselves, let alone dream theories. The British were most prolific in this ethnographic field.[6] Skeat's *Malay Magic* (1900) contains several examples of Malay dreams (Skeat 1900, 142–144, 666–669). Similarly, Hugh Clifford's *In Court and Kampong* (Clifford 1897, 189). Notes on Malay superstition that contain scattered references to dreams are found in journals such as the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, the *Journal of the Federated States Museum* and the *Malayan Police Magazin*e. The Malay *Haji* Abdul Mahid, for example, shared his knowledge on the interpretation of dreams and omens in the natural world with the readers of these journals on several occasions. His sources were oral traditions on dreaming and perhaps one or more Malay dream books. To give an impression of the kinds of dreams and interpretations that were known in the Malay World, a few examples of dreams and interpretations are given next. Several of the dreams that are mentioned by Abdul Mahid relate to pregnancy. If a pregnant woman dreams of receiving a creese she will have a boy; if the gift is a ring or an earring, she will give birth to a girl. Love and marriage is another theme commonly encountered in these compendia. If a girl dreams she is being seized by an animal, she will soon marry. If one sees oneself catching a bird, it means that the dreamer has transferred his or her love to another person. The image of a big fish stands for the wife the dreamer will soon marry. But a man's dream of marrying a woman is considered a highly inauspicious vision; it means that trouble is coming his way. And finally, there are dreams that pertain to the dreamer's social standing or good name, and wealth. Smelling 'evil smelling things' in a dream indicates that people have been talking evil of the dreamer, while eating a lemon in a dream forewarns the dreamer that he or she will receive silver or gold (Mahid 1928, 41–45; Skeat 1900, 666–669).

[6] An overview of publications on Malay magic is found in Robert L. Winzeler's article "The Study of Malay Magic." *BKI* 139 (1983) 4, 435–458.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the idea took root among European scholars that folktales in particular held the key to the 'essence' of an ethnic group. This led to a heightened interest in Malay folktales around the turn of the twentieth century. Some of the oral narratives that were collected by the British on the Malay Peninsula express ideas related to dreams. The following story stresses the significance of dreams, as well as their 'truthfulness'. A poor man one night dreamt that a supernatural visitor came to him and told him that his only way to better his miserable condition was to kill his wife. The man was greatly disturbed by this message, but believed that the proper course was to obey. When his wife went to bathe herself with lime in the river in preparation for her death, she accidently hurt her finger cutting the limes. Her blood fell in the water, where each drop miraculously transformed into a jar filled with gold. She took the jars to her husband and the two lived the rest of their life in comfort. In contrast, the story of a greedy fisherman who ignored the signs disclosed to him in his dream illustrates what can happen if one does not exactly do what one is told to in the dream. The fisherman drew up a long golden chain from the bottom of a pool, but lost it all after he refused to cut the chain with his betel scissors as he was told to do so by a little bird (Skeat 1900, 563–566).

Besides these ethnographic compendia compiled mainly by British scholars and administrators in the first half of the twentieth century, there was no scholarly interest in dreams in a Southeast Asian context until the 1970s and 80s.[7] The latter period saw anthropologists such as James Siegel, Andrew Duff-Cooper, Jane Cathleen Wellenkamp and, in particular, Douglas Hollan who began analyzing dreams and dream interpretations from the Archipelago in a systematic way.[8] All four explain dreams in relation to

[7] Considering this fact, the following story about the unexpected and large impact on American culture in the 1960s and 70s of Kilton Stewart's writings on Senoi dream theory is exceptional (Stewart 1951, 1953–4, 1954, 1962). In the 1930s, American anthropologist Stewart studied the Senoi, an indigenous people living on the Malay Peninsula. His publications appeared only in the 1950s; they describe the Senoi as a non-violent and easygoing people, with a near-perfect mental health. It was assumed that this utopian society was achieved by the way the Senoi shaped, controlled, and interpreted their dreams. The idea of taking control over your own life through dreams resonated with the 1960s human potential movement in the United States. Stewart's work was reread and became popular (Domhoff 1985, 1–34). This is how a dream theory of a relatively unknown and isolated people living close to the Malay on the Peninsula was exported to the United States, where it was transformed into the creative dream work movement.

[8] Studies on the social use of dreams and dream theory in Papua New Guinea have not been included in the discussion for the following two reasons. First, the area does not immediately border the regions making up the Malay World and second, its indigenous peoples/pre-colonial population belongs to the Melanesian ethno-cultural family and is markedly distinct from the other ethno-cultural groups inhabiting the Western part of the Archipelago. For more on dreams in Papua New Guinea, see the volume edited by Lohmann, *Dream Travellers: Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific* (2003), and Mimica 2006.

their function in society. In 1977, Siegel wrote a paper on the social function of dreams in Pidir, Aceh: "Curing Rites, Dreams and Domestic Politics in a Sumatran Society." He interprets dreams as the source from which women in Pidir derive authority in domestic politics. Whereas men acquire authority from their prayers to God, women dream dreams sent to them by Islamic spirits. This means that they can have their say in society, for they 'speak with the voice of *jin*'. For the same reason, they play a role in curing rites and the interpretations of dreams. Dreaming and dream interpretation turn out to be closely connected to the female social realm. Pidir dream theory discerns three different types of dreams, two of which are said to be brought by djinn and one that is sent by God. Dreams sent by God contain a message and are self-explanatory; they can be dreamt by both men and women. Although men do recognize the three types of dreams, they differ from the women in their cultivation of dreaming. Whereas Pidir women turn out to be prolific dreamers, Pidir men say they rarely dream. Furthermore, Siegel establishes a link between dreaming and illness; not through the concept of the wandering *semangat*, as was done in the previous chapter, but by taking into account the special nature of spirits. Spirits have no body and thus no voice; by invading a human body – causing illness – and by visiting sleeping women in their dreams, *jin* speak through the voices of Pidir women.

Whereas in Pidir spirits bring dreams to a sleeping individual, among a Balinese community in western Lombok dreams are seen as the experiences of the dreamer's 'soul' or life force that has detached itself from the confines of the human body. Dreams are divided into auspicious dreams and inauspicious ones, but they all contain messages from the gods. Using data on dreams and dream interpretation collected during his fieldwork on Lombok in the period 1979–1981, Duff-Cooper illustrates how the dreams, dream reports and dream interpretations of Balinese individuals are shaped by social constraints: "[...] what some might consider purely private (or personal) representations rely heavily on public, social facts for their sense" (Duff-Cooper 1987, 63). From the plethora of details of a dream, only salient points are picked out by the dreamer or dream interpreter to be abstracted into a familiar motif, thus limiting the number of possible interpretations. Moreover, these motifs "[...] depend upon them being significant in daily social life" and the significances "are limited by the dreamers' ideological frame" (Duff-Cooper 1987, 73). Thus, a motif such as fire is linked to anger and used to refer to a father's disapproval of the misbehaviour of his son towards the researcher. The image of a bookshelf on fire while the researcher was in the house was interpreted as a sign that that someone disliked the researcher or was jealous of his closeness to the villagers. Aside from this category of symbolic dreams, there is another element of Balinese ideas on dreaming that is present in other dream theories found in the Archipelago. Having received a message through dreaming that a certain spirit is dissatisfied with the dreamer, the latter can remedy this by making an offering to this particular spirit (Duff-Cooper 1987, 70–72). Placating spirits or God(s) is a common instrument for averting the course of an individual's fate as alluded to in a dream.

Both Wellenkamp and Hollan have examined dreaming among the Toraja, a people inhabiting the highlands of South Sulawesi. Wellenkamp's PhD dissertation *A Psychocultural Study of Loss and Death among the Toraja* (University of San Diego, California) of 1984 discusses dreaming as a way to cope with the death of a loved one. She noticed how, among the Toraja, people often dream of the deceased. Although she does not state it explicitly, it seems that Toraja dreams of the dead reflect their anxiety over the influence of the dead on the lives of the living. Different than the Malay or the Javanese, for instance, Toraja "[...] are more interested in what after death the souls are going to do to the living than in questions of what their private fate will be" (Nooy-Palm 1979, 124, cited in Wellenkamp 1984, 41–42). Toraja consider dreaming as a way of communicating with the souls of relatives who have died. Some dreamers tell that they visited the afterworld in their dreams; life in Puya, as this world is called, mirrors the present life. But more often deceased relatives come down to visit the dreamer in his or her village. These contacts often involve a gift to the dreamer, clothes, a letter or knowledge. Those are considered good dreams, which bring luck or prosperity to the dreamer. On the contrary, when the dreamer is asked for something, a chicken, pig or buffalo, this is viewed as a bad omen; either the dreamer or his or her child will die. Villagers also report dreams in which knowledge or advice is given (Wellenkamp 1984, 441–42, 233–235).

The central theme in the publications on Toraja dreams by Hollan (1989, 1995, 2003, with Wellenkamp, 1994 and 1996) is the creative and personal use by individuals of widely shared beliefs about dreaming and dream interpretations. Hollan's work demonstrates how the use of stock dream formats, latent content and interpretations is not automatic or effortless, but requires inventiveness on the part of each individual dreamer. Dreams in South Sulawesi are thought of as communications of the soul of the dreamer with wandering souls of other sleepers, spirits, or the souls of the deceased. Not all dreams are marked in Toraja society; special significance is ascribed only to one type of dream, called *tindo* in the local language. If the format and content is similar to that found in dream books and perhaps oral traditions on dreaming, the dream can be interpreted. *Tindo* are predictive of future events. When a particularly ominous interpretation is given to a dream, the dream's meaning can be neutralized or reversed by a reinterpretation of a dream. For this, one can consult a ritual specialist. Sometimes offerings are made to the soul of an ancestor who has appeared in a dream; this is done to coax the ancestor into following through with his promise made in the dream, to ensure the dream will come true.

Two findings of Hollan are especially interesting in light of the current chapter; they concern two characteristics that turn out also to be valid for the Malay dreams. The first is the ambiguity that surrounds Toraja dream interpretation. Dream explication leaves room for uncertainty, as it is never clear whether a dream should be taken literally or metaphorically. Next, Hollan demonstrates how dreams give expression to salient emotions that have their roots in society. He links the most common theme found in Toraja

dreams; that is, the feeling of being preyed upon by others, to the anxiety that is caused by the social code that steers Toraja life, namely reciprocity. Toraja social life is characterized by 'give and take' and the dreams express a salient emotion that stems from this social reality (Hollan 1989, 174–177, 182; Hollan and Wellenkamp 1996, 197–200).

A Dream Theory

Malay adventure stories articulate interconnected assumptions on dreaming that form an explanatory framework for certain behaviour by the stories' protagonists. This dream theory includes a dream classification, rules for the interpretation of dreams, ideas about what exactly a dream is, and whether it is appropriate or not to share a dream with others. These findings have many elements in common with the 'real' dreams described in the Malay dream books. Malay adventure stories, like the dream books, taught people what to dream and how to attach meaning to these dreams. They provided them with both the symbolic images of their dreams and the vocabulary to discuss them with. Type dreams are, in a sense, 'acquired' dreams; people dream these dreams because they were taught to do so from a very young age. But the Malay narratives are unique in that they provide the reader with knowledge on dreaming that is not found in other Malay texts.

The Malay stories give an explanation for the dream experience that is lacking in the Malay dream books. They convey the idea of a dream as the wanderings of an individual's *semangat* or vital force at another plane of existence. This view fits in with the ontology discussed in Chapter 4 and displays similarities with Toraja and Balinese ideas on dreams. It is not the dreamer herself who meets with her lover in her dream, but that part of her being that is able to leave the corporeal confines of her body, her *semangat*. And when a woman in her dream sees herself sitting on the horns of a water buffalo, it is actually her own, detached *semangat* she is looking at. As explained earlier, a person's *semangat* is an exact copy of that person, with all his or her characteristic traits. This means that *semangat* can act as human beings and interact with other *semangat* in dreams. What distinguishes them from real people, though, is the substance they are made of – pure and immaterial vital force – and the world they act in. During sleep, *semangat* are capable of crossing the boundary between the 'real' world and another world or dimension accessible only to them, ghosts and *semangat* of the deceased.

In the world depicted in the Malay narratives, dreams are considered as marked events in an individual's life. They convey important knowledge of immediate relevancy to the life of the dreamer, which cannot be accessed otherwise. Dreams are meaningful and therefore are to be given due thought. Some dreams disclose the information in a straightforward manner; a dream messenger appears who delivers a message for the dreamer. Other cases of dreaming require interpretation. Those are the dreams that puzzle the dreamer; instead of imparting knowledge, they cause the dreamer to become anxious

and upset. In her dream – it is always a woman who has this kind of troubling dreams – she is confronted with an incomprehensible image that needs to be translated in order to obtain meaning.

Next, dream sharing and dream interpretation are governed by rules. In the Malay stories only women share their dreams with others. And they share them with women only. In contrast, men keep their nightly visions to themselves. The dreams of women always need to be interpreted, by themselves or one of their women friends or servants. In case a straightforward interpretation of the dream image proves too difficult, the advice of a specialist is required. Considering the female context of dreaming, dream sharing and dream interpretation, it is remarkable that the specialists that are consulted by the women are, without exception, men – wise and learned men, ascetics or astrologers. Male dreamers, on the other hand, are advised to refrain from searching for a hidden meaning behind the messages conveyed to them during their sleep. They are never to doubt what is said to them by the male messengers that figure in their dreams, for the message is imbued with the religious or patriarchal authority of the dream messenger.

Malay adventure stories abound with scenes that are set in the other dimension. As for its outlook, it mirrors the real world in that it has seas, islands, harbours, forests, capitals with palaces and villages. It seems to comprise past, present and future and is experienced as being as real as the 'real' world of waking life. In these aspects the Malay ideas resemble the Toraja concept of the other world. In Indian tradition there exists the idea of an abstract 'reality-scale,' where some experiences are placed more towards the 'real' end of the scale, while others are placed more towards the other, 'unreal' end of the scale. In such a context, two or more experiences can be considered as real, while, at the same time, it is possible to distinguish between those that are more real and those that are less real (Doniger O'Flaherty 1984). Malay adventure stories do not contain references to such a gradual reality. With this in mind, it is not difficult to understand why, in the *Story of Bahram Syah*, Bahram Syah is devastated when he fails to find his father, after having seeing him in his dream just a moment ago. Dreams are considered as being as real as it gets.

The current argument that Malay adventure stories – including their fictional dreams – are important means for the transmission of cultural knowledge finds an equivalent in the findings of Vinson H. Sutlive in a study on shared beliefs and concepts among the Iban of Kalimantan (Sutlive 1979, 105–123). In his research on Iban oral narratives and dream reports, he seems to question the assumed distinction between the two categories. His approach shows how he considers the oral stories and dream reports – of real dreams – as belonging to the same family, and having an identical function in society, the dissemination of cultural knowledge. What makes his findings especially salient is the role he ascribes to dreams in the socialization process. He contends that "Iban oral literature has developed as a body of knowledge and dreams, in which are combined ethno science, traditions, and beliefs about the world, man and society" (Sutlive 1979,

105–106). Here again, as in the previous chapter, narrative and world view come together in a communicative act, but now dreams are assigned a similar role.

An important element of the dream theory imparted by the stories is a dream classification. It distinguishes two types of meaningful dreams, one that needs to be interpreted, and one that conveys knowledge in a direct manner. This distinction forms the base of the dream typology that will be presented next.

Feminine Desire and Symbols of the Absent Lover

The dreams that feature in Malay adventure stories fall into two categories: the symbolic dream and the message dream.[9] The categories are delineated by a binary set of opposing and mutually exclusive characteristics, long versus short, auditory versus visual, and self-explanatory versus in need of interpretation. But the main feature that distinguishes the symbolic dream from the message dream is the gender of character who has the dream. In Malay adventure stories, men dream of fathers or religious messengers who visit the dreamer to convey a message, warning, order or knowledge. Women never have such dreams. In contrast, women are confronted in their dreams with images or events that, at first sight, seem incomprehensible. Instead of providing knowledge, these symbolic dreams make the dreamer aware of their lack of knowledge. They demand immediate interpretation, as the uncertainty over its meaning causes feelings of anxiety. For it is the dreamer's equilibrium with the world around her, as she understands it, that is disrupted.

This division along gender lines repeats itself on the level of dream content. Although in the dreams of both men and women desire plays a central role, it is the object of their desire that distinguishes male message dreams from female symbolic dreams. The women of Malay adventure stories desire strong, passionate lovers and loyal husbands. The men want much more. As Malay princes and kings, they not only dream about women, but also about fame, fortune, family (the fathering of a son in particular) and founding a state. Below, the two types will be addressed in more detail; some examples of dreams taken from the Malay stories serve as illustration. The symbolic dream will be dealt with first.

As was stated earlier in this chapter, symbolical dreams are dreamt by women only. Malay adventure stories are set in a courtly environment, and thus the dreams are dreamt

[9] Classical Arabic texts on dreaming and dream interpretation contain references to a similar dream categorization. In the Introduction to her critical edition of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's (823–894 CE) work on dreams *Kitāb al-Manām*, Leah Kinberg speaks of the categories symbolic dreams and literal dreams. The latter coincide with the message dreams of this chapter. Of Malay dream books it is known that they trace their roots, at least partly, to Arabic works on Muslim oneirocriticism. These, in turn, are based on the Greek treatise on dreams *Oneirocritica* (The Interpretion of Dreams) by Artemidorus in the second century CE (Kinberg 1994, 43–46).

by princesses and their female attendants. The pictures of the surroundings where these ladies have their dreams show an exclusively female realm. A common scene in the Malay stories is set in the women's quarters of the palace, or in a lush garden with fragrant flowers, birds and a cool breeze, with the princess sitting or lying, surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting and talking parrots or parakeets. It can be either day or night when the princess entertains herself there with her women friends. *Pantun* – four line Malay poems – are exchanged, often accompanied by much laughter as they are full of puns. The ladies make jokes and play tricks on each other and tell each other their dreams.

The one exception to the rule that symbolic dreams are dreamt by women actually reinforces the exclusive female character of symbolic dreams. The dream in case features in the *Story of Bahram Syah*. To convince Bahram Syah's father that the disappearance of his youngest son was preordained, Bahram Syah's two jealous older brothers lie to their father and tell him that they both had a (symbolic) dream that alluded to Bahram Syah's sad fate. One brother supposedly saw three hearth stones of which one disappeared; the other lied that he saw the sun, the moon and the stars, and that the stars suddenly disappeared. What happens here is that men try to appropriate women's symbolic dreams. But, because of their gender, the two brothers are not able to dream real symbolic dreams and thus have to resort to imitation.

As for manifest dream content, symbolical dreams present the dreamer with an image, a symbol that has to be 'translated' in order to reveal the meaning of the dream. The images are of various sorts. To give an impression of symbolic manifest dream content and the environment in which these dreams occur four examples are presented. In the *Story of Dewa Mandu* it is told that, one day, a princess passes her time in a lush garden together with her female attendants. A gentle breeze blows the fragrant odours of many flowers to the princess' face. The fragrance instantly reminds her of her absent lover, while the soft voices of the humming bees hovering above the flowers are reminiscent of her lover's sweet voice when caressing her in the bedroom. Full with memories, the princess starts to weep and tears roll over her face like pearls falling from their string. Overwhelmed by sadness, she is lulled to sleep by her female servants. At this point in the story, the princess has a dream:

> The Princess dreamed that she met with her lover Dewa Mandu. She was startled and awoke while moaning. She asked, "What could this dream of mine possibly mean?" Her lady-in-waiting Dang Ratna Baidur paid homage and replied, What dream are you talking about? When the Princess heard her lady-in-waiting ask this, she smiled. Then, the parrot folded his wings together and paid his respects, just like a human being would do, and spoke, "Order to ask the priests for an interpretation of your dream!" Hearing this, the Princess smiled and, still smiling, she spoke, "I dreamed that I met with Dewa Mandu and that he took me around the garden and into the Puspa Kemuning pavilion. At that point I awoke. Now, what could this dream mean? Does it mean that he is dead or that he is still alive? Does it say something about where he went?" The parakeet listened to the Princess and respectfully folded his wing together. He then said, "Your dream is a good dream

because you have dreamed it during the day, at the time of day called [...]. Such a dream is called a dream of compassion.[10] As far as I can read your stars, I see that Dewa Mandu is not far away from here and that you will see each other in the near future." The parrot said, "You are right! It is as is said in this *pantun*,

Kusangka pungguk kami di rimpi [11]
Dried flower petals in Dang Jelia's room
"I think that dreams speak the truth
So go back to sleep and see where he is!"

The princess smiled when she heard the parrot's *pantun* and all the ladies-in-waiting were laughing as well. In answer to the parrot's *pantun,* the parakeet in turn started to recite a *pantun*,

"Dang Judah is weaving on the river bank
The pattern Clouds-Meet-Flowers
If you have seen it in your dream
You will meet each other soon."

Next, the lady-in-waiting Dang Ratna answered in rhyme,

"A wild ginger flower is eaten by a squirrel
Ginger stalk between the rice
You have really seen him in your dream
And yet your heart is not satisfied" (*SDM* 224–225).

In the *Panglimo Awang*, as told by *Pak* Ganti, Princess Gadih Kainam dreams that she is drinking water from a gourd, when suddenly the gourd breaks. Immediately after she wakes up, she orders that a ship be prepared. The reason for her instant longing to leave her country is that she thinks that her husband, who was overseas at the moment of her dream, has died. She interprets the dream in a symbolic way; the breaking of the gourd refers to the sudden death of her husband Panglimo Awang. Dressed in men's clothes, she then boards the ship and sets sail to hostile grounds in search for her husband's body.

A common dream image in the dreams dreamt by princesses and governesses is the *naga* (giant mythical sea snake). In the *Story of Indraputra*, Princess Kemala Ratnasari dreams that she is bitten by a snake, who subsequently steals her magic jewel. The nymphs that attend to her explain the dream: the princess will soon marry *Raja* Dewa Lela Mengerna. Early the next morning, Kemala Ratnasari and her nymphs fly to the lake for

[10] Another *topos* of Malay narrative: the talking parakeet as the "bearer of love-messages to closely guarded maidens" (Wilkinson 1959, 94).

[11] The meaning of this line is obscure. The reference to the night owl or *burung pungguk* though, fits in with the context of a lovelorn maiden who dreams of her lover. In Malay narrative tradition, the stock image of the nigh owl watching the moon carries the meaning of longing for a loved one.

their morning bath. Indraputra hides himself on the lakeshore. He takes the women's clothes and enters the water without being seen. While underwater, he suddenly pinches the princess, who jolts out of the water. She thinks that she has been bitten by a snake (*SIP* 69–67).

The last two examples are taken from the *Story of Sahrul Indra* (*SSI*). One day, Princess Kumkumah Johari tells her governess that she dreamt that the sun rose and then fell into her lap. She adds that she has not been feeling well since she had the dream. The governess interprets the dream as an auspicious one: the princess will soon marry a great king. The glittering sun symbolizes the great, shining, king who will 'fall into her lap.' The stereotype image of celestial bodies as symbols of people of noble descent is commonly found in Malay narratives; the made-up dream by one of Bahram Syah's older brothers mentioned earlier, involving the sun, the moon and the stars, forms an example. Then, after the governess has explained the dream to the princess, she starts to tell the princess one of her own dreams from the time she was still a virgin. One night, while sleeping, she dreamt that she was sitting on the horns of a white water buffalo. According to the governess, this image symbolized her future husband, whose skin turned out to be covered with white spots as the result of a skin disease (*SSI* 85–86).

Symbolic dreams pose a question, a riddle. If an interpretation is not provided for quickly the dreamer's health is affected. Physical weakness and mental instability are the results of both 'not knowing' and unfulfilled desire. In literary traditions from other cultures than the Malay, for example the Near Eastern (Sumeric) or Greek, the ambiguity of the dream is often made into the central organizing principle of a text.[12] Dreams present a question, or need an explanation, and sometimes much attention is paid to the importance of interpreting the dream correctly. In these texts, misinterpretation plays a crucial role in the development of the rest of the story as it is an effective fictional device to create tragedy. By giving the reader access to a character's dream, the text at the same time gives the readers the opportunity to interpret the dream. Great tragedy arises when the readers have 'read' the dream correctly and witness how the character continues in a line of action based on his or her misinterpretation of a dream, like in the Sumeric epic *Gilgamesh* (Bulkley 1993, 163-164).

In contrast, misinterpretation does not play a role at all in the Malay adventure stories. In the world of the Malay stories wrong interpretations do not exist. Malay fictional dreams come true, as their interpretations are true. The dreamer herself, one of her female attendants, a talking bird, learned men, ascetics or men of religion provide the necessary translation of the dream image. Moreover, the stories attest to a close link between dream interpretation and the reading of the stars. First, all symbolic dreams refer to the future.

[12] For more on the literary dream as a narrative device in Classical Greek literature, see William Stuart Messer's *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (1918).

But astrologers, who are usually consulted for knowledge about events in the future, can read dreams as well.

Summarizing, the symbolic dream of Malay adventure stories has the following characteristics: it is gendered feminine, in that the dreamer is without exception a woman, it presents the dreamer with a riddle that needs to be solved, and the latent content is invariably connected with the future and masculinity. The dreams of the women in these Malay stories are all about the opposite sex. Lastly, although the content of the symbolic dream varies, its images are those well-known from oral and written Malay narrative practices. But there are more features that distinguish the symbolic dream from the message dream.

First, the symbolic dream consists of a visual experience. In contrast, message dreams dreamt by men have an important auditory element; they convey information solely through the spoken word. The female dreamer of a symbolic dream is often not more than an observer; the dream image is often static. The shortest dream report is undoubtedly the dream of Princess Kumkumah Johari's governess found in the *Story of Sahrul Indra* cited earlier. She tells how she dreamed that she was *di tanduk kerbau bule*, which translates as 'on the horns of a white water buffalo.' Another example is the dream about a sky-sheltered moon surrounded by stars found in the *SBS* and *SLB* (*SLB* 24). The dream is expressed with only five words, *langit berpayung bulan dipagar bintang*. The compactness of these dream reports is enhanced by the use of conventional Malay similes, such as *bulan dipagar bintang*, or 'star-encircled moon,' for a glorious sight of a royal character (the moon), shielded from the sun's rays by the royal umbrella (the sky), and surrounded by loyal servants (the stars). Similes like this one have acquired their compact format through the ages and are used to render in a few words a scene that would normally require many words to describe. Lastly, the reader only learns about the symbolic dreams dreamt by the stories female characters, because he 'overhears' the ladies of the court exchanging and interpreting dreams. Message dreams, on the other hand, position the reader as an observer, on the same narratological level as the male dreamer, as if he is looking over the latter's shoulder.

The Male Quest for Fame, Fortune and Family

The second category of fictional dreams is the message dream. In this type of dream a male messenger visits the dreamer in his sleep to reveal important information or to convey a warning or order. Message dreams display a number of shared features that stand in direct opposition to those that define symbolic dreams that belong to the female realm. The message dream is gendered male and is self-explanatory. It is depicted as an auditory experience; it occupies a relatively large space in the text, and usually refers to

fame, fortune, knowledge, and offspring. A typical example of a message dream is found in the *Story of Langlang Buana*:

> On a certain night, the king was sleeping when an elderly man appeared to him in a dream. This man spoke as follows, "Oh King of Kings Puspa Indera Koci! Wake up! Tomorrow you must go on a hunt. When you find a jasmine plant, take it with you, as it will turn into an incredibly brave son. This son of yours will become the ruler of all four worlds." When the king woke up, he went to his wife, the Queen, and told her of his dream (*SLB* 2).[13]

Message dreams are the exclusive domain of men, notably young male aristocrats. This is because these dreams are invariably linked to the aspirations of young adults of noble descent: the quest for a suitable marriage partner, fathering a male heir, acquiring possessions, gaining knowledge and establishing an independent state to rule. The dream cited above, of a young king who has to find a jasmine plant that will transform into a son, is illustrative of the desires of these princes. Similarly, both Panglimo Awang and his brother Panglimo Nayan from the *PA* dream about a future partner. In the *SMB*, the prince leaves his country to look for Princess Komala Ratna, his future wife. During his wanderings he has a dream in which an elderly messenger tells him to visit a learned man, who will teach him the tricks he needs to win the final battle with his adversaries. For it is only after this battle, that the prince will be able to marry his sweetheart (*SMB* 80–81).

The messenger who appears to the dreamer is, without exception, a man; usually, an old man. He may be a representative of God, as in the initial dream of the *SBS*, or a deceased relative. The message dream of the Malay adventure story presents a picture of a patriarchal realm where fathers or father figures play an important role in providing their biological or adopted sons with information that is vital for their survival, and, as will be shown later, for the continuation of the story. In some cases, the father-messenger is known to be alive and well, peacefully living his life while his son is away, having his adventures. But other cases suggest that the father-messenger has already died. In this respect, fictional message dreams resemble Toraja dreams; Toraja dreamers often dream of the dead, notably their parents, who visit them in their dreams to convey a message. Overwhelmed by worries about his unmarried status at 24 years of age, the main protagonist in the *PA* dozes off. Then,

> His father comes down from heaven
> He is called Lord Sheikh Panjang Ganyuik
> His beard reaches beyond his lap
> His long dress hangs down to his heels

[13] Maka ada suatu malam, baginda tidur lalu bermimpi datang seorang tua. Demikan katanya, "Hai Maharaja Puspa Indera Koci! Bangunlah engkau. Esok hari pergi engkau berburu. Jikalau bertemu dengan serumpun bunga melur maka ambil oleh engkau. Itulah kelak akan menjaid anak laki-laki terlalu gagah beraninya dan anak engkau inilah kelak akan menjadi raja keempat alam ini" (*SLB* 2).

His turban soars up into the air (*PA* 34–35).

The outspoken Islamic character of this messenger – the title of *syaikh*, the long beard, the dress, and the turban, all marks of a pious Muslim – is found in other message dreams as well. Some dream messengers introduce themselves as a 'representative of God.' With the widespread Islamic notion in mind that only dreams sent by God are truthful, these references to God and pious Muslims seem to be aimed at convincing both dreamer and reader that the message delivered in the dream is truthful and should therefore be acted upon (Kilborne 1992, 171–191).[14]

Besides truthfulness, another distinctive aspect of the message dream is its 'reality.' The events in message dreams, with their connotation of Islamic authority, are time and again depicted as really happening in the here and now of the story. Several narrative techniques are employed to heighten this sense of reality. The dreamer is always directly addressed by the dream messenger, for instance. And in the *PA* by *Pak* Ganti, it is told that Panglimo Awang heard the voice of the dream messenger "near his head" (*PA* 66–67). This passage serves to prove that the father had been standing right next to his son, while the latter was asleep. And as if this should leave any doubt about the reality of the dream, the storyteller subsequently adds that he does not make this up, and that the story about the dream is true, "It felt like it really happened before his [Panglimo Awang's] eyes."

Displaying proof or evidence of an actual meeting between the dreamer and the person appearing in the dream is, evidently, the most effective way to convince dreamers and readers alike that the events that took place during a dream have really happened. The most famous example of this is found in the Greek tradition: Bellerophon receives a bridle to subdue the horse Pegasus from Pallas who appears to him in a dream (Caillois 1966, 36). In Indian texts, the description of a girl's body marked by nails provides the proof of a dream encounter and sexual intercourse between two lovers. These marks, together with semen and blood, are presented as the physical signs of intercourse. The ultimate proof of a dream encounter between a man and a woman is, of course, the statement that the girl is pregnant (Doniger O'Flaherty 1984, 64–66).

Remarkably, the authors of Malay adventure stories never resort to this technique. Besides tangible objects that serve as proof of the reality of the dream, such an intangible thing as an odour can have the same function. In the Chinese tale of the young Liu of P'eng-ch'eng, for example, it is told that the young man dreams several times that he visits a brothel. But the women's perfumes that stay with him even after he has woken up, make him doubt whether the experiences were real or not (Caillois 1966, 36–37). A comparable dream is found in one of the Malay stories, but it is a symbolical dream dreamt by a woman, instead of a message dream dreamt by a man. In the *SLB*, a princess shares one

[14] In this framework, see also Siegel 1977. Acehnese Islamic dream theory contains the notion that only men can receive true knowledge from God through dreams.

of her dreams with her ladies-in-waiting and governesses in the women's quarters of the court. She tells them that she dreamt that she was wrapped up in garlands of fragrant flowers. When she woke up the garlands were gone, but their sweet-scented odour was still clinging to her body. With this scent as proof of the existence of the flowers, the princess passionately yearns for them. Here again, dream reality and external reality seem to be one and the same (*SLB* 24).

A final confirmation that in Malay adventure stories the dreams are perceived as both real and truthful is provided by the *SBS*. Indeed, the whole story of Bahram Syah's adventures, from beginning to end, exists only by the mercy of the protagonists' belief in the truthfulness of dreams. When, at the beginning of the story, the king receives information in a dream about the existence of an extraordinary bird, this triggers a whole chain of events. The dream stirs a desire for the bird so strong in the king that he is prepared to abandon his throne and let his kingdom fall into chaos. Consequently, his three sons offer to leave home to look for the object of their father's desire. Their adventures make up the narrative.

Contrary to symbolic dreams that need to be interpreted to reveal their meaning, message dreams are self-explanatory. Where symbolic dreams may cause the dreamer to wake up feeling distressed, the information received in a message dream is taken at face value and swing the dreamer into action. Thus, in the *Story of Langlang Buana*, Maharaja Puspa Indera Koci leaves his court in order to hunt in the woods, as he was told to do in a dream. And both Panglimo Nayan and his brother Panglimo Awang set sail and court the princess described by their father in a dream in the *PA* (*SLB* 2). Similarly, when Bahram Syah learns that the rooster he told his stepbrother to sell on the market contains a magic ring he does his utmost to get the animal back. And when Bahram Syah is told in yet another dream to dedicate all his love towards 'filthy' animals rather than human beings, he saves three 'bags of bones,' a dog, a cat and a mouse, from starvation without even wondering why his father would give him such an unusual piece of advice (*SBS* 49b, 69a–b).

There is an interesting passage in the *SBS* that seems to stress the self-explanatory nature of the message dream. At one point in the story, it is told that Bahram Syah receives a message from his father through a dream. But instead of taking his father's words literally he tries to discover their hidden meaning. Shortly afterwards however, he realizes he is acting "[...] crazy and is torturing himself" doing this (*SBS* 20b). The point is clear: message dreams provide information, instead of riddles that need to be solved. Dream interpretation is the domain of women, not men.

Malay Dream Books

Malay dream books are enumerations of stereotyped symbolic dreams and their interpretations. But they also convey information on the different categories of dreams and on attitudes towards dreaming and dream interpretation. Among the latter are the need to take dreams seriously, and the idea that man gains benefits by interpreting his dreams. This paragraph discusses both the similarities and the differences in the way dreams and dreaming are presented in the Malay stories and the dream books. The following overview on the character of the Malay dream book should be considered as tentative, for there are very few sources available on this topic.

A survey of the catalogues of the various manuscript collections that hold Malay manuscripts reveals that there are actually very few extant Malay dream books. In the combined collections of Great Britain for instance, only two texts on dream interpretation are found. Indonesia's National Museum holds not more than five (*Katalogus Koleksi* 1972, 306–307; Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977, 144, 162). Several factors can be highlighted that account for this scarcity. First, the nineteenth-century European collectors were interested in Malay writings mainly to further their knowledge of the Malay language. Narrative prose texts, *hikayat*, suited their aim better than lists of dreams and interpretations written in stereotyped phrases. Furthermore, owners of Malay texts on divination and the manipulation of 'supernatural' powers were often reluctant to sell or lend out their manuscripts. This was also the case in Barus, where Van der Tuuk gathered his manuscripts. First, the owners wanted to safeguard this kind of esoteric knowledge from outsiders; this was *ilmu* that could be used against them. Second, manuscript owners in general were not always keen to share their texts, as exclusivity increased the value of their manuscripts. For instance, one of the manuscripts bought by Klinkert in Riau contained the admonition not to let anybody copy the texts (Klinkert 1880, 512). In addition to handwritten dream books, there are lithographed editions; they were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Singapore (see Proudfoot's catalogue of early Malay printed books, 1993).

The Malay dream book has never been the subject of thorough investigation. A quick glance at the contents of extant dream books, though, corroborates Skeat's observation that the Malay texts represent different systems of dream interpretation. According to one method, the meaning of a dream is based on the initial letter of the object or event witnessed in the dream. But it is more common to find interpretations that explain the dream image in a symbolic way.[15] The dream books usually present the dream images

[15] Nineteenth-century Malay dream books originating in Java present a more elaborate system of dream interpretation. Here, it is not just the first letter of the dream image that is significant, but its combination with the week day or year the dreamer had the dream (see for instance, KITLV Or. 113 and Wieringa 1998, 192, 37–38).

arranged thematically. The lists start with visions of the Islamic prophets and angels, which are followed by phenomena related to weather, celestial bodies, water, food, fruit, birds, snakes and lizards, four-legged animals, involuntary movements of the limbs and other parts of the body. A few examples serve to give an idea of the nature of these dream images. Seeing a fly or a mosquito in your dream means that an enemy will come to your village. Taking a bath in your dream or experiencing a heavy rain shower informs the dreamer that he or she will be safeguarded from danger or misfortune in the near future. If the dreamer sees himself shaving the hair in his armpit, he will be freed from all his debts. And lastly, if the moon and the sun fall into your lap in a dream, it is a sign that the dreamer will attain greatness and live in comfort, peace and wealth for the rest of his life (Skeat 1900, 667–668; Overbeck 1929, 341, 352; Iskandar 1995, 588–589; *Katalogus Koleksi* 1972, 306–307).

While the manifest content of dreams consists of a large variety of dream images, their latent content – their meaning – is more limited. In general, the dream interpretations refer to the dreamer's well-being in this world and the Hereafter. Dreams inform the dreamer what the future has in store for him, and offer advice on important issues in both his private and professional life. They tell him whether he will fall ill or will be cured, whether he should marry or distrust his partner, and whether he will acquire money and goods or will lose his wealth. Dreams warn of enemies and give advice on whom to trust. Still other dreams disclose who will receive God's mercy in this life and the next. But interpreting a dream is not as straightforward as is seems. The interpretation of dreams is always fraught with ambiguity.[16] Because, with different systems of interpretation, a dreamer must make a choice regarding which one to turn to. But even within a single system or a single dream book there are contradictions that the dreamer has to deal with. For example, a dream book reads in one line that smelling amber in a dream is a sign that an illness will befall the dreamer, while in the next line the same symbol is explained as an indication that the dreamer will acquire possessions (Daris Kedah 1936, 21).

Dream books and the interpretation of dreams turn out to be part of wider divinatory practices. That is why Malay texts on dream interpretation are often found in combination with texts on other means of divination, including astrology, the meaning of lunar and solar eclipses, earthquakes, the involuntary movement of limbs and other parts of the body, the colours of cats and holes gnawed in sarong and other clothing by mice (see also Wieringa 1998, 192, 37–38; *Katalogus Koleksi* 1972, 306–307; Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977, 144, 162).

But there is more to learn from these compendia. Their prologues and epilogues speak of different categories of dreams and the urgency to interpret certain kinds of dreams. Again, the dream books do not always agree with each other, but it is worthwhile to

[16] The uncertainty about the right interpretation of a dream is markedly present in Toraja dream theory as well, similarly in Pidir, Aceh (Hollan 1989; Siegel 1977).

discuss a few examples. There seems to be consent about the fact that there are different kinds of dreams, and that some are meaningful and should be interpreted, while others do not carry meaning. A lithographed dream book published in Singapore in 1887 distinguishes between dreams that are dreamt during the day and those that are dreamt during night-time only. The former give expression to the dreamer's personal desires; the latter are meaningful and require interpretation. Also, the author warns not to seek meaning in the dreams of non-Muslims and sinners (*Syair Ta'bir* 1887).[17] The latter admonition is related to the statement encountered in another dream book that only the dreams of Muslims who are in a pure state carry meaning. Dreamers whose body is not clean, for instance after sexual intercourse, can fall prey to the works of the Devil. Those dreams should not be trusted. To dream meaningful dreams, the text reads, one has to perform the *mandi junub*, or the 'larger' Islamic ritual bath to attain the required state of ritual purity (Daris Kedah 1936). Dream books in prose were often put into verse to make its content easier to digest for the public. That was what Muhammad Cassim did in 1896 in Riau. In the prologue of his *Poem on Dream Interpretation* (Syair Ta'bir Mimpi) he stresses that his verse, in contrast to many other romantic *syair* that were circulating at the time, deals with a serious topic and not with such a frivolous thing as romantic love. Then he continues to discuss the uncertainty that comes with dreaming, the fear that the dream is the work of the Devil or ghosts, and the status of dreams dreamt by unbelievers and sinners:

The eyes become heavy; you are carried away by sleep
Lying on your mattress, the mosquito net around you
You dream when you are asleep and snoring
When you wake up you are amazed and cannot stop pondering

Remembering your dream leaves you stupefied
You wonder what it could mean
Your heart is troubled
As you fear being tricked by the Devil or ghosts

When you dream about something strange
Do not feel troubled
Instead search for its correct meaning
So that you will not suffer

If you dream about something unusual
It is good to interpret the dream
Except if you are a sinner or unbeliever
For their dreams make no sense

[17] A similar distinction is made in the dream book by Abu Bakar Daris Kedah 1936.

Dreams are subtle events
For they may carry many different meanings, good and bad
Except for those of sinners and unbelievers; they remain ignorant
Do not let the riddle of the dream drive you crazy (Iskandar 1995, 588–589).[18]

Lastly, the dream books mention the benefits of dream interpretation: it keeps the dreamer from harm and from committing sins in the future, and takes away the anxiety caused by the dream.

A Narrative Device

The format of the fictional symbolic dream, its manifest and latent content, and the discourse on dreams that is presented in the Malay adventure stories show a striking resemblance to the information presented in the dream books. The images of snakes and other animals, flowers, celestial bodies, and the smell of fragrant odours in the fictional dreams bear a close resemblance to the dreams explicated in the dream books. Also, in both discourses dreams are assigned predictive qualities. In this respect, the stories participate in the transmission of cultural knowledge on dreams, just like the non-fictional writings on dreams.

But the narrative format of the adventure stories facilitates the transmission of specific knowledge on dreams that is not found in the Malay compendia. Apparently, some matters are easier to explain in the form of a story. Take, for instance, the conception of a dream as the adventures of the wandering *semangat* of a sleeping person. Only Malay adventure stories offer this explanation of the so-called two body problem that arises after a person wakes up from his dream. Next, there are the descriptions in the stories of this other dimension; they turn out to be the only representations in the Malay World of this space. And lastly, the dangers of sleep to an individual's mental and physical well-being, and the urgency to interpret certain kinds of dreams are aptly expressed through narrative as well.

Message dreams, so conspicuously present in adventure stories, are absent in dream books. This is peculiar, since this type of dream must have been familiar to the people

[18] Mata mengantuk dibawa' tidur / Di dalam kelambu di atas kasur / Bermimpi di dalam tidur berdengkur / Bila tersedar hairan terpekur. Teringatkan mimpi hairan termutu / Apa gerangan ta'birnya itu /Merasalah hati tidak bertentu / Takut disulab syaitan dan hantu. Kalau bermimpi perkara yang hairan / Tidaklah tentu rasa pikiran / Cari ta'birnya dengan kebenaran / Jangan sampai menjadi kesukaran. Jika bermimpi perkara yang pelik / Mena'birkan itu hendaklah baik / Tetapi jangan orang yang pasik / Karena mimpinya setengah merapik. Perkara mimpi terlalu halus /Alamatnya banyak jahat dan bagus / Orang yang pasik tiada lulus / Gila dan mabuk tiada harus (Iskandar 1995, 588–589).

inhabiting the Malay World. Besides their presence in adventure stories, the message dream was known among other ethno-cultural groups in the Archipelago as well.

On the other hand, several ideas from dream books that are central to the dream theory explicated in these works are lacking in the adventure stories. It concerns the ambiguity that surrounds the interpretation of dreams, and the possibility to ward off impending misfortune or avert the predicted course of events. Their absence in the stories, it is asserted, is related to the narrative function of the fictional dream in Malay adventure stories. For while they resemble the culturally informed type dreams real people dreamt, Malay fictional dreams turn out to be partly shaped by the constraints of their function in the narratives. The fictional dream in Malay adventure stories is used as a device to construct narrative with.[19] Dreams can fulfil different kind of functions in narratives, such as creating drama or suspense, providing the protagonists with psychological depth, and giving readers insight into the protagonists' motives. But the dreams in Malay stories are employed solely to get the narrative under way and to keep it going until the story ends. The fact that dreams are never misinterpreted and that misleading dreams never occur points to this. A close look at the exact moments in the stories when characters have their dreams demonstrates the constructive power of dreams.

The first dream of a Malay adventure story is invariably a message dream, as opposed to a symbolic dream. It brings about a disruption of a stable situation that requests a whole story to happen before balance is restored. It does so by arousing an intense feeling of desire in the main protagonist. And desire, as has been explained in the previous chapter, can make the *semangat* – or part of it – leave the body and concurrently cause mental and physical afflictions. The dream of Bahram Syah's father about the wonder bird *Marah* Jalin makes him threaten to give up his throne to go in search for the animal. To prevent this from happening his sons leave the court to find the bird for him. A similar seemingly irrational threat caused by longing is found in the *Story of Maharaja Bikramasakti*. After having dreamt about her missing brother, a princess threatens to kill herself with a knife if she is not allowed to leave her country to look for him.

But a king or prince is not always eager to leave the safe walls of the palace compound and risk his life for a princess, knowledge, medicine or a magic object or animal. The dream messenger has to entice the dreamer to go and search for the object. In the *SBS*, the king receives very detailed information about the bird *Marah* Jalin. Its many amazing properties are carefully listed. Also, the messenger reveals the name of the owner of the bird, and of the state where the animal lives. Unfortunately for this king, though, the dream messenger 'forgets' to disclose the exact location of the state of Gastu Gasta. But the news about the wondrous bird has already succeeded in instilling a longing for the

[19] Narrative devices that serve a similar purpose in MAS are the fictional letter, speaking animals and supernatural beings that endow the hero with information indispensable for the continuation of his journey and with it, the story.

bird in the king serious enough to make his sons embark on a quest for the animal. The remaining question of the bird's abode guarantees an adventurous journey with ample opportunity for the three princes to have many a surprising encounter. In contrast, the father of Panglimo Awang in the *PA* tells his son exactly where he can find his bride-to-be. But to encourage the young man to actually leave his father's court to propose to her, he informs his son of the slightly eccentric wedding gifts his future spouse desires:

> "Ho there, you, Awang Panglimo Awang
> Why are you upset, beloved?
> Why are you restless, beloved?
> If you wish, go out and court someone
> Visit Princess Anggun Cik Suri
> The child of Lord Pumangku Bumi
> The niece of Lord Batin Sumerong
> Ongku Raja Sulong's tethered chicken
> These people have made an agreement of three months
> Although the agreement is valid for three months
> As long as the hornbill broods
> As long as one papaya season
> When the fruit of the sago palm is ripe
> When the rice pounder and mortar sprout
> Only then will the appointment be carried out
> Only then will the wedding night be determined
> Yet, the Princess' desire is not fulfilled by this
> She wants a cloth of beautiful silk
> She wants a knife with a haft of palm blossom
> She wants a large openwork cooking pot
> She wants a parrot that can speak or chant
> A macaque that can play the harp
> If all this is not found, she does not want to be courted
> Just let her body decay in the soil" (*PA* 66–69).

Message dreams also occur at turning points in the story that are both moments of personal and narrative crisis. The hero lacks information on the whereabouts of the object of his quest, or is ignorant of the dangers that lie ahead of him. He does not possess the skill to defeat his adversaries, or lacks the gold, silver or diamonds to buy the desired object with. As a result, his adventures have come to a standstill, and so has the story. The following passage from the *SBS* relates how a father comes to the aid of his son by giving him advice through a dream. It is told that Bahram Syah is out in the woods on a hunt for a male deer with young. He finds himself in a hopeless situation. First, he cannot return home to his pregnant wife, as he has been denied access to his own palace by the guards without having any idea as to why. And second, he has been hunting for a long time without success. He is convinced that his wife asked him to hunt for a male deer

with young, but he has failed to find one.[20] The story seems to be on hold here; there is nothing the hero can do and, consequently, there is nothing that can be told. Exactly at this point in the story, Bahram Syah dreams of his father who has several messages for him:

> "Oh, my son Bahram Syah! Why do I see you sleeping soundly? You must know that amongst all mouse deer, barking deer, and ordinary deer, you will never find a male animal with young. There are only female deer with young, so search for a female animal. If you find one, cut open its belly and take the young home with you, oh my son! What is more, your son has already been born. Compared to all other little boys, he is the most handsome one. His behaviour is very sweet indeed and amazing too. Oh, my son Bahram Syah, your ring of state has been taken by your servant Turani, who took it with him to the island Siranjang Petinggangan in the middle of the sea. With the help of your ring, he has founded his own kingdom there. Now, son, when you are on your way home, do not give your love to human beings, but give it to filthy and unclean animals only. In this way, you will gain profit in the future, God, may He be exalted, willing! Oh my son Bahram Syah, get up now. The day has already begun! (*SBS* 69a).

Through a dream, the father is able to untie the knot of the story. He tells his son that male deer with young do not exist, and that he should kill a female deer instead. Bahram Syah does not question the truthfulness of his father's words, but complies with his orders. Moreover, by giving Bahram Syah the seemingly odd advice to care for 'filthy' animals, the king/author simultaneously secures the continuation of the story at a later point and an appropriate ending. For the three grateful animals he will save from starvation will retrieve Bahram Syah's stolen ring for him.

Now that the status of the fictional dream as a narrative device has been established, the absence of certain elements of Malay dream theory in the stories becomes understandable. Whereas in the world outside the stories, dream interpretation is fraught with ambiguity, in the textual world the characters never doubt whether their dreams have been interpreted correctly or not. Also, Malay adventure stories never contain directions to avert the bad luck or the calamities that have been foretold in the dreams, like dream books do. And it explains the limited array of latent content or interpretations of the fictional dreams. First, however, more on the ambiguity.

Since dreams in Malay adventure stories provide the protagonists with either a reason to go on an adventurous journey or knowledge to be able to continue his journey, there is no room for ambiguity. The author uses straightforward dream messages and comprehensible interpretations of dreams to set the story into motion. A protagonist needs to be certain about the meaning of his or her dream, so that he or she knows what to

[20] The craving of pregnant woman is a recurring motif in Malay adventure stories. In this particular case, the princess has a very unusual kind of craving on the seventh day of her pregnancy. She yearns for the meat of a male deer, but only an animal that carries a female young. Without hesitation, the ignorant Bahram Syah sets out on a hunt that is bound to fail.

do next and the author can continue his story. A dreamer with a 'troubled heart' would cause narrative chaos. And while female dreamers in particular do experience restlessness and anxiety as long as their dream has not been explained to them, once the dream is interpreted this ceases completely.

The contents of dream books point to a society whose members have a profound interest in discovering what their life has in store for them. They believe that it is possible to acquire knowledge about their individual fate through 'reading' the signs their surroundings and dreams provide them with. In such a society, every trivial event in daily life can – if read correctly, that is – lift a tip of the veil that covers an individual's fate. These practices are concomitant to the belief that it is possible for an individual to change the course of his or her fate. In case harm is coming one's way, there is the possibility to change the course of fate to such an extent that the imminent danger is averted (Skeat 1900, 566). It is not difficult to understand why this *tolak bala*, 'to avert danger or harm,' is an important element of dream books. Means to manipulate the future include (Islamic) praying, reciting Quran verses or Islamic charms, purifying oneself by taking a ceremonial bath with limes or performing the Islamic *wudhu* (the so-called 'small' ritual bath), and giving alms – money, but also (golden) *kain* – to the poor.[21] With the narrative function of the fictional dreams in mind, it is not difficult to understand why *tolak bala* does not play a role in the stories. For the sake of the story, all fictional dreams have to come true, even the inauspicious ones.

The predictions that real dreams in the Malay World communicate pertain to all important issues in the life of an individual, his health, name and fame, possessions, love affairs, and his life in the Hereafter. In contrast, the dreams that are narrated in the adventures stories show a more restricted interpretative discourse. This is because Malay adventure stories are set in a courtly environment and are, in a way, coming-of-age stories. The male protagonists are young men of noble descent; their dreams reflect what is of direct concern to them in their daily lives: finding a suitable spouse, fathering a son and founding their own state. Queens, princesses and their female attendants dream symbolic dreams that allude to a loyal husband or a romantic lover.

For a last illustration of the narrative force of desire invoked by dreams, we return

[21] Also among the Toraja and Balinese, there exists the possibility to ward off the evil or danger predicted in a dream, or to secure the auspicious prediction conveyed in the dream. In South Sulawesi a dreamer can make an offering to the ancestor who appeared in a dream in order to make the dream come true. The meaning of ominous dreams can be neutralized by reinterpreting them (Hollan 1989, 172). To the Balinese on Lombok, a dissatisfied spirit is potentially dangerous. A dream about a dog or a cat informs them that they have offended or neglected a spirit. They have to make an offering of palm wine to this spirit to appease it (Duff-Cooper 1987, 71–71). The Islamic alms of the Malay dream books are the equivalent of the Toraja and Balinese offerings. Examples of *tolak bala* are found in, among other sources, Overbeck 1929, 351, 361–362, Daris Kedah 1936, 3–4, and the poem *Discover the Good and the Bad by Interpreting Your Dreams* (Syair Ta'bir Mimpi Melihat Jahat dan Baik) (1887).

once more to the dream of Bahram Syah's father. Having woken up, the king realizes that he has forgotten to ask the dream messenger for the whereabouts of the wondrous bird. In an attempt to summon the messenger, the king goes back to sleep. He stays asleep for seven days and seven nights, but the dream messenger does not reappear. It is in this last example, of a king who cannot generate his own dreams, that the author's omnipotence is most evident.

Male and Female Spheres of Action

The gendered nature of the Malay fictional dream is closely linked to the existence of two separate social spheres of action in the world depicted in the Malay stories, a male and a female one. The perimeter of each is defined by strict rules that govern the behaviour of the male and female protagonists. The rigidity of the boundary between this male and female social space is vividly depicted in an episode from the *Story of Maharaja Bikramasakti* referred to earlier, about a princess who wants to go on a quest for her missing brother. The clash between a woman's wish and the social constraints of her milieu is expressed by the warning she receives from the state's Prime Minister:

> "Do not go and look for your brother yourself! Let me, your uncle, give somebody else the order to look for him, as it is not fitting for a girl to be on a boat. You will bring shame to your parents, and people will talk about it over and over again. Have you perhaps forgotten what your parents told you to do before they died?" When the princess heard what the Prime Minister said, she started to cry and threw herself on the ground. She then fetched a knife to kill herself and spoke, "Let me die instead of living with this endless longing!" (*SMB* 15).

The princess is not allowed to leave the court because of her gender. Luckily for her, though, there seems to be a solution, and that is cross-dressing. By donning men's clothes she will temporarily change gender and will be able to have the adventures male protagonists have become renowned for. Thus, the Prime Minister, seeing the young woman's desperate behaviour, in the end gives his permission, but on the condition that she and all her ladies-in-waiting dress themselves in men's clothes before they board the ship.

The twofold division of fictional dreams in Malay adventure stories reflects a genderization of space (Leed 1991, 221). In the world of the Malay stories, men are the ones that travel, while women stay at home. In such a context, travel is gendered and becomes a gendering activity. Men travel to find a bride, to establish their name, to gain knowledge or to acquire new riches. Women stay home, passing their time fantasizing about passionate lovers and loyal husbands, or, when they are married, taking care of the children and household affairs. To be able to perform their reproductive tasks, the women of the Malay courts need safety and stability and this is what their fathers, brothers, and

husbands offer. As their male relatives dedicate themselves to typical male tasks such as administration, jurisdiction, hunting, and military affairs, their female relatives, who are excluded from these male activities, pass their time as pleasantly as possible in the palace.

In the stories, travelling is not considered proper female conduct. Men travel, women stay at home. Women play in the garden, weave *kain*, sing songs, make jokes, play with parrots or other birds, exchange *pantun* or tell each other their dreams, but they do all this within the confines of the palace walls. Their place is at home. They are not allowed to leave the court and travel on their own. If travelling cannot be avoided, a male family member has to accompany them. If they do leave the court on their own and thereby transgress the gender-related behavioural codes they are forced to transform gender. The way this transformation of gender is effected is by wearing men's clothes. This, together with the male behaviour they display and, in some cases, the new male name they adopt, result in a complete transformation of gender; they are no longer recognized as a woman.

The confusion such a transformation can cause is skilfully used by the author of *SMB* to create a comical tale. After the princess and her servants have changed their clothes for men's clothes, they the board the ship and leave the harbour. The princess decides to adopt a new name, the Young Captain. One day, during her travels, a young prince falls in love with her; he is convinced the Young Captain – who looks like a man – is not a man, but a woman. To expose her as such, he decides to test her. First, he invites the Young Captain for dinner. If she chooses her food herself, she proves to be a woman; if she leaves it to the prince to choose the food, she is a man. But with the help of her spying and talking parrot the princess passes this and other tests. They include betting, cock fighting, dancing, horseriding and picking out jewellery, and all serve to determine the Young Captain's gender. For yet another test, the Young Captain is invited to climb into a tree and pick some flowers. Before she leaves her room, she puts on an artificial penis made from wax. This way, she will be able to urinate in a man's fashion down the tree. Using this same ingenious device, she later is able to beat her challenger by jetting the trickle of urine further into the river than him. She is more of a man than the prince, these passages seem to say. When the prince invites her to his bed to spend the night with him, she is able to put off this test by telling him a story that lasts until the breaking of dawn, like a Sherazade. The last test the Young Captain is subjected to is to have a bath together with the love-smitten young man. However, she leaves the bathing place just before the prince arrives. She returns to her ship, where she takes on her own gender by changing her clothes for women's clothes.[22]

The theme of the disguised heroine is quite common in Malay narrative texts, but it was especially prominent in long poems written by and for women at the court of the

[22] This same story attests to the disastrous consequences cross-dressing can have for the heroine. Later on in the story, the Young Captain engages in a battle and is stabbed to death, as her adversary is unaware of her true identity. The latter would never have fought her if he knew that she was a woman.

Penyengat, Riau, around the middle of the nineteenth century. Mulaika Hijjas (2011) convincingly links this prominence to the restrictions in the social arena that were experienced by the women authors of Penyengat in their daily lives. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Islamic modernist winds from Arabia had blown eastwards and had touched Southeast Asian hearts and minds. Adherents of this strand of Islam preached a more or less radical (re)interpretation of Islamic authoritative sources, which resulted, in Penyangat as elsewhere in the Islamic world, in a diminished role of women in public life and a restriction of their freedom. By turning upside down the conventional idea of a male hero and by relating the story of a woman who acts independently of men and fights her own battles, the women of the court presented a voice that ran counter to the dominant male discourse on the proper behaviour of women. Moreover, through the process of catharsis the stories about heroines who transgressed gender boundaries made it possible for Penyengat's women to temporarily enjoy the same freedom as men.

Considering this gendered division of space the textual world of the Malay stories, it makes sense that only male characters have message dreams. No female character has the freedom to leave her home, to travel to faraway lands; in short, to have adventures. Nor do they have the skills and experience to build boats, kill dragons, fight with swords, or to make new alliances with foreign rulers. A female protagonist that received a message in her dream about a faraway magic object or an interesting hunt would become utterly frustrated. In such a context, it is more appropriate for girls to dream about a lover or a future husband. That is what they can pin their hopes and dreams on, that is the field in which they can function, be happy or excel, as all the other fields of activity are the exclusive domain of men. And that is why they dream their symbolic dreams about love, passion, and marriage; whereas men dream message dreams that swing them into action.

Dreams propel the story forwards by arousing desire in the characters. Message dreams swing the male dreamers into immediate action, but dreams by women seemingly play no role at all in building the story. The rules of proper female conduct tie the lady-dreamers firmly to the palace grounds. They do not kill ghosts or giants; they do not travel the woods, marshes and plains, or marry three or four times. But the constructive power of female dreams has to be sought elsewhere. It is not as easy to discern as the driving force of male dreams, but female dreams do push the story forward too, albeit in a different manner. This is illustrated by the dream about the rising sun that fell into the lap of a princess that was mentioned earlier. The dream is interpreted by one of the princess' ladies-in-waiting; she claims that the falling sun stands for the great king who will one day marry the princess. Although, at first sight, nothing seems to happen (the princess does not leave her palace in search of her future husband) a whole lot happens; indeed, a complete story 'happens'. The princess can do nothing but wait for what will happen in the future. She cannot pack up her belongings and have adventures herself, but by dreaming her foretelling dream, she enforces the story to be told, at least till the point that her dream has become true.

In a chapter bearing the telling title "The Spermatic Journey", Eric J. Leed goes into the male fate more deeply. He argues that traveling, and subsequently suffering, by men is a substitute for the female reproductive path. Women are partly identified by their ability to bring forth new life and, in this way, their ability to overcome death. Women live on in their children. Men throughout history, on the other hand, have been willing to suffer and endure the threat of losing their lives for the sake of overcoming death. Their heroic deeds and death provide them with the only kind of life after death, namely fame. Men live on in stories; in stories about their lives, their peregrinations, their wars, their conquests, the cities they founded and their women. Leed's explanation of these male journeys is men's natural alienation from the process of reproduction. Apart from one short instant, men play no role in the reproductive process. While women carry the babies in their wombs, give birth, breastfeed and shape the personality of the younger children, men are engaged in pursuing their own male business. Their version of the reproductive experience is travel, during which they produce civilization instead of human life (Leed 1991, 221–224).

The inability of men to give birth is exemplified in the *SBS* by Bahram Syah's fruitless hunt for a male deer with young. Bahram Syah's alienation from the reproductive process stands out even more clearly when one considers the reason why Bahram Syah left his safe abode and went into the dark woods: it was his pregnant wife who craved for the meat of male deer with young. During the pregnancy of his wife and birth of his son, Bahram Syah is absent; he is only able to return home with his game and join his family after his father has told him he should hunt for a female deer instead.

Concluding Remarks

Like texts in general, Malay adventure stories are imbued with the categories, values and fixations of the society the stories sprang from. Their narrative format facilitates the transmission of knowledge on dreams that cannot be found elsewhere. But the representations are not crystal clear reflections of a society's mental world. This chapter showed how Malay adventure stories offer us a view on Malay dream theory, but also explained that it is a distorted view. Yet, it is argued that with an eye for the shaping forces that are responsible for such distortions, the stories people tell each other are valid sources for scholarly research.

Besides imparting knowledge on sickness, health and dreams, the Malay narratives also prove a suitable vehicle for the transmission of norms for ideal behaviour. This is how the gendered space of the Malay adventures stories should be understood. Not as a description of the way the male and female readers of these stories acted in their daily lives, but instead as a portrayal of idealized behaviour of men and women. This division of space based on gender the stories so distinctly portray is connected to a courtly environment. But the dispersion of this type of story was not contained within the walls of Malay

courts; they were found in possession of sailors, travelling merchants, and globetrotting Muslim scholars alike. Malay courts derived an important part of their status from upholding socio-cultural standards; ordinary men and women were to emulate these ideals. But without the social institutions at the court that secured the limitation of the freedom of women, the (young) men and women who inhabited the coastal communities along Sumatra's west coast probably had more space to manoeuvre.[23]

It is striking that the stories do not explain the link between women and symbolical dreams along the lines of the Islamic notion that men are governed by reason or *akal* and women by passion or *nafsu*. In Aceh, for instance, the assumed innate dominance of passion and emotions in women is believed to make them susceptible to the influence of Muslim spirits or *jin*. The latter are the source of the puzzling dreams dreamt by Acehnese women (Siegel 1977, 2–3, 19–20). But while the idea that women lack the rationality men are endowed with is widely known in the Malay World, nowhere do the Malay adventure stories hint at a similar explanation (Peletz 1996; Hijjas 2011, 48–60).

One can pose the question whether the male-female opposition expressed in both Acehnese and Malay dream theory traces back its roots to another, older and non-Islamic world view specific to the Southeast Asian Archipelago. In this region, relatively isolated societies where the cultural influence of Hinduism and Buddhism and later Islam and Christianity seem to have had limited impact, traditionally supported a dualistic world view that was based on the distinction between male and female. Examples are found in Kalimantan (Ngaju Dayak and Meratus), Nias, Sulawesi, and on Sumba, Flores, and Timor (Schärer 1963; Suzuki 1959; Hoskins 2013, 23–24). This dualistic world view, based on gender, might have presented an ideal niche for the adoption of Islamic notions on the attributes of gender in the Archipelago; among them the categories of *akal* and *nafsu*. Similarly, the presence of non-Islamic stereotyped culture pattern dreams might have facilitated the adoption of Islamic culture pattern dreams and notions on dreams and dream interpretations from the Middle East. In such a hypothesis, Malay adventure stories have retained the basic structure of an indigenous dream theory.

[23] The women at Malay courts lived in the women's quarters and were never alone. This part of the court compound was occupied by the ruler's wives, his daughters and infant sons, and his female relatives together with their female attendants. Their behaviour was strictly monitored by the ruler, his male relatives and the male court guards. See also Hijjas 2011.