

Mothers, Lovers, Others

An Evolutionary Analysis of Womanhood in Western Malayo-Polynesian Oral Traditions

Nurul Ikhlas Abdul Hadi

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father,
Abdul Hadi Harman Shah,
who wove many fantastic tales for me.

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Abstract

This thesis is the first to study female characters from Western Malayo-Polynesian oral tradition. It is also the first to apply an evolutionary literary analysis to these stories. The aim was to analyse the life history cycle of women as portrayed in oral stories from the Western Malayo-Polynesian language group, which includes languages spoken across southern Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the island states of western Micronesia, and Madagascar.

The general principle behind evolutionary literary theory is that any knowledge (including stories) generated by the mind is a biological phenomenon and worthy of scientific study. This tenet is then compounded with an evolutionary understanding of life whereby all animals, including humans, are driven to ensure somatic success through the preservation of life, and reproductive success through the proliferation of genes. It is argued that oral stories contain implicit evolutionary ‘lessons’ that may assist humans in obtaining somatic and reproductive success.

The most recurring evolutionary theme in female-led Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories revolves around reproductive success, with approximately 90% of stories in this thesis focusing either on family life or the search for a partner. In the section ‘Tales of Family Life’, stories portray the complexity of family dynamics, showing how family members must sacrifice their selfish interests for the sake of their kin in order to maximize the propagation of their genes. In ‘Tales of Searching for a Partner’, heroines take part in complex mate attraction and retention strategies, showing that the search for a ‘Happily Ever After’ (or evolutionary fitness) is not always a straightforward journey. Unsurprisingly, themes without direct correlations with evolutionary fitness form only 10% of the entire corpus. ‘Tales Beyond Family and Partners’ attempt to explore stories of evolutionary anomalies through the phenomenon of childfree and heroic women. Evolutionary studies, however, have yet to provide a satisfactory theory on women whose behaviour seems to hold little or no reproductive advantages, and analysis of these types of stories would benefit from further research.

As a multidisciplinary study, this thesis is able to impact future research in three different ways. Firstly, it is hoped that it will bring attention to and increase knowledge of the lesser known and under-studied Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions. Secondly, the thesis can also serve as a model for the application of evolutionary theory to the folkloric study of oral stories. Finally, it shows the potential of applying evolutionary literary theory to non-Western cultures. It is hoped that future research will be able to expand the findings of this thesis either through larger or more concentrated pools of data, with the aim of emphasizing the universal drives that underlie our common humanity.

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List of Abbreviations

CST	Costly Signalling Theory
EI	Emotional Intelligence
RHP	Resource-Holding Potential
WHO	World Health Organization
WHR	Waist to Hip Ratio
WMP	Western Malayo-Polynesian
WTR	Welfare Trade-off Ratio

INTRODUCTION

“Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

This thesis aims to analyse female-oriented stories from Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions through an evolutionary understanding of female mate selection, childbearing, and childrearing. It seeks in particular to understand the portrayals of women from the Western Malayo-Polynesian language region, and to argue that the traits presented in these stories contain lessons of evolutionary fitness. This introductory chapter will provide a discussion of key terms and concepts used throughout the thesis. The five categories of discussion are the notion of stories, tools for analysing stories, stories understood from an evolutionary perspective, the Western Malayo-Polynesian language region, and the evolutionary pressures exerted on women.

0.1 THE BROADER SUBJECT: STORIES

Stories – narrative accounts of events related in a causal way – have been defined as ‘generalized knowledge structures’ in which the core structure is permanent but its ‘formal, substantive, and semantic dimensions are apt to be culturally inflected and sometimes culturally determined’ (Easterlin 2012:50-1). As stories are made by and for human beings, it is no surprise that they are shaped by the cultures in which they are produced. More than simply a product of human *culture*, however, stories are a specifically *human* product. No animal other than humankind has demonstrated this capability for creating stories, which implies that stories are part of an exclusively human phenomenon. This notion is supported by Michelle Scalise Sugiyama, founder and director of the Cognitive Cultural Studies Project based in University of California, Santa Barbara, who asserts that stories are a ‘product of the mind’; more specifically, the *human* mind (Sugiyama 2001b:233). Literature and evolution expert Brian Boyd, as well as Booker Prize-winning novelist A.S. Byatt, emphasise this point by proclaiming that the mind conjures up stories that focus on *human life* (Boyd 2009:159; Byatt 2000:129).

This thesis will focus on the human aspect of fictional stories, that is, stories based on imagined people, places, and events. Critics of fictional stories contend that people ‘waste’ their time on stories that tell ‘lies’.¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, the father of modern fantasy literature, disagrees. He defends fictional stories, proclaiming that they are an absolutely ‘natural’ part of human activity (Tolkien 1983:144). This may seem a strange assertion, as fictional stories are not necessarily about human life, nor are they always bound to the natural world. Stories can consist of talking animals, faraway aliens, or imagined elves, and take place on unknown planets or in imaginary universes. Literary theory expert Paul Hernadi (2001:59) argues that, regardless of the topic of fiction, such stories have always been experienced as being about ‘us’. Thus it does not matter that the stories tell of talking animals, faraway aliens, or imagined elves; what matters is that the readers are able to extract human *experiences* and *emotions* from stories. Empathizing with the human aspects of fictional stories is important as people are able to obtain valuable life lessons in the form of life ‘templates’ (Dutton 2009:114-115, 122).

What lessons can be learned from fictional stories? Philosopher of art Dennis Dutton (2009:132) hypothesizes that because stories centre on human predicaments they have been used as a tool to solve human problems. Novelist A.S. Byatt agrees with Dutton and asserts that stories describe the social concerns of a contemporary society (Byatt 2000:92). These concerns are reflective of humankind being a cooperative species, which seeks to create harmony within social groups. Humans are not evolved to live solitary lives as each individual needs the assistance of others in order to survive. In order to live peacefully in a group, humans have developed various methods of social control. These methods ensure smooth relations between individuals, whether the relationship is one between husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and employees, or neighbours and strangers.

¹ In mid-2016, a private school headteacher argued in a viral blogpost that she wanted ‘children to read literature that is conducive to their age and leave those mystical and frightening texts for when they can discern reality, and [for] when they have first learned to love beauty. *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Game of Thrones*, *The Hunger Games*, and Terry Pratchett, to mention only a few of the modern world’s ‘must-haves’, contain deeply insensitive and addictive material which [she is certain] encourages difficult behaviour in children; yet they can be bought without a special licence, and can damage the sensitive subconscious brains of young children, many of whom may be added to the current statistics of mentally ill young children’ (Whiting 2016).

Stories can function as a method of social control through the maintenance of a hegemonic belief system and, by extension, can also become a means of acquiring power (Easterlin 2012:51, Sugiyama 2001b:241). The use of stories to exert social control is found in the earliest form of stories, namely oral traditions. Some oral stories extant today are not only ancient in origins but are also widespread.² These stories can then be more easily retained when they are written down and translated, becoming in the process a literary fairy tale. J.R.R. Tolkien (1983:120) himself declared that as long as there is language, there will always be a form of fairy story. As oral stories are a ‘low cost’ form of storytelling but with ‘high long-term benefits’ (Boyd 2009:207) with the potential to reach a large pool of audience, they are perfect for disseminating models of social behaviour. In this thesis, I will analyse stories from oral traditions and explore how storytellers attempt to exert social control over their audiences using an evolutionary framework.

0.2 TOOLS FOR ANALYSING STORIES

In searching for a framework to analyse stories from oral tradition, I considered some of the more traditional research methodologies. Oral stories are generally studied either as part of folklore, or as part of the literary fairy tale tradition. In this section, I will briefly discuss three popular folktale and fairy tale methodologies of study, the sociohistorical, structural, and psychoanalytical perspectives, before introducing an evolutionary framework.

Folk and Fairy Tale Research Methodologies

The sociohistorical perspective is arguably one of the oldest and most popular methods of approaching oral stories. As the name suggests, it is best used to uncover the cultural and historical contexts that surround the production of a tale. Influential researchers who have worked in this field include Jack Zipes and Marina Warner. Warner, particularly, has argued that

‘the historical interpretation of fairy tale holds out more hope to the listener or the reader [...], because it reveals how human behaviour is embedded in material circumstance, in the laws of dowry, land tenure, feudal obedience, domestic

² Jamshid J. Tehrani’s fascinating study ‘The Phylogeny of Little Red Riding Hood’ (2013) shows how the plot and themes of this tale in particular travelled across Europe, Africa, and East Asia.

hierarchies and marital dispositions, and that when these pass and change, behaviour may change with them' (Warner 1994:xviii-xix).

Indeed, throughout *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994), Warner provided exhaustive sociohistorical context to the women of fairy tales; more specifically, in regards to the women in the fairy tale traditions of Charles Perrault, the brothers Grimm, as well as Hans Christian Andersen, arguably the founders of the fairy tale genre. Despite drawing on a variety of tales, from the contemporary fairy tales of Angela Carter to earlier variants from ancient China,³ Warner's analysis ultimately provided a manner of understanding the history and legacy of these European fairy tale figures.

As shown above, a sociohistorical approach is able to provide background information and depth to a story. However, I believe it is unable to adequately answer a question that is integral to this thesis: *why* are the same stories told and spread across different cultures and historical periods? In the case of stories on 'Absent Mothers', Warner seems to provide a partial answer:

'[the] absent mother can be read literally exactly as that: a feature of the family before our modern era, when death in childbirth was the most common cause of female mortality, and surviving orphans would find themselves brought up by their mother's successor' (Warner 1994:213).

This answers one question for one story. But what about other themes that appear across all cultures? What connects them with each other, and why do humans continue to tell stories that contain the same themes?

Perhaps to answer this question, one needs a method that develops a cross-cultural folk and fairy tale conversation regarding *universality*. One popular method is through structural folkloric research; a strand of study that has developed categories of organizing tales worldwide. One of the most utilized tale-type classification systems is the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) index, where stories are organized according to these broad categories: 'Animal Tales', 'Tales of Magic', 'Religious Tales', 'Realistic Tales', 'Tales of the Stupid Ogre (Giant, Devil)', 'Anecdotes and Jokes', and 'Formula Tales'. Both Zipes and Warner, however, are critical of such a system. Zipes argues that

³ Under the trope of 'Absent Mothers', one that will later be examined in this thesis, Warner traces the history of 'Cinderella', from the 'Chinese Cinderella' variant written down around AD 850-60, the second-century AD Egyptian Rhodope, Aschenputtel in 1812 Germany, to Disney's 1950 animated film (1994:202-7).

even if the index points toward a common experience, the system does not assist in understanding *why* such a commonality of experience occurs (2006:129). Warner echoes this sentiment and adds on to it by saying that

‘[when] history falls away from a subject, we are left with Otherness, and all its power to compact enmity, recharge it and recirculate it. An archetype is a hollow thing, but a dangerous one, a figure or image which through usage has been uncoupled from the circumstances which brought it into being, and goes on spreading false consciousness’ (Warner 1994:239).

Indeed, the main reason this thesis looks beyond the ATU classification system is because of the index’s eurocentrism (Berezkin 2015:4).

As this thesis will analyse tales from the Western Malayo-Polynesian languages, it needs to engage with a system that allows for cross-cultural application. While many Western Malayo-Polynesian stories may be organized according to the broader categories such as ‘Domestic Animals’ (under ‘Animal Tales’), ‘Supernatural Adversaries’ (under ‘Tales of Magic’), and ‘The Man Marries the Princess’ (under ‘Realistic Tales’), one would find it difficult to place a Western Malayo-Polynesian tale within their more specific categories of ATU 211 ‘The hog who was so tired of his daily food’, ATU 330 ‘The Smith Outwits the Devil’, and ATU 860 ‘Nuts of "Ay ay ay!"’. These categories are undoubtedly useful for organizing European fairy tales and folktales; but the figure of the ‘hog’, the ‘smith’, and the ‘devil’, as well as expressions such as ‘ay ay ay’ are not viewed as European cultural elements, instead they are seen as the ‘norm’. Stories that do not fit this norm are thus relegated to ‘other’. Should this thesis attempt to use the ATU system, it will be forced to view its stories as ‘variants’ of an arguably Eurocentric norm.

A bias in norms is also seen in another popular method of analysing folk and fairy tales: psychoanalysis. Influential figures in the field of fairy tales such as Bruno Bettelheim and Alan Dundes have applied Sigmund Freud’s ideas on penis envy and the Oedipus complex respectively, and both have applied the notion of ‘projection’ to analyse themes in stories (*The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales & Fairy Tales* 2008:389). While psychoanalyzing themes of stories provides a fascinating method of examining

the human mind, such a method lacks the weight of scientific rigour⁴ and has more recently been criticised for its treatment of women. Influential feminist writer Hélène Cixous argued in her essay ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ that these Freudian concepts were a manner of suppressing female desire and agency:

‘[...] if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successful a repression at that – men have made it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the "human" sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects’ (Cixous [translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen] 1976:884).

A masculine view of psychoanalysis is problematic when the subject of this thesis is women in Western Malayo-Polynesian oral tradition. The theoretical framework must thus allow inclusivity in terms of gender and cultural perspectives, while also providing a more in-depth manner of searching for universality of themes in oral stories. For these purposes, I have opted to apply findings from the evolutionary sciences using the framework of evolutionary literary theory to analyse female characters from Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories.

Evolutionary Science

The Darwin-Wallace theory of evolution is a scientific discovery that has changed the way in which many scientists study the world. This change has been so all-encompassing that it challenges earlier religious beliefs on creation. Instead of viewing humans as created fully perfected into the world, it is now understood that all life forms have evolved over hundreds of millions of years as a result of adaptations to environmental pressures and the process of sexual selection. Despite the fact that the theory of evolution has become the only scientific manner of studying life on earth, educational institutions in many countries suppress the teaching of evolution because of how it conflicts with their religious ideas of creation. Charles Darwin was aware that his theory would face powerful resistance from such religious communities. This is why he ends his revolutionary book, *The Origin of Species*, with a conciliatory thought: ‘There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according

⁴ See Paul Kline’s (2014) *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory* for an in-depth investigation on whether Freud’s theories hold up to empirical testing.

to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved' (Darwin 2011:490).

This evolutionary understanding of how life developed on earth has since become the foundation of numerous academic fields, such as the biological, psychological, and anthropological sciences. The biological sciences cover a wide range of studies that look at life on earth; an understanding of evolution is inseparable from biological science in that it is the paradigm by which it is studied. For the psychological and anthropological sciences, evolution has partly been shaped by an understanding of society in terms of its 'behavioural constraints [...] imposed by the genetic constitution of the species' through the subject of sociobiology (Wilson 2000:5).

In the study of the arts and humanities, however, there has been a notable reluctance to engage in the study of humans through evolutionary science. This may have been caused by the disturbing results of the early study of humans through the lens of evolution, namely the formation of 'Social Darwinism' and 'eugenics'. In the introduction to the edited collection of *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, literary scholar Jonathan Gottschall and biologist E.O. Wilson argue that there is anxiety over the term 'evolution' in terms of human behaviour, psychology, and culture because it is associated with:

“‘Hitler’, ‘Galton’, ‘Spencer’, ‘IQ differences’, ‘holocaust’, ‘racial phrenology’, ‘forced sterilization’, ‘genetic determinism’, ‘Darwinian fundamentalism’, and ‘disciplinary imperialism’ (2005:xx).”

Using the idea of evolution to reinforce existing imperialistic power structures, Social Darwinists and proponents of eugenics attempted to legitimize racist views of 'superior' and 'inferior' humans. This view of racial hierarchies culminated in one of the most tragic consequences of modern human history, as a result of which entire groups of people were massacred as they were simply deemed 'inferior races' during the Second World War. At the end of the war, the application of evolutionary science to humans by Social Darwinists as well as eugenicists quickly fell into disfavour. New findings from the field of anthropology and genetics falsified the claims of a 'superior' versus 'inferior' humans, which resulted in an abhorrence of the study of evolution in the arts and humanities (McEwan 2005:10, 16). The importance of culture was stressed, and

there was a determination to move away from analysing humans in terms of their biology.

As a result, the study of human beings through evolutionary science has been strongly criticised by scholars of the arts and humanities. This reluctance to apply evolutionary concepts to human behaviour is particularly seen in the study of literature. An evolutionary approach is routinely viewed as being ‘reductive’ and ‘deterministic’, the main argument against it being that such an approach lacks emphasis on the role of culture.⁵ In short, the application of evolutionary science to the arts and humanities is held by many literary scholars as relying too heavily on an ‘essentialising’ biological view of humans. I believe that this view, in part, stems from the desire to move firmly away from the history of social Darwinism and eugenics, which had wrongly reduced human groups through essentialising them by their class or ‘race’.

This does not necessarily imply that the theory of evolution had an entirely negative impact on literature itself. A.S. Byatt has written how this complete revisioning of the idea of humans has affected writers and their writing. Byatt’s idea is exemplified in the manner in which George Eliot explored human emotions and ‘purpose’ in her novels; indeed, her classic novel *Middlemarch* has been claimed by Victorian specialist Sally Shuttleworth to be suffused by a ‘post-Darwinian pessimism’ (Shuttleworth 1994:56). Greg Buzzwell (2016), curator for Printed Literary Sources at the British Library, also noted that late-Victorian Gothic novels, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), similarly responded to ‘a nightmarish biological lineage that denied the specialness of humans’. Even the contemporary novelist Ian McEwan makes use of a Darwinian-Wallace understanding of the world in his portrayal of human interests.⁶ If writers themselves are affected by evolutionary ideas and humans, should not literary theorists also take these matters into consideration when analysing a story?

⁵ In his seminal book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Richard Dawkins (1991:13) explained that the ‘nonexistent reductionist – the sort that everybody is against, but who exists only in their imaginations – tries to explain complicated things directly in terms of the smallest parts, even, in some extreme versions of the myth, as the sum of the parts!’ He goes on to argue that ‘reductionism, in this sense, is just another name for an honest desire to understand how things work’. Gottschall agrees with Dawkins, asking: ‘Is “reductionism” really a nasty word? Does it deserve its status as a term of opprobrium?’ (2008:36).

⁶ Ian McEwan’s interest in Darwinian science is also evident in his contribution to many scientific articles, including the edited anthology *The Literary Animal, Darwinian Perspectives in Literature*.

Analysing Stories through Evolution

In the late 1980s, a new literary movement began with the aim of applying evolutionary theory to the study of the arts, which includes literature and stories. The foundation of this movement lies in viewing the human brain as being itself a product of evolution, and the mind as a tool of prediction. In this respect, the mind owes its capabilities to the evolution of ancestral species, the cultural past of the population, and the experiential past of the individual (Boyd 2009:34). This is a far cry from claiming a purely biological view of humans; indeed, this new literary paradigm insists that our biology influences our cultures, and thus inculcates both biology and culture in its examination of the stories that humans produce. Following this, when one speaks of the mind as a product of adaptation, this pertains to the fact that the mind generates knowledge that assists humans in adapting to their environment for the purpose of survival. In addition to knowledge, the mind also generates the arts, which includes the art of stories, which arguably help to improve humans' capability to survive and reproduce. According to Boyd (2009:381) the functions of the arts include refining and retuning minds, raising status, improving the coordination and cooperation of communities, and fostering creativity. Based on these crucial advantages for survival and reproduction, one could conclude that the arts, and by extension stories, are also the result of evolutionary adaptation.

Joseph Carroll, who could be said to have pioneered the field of evolutionary literary studies, has argued that because knowledge generated by the mind is a biological phenomenon, and literature is a form of knowledge, literature should therefore be considered a biological phenomenon (Carroll 1995:1) and thus literary theory should be able to apply the science of evolution to stories. By doing so, one aims to observe the art of storytelling through an informed understanding of human biology. Two types of life efforts identified by Carroll (2004:108) pertain to the types of biological struggles that humans employ to ensure their survival, namely somatic life efforts to attain resources for survival and development, and reproductive life efforts to mate, parent, and to ensure the survival of offspring. These life efforts lie in tandem with one of the functions of the arts, which is to make sense of human behaviours. 'They [the arts] simulate subjective experience, map out social relations, evoke sexual and social interactions, depict the intimate relations of kin, and locate the whole complex and

interactive array of human behavioural systems within models of the total world order' (Carroll 2005:87).

Rationale of Method in Thesis

According to nineteenth century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, the idea of 'disinterestedness' is of utmost importance in the analysis of texts (Arnold 1971:597). In this, Arnold urges researchers not to impose their views on a project but instead allow the results of their inquiries to speak for themselves, a notion that has been supported by numerous authors (Gottschall 2008:67; Barry 2002:26; Klages 2011:28). Setting aside for the moment Kuhn's notion of the interpretive 'paradigm',⁷ evolutionary literary theory works in this same spirit, providing an arguably more 'neutral' method for the analysis of literary texts than, for example, postmodernist or postcolonial criticism. In non-evolutionary methods of examining literature, analyses are made via individual interpretation without the opportunity of testability or falsability (Gottschall 2008:9, 70). According to Gottschall, the testability of theory is important as it seeks to '*limit* the scope for various forms of bias [that can] distort human perception' (Gottschall 2008:9 emphasis mine). In postmodern or postcolonial studies, issues such as gender equality, the problematic treatment of race in texts, and post-colonialism are discussed in favour of dismantling existing or past prejudices and power structures. These types of analyses are based on value judgments that are considered 'correct' by their practitioners. Both Carroll and Gottschall are critical of this approach, finding that it is value-driven, and that it is being used to further a socio-political agenda (Carroll 2004:25-26, Gottschall 2008:70-71).

Natural science, on the other hand, is a method by which theories are tested and results are made on the basis of evidence. At times, results may not fit with a particular social agenda: for example, the idea that gender is a purely socially constructed concept may be challenged by evidence to the contrary. While it is arguably easier to deconstruct a notion that is apparently 'man-made', to deny that a human being is unaffected by whether one has an X or a Y sex chromosome is more difficult. This is not to deny culture's effects on a person's gender development; but culture needs to be considered alongside the effects of biology. Instead of ignoring the reality of human biology, it is

⁷ The implications of Kuhn's seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) will be addressed later in this thesis.

prudent to inquire further into the issue at hand. As Gottschall (2008:81) says: ‘Before we can change *who we are*, we need to understand *what we are* and *how we got this way*’. An evolutionary understanding of stories can ‘offer a literary theory both theoretical and empirical, proposing hypotheses, against a full range of what we know of human and other behaviour, and testing them’ (Boyd 2009:385). Carroll (1995:126) further adds that in order for ‘critical commentary to be susceptible to rational evaluation, critical propositions must be “falsifiable”; that is, susceptible to being declared mistaken on grounds of logic and evidence that would be ratified by all reasonable, informed observers’.⁸ An evolutionary approach to literature provides such a method, in that it bases its arguments on current evolutionary understandings of human nature, and opens its theories and results of analysis to falsification and testing.

A second argument for the application of evolutionary literary theory is its potential in itself to provide a more accurate understanding of human nature and human universals. Locke in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) argued that the human mind is essentially a ‘blank slate’ and is formed and shaped by the institutions that surround it, a view with which Steven Pinker takes serious issue in his 2002 book *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. The present author believes that Pinker’s position is more plausible than Locke’s, and that the recognition that all people share an essential nature helps to emphasise sameness rather than difference. While it is important to acknowledge cultural differences, I would argue that an understanding of sameness, that is our human nature and its universals, is equally or more important. By understanding and appreciating cultures from a position of familiarity and similarity, this research hopes to alleviate the tendency of ‘othering’ a culture.

E.O. Wilson, who is widely considered the founder of sociobiology, argues that human nature lies neither in the genes nor in the universal traits of culture. These universal cultural traits can include myths and religion. Wilson defines human nature as the ‘inherited regularities of sensory and mental development that animate and channel the acquisition of culture’ (2005:viii). In short, instead of human nature being determined by either genes or culture, Wilson argues that biology *guides* while environment *specifies* human experience and nature (Wilson 2005:viii). Donald E. Brown, an

⁸ This idea is based on the idea of the philosopher Karl Popper, who claims that ‘the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability’ (Popper 2002:48).

anthropologist who works on the universals of human nature, argues that ‘human universals [...] consist of those features of culture, society, language, behaviour, and mind that, so far as the record has been examined, are found among all peoples known to ethnography and history’ (Brown 2004:47). These two terms, human nature and human universals, are widely accepted in two schools of thought that influence the evolutionary approach to literature, namely sociobiology and evolutionary psychology.

Sociobiologists are researchers who view humans as ‘fitness maximizers’, whereby humans behave in a manner to increase their progeny, while evolutionary psychologists see humans as ‘adaptation executors’ motivated by proximal desires. Evolutionary psychologists hold that humans are less motivated to ensure the survival of their species but rather are impelled by having their ‘pleasure buttons’ pushed (Carroll 2004:193). Carroll, however, considers humans to be neither fitness maximizers nor adaptation executors, but instead as possessing a ‘highly integrated set of behavioural systems that have been organized and directed by the logic of the human life-history cycle’ (2005:84). Carroll’s middle-ground between these two schools of thoughts implies that humans are influenced by primal instincts that, in turn, through the process of evolution, switch on ‘pleasure buttons’ that fulfil that instinct. A simple example is the act of reproduction.

When analysing a story through an evolutionary perspective, one needs to take account the nature of the human species at a universal, or macro, level. However, it would be impossible to ignore the uniqueness that occurs on the social or micro-level. Examples of the micro-level in an oral tradition include ‘local solutions to adaptive problems’ and ‘fitness-affecting constraints that are unique to a particular locale or way of life’ (Sugiyama 2001b:243). Different social environments will affect the way in which a story is told, how characters in the story behave, and how the audience responds; for example, in stories from Malaysia and Indonesia, there are depictions of rice cultivation as a cooperative endeavour, stressing the importance of the entire community taking part in the process for the sake of survival. Carroll (2004:110) argues that while results across culture and time will vary this does not imply that human universals and individual differences are mutually exclusive. Elsewhere Carroll (1995:136) emphasizes the point that ‘every depiction of a specific human being in a specific setting necessarily implies a concept of the specifically human and of the total human environment’.

Individualness is still affected by human nature, and stories make sense of this nature (Carroll 2005:87). An understanding of evolution allows glimpses into how an author views his or her surroundings, and how he or she makes sense of them through the medium of the story. Research made with an evolutionary understanding of the world will thus contribute to analyses of human nature, both in terms of its universality and in regards to a specific environment.

The growing importance of evolutionary approaches to the humanities requires that evolution is incorporated into the study of literature to ensure that the field of studies remains relevant. Historically, the study of literature in higher education has had to defend its methods against the criticism that the study of fiction is essentially frivolous,⁹ and produces no testable knowledge (Boyd 2009:384). However, by opening the discussion to include other academic fields such as biology, psychology, anthropology, and cognitive science, an evolutionary literary reading can engage with and inform the world both inside and outside of the text. Using an evolutionary understanding of storytelling, one is able to make sense of the human need for stories, and to offer scientific insights into their meanings. In this way, the study of storytelling and its stories need not apologize for being a ‘peripheral indulgence’ (Boyd 2009:384). In conclusion, ‘we can say that our own human literature does not define human nature so much as *exemplify* it’ (McEwan 2005:12, emphasis mine).

0.3 STORIES AND THE STORYTELLING ANIMAL

Thus far, I have briefly discussed evolutionary theory and its use in understanding the stories humans produce. In the following section, I will use an evolutionary framework to analyse the phenomenon of stories and identify the benefits they provide human beings. By understanding the importance of storytelling to human survival, the functions that stories serve, as well as the types of stories that humans tell each other, we may begin to understand why humans are essentially storytelling animals.

⁹ Edward Augustus Freeman, the Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford in the late nineteenth century, famously voiced his dissent at the establishment of the new school of English literature by saying that it would degenerate to “mere chatter about Shelley” (Kernan 1999:46).

The Science of Stories

Fictional stories are a peculiar phenomenon in that they are an art form that frequently engages the listener in deliberate untruths. In an environment in which humans struggled to survive, how did relaying fictitious stories develop as an adaptive function in the human species? In answer to this question, Boyd argues that ‘even if art [in this case, in the form of stories] diverts attention from the immediate needs of survival and reproduction it can improve cooperation within a group so as to successfully compete with others less inclined for it’ (2009:106). Humans are social animals and cooperation is an integral part of survival and reproduction. Through partaking in art, and by extension the shared experience of storytelling, members of a community are exposed to ideas that unite them, and a bond is created. This bond fosters feelings of shared values that assist in creating a united group of people rather than self-interested individuals (Boyd 2009:107-8).

Before humans are able to reap the benefits of fictitious stories, they need to firstly engage with the stories themselves. It has been argued that a key component in ensuring that humans continue to seek fictitious stories is the sheer enjoyment they receive from their telling; humans, it appears, have evolved to take pleasure from stories (Gottschall 2013:59). Boyd claims that art offers a ‘supernormal stimulus’ where ‘neural connections establish themselves gradually through experience, and because we find art self-rewarding, and we engage in it repeatedly and eagerly, art can overtime fine-tune our minds for rapid response in the information that matters most to us’ (2009:94). In short, the more humans acquire and process stories, the more efficient they become in responding to real-world situations that mirror the stories that they have digested.

Another fascinating aspect of the human mind is the ability to process stories as if they were real, while at the same time being able to separate fact from fiction. This can be seen when humans attempt to recall the stories they have heard; the mind is able to mentally process fictitious stories ‘as if they were analogous to remembered actual events’ (Hernadi 2001:62). However, ‘although fiction seems to be processed as surrogate experience, some psychological subsystems reliably react to it as if it were real, while others reliably do not’ (Tooby and Cosmides 2001:8). This is due to the ‘cognitive machinery’ of the human mind, which is capable of separating the real and

unreal, allowing humans to benefit from information communicated in fictitious tales (Tooby and Cosmides 2001:9).

The Science of Folk and Fairy Tales

Evolutionary science has been applied through the concept of ‘memes’ in the study of folktales and fairy tales. This concept of ‘meme’ was proposed by Richard Dawkins as a means to ‘convey the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*’ (Dawkins 1989 [1976]: 192, emphasis in original). Memes are seen as the cultural equivalent to genes, where they work through replication, keeping elements that are useful and discarding those that are not. Elements that are deemed ‘useful’ for memes and genes have been argued to assist in the survival of the human species. With this concept of usefulness in mind, memes can then take the form of ‘alphabets, cooking, wearing clothes, marriage, [and] war’; indeed, even folklore itself can ‘consist of memes’ (Pimple 1996:236). One such meme is the folk or fairy tale.

Leading fairy tale expert Jack Zipes is the first to analyse fairy tales in terms of its memetic qualities in addition to the sociohistorical context of a tale. Zipes is concerned with aspects of fairy tales that are replicated in new literary works. He asks the question: why have they been replicated? And, why are certain elements of the tale so memorable? In one particular case, he uses ‘The Frog Prince’ as an example where the titular character has been used as a memetic device in fairy tale reimaginings and critical essays. Zipes found that there are many self-help books written to raise awareness on the danger of the idea that ‘behind every frog, there could be a prince in disguise’. He notes:

‘There is an explicit admission that “The Frog Prince” meme is invoked in these works in order to comment on the inadequacy of the approved mating standards. [...] Not every frog is a prince, nor are good looks the most compelling attribute for choosing a mate. And in the case of enchanted frogs, they are not always satisfied with alluring princesses (Zipes 2008:131).’

Zipes argues that because ‘the information conveyed by the narrative, symbols, and icons is related to particular cultural transformations that have modified our innate mating behaviour’ the tale is popular and thus *replicated* in new ways (2008:111).

An important element to emphasise is that Zipes works mostly with European and North American fairy tales; among the stories he has examined include the aforementioned ‘The Frog Prince’, as well as ‘Cinderella’, and ‘Bluebeard’. These stories have had such long literary histories; storytellers from many genres have taken part in the writing and rewriting of the tales, so much so that the characters of the Frog Prince, Cinderella, and Bluebeard have themselves become memetic through their many incarnations. As such, one can then understand why Zipes limits his definition of the meme in fairy tales by saying that he uses it to:

‘[...] denote a particular fairy tale that has been canonized in the Western world and become so memorable that it appears to be transmitted naturally by our minds to communicate information that alerts us to pay attention to a specific given situation on which our lives may depend.’ (Zipes 2006:14).

While application of this very specific definition of ‘meme’ works with the European and North American understanding of fairy tales, it is perhaps less useful for oral stories that lack a ‘canon’ and that have not become as pervasive as the Frog Prince, Cinderella, or Bluebeard.

Zipes has also provided succinct evolutionary explanations for the veracity of certain fairy tales: the Frog Prince contained messages of mating strategies (2008:129), Cinderella articulated fears of stepparental violence and sibling competition (2006:115), and Bluebeard portrayed a fear of male violence against females (2006:192). However, these evolutionary struggles are made secondary and are not expanded upon. His focus, instead, is on the *story* and its many forms since it first appeared in print. This thesis will explore the evolutionary struggles depicted in Zipes’ works, as well as others that have yet to be looked into, and it will organize them according to the human life history and not according to a particular story or tale-type. I will also be clarifying the evolutionary nuances of such struggles, using findings from across the evolutionary sciences such as psychology, anthropology, and biology, to better provide an analysis of the evolutionary themes that have become memetic.

In this thesis, I will be using and adapting Zipes’ (2006) concept of memes; instead of Western fairy tales, I will be analysing *themes* in an oral story that have ‘become so memorable that it appears to be transmitted naturally by our minds to communicate information that alerts us to pay attention to a specific given situation on which our lives

may depend' (Zipes 2006:14) This concept will be applied to the stories in order to connect seemingly separate storytelling traditions. I will argue in section 0.4 'Geographical and Cultural Considerations' that as humans migrated in prehistoric times, they carried with them stories that can create a connection through an oral tradition. Through memetic *themes*, specifically, certain types of stories would have survived despite the disparity of locations. I will be extracting evolutionary 'useful' elements in stories that can be considered to have assisted human reproduction and survival.

The Functions of Stories

Renowned cognitive scientist Steven Pinker considers that 'fictional narratives supply us with a mental catalogue of the fatal conundrums we might face someday and the outcomes of strategies we could deploy in them' (1997:543). This 'mental catalogue' is part of a function that Gottschall has expanded upon and termed the 'simulator model' (2013:45-67). Pinker (1997) posits the idea that stories contain explicit solutions to problems one might face in one's daily life, they provide a way to safely test life choices without experiencing real-world dangers (1997:539-42). Gottschall adds on to this by emphasizing that the mind relies on *implicit memory* to constantly update and rewire information (2013:44-66). Humans do not merely consume stories and replicate the examples set forth by their characters; through constant consumption of fiction the mind is able to fine-tune specific reactions towards the possible dilemmas faced in a person's life. Turner (1996:14) reinforces this claim by stating that '[stories] are so essential to life that mastery of them must be almost entirely unconscious; from a biological point of view, we cannot be trusted to run them consciously'.

A second theory on stories moves away from the idea of an individualistic benefit of stories to one that is more communal. Kin selection theory addresses the reasons that drive a person to share stories with others as opposed to keeping them to his or herself (Sugiyama 2005:189). This theory adds to the simulator model in that humans tell stories not just to further an individual's own survival, but also the survival of their close kin. Dutton (2009:45) emphasizes that 'human evolution is not just a story of hunter-gatherers coping with a physical environment but one of *Homo sapiens* cooperating with each other to maximize species survival'. Kin selection theory takes

this notion of cooperativeness and works through reciprocal altruism, whereby one would not only acquire stories but one could also share them with one's own children or other kin members. Sugiyama suggests that in sharing wisdom with one's young or wider family, one seeks to ensure the continuation of one's bloodline and community without 'the risks and costs of exploration' (2005:189).

Sugiyama argues that while stories can assist an individual's survival, they can also be used as a tool by the *storyteller* to 'influence the opinions, beliefs, and behaviour of the audience in ways that serve the storyteller's ends' through 'Machiavellian intelligence' (Sugiyama 2005:189). This is in line with an argument by Easterlin (2012) who interprets stories as agents of social control. Other scholars argue that 'narratives can contribute to the reproduction of existing structures of meaning and power', with the result that the audience continues to uphold values that are told and retold through these narratives (Ewick and Silbey 1995:212). In this way, the storyteller is able to work on behalf of a ruler or a society's dominant group where stories assert and maintain an advantageous position in society. These findings are further supported by Sugiyama's (2001b) study which shows that different narrators tell the same story differently depending on their gender and birth order, and how a narrator will tell the same story differently depending upon the composition of his or her audience (2001b:241).

Taking all these theories into account, one can hopefully understand the prevalence of the concluding line 'And the moral of the story is...', expressed so often in fairy tales and folklore. The moralizing element of a tale explicitly provides the 'lesson' to be derived from a story, while implicitly influencing the socialising of its audience. An impulse to moralize is considered a normative part of human nature; Carroll et al. (2009:51, 69-70) propose that the 'agonistic structure', which consists of protagonists, antagonists, and minor characters, reflect moral problems encountered in real life. In a recent publication, Gottschall states that because people search and devour stories that convey a strong sense of morality, 'stories make societies work better by encouraging us to behave ethically' (2013:134). Thus the development of efficient societies through the inculcation of morals in stories is an adaptive function to support the continued tradition of storytelling.

How Many Stories Are There?

Cuatro son las historias. Durante el tiempo que nos queda seguiremos narrándolas, transformadas.

(Four are the stories. During the time left to us we will continue telling them, transformed.)

— Jorge Luis Borges (1972)

Jorge Luis Borges, novelist and short story writer of international fame, asserts in his short prose work *Los Cuatro Ciclos* (The Four Cycles) that there are just four types of stories. These are a story of warriors defending a city, a story of a quest, a story of returning home, and a story about sacrificing a god (Borges 1972:32). Joseph Campbell (1949), an influential mythologist, boldly argues that there is in fact only one type, the Monomyth, which revolves around the journey a hero takes on a quest. Borges and Campbell are simply two among many who have pondered the fact that stories have limited variations. Across cultures, one will find stories that repeatedly deal with travel, love, and families; these stories of course contain variations of characters and outcomes. As Borges (1972) asserted at the end of *Los Cuatro Ciclos*, ‘During the time left to us we will continue telling them, transformed’ (Borges 1972). This raises the question: why exactly do we tend to repeat the same type of stories?

Using the framework of evolutionary studies, Sugiyama (2005) groups stories into two categories: stories of universal content and stories of local content (2005:187). Stories of universal content deal with the nature or condition of humans; these stories carry themes that are ‘a product of fundamental, evolved interests human beings have in love, death, adventure, family, justice, and overcoming adversity’ (Dutton 2009:132). While such themes can be found in any culture around the world, local content refers to ‘location-specific physical or cultural conditions’. For example, this thesis is partitioned according to universal content that deals with family life and the quest for a partner.

However, while these stories are indeed similar, they are also coloured with local content such as descriptions of volcanoes or paddy fields.¹⁰

Thus far I have described the three broader aspects of research: the subject of study, which is the fictional oral story (often referred to as a folk or fairy tale), the theoretical framework that will be applied in this thesis, and a reassessment of stories using evolutionary theory. In the final sections of this chapter, I will provide an overview of the geo-cultural area of this thesis, as well as an overview of the subject of women from the perspective of evolutionary science.

0.4 GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research Area

This thesis will investigate oral stories from societies speaking languages belonging to the Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) group. These languages are spoken by the majority populations of the following modern nations: Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Madagascar, and the island nations of western Micronesia (Bellwood 2007:105).¹¹ The Western Malayo-Polynesian language group forms a part of the Austronesian language family, one of the largest families in the world in terms of the number of languages it contains, as well as in terms of geographical distribution (Bellwood 2007:97). The Austronesian language family has four major subgroups: the largest of these is the Malayo-Polynesian subgroup, which includes ‘all Austronesian languages not located in Taiwan’ (Bellwood 2007:104). One of the branches that emerged from the pre-historic migrations of speakers of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian is the Western Malayo-Polynesian subgroup (Bellwood 2007:105), the language group of the societies whom the stories are the subject.

¹⁰ These two categories overlap on many occasions. A case in point with this thesis is that local information, while being location- and culture-specific, also deals with universal content, as mentioned above.

¹¹ The stories from Indonesia are from Borneo, Java, Sumatra, and western Sumbawa. In Malaysia, stories from the Orang Asli (indigenous tribes) are excluded as their languages belong to the Austroasiatic family (Bellwood 2007:97). Stories from western Micronesia are taken from the Palauan and Chamorro languages.

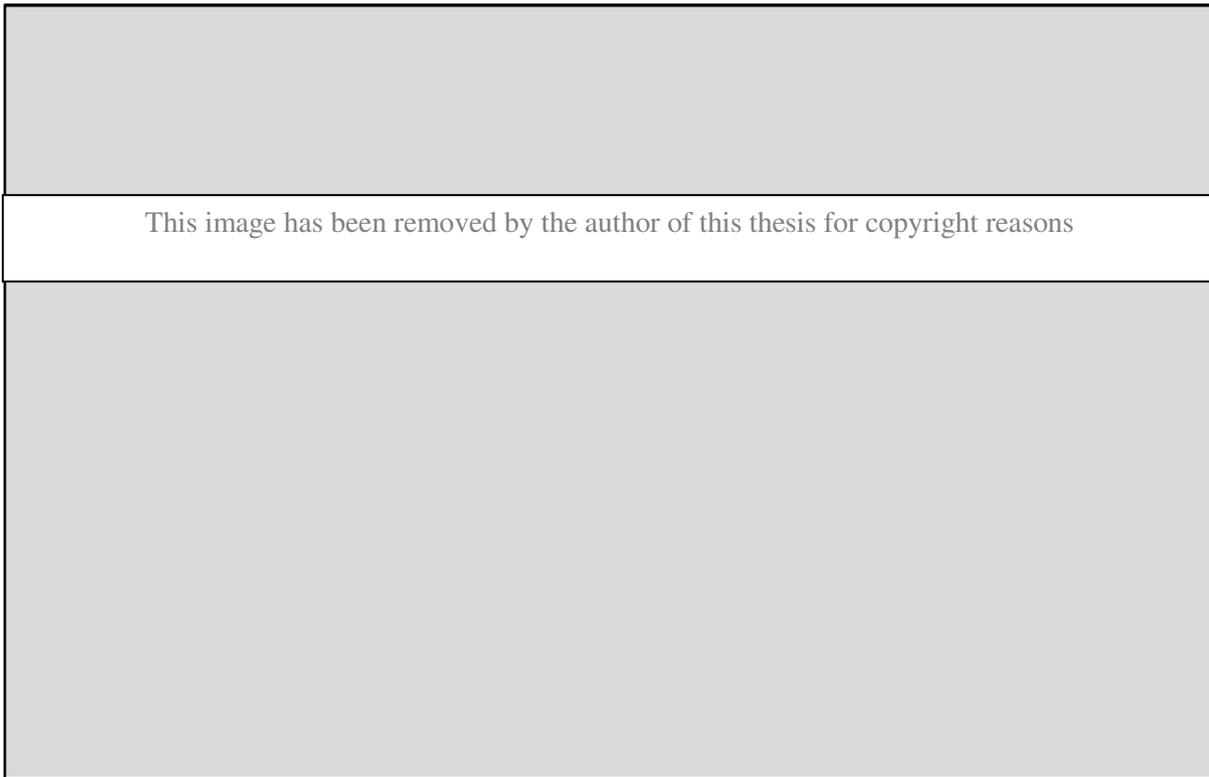


Figure 1 The Austronesian languages family tree (after Bellwood 2007:103)

Choosing the Western Malayo-Polynesian language region as an area of study may seem strange; one might wonder why I had not chosen the more-widely studied Southeast Asia or Oceania. My choice of looking at a linguistic area, rather than a recently established political area, is based on the fact that all speakers of Western Malayo-Polynesian languages can trace their languages to an early Proto-Austronesian language in Taiwan,¹² and that their speakers have had long historical contact with one another (Bellwood 2007:122). This is evidenced by the manner in which sixteenth-century Spanish priests sometimes referred to the Madagascan language of Malagasy as ‘Bugis’ (spoken in modern Indonesia), seventeenth-century Dutch hearing ‘Malay’ words in Taiwan, and the ancient Chamorro people of Guam having travelled to Malaysia for trade and barter prior to Western contact, among others (Andaya 2006:34-5, Santos-Bamba 2010:40). It can be argued that as these people and their languages travelled outwards from Taiwan to as far as modern-day Madagascar, they must have carried with them stories that were passed on to new generations and locations. Given the emphasis on the *oral* origins of stories to be analysed in this thesis, the oral history between the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Madagascar, Palau, and Guam can thus

¹² According to linguists, ‘this language spread has occurred since 1500 – 1000BC’ (Bellwood 2007:22).

be an interesting point to springboard future research. Indeed, respected historian Barbara Watson Andaya asserts that ‘strong arguments have been advanced in favour of treating the whole Austronesian world as a single “phylogenetic unit” that offers “exceptionally favourable conditions for a holistic and interdisciplinary culture history” (Andaya 2006:34).’

This is not to say that there were no other linguistic and cultural influences on the region. I am aware of the fact that present-day Indonesia and Malaysia were influenced by the adoption of Islam from traders¹³ and Hinduism from India. One will find evidence of these influences in the oral stories discussed in this thesis through hybridization or oikotypification;¹⁴ characters bear names that show traces of Arabic and Indic influences, while the stories themselves might seem as if they harken back to a particular Arabic or Indian myth (Kumar 2000). Hinduism and Islam in the Philippines were influenced by both Indonesia and Malaysia in the ninth and tenth centuries AD, though animism remained dominant prior to the introduction of Christianity (Lopez 2006:xxv). Madagascar, on the other hand, was found to be uninhabited until fairly recently. Indeed, it has been argued that the island’s first ancestors were from Indonesia around 830 AD, and recent genetic testing has found that more than twenty percent of its current population can trace themselves back to Indonesian relatives in Borneo (Cox et al. 2012:3, 6). Later, Madagascar developed its population and culture with the coming of people from East Africa (Cox et al. 2012:1). These are only a few of the examples of the Western Malayo-Polynesian language region’s pre-colonial historical and cultural influences.

The Western Malayo-Polynesian language region has also had a long colonial history from various world powers. The Philippines and Guam were colonized by the Spanish for over 300 years, as was Palau (though it was sold to the Germans in 1899 after fifteen years of colonization by the Spanish). These countries were later colonized by the

¹³ There are several theories on when and how Islam was spread in the Indo-Malay archipelago. One theory ‘dates it back to the seventh century, soon after the birth of Islam in Arabia. This version assigns a crucial role to Arab traders in its dissemination. The other version is that Islam was brought to Indonesia in the thirteenth century by traders from Gujarat in India’ (Nurmila 2013:109). For Malay scholars, Islam was officially adopted by the Malaccan court around 1430 (Andaya and Andaya 2017:58).

¹⁴ These terms are discussed in the section *Collecting Western Malayo-Polynesian Stories* below.

United States of America.¹⁵ As a result of colonization, the Philippines radically dropped in number during the Philippine-Spanish war (1896-1898), and the languages of Palauan and Chamorro dwindled in use upon the United States' enforcement of the English language (Santos-Bamba 2010:6). Indonesia and Malaysia shared a history of being colonized from 1511 onwards by the Portuguese, Dutch and British, while Madagascar had been under French colonisation from 1885 and was only recognized as an independent country in 1960. Most historical accounts that have managed to survive to this day were recorded during this period of colonization (Creese 2004, Hijjas 2011, Cox et al. 2012). With the coming of the Second World War, the WMP language region was occupied by the Japanese, and Guam, in particular, continues to be influenced by the Japanese language to this day (Santos-Bamba 2010:6).

Across all the language regions analysed, there is strong evidence that prior to the arrival of European colonialists women were respected as contributing members of society and actively took part in life beyond the home. Women were in charge of religious rituals in Chamorro and Philippine society (Souder 1991:443, Brewer 2000:85-6, Leong 2013:118-19), responsible for the planting of roots and vegetables as well as inshore fishing in Palau (Matthews 1992:1), responsible for the provision and transportation of water and firewood in Madagascar (Predelli 2000:85), and women were also responsible for purchasing and liaising with traders in Indonesia and Malaysia (Reid 1988a:634-35). In terms of their private lives, there is evidence that women were afforded greater sexual autonomy in the precolonial era of these language regions (Brewer 2000:85-6, Reid 1988b:156). Premarital sexual relations were permitted, and marriage was mostly monogamous. In Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, women were also able to initiate divorce (Reid 1988b:152-6).

The arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines, Palau, and Guam, and the French in Madagascar, brought with them efforts of christening the indigenous communities. By enforcing the Christian values of a model society, greater emphasis was placed on men as leaders, and women were removed from any positions of power in their religious domains and were secluded inside the confines of the home (Leong 2013:119, Souder

¹⁵ The Philippines were colonized by the United States from 1898 to 1946, Palau was under US rule after the Second World War until 1994 (Williams 2008:181), and Guam remains a territory of the United States to this day.

1991:442, Santos-Bamba 2010:41, Dames 2003:369, Williams 2008:181, Predelli 2000:90, 93). Women's sexuality was effectively curtailed, where monogamy was enforced and anyone, particularly women, who indulged in multiple sexual partners were punished.

Similar curtailment of women's freedoms had already begun in Malaysia and Indonesia with the arrival and adoption of Hinduism in kingdoms from as early as the second century (Kumar 2000:96-7). Hinduism brought with it the idea of a caste-stratified society, one in which women were seen as inferior to men. Indeed, this was seen through the practice of suttee, one that was practiced even during the colonization of the Dutch in the Indonesian archipelago (Kumar 2000:97, Creese 2004:117, 239). When Islam arrived and penetrated the courts of the Indo-Malay region, it calcified the division of gender roles, where men were seen as leaders of the community and women were to be safeguarded and kept away from public life (Kumar 2000:97, Hashim 2000:108, Andaya 2000:242, Reid 1988b:156). These religions continue to affect gender relations in contemporary Western Malayo-Polynesian speaking societies, and have been employed as a point of analysis in studies of stories from this region.

Two studies have especially informed the structural and cultural backdrop of this thesis, Helen Creese's (2004) *Women of the Kakawin World: Marriage and Sexuality in the Indic Courts of Java and Bali* and Mulaika Hijjas' (2011) *Victorious Wives: The Disguised Heroine in 19th-Century Malay Syair*. These books showed that female-led stories, while considered literary pieces, could offer information regarding gender roles in specific points in history as well as information regarding the types of stories that were told by women and for women (Creese 2004:41-2, Hijjas 2011:11-13). For instance, both *kakawin* and *syair* literature contain an abundance of stories focusing on romance, and the authors analysed the rules and rituals that govern courtship and marriage in relation to Islamic and Hindu norms of gender relations. We are able to infer various aspects of courtship and marriage through the stories that idealised Malay, Javanese, and Balinese women of the court through the *kakawin* and *syair* literary characters: beauty is of utmost importance when attempting to woo a potential partner (Creese 2004:58, Hijjas 2011:102), women's place (even a powerful and intelligent woman) must be subservient to men (Hijjas 2011:13), sex is painful but can be

pleasurable with the ‘right’ man (Creese 2004:174, Hijjas 2011:130), and conceiving a child is absolutely necessary upon consummating the marriage (Creese 2004:72).

Having said that, the purpose of this thesis is to extract *universal* evolutionary themes in Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories. It aims to uncover women’s life struggles that pervade different cultures of this region across various historical periods. While previous research on women’s stories were discussed in terms of how they have been affected by the social and cultural mores of a particular time period, I hope to show that there are recurring themes that underlie such social and cultural institutions. These themes, I will argue, imply a common human interest in reproduction and survival. I am not discounting the importance of cultural and historical settings as influencing the stories; however, I am arguing that despite these settings, the same themes will continue to be told. In this thesis, one will find stories from the Philippines collected in 1904, Malaysia in the 1970s, and even Madagascar in 2007. Across these places and time, the stories tell of methods overcoming struggles to survive, or of men and women searching and attempting to retain a perfect partner. The nuances of these efforts for survival and reproduction will be explored with evolutionary theories in Parts One, Two, and Three of this thesis.

Terminology

When deciding to focus on stories of oral origin from Western Malayo-Polynesian languages, ‘folktale’ had been the initial and logical choice of terminology. However, while ‘folktale’ is widely used when discussing stories from oral traditions, the word carries with it strong connotations, and subconscious references, to European stories. Because the study of literature has largely been discussed by Western scholars, the link between the term ‘folktale’ and European stories may prove problematic when applied to WMP stories. The Malay scholar Amin Sweeney has argued throughout *A full hearing: orality and literacy in the Malay world* (1987) that scholars should be careful when using the term ‘folktale’, as it can bring Western expectations and understanding to these oral stories. This is exemplified by how ‘The Merchant’s Two Daughters’, one of the stories featured in this thesis, is often introduced as ‘the Indonesian/Malaysian

Cinderella' instead of being viewed as a work in its own right.¹⁶ This thesis aims to recognize and analyse WMP stories without holding them against a Western template. Therefore, when referencing stories within the Western Malayo-Polynesian region, I will instead use the terms 'oral tradition', 'oral stories', 'tales', or simply 'stories'.

Collecting and Analysing Western Malayo-Polynesian Stories

The stories that form the subject of this research were collected from printed texts as well as online resources. Printed texts consisted of single tales and folktale anthologies. Based on the authors of these texts, it can be assumed that certain texts were written for children, while others aimed at a general and perhaps even academic audience. The authors themselves came from a variety of backgrounds: Zakaria Hitam is a Malaysian cultural figure who collected oral stories from various sources that resulted in collections such as *Ikan Jantan* (1972) and *Perdana Menteri Muhammad* (1972), Murti Bunanta is an Indonesian contemporary writer of children's books and folktale anthologies from Indonesia and other parts of the world, Mabel Cook Cole was an anthropologist who collected the 1912 *Philippine folk tales* anthology when the Philippines was colonized by the United States, while Lee Haring's folkloric research in independent Madagascar led to the publication of *Stars and Keys* (2007) that is used in this thesis. The online resource *Guampedia* (2016), on the other hand, contains peer-reviewed articles on Chamorro heritage and Guam history as well as stories contributed by scholars in this field.

The usage of various types of texts that spring from various types of writers is intentional. The aim in doing so is to show the *universality* of themes that can cross the genre in which a tale is written, the type of person who is recording the tale, and the place from which a tale originates. This is by no means an uncontroversial choice; however, this wide-ranging corpus of tales will emphasize that the *human* mind behind the creation of such tales will emphasize common evolutionarily beneficial themes. Indeed, folklorist Bengt Holbek explained in his 1987 book *Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective* that when looking at these oral stories from a literary and psychological perspective:

¹⁶ Indeed, as was noted earlier, Warner (1994:202) refers to Yeh-Hsien as the 'Chinese Cinderella' instead of using the earlier known variant as a point of reference; i.e., referring to Cinderella as the 'French Yeh-Hsien'.

‘[...] the real object of analysis is not the folktale or myth, but its progenitor and bearer, the human mind itself. The analytical psychologists tend to be even broader than the folklorists mentioned above in their selection of material. Myths and legends, fairy tales and other forms of traditional narrative are equally useful for amplification, the method by which they develop the potential aspects of a basic concept embodied in a motif (Holbek 1987:26).’

While Holbek was describing a psychoanalytical study of European folktales, this same concept can be applied to an evolutionary psychological understanding of memetic themes within Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions.

Some stories in this thesis may contain elements of external cultures; as discussed earlier, the Western Malayo-Polynesian language region has been shaped by a large number of external influences. It is thus unsurprising that some stories have undergone hybridization, where they are products of ‘[...] the convergence of several diverse storytelling traditions. Sometimes they arise unexpectedly and are historically discontinuous and autonomous; sometimes they appear as something novel in a process of evolution’ (*Greenwood Encyclopedia of Fairy Tales* 2008:463). And some are products of oikotypification, where ‘[...] an isolated local culture could shape the reception of a tale in a new environment and social context’ (*Greenwood Encyclopedia of Fairy Tales* 2008:704). This case of oikotypification is apparent in Madagascar as it was ‘[...] a port of call for every voyage eastward or westward from the time of Vasco de Gama; its geographical location made it a catchment area for numerous tales (and other culture traits) of foreign origin. Upon their adoption in Madagascar, their content was changed in accordance with existing patterns of Malagasy culture (Haring 1982:42)’. In the age where the search for an ‘authentic’ tale is considered an impossible task (Zipes 2006:241, Warner 1994:24), hybrid and oikotype tales are considered ‘normal’ in the realm of oral stories. Such tales are considered arguably even worthier of study in this thesis as they may further emphasise themes that benefit human fitness by transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

By focusing on *memetic themes*, this thesis will be looking for *broader* issues for evolutionary fitness and will not be looking at specific motifs such as the types of animals that appear in, or transformations that occur within, these Western Malayo-Polynesian stories. While specific motifs may confer fascinating evolutionary analyses

in their own right (as had been exemplified by Zipes in his 2006 and 2008 studies), this thesis focuses on the broader implications of such motifs in the memetic themes of human survival and reproduction. For example, in the case of an animal such as a tiger, I will not be analysing it as a recurring cultural motif, but as part of a broader symbol of fear for somatic survival. This approach will be similarly applied to transformations; instead of exploring the cultural and historical perspectives of magic in Western Malayo-Polynesian language regions, I will be applying an evolutionary perspective into the types of ideas that they could signify. In this thesis, transformation has appeared in memetic themes such as overcoming prejudices against disgust for reproductive success (which will be discussed in section 4.3 ‘An Unlikely Match?’), emphasising the importance of kin altruism in the somatic and reproductive survival of families (throughout tales in ‘Part 1: Tales of Family Life’), and highlighting the strength of conviction and action (such as in Chapter 7 ‘The Childfree Woman’ and Chapter 8 ‘The Heroic Woman’). While this might be an unusual way to view transformations in oral stories, I believe that it may provide new perspectives that will add on to folkloric and evolutionary literary studies alike.

Finally, the stories selected for this thesis feature female characters as the main movers of plot. The intention behind this comes as a response to Gottschall’s (2008) study on the lack of oral stories with lead female characters. Through his study on folktales, Jonathan Gottschall quantitatively established that there are indeed ‘missing tales on women’ and that this phenomena is prevalent in all cultures (2008:150-155).¹⁷ With women making up half of the human species, this lack of attention to female characters in stories is both striking and inexplicable. Hence, in addition to highlighting largely unknown collections of Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories, this thesis aims to bring scholarly attention to the small number of female-oriented stories available in folk and fairy tale anthologies.

¹⁷ Gottschall (2008) hypothesizes that the significant lack of stories on women may be because the collectors are often male. This may account for the tone and outcome of female-driven stories (Gottschall 2008:151).

0.5 WOMEN, STORIES, AND THEIR LIFE HISTORY

"Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands."

- Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1817)

In Jane Austen's final novel, *Persuasion*, Captain Harville attempts to convince Anne Elliott that he is well-acquainted with women's nature of 'inconstancy', and that he has evidence from 'all histories [...] all stories, prose and verse'. He exclaims that 'I could bring you fifty quotations in a moment on my side of the argument. [...] But perhaps you will say, these were all written by men (Austen 1817).' Indeed, Anne Elliott argues precisely that. It can be further argued that women's lack of control over their own story has had a history that goes as far back as oral tradition (Gottschall 2008:151). In oral stories, young women are generally portrayed as obsessed by romance, and marriage appears to be their main goal. Such stereotypes of women are found in Western Malayo-Polynesian tales. Are these stereotypes a reflection of female nature, or are they essentially the product of male bias through their telling?

At present, this is an impossible question to answer. I would argue that despite the fact that these stories contain female archetypes and stereotypes, some of which may be in part the product of their collection, they can still provide us with information into women's lives in a pre-modern Western Malayo-Polynesian society. At the end of the day, these stories *survived*, in that they have been told and re-told again and again. It is safe to say that if these archetypes and stereotypes had not appealed to their audiences (which presumably included women) they would not have continued to exist until today. This thesis aims to uncover the evolutionary benefits of these stories for the lives of WMP women, and in particular whether there are evolutionary benefits to persistent female archetypes found in oral stories. At the same time, it will attempt to recognize and to manoeuvre around biases that may have been a part of the formation of these tales.

It was claimed earlier that a more scientific approach to literature, that is one based on evolutionary studies, can provide a ‘neutral’ or ‘disinterested’ method of analysis. I am aware, however, that stereotypical portrayals of women also occur in the biological sciences. The main source of contention lies in the overwhelming focus on women’s childbearing ‘role’ as well as sexual ‘predispositions’. Indeed, influential evolutionary psychologist Anne Campbell, in her book *A Mind of Her Own: The Evolutionary Psychology of Women* laments that ‘the driving force of evolution, we were told, was male success or failure, with females relegated to convenient sperm receptacles and breeding machines’ (Campbell 2002:62). When not speculating on the naturalness of motherhood, evolutionary studies have frequently debated whether or not women are inherently ‘active’ or ‘passive’ in their reproductive role. Emily Martin, a social-anthropologist who is known for her criticism of the language used in science, argues that ‘the egg and the sperm’ are a ‘scientific fairy tale’ that reinforces societal gender stereotypes (Martin 1991:486).¹⁸ As a result, efforts have been made to make science more gender inclusive. In recent years, the biological analyses of women have become more nuanced, especially as more female scientists have become involved.

Leading primatologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy is one such scientist who has written extensively on the lives of female primates, including women. She writes about the stages of women’s life history, from being a child in a family, to finding a mate, becoming a mother, and then a grandmotherly figure. In her studies, Hrdy considers the evolutionary pressures that affect women’s social environments. In particular, I have been drawn to her research because of her awareness of the biases that pervade evolutionary studies. For example, in her seminal book *Mother Nature* (1999), she writes that:

‘[...] the selflessness of mothers always seemed too vital to the well-being of too many for anyone – scientists included – to be able to examine their behaviour dispassionately. And none did. Old biases from many sources burrowed in and

¹⁸ Martin shows the negative language used in describing the female biological process where menstruation is often described as ‘a chaotic disintegration of form, [...] many texts [...] describe it as "ceasing," "dying," "losing," "denuding," "expelling"’. She finds it a ‘mystery’ that, meanwhile, ‘male’s vast production of sperm is not seen as wasteful’. This is after taking into account the fact that ‘for every baby a woman produces, she *wastes* only around two hundred eggs. For every baby a man produces, he *wastes* more than one trillion (10^{12}) sperm’. However, science literature often writes men from the perspective that they ‘*produce* 100 million (10^8) sperm per day’ (Martin 1991 486-488, emphasis mine).

nestled at the heart of evolutionary theory, the most coherent and all-encompassing theory that scientists have ever had to explain the living world. [...] Unlike superstition or religious faith, a good scientist's underlying assumptions are subject to continuous challenge. Sooner or later in science, wrong assumptions get revised. Nevertheless, some take longer to get corrected than others, as was the case with overly narrow stereotypes about females.' (Hrdy 1999:xiii-iv, xv)

Hrdy's argument regarding the stereotypification of women, particularly on motherhood, is grounded in findings from two influential papers: Robert L. Trivers' 1972 study on parental investment, and W.D. Hamilton's model of kin altruism in 1964. Trivers provides an explanation of how mothers and fathers differ in terms of the amount of investment they place on their offspring based on the 'cost' inflicted on their reproductive system (Trivers 1972:146). Women are considered the more 'invested' sex because they go through nine months of pregnancy followed by two or more years of breastfeeding, and are seen as the more 'nurturing' sex. Hamilton's model (1964), on the other hand, emphasises inclusive fitness; that is, the survival of one's kin in order to ensure that one's genes are propagated in the future.¹⁹ Because a woman is the only sex that can be confident that the child she bears is hers, she is also expected to be more 'instinctively' nurturing. These two influential papers established the basis for analysing the tension that arises between men and women, between parents and children, and also between siblings in regards to each individual striving for the greatest reproductive success.

This conflict, whereby an individual is driven to assist kin survival but at the same time to care for his or her own somatic and reproductive success, is evident in stories from 'Part 1: Tales of Family Life'. Evolutionary studies employed to analyse these tales are drawn from either or both Trivers' and Hamilton's studies. In regards to women's family life, I will analyse the tension between mothers and their children, the competition between siblings, as well as the expected role of elderly women. Through this analysis, I aim to show that oral stories can also be a rich source of data for

¹⁹ In this thesis I will use Hamilton's concept of inclusive fitness both as a means of expressing the idea of gene transmission, as well as a metaphor for the continuation of one's lineage. Hamilton's notion is more popularly known through Richard Dawkins' (1976) *The Selfish Gene*. While one may be skeptical of Dawkins' highly reductionist interpretation, it is nevertheless true that human reproduction is also the reproduction of human genes.

evolutionary science, where the memetic themes presented on family life are reflective of human evolutionary struggles.

Moving from the sphere of kin relations, this thesis will then explore one of Hrdy's 'narrow stereotypes' mentioned earlier. This stereotype is in regards to women and their mating behaviour. One of the most heavily cited works by evolutionary psychologists on human mating behaviour was published by one of the founders of the field of evolutionary psychology, David M. Buss, whose 1989 study looked into the differences in human mate preferences in thirty seven cultures.²⁰ He found that most men desired younger, physically 'attractive' women, while most women desired older, wealthier men (Buss 1989:12). This tendency, Buss argued, was due to women desiring men who can provide for them and their offspring, while men looked for youth and beauty as cues for fertility. Hrdy provides depth to this finding by proposing that women marry for wealth as result of their position in patriarchal societies, 'where powerful men (or patriline) monopolize access to the resources women need to rear their young' (Hrdy 1999:245). Hrdy speculates that men's obsession with youth, on the other hand, is due to their ability to literally 'possess' a woman for a longer time in a patriarchal society (1999:186).

The tension between the recurring trope of the wealth-seeking heroine and a background of patriarchy, which is rooted in men's control of resources, will be explored through various stories in this thesis. While the large number of female-led stories dedicated to finding a husband may support Buss' (1989) study, I will argue that the manner in which power and status is manipulated by men (and also by women) affects the production of these narratives. This theme is mostly evident in 'Part 2: Tales of Searching for a Partner', which explores male/female tendencies in sexual selection through the process of searching, attaining, and retaining a mate.

Finally, while most of the female-driven WMP oral traditions covered in this thesis revolve around the process of motherhood and mate selection, a small number tells of

²⁰ Buss' (1989:4) study includes findings from Nigeria, South Africa (whites), South Africa (Zulu), Zambia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel (Jewish), Israel (Palestinian), Japan, Taiwan, Bulgaria, Estonian S.S.R, Poland, Yugoslavia, Belgium, France, Finland, Germany – West, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Canada (English), Canada (French), USA (Mainland), USA (Hawaii), Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela.

women who are not looking to take part in either process. For this type of stories, investigation will be carried out to uncover whether these stories tell of an evolutionary survival strategy separate from the process of reproduction. Of particular interest to this research is the somewhat controversial theory of ‘meme selection’, where humans are driven to propagate a lasting *personal* legacy of themselves, rather than a diluted genetic legacy through their children (Aarssen and Altman 2006). These stories will be grouped in a section entitled ‘Part 3: Tales Beyond Family and Partners’.

A final consideration is that the Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) cultures are spread far and wide and have been subjected over time to different environmental and cultural pressures. Because of these different cultural pressures, the depiction of women in these stories may vary considerably. Among the types of historical-cultural pressures that have shaped the different WMP regions include the export of Malagasy people of Madagascar as part of the slave trade (Campbell 1981:203), the Spanish colonisation of the Philippines and western Micronesia, and the transformative influence of Islam on local beliefs and culture in Malaysia and Indonesia. These historical-cultural events are likely to have shaped the manner in which women are portrayed and how their stories are told. Thus, when explanation of local content is necessary, I aim to ground evolutionary theory within these historical-cultural environments.

0.6 STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY OF THESIS

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into three major sections dealing with evolutionarily memetic themes. Each section is divided into a number of chapters, numbered sequentially. Part One will deal with women’s issues in family life, Part Two will deal with women’s concerns when searching for a partner, and Part Three will explore stories that fail to fit the categories of evolutionary survival, either through inclusive fitness or reproductive fitness. These stories have been collected from speakers of Western Malayo-Polynesian languages.

This thesis is the first study to look at female characters in Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions. It aims to show how the study of oral traditions can be analysed using evolutionary findings. It is also the only study that uses findings from evolutionary biology and psychology to analyse WMP oral stories. It argues that narratives from pre-

modern oral traditions can be analysed using evolutionary scientific findings to construct an understanding of women's essential 'nature'. In doing so, it is hoped that the findings of this thesis will stimulate a discussion regarding the power of stories and their effects on women.

PART 1: TALES OF FAMILY LIFE

INTRODUCTION: BEGINNING A FAMILY

“Survival without reproduction is a genetic dead-end. An animal that survives but does not reproduce leaves no genes behind.”

- Anne Campbell (2002:34)

All animals are driven to reproduce, and the human species is no exception. Most human societies are ‘pronatalist’, where the norm is to bear children. Social pressure is applied to both women and men to have children. When analysing this norm for reproduction through an evolutionary lens, this pressure can be scientifically understood as an instinctual need to ensure the survival of human genes into a new generation. Reproductive success, however, does not necessarily end with the birth of a child. Newborn babies must be continuously cared for and taught how to survive: they need help learning to walk, to be shown how to feed themselves, and to be taught how to socialize in their community. If children survive into adulthood, they must themselves reproduce to ensure that their genes are passed onto a new generation. This reproductive cycle needs to be repeated again and again in order for genes to be continuously transferred to the next generation. To ensure that humans take part in this process, they need to *desire* children. In addition, they also need to want *other people* to desire children and to reproduce. To a certain extent, social pressure to bear children is an important component in humankind’s survival.

Anna Rotkirch (2008, 2007), who has worked extensively on population research, discusses various theories on the evolutionary human instinct to bear children. She shows that while Edward Westermarck, one of the earliest evolutionary psychologists, believes that there is indeed a “childbearing instinct”, his research largely focuses on the desires of *men* to have children; Rotkirch hypothesized that this is due to his ‘male-centred bias’ in his data collection (Westermarck 1891:379; Rotkirch 2008:152).²¹ Rotkirch (2007:91) contrasts Westermarck’s childbearing instinct theory with Caroline Foster’s (2000) study, which argues that the desire for a child is a result of nurturing,

²¹ Westermarck states that ‘there is in man an instinct for reproduction’ (Westermarck 1891:379). Throughout his book, he focuses on *paternal* roles and duties towards the family, which consists of father, mother, and offspring.

rather than a childbearing (or sexual), instinct. In Foster's paper, emphasis is placed on the importance of human *mothers* to be able to care for their young, as it is through this nurture that children survive into adulthood (Foster 2000:214). This is a line of thought that has been echoed in evolutionary studies on women and motherhood. Finally, Rotkirch proposes her own theory to add to Westermarck and Foster's; she posits that there are in addition psychophysical factors, whereby 'longing for a baby can develop as a by-product of hormonal changes that evolved to prepare the woman for motherhood' (Rotkirch 2007:92). This means that a woman's body may instinctually prepare her for wanting a baby, but this biological desire may be triggered by social pressure.

Taking into account Rotkirch (2007), Foster (2000), and Westermarck's (1891) theories of desiring a child, I will now discuss more specific examples. Rotkirch (2007) shows the intensity of 'baby fever' (as it is known in Finland) through personal accounts from 160 Finnish participants. The feeling has been described as a 'painful longing in my whole being', an 'unbelievable aching', 'anxiety and sorrow', or 'a pleasant longing and a burden' (Rotkirch 2007:98). Through the personal testimonies of these Finnish women, several conclusions regarding the triggers of 'baby fever' could be drawn. One of the most cited triggers is age, whereby women feel a longing for children at certain points in their lives (Rotkirch 2007:99). Other triggers include falling in love, having experienced previous pregnancies, and being influenced by their peers (Rotkirch 2007:100-101). Rotkirch's findings regarding the visceral emotions felt by her respondents are invaluable in the understanding of stories in 'Beginning a Family'.

The first story examined in this thesis is the Indonesian tale of 'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada' (The Origins of the Kasada Ceremony). It tells of a husband, Ki Segar, and his wife, Nyai Anteng, who live together in peace and harmony. Upon reaching old age, they realize that their happiness is incomplete without children. Elderly and unable to conceive, husband and wife travel to the foot of Mount Bromo. There they pray to their god, Dewa Brahma, for the gift of a child. Dewa Brahma finally proclaims that he will grant them 25 children on the condition that they sacrifice their firstborn child. Nyai Anteng agrees to the condition and promptly becomes pregnant. She gives birth to 25 children, but it is her eldest son, Kusuma, whom she loves the most. The new parents are so happy that they forget their promise to Dewa Brahma. Mount Bromo begins to stir and shake, demanding that the parents keep their promise of delivering their

firstborn child. Nyai Anteng is unable to bear the thought of losing Kusuma and tries to negotiate with Dewa Brahma, offering to exchange herself for her son. But Dewa Brahma insists; he wants her beloved Kusuma. The aged parents are engulfed in sadness and Kusuma, noticing their heavy hearts, asks the reason for their pain. Nyai Anteng reluctantly explains the promise she made to Dewa Brahma. Kusuma is stunned, but swallows his own sadness, informing his mother that he is willing to sacrifice himself for the safety of his family. In the story, Kusuma is delivered into the crater of Mount Bromo and his sacrifice appeases Dewa Brahma's anger. Mount Bromo becomes dormant and the villagers, Ki Segar, Nyai Anteng, and their 24 remaining children are saved. From that day onwards, the Tengger people take part in an annual supplication of sacrifices for Mount Bromo. Instead of sacrificing their sons, they offer a buffalo's head as well as part of their annual harvest.

At the heart of 'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada' is the idea that even if a couple is in a happy relationship and lead a contented life, they still need children to feel 'complete'. But how true is this notion that children are the source of happiness in a marriage? Kohler, Behrman, and Skyttthe (2005), who conducted a study investigating whether 'Partner + Child = Happiness', found it difficult to prove whether or not the notion was true. They found that there are too many factors that affect how a couple may feel towards having children, one of which is the sex of an individual because 'important sex differences exist between women and men with respect to the influence on well-being of the number of children, stepchildren, the role of current partnerships, and the timing of fertility' (Kohler, Behrman, and Skyttthe 2005:435-6). Another factor is age, where older parents (aged between 50 and 70) do not seem to experience the same level of happiness at having children as do parents between the ages of 25 and 45 (Kohler, Behrman, and Skyttthe 2005:435).

'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada' shows the lengths to which a childless couple will sometimes go to in order to beget children. Dewa Brahma requires that Ki Segar and Nyai Anteng sacrifice their firstborn son. Desperately in want of children, the couple are willing to make this promise. However, upon the birth of their firstborn, and having raising the child to adulthood, the obligation to sacrifice their son becomes unbearable. Kusuma is the couple's favourite child, and Nyai Anteng would rather sacrifice her own life than have her beloved son killed. This preferential bias for the firstborn child is

common among parents. The eldest child has received the greatest amount of investment and has also survived the perilous years of childhood. The high status of a firstborn child is evident when taking into consideration the fact that in societies practicing infanticide, ‘there is not a single culture that calls for the sacrifice of older siblings!’ (Suloway 1995:76). The status given to firstborns might be offered as an explanation for Nyai Anteng and Ki Segar’s reluctance to sacrifice their firstborn child.²²

Finally, the noticeable lack of external pressure on the couple in ‘Asal Mula Upacara Kasada’ seems to imply that the desire to have children is ‘natural’. Husband and wife are moved by their own feelings of inadequacy, signifying that their desire is ‘natural’ and ‘innate’. I would argue that this type of message, where the feeling of wanting to be a parent can be perceived to be ‘natural’, and perhaps even encouraged through stories such as ‘Asal Mula Upacara Kasada’, can be seen as one of the building blocks of cultural expectations. While one can hypothesize that cultural stimulation through storytelling can positively influence the transmission of genes in the community, it can also create ‘natural/accepted’ versus ‘unnatural/unacceptable’ feelings of motherhood. These ideas of naturalness can be problematic for women who are disinclined to such desires. As argued in a study by Kohler, Behrman, and Skytthe (2005), while women may desire children ‘naturally’, there are various social and environmental factors at play that support the satisfaction of bearing children. Age at first birth, the number of children born during different parts of a woman’s life, the sex of the children born, the support given to older parents – these factors are often missing from oral stories that stress the importance of childbearing as evidenced in ‘Asal Mula Upacara Kasada’ (Kohler, Behrman, and Skytthe 2005:434-436).

The Sakalava people of Madagascar also stress the importance of childbearing through the tale of ‘The Two Brothers’. The story opens with a barren old wife. Distressed at her inability to conceive, she consults an ogre named Rakakabe. She confides that the village people laugh at her childlessness, and that she fears her husband will leave her. Rakakabe agrees to help her on the condition that she gives him her firstborn child. The old wife consents to the terms. Soon, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to twin sons.

²² Further discussion of the characteristics of the eldest sibling are made in Chapter 2: Sibling Competition and Cooperation.

When her children are older, Rakakabe goes to claim his part of the bargain. The mother agrees to identify one of her sons by placing a red *lamba*, a type of garment, on his person. However, the plan goes astray when her son decides to cut the *lamba* into small pieces and to distribute it among the village children. The monster complains to the mother that he is unable to identify the chosen child. She tries to point out her son to Rakakabe, but her son evades capture. Frustrated, Rakakabe changes his tactics and sets out a task for the twins in order to select one for himself. The twins are ordered to use a coconut shell to bring back as much water as they can to Rakakabe. Following the monster's orders, one of the twins manages to complete the task and his mother instructs him to follow Rakakabe home. When the boy arrives in Rakakabe's cave, he finds an old woman who tells him of the ogre's plan to eat him. The boy then kills the monster and rejoins his brother. The two brothers live happily ever after, enjoying many more adventures that show off their cleverness.

While the mother's act of searching for a cure for her infertility is not the main plotline of the story, her feeling of desperation at wanting children can still be considered a memetic theme as it is replicated across various oral stories. It suggests an inherent evolutionary *need* for the proliferation of genes, highlighted through the mother's willingness to sacrifice even herself in order to become pregnant. These oral traditions show that parents will seek various alternatives, making deals with fantastic creatures of both heavenly and monstrous origins, in order to have children. In 'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada', Nyai Anteng and her husband prayed to Dewa Brahma and agreed to sacrifice their son; in 'The Two Brothers', the old mother also agreed to sacrifice one of her twin sons to the ogre, Rakakabe. These sacrifices are made for the sole intention to conceive and, by extension, transmit their genes to another generation. The old mother's journey and visit to Rakakabe, however, is more dangerous than Nyai Anteng and her husband's, as she faced the probability of being killed by the ogre. I would argue that she is willing to risk her life because she feels that a life without children is worse than death. Thus she takes the perceived necessary risks in order to obtain children, and ensures the continued proliferation of her genes.

While 'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada' emphasized the married couple's own desires to have children, the old woman in 'The Two Brothers' is driven by negative perceptions of childlessness in her community. She is ridiculed by her fellow villagers and fears

abandonment by her husband because of her inability to bear a child. The disapproval associated with childlessness in 'The Two Brothers' displays the community's perception of what is regarded as an 'unnatural' woman. This negative response to female childlessness is, unfortunately, a normalized part of pre-modern (and to a certain extent, contemporary) human society; in many pronatalist societies, the idea of a 'proper' woman is synonymous with the state of motherhood, while childlessness, whether by choice or inability to conceive, is associated with an 'abnormal' woman and treated as 'other' (Letherby 2002:10). In an extensive study on the perceptions of childlessness amongst women, Rosemary Gillespie found that these women are often thought as 'unnatural', 'unhealthy', 'deviant', and 'unfeminine' (Gillespie 2003:124). It can be argued that the impetus to search for alternative methods of conceiving is beneficial towards the continuation of a society; hence, it can be hypothesized that a community would, either subconsciously or consciously, encourage stories that move women to recognize the importance of child-bearing, in order to ensure the survival of the community's members, even at the expense of the women's own survival.

The final story to be discussed is also from Madagascar and is entitled 'Faralahy Mahery: Strong Youngest Son'. The focus will be on an early segment of the story where the audience is introduced to an old woman who is unable to bear children. The woman goes to a healer, Faralahy Mahery, to find a cure for her problem; he promises to heal her condition, but asks that if she has a daughter she will marry her to him, and if she has a son, that he will become Faralahy Mahery's brother. The woman and her husband agree, and a short time later they have a baby girl. The girl, Isoamangitravelo, grows up knowing that she is betrothed to Faralahy Mahery, as the parents make it clear that this had been part of their bargain with the healer. When Isoamangitravelo is older, Faralahy Mahery comes to marry her. While her parents agree to give her away, Isoamangitravelo asks him to wait as she says she is too young to leave her parents. He agrees and promises to return when she has come of age. However, when she does so, she searches for her betrothed instead of waiting for him. Failing to find him on her journey, Isoamangitravelo marries another man, and Faralahy Mahery has to fight with her husband's entire village in order to regain her as his wife.

The new mother in 'Faralahy Mahery: Strong Youngest Son' is more fortunate than the mothers in earlier stories. The choice of payment for the healer's services is non-lethal;

instead of deadly sacrifices, he wished to be bonded with the woman's child through marriage or brotherhood. In both instances, the mother would gain a child as well as a protector. A protector, whether in the form of a husband or a brother, is important in assisting the survival of a child. Parents always need help in raising their offspring; a healer, who is knowledgeable in caring for the wounded and the sick, would be an advantageous addition to the family. Thus, the parents' decision in 'Faralahy Mahery: Strong Youngest Son' was not a difficult one. Indeed, they are so happy to have someone else take responsibility for their daughter that they are willing to give her away in marriage before she is even of age.

The role of the healer in this story is arguably analagous to the role of a medical specialist involved in fertility treatment in contemporary society. This implies that the inability of Nyai Anteng to conceive is regarded as a form of 'sickness' to which there is a 'cure' (the same could be said of modern medical fertility treatments). Secondly, medical treatments can become another form of social 'attack' used against childless women, in that childlessness is inexcusable as there is now the technology to 'cure' their infertility (Letherby 2002:15). In Letherby's (2002) research on perceptions of 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' childlessness, several of her respondents 'noted it was common for them to be told "well, you can have a test-tube baby, can't you."' (Letherby 2002:15)'

In the three stories discussed above, parenthood, especially motherhood, is presented as an ideal state that continues the human life-cycle.²³ Long before the understanding of evolutionary fitness and the human drive to reproduce, such stories represented the deep fears and desires of societies needing to ensure that they (and thus their collective genes) were carried forward. The memetic theme in these stories functions by motivating listeners to continue to reproduce, and to feel that without children their lives would be incomplete. These deep-seated longings are best summarized through the following statement made by 'Claire' in a sociological study on childlessness and the feelings of these childless mothers:

²³ This is a stark contrast to the manner in which motherhood is addressed in literature with women as protagonists. In *kakawin* literature, specifically, 'only a few *kakawin* consider women as mothers. Even this interest is muted, little more than a passing reference to the need to provide descendance' (Creese 2004:71).

“If it turns out –as it looks likely- that I won’t have children, as well as being deprived of the whole vast experience of motherhood and a nurturing role I shall be contributing nothing to the future and unable to pass any of my ‘self’ on. My existence will be invalid, I shall be an evolutionary dead-end as well as a biological misfit, my life up to now will have been a waste and my life in the future will be pointless and purposeless. This isn’t something that can be ‘unthought’ or rationalized away – it’s how I feel. I’ve heard it asked whether the drive to have children is biological or ‘simply’ social conditioning. In my case it’s neither; it is spiritual and existential (Letherby 2002:13-14).”

This type of fear, in terms of evolutionary fitness, has evolved to spur individuals to continue to survive and to reproduce. This fear of childlessness poses a conundrum to evolutionary feminists in navigating through discussions concerning ‘naturalness’ and ‘motherhood’. On a positive note, humans are social creatures that have created cultures that can constantly be adapted to their surroundings, thus the reproductive drive does not need to comprise an individual’s sole ‘natural purpose’ or social responsibility. Later in this thesis, I will examine other aspects of the female life-cycle that, at times, may not involve motherhood, but can still contribute to the proliferation and success of an individual and a community.

CHAPTER 1: MOTHER – CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

“Being a mother is an attitude, not a biological relation.”

- Robert A. Heinlein

1.1 Mother Knows Best

When one thinks of a mother, one draws up an image of a selfless woman who is prepared to do anything for her child. A mother is connected with the idea of home and family, with the idea of a woman who has a natural and unlimited supply of love and care. These ideas have been perpetuated through stories in various mediums, from oral traditions, to the Grimms’ fairy tales, and even through Disney’s animated movies. Over the years, however, women have begun to question and resist the roles that have long been assumed to be a ‘natural’ part of motherhood. From George Eliot responding to Herbert Spencer’s social Darwinian idea of ‘women as breeding machines’ in 1859, to Elisabeth Badinter questioning maternal instinct in 1980, debates have been carried out on the idea of the ‘natural mother’ (Hrdy 1999:22, 309). Is there really such a thing as a natural mother? Or are these ideals socially constructed? Chapter 1 aims to examine the ‘naturalness’ of motherhood and to understand how this ‘naturalness’ is addressed from an evolutionary perspective.

Primatologist Sarah Hrdy asserts that, ‘a mother’s emotional commitment to her infant can be highly contingent on ecologically and historically produced circumstances’ (1999:316). This is to say that mothers *can* be the loving, nurturing figure often depicted in stories, but they first need to feel a sense of security. If a mother feels that she will face difficulties after delivering her child, this may influence the way a mother feels and acts towards her newborn. Among the factors that could sway a mother’s decision to love and care for her child include living conditions, financial circumstances, as well as the presence or absence of a support system. Support systems can take the form of a father figure, a caring family, or a beneficial government programme.

Evolution has developed many ways to prompt a mother to dote on and care for her child. Theories of mother-child bonding cite the importance of the mother's subconscious understanding that her child shares her genes. The genetic bond, which creates a link between a child to his or her mother, increases the mother's motivation to invest her energies in her newborn (Keller 2000:960). Hrdy (1999) argues, however, that more important than genes is financial and social stability. If a mother feels that she is in a supportive environment, she will be more likely to invest and care for her offspring (Hrdy 1999:149-167; Keller 2000:960). There are also biological processes that take place to ensure that a mother bonds with her child: oxytocin levels increase upon contact with the child, and are further elevated upon breastfeeding; the child also attempts to win his or her mother's favour by mimicking her facial expressions, grasping her proffered finger or breast, and charming its way to protection with its cute baby features (Hrdy 1999:390, 536-9). These processes all work to assist in strengthening the bond between a mother and child, which is crucial for the perpetuation of genes.

From an evolutionary perspective, a mother's investment in effort and time in her child aims to ensure that he or she will grow safely into adulthood, find their own mate, and produce his or her own offspring, and in doing so transmit the family's genes. Numerous stories illustrate a mother's important role in society and remind children of how they have managed to survive. In the first of J.K. Rowling's hugely popular children's series, Lily Potter sacrificed her life to save her only son, Harry (Rowling 1997). Rudyard Kipling's (1894) *Raksha*, Mowgli's wolf mother, and Edgar Rice Burroughs's (1912) *Kala*, Tarzan's ape mother, exemplify the importance of mothers in ensuring the survival of a child. This chapter will thus discuss Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories revolving around this memetic theme: the importance of mothers. In section 1.1, six stories will be discussed in regards to the importance of *the mother to her child*; three will focus on the concept of 'derhaka', a Malay term that denotes the act of betraying one's superiors, and three will look into circumstances that lead a mother to cut off her investments and to abandon her child.

1.1.1 Derhaka

‘Malin Kundang’ and ‘Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa’ (The Origins of Mount Batu Banawa) are stories with similar plots but have characters and locations of different names. In both, a boy, who is known as ‘Malin Kundang’ in the tale from West Sumatera and ‘Raden Penganten’ in the second tale from Sulawesi, is born into a poor family. He leaves his village and travels in order to seek fortune for himself. After a while, he becomes master of his own ship and marries a beautiful woman. After many years away from his mother, he decides to return home. When Malin Kundang/Raden Penganten’s ship reaches his village, news of his arrival quickly spreads. Upon hearing of her son’s return, his mother runs out to meet him. In one version she meets him with his favourite dish, in another she leaves her pot in the middle of her cooking. In both tales, she has grown old and haggard, having lived alone all the years her son was away. Ashamed by his mother’s appearance, the son refuses to acknowledge his mother, declaring that his real mother must have died in his absence, and orders his ship to depart. The mother is distraught by her son’s rejection and calls on the gods to punish him. A great storm takes place and the mother’s wish is granted. In ‘Malin Kundang’, the son and his ship are turned into stone, while in ‘Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa’ they are transformed and fused into a mountain.

A curious detail in ‘Malin Kundang’ and ‘Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa’ is that the son’s embarrassment at his mother’s ragged poverty is aggravated by the presence of his beautiful wife. The shame that the son experiences is part of a range of human emotions that acts as a warning to an individual of their impending loss of stature, and thus loss of attractiveness, to another individual (Fessler 2004:249, Matos, Pinto-Gouveia, and Gilbert 2013:336).²⁴ Shame mobilizes an individual to avoid a course of action that could devalue them in the eyes of another individual, to limit any sort of damage that can be caused by embarrassing information, and to assist a shamed individual to respond to his or her new social environment (Sznycer et al. 2013:2).²⁵ In the case of

²⁴ Fessler’s (2004) evolutionary anthropological study compared the effects of shame in two cultures: Bengkulu (Indonesia) and California (United States). Matos, Pinto-Gouveia, and Gilbert’s (2013), on the hand, provided a summary of emotions that were linked to a feeling of shame and social anxiety.

²⁵ Sznycer et al.’s (2013) study found that individuals with lower relational mobility feel greater shame when faced with another valued individual, that individuals with ‘higher levels of socially valued

these two stories, the son is concerned with how his mother's destitution reflects on himself in the eyes of his wife. His act of rejecting his mother is an attempt to 'save face', and to ensure that his wife does not leave him. His choice makes evolutionary sense; should his wife leave him, he will lose access to reproduction and thus the proliferation of his genes. From the point of view of Malin Kundang/Raden Penganten, his act of cutting ties with his mother to maintain new ones with his wife aims to ensure his own reproductive survival.

The moralistic ending of 'Malin Kundang' and 'Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa', however, shows a cultural disapproval of such a choice. The audience views Malin Kundang/Raden Penganten's mother as the embodiment of the 'good mother' figure throughout these two tales. She cares for her child and makes his favourite dishes; she loves him so much that when he asks for her permission to leave, she gives him her blessings, even when it means she will be left alone. Nevertheless, the story emphasizes that while a mother's love is selfless, a child must not take her love and care for granted; the child is expected to repay the mother's natal investment. In 'Malin Kundang' and 'Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa', the son not only refuses to assist his mother after he becomes wealthy, but he also rejects her. The punishment meted to Malin Kundang/Raden Penganten reflects an understanding that a mother's care is not unconditional; children are indebted to their mothers and are expected to care for them later in life. In the story, Malin Kundang/Raden Penganten fails to return this gift, and so the mother punishes him.

The same message regarding the value of mothers is found in the tale of 'The Spoiled Little Kitten' from North Sumatra. This focuses on a Siamese cat and her male kitten. Growing up in a palace and smothered with affection, the kitten becomes spoiled. One day, disaster strikes when the palace burns down. The mother and kitten survive, but their lives change drastically when the pair is left homeless. The mother searches for food for her family, but the kitten does nothing to help and the work takes its toll on the mother. Seeing that his mother is becoming increasingly weak, the little kitten decides that she is an unacceptable provider and goes in search of a new mother. He asks many powerful things to be his new mother – the sun, the mist, the wind, the hill, the carabao,

characteristics were less prone to shame', and that shame was felt more in the presence of strangers than friends (2013:8-11).

the rattan, and the rat – but they all defer to another more powerful than them. The rat finally acknowledges that while he is powerful in his own right, he knows of an even more powerful being. The rat tells of a creature that stalks him, threatening to bring the end of his days. The kitten realizes that it is his mother being described as the most powerful of all creatures. He repents and returns to her side, and they live happily ever after.

The kitten displays a high degree of prideful behaviour that can be attributed to ‘favorable comparisons of the self to others, or socially valued standards, which implicate rises in social status’ (Oveis, Horberg, and Keltner 2010:619). He feels superior to others after having been spoiled all his life, first by his owner and then later by his mother. As his mother’s capability to care for him diminishes, he feels a growing sense of superiority over her; this buttresses his prideful behaviour in searching for a new provider. The type of pride experienced by the kitten is not associated with positive feelings of accomplishment or success, but leans towards hubristic pride, which is characterized by an ‘anti-social facet, associated with disagreeableness, neuroticism, and a lack of conscientiousness, as well as narcissism, problematic relationships, and poor mental health outcomes’ (Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich 2010:335). Pride can be negatively associated with a person’s sociality as it disengages a person from others who can potentially help his or her survival. This is what happens between the kitten and his mother. The spoiled kitten views his mother as an unqualified ‘provider’ as she falls short of the expectations from having once lived in a palace. His pride in his status blinds him from seeing that he was part of the problem in that he was not contributing to his own survival.

When the kitten searches for a new provider, he seeks out and is deferential to figures that he sees as superior to himself. It can be argued that this is reflective of the kitten’s prideful character in that ‘pride may represent a psychological adaptation that guides the selection of strategies (including cognitions, subjective feelings, and behaviours) from an organism's repertoire, and thereby facilitates the acquiring, sustaining, and signalling of social status’ (Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich 2010:335). Thus the kitten’s searching for superior figures denotes his need to establish and sustain his status. Through his interactions with each of the characters he meets the kitten discovers that the mist is superior to the sun, the wind is superior to the mist, the hill is superior to the wind, the

carabao is superior to the hill, the rattan is superior to the carabao, and that the rat is superior to the rattan. The idea that the kitten's mother is superior above all others dawns on him only after the rat tells him of an even more powerful creature. In overcoming his feelings of pride and accepting the idea that no one and nothing on earth could be better for a child than his or her own mother, the kitten is helping to ensure his own survival.

It can make perfect evolutionary sense to have one's own genetic interest at heart, as can be argued for the case of Malin Kundang, Raden Penganten, and the little kitten. By putting themselves first, instead of caring about their mothers, they prioritized their own somatic and reproductive survival. However, whenever looking at fitness, especially human fitness, it is insufficient to consider only one's own interest because humans are highly social creatures that are embedded in complex social systems. To ignore the social aspect of human fitness is to endanger one's own overall survival. The little kitten epitomizes this human dilemma. He realizes that his survival depends on both himself and his mother. Unlike the kitten's mother, Malin Kundang and Raden Penganten's selfishness was not kindly looked upon by their mothers. In this case, the wrath of a mother can be understood as the manner in which society may punish an individual who puts their own needs above their kin, especially the mother that raised them.

1.1.2 Abandoned Children

As seen in the previous section on 'Derhaka', raising children can be difficult work. Parents find it challenging to constantly cater to their children's need for attention. This need for care and attention from mothers can be seen as a way for children to ensure an advantage in seeking somatic success. Older or larger children will generally be more demanding of their mother's attention, particularly when they feel as if they were favoured in the first place.²⁶ In studies on birth order and relationships, Catherine Salmon emphasises this point by stating that the elder siblings have 'the security of parental preferences' (Salmon 2003:74). Elder siblings, however, will demand more attention should they face neglect with the arrival of newer, more vulnerable siblings

²⁶ In one study, it was found that 'the strongest demands for investment come from ambivalent children, who experience inconsistently sensitive caregivers (i.e., intermediate parental investment) and display clingy, attention-seeking, and overly dependent behaviour' (Schlomer, Del Giudice and Ellis 2011:500).

who can dominate their parents' time and resources. This type of older versus younger sibling competition can lead to unwanted and troublesome behaviour. To avoid such difficulties, parents attempt to curb unwanted behaviour from an early stage. This can be a challenging task. A balance needs to be struck by parents when attempting to regulate the behaviour of their children: too much control may result in rebellion, while too little control may foster a sense of privilege. Among the types of behaviour-regulating control that parents try to instil in their children include 'discipline, monitoring, and autonomy granting, as well as affective components of parent behaviours, including warmth, acceptance, and responsiveness'; these types of behaviours have been seen as being 'predictors of children's adjustment' to 'social, emotional, and behavioural development' (Kiff, Lengua and Zalewski 2011:251). Quite obviously, a tremendous amount of time and energy is put into raising, nurturing, and educating children.

However, even after all the efforts made by parents, certain conditions may lead them to cease investments in their children. A mother may cease investment if her child indicates poor future prospects, or if taking care of the child jeopardizes the mother's own survival.²⁷ One of the common ways of terminating maternal investment is through child abandonment. Sarah Hrdy describes abandonment as 'one extreme of a continuum that ranges between termination of investment and the total commitment of a mother carrying her baby everywhere and nursing it on demand' (Hrdy 1999:297). She explains that one of the abandonment tactics taken by mothers includes leaving their children in foundling homes, which have historically terrible survival rates (Hrdy 1999:299-308). Another tactic includes psychologically distancing themselves from their child, opting not to breast-feed, 'with the result that the baby succumbs to dysentery' (Hrdy 1999:304). These cases of abandonment can be seen as attempts to clear the mother of guilt when terminating investment in her child (Hrdy 1999:305, 308).

Stories of 'Abandoned Children' tell of the conditions that lead otherwise loving mothers to abandon their children. The first story, 'Rawa Tekuluk', is a West Sumatran tale of the relationship between a girl, Upik, and her mother after the death of her father. Before his death, Upik had been spoiled by her parents and had never been taught, or

²⁷ According to Schlomer, Del Giudice and Ellis, 'a powerful external circumstance that regulates parental investment is resource availability: lack of nutritional and economic resources' (2011:502).

required, to do any work. Following the death of her father, Upik's mother takes a job harvesting rice in order to provide for the family. The mother also gives a bigger portion of her food to her daughter, even though Upik does nothing to help in the fields. At the end of the harvest season, the mother receives fifteen *sukats*²⁸ of rice as payment. She asks Upik to carry five *sukats* of rice as she is too old and weak to carry all of them by herself. Upik refuses to help and is unsympathetic to her mother's plight. Upik's mother has no choice but to hide five *sukats* of rice under the bushes in a nearby swamp and carries the remaining ten *sukats* home on her own. When the time to dry the rice arrives, the mother is needed at home to watch over the rice, so she sends Upik to retrieve the five *sukats*. Upik goes off in a huff and comes back empty-handed, saying that the rice has vanished. The mother is confused as she has hidden the rice well, and goes to look in the original hiding place under the bush. Instead, she finds them buried in mud. None of the rice can be salvaged. The mother realizes that her daughter has destroyed their rice in order to avoid the effort of carrying it home. The daughter, however, is adamant that her mother is at fault for making her work. Stunned by her daughter's wastefulness and selfishness, the mother leaves without turning back. As Upik goes after her, she slips and falls into the swamp. As she sinks, she cries out for her mother's help, but her mother fails to hear her. As a result, Upik dies in the swamp.

Early in the story, it was established that Upik's reluctance to work lies with her parents spoiling their daughter. With both parents in a stable environment and able to pool their energies to provide for their family, the daughter is placed in a privileged position whereby she is able to live free of any labour. The parents' situation seems to reflect a pattern found amongst many animals: 'in stable and well-resourced environments, parents can afford to invest in needier offspring in a "compensatory" fashion' (Schlomer, Del Giudice and Ellis 2011:503). In the case of Upik's family, her father had been a source of stability. If he had continued to be a source of income and physical strength in the family, Upik might have been able to continue her life never having to raise a finger. The parents' failure to instil a work ethic in their daughter, however understandable, was ultimately short-sighted.

²⁸ One *sukat* is approximately 12.5 kilograms (Bunanta 2003:62)

The death of the father coupled with Upik's resistance to work, left Upik's mother with the burden of obtaining resources on her own. Upik's assistance could have balanced the loss of the father and alleviated her mother's load; however, her refusal to help kept her family impoverished and aggravated the situation. Despite all her efforts, Upik's mother needed an extra pair of hands to assist in chores. This situation can be viewed as an example of the difficulty of single motherhood, where even if a single mother is an able-bodied working woman, she may still need assistance from others. Being solely responsible for supporting oneself and a child can make a situation more difficult than it already is, leading to feelings of distress. Single mothers in such situations have been found to commit infanticide, as a result of being unable to cope with the extra burden of a child (Friedman, Cavney and Resnick 2012:588,589).

On an evolutionary level, Upik would have been a losing investment for her mother as she failed to assist and even endangered her family's somatic survival. Displaying no sense of cooperative behaviour, Upik would be an unreliable partner for a potential mate. Lacking a sense of responsibility for her family, and unable to care for herself, Upik would have made a poor partner.²⁹ I would argue that Upik's mother realized the danger to her own survival when she discovered that Upik wasted five *sukats* of rice simply to escape work. Had Upik been merely unhelpful (like the spoiled little kitten), her mother would probably not consider her such a poor investment. Upik is more than unhelpful; she is also antagonistic towards the survival of herself and her mother. This malicious behaviour, rather than her selfishness, is the reason for her abandonment.

A tale from the Philippines, 'Agkon: The Greedy Son', tells a similar story. Agkon, the son of the widow, Balligokan, catches and kills a fat rooster. He proudly shows the bird to his mother and Balligokan is excited at the prospect of eating it. Agkon prepares a soup, but just as he is about to finish cooking he drops his ladle to the ground. His mother goes to retrieve the ladle, and Agkon quickly draws up the ladder so that she is unable to climb up after him. Upon recovering his ladle, Agkon tells his mother that he will begin eating and will call for her later. His mother asks for her son to save some chicken for her but Agkon greedily eats until nothing is left. When he finally lowers the ladder, Balligokan sees that her son has saved nothing for her. Saddened, his mother

²⁹ In a recent review of the subject, it has been shown that humans intuitively identify individuals who will be cooperative and those who will not (Baumard, André and Sperber 2013:62).

goes away and casts a spell over a corpse. The corpse is reanimated, and she brings it home to eat her son. Agkon pleads for her help, but Balligokan ignores him. The corpse devours Agkon and Balligokan is left alone. Deprived of her son's company, Balligokan becomes so lonely that she casts another spell to return him from death. When Agkon is brought back to life, both mother and child promise to cherish each other, and Agkon promises his mother that he will always share his food.

Unlike Upik, Agkon helps in the housework and brings food for his family. However, instead of sharing that food with his mother, he eats it all himself. The story attributes his vice to greed, as reflected in the title, 'Agkon: The Greedy Son', but is it greed that causes Agkon to meet his mother's lethal wrath or is it an unwillingness to share? The memetic theme of individual fitness versus kin altruism resurfaces in this tale. Agkon may have considered it in his best interest to feed only himself, but the development of the story shows otherwise. As Korchmaros and Kenny argue, 'human societies have implicit and explicit rules that impose constraints on the behaviors of their members and that prescribe different rules for relationships among kin than for those among non-kin and for relationships among close kin than for those among more distant kin' (2006:23-24). These rules encompass the relationship between parents and their children; parents expect to be paid for their care, whether it is through bringing 'credit to the family name, or to translate parental investment into either cultural success or its former correlate: enhanced fitness for lineage' (Hrady 1999:318).

A final theme that emerges from this tale is the *reason* for both mother and son to engage in cooperative behaviour; rather than a moral decision to be altruistically good to each other, their behaviour may instead indicate an evolutionary preference to improve their individual survival. This is seen when Agkon's mother realizes she is unable to live without her son. Even though he caused her pain from his selfishness, she did not want to face the world alone. Balligokan finds it better to cooperate with her son, enduring his occasional lapses of judgment, rather than suffering on her own. The ending sees Agkon's mother bringing him back to life; mother and son promise to care for each other both emotionally and in terms of resource-sharing. In a study by Baumard, André and Sperber, emphasis is given to the fact that 'not all cooperative behaviour, whether mutualistic or altruistic, is moral behaviour' and that 'behaviour based on parental instinct or friendship is aimed at increasing the welfare of specific

individuals to the extent that this welfare is directly or indirectly beneficial to the actor' (2013:60). I would suggest that the decision made by Balligokan to revive her son is a reflection of this finding.

The final tale on 'Abandoned Children' is a story collected from the province of South Maluku, Indonesia. 'Batu Badaung' focuses on a widowed mother with two children to care for. After many days of searching for food, the mother catches a skinny fish that she cooks for her children and herself. She reminds them to leave a little for the next day as she might be unable to find more food. In the morning the mother goes in search of food, but by the time the sun sets she is empty-handed. Exhausted, she returns home, anticipating a scrap of fish waiting for her. However, she finds that her children have finished all of the fish and that nothing has been saved. Saddened, the mother goes to bed hungry. Her luck at finding food does not improve the following day; she despairs and goes to Batu Badaung, a rock with rumoured magical powers. She pleads for the rock to swallow her whole as she is unable feed her family. The rock opens up and the mother jumps inside, disappearing forever.

'Batu Badaung' is different from other stories of 'Abandoned Children' because of the utter hopelessness that pervades the story. Here, the mother despairs of being able to provide for her offspring. Her children are young and are unable to assist in the search for food. This makes it difficult for the struggling mother to survive; luck at finding food is not on her side and her children are too young to understand the need for frugality. Her act of abandonment comes from her belief that she cannot possibly provide for them. To leave them, in the hopes that perhaps they might have a better future under someone else's care, would be preferable to facing certain starvation and death.

Throughout history, there have been records of mothers abandoning their children because of their inability to care for them.³⁰ This is reflected in the numerous foundling homes that were established throughout Europe as an attempt to assist in the lives of

³⁰ Indeed, there seems to be a 'feminization of poverty' based on records in church archives from eighteenth century Batavia, showing that '70-80% [of applicants] were single women and women with children' (Niemeijer 2000:182).

these abandoned children (Hrdy 1999:299-302).³¹ These mothers hoped that by leaving their children in the hands of fate, they would have a better chance at life; a line of thought similar to the mother in ‘Batu Badaung’. In reality, the mother’s abandonment of her young children can be inferred as a form of involuntary infanticide. In the case of ‘Batu Badaung’, the mother’s act of suicide and abandonment can be seen as a method to cleanse herself of guilt at her inability to provide for her children. Instead of being responsible for their possible deaths, she abandons them, leaving their survival to chance.

While the trigger of the mother’s suicide in ‘Batu Badaung’ was her children’s disobedience, emphasis should be made on the living conditions that were destructive to the mother’s mental health. Several factors led to the deterioration of her mental health: the loss of a partner and mutual provider, the poverty of her situation, periods of starvation, and the sole responsibility of caring for her two children. While these examples are not predictors of suicidal tendencies, they are factors that could aggravate her unstable mental health conditions. Of all cases of maternal infanticide, only infanticide that results from the mother’s own suicide can be considered a result of the mother’s own mental illness (Camperio Ciani and Fontanesi 2012:525). Friedman, Cavney and Resnick (2012:589) show that women who commit filicide are often suffering ‘multiple stressors’ such as being ‘poor, socially isolated, [or even being] violence victims themselves’; these are conditions that are similar to the mother in ‘Batu Badaung’. It shows that far from being ‘natural’, the image of the caring mother is posited on a result of stable and supportive circumstances.

1.2 Children’s Need for Reciprocity

Mothers are often portrayed as the ultimate altruists, willing to do anything for nothing for the sake of their children. As shown in section 1.1, this is not necessarily true. If mothers, supposedly the most altruistic of humans, are driven by self-preserving instincts, what does that mean for the rest of humankind? Are humans ever truly capable of altruism? This is a divisive question – some thinkers are certain that humans are

³¹ Sarah Hrdy (1999) provides an overview of the establishment of foundling homes and the high number of child deaths in these establishments. For example, the Innocenti, one of the largest of ‘sixteen foundling homes in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany’ had ‘appalling’ mortality rates (Hrdy 1999:299).

capable of selfless acts, even at a cost to themselves, while others maintain that humans will always have self-serving intentions in mind. Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857), founder of the discipline of sociology, coined the term ‘altruism’ as referring ‘to live for others’ (*vivre pour autrui*) (Comte 1973 [1851]:565–56), a concept that is often linked to human morality. However, when the question of altruism spills into evolutionary science, the issue is explored through a different dimension. While certain species, such as the honey bee,³² can perform ‘evolutionary altruistic’ acts, humans are said to be more ‘psychologically altruistic’ (Sober 2002:17). The notion of psychological altruism can only be applied to beings with the power of conscious reflection. However, questions still arise as to whether psychologically altruistic acts are simply for the sake of others or contain selfish benefits for the altruist (Sober 2002:18-19).

Altruism is seen as evolutionarily ‘confounding’ because humans are perceived as a self-interested species, always looking to advance their own fitness. When analysing why humans engage in selfless acts with family members in particular, one evolutionary theory that has been used is altruism by kin or group selection (Sober 2002:26). Indeed, altruistic acts towards family members may not be wholly selfless as assisting one’s kin can be an extension of assisting the fitness of one’s own genes through ‘inclusive fitness’. These outwardly altruistic tendencies towards family members can be interpreted as a form of ‘reciprocal altruism’. Reciprocal altruism works when individuals ‘conditionally help others as long as the costs of helping are outweighed by the future benefits scaled by the likelihood of future interactions’ (House et al. 2013:1).

Reciprocity,³³ unlike true altruism, works through a give-and-take relationship. Reciprocal help, while seemingly altruistic, engages its receiver in a contract which requires a return of the favour. This type of relationship is common between parents and their children, where the boundless care, energy, and resources provided by the parents are not without terms and conditions. In most cultures, children are expected to

³² The honey bee ‘disembowels itself’ through its barbed stinger, pumping venom into an intruder of its nest, and thus protecting its community at a cost to itself (Sober 2002:17).

³³ This thesis uses an evolutionary understanding of human reciprocity, specifically in regards to parent-child reciprocal acts. In cultural anthropology, reciprocity is often understood through the works of Marshall Sahlins (1972) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1949). These two prominent figures relate reciprocity to kin groups and social status; an evolutionary perspective relates reciprocity to inclusive fitness (ensuring the survival of genes amongst genetic relatives).

reciprocate their parents' earlier investments by taking care of their parents when they reach old age.

'The main idea of reciprocity in parent-child relationships refers to long-term exchange: Adult children feel indebted to their old and frail parents, who supported them earlier, and use time transfers of help and care as repayments for the earlier parental investments' (Leopold and Raab 2010:3).

Adult offspring are expected to repay their parents' altruistic acts by investing similar care, energy, and expenses. Reciprocal altruism has been so encoded into human genes that some children feel obligated to care for their parents, even when the parents have been neglectful (Silverstein et al. 2002:S10-11).

Recent studies on reciprocal altruism have shown that alongside long-term reciprocity between parents and children, there exists also 'short-term reciprocity' (Leopold and Raab 2010:7). In long-term reciprocal relationships, children 'repay' their parents' investments later in life. Leopold and Raab found that this form of long-term 'repayment' can strain relationships. There is a continuous need for children to return, in a different form, the support given to them by their parents. This short-term reciprocity helps establish a balanced relationship whereby both sides feel comfortable in their respective positions (Leopold and Raab 2010:8). In theory, when parents and children take part in short-term reciprocal behaviour, they feel less burdened at giving and receiving assistance because their assistance is returned in an appropriate form.

'Abandoned Children' (section 1.1.2) explored the evolutionary underpinnings of the memetic theme of respecting mothers. Stories focused on the mother's plight and children were taught to be aware of their mother's value in their lives. This section will look at the other side of the coin, focusing on the respect that children expect to receive. While parents are held in high regards among Western Malayo-Polynesian speakers, children also need to be valued as the link for posterity. The stories throughout section 1.2 deal with short-term reciprocity between parents and children. They will analyse the effects of parents who do not reciprocate the emotional investments given to them by their children.

1.2.1 Escape through Flight and Sea

‘Raja Tekukur’ (Spotted-Dove King) is a Malay tale that tells the story of the beautiful Puteri Setarik Hati (Heart-Tugging Princess). Growing up, the princess sees her father going off to clear new lands and wishes to join him. She asks for permission to watch him work, but her father refuses, telling his daughter that the area is too wild for her. He promises that the next time he goes to the fields he will allow her to follow. But, when the time comes for him to go to work again, the king makes another excuse to keep Puteri Setarik Hati in the palace. Again and again, the princess begs to follow her father, but the king continues to offer her excuses. One day, her father, mother, her betrothed, and her people are out sowing in the fields, and the princess is left alone in the palace. Sad that her father has yet again broken his promise, and desperate to join her family, she chants a spell that turns her into a spotted dove. She flies to the fields and announces her transformation to her parents; they beg her to return to her human form but she refuses, saying that she does not wish to return to the palace. After repeated failure to coax their daughter to transform herself back into a human, her parents return to the palace. Only her betrothed, Raja Muda, is unwilling to leave her; he gains her sympathy and she transforms herself back into a human. Not long afterwards they are married. As time progresses, Raja Muda becomes curious as to how she had turned into a spotted dove. She begs him not to ask her because the consequences would be disastrous, but he insists. She finally concedes and changes into a spotted dove. She informs him that because he had forced his hand, she will remain a dove forever. She then flies away from the palace, never to return.

This story is an example of short-term reciprocity expected by the child but not given by the parents. Puteri Setarik Hati respects and abides by her parents’ wishes but finds that her own wishes are ignored. Her obedience is taken for granted as her parents expect it in return for their continued care. They feel no need to grant her wishes and fail to anticipate her rebellion. This lack of awareness is attributed to the notion that parents will only ‘repay’ certain types of support by their children. For example, a study by Leopold and Raab found that upward transfers of emotional support (from the children to the parents) do not result in ‘parents’ feelings of dependency’ and because parents do not feel burdened by receiving emotional support from their children, they are disinclined to ‘initiate or repay emotional transfers from children’ (2010:9). This study

complements the situation of Puteri Setarik Hati: the complexity of the parent-child dynamics give rise to misunderstandings when the parents felt no inclination to ‘repay’ their daughter’s obedience through the granting of her wishes.

The ‘flight’ response by Puteri Setarik Hati shows that the child is stepping away from her family and striking out on a life of her own. This flight may lead to two evolutionary problems: firstly, her parents may find themselves without a return on their long-term investments in old age. A lack of care from their child may diminish their quality and length of life (Merz et al. 2009:784). Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the parents’ genetic line may end with their child as they will not know whether their daughter will mate and reproduce. These tensions are briefly assuaged when Raja Muda, the princess’ betrothed, convinces her to return to her human form. Unfortunately, Raja Muda’s lack of respect for his wife leads to her eventual flight from him, and by extension, her family.³⁴ And thus, both Raja Muda and her parents are left unable to propagate their genes. I would argue that in terms of reproductive success, the parents of Puteri Setarik Hati were more affected by this turn of events. Raja Muda would, theoretically, be able to find a new partner and reproduce. As the only child of her parents, Puteri Setarik Hati’s flight from home can be seen as a form of ‘death’, and as such, a termination of their reproductive opportunity. With her transformation into a bird, which originated from a case of unreciprocated care, she effectively puts an end to their line of descendants.

The memetic theme of unreciprocated parent-child investments is not limited to female experiences; the same can be found for sons as well. In the ‘The Story of Kanag’ from the Philippines, Kanag is the son of Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen who is sent to a watch-house to guard their crops from wild pigs. The gates of the watch-house are sturdy and no wild pigs threaten the safety of the crops. With nothing to do at his lonely station, life for Kanag is dreary. His father, Aponitolau, notices his son’s unhappiness but does not share this with his wife, nor does he attempt to comfort his son. One day, Kanag turns himself into a bird and flies away. He does not fly too far, always keeping his parents in sight. He provides direction to his father as a bird, keeping him on a safe path and warning him of dangers that lie ahead. This is not enough for his parents, who

³⁴ The theme of wifely conditions will be analysed in [section 6.1](#): ‘Conditions of Marriage’.

are desperate to bring him back. They decide to find a beautiful girl to tempt Kanag; the plan is successful and Kanag becomes attracted to the girl. He returns to his human form in order to marry her. The story ends happily with Kanag and the girl becoming husband and wife.

Aponitolau, Aponibolinayen, and Kanag are aware of their roles as ‘parent’ and ‘child’, highlighting the importance of reciprocal altruism by both parents and child. As Kanag’s providers, the parents expect their son to reciprocate their investments by safeguarding their crops. As a model son, Kanag accepts this responsibility. But Kanag’s isolation and boredom makes him unhappy and he hopes that his parents will show some understanding of his situation. It is an obvious fact that children wish to feel supported by their parents, but it bears mentioning that studies on emotional health also corroborate this folk knowledge. A paper by Ackard et al. emphasises that ‘increased *perceived* communication and caring by either mother or father were consistently associated with adolescent well-being’ (2006:63, emphasis mine). Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen did not even show *perceived* care through a display of sympathy towards Kanag. Because they had expected their son to reciprocate their investments without asking for more support, they did not anticipate that it would damage their relationship. Their lack of consideration to Kanag’s lonely position causes his eventual flight from home. Upon his transformation, his continued assistance of his family demonstrates his faithfulness as a son. I would thus argue that Kanag’s break from his family was not his fault but was a result of his parents’ carelessness and lack of reciprocity

Kanag’s story ends happily, however, as he returns to his human form. The happy ending is tinged with an evolutionary ‘lesson’ in which Kanag returns only after finding a mate, a process assisted by his parents. Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen seemed to worry about the future of their family; from their method of enticing their son back to human form, it can be hypothesized that they subconsciously wanted to ensure the continuation of their genes. If Kanag had remained a bird, the parents would have lost not only their son but also the chance to perpetuate their genes. Thus, Kanag’s parents actively searched for a prospective partner for their child, luring him back into their world, and ‘redeeming’ themselves. The story’s ending can be read as benefitting both parents and child: Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen are able to ensure that their son

continues to propagate their genes and the sense of unreciprocated care felt by Kanag is alleviated by his parents' assistance. It can be concluded that while these reciprocal actions are not consciously tallied, each party does keep 'score' and it is only when the scores are balanced that harmony is found.

The stories discussed thus far in this section 'Escape through Flight and Sea' looked at situations where parents fail to show respect in return for their child's obedience, leading the children to sever ties with their family. In the following Chamorro stories from Micronesia, while the parents indulge their child with freedom of action, their child fails to reciprocate with obedience. 'The Mermaid' tells of a spoiled girl who loves to swim in the sea. As she grows older, her mother becomes frustrated when her daughter leaves the house early to swim every day, returning only when night has fallen. The daughter fails to carry out her household chores, and one day the mother loses her patience. In her anger, she wishes her daughter to turn into a fish. The girl is unrepentant and continues to swim in the sea until one day her mother's wish is granted. A school of fish provides the girl with scales, and because her lower half is in the water, only her legs are transformed into the tail of a fish. She swims home and tells her parents that she is unable to leave the water. Her father is unwilling to relinquish his daughter to the sea, but discovers that his daughter is unable to live elsewhere. The parents give their tearful blessing to their daughter, who makes her new home in the sea.

Chamorro mermaids make another appearance in a tale of transformation entitled 'Sirena'.³⁵ The title character is a beautiful young woman who enjoys swimming in the river. One day, she abandons her chores and goes swimming. Her mother is enraged and curses her daughter, wishing she turns into a fish. Sirena's grandmother realizes the danger of the mother's words and interjects: 'Leave the part of her that belongs to me as human' (Guampedia 2015). Realizing her mistake, Sirena's mother tries to retract her words but it is too late. Swimming in the river, Sirena is transformed into a mermaid. Saddened that she can no longer live with her family, Sirena wishes that her mother had

³⁵ Oral historian Toni "Malia" Ramirez (2015) notes that the Chamorro 'Sirena' had been developed from Spanish folklore, where 'Sirena' in Spanish can be translated as 'mermaid': 'The story of Sirena was probably adapted in the Chamorro society by either the missionaries, Spanish government officials, or native mariners in the late 1700s' (Ramirez 2015). The Chamorro, however, made the story their own and incorporated it into their own oral tradition. This acceptance by and incorporation into the traditions of the Chamorro people, I would argue, denotes that 'Sirena' is a 'hybrid' oral story, one that makes it worthy of representing Chamorro oral tradition.

punished her in another way. In the end, she makes peace with her transformed self and goes off to live in the sea.

‘The Mermaid’ and ‘Sirena’ bear resemblance to stories in section 1.1 ‘Mother Knows Best’. The mothers are frustrated with their daughters; they feel that their daughters are ‘cheaters’ in their cooperative relationship, and the maternal ‘moralistic aggression’ or ‘indignation’ act as a manner to ‘educate the unreciprocating individual by frightening [her] with immediate harm or with the future harm of no more aid’ (Trivers 1971:49). By expressing their anger, the mothers are attempting to correct the imbalance in their relationships with their daughters. In the stories of ‘Mother Knows Best’, the child repents and the mother’s anger is justified. However, even though it is clear that the child causes difficulties for the mothers in ‘The Mermaid’ and ‘Sirena’, the mothers’ anger does not bring about a positive outcome. In fact, it ends up hurting the child. The story, then, favours the child and is propagating a message that benefits children rather than the parents.

Even when a child is being difficult, a parent should neither act hastily, nor create distance between themselves and their child. Sirena’s grandmother understands this need for reciprocal respect, and also understands the power of words that can transform and permanently damage kin relationships. In ‘The Story of Kanag’, a lack of words damaged parent-child relations. With ‘Sirena’ and ‘The Mermaid’, it is shown that thoughtless words can also create a gap between parent and child. Indeed, its effects, unlike Kanag’s, are more permanent and therefore harmful to the family. There is always a need for ‘open communication and caring’ between the parent and child, and a need for displaying emotional support by being respectful with one’s words (Ackard et al. 2006:63). Kin relationships need to constantly be worked on; if not, a weakening may occur. In both ‘The Mermaid’ and ‘Sirena’, the loss of their daughter is felt by both parents, displaying the value of children regardless of the frustrations they inflicted on their parents. Thus, one of the memetic lessons being taught by the story is that as much as a child needs its parents, parents also need their child later in life.

1.2.2 Beyond Metaphorical Depictions of Disrespect

While stories in 'Escape through Flight and Sea' make use of the figurative element of transformation to show the effects of parental frustrations, 'Buttu Kabobong' takes a more direct approach. Deriving its name from a mountain on the island of Sulawesi, the story focuses on a princess who is betrothed without her permission. When the princess discovers that she is engaged to a stranger, she becomes withdrawn and pensive. She understands that it is the custom of her land, but she does not feel she is ready to be a wife. She is also hurt that her father did not consult her. She becomes increasingly anxious about her impending marriage and runs away. Her father is outraged at his daughter's actions and orders her to be killed. When his soldiers find her, however, an unknown man has become her protector. The soldiers try to reach an agreement with her protector; the man agrees to return the princess to her kingdom on the condition that she will not be killed. But when the princess' protector turns his back, one of the soldiers slices her in two. One half of the princess' body flows down the river and the other half becomes the mountain, Buttu Kabobong.

Arranged marriages, while an uncommon method of finding a partner in modern societies, are considered acceptable in many pre-modern societies (Schlomer, Giudice and Ellis 2011:510). Parents are trusted to find an appropriate match for their child as they are considered to have their child's best interests at heart. Complications can occur, however, when the parents' choice does not match the child's desires. 'Buttu Kabobong' shows such a complication when parents take their power for granted. While parents can decide the future partner of their child, they must also seek their child's approval. Factors such as informing the child of their intent, providing him or her with information on who the future spouse is to be, as well as obtaining the child's consent, are important factors in ensuring a successful arranged marriage. In this story, the parents see tradition as overriding the wishes of their daughter and this conflict of interests gives rise to a tragic conclusion whereby the princess is slain. Not only do the parents lose a daughter, but the daughter also loses her life.

'Buttu Kabobong' is similar to 'The Story of Kanag' where children show obedience in return for their parents' life-long investments. However, this obedience is conditional; parents must respect their children and acknowledge that the lives they lead may be

different from that of their natal family. If parents take respect for granted, children may seek to discontinue their short-term reciprocal actions and abandon their parents. In 'Buttu Kabobong', instead of figuratively swimming or flying, the princess literally runs away. Following the disobedience of their child in the real world, the angry parent may retaliate with anger against his or her disobedient child. In the Chamorro tales, the daughter is turned into a mermaid as a consequence of that anger. In the Indo-Philippine tales, daughters turn into birds. In the Sulawesi tale, the daughter is killed, showing the damage that can result from parent-child conflicts.

Stories in 'Children's Need for Reciprocity' show that children are not merely on the receiving end of parental investments. They attempt to 'repay' these investments through acts of obedience. Parents, similarly, do not expect to have their investments repaid later in life (Leopold and Raab 2010:5). From stories such as 'The Mermaid' and 'The Story of Kanag', parents expect to receive short-term 'repayments' through appreciation, support, and physical labour. While children provide these 'repayments', they also hope that their parents show appreciation through emotional support.

1.3 'Not My Child': Stepfamilies, Polygamy, and the Cycle of Discontent

The support a child receives may be affected by whether or not he or she is living with a biological or stepparent. The evil stepparent is a well-known trope in oral traditions: stepchildren are frequently abused, while their stepsiblings, being the biological children of the wicked stepparents, look on from a position of safety. A popular story depicting such tensions is the Grimm brothers' 'Cinderella', which has been retold in various formats, from novels to movies, a testament to the potency of its memetic theme. With the popularity of such a tale, one would have expected there to be a mountain of research investigating whether such stepparental abuse is evident in real life. However, because of the sensitivity of the topic, few studies look at specific incidences of stepparental abuse and whether there are correlations with the memetic theme of the 'evil stepparent'. Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, leading names in the study of homicide and filicide, are two of the few figures who have written extensively on the subject of stepfamilies and their correlation with domestic abuse and homicide.

They have coined the apt term ‘The Cinderella Effect’ to describe the occurrence of stepparental abuse in real life (Daly and Wilson 2005).

Although this section focuses on the abuse that occurs in stepfamilies, it attempts to avoid characterizing stepparents as ‘wicked’ or ‘evil’. There are plenty of well-adjusted stepfamilies that care for their stepchildren and ensure that their needs are met (Daly and Wilson 2005:6-7).³⁶ However, across all of Daly and Wilson’s studies on violence in stepfamilies (1996a, 1996b, 2001, 2005), stepchildren and their mothers face higher levels of threat than do biological children and fathers. This is reflected in stories from oral traditions; indeed in *The Truth About Cinderella*, Daly and Wilson argue that there is a ‘cross-cultural ubiquity’ to tales consisting of wicked stepparents which may imply a correlation to a ‘human condition’, as such tales would not persist ‘where their themes had no resonance’ (Daly and Wilson 2005:5).

Daly and Wilson (1996b:79) assert that ‘Parental care is costly’ in that mothers and fathers are depleted of resources and energy from the process of ensuring their offspring’s survival. They argue that while most ‘animals usually avoid expending [resources and energy] on behalf of young other than their own’, humans may take part in stepparenting because it is part of the ‘mating effort’ (Daly and Wilson 1996b:79). In an environment where there is a lack of a suitable mate, subconsciously displaying one’s willingness to care for the young of a potential mate would increase one’s chances of attaining a partner. Daly and Wilson found across multiple studies that children from a present marriage often bring harmony to the relationship, while children from a previous marriage are often a source of discord and even divorce (1996a:16; 1996b:80). Thus it can be argued that in the process of *attracting* a mate, a person will be more tolerant of the existence of children from a previous relationship. However, when a new mate has been *secured*, the act of caring for these stepchildren, and having feelings towards them that is akin to loving one’s own biological children, is a different matter.

³⁶ Joseph Carroll’s (2008) evolutionary literary study on Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*, argues that the novel is ‘a story about a parasitic appropriation of resources that belong to the offspring of another organism’ (2008:249). Heathcliff, a child adopted by Mr. Earnshaw, finds himself in a rare disposition where he is much loved by his new family. However, he is so loved by his adopted father that he inspires envy in Earnshaw’s biological son, Hindley, which creates chaos within the family.

Studies have shown that stepchildren often feel, at the very least, ignored or neglected by their parents (Daly and Wilson 1996a, 1996b, 2005; Temrin et al. 2011). These findings corroborate with reports by stepparents; while they try to care for their new partner's child, they 'do not typically experience the same child-specific love and commitment, nor reap the same emotional rewards from unreciprocated parental investment, as [do] genetic parents' (Daly and Wilson 1996b:80). In dire circumstances, stepchildren have a higher statistical chance than do children of biological parents to be abused by their stepparents (Daly and Wilson 1996a:17).³⁷ However, it is not only stepparents that stepchildren need to be wary of. Daly and Wilson argue that 'sometimes the genetic parent has to choose between the new mate and the child, and may even become complicit in the exploitation and abuse of the latter' (1996b:80).

1.3.1 The Reluctant Stepparent

Tension in stepchild-stepparent relationships is evident in stories from Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions. 'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi', a tale from the Philippines, begins with the death of the titular characters' father. The mother marries her late husband's brother, who turns out to be a cruel stepfather. One day, the stepfather tells his wife that they are to move to a new place, and that they will leave her children behind as it is too difficult to feed and raise them. When the mother pleads for her children, saying that they are young, and that one is still breastfeeding, he threatens to murder them. Fearing her new husband's actions if she does not obey him, the mother tearfully prepares to abandon her children. Before she does so, she hides some food and milk for them. Meanwhile, the stepfather sends the children on an impossible task and tells them not to return until they have finished it. As soon as the children leave, their mother and stepfather steal away. Only when Bata Bahi, the two year-old daughter, begins to cry for milk does Bata Mama, her seven year-old brother, take her home, prepared to be beaten by their stepfather. When they fail to find their parents, the siblings stay overnight in the house and discover the food their mother had left for them.

³⁷ Daly and Wilson had found that 'in several countries, stepparents beat very young children to death at per capita rates that are more than 100 times higher than the corresponding rates for genetic parents' (2005:2). When looking at nonlethal cases of abuse through child protection agencies and victimization surveys, they continue to find that 'stepparents perpetrate both nonlethal physical assaults and sexual abuse at much higher rates than genetic parents' across various countries (2005:4).

In the morning, when their parents fail to return, they leave home in search of them. On their journey, they come across a magical crab that cares for them as a surrogate parent. When the crab grows old and dies, Bata Mama and Bata Bahi inherit its powerful claws; these claws help them establish a prosperous kingdom. News of their kingdom travel far and wide, and one day, it even reaches their long-lost parents. Old and haggard, they travel to Bata Mama and Bata Bahi's kingdom in search of help. The grown children recognize their approaching parents and conjure up a storm. The stepfather struggles through the storm and when he finally arrives at the palace, he faints at their feet. When he recovers, his stepchildren welcome him with forgiveness. The mother, however, is unaffected by the storm; she breezes into the palace, where she is joyfully reunited with her children.

Daly and Wilson (1996b:80) explain that marrying one's late husband's brother is one of the ways single mothers can attempt to reduce the possibility of conflict over their children in a new marriage. The reasoning behind such a union is that by establishing a relationship with a man who is genetically related to their stepchild, the new partner would, hopefully, look more favourably on that child, and would want, or would be willing to invest in his nephew or niece who shares a proportion of his genes. In the case of 'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi', the mother's calculations proved wrong, as the new husband was abusive to her children and did not care for them. Why is this so? It is a curious aspect of this story that the children's own uncle did not look favourably on his niece and nephew. A detail in the story that may provide an answer to this question lies in the stepfather's position as a *datu*,³⁸ a position that he inherited after the death of his brother. It can be argued that the stepfather did not want to raise the offspring of another ruler that could usurp his own power. Rather than having his new wife raise her children from a previous marriage, he would prefer her to raise his own sons instead.

With a murderous stepfather and a deceiving mother, why do the children forgive their parents? It is a strange feature of the tale until we consider the symbolism behind the children's magical storm. It can be argued that the ending of 'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi' tells of the disapproval at the behaviour of the cruel stepfather, and of the sympathy that is felt for the mother. The stepfather, having suffered through Bata Mama

³⁸ Datu is the title of a Philippine tribal chief.

and Bata Bahi's storms, has to earn his forgiveness. Their mother, however, is spared punishment. Even though the mother abandoned her children, she did so out of fear of abuse to herself and her offspring. Many women who remarried have found themselves in similarly desperate circumstances (Daly and Wilson 1996a:19-20).³⁹ The tale empathizes with the plight of mothers and shows their struggle to attain security for themselves and their children. In the end, 'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi' acts as a cautionary tale, warning single mothers of the dangers of choosing the wrong stepfather for their children.

Besides stepparents, co-wives in polygamous marriages also find themselves caring for offspring that are not their own biological children. In the following stories, I will analyse the tension faced by women who become co-wives, as well as the dynamics between children and their stepmothers in a polygamous marriage. The first story, 'The Merchant's Two Daughters', is well-known among the Malay-speaking people of Malaysia and Indonesia. It tells of two sisters, Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah, who have different mothers but share the same father. Bawang Putih's mother is the second wife and she is envious of Bawang Merah and her mother for their seemingly favourable position in the family. As the tale opens, the tradesman father is away from his family. While he is gone, his second wife is involved in a confrontation with Bawang Merah's mother. In a fit of rage, the second wife pushes the latter down a well, killing her. The death of her mother leaves Bawang Merah alone and unprotected. She is treated as a servant in the house, and her stepmother and half-sister enjoy their newly established privileges. In a turn of events, Bawang Merah's mother is reincarnated as a fish. She helps Bawang Merah with her duties using magic, but she is soon found out, and is caught and cooked by Bawang Putih and her mother. In a show of cruelty, they serve the fish as dinner to an unsuspecting Bawang Merah. In a dream, Bawang Merah's mother tells of the horrible deception and instructs her daughter to bury her bones under a banyan tree. Bawang Merah is then instructed to sit on a swing and to sing. Heavy-hearted, Bawang Merah does as she is told and her melodious singing attracts the attention of a passing prince. Instantly enamoured by Bawang Merah, he marries her and they live happily ever after.

³⁹ In the study, 'homicide case descriptions and other materials show that the genetic mother's inclination to defend her children in this [flight to shelter] and other ways is itself a source of overt marital conflict and an elicitor of violence against her' (Daly and Wilson 1996a:19-20).

Polygamy⁴⁰ in the Indo-Malaysian archipelago has been practiced for centuries as part of Islamic tradition. In order to enter an Islamic polygamous marriage, a man must fulfil two conditions: he must be able to support each wife and her children, and he must also treat them fairly (van Wichelen 2009:182, Alamgir 2014:892).⁴¹ These conditions complement an evolutionary view of a ‘perfect husband’: a man’s personality and capability to provide resources have been found to be integral characteristics to assist in his own somatic and reproductive success. These qualities are also reflected in the merchant, who is both rich and fair to his wives and children. Despite his financial status and just personality, however, he is unable to provide a stable familial environment. Jealousy and discontent brewed between his two wives. ‘The Merchant’s Two Daughters’ can thus be suggested to be a subtle critique of the institution of polygamy. In the tale, it has been shown that regardless of the husband’s character and resources, he will be unable to ensure the happiness of his wives. While he may be able to control other aspects of the marriage, he is unable to control his wives’ feelings,

⁴⁰ The term ‘polygamy’ refers to the marriage of either a man to several wives, or a woman to several husbands. However, the term ‘polygamy’ has become more related to the former case of polygyny than to the latter case of polyandry (Brooks 2009:109). Proponents of polygamy in Indonesia in recent years have cited men’s ‘natural’ need for sexual diversity while also claiming to solve the problem of unwed younger women (van Wichelen 2009:176,179). This idea of ‘naturalness’ may stem from the fact that between 80 – 85% of all human societies in anthropological record permit polygamy (Henrich et al. 2012:657, Kramer and Russell 2015:75, Chapais 2013:54). However, even when accounting for polygamous societies, most individuals practice monogamy (Kramer and Russell 2015:75, Chapais 2013:54). When taking into account that many individuals take part in serial monogamy, it has been argued that the current human mating system is ‘similar to a promiscuous breeding system in terms of the interrelatedness of progeny’ (Kramer and Russell 2015:77). This creates problems in defining the human mating system as inherently monogamous versus polygamous; which is why it has often been described as a pattern of ‘long-term male-female relationships and some short term unions’ instead (Kramer and Russell 2015:78). From an evolutionary standpoint, when polygamy is practiced, it mostly benefits men of high stature, allowing them to ‘collect’ as many mates as they want, while leaving other men without an opportunity for reproductive success (Henrich et al. 2012:663, 658, 659). Monogamy, on the other hand, has been argued to be an important development in human mating to allow for the evolution of cooperative breeding (Kramer and Russell 2015:73, 75).

In a sociological review of literature on polygamy, Thom Brooks (2009) outlines several arguments against polygamous marriages; he focuses specifically on the damages that can occur within the family, particularly to wives and children. Brooks shows that first or ‘older’ wives are often not consulted, nor are their agreements needed, in the acquisition of a new wife (2009:111-2). It was found that women in polygamous marriages ‘are typically subservient to their husbands who hold their wives primarily responsible for childbearing’; these wives enjoy a brief rise in status during pregnancy, but then later are depressed when they experience a lack of attention after the birth of a child (Brooks 2009:111). It highlights the unequal positions of power in the marriage, one that is starkly felt by the women in this relationship. In the same study, Brooks also outlines the detrimental effect of being in a polygamous family for children. Similar to children of stepfamilies, children of polygamous families are also prone to family violence and family disruptions that may lead to further behavioural and developmental problems (Brooks 2009:112).

⁴¹ This theme is also reflected in *kakawin* literature, as noted by Creese (2004:53): ‘A wise and just *kakawin* king is always sensitive to the possibility of animosity and jealousy among the many minor wives who seek to serve him, carefully avoids seeming to favour one over the others, and presents them all equally with gifts of fine clothing in moderation in spite of his great wealth.’

thoughts, or actions. In the practice of polygamy, the wives' mental well-being is integral to the well-being of the family; as co-mothers, their rivalries over resources and privilege can significantly aggravate their children's chances of survival.⁴²

One is able to see why this story is often referred to as the 'Malay Cinderella'. The desire for the means to support one's biological family provides a basis for discord in both a polygamous and a step-family. Bawang Putih's mother, being the second wife, enjoys a less secure position in the family. The second wife's feelings of dissatisfaction and jealousy lead to the murder of Bawang Merah's mother. The second wife's actions can be seen as a desperate attempt at ensuring that she and Bawang Putih receive greater attention from the merchant when he returns from his travels. Bawang Putih's mother is also aware of Bawang Merah's mother's superior beauty:

'Because women's physical attractiveness is more strongly tied to reproductive capacity, superiority in this domain provides a greater advantage to women—both in terms of mate attraction and of actual reproductive potential—than it does to men' (Hill, DelPriore, and Vaughan 2011:658-9).

Acknowledgment of superiority breeds jealousy, which is described as a 'function to motivate behaviour designed to ward off threats to valued relationships with behaviour ranging from vigilance to violence' (Buss 2013:156). For women, especially, jealousy comes as a response mechanism that focuses their energy on ensuring that their 'mate's time, investments, and effort, all of which could get allocated to a rival woman and her children' remains focused on them (Buss 2013:166). Feeling threatened by Bawang Merah and her mother's attractiveness, as well as their preferential treatment from her husband, Bawang Putih's mother reacts instinctively to ensure that competition for her husband's wealth and affection is eliminated.

'The Merchant's Two Daughters' also highlights a biological mother's knowledge that leaving her child in the care of another parent may not bode well for its future survival.

⁴² The negative effects of polygyny from a Malay female perspective in literature is further analysed by Hicks (2008) in three *syair* works: *Syair Bidasari*, *Syair Selindung Delima*, and *Syair Yatim Nestapa*. Hicks' analyses show that while these works do not openly argue against the polygynous institution, it nevertheless mediated 'between the accepted institution of polygyny and the needs of the women within it' (2008:49).

Bawang Merah's mother returns twice in the story after having been murdered – not to exact revenge, but to ensure her child's safety and well-being. Bawang Merah's mother is aware that without the protection of her husband, her daughter is at the mercy of her new stepmother, who has no genetic investment in Bawang Merah's survival. Bawang Merah's mother also has first-hand experience that the new stepmother is a murderous woman who could potentially harm Bawang Merah. Bawang Merah's mother had no other choice but to return, as no one else would be able to prioritize her daughter's life. It is she who leads her daughter away from her stepmother's abusive household, and provides her with the opportunity to marry a prince. The method by which Bawang Merah is able to achieve happiness and security is a reflection on how mothers believe that they alone have the ability to properly care for their own children.⁴³

The second story on polygamy and the role of co-wives focuses on a tale from Northern Sumatra, 'Si Raja Omas'. The title character, Raja Omas, is born to the seventh wife of the king. The father is delighted by this birth, bestowing special care and attention upon his newest wife and son. The first six wives of the king become jealous at the attention given to the new mother and son, and plot to murder the newborn child. Stealing him away in the middle of the night, they set him adrift in a nearby river in a hollowed out pumpkin. While his mother grieves the loss of her son, Raja Omas is cared for by an elderly woman who finds him cast ashore. It is only through divine intervention that Raja Omas is later reunited with his father in adulthood; there is no further mention of his mother in the story.

'The Merchant's Two Daughters' is similar to 'Si Raja Omas' in that it highlights the fierce and potentially lethal competition that may occur between wives in a polygamous marriage. Jealousy is again seen as the driving force behind the attempted homicide; instead of the wife, it is the newborn baby, Raja Omas, who is the victim. The perceived difference in quality of affection and attention given to the newest wife and child creates

⁴³ This insecurity for a child's survival under the protection of the co-wife seems to be reflected in Jennaway's (2000) anthropological exploration of the lived experiences of polygyny by Balinese women in Punyanwangi. Indeed, in one of Jennaway's (2000) case studies, the situation is unfortunately reminiscent of the story of 'The Merchants' Two Daughters': One of her informants, Ni Ng Nasih, left her polygynous household and was forced to leave her son behind. Nasih discovered that upon her departure, her co-wife withheld food from her son. Without sustenance, he is forced to travel to his biological mother's house every day for food (Jennaway 2000:149-50).

feelings of animosity among the earlier wives.⁴⁴ This animosity binds them as they attempt to safeguard their positions in the marriage. The six plotting wives display mate-guarding tactics through their feelings of jealousy; they fear that the king's continued favouritism for his newest wife and child will result in poorer treatment and fewer resources for themselves and their offspring.⁴⁵ Hence the removal of the source of the king's favour to his new wife: his son. The fear felt by the six wives against the youngest wife and child, which is also present in 'The Merchant's Two Daughters', is similar to the type of fear felt by women in monogamous relationships – a fear of their husband's infidelity. It can be hypothesized that women who have partners of higher status and wealth are more likely to display intense mate retention tactics such as vigilance over potential mate-poachers and emotional manipulation (Buss 2013:174).

In both Malaysia and Indonesia, polygamy is a symbol of status that is often linked to the idea of elites and kings with their many wives (Smith 2014:122, van Wichelen 2009:177, Hicks 2008:48). As seen in the two stories above, both the merchant and the king are men of high status and the number of wives they have reflect their position in society. While the husbands are perfect representations of 'goodness' in a polygamous marriage and are quite happy in their positions, their wives are a completely different matter. An initial hypothesis that can thus be made is that a woman and her child are, from an evolutionary standpoint, more secure in a monogamous partnership. This is because both women *and* men are assisting each other to propagate their genes; where '(h)er reproductive success becomes his, and vice versa, promoting harmonious relations between genetically distinct individuals striving toward common goals' (Hrdy 1999: 231).

⁴⁴ The co-wife rivalry between the six older wives against the new wife is reminiscent of the literary work *Syair Selindung Delima* (see Hicks 2008). The method of removing the new wife, however, is different. In the *syair*, the older wives attempt to poison the younger wife instead.

⁴⁵ Buss (2013) argues that 'Because men often (but not always) channel resources and investments to women with whom they have sex, a man might devote time, attention, energy, and effort to another woman and her children rather than to his regular mate and her children. For these reasons, women's jealousy, more than men's, is predicted to focus on cues to the long-term diversion of a man's commitment' (2013:167).

CHAPTER 2: SIBLING COMPETITION AND COOPERATION

“When I was five years old my parents all of a sudden produced a baby boy, which my mother said was what I had always wanted. Where she got this idea I did not know. She did quite a bit of elaborating on it, all fictitious but hard to counter.”

- Alice Munro

2.1 Sibling Rivalry: Birth Order and Competition within the Family

When one recalls the historical literature of sibling rivalries, several notable examples come to mind: the biblical story of the beloved Abel and the jealous Cain, the tormented Cinderella and her wicked stepsisters, as well as generous Ali Baba and his greedy older brother. In the search of a ‘happily ever after’ in these stories, protagonists find themselves competing against their own brother or sister. In the collection gathered for this research, eleven of the sixteen stories on sibling relationships feature the memetic theme of sibling rivalries. These are stories of competition rife with jealousies, power struggles, and in some cases, murder.

Frank Sulloway, who has written extensively on sibling competition, describes sibling rivalry as ‘Darwinian common sense’ (1995:77). In a world where humans are competing for resources and reproductive fitness with each other, it is only logical that such competition does not exclude one’s own siblings. This may account for the large number of stories where siblings, both male and female, engage in rivalry with each other. Sulloway has argued that the birth order of a child is predictive of personality and of competition or cooperation between siblings (1995, 2001).

In a few words, there are persistent stereotypes regarding the personality traits of the eldest, youngest, and middle children of the family. The eldest is usually more responsible, the youngest is more carefree and spoiled, while the middle child is often left out of the picture altogether. Recent studies have shown that there is some truth to these stereotypes, and have been able to provide an evolutionary understanding to the

predictability of lives led by siblings according to their birth order. Sulloway (2001:39), for example, found that the different manners in which parents invest in different siblings play a significant role in developing sibling personalities. These investments are contingent on the parents' circumstances, as well as the reproductive potential of each child (Gibson and Gurmu 2011:2200; Sulloway 2001:44). Sulloway found that in many cases, elder siblings are favoured because they had survived the longest and thus had the most potential to carry on the family's genes (2001:44). Because elder siblings are in a favourable position to receive investments from their parents, their younger siblings will need to develop personalities that redirect their parents' attention towards themselves.

Sibling personalities develop as a manner of sibling competition for parental investment. The eldest in the family is often the one who tries hardest to emulate his or her parents' values, acting as a surrogate parent to his or her younger siblings (Sulloway 2001:39, 47). This builds the perception that the eldest child is the most responsible and more family-oriented of his or her siblings. This type of personality stems from expecting a certain amount of parental favouritism, thus making 'firstborn children defenders of parental values and the status quo' (Salmon 2003:74). Indeed, their expectation of favouritism is not unfounded; in societies where infanticide is permitted, none permits the killing of the elder of two children, indicating the higher status accorded to elder siblings (Sulloway 2001:44). In terms of displaying their personality traits according to the Five Factor Model,⁴⁶ firstborns appear more conscious about status and are seen to be more extraverted in the sense that they are more assertive and dominant, while also being more open to experience in terms of intellectuality (Sulloway 2001:46). Sulloway's extensive research on the differences in personalities between siblings also finds that the eldest are often found to be more 'conscientious [...], responsible, ambitious, organized, and academically successful' than the younger siblings (2001:46).

In contrast to the firstborns of the family, lastborn children tend to head in the opposite direction and are often labelled as 'rebels' for this very reason (Salmon 2003:74). In an

⁴⁶ 'The five-factor model of personality is a hierarchical organization of personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience' (McCrae and John 1992:175).

earlier work, Sulloway mentions that because of this rebelliousness, lastborn children score higher on Openness in the Five Factor Model by being more 'daring, untraditional, and rebellious' (1995:77). Sulloway continues elsewhere that because later-born children 'cannot babysit themselves, [...] they seek out an unoccupied family niche, in part by cultivating latent talents that can be discovered only through experimentation. For these reasons, laterborns are generally more exploratory, unconventional, and tolerant of risk' (Sulloway 2001:47). Other personality traits attributed to the youngest of the family include a certain amount of Agreeableness in the sense that they are more 'tender-minded, accommodating, and altruistic' and they are also more extraverted in terms of being more 'fun-loving and sociable' when compared to their eldest siblings (Sulloway 2001:46).

In comparison with their eldest and youngest siblings, middle children seem to be on the losing end of the competition for parental investment. The eldest sibling normally enjoys a period of being the only child and thus on the receiving end of unlimited attention before the birth of the next sibling. The youngest sibling has the advantage of having no younger rivals. When older children grow up and leave home, the youngest will enjoy undivided attention from its parents. Middle children, on the other hand, are constantly sharing the attention of their parents with their elder and younger siblings and appear to receive a lesser amount of interest or parental investment as their earlier and later-born siblings. Indeed, in a study by Catherine Salmon, middle children have reported feeling less supported by their parents, both emotionally and financially (2003:74-75). They are often characterized as being less interested in creating kin relationships and are more interested in seeking closeness, as well as shaping their own identity, by forging friendships outside their family (Salmon 2003:75).

In conclusion, these differences in interests and personalities between siblings seem to reflect rivalries for attention and investment from their parents. The greater the number of children in the family, the fiercer the competition to attract parental favour in order to ensure continued survival and well-being. In order to receive the optimal amount of care from their parents, each child will need to navigate his or her own unique circumstances to ensure survival and to positively affect his or her reproductive choices in life. On these grounds, each child's personality can thus be viewed as a tactical response in seeking parental favour. Based on studies by Sulloway and Salmon, it would appear that

the eldest in the family would be in the most favourable position to receive parental assistance. Because the eldest children have managed to survive and live ‘[through] the most perilous years of life, these children were more likely than their younger brothers and sisters to reach the age of reproduction, and to pass on their parents’ genes’ (Sulloway 2001:44). Sulloway argues that coupled with the parents’ greater investment in an older child, the eldest child’s tendency to reflect the parents’ beliefs and values helps ensure they are provided for (1995:77). Daring to be different, the youngest child, provides the eldest child with the fiercest competition. This strategy sets them apart from their siblings, garnering attention and investment from his or her parents when successful. The middle child, finally, tends to form its identity and establish relationships outside of the family rather than engaging in sibling rivalries.

2.1.1 The Entitled Elder Sibling

Raskin and Hall’s concept of ‘narcissism’⁴⁷ is one of the characteristics associated with the position of the elder sibling. This may be due to the fact that narcissism (in this restrictive sense of the word) includes feelings of entitlement and is closely related to children who are most loved and admired by their parents (Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman 2009:451). These feelings of entitlement can be summarized as ‘the belief that one simply deserves more than others’ (Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman 2009:448). When these two facets of personalities are taken together, entitled narcissistic individuals can be considered to suffer the most from psychological maladjustment and have strong correlations with being ‘Antisocial, Passive-Aggressive, and Paranoid’ (Reidy et al. 2008: 866). In cases where entitled narcissistic individuals feel that their position and authority are being questioned, it has been found that they can be pushed to aggression and violence (Reidy et al. 2008:874, Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman 2009:448). The stories in ‘The Entitled Elder Sibling’ tell of such elder siblings, and how they can be driven to violence as a method of status preservation.

⁴⁷ This differs from the standard definition of narcissism, namely a tendency to self-worship, excessive or erotic interest in one’s own personal features. In their model of the ‘Narcissistic Personality Inventory’, Raskin and Hall (1979) defined narcissistic individuals as having the following characteristics: ‘(1) grandiose sense of one’s self-importance; (2) preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; (3) exhibitionism; (4) responds to criticism, indifference, or defeat either with cool indifference or with marked feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness; (5) *entitlement, expecting* special favours without assuming reciprocal responsibilities; (6) exploitativeness; (7) relationships vacillate between the extremes of over-idealization and devaluations; and (8) lack of empathy’ (1979:590).

'Molek' is a tale from Riau, a province of Indonesia lying south of Singapore, which tells a story of sibling rivalry between seven sisters. While all the sisters are beautiful in their own right, the youngest sister, Molek, is considered the prettiest of all. Aware of their beauty, the sisters are fussy about their suitors and remain unmarried, much to their parents' dismay. One day, a fish approaches their parents and asks for one of their daughters' hand in marriage. Each of their daughters refuses except for Molek. She agrees because the fish shows both kindness and good manners, and as a way to please her parents. Upon marriage, Molek lives happily with her husband but is constantly taunted by her sisters because of her husband's lowly status as a fish. As events unfold, Molek discovers that her husband is a handsome man in disguise. She persuades him to discard his disguise as she has already proven her love for him, and wishes to silence her sisters' taunts. Molek's sisters become envious of their youngest sister's good fortune. When Molek's husband goes on a sea voyage, the sisters concoct a plan to murder Molek; they take her to the middle of the sea and abandon her in a small boat without any paddles or provisions. Fortunately, Molek is saved when her husband's ship happens to come across her on the high seas. Angered by the cruelty of her sisters, Molek's husband concocts a plan. As soon as he reaches shore, he goes in search of his wife; the sisters feign ignorance of her whereabouts and attempt to seduce him with food and drink. He recounts how he rescued a woman at sea and brings forth Molek. He announces that he knows the identities of the evil culprits but that he will not punish them; instead, he hopes for their repentance. The sisters realize their error and make amends by living harmoniously with Molek and her husband.

One of the first elements of the story that resonates with the audience is Molek's sisters' murderous drive. They are willing to murder their youngest sibling in order to obtain her husband as one of their own. It could be argued that the sisters felt cheated out of a prosperous match and, from an evolutionary perspective, felt that their youngest sister had bested them in terms of reproductive competition. The sisters felt that the only way to win over Molek's husband was to commit siblicide, and so the sisters carried out their plan cooperatively. In this instance, the six elder sisters seemed to unify into one entity, 'The Elder Sibling'. One of the main characteristics of 'The Elder Sibling' is their sense of entitlement to status and respect. This would account for their feeling

entitled to Molek's husband whom they felt was 'rightfully' theirs.⁴⁸ Sulloway (2001:46) notes that the eldest sibling is frequently characterized as temperamental and 'anxious about their status'. Molek's sisters' action of attempted siblicide can thus be seen as a method to preserve their relative status as 'The Elder Sibling'. The sisters' decision to murder Molek is an example of why siblicide happens in the real world: Molek was seen as 'privileged' and thus 'envied and slain' by her sisters (Daly et al. 2001:43-44).

'Tattadu' (caterpillar), a tale from South Sulawesi, differs from 'Molek' in the sense that it begins with the elder six sisters already married. It is the youngest sister (referred in the tale simply as 'Youngest Sister') who is in desperate want of a husband. One day she declares that she will marry anyone who asks for her hand, even a caterpillar! A caterpillar overhears her and follows her home by clinging onto her leg. Youngest Sister is unable to shake off the caterpillar and, irritated by its presence, wonders aloud why it will not leave her. The caterpillar replies that it heard her proclaim that she would marry anyone willing to have her, even a caterpillar, and so has decided to become her husband. Youngest Sister resigns herself to her fate, much to the surprise and derision of her sisters. However, her caterpillar husband is hard-working and brings riches for his wife. Upon seeing Youngest Sister's increased fortune, her siblings cease mocking her husband. One day, the caterpillar travels to a faraway land and changes into a handsome man. When he returns, Youngest Sister's siblings become envious and persuade their husbands to go off to the faraway land to improve their appearances: unfortunately, the husbands are transformed into animals instead. So the sisters are left with their animal-husbands while Youngest Sister is happily married to her handsome and wealthy husband.

Youngest Sister is more fortunate than Molek because her sisters were not inclined to murder her when they discovered Youngest Sister's good fortune. This can be attributed perhaps to the fact that Youngest Sister's husband, while able to bring home riches, was still a humble caterpillar, placing Youngest Sister at a lower position than her sisters. The elder sisters engaged in active social comparisons that were 'used to self-enhance,

⁴⁸ In Malay wedding customs, when a younger female sibling marries before her older sister this event is referred to as 'langkah bendul' (stepping over the sill). Upon such an event, the younger sister's future husband is required to provide gifts to his older sister-in-law as well as his bride (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia 2013).

self-improve and decide whether to challenge or submit in conflict situations' (Gilbert, Price, and Allan 1995:149), and cease mocking their sibling. However, when the caterpillar is transformed into a handsome man, they become envious of their sister as a perceptible shift in status has occurred: Youngest Sister is now not only married to a rich man, but to a man who is more handsome than any of her sister's husbands. Upon the transformation of the caterpillar, the sisters send their husbands to improve their physical appearances. Unlike Molek's older sisters, Youngest Sister's elder siblings attempted to raise their own status instead of eliminating the competition. This can be attributed to the married status of Youngest Sister's siblings, which implies that they have no economic need for antagonistic behaviour.⁴⁹

One of the similarities between Youngest Sister and Molek's sisters is that both sets of siblings display characteristics of entitled narcissists. The tipping point, where Youngest Sister's husband becomes the most handsome of all their spouses, reveals the elder siblings' need to ensure that they maintain their higher statuses over Youngest Sister. As narcissists, the elder siblings' statuses were tied to their husbands' physical attractiveness. In order to protect their statuses, they send their husbands off to a faraway land, with disastrous consequences. Such behaviour, while aimed at maintaining respect and admiration, can lead to damages in one's relationships with other people (Moeller, Crocker, and Bushman 2009:450). Stories from oral tradition aim not only to entertain, but also to provide important models of behaviour and their likely consequences. 'Tattadu' is a perfect example of a story that can be used to teach the dangers of entitled narcissistic behaviour.

The Malagasy tale of 'The Three Princesses and Andriamohamona' tells of how Prince Andriamohamona arrives in a small village and announces his intention to marry one of three princess-sisters. The sisters are excited about being chosen by the prince and wait impatiently for his decision. Frustrated by the wait, they decide to go and ask him directly. As they journey, they hold 'beauty competitions' (see Haring 2007:265) in which the youngest wins each time. Angered by this, the older sisters cut off the

⁴⁹ It was found that 'self-esteem may fall with loss of reproductively useful resources' and that 'ritual agonistic behaviour are related to the shortage of resources and density of predators' (Gilbert, Price, and Allan 1995:153).

youngest's hair and make her their slave, changing her name to 'Sandroy'.⁵⁰ A rat appears and helps Sandroy, clothing her in a beautiful dress and re-growing her long hair. Sandroy attracts the attention of the prince and discloses her sisters' abuse. Andriamohamona banishes the sisters; they are chased out of town by the villagers with boos and angry jeers before being turned into lizards.

The theme of 'The Three Princesses and Andriamohamona' is similar to 'Molek' as the two elder sisters are driven to extreme measures in order to ensure they do not 'lose face' against their youngest sister. The elder sisters descend into cruelty when their vanity comes under attack as their youngest sister continuously overtakes them in beauty competitions. To make matters worse, none of the sisters are married, leading to antagonistic behaviour when there is a handsome prince as prize. It is obvious that if their youngest sister were to be presented with the two elder siblings, neither would have a chance in winning the affections of the prince.⁵¹ The older siblings chop off their sister's hair, disguise her as their servant, and change her name. This type of 'explosive and extreme aggression' stems from having their self-esteem threatened, and is characteristic of narcissistic individuals (Reidy et al. 2008:874). It stems from a defensive standpoint, where the older sisters' aggression was a desperate attempt to improve their opportunities to marry the prince (Gilbert, Price, and Allan 1995:157).

2.1.2 Risk-Taking in Younger Siblings

While the elder siblings in 'Molek', 'Tattadu', and 'The Three Princesses and Andriamohamona' display characteristics of entitled narcissists and employ various tactics to maintain their statuses, the younger siblings take on the role of risk-takers in order to defend themselves from being overpowered by their elder siblings. Their risk-

⁵⁰ This name may have been influenced by the French Cendron or Cendrillon (Bascom 1982:160). However, Haring notes that the original collector of 'The Three Princess and Andriamohamona' retrieved the story from an illiterate source who 'insists he has known the tale from childhood' (Ferrand in *Contes*, translated by Haring 2007:266). This incidence of changing a foreign oral story to fit a local culture would fit Haring's (1982) own explanation of 'oikotypification' in Indian Ocean tales as discussed earlier in the Introduction.

⁵¹ In their paper on social comparison and social attractiveness, Gilbert, Price, and Allan (1995:152) explain a self-concept entitled 'resource-holding potential' (RHP) where it is 'an intervening process which allows an estimate of fighting capacity and the probability of making a successful challenge or successfully defending against other challengers'. In 'The Three Princess and Andriamohamona', the two elder sisters are aware of their lower RHP in terms of social attractiveness as compared to their younger sister.

taking corresponds with personality traits normally attributed to younger siblings; as noted by Sulloway (2001:47), younger siblings need to seek new niches that have yet been claimed by elder siblings, creating a tendency among younger siblings to be more open to new experiences and the risks that go along with it.

An individual will be more prone to take risks when there is no 'safer, low-risk means' (Mishra, Barclay, and Lalumière 2014:127). When faced with competitive disadvantage against their elder siblings, younger siblings need to be more adventurous in order to achieve some degree of success in both their somatic and reproductive efforts. Daly and Wilson (2001:4) provided notable examples of later-born sons from aristocratic European families who became explorers and conquerors, choosing a riskier path of emigration as the family fortune and estate went to their elder siblings. Although embarking on risky adventures across unknown oceans and foreign lands may seem unattractive, the prospect of staying in a low-risk environment with little to no chances of success is even less desirable. Thus, the younger siblings' disadvantaged conditions in 'Molek', 'Tattadu', and 'The Three Princesses and Andriamohamona' could account for their risky decisions.

While the elder siblings in 'Molek' and 'Tattadu' are threatened by their younger sibling's sudden good fortune, both Molek and Youngest Sister showed no discernible intentions to challenge their elder sisters' status. Their decisions to marry unlikely matches, a fish and a caterpillar, came from a spontaneity that corresponded with the character traits of the youngest sibling. As discussed earlier, later-borns are more 'open to experience, as expressed by their being more nonconforming and unconventional' (Sulloway 2001:46). While agreeing to marriage with animal-husbands is an extraordinary move, the prospects of both Molek and Younger Sister remaining unmarried and at the mercy of their elder sisters were strong reasons to make unconventional life choices. This sense of nonconformity and unconventionality in both Molek and Youngest Sister changed the course of their fate and resulted in the most desirable of circumstances, marrying the most suitable men who were able to provide them with a good life.

Another reason for their success is connected to a different aspect of their personality as younger siblings. Both Molek and Youngest Sister display traits such as being more

‘tender-minded, accommodating, and altruistic’ as well as being ‘fun-loving and sociable’ (Sulloway 2001:46). Unlike her elder siblings, Molek attempts to appease her parents’ worries over her unmarried state by marrying her fish husband, and Tattadu is kind to her caterpillar spouse who strives to make himself a worthy husband. This is in contrast to their elder sisters who operated on a more ‘ambitious’ and status-preserving intent. Molek’s sisters, who took risky measures with attempted siblicide, and Youngest Sister’s siblings, who competed with Youngest Sister by improving their husbands’ appearances, saw their plans go awry. Why did the elder siblings’ risk-taking behaviour fail? Could it be due to something as ‘simple’ as personality traits affecting the outcome of risks? When looking into risk-taking and positions of power, it has been found that those who are unstable while in power, and those who are stable but powerless are the ones who usually take part in risky behaviour (Mishra, Barclay, Lalumière 2014:129). It can be argued that the elder siblings lost their positions because they had been in a stable, powerful position but were unaware of it. Their perception of being in an unstable position is merely that, a perception, and thus when they engaged in risk-taking behaviour, it was an unnecessary risk. The stories provide another subtle lesson: do not engage in risky behaviours when there is no need to do so.

‘How Rice Grows in the Wet Rice Fields’, an origin tale on rice cultivation from Central Sulawesi, is a story that revolves around the unwanted youngest sister (simply named ‘Youngest’). Enduring hatred and rejection from her elder sisters, Youngest tries to make a living on her own. At first she struggles and is barely able to make ends meet, but eventually she is helped by a god named Buriro, who has been ordered to live on earth. He provides food and shelter for Youngest and asks that she marries him in return for these favours. Youngest does so happily, and their land becomes fertile, while the rice grown in forests in the surrounding areas fail to yield. More and more people join them, adding to their prosperity. Eventually, Youngest’s sisters approach her. They fail to recognize their sister, who is ‘so beautiful that the girls did not dare to look on the face of this princess-like person’ (Bunanta 2003:82). It is Buriro who points out to Youngest that the women who have approached them are her sisters. Upon reuniting with their youngest sister, the elder sisters realize their wrongs and apologize. Youngest and Buriro allow the sisters to stay and make a living from the fields. Once knowledge of growing rice in wet fields is passed on, Youngest and Buriro ascend to heaven.

Of all the stories highlighting competition between elder and younger siblings, ‘How Rice Grows in the Wet Rice Fields’ is the only one in which the youngest sister is rejected by her family. Readers are not privy to the reasons for this animosity, but based on the description of Youngest’s physical appearance it could be deduced that the elder sisters were threatened by her beauty. The elder sisters were thus driven by jealousy to rid themselves of sexual competition, a situation reminiscent of the treatment received by Bawang Merah’s mother from Bawang Putih’s mother (section 1.3.1). It should be noted that Youngest’s sisters were probably unmarried as they arrived to look for work without any mention of husbands. If they were unmarried, living in the same abode and vying for the attention of marriageable men, Youngest’s beauty could distract potential suitors, a situation similar to ‘The Three Princess and Andriamohamona’. Fortunately, Youngest is now married and no longer a competitor.

It is interesting, however, that Youngest’s sisters did not attempt to steal Buriro for themselves as had been done by Molek’s sisters. Like Molek, Youngest had ‘stepped over the sill’ (*langkah bendul*)⁵² and yet had not attracted the envy of her elder sisters. Perhaps this can be attributed to the circumstances that surround both sets of elder sisters. Molek’s siblings live with their family and appear to be well cared for; when they attempt to seduce Molek’s husband, they do so by tempting him with delicious food, implying that they are in possession of resources for themselves. Youngest’s sisters, however, were scarce in resources as their lands had failed to yield crops. They were indebted to both Buriro as well as their sibling, Youngest, for work as well as sustenance. It is thus not too surprising that the sisters seemed willing to overlook their sibling’s act of *langkah bendul*⁵³ – to do otherwise might have endangered their own somatic survival.

Youngest is the first sister in ‘Risk-Taking in Younger Siblings’ who attempts to make a living on her own. At the beginning of the tale, she does not fare well: her clothes are in tatters, she is hungry from not having eaten in days, and she lives alone in a run-down hut. Buriro appears as her savior, providing her with food, shelter and a means to make

⁵² See ‘Molek’, footnote 42.

⁵³ This situation is reminiscent of Sandroy’s sisters (in ‘The Three Princesses and Andriamonhamona’) realizing their low RHP in comparison with their younger sister. Youngest’s siblings, however, realize that they did not have the resources to challenge their youngest sister, and thus did not fight against her as had Sandroy’s sisters.

a living from cultivating rice – without Buriro it is unlikely that Youngest would have survived. However, while leaving her family included the risk of starvation, her risk paid off. This happy ending was experienced by other younger siblings such as Molek, Youngest Sister in ‘Tattadu’, and Sandroy. Meeting their ‘Prince Charming’ would not have been possible if the youngest sister had continued to live with her elder sisters. Facing reduced reproductive opportunities at home, Youngest could only improve her opportunities by venturing out into the world.

If Youngest in ‘How Rice Grows in the Wet Rice Fields’ had stayed and engaged in sibling competition, she might have faced a similar type of abuse as did Sandroy in ‘The Three Princess and Andriamohamona’. It should be noted, however, that Sandroy’s risk-taking is different from that of Molek, Youngest Sister, and Youngest in the sense that she is *consciously* taking part in a competition with her two older sisters. Sandroy had a tangible, attractive goal to keep her with her sisters: the prince. The young beauty risked death from her sisters’ abuse in order to win him. The question is: would the risk of death be worthwhile in the pursuit of a suitable mate? In Sandroy’s quest for reproductive success, the answer is a definite ‘yes’. As Sandroy wins one beauty competition after another, she becomes more confident of her ability to win the affections of the Prince. Logically, an individual is more prone to take greater risks when he or she is confident of his or her capability to achieve greater profit than loss from their risk-taking (Mishra, Barclay, and Lalumière 2014:130). Thus, Sandroy bided her time and waited for an opportunity; if she had rebelled earlier on without a champion for her cause, her two sisters could have inflicted grievous harm upon her. When an opportunity presented itself, she accepted the help of a magical rat and received the attention of the prince, before openly defying her tormentors and seeing her risk-taking pay off.

2.2 Sibling Rivalry and Siblicide

In the previous stories, sibling rivalries can take many shapes and forms: from petty resentments, quarrels over inheritances, or in the most extreme of cases, attempted siblicide. Sulloway (1996) posed one of the earlier theories on siblicide, predicting that later-born siblings are in more danger of being killed by an elder sibling than vice versa. He reasoned that younger siblings are less likely to commit siblicide because they saw

their older siblings as being of 'higher reproductive value' and would not jeopardize the survival prospects of existing nephews and nieces (Sulloway 1996:437). From this notion, Sulloway (1996) concluded that older siblings are more siblicidal. Sulloway (1996) provided the example of the elder Abel murdering his younger brother Cain as representative of his theory; Cain being favourable not only in the eyes of his family, but also in the eyes of God, was cause for Abel to remove his competition through siblicide.

Recent studies have shown that the case of Abel and Cain, where the elder murders the younger sibling, tends to be the exception rather than the rule. According to Daly et al. (2001:37), the argument that older siblings have higher reproductive value than their younger siblings, 'applies only in childhood, because it is only then that such an asymmetry in reproductive value is generally to be expected; at older ages, the expected future reproduction of the younger party is likely to be greater'. Thus, in siblicide cases among children, the murderer is most often the elder sibling. Daly et al.'s (2001:43) study goes on to suggest that rather than reading the story of Abel and Cain as an *elder* brother slaying a *younger* brother, one should see it as a *favoured* brother being removed by one that is *envious* of him. With this new perspective on the siblicide of Cain by Abel, the focus then shifts to power struggles between siblings. Indeed, Daly et al.'s (2001) study on siblicide across Canada, Great Britain, Japan, and the United States found that when looking at siblicide cases among adults, the murderer is more often the younger sibling rather than the elder. When considering power as the catalyst for siblicide, studies find that younger siblings are more likely to be the perpetrator when they resent 'an elder's presumption of authority or other perquisites of seniority' (Daly et al. 2001:40).

Siblicide usually takes place between siblings of the same sex rather than between sexes. Brothers are more inclined to be in fiercer competition with other brothers rather than with their sisters, and vice versa. This is due to the fact that male and female siblings have different interests when engaging in competition with each other. For example, brothers tend to engage in greater rivalry in terms of family inheritance, whereas sisters tend to view each other as rivals in terms of finding reproductive success (Gibson and Gurmu 2011, Ji et al. 2013). Nitsch, Faurie and Lummaa's (2012:7) results further show that 'among both males and females surviving until sexual

maturity, reproductive success was negatively associated with the number of same-sex elder siblings'; while Ji et al. (2013:6) asserts that 'sisters [...] are associated with significantly suppressed fertility, and co-resident female cousins [...] are significantly associated with later first birth'.

In addition to gender being a factor in increasing sibling competition, a study in rural Ethiopia found that sibling competition was more pronounced in agricultural and pastoral communities than in foraging ones. According to Gibson and Gurnu (2011:2200), the more same-sex siblings there are in an Ethiopian family, the more they will reduce 'wealth inheritance, inhibit marriage opportunities (marriage payments and bride choice), increase adult mortality, and in most cases, reduce an individual's lifetime reproductive success'. They suggest that the intensity of competition within these families could be due to the manner in which wealth, in agricultural or pastoral societies, are limited and thus could further limit a sibling's capability for reproductive success.

2.2.1 Warring Sisters

Oral traditions about power struggles over a kingdom are frequently depicted as a family affair. As royal power is normally inherited by the firstborn child, problems occur when younger siblings feel that they are more suited to the throne and ruthlessly pursue power for themselves. Observations have been made regarding the correlations between the eldest child and a position of power. One of the factors that can be attributed to this phenomenon is the type of care provided by parents towards their firstborn child. First-time parents are often seen as being more sensitive and anxious to their eldest children as well as pinning more of their 'hopes and dreams' on them than to any of their successive children, endowing them with attention and sensitivity that can improve the 'intellectual and verbal skills that are necessary in any political career' (Andeweg and Van Den Berg 2003:607). Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the eldest child's own personality. The eldest siblings' role as caretakers and 'tutors' to their younger siblings can foster 'more politically relevant capabilities' and they would thus 'seek power as compensation'; in addition, any type of sibling rivalry that had occurred throughout their lives provides them with adequate training for any future power struggles (Andeweg and Van Den Berg 2003:608).

While eldest sons are privileged over daughters in many parts of the world, most Western Malayo-Polynesian societies allow both brothers and sisters to make a bid for the throne; neither do they need to be the eldest. The only prerequisite to power is that the candidate must be of royal blood and display an aptitude for ruling. It is often mentioned that among the Western Malayo-Polynesian people, especially those located in the Southeast Asian region, there is a 'prominence of women in local economies, indigenous rituals, and kinship patterns' (Andaya 2004:326). Indeed, Anthony Reid's study stresses that 'Austronesian societies, [...] which include Polynesia and Madagascar as well as Indonesia and the Philippines, have been more inclined than perhaps any other major population group to place high-born women on the throne' (1988a:639). The following stories may provide support to this assertion as power struggles over kingdoms and lands are not exclusive to male characters. There are two stories in this section that will be analyzed in terms of the memetic theme of female power struggles and how they relate to feelings of entitlement between siblings: 'Puteri Santubong' and 'Why the Sun is Brighter than the Moon'.

Putri Santubong and Putri Sejenjang are two princesses living in heaven with their father, the king. When war breaks out over Sarawak, the king asks his eldest daughter, Putri Sejenjang, to restore peace on earth. Putri Sejenjang does so willingly and discovers the cause of the war: there is disagreement over the right to rule the land and Putri Sejenjang solves this problem by becoming their leader. However, she quickly abandons her duty of upholding the peace, staying in her palace to grind rice. Sarawak soon falls back into war. The king is angered by her negligence and sends Putri Santubong to help her sister restore peace in the land. Putri Sejenjang feels threatened by Putri Santubong's presence and the elder sister refuses to share her kingdom with her younger sibling. Putri Santubong is thus banished from the palace. Meanwhile, a prince, who is admired by both sisters, arrives on earth intending to make Putri Santubong his bride. Putri Sejenjang tricks the prince into thinking that she is Putri Santubong and locks him in her palace. He escapes while she is busy grinding rice, and comes upon Putri Santubong. Struck by her beauty, he pledges his love to her. Putri Sejenjang is furious and claims that the prince is hers; Putri Santubong begs otherwise and the two sisters fight. Their father sees his daughters fighting and is enraged at the sisters' inability to keep the peace, and at the prince for causing the conflict. The king punishes all three by turning them into mountains that now stand over Sarawak.

The story of 'Putri Santubong' can be seen as countering the assumption that the elder or eldest sibling is a 'natural' fit for the throne. Putri Sejenjang's ascent to power as the firstborn child is questioned throughout this tale. Although she brought temporary peace to Sarawak, her actions displayed her inaptitude as a ruler. Instead of displaying leadership, Putri Sejenjang felt entitled to be ruler of Sarawak, due solely to her position as the eldest sibling. In doing so, Putri Sejenjang displayed entitled narcissistic qualities similar to the sisters of Molek, Sandroy, and Youngest Sister (in 'Tattadu'); the main difference being that in addition to reproductive success Putri Sejenjang was anxious to defend her throne. When Putri Santubong came to assist in the ruling of the land, Putri Sejenjang clung to her position and insisted that she was the rightful ruler, signalling her anxiety over the precariousness of her status as both the eldest sister and the ruler.

Putri Sejenjang's lack of confidence stems from Putri Santubong being the 'prettier' sister. Beauty increases a woman's mate value in the eyes of potential mates as it has generally been seen as an indicator of good health and genes (Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:17; Szepsenwol, Mikulincer and Birnbaum 2013:196). When there is another attractive woman in the vicinity, women 'reported greater body dissatisfaction in the presence of attractive peers, particularly when a desirable man was present' (Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:15). The competition, spurred from the presence of a more attractive female, leads to 'invidious comparison and excessive rumination' (Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:18), which can also lead to feelings of depression and antagonism.⁵⁴ This situation is reflected in Putri Sejenjang's antagonism against her 'prettier' younger sister. The elder sister's response to her younger sister's beauty is to hold fast to her kingdom in order to ensure that she remains higher in status.

A second source of tension between Putri Sejenjang and Putri Santubong is their shared romantic interest. Both sisters are attracted to and wished to attain the same prince. Realizing that the prince wants to woo her sister, Putri Sejenjang faces another affront to her narcissistic ego. Pretending to be Putri Santubong, she effectively admits her sister's superior sexual attractiveness, but is determined to win the prince. The prince,

⁵⁴ In literature on court women of the *kakawin* world, beauty as a manner of outdoing one's reproductive competition is also an important topic: 'The purpose of so much attention to [the women's] appearance is to make themselves as attractive as possible and to outdo their companions in the art of seduction. (Creese 2004:58)'

as a desirable mate for both princesses, would consolidate Putri Sejenjang's status as eldest sibling. Had Putri Sejenjang's plan been successful, she would have established herself as the clear 'victor'.

The power struggle instigated by Putri Sejenjang is aggravated by Putri Santubong's willingness to fight back. Putri Santubong is not a meek younger sister who allows her older sister to win. She sees that her sibling is failing as the ruler of Sarawak and tries to assist her. She wisely retreats when her sister removes her from the palace by force – Putri Santubong knows when to pick her battles. However, she is more than willing to stand up for herself and to fight her sister over the prince. This may be a reflection of female tendencies to resort to direct physical aggression as a 'response to another woman's attempt to 'steal' a man whose resources are already committed' (Campbell 2002:197). Putri Santubong did not allow her sister to 'steal' and 'win' the prince purely on the basis that Putri Sejenjang is older. The sexual competition between Putri Santubong and Putri Sejenjang is further aggravated by their elite status where finding a mate of equal status would be difficult (Campbell 2002:200); thus the great value of the prince. In the end, Putri Santubong does not usurp her sister's political power, but she does not allow her to 'steal' a potential mate on the precept of birth rank and entitlement.

The twist in the story comes with the prince's transformation. Putri Santubong and her sister are both punished by their father for not carrying out their duties. However, it is arguably surprising that the prince, seemingly innocent in the story, is not spared the king's wrath. Seeing that the prince was the cause of the sisters' physical aggression and dissolving kinship, the king meted out punishment against him as well. From the prince's similar fate, the king's action shows that the crime of causing a rift between siblings is as serious as the rivalry itself. Again and again, these oral stories demonstrate that family is of utmost importance. The death of the three protagonists displays the tale's 'lesson' that there is no excuse for sibling rivalry, and that the search for power and partners should not weaken familial bonds. The imagery of mountains, bearing the names of the two princesses and the prince, stand over Sarawak to remind its people of their rivalry and consequences, and that the ties of kinship should not be broken.

The second story on sibling power struggles is a tale from the Philippines entitled ‘Why the Sun is Brighter than the Moon’. It tells the story of the children of the creator of the world: a son, Apolaki, and his sister, Mayari. Their eternally-opened eyes beam light onto the world and create perpetual daylight. When their father, the creator, dies, they quarrel over who will rule the world. Their fight turns violent; they pick up arms and physically battle each other. One day, after a fierce fight, Apolaki blinds Mayari in one eye. He takes pity on his sister, asking that they cease fighting for sole custody of the throne, and offers to rule equally by her side. From then on, Apolaki is known as the sun, for his eyes shine bright and warm light during his rule over day, and Mayari is known as the moon because she bathes the world in cool, gentle light as a result from being blinded in one eye.

In ‘Why the Sun is Brighter than the Moon’, the subject of gender and power is addressed when the siblings’ father passes away. Apolaki declares himself the rightful ruler of the world because he is his father’s son. His sister is angry and retorts that she is no less her father’s child, and has equal right to the throne. This situation implies legitimacy of both male and female rulers in the Philippines. Reid (1988) has argued that in Southeast Asian societies all children of royal birth were potential contenders for the throne regardless of their sex or birth order (1988:639-640).⁵⁵ Indeed, ‘early modern Tagalog and Visayan women [from the Philippines specifically] could own property, succeed to the throne in the absence of a male heir, and achieve power and influence as religious leaders (Leong 2013:119). To display her worthiness for the throne, Mayari even takes up arms to prove herself to her brother. Mayari does not try to coax her brother to share his assumed entitlement to a position of power. Instead, she grows angry and is determined to prove that she is more than capable of ruling the world on her own. Later on, when the siblings share the throne, Mayari proves to be an able ruler of the kingdom of night. The story neither sides with the brother or the sister, nor argues that one was a better ruler than the other. Instead, the story shows that both siblings were able to contribute in different ways that benefited their kingdom.

⁵⁵ There are many notable examples of female rulers in Southeast Asia. An excellent example is the first historically-attested ruler, Wé Tékkéwanua, of the kingdom of Soppeng in South Sulawesi, who ruled around 1400. She is recorded as being a powerful ruler who ‘broke the long and split the broad’ and presided during a period of economic expansion and prosperity (Caldwell 1995).

These stories on power struggles between siblings take a distinctly physical form. Through physical violence, we see the damages inflicted from such sibling rivalry. In an extensive study on the evolutionary psychology of women, Anne Campbell (2002:92) found that women were more often driven to anger than are men when they are talked down to or are the subject of condescending behaviour.⁵⁶ In the case of Mayari, her anger at being underestimated by her brother leads to direct physical aggression. Her brother retaliates by taking up arms against his sister. It is only when Apolaki blinds her that he realizes the cost he is willing to pay to achieve power. Men generally are more used to dealing with direct physical aggression and are thus more aware of the risks involved (Campbell 2002:77). This may account for Apolaki's decision to stop the fight; having harmed his sister and realizing that he may lose her in the process of continued physical aggression, he calls a truce and invites her to share power. This tale, with its more positive outcome, is similar to 'Putri Santubong' in how it expects siblings to live together harmoniously even in the pursuit of power. Stories that encourage a cooperative relationship between siblings can be said to work towards a community's survival into the future.

2.2.2 Beauty and Goodness

Evolutionary perspectives on human mating strategies find that men search for physically attractive women. It has been theorized that generations of human experience has resulted in people relating physical attractiveness to the health of an individual. In other words, a man who is looking to find a healthy and reproductively-able mate would instinctively judge a woman's fitness through her physical appearance. Multiple studies have found positive correlations between certain beauty stereotypes and a woman's health. For example, the Waist to Hip Ratio (WHR) ideal⁵⁷ is complemented by findings that women with a low WHR have better heart and mental health, that children of

⁵⁶ Anne Campbell explains that women are frequently 'excited' into anger when they face issues regarding their competence or meeting goals; the 'next most frequent precipitator is lack of respect or consideration from others followed by other family or co-workers failing to contribute to joint tasks' (Campbell 2002:92).

⁵⁷ Ferguson, Winegard, and Winegard (2011) summarized the results of studies on WHR ideals in their paper: 'although the narrow WHR is preferred across cultures, the specific ratio varies' (2011:16). Chinese men and African American men find the ideal ratio to be approximately 0.6 and 0.8-0.9, respectively (see Dixon, Dixon, Li, and Anderson 2007; Freedman, Cartera, Sbrocco, and Gray 2007). Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens drew nude women with a WHR of 0.776, while Playboy has featured nude women with a WHR of approximately 0.68 between 1978 and 1998 (see Swami, Gray, and Furnham 2007, and Katzmarzyk and Davis 2001 respectively).

women with low WHR were found to have higher scores on intelligence that can be attributed to the ‘fatty acids found in gluteofemoral fat’, and that women with a smaller waistline and larger breasts were found to have higher levels of hormones that ‘facilitate ovulation’ than did women with smaller breasts or larger waists (Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:16).

While beauty and mate selection are two concepts that work satisfactorily together, the concept of beauty and moral goodness is more ambiguous. Many people still hold to the stereotype that ‘compared to unattractive people, attractive individuals are assumed to have better personalities and be morally good’ (Tsukiura and Cabeza 2010:138), showing that the ‘beauty is goodness’ stereotype is still prevalent in today’s societies. The results of studies that have looked into whether there is truth to this stereotype have failed to agree, leaving us with no concrete answers. For example, beauty is seen by Langlois et al. (2000:393) as an ‘honest indicator’ of a person’s general health and fitness. However, Feingold (1992) reported that ‘physically attractive people of both sexes were perceived as more sociable, dominant, sexually warm, mentally healthy, and socially skilled—but not as possessing greater character (and were seen as less modest)—than physically unattractive people’ (1992:332). In other words, while beauty may be a predictor of good health, it is not a reliable predictor of ‘good’ behaviour. This conclusion finds support in maxims found widely across cultures, such as ‘beauty is only skin deep’ and ‘don’t judge a book by its cover’ (Langlois et al. 2000:390).

Beauty is a memetic theme prevalent in all stories previously discussed in Chapter 2, and is the main driving force in the next two tales. ‘The Sweet and Sour Sisters’ and ‘Mangita and Larina’ are both stories from the Philippines; in neither is the audience privy to which sister is older or younger. Both stories are focused on *being* good rather than on *which sister* is good. Similar to the previous stories, however, is the prevalence of sibling competition whereby one of the sisters will try to ensure that she is ‘victorious’.

In ‘The Sweet and Sour Sisters’, Meraat Bawa is depicted as essentially ‘bad’ and Mepiya Bawa essentially ‘good’. These characteristics are described as follows: When Mepiya Bawa meets a hen that asks if it can defecate in her mosquito net, she is

surprised but allows the hen to do as it pleases. Instead of defecating on her net, however, the hen lays plenty of eggs for her. Mepiya is delighted at her good fortune and tells her sister, Meraat Bawa. The latter attempts to receive a similar fortune, but when the hen asks to defecate in her net, she becomes cross and denies the hen's request; she demands it to lay eggs instead. The hen ignores her demands and proceeds to defecate on her mosquito net. Later in the day, when Mepiya Bawa is out swimming, a fish asks if it could pull on her pubic hair. Mepiya Bawa laughs 'good-naturedly' and says: 'If that's your pleasure' (Wrigglesworth 1995 [1981]:159). The fish pulls the hair on her head instead, creating long, luscious locks. Mepiya Bawa thanks the fish and goes to tell her sister her good luck. Meraat Bawa, again, attempts to receive similar blessings as her sister. When the fish asks if it could pull her pubic hair, however, Meraat Bawa replies: 'That's not what needs pulling. [...] Why don't you pull the hair on my head to make it long like my sister's? (Wrigglesworth 1995 [1981]:160)' Of course, the fish does no such thing, and pulls on Meraat Bawa's pubic hair instead. Mepiya Bawa wants to bring home fish to cheer up her sister after such misfortunes, and so goes to her friend the crocodile to ask it for advice on fishing. The crocodile says that it will catch fish for her if she would look after its baby. Mepiya Bawa agrees and sings a lullaby of praises to the crocodile's baby, which the crocodile overhears. Pleased, it brings back plenty of fish for Mepiya Bawa. Meraat Bawa is frustrated at this turn of events and similarly attempts to care for the crocodile's baby in return for fish. However, she sings it insults, which infuriates the crocodile and it only brings back a small fish for Meraat Bawa. The last kindness Mepiya Bawa bestows upon an animal is towards a deer that needs some of its fat chopped off so it can move properly. Its only request is that she is careful not to cut out its heart. Taking pity on the deer but worrying that she may hurt it, Mepiya Bawa only slices off a bit of its fat and brings it home with her. Again, she tells Meraat Bawa of her encounter and her sister goes to find the deer. Meraat Bawa becomes greedy as she takes off more and more of the deer's fat and flesh, unheeding its warning about leaving its heart untouched. Startled and shocked, the deer begs her to remember its words but Meraat Bawa claims that she should have the heart as well because it is the best part to eat. Without any warning, the deer jumps away from Meraat Bawa's greedy hands. It punishes Meraat Bawa's cruelty by goring her to death.

In 'The Sweet and Sour Sisters', Mepiya Bawa and Meraat Bawa's relationship as siblings seems more of a convenient plot device to showcase the juxtaposition between a 'good' and a 'bad' person rather than a commentary on sibling relationships. In addition, there is greater emphasis on a friendly and helpful disposition as the defining quality of 'goodness' in a woman rather than her physical beauty. The tale does not say whether the sisters were beautiful or ugly, only that one was kind and that the other was not. However, while beauty does not cause goodness in this story, it is implied that virtuousness of character can lead to beauty. When Mepiya Bawa responded to a fish's strange demands with laughter and kindness, she is rewarded with beauty in the form of long, black hair. Luscious hair as a form of beauty is used to signal health and youth in a woman and thus is a positive signal for mate attraction (Buss and Schmitt 2011:776). This twist in the plot shows that whatever one's appearance may be, one can be 'transformed' into being more attractive with a pleasing personality. 'The Sweet and Sour Sisters' make full use of the human knowledge of mate attraction and drives the point that to be able to survive in life and to become more beautiful in the eyes of others (particularly men), one needs to be 'good'.

One of the more problematic undertones in 'The Sweet and Sour Sisters' is the type of behaviour that is perceived as 'good' and 'acceptable'. Because stories from oral tradition often exaggerate aspects of everyday life, Meraat Bawa's detestable personality is hinted at as being a result of over-exaggerated displays of 'unfeminine' qualities. For example, she does not tolerate threats from the chicken who declared it wants to defecate in her fishnet, nor does she tolerate sexual harassment from the fish, who wished to pull on her pubic hair. She demands what she wants, and is punished for it. Her sister, Mepiya Bawa, on the other hand, laughingly tolerates the harassment aimed at her and is rewarded for her 'good behaviour'. Meraat Bawa is also shown as being an unfit caretaker of children, singing an insulting lullaby to the crocodile's babies, displaying her inability to be a good mother, for which she is promptly punished. I would argue that such 'unfeminine' attributes are undesirable qualities for a woman in a pre-modern Philippine societies. Thus, an undesirable woman is one who stands up for herself, as well as a woman who is evidently an unfit mother. As a sister, Meraat Bawa is neither better nor worse than Mepiya Bawa, but as a potential mate, she is the antithesis of Mepiya Bawa. This is problematic because the story is framed as Meraat Bawa being an example of a 'bad' *person* but most of the qualities that make her

‘bad’ are in reference to how she would be a ‘bad’ *mate choice* from an arguably male perspective.

While the concept of female ‘goodness’ in ‘The Sweet and Sour Sisters’ may be limited to the qualities of passivity and acceptance, the story of ‘Mangita and Larina’ provides a wider meaning to the concept. The two sisters of the title are described as beautiful but different in personality. Mangita is similar to Mepiya Bawa, in that she is loved by her neighbours for her kindness and good nature. This favouring of Mangita over her sister, however, causes Larina to harbour envious feelings. One day, an old beggarwoman knocks on their door, asking for food. Larina mocks her and pushes her away, causing the old woman to fall and cut her forehead. Mangita rushes to help tend her wound and gives her some food. The old woman thanks Mangita, swearing that she will never forget her kindness, but is silent to Larina. Mangita scolds Larina, causing hatred to brew in Larina’s heart. Not long afterwards, a sickness sweeps over their village and Mangita becomes so ill that she is at the point of death; Larina refuses to help or alleviate her pain. The old woman re-appears and feeds Mangita magical seeds that restore her to health. The old woman gives a bag of seeds to Larina, instructing her to feed her sister every hour until the old woman returns. Larina ignores the old woman’s instructions, however, hiding the seeds in her hair and ignoring Mangita’s pleas for help. Mangita is again on the verge of death when the old woman returns and asks Larina whether she has followed her instructions. Larina shows her the empty bag of seeds and lies about feeding her sister. The old woman questions her, and when Larina refuses to tell the truth the old woman transforms herself into a fairy and heals Mangita. The fairy curses Larina to dwell at the bottom of a lake, where she is to spend eternity combing out the seeds in her hair. The fairy brings Mangita to her heavenly home, where she lives in peace and happiness.

On the point of character overriding physical attractiveness, this tale bears resemblance to ‘The Sweet and Sour Sisters’. In ‘Mangita and Larina’, however, the story states that both sisters are beautiful, albeit in different ways. Larina is a particular beauty; she is described as having beautiful golden hair⁵⁸ and this unique attribute sets her apart from

⁵⁸ Miller (1904) does not comment on whether or not this golden-haired trait is an imported motif. However, a sociohistorical hypothesis can be made in regards to the characterization of which sister is ‘good’ and which is ‘bad’. At the time of collection, the Philippines were being colonized by the United

her dark haired sister, Mangita. However, it is Mangita's kindness that speaks to her neighbors and makes her beloved by all. The villagers are repulsed by Larina's cruelty and distance themselves from her. Unlike Meraat Bawa, however, Larina is affected by the adoration heaped upon her sister, and the more the villagers love Mangita, the more hatred Larina feels for her sister. It is clear from the tale that Larina does not care for her sister and wishes her to die.

Evolutionary theory can be drawn upon to explain Larina's jealousy towards her sister. Since Mangita and Larina's parents are absent, the attention and adoration heaped upon them by their neighbors and community replace that of their parents. When Mangita becomes the sole receiver of attention from their surrogate parents, this creates feelings of jealousy in Larina. Favoritism towards one child may incur jealousy and trigger attention-seeking behaviours in a less-favoured child (Dillon 2013:15). While seemingly self-defeating, Larina's behavior reflects a desperate cry for attention, so intense that she settles for negative attention. As outlined in Chapter 1, children are constantly vying for investments from their parents in the form of attention. This cry for attention by Larina may be part of the reason she behaves in such a deplorable manner; even if she is viewed negatively by her community and by her sister, she is still receiving attention. This attention is important as Larina may feel a false sense of investment from her community.

Certain points should be noted regarding the study of jealousy amongst siblings. While much has been discovered about feelings of and reactions towards jealousy among siblings in childhood, not much is known about adult siblings. According to Dillon (2013:17), 'sibling jealousy persists into adolescence and adulthood but it is understudied and confounded with rivalry, which makes partialling out the unique effects of jealousy difficult'. Thus, Larina's jealousy-induced, attention-seeking behaviour is understood through an analysis of *children's* behavior towards a lack of attention from parental figures. While it does not detract from the initial analysis of Larina's character, further developments in this area of sibling competition may add depth to this reading.

States; it is telling that the dark-haired sister, arguably the one who looks more Philippine in features, is portrayed as 'good' while the light-haired sister, arguably the one who looks 'foreign' and perhaps resembling American features, is portrayed as 'bad'.

Larina's dissatisfaction with Mangita's popularity is further amplified by Mangita's willingness to reprimand her sister after Larina acts in a deplorable manner. This results in Larina feeling slighted by her sister, and causing hatred to arise. We are not privy to the birth order of the two sisters, but as seen here, sibling seniority need not be the prerequisite for homicidal intentions.

'Siblings who are close in age have more similar needs than if they are at different developmental stages and are likely to experience more intense competition for parental attention and other resources' (Daly et al. 2001:38).

This competition culminates in an attempted siblicide by negligence when Larina perceives Mangita as overstepping her boundaries. Larina is characterized as essentially 'bad' because of her capability for cruelty to others as well as her intention to commit indirect siblicide. Unlike 'The Sweet and Sour Sisters', rather than teaching the audience about how to be a 'good' person for mate attraction, 'Mangita and Larina' teaches the audience about the 'good' of a person towards other humans beings and their fellow kin.

2.3 Sibling Harmony

Just as one can think of stories of antagonistic siblings, one can equally quote the love between siblings as portrayed across various storytelling mediums: Scheherazade and her younger sister in the folktale collection of 'One Thousand and One Nights', the cooperation between Hansel and Gretel in the witch's lair as depicted in the Grimm brothers' fairy tales, and the self-sacrifice of Princess Anna for her sister Elsa in Disney's hugely popular film 'Frozen'. The ability of this theme to transcend cultures and mediums imply that it is as memetic as the theme of 'Sibling Rivalry'. In this chapter, examples of cooperative sibling relationships can be found in the following five Western Malayo-Polynesian stories. These tales tell of help against predators and the sharing of ruling responsibilities over a kingdom.

Positive sibling relationships occur when elder siblings assist in the provisioning of the family, when all siblings take part in domestic labor, or when they act as alloparents to their younger siblings in need of care (Nitsch, Faurie and Lumma 2012:2; Gibson and

Gurmu 2011:2200). Elder siblings assisting in acquiring resources and caring for younger children can increase a family's wellbeing and provide future reproductive success through accumulated bridewealth. These helpful elder siblings acquire status within the family and increase their own chances at reproductive fitness through a display of skills and devotion to their younger siblings.

On the other hand, while cooperation occurs among siblings, it has been found that most instances appear to be between an elder sibling and a younger sibling of a different sex. According to a study of sibling relationships by Nitsch, Faurie and Lumma (2012), the presence of elder sisters for younger brothers translated to a positive effect on their longevity, while an elder brother would threaten a younger brother's reproductive success. Similarly for younger sisters, older brothers create a positive association for a longer life while older sisters seemed to have a negative influence on their reproductive success (Nitsch, Faurie and Lumma 2012:6).

2.3.1 Helpful Siblings

It is generally recognized that the closer a person is by blood to another person, the more willing he or she tends to be to help that other person, in contrast to a person who is not genetically related to them.⁵⁹ In evolutionary studies, the theory of kin selection, also known as inclusive fitness theory, 'focuses on cooperation among individuals that are genetically closely related' (Fehr and Gächter 2002:137). This theory is applied to analysis of sibling relationships in this section on 'Helpful Siblings'. The theory proposes that those who carry genes that encourage them to help their kin have better rates of survival and reproduction and are thus able to increase the pervasiveness of those genes (Korchmaros and Kenny 2006:22). In section 2.3.1, kin selection theory can be viewed in three different ways: firstly, when elder siblings act as resource collectors or helpers; secondly, when elder female siblings improve the likelihood of younger siblings surviving childhood; and finally, when elder brothers improve their younger sisters' survival rate and consequently the number of their offspring (Nitsch, Faurie and Lummaa 2012:2, 6).

⁵⁹ A spouse, while not biologically related, can be argued to inspire similar devotion because of their status as the begetter of future family members.

'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi' is a tale from the Philippines that had been discussed in regards to stepfamily dynamics in 'Not My Child'. The titular two siblings are rejected by their stepfather when their mother remarries following the death of their father. Bata Mama is seven years old while his sister, Bata Bahi, is barely two years old. Unable to care for themselves, the two embark on a journey to find their parents. Bata Mama is caring and gentle with his sister; he scares away a witch that tries to eat them and uses his ingenuity to find food to feed them both. They encounter a family of giants who attempt to eat them but are saved by a friendly crab that acts as their foster parent, caring for them until they become adults. When the crab is old and lies dying, it bequeaths its magical claws to the siblings. With these they are able to build a prosperous kingdom. At the end of the tale, they are reunited with their mother and stepfather and both are forgiven.

Two questions arise from the story of 'Bata Mama and Bata Bahi'. Is Bata Mama an exemplary sibling because he is an elder *brother*? Or is his gender inconsequential and his exemplariness comes from his status as an elder *sibling*, acting instinctively to protect a close family member? The answer to the first question is a tentative 'yes'. Using a 'large demographic dataset on preindustrial humans from Finland', Nitsch, Faurie, and Lummaa (2012) found that elder brothers negatively affect the reproductive success of their younger brothers at adulthood, but have a positive effect on all their younger siblings in childhood.

'[As] boys usually worked at the farm, their participation could have increased the overall resources of the family and benefited all younger siblings independently of their sex. By contrast, girls had the opportunity to bias their help towards males as they provided direct care to their younger siblings at home.' (Nitsch, Faurie and Lummaa 2012:6)

The advantages of having an older brother during childhood is further emphasised in a study by Gibson and Gurmu (2011). The authors found that in rural Ethiopia the presence of an elder brother increased not only the survival rates of female children, but also correlated positively to an increased number of those sibling's offspring (Gibson and Gurmu 2011:2202). It could thus be argued that Bata Mama's heroism is based on

the precept that he is an elder *brother* to a younger *sister*. Furthermore, as children they have no need to compete for mates, and are able to cooperate with each other.

One should bear in mind, however, that Bata Mama and Bata Bahi were under the constant threat of death. From an evolutionary perspective, the death of a family member means the termination of further opportunities to perpetuate genes. From a more humanistic level, however, people may fear the death of kin because of emotional closeness (Korchmaros and Kenny 2006:22). Korchmaros and Kenny (2006) contend that:

‘Death necessarily precludes future reproduction of carriers of the genes that cause helping, whereas failure to accomplish an everyday task does not. Thus, according to evolutionary theory, people should be particularly willing to help when the life of the person in need is contingent on receipt of aid than when it is not.’ (2006:24).

This is to say that, while his actions may have reflected an instinct to protect kin, Bata Mama is not necessarily an example of elder *brothers* being protective of younger sisters; instead, Bata Mama is rather an example of the advantages of having a protective elder *sibling*. Bata Mama’s instinctive care of his younger sibling, Bata Bahi, ensures that they both survive, and doubles the probability of propagating their shared genes in the future.

Memetic themes concerning impending death and sibling cooperation pervade the following three stories from Madagascar, all of which contain a similar plot. In ‘Betombokoantsoro: Faralahy Bikesa, the Monster’, ‘The Cowhide that Turned into a Cow’, and ‘The Defiant Girl in Madagascar’, a daughter (or daughters)⁶⁰ is engaged to a suspicious character whom she adamantly wishes to marry. Upon her marriage, at least one of her siblings or slaves follows her to her husband’s house. Her sibling or slave, who had been watchful during their first night together, discovers that the man she has married is a monster. The monster is thrilled at the prospect of being able to feast on his new bride as well as her siblings but his potential victims manage to escape. When they

⁶⁰ In ‘Betombokoantsoro: Faralahy Bikesa, the Monster’, three sisters go to live with the monster. In ‘The Cowhide that Turned into a Cow’ two sisters marry the disguised monster, while in ‘The Defiant Girl in Madagascar’ one sister marries the monster and another sister follows her to her new home.

arrive home, they are given refuge by their family. The monster gives chase but assisted by the people of their village, the family is able to kill it.

The heroes of these three tales are of different sex. One is a sickly younger brother, one is a slave girl, and another is a sister. The three differ in terms of their levels of closeness and relationship to the girl(s) being married, but in the face of impending death at the hands of the monsters *Betombokoantsoro*, *Tsangarira*, and *Mandrangana*, all work not only to save themselves but also the people they are obliged to protect. The sickly younger brother in ‘*Betombokoantsoro: Faralahy Bikesa, the Monster*’ and the sister from the ‘*The Defiant Girl in Madagascar*’ are the closest in terms of kin relations to their sibling. They willingly follow their sister(s) to their new brother-in-law’s house to act as their sister(s)’ protector, and it is through their vigilance that all escape alive. The slave girl who accompanied the sisters in ‘*The Cowhide that Turned into a Cow*’, however, acts from a sense of duty. In this instance, the story shows that while kin relations can be argued to account for a large part of altruistic behaviour, a feeling of responsibility and obligation is the basis for helpfulness and cooperation.

The final tale that looks at cooperative behaviour between siblings is from the Chamorro people and entitled ‘*Puntan and Fu’una*’. According to the story, *Puntan* and *Fu’una*, the gods of creation, are brother and sister. *Puntan* asks that his sister, *Fu’una*, take apart his body in order to create different parts of the world: one of his eyes to become the sun, another to become the moon, and his back to become the earth. Upon completing his request, *Fu’una* uses her energy and spirit to bring life to the different parts of her brother’s body, creating light for the sun and making the earth bloom. As a final act of creation, *Fu’una* throws her body into the earth, creating *Fouha Rock*, which can be found in *Umatac Bay* in the southern part of *Guam*. From there, the first humans emerged.

The tale of ‘*Puntan and Fu’una*’ is reminiscent of ‘*Why the Sun Shines Brighter than the Moon*’, a tale that involves a brother and sister who take part in the creation of the world. Unlike ‘*Why the Sun Shines Brighter than the Moon*’, however, there is no rivalry between the two siblings; both are in harmony, finding their own ways of contributing to life on earth. This reflects the way in which gender is viewed in Chamorro society whereby both men and women are respected as contributing members

to society. This is further exemplified in Chamorro politics where ‘the two most powerful titles in society were held by a male and a female, the maga’låhi (leading son) and the maga’håga (leading daughter)’ (Hattori 2009). In Chamorro matrilineal families, the brother-sister pair is the most stable and reliable relationship. It even takes precedence over one’s marriage partners, as brothers and sisters are held to work together harmoniously in order to ‘protect family property, raise the children of the family, and generate assets to keep the family well endowed’ (Hattori 2009).

Even though the method of delivering the themes of ‘Puntan and Fu’una’, ‘Why the Sun Shines Brighter than the Moon’, and ‘Putri Santubong’ differ, each revolves around the memetic idea that power should not corrupt family relationships. All societies have implicit and explicit rules that convey to its members the manner in which they should conduct themselves with relatives, as well as non-kin members (Korchmaros and Kenny 2006:23). In the case of family members, close cooperation is advised. In the story of Puntan and Fu’una, cooperation gives birth to a new world. This sharply contrasts with the competition that initially plagued Apolaki and Mayari in ‘Why the Sun Shines Brighter than the Moon’.

All the stories in this chapter reflect a concern for cooperation rather than competition between siblings and other kin. This emphasis is in line with an evolutionary perspective of human behaviour. The emotional closeness one normally feels for one’s kin is the result of years of nurturing and support, producing a feeling of obligation and duty, and inspiring siblings to care continuously for one another. The more support an individual receives from his or her family members, the greater the chances that individual survives into adulthood and produces offspring.

CHAPTER 3: THE GRANDMOTHER HYPOTHESIS

“[...] the planet will be steered to safety by Grandmother/Grandmothers or it will not be steered to safety at all.”

- Alice Walker

3.1 Why Grandmothers?

Help is always welcome when it comes to caring for children. Help can come in many forms: looking after older children while mothers are nursing a baby, taking care of children while parents are out working, or giving advice to nervous new parents. This type of help can increase the stability of a home and provide a better quality of life for children. The people who provide this sort of help in raising children have been termed alloparents (Wilson 2000). Alloparental care is important in reducing the burden upon new mothers; and as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. But what type of alloparent is considered an ideal addition to the family? While there may be many potential carers to choose from, parents normally seek out one particular figure for their children: the grandmother.

The grandmother figure can be defined as ‘a female who is no longer fertile and has no current dependent [who] adopts a weaned dependent from a female of fertile age, freeing the fertile female for another conception’ (Kim et al. 2014:86). This thesis will widen the definition of a grandmother to include elderly female figures that do not have children, but help look after the younger generation. From an evolutionary perspective, grandmothers and post-reproductive women in general are a difficult phenomenon to explain. It is an evolutionary conundrum that women continue to live healthy lives long after they are able to bear children. Most animals live only a short while after they are no longer able to reproduce (Kim et. al 2014:85). According to Jamison et al. (2002:67), ‘human females experience menopause at approximately the age at which their chimp counterparts die and then go on to live for another 25 years or more’. Humans are one of the rare mammalian species that have ‘grandmother’ figures in their communities

(Johnstone and Cant 2011:3765). Why do the female in certain species continue to live on past the age of reproduction? What possible evolutionary advantage could this offer?

The ‘grandmother hypothesis’ is a collection of theories as to why human females continue to live past reproductive age. One of the main tenants of this hypothesis is that postreproductive females continue to live in certain higher mammalian species because they provide a crucial form of alloparental care towards the young of their own offspring (Kim et. al 2014:85). The grandmother figure is considered integral towards the survival of her offspring’s family; in the case of humans, she is able to provide extra food for a growing family and can care for children while the parents are absent or caring for a newborn child. When approaching the ‘grandmother hypothesis’ among humans, studies tend to take two general approaches: either researchers are interested in why women cease being reproductive or they are interested in why humans lead such long somatic lives compared to other primates.

Evolutionary biologist G.C. Williams was among the first to ask the question of why women cease to reproduce at a certain age. Williams remarked that

‘[...] at some time during human evolution it may have become advantageous for a woman of forty-five or fifty to stop dividing her declining faculties between the care of extant offspring and the production of new ones’ (1957:403).

He was the first proponent of the menopause and the post-reproductive female as being adaptive, and proposed the ‘stopping early hypothesis’. This hypothesis claims that grandmothers who cease to reproduce benefit already-born children (Williams 1957:32-39). This led to the ‘good mother hypothesis’, namely that the post-reproductive woman goes on to assist her children’s fertility by ensuring that they will be able to ‘mature and take their place in society’ (Jamison et al. 2002:68). A ‘narrowly defined’ version of the grandmother hypothesis underscores the significance of the grandmother in relation to her grandchildren rather than to her own children, placing emphasis on the role of grandmotherly provisioning and how grandmothers provide a significant amount of food to grandchildren as well as to other kin members (Jamison et al. 2002:68-69). Hrdy has combined both these ideas with the ‘grandmother’s clock hypothesis’ where ‘the long postmenopausal stint is, in fact, an integral part of the human organism’s

reproductive plan' (1999:385) and evolved alongside extended childhood dependency, making grandmothers a necessary part of human life.

Another manner of approaching the subject of elderly humans is to ask: 'why do humans live longer than any other of their primate relatives?' Kristen Hawkes, an evolutionary anthropologist, has written extensively on this question in relation to the grandmother hypothesis. Discussing the problem of postmenopausal longevity, Hawkes argues that '[natural] selection can favour increased longevity, with lower rates of annual fecundity, as long as the overall rate of increase in the longer-lived lineages is higher than in competing lineages' (2003:385). Therefore, constant fecundity will bring about a lower lifespan, whereas limited fecundity (such as in humans) will bring about longer lifespans. This accounts for the fact that there is constant fecundity among other primates but with smaller numbers of grandmother figures as opposed to humans, who live on into post-reproductive years (Hawkes 2003:387).

Critics, however, have pointed out that longevity is 'unlikely to be an evolutionary consequence of grandmothing'; instead widespread allocare 'may have more important consequences for the mortality trajectory observed in modern humans' (Kachel et al. 2010:389). Thus, it is not the existence of *grandmothers* per se that has helped increase the lifespans of humans, but help through the form of allocare in general. While some researches have argued that other alloparents such as grandfathers, fathers, or other family members can provide the same type of benefits as those offered by the grandmother (see Kaplan et al 2000:179-80), a grandmother is able to provide a number of advantages as an alloparent that are markedly different in evolutionary terms than that of the father, grandfather, or other family members.

A grandmother is considered to be the best type of alloparent for a mother for three important reasons. Firstly, the grandmother is directly related to her grandchildren and thus is invested in their well-being (Alvarez 2000:73). The type of help a grandmother bestows upon her grandchildren is invaluable, as she has their best interests at heart. It has even been argued that she has their best interests ingrained in her genes. In the article 'The Selfish Grandma Gene', it was noted that 'Care giving between family members may be influenced by genes in ways that encourage people to treat relatives differently according to their degrees of relatedness' (Fox, Johow, and Knapp 2011:1).

The genetic link that binds a grandmother and grandchild makes a grandmother's help superior to that of a stranger, who is not genetically involved in the future of these children.

Secondly, a grandmother is considered the best type of alloparent because of her prior experience in raising children. Having raised children to adulthood, the grandmother figure is arguably more capable at taking care of children than are other family members. Sarah Hrdy emphasizes this point by naming grandmothers (or 'post-reproductive females') as the ideal type of alloparent (1999:274). While an older sister is directly related to her younger sibling, and might be enthusiastic at the prospect of caring for him or her, the older sister has little experience in mothering, and important details might escape her attention. With first-hand mothering experience, the grandmother figure is the ideal alloparent for mothers everywhere.

Thirdly, an important aspect of the grandmother figure is her inability to have children. Being post-reproductive, a grandmother is removed from the reproductive process, which enables her to focus on the survival of existing family members rather than childbearing (Kim et al. 2014:93). The rationale behind grandmothers being ideal alloparents harkens back to the "the stopping early hypothesis" as well as the "good mother hypothesis" (Hawkes et al. 1998, 2003). Mothers tend to direct their attention to their youngest children. By 'stopping early' grandmothers are free to provide focused attention to older grandchildren.

While grandmothers arguably provide the best type of alloparental care, certain grandchildren may receive more care than others. The hypothesis argues that if the grandchildren are the offspring of the grandmother's daughter, the grandmother will be more invested in their well-being as 'females [...] have the higher probability of carrying her [grandmother's] genes on to the next generation [than males]' (Jamison et al. 2002:73-74). This is because a female is always certain that her child is her own, which is not the case for males. The hypothesis also predicts that, if there are male and female grandchildren, the grandmother will favour her granddaughter more than her grandson. This scenario is termed the 'X-Linked Granddaughter Favouritism Hypothesis', whereby grandparents favour granddaughters over grandsons as long as 'the magnitude of the cost to grandsons is no more than twice the benefit to

granddaughters' (Fox, Johow, and Knapp 2011:2). In industrialized societies, it has been found that the type of investments poured into grandchildren from different grandparents are as follows: 'maternal grandmothers invest the most in, have most contact with, and have the closest relationships with their grandchildren, followed by maternal grandfathers, paternal grandmothers, and, finally, paternal grandfathers' (Coall and Hertwig 2011:95). This finding lends weight to the first part of the hypothesis.

Because of their valuable services, as well as their role as keepers of knowledge in their communities, elderly female figures are revered. Indeed, Andaya (2000) notes that 'the image of the senior woman as wise and strong is a recurring motif' in Southeast Asian literature, especially the motif of 'the female leader as grandmother' (2000:236-37). This sentiment is echoed in Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) oral traditions as seen in the following five stories about grandmothers from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Madagascar. While each deals with a different aspect of being a post-reproductive woman in WMP speaking communities, certain commonalities unite them. For example, *Dano Marsabut* and the *Tale of 101 Brothers and their Sister* deal with the theme of 'Disastrous Desires'. The first story, *Dano Marsabut*, deals with desires for the protagonist's 'glory' days. The second story, *Tale of the 101 Brothers and their Sister*, deals with an aging couple who suddenly find themselves with 101 children in a single night as an answer to their prayers. Both stories act as analogies to the pitfalls of 'going against nature' or working against the role of the grandmother as defined by society and, I would argue, by nature itself. This analogy will be explored below.

3.1.1 Disastrous Desires

'Dano Marsabut' is the origin tale of a lake in Northern Sumatra and its main character is an old woman who is bored of watching over drying rice. To escape the tediousness of her duties, she starts to daydream of her long-ago wedding day. As she slides deeper into her daydreams, she deserts her post and goes in search of her old wedding ornaments; when she finds them, she drapes them on her cats. The grandmother locates a drum, and begins to beat a march. As she beats, she becomes transfixed by the cats' movements and her drumming becomes more frantic. The gods become angered by her actions and the heaven storms down on the whole village. The village and its inhabitants are completely destroyed; the only thing left is the lake, Dano Marsabut.

'Dano Marsabut' seeks to caution the elderly female against stepping out of her role in the cycle of life. In previous chapters, when stories from oral traditions seek to caution younger women or men, one can find common memetic themes: be a dutiful son or daughter, and be careful of whom you choose as your partner. 'Dano Marsabut' reminds the audience of the intended place in society for elderly women. In the story, the elderly woman abandons her duties of looking after the drying rice to pursue her daydreams, an act that brings catastrophic results. According to the tale, there is no excuse for her to leave her post, even if the act of watching rice dry is tedious.

Earlier on in the tale, the old woman weighs her options of either taking a nap or leaving her drying rice. She decides against either because chickens might eat it, or rain might spoil it. She is aware of the importance of her social role and that she should not abandon her duties. This changes when she envisions herself once more as the centre of attention on her wedding day, and the drums that accompany her daydreams carry her onto her feet and away from the drying rice. Following the grandmother hypothesis, this part of the story shows her deviating from her intended social role. She wants to imagine herself part of the reproductive process, instead of remaining outside of it. The grandmother's desire goes against the hypothesis that grandmothers exist in order to care for her family (Kim et al. 2014:93).

'Dano Marsabut' speaks volumes with its small tale. While aimed at an elderly female population, it also speaks to a larger community. The elderly female in the story is not the only one who is punished; the tale ends with the entire village being destroyed. From this, it can be inferred that the lesson goes beyond a cautionary tale for elderly women. Early in the story, it is mentioned that the old woman is not only bored but also lonely. Lacking companionship, she has been left to carry out her duties alone, driving her to boredom and daydreams. The story seems to indicate that the old woman is not solely to blame for the catastrophic events; while the people in her village are nameless and many, they all play a part in the tragic events. Communal life in a village requires each member to assist the other so that no one is neglected. Indeed, it has been postulated that the longevity of humans can be attributed to 'human patterns of cooperation and interdependence' (Hawkes 2003:392). While a grandmother's role is to protect and assist her family and community, her family and community must also play

a part in ensuring her happiness and contentment. Her loneliness was caused by a lack of support from her community, contributing to the downfall of their village.

In the next story of the ‘Tale of the 101 Brothers and their Sister’, we are introduced to a poor, aging couple who pray for children but to no avail. Having lost all hope, they proclaim to each other that God does not exist as their prayers have never been answered. In reply, God bestows upon the aging woman 102 children, which she delivers one after another throughout one long night. Realizing that they will never be able to care for them all, the new elderly mother asks her husband to dispose of their 101 sons, and allow just their one daughter to survive. The husband fails to heed her latter instruction and throws all their newly born children into a ravine. Having done so, he discovers that all have miraculously survived, and provides them with sustenance before he abandons them. The story then moves away from the aging parents and focuses on the adventures of the 101 brothers and their one sister.

An aspect of the ‘Tale of the 101 Brothers and their Sister’ that stands out is that the couple is past the age of reproduction, and they seem to be oblivious of the dangers of late childbirth. There are serious risks associated with childbirth at an older age, such as a child being born with low birth weight and chromosomal abnormalities, a higher possibility of miscarriage, and even the death of the mother in childbirth (Jamison et al. 2002:68). Pre-modern societies are familiar with the dangers of late motherhood and stories such as this would have acted as a warning to discourage late pregnancies. In the story, the couple ignored this danger and turned against God, and were punished with 102 children.

Caring for one child is difficult enough for first-time parents, but caring for a large number of children when the first-time parents are old, poor and without the help of family members, is virtually impossible. In the ‘Tale of 101 Brothers and their Sister’, the new mother, after a tiring delivery, knows that they are unable to care for all their newborn children. She instructs her husband to kill all their sons but to keep their only daughter. It is interesting that out of the 102 children she could have kept, she wanted to keep her only daughter. Across the Western Malayo-Polynesian-speaking world, daughters are often seen as investments as future carers for either the mother’s younger

children or as future carers to the mother herself.⁶¹ While sons will leave home to begin their own families, the women in the Western Malayo-Polynesian speaking world often stay close to home, and thus could be the reason for the elderly mother's preference to keep a female child.

'Dano Marsabut' and the 'Tale of 101 Brothers and their Sister' discuss the memetic theme of elderly women who desire to be a part of the reproductive process. The stories seem to reflect an evolutionary understanding of the grandmotherly role, and warn grandmothers against such involvement. 'Dano Marsabut' is a darker tale, pushing the idea of elderly desire as potentially catastrophic to the dreamer and also to the dreamer's community. The elderly parents in the second story portray the difficulties faced should such desires be realized. The evolutionary message is clear in both tales of 'Disastrous Desires': the elderly should not take part in the reproductive process.

The next story explores the complicated family dynamics between starting a new family and merging harmoniously with an old one. In the Massenrempulu tale, 'Beristerikan Daun Pacar' (Married to a Henna Leaf), the elderly grandmother-in-law is posed as a threatening figure who upsets the equilibrium between the newlyweds and their child. Or could it perhaps be the other way around?

3.1.2 The Grandmother Figure

This section will focus on the role of the husband's grandmother in the progression of the tale. In the story, a grandmother lives with her grandson, a poor farmer, and cares for him. When the grandmother leaves to tend to a sick relative in a nearby village, the tale shifts to the romance between the farmer and his would-be wife, a woman who is transformed from a henna leaf he has gathered. One of the conditions the henna leaf-woman makes in order for him to marry her is that no one should ever be angry at her or her children. He agrees to her conditions and they marry, promptly begetting a son who is often taken care of by his grandmother. One day, the young son accidentally spills some of his grandmother's coconut oil and laps it up. His grandmother is furious when

⁶¹ This may partly explain the saying of 'the more daughters a man has, the richer he is' (Reid 1988a, 629). The role of women as carers may add on to Reid's (1988a) explanation attributing '[women's] reproductive role [as giving] them magical and ritual powers [that was] was difficult for men to match' (1988a: 629, emphasis mine).

she finds that she has lost her precious coconut oil. As she berates the child, his mother appears, and scoops him into her arms. The mother then sings a song that turns her son into oil. She bottles the oil and gives it as compensation to the grandmother before turning herself back into a henna leaf. When the husband returns and his wife and child are nowhere to be found, he asks his grandmother, who does not reply.

Introducing the grandmother of the farmer early in the story is an interesting plot device to garner sympathy from the audience. We are drawn to empathize with the grandmother as we learn of their relationships to each other. The farmer is described as being a lonely man who finds happiness in the company of a long-lost grandmother. She takes care of his day-to-day life, cooking, cleaning, and tending to his domestic needs. When she leaves to care for another sick relative in a different village, the farmer misses her company and the care she has provided him. The grandmother's absence seems to be crucial to the development of the romance between the farmer and the mysterious henna-leaf woman, who takes over the chores that the grandmother once performed. His marriage to this woman and his willingness to agree to an impossible condition – that neither he nor anyone in his family can ever be angry at her or her children – speaks volumes about the importance of a caring, female figure in his life. In the end, he seems to settle down to fill the void and uncertainty from his grandmother's absence.

The centrality of the story lies in the impossible condition that one must never become angry at another family member. The grandmother seems to enjoy caring for the child but is angered when he spills her coconut oil. This leads to a tragic result: the loss of a wife, who transforms back into a henna leaf, and the child, who is transformed into oil. Whose fault was it that the father loses both his wife and child? While the wife sets impossible conditions for her marriage and the father foolishly agrees to them, we cannot entirely disregard the grandmother's role in the story. It is ultimately her anger that causes the loss of mother and child.

In order to understand the significance of her anger towards her grandson, it is important to understand anger itself. Anger is described as an expansive emotion that negotiates 'how much weight an individual should put on the welfare of another compared to themselves when making decisions that affect them both' (Sell 2011:382, 384). This mental weighing is referred to as the Welfare Tradeoff Ratio and affects how

individuals would react in response to anger. The Welfare Tradeoff Ratio (WTR) is key to understanding the recalibrational theory, a model that ‘hypothesizes that the regulatory program governing anger evolved in the service of bargaining, to resolve conflicts of interest in favor of the angry individual’ (Sell, Tooby, and Cosmides 2009:15073). According to this theory, anger occurs when the offended finds that the offender holds a WTR that is ‘too low’ (Sell 2011:383). Sell adds on that ‘during human evolutionary history, others' WTRs toward you would have been a powerful predictor of your ability to receive food, acquire and retain mates, receive aid while sick, protect ones offspring from injury and predation, and influence others’ (Sell 2011:382).

In ‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’, the grandmother unleashes her anger on her grandson whom she sees as holding a lower Welfare Tradeoff Ratio than herself. The coconut oil has been spilled and eaten by the grandson, making it a waste of resources that the grandson will not be able to replace. Her anger here seems warranted in the face of such loss. However, she does not anticipate that when she directs her anger at her grandson it is the mother who responds. The mother turns the tables on the grandmother when she transforms her son into oil to compensate the grandmother’s loss, demonstrating her higher sense of WTR as compared to the grandmother. Four bottles of the lost coconut oil and a henna leaf in exchange for a baby boy and a divine wife – with such stark comparisons, the exchange of ‘gifts’ demonstrates how the perceived loss of coconut oil as loss of resources does not compare to the loss of both wife and child. The henna-leaf mother knows that the farmer and the grandmother need her in order to continue their lineage. This knowledge gives her power, which she asserts by retracting her son and herself from the farmer’s life.

‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’ speaks to grandmothers about their role as caretakers to the young and about the repercussions of their actions on the entire family. The story shows that in caring for their grandchildren, grandmothers sometimes need to be aware of the larger picture when confronted with a stressful situation. The juxtaposition between what was perceived as lost (the coconut oil) and what could actually be lost (the mother and son) is a powerful image that warns the audience of the dangers of quick tempers and hasty reactions.

‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’ exemplifies the difficulties in navigating between one family (that of the farmer with his wife and child) and another (that of the farmer and his grandmother). It demonstrates the challenges that can arise when two sets of expectations collide in a household, and that despite this family members need to continue to care for their fellow kin. The tale also humanizes the character of the old grandmother figure. While she is good, kind, and caring for her family, she has her limits, as exemplified by her loss of temper. Her silence at the end of the story as an indicator of her guilt, however, shows the humanness of her character. It is hypothesized that the realistic portrayal of the grandmother will resonate with an elderly female audience, driving home the lesson implied in the story.

The final two sections explore ‘Examples of Good Behaviour’. Unlike the grandmother in ‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’, these stories contain elderly female figures that have been reduced to the archetype of what a Good Grandmother should be. In the Malagasy tale of ‘Two Girls and the Old Woman’, we are presented with a typical friendly, grandmother-like figure more common in oral traditions, and in ‘Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus’ (The Poor Widow and the Snakehead Fish), the old widow is ‘goodness’ personified.

3.1.3 Examples of Good Behaviour

The elderly Malagasy female figure in ‘Two Girls and the Old Woman’ is different in one major way from the grandmother in ‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’, namely that she has no family of her own. She is a childless old woman living alone who comes across two orphaned girls heading towards a monster named Itrionobe. She warns them of the impending danger but the girls do not heed her. The old woman warns them a second time but they laugh and continue their journey. Soon enough, they encounter Itrionobe, who gives chase. They distract him by dropping maize and corn from their pockets, but this stops the monster only momentarily. Pausing to gather and eat it, the monster remarks on how stupid the girls are to throw away food. The girls escape only after magically turning themselves into orange trees, a transformation that fools the monster. Ensuring that the monster has left, they return to the old woman, who welcomes them warmly. The girls respond to her kindness, referring to themselves as her daughters and she as their grandmother. They all live together and become a family.

This type of characterization, where the old, grandmotherly figure is helpful, kind, and benign, is the more typical representation of the elderly female figure in oral traditions. In this story, she seems to serve no further purpose than to warn the two girls of danger and to provide a safe haven when they return. Unlike in the ‘Tale of the 101 Brothers and their Sister’, the childless old woman does not yearn for her own offspring. Instead, she chooses to adopt and care for other children, raising them successfully into adulthood. The old woman has no desire beyond that of helping the lost girls; she is the archetypal good grandmother, unlike the grandmotherly figures in the three tales previously discussed.

The old widow in the second tale, ‘Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus’ (The Poor Widow and the Snakehead Fish), is similar to the lonely grandmother figure in ‘Two Girls and the Old Woman’. Although she is alone and poor, she does not complain of her circumstances, but goes looking for wood in the forests to exchange for food. One day, she comes across a dry pond where snakehead fish are flopping about, as if near death. She thinks of catching them to eat, but takes pity on them and walks away. As she does so, she overhears them calling aloud to God for rain. Soon enough: rain comes pouring down. The old widow is so moved by this event that she goes home and that night calls to God to send her money. Her frantic cries annoy her rich neighbour, and when she does not heed his yells to quiet down he fills a bag with broken glass and rocks and throws it at her. She is knocked unconscious by the impact. When she awakens, she quickly opens the sack and finds that God has turned the glass and rocks into money. When her neighbour sees this, he tries to repeat the miracle by having a neighbour throw glass and rocks at him. But the glass and rocks remained just that!

In the ‘Two Girls and the Old Woman’, the grandmotherly figure is portrayed as ‘good’ through her selflessness at caring for her two adopted daughters. ‘Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus’ shows a different type of ‘goodness’ where the poor widow is portrayed as hard-working and uncomplaining; even in old age she goes to gather wood. Unlike the protagonist of ‘Dano Marsabut’, who abandons her task to pursue her ‘selfish’ daydreams, the poor widow is steadfast in her work and in her prayers. Although she has no children or grandchildren, she is ‘useful’ to her community. Because of her ‘goodness’ in living her life selflessly, the poor widow is rewarded with riches.

From the five tales on post-reproductive females examined in this chapter, we see that the ideals placed upon these characters mirror those of the roles of grandmothers found in the grandmother hypothesis. ‘Dano Marsabut’, ‘The Tale of 101 Brothers and their Sister’, and ‘Beristerikan Daun Pacar’ all attempt to ‘teach’ the elderly of their place to nurture and provide provisions for their family and community, while ‘Two Girls and the Old Woman’ and ‘Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus’ show that their own joy at selflessness is the ultimate reward. Elderly female figures are expected to be doting grandmothers and any attempt to deviate from the norm is discouraged. This begs the question: to what extent is this supposedly ‘natural’ nurturing circumstance a result of a genetically evolved disposition, and to what extent has culture, through storytelling, played a part in cementing grandmotherly role expectations? It is a question that needs to be studied in future research on the grandmother hypothesis.

**PART 2: TALES OF SEARCHING
FOR A PARTNER**

CHAPTER 4: THE SEARCH FOR HAPPY ENDINGS

*“Tout le monde sait comment on fait les bébés
Mais personne sait comment on fait des papas”*

- ‘Papaoutai’, Stromae

In Stromae’s international hit song ‘Papaoutai’ (*‘Dad, where are you?’*), the singer laments that ‘Everyone knows how to make babies | But no one knows how to make dads’. He questions what it means to father a child – whether it is ‘just passing on genes’ or raising the next generation (*‘Des géniteurs ou des génies?’*). While biologically, a man’s contribution to the proliferation of his genes ends with the insemination of an ovum, much more is required. The global reach and popularity of ‘Papaoutai’ can be seen as a contemporary reflection of the evolutionary importance of fathers. A man’s support throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and a child’s developmental years can be vital to a child’s survival. When searching for a partner, women are instinctively aware of the importance of a father in bringing up children. But they also know that men may have other plans in mind.

Evolutionary researchers have argued that most women are searching for a long-term relationship, while most men are more interested in short-term relationships (Buss and Schmitt 1993:206; Wlodarski and Dunbar 2015:99; Wlodarski, Manning, and Dunbar 2015:1; Szepeswol, Mikulincera, and Birnbaum 2013:196). This behavioural pattern seems to be universal. Buss and Schmitt (1993) have argued that these different relationship goals are related to the differences between a man and a woman’s reproductive system. A woman’s body produces a set number of gametes that can be fertilized within a limited window of opportunity (Buss and Schmitt 1993:206). When a woman becomes pregnant, she takes on the role of child-bearer for the following nine months. During that time, she needs to exercise care to ensure that her child is brought to term.⁶² After the birth of her child, the woman may nurse her offspring for the next three to four years (Fletcher et al. 2015:21). Anne Campbell (2002:38) emphasizes that

⁶² Even when a child is brought to term, a mother may still encounter difficulties in labour because of the unique circumstances of human birth; unlike other primates and mammals, a human mother often needs assistance in giving birth because of the ‘close correspondence between [the] neonatal head and shoulder dimensions and maternal pelvic dimensions’, which necessitates that the child is birthed head-first (otherwise known as the occiput anterior position) (Rosenberg and Trevathan 2002:1203).

‘every baby represents a very large investment of time and energy, to say nothing of emotion’. This compels a woman to choose the right mate to help her through this challenging process.

A man’s contribution, however, can end after depositing his sperm inside a woman. A man is able to produce viable sperm into old age, long past a woman’s capability to conceive. He does not necessarily need to care for his offspring and can instead continue to “sow his oats” far and wide, creating more opportunities for his genes to perpetuate themselves. This creates a potential conflict of interest: a woman will want her mate to invest in a long-term relationship, spending his time and energy raising their child. A man, on the other hand, logically has a better opportunity to disseminate his genes through short-term relationships with different women (Szepeswol, Mikulincer and Birnbaum 2013:196; Wlodarski, Manning and Dunbar 2015:2; Landolt, Lalumière, and Quinsey 1995:13).

This conflict of interests led both sexes to develop different strategies to achieve their reproductive goals. Consciously or unconsciously, women and men put out various signals to attract the type of partner they want. These signals can range from enhancing their physical appearances, whereby men and women dress to impress a potential mate, to modifying their behaviour in order to interest the opposite sex. Among the types of behaviours that have shown positive results in attracting partners include displays of kindness, empathy, and intelligence (Regan et al. 2000:2). Mate selection is a complex process, one that may involve deception by both sexes, all so that they will be able to find a partner and to reproduce.

It is not difficult to find tales on the memetic theme of ‘Searching for a Partner’. Fairy tales and folktales that feature female protagonists are often about finding Prince Charming. Whether stories are about selecting the Right Man, or competing for his attention, the life of the female protagonist seems to revolve around the search for Mr. Right. This is a problematic narrative because the main *goal* of a woman’s story seems to be the attainment of a life partner or a husband. This is unlike a hero’s story, where love is often a brief encounter on an epic journey. A heroine, on the other hand, embarks on an adventure where the end goal is the hero himself. It emphasizes that a woman’s life is not her own, and that in order to reach ‘completion’ she needs to

acquire a partner. This ‘problem’ also appears with the stories in this thesis. Indeed the majority of female-focused stories from Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions are on the quest of finding a partner.⁶³ As will be argued in this chapter, this is not necessarily a ‘problem’ per se; at least, not for the evolutionary purposes of humankind.

4.1 The Ardent Female

When discussing sexual strategy within an evolutionary framework, the focus is on ‘distal causal mechanisms that might influence partner preferences - evolved psychological heuristics that were selected because they overcame obstacles to reproduction located in the human ancestral past and therefore maximized genetic fitness’ (Regan et al. 2000:4). For women, their sexual strategy focuses on finding men who are resource-rich and who show an inclination to share those resources with them. In Buss and Schmitt’s seminal paper on human sexual strategies, they argue that one of the elements of their Sexual Strategies Theory lies in the hypothesis that women ‘historically have been constrained in their reproductive success not by the number of men they can gain sexual access to but rather primarily by the quantity and quality of the *external resources* that they can secure for themselves and their children and perhaps secondarily by the quality of the man’s genes’ (Buss and Schmitt 1993:206, emphasis mine). As these resources have been, and to a large degree still are, controlled by the men in their community, women have developed strategies to identify the type of man who is able to obtain and share resources with their future family.

In *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating* (2003), David M. Buss, an influential evolutionary psychologist, discussed what women searched for when finding their potential mates. In terms of physicality, women assess men in terms of their size, strength, as well as age. Across various cultures, it has been found that taller men are preferred because their height denotes their ability to compete with other males, to provide protection for their female partners, and to hunt more effectively, as well as possessing other survival skills (Dixson et al. 2007:89). In terms of age, older men are preferred for their practical experience and access to resources, although there are cases

⁶³ 48.4% of stories collected in this thesis revolved around searching for a partner, while 7.5% featured stories on family life as well as searching for a partner. This prevalence of stories about searching for a partner seems to correlate with findings in Southeast Asian literature where ‘the competition between men for access to women is a primary theme in indigenous sources’ (Andaya 2000:105).

where younger men are preferred when they are in possession of wealth (Buss 2003:28-29). Besides physical cues, women also look for ambition, industriousness, dependability, stability, and intelligence when searching for the man of their dreams (Buss 2003:30-35).

With such a tall order for the perfect man, women take pains to improve their chances of obtaining a desirable partner. Women enhance their physical appearances to highlight their health and fertility; in particular, they emphasize their youthfulness, a quality that men seek in their partners as a sign of reproductive capabilities (Buss and Schmitt 1993:226; Szepeswol, Mikulincer and Birnbaum 2013:196; Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:16). In addition to physically attracting a man, a woman will also attempt to display a 'wife-worthy' disposition. Since men's preferences lean towards short-term relationships, women are driven to display qualities that would convince men otherwise (Buss and Schmitt 1993:226). This includes a show of fidelity, where loyalty towards a partner can increase assurances of a man's paternity. In addition to a show of fidelity and sexual exclusivity, women also display nurturing abilities, signalling their capability of being a good mother to her partner's children.

In fairy tales and folktales, a concoction of all these qualities is mixed together when making the 'perfect woman'. A heroine is usually described as 'young' and 'beautiful', displaying the qualities men seek in women. In addition to her youthfulness and good looks, she is also in possession of a pleasing personality and may even come from a royal background. These traits are attractive for a man in search for a long-term partner; a pleasing disposition would signify a happy marriage, and a royal background implies material well-being. In oral traditions, what type of sexual strategies should a woman employ in order to obtain a perfect husband? The following stories look into their strategies for reproductive success.

'The Biggest Basket in the World' is a story from Malaysia about a girl so lazy that her parents tire of caring for her. They order her to live alone in an old hut by the river, providing her with a Big Knife for protection. She sleeps well on her first night, but she is rudely awakened the next morning by a loud voice. She discovers that Big Knife can speak; and speak it does. Big Knife is appalled at her laziness and orders her to clean herself, brush her hair, and clean her house. Intimidated by Big Knife, the girl does as

she is ordered and soon enough, she is running errands and learning how to make a basket. Working day in and day out, the girl and Big Knife weave together the biggest basket in the world. Upon completion of the basket, Big Knife goes to the nearest town to find the Prince; the knife tells him to prepare a feast for a wedding, as it will bring the Prince a bride. The women of the village cook a mountain of food but they realize that they do not have a basket big enough to carry it to the feast. Big Knife presents them with the biggest basket in the world to transport the food. The Prince is so impressed with the basket that he proclaims he will marry the girl who made it. And so the lazy girl comes forward – but she is no longer lazy. Having become hard-working and tidy, she has transformed herself into not only an industrious person, but also into a beautiful girl who is worthy of a Prince.

‘The Biggest Basket in the World’ introduces us to an unnamed female character who is driven to better herself through constant, aggressive encouragement from Big Knife. It is a story of self-improvement, albeit with supernatural help from a talking knife. Rather than having been formed fully perfect, the audience is told of the girl’s transformation and the manner by which she achieves her ‘perfect’ state of being. When we are introduced to the girl, she is described as being ‘the laziest girl in the world’; lacking self-regulation, she is unable to adjust or change her actions according to the needs of her social world (Baumeister and Vohs 2007:1-2). Instead of working, she spends the day idling, having her parents care for her. This selfish behaviour is ultimately self-damaging: the lazy girl needs to improve her work ethic and develop her sense of self-regulation. Big Knife can be seen as a gift from her parents that inculcates in her a self-regulatory instinct. Big Knife compels the girl to overcome her laziness, increasing her will to survive, as well as motivating her to become a ‘better person’.⁶⁴

At the end of ‘The Biggest Basket in the World’, the lazy girl has been transformed into a typical fairy tale heroine. She is described as beautiful, though the audience recognizes that her beauty comes from caring for her physical appearance. It is not her beauty, however, that the Prince falls for; he is attracted by her skill in weaving the biggest basket in the world. The story emphasises her industriousness, her beauty being a result of hard work and a cooperative personality. Instead of showing that these traits

⁶⁴ ‘Changing one’s behaviour so as to follow rules, match ideals, or pursue goals is thus a (very useful) form of self-regulation’ (Baumeister and Vohs 2007:2).

are an innate quality, the tale portrays her skills as being derived from hard work and diligence. It can be argued that such a tale acts as a motivator for others to work towards their own reproductive advantage. If even the laziest girl in the world can obtain a Prince as her husband, is it not too great an assumption that others will be able to do so as well if they work on themselves?

However, improving oneself is only the first step towards obtaining a desirable mate. Big Knife is dissatisfied with the girl merely becoming more productive and presentable; it goes out of its way to ensure that the girl marries the best mate available. The tale indicates that sitting around, waiting for Prince Charming to notice a girl's wonderful qualities à la Snow White is not sufficient to obtain a husband. Instead, one should actively display one's attractiveness as a mate. In a previously discussed tale, 'The Merchant's Two Daughters' (section 1.3.1), Bawang Merah's mother advises her daughter to sing on a magical swing in order to attract a visiting prince. Big Knife acts in a similar vein, ensuring that the girl's advantages are noticed in order to secure her reproductive future. In this way, the story has a twofold message: a person can improve his or her situation; but he or she must also display his or her attractiveness as a potential mate. With Bawang Merah and the lazy girl, it was only upon promoting their talents that they were noticed by their princes and were able to secure their reproductive success.

The next story is from Bengkulu in South Sumatra and highlights an atypical female figure. The titular character of 'Princess Kemang' is described as 'very like a man in her nature' (Bunanta 2003:50). Highly-skilled at all manner of activities, when the story opens we find her in the middle of a deer hunt. She is chasing a striped-leg deer deeper and deeper into the forest, whereupon it stops under a kemang tree. As Princess Kemang approaches the deer, the tree begins to speak: 'Dear Princess, don't chase after this deer. This deer is actually a tiger in disguise' (Bunanta 2003:50). Despite the warning, Princess Kemang kills the deer and the corpse transforms itself into a dead tiger. As the princess begins to skin the tiger, the tree shakes, transforming itself into a handsome man. The man proclaims that he is the guardian of the forest, and explains that he is unable to leave his post until every living being in the forest is transformed into a human being, and the forest is transformed into a kingdom. Princess Kemang declares that she wishes to be his friend and promises to return when the forest becomes

a kingdom. A year passes. One day, out hunting, the princess comes across a magical kingdom. An old man she meets explains that the kingdom used to be a forest and is now ruled by a Prince. Curious at this turn of events, Princess Kemang asks the old man to take her to the palace. There she is reunited with the handsome man, who has transformed into Prince Kemang. The two become friends and travel to Princess Kemang's kingdom. Impressed by Prince Kemang, the king marries his daughter to him and they all live happily ever after.

I would argue that the story supports a less traditional view of female attractiveness: a woman need not be docile or even 'feminine' in her personality in order to attract a suitable mate. Unlike the lazy girl from the previous story, Princess Kemang does not need to improve her looks or personality. The only aspect of her person that seems to be worth mentioning is her 'manly' disposition. While this might seem to be a potential flaw in her character, there is no discernible criticism to her personality. Instead, her active nature, which involves hunting and other skills, is the catalyst that propels her to meet her future partner. Princess Kemang proves that she is more than capable of fending for herself, and her sense of daring wins her the opportunity of discovering the Prince's true identity.

What types of personal qualities are promoted for the story's heroine? I would suggest that the essential aspect of Princess Kemang's personality is her ability to take care of herself, exemplified by her prowess as a hunter. Peeling back the gendered connection between 'hunting' with 'masculinity' (Wood and Eagly 2002:703),⁶⁵ Princess Kemang's ability to hunt displays her ability to provide for herself. Her potential mate need not worry about resources as Princess Kemang is more than able to assist in providing for a future family. Indeed, the princess does not need a magical knife or a helpful mother figure; her active nature, her pursuance of her own interests, her forwardness in befriending the Prince, as well as her ability to fend for herself, leads her to finding her perfect mate.

⁶⁵ Wood and Eagly (2002) explain from a biocultural perspective the reasons why men are generally more responsible for hunting compared to women: firstly, because 'ancestral men's size and strength enabled their success at hunting'; secondly, that 'hunting yielded fitness-related benefits for men in the form of mating opportunities enabled by gifts of meat and the provisioning of hunters' children'; and finally, men were likely to assume the role of hunter within certain 'social structures and local ecologies to the extent that hunting could be more efficiently accomplished by men than women' (Wood and Eagly 2002:703).

This story calls into question previously held assumptions that separated the gender roles, namely that: ‘men are hunters, women are gatherers’ (Wood and Eagly 2002:703, 706). It can be argued that when women are in a position of power, like Princess Kemang, they are able to exercise greater freedom over their movements as they are less in need of resources, unlike the lazy girl in the earlier tale (Eagly and Wood 1999:418-419; Lenton et al. 2012:437-8). Princess Kemang is of royal blood and is able to do as she pleases. This supports the notion that gender roles exist not because women are unable to obtain resources for themselves, but because those resources have been monopolized by men (Lenton et al. 2012:438-9). This monopoly over resources has often been theorized to be a form of sexual strategy by men in order to gain access to women (Lenton et al. 2012:438-9).

Another assumption that comes into question in ‘Princess Kemang’ is the idea of the sexually passive, ‘coy female’. This is a notion that has been repeated frequently in the study of evolutionary psychology,⁶⁶ despite evidence showing that this is not a universal trait for women. It has been argued in several studies that there are plenty of ‘ardent’ female primates, whereby this promiscuity has been interpreted as a sexual strategy to confuse paternity (Gowaty 2003, Hrdy 1999, and Smuts 1992). In humans, however, the norm of the ‘passive’ and ‘coy’ female can be attributed to male aggression against female sexual freedom in order to guard their paternity (Gowaty 2003:913). Security from male aggression is thus key to the freedom of female sexual behaviour and changes the type of sexual strategy employed. Princess Kemang is not the ‘passive, coy’ woman that is supposedly the universal character of the female human species; rather, she is active and ardent. It can be hypothesized that she is able to display a sexual forwardness to Prince Kemang, declaring her wish to be his ‘friend’, as she is protected by her royal background. This enables her to be sexually forward and assertive in her choice of mate without a fear of repercussion.

⁶⁶ The idea of the ‘coy female’ can be traced back to Charles Darwin’s *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, where he notes that ‘The female [...] with the rarest exception, is less eager than the male. [...] she is coy, and may often be seen endeavouring for a long time to escape from the male (1871:273).’

‘Bolak Sondag: The Woman Warrior’ features another female fighter, similar to Princess Kemang.⁶⁷ Bolak Sondag is beautiful, intelligent, and of royal descent. Many suitors vie for her hand but it is Sandayo, a man born from divine origins and remarkable in his own right, whom she chooses as her husband. Unfortunately, in his quest to gain her hand, he incurs the wrath of a wicked witch. She slips him a sleeping potion so strong that it puts him in a deep, life-threatening sleep. Bolak Sondag stays by Sandayo’s side for a week before she embarks on a journey in order to retrieve her husband’s spirit. After two years of searching, she becomes gaunt and pale. The gods and goddesses watch her journey and take pity on her, and lead her to a tree where she overhears two birds talk about the location of Sandayo’s soul. Armed with this information, Bolak Sondag finds her way to the house of an amazon woman, Tinayobo, and battles her for four days in order to retrieve her husband’s spirit. The couple return home and live happily ever after.

In a cross-cultural analysis of the behaviour between men and women in nonindustrial societies, Wood and Eagly (2002:708) found that women provided ‘substantial overall contributions to subsistences’ and, like men, engaged in strenuous, physical labour. However, because women are also responsible for the care of their young, they take part in activities closer to home, which allow them to supervise their children. Wood and Eagly (2002:709) name several societies in which women take part in hunting, one of which is the Agta from the Philippines. The authors argue that while this is atypical behaviour, these women are able to take part in regular hunts because game is available close to their home, allowing them to be near their children. In ‘Bolak Sondag’, a story that is also from the Philippines, the ability to hunt is connected to the idea of activeness and strength, where women are not passive and weak. Instead, there is an attractiveness to the concept of a woman who possesses physical power to protect herself and her family from harm. ‘Bolak Sondag’ corroborates Wood and Eagly’s (2002) research in that when women are provided with the opportunity, they are able to gather resources for their family alongside their mates, contributing beyond the simple nurturing of children to the welfare of the family.

⁶⁷ This is one of many Philippine tales on female warriors who fight for their people and for what they ‘believed was just and right’ (Brainard 1992:33).

It could be argued that there needs to be greater emphasis by researchers on the situational and environmental factors that affect the adaptiveness of evolved traits, and that the old idea that ‘women are coy, men are ardent’ needs to be reconsidered. The story of Bolak Sunday displays a woman who is capable of retaining her mate through her own physical strength and bravery. The theme of activeness which pervaded the story of ‘The Biggest Basket in the World’ and ‘Princess Kemang’ is also apparent in this tale from the Philippines. When she is in danger of losing her husband because of supernatural forces, it is Bolak Sunday who saves him, and in doing so her reproductive future. Had she been passive and lacked the determination to physically confront her enemy in battle, she may have lost her ‘perfect’ mate, and the opportunity to propagate her genes.

The story of Bugan, the daughter of a deity in the Philippine tale ‘The Choosy Maiden of the Fourth Heaven’, provides a sharp contrast to Bolak Sunday. Beautiful and stubborn, Bugan refuses to marry simply for the sake of marrying. She proclaims ‘I shall take care to get married at my pleasure’ (Beyer 1995). Undeterred, her uncles insist that she marries quickly; one of her uncles even tries to set her up with his son, the god of lightning. When Bugan declines the offer, her uncle suggests that she seek a partner outside of their heavenly realms. Bugan agrees and announces that she is not interested in living among her people anymore, turning her sights on Earth. Bugan notices a poor man who is down on his luck and takes pity on him; she heads to Earth and asks the man Kinggauan to marry her. She promises to turn his luck around, and Kinggauan agrees to become her husband. They have a child together and all seems well. Unfortunately, the couple fail to anticipate the jealousy of their neighbours:

‘The people of the region bore Bugan resentment and much envy. She was a stranger and because they knew she did not like certain vegetables of theirs, and because she was not one of them, they strove to make her depart from their town and return to her birthplace of Luktag in the sky’ (Beyer 1995).

They terrorize Bugan’s home with the smell of things that are inedible to her, such as fish and vegetables, causing Bugan to be constantly nauseous. In the end, Bugan is unable to withstand their hostility. She suggests to Kinggauan that they move to the Fourth Heaven but her husband is scared of leaving Earth. Bugan splits their son in two,

taking half of him to the Heavens with her, while another half is left on Earth with her husband. Lacking Bugan's powers, Kinggauan is unable to reanimate his son, and when his wife finds her half of their son in a state of decay, she becomes enraged. She turns the rotten parts of her son into pestilence, tormenting the villagers in return for the way that they had tormented her.

Unlike the previous three heroines, Bugan does not end up with her 'equal'. She does not choose a man who is of her rank nor does he elevate her status. She chooses Kinggauan, a man who needs *her*, instead of the other way around. At first, this may be attributed to Bugan being a deity, and thus lacking choices in terms of available mate choices. In a study on mate selection criteria in the U.S.A., 85% of the female respondents felt that if they experienced an increase in status, their pool of prospective partners would decrease (Townsend 1989:246). This result is attributed to women's general tendency to seek higher status men, even as their own statuses increase (Townsend 1989:246). However, in the tale, Bugan has plenty of options as her uncles are eager to help her marry. But it was Bugan who refused to wed the candidates presented to her. Bugan made a conscious decision to marry 'down', choosing to help instead of *be* helped. This decision goes poorly for her as she is separated from her husband and her family falls apart. Can it be argued then, that 'The Choosy Maiden of the Fourth Heaven' encourages women to marry 'up' or at par, but never below their status?

The answer is complicated. It can of course be argued that the disastrous ending of Bugan's marriage to a lowly peasant warns against the dangers of marrying below one's station. However, the dissolution of Bugan and Kinggauan's marriage is not due to their unhappiness with each other. Rather, Bugan creates a better life for Kinggauan and she is happy to increase his fortune and to live away from her home. Bugan's unhappiness stems from the psychological torments inflicted on her by Kinggauan's villagers. It is the society that they live in that creates an unhappy situation for Bugan, and drives her away from her husband and family. As noted in Part 1, in order for individuals to live in peace and harmony, it is important that they are supported by their community. A community is able to provide for its members but can also refuse help as illustrated in this tale. A woman who is able to take matters into her own hands and creates her own reproductive success by eschewing societal norms and expectations can thus expect

repercussions. ‘The Choosy Maiden of the Fourth Heaven’ shows that in these situations, it is not the woman’s ‘fault’ for the breakdown of a marriage, but society at large for failing to support her.

The previous tales feature women who were fortunate to be in possession of great beauty, talent, a good upbringing, or a magical helper. But what happens when a woman has none of these at her disposal? ‘The Disguised Warrior’ tells of a woman’s determination to save her village, Peleliu, from a group of seven men called the Tewid el Ketord.⁶⁸ These men are from a neighbouring village, Angaur, who raid and murder the villagers of Peleliu. They are too strong for the locals and the villagers despair of ever defeating them. Obirrir, a woman devoid of talent or beauty, decides to take matters into her hands. She goes on a trip around her island, looking for a man strong enough to defeat the Tewid el Ketord. On her journey, she meets Ngirngemelas, a strong man from Ngiwal Village and tells him of the situation. After a night of negotiation, they are married and he moves to her village of Peleliu. Unfortunately, the villagers of Peleliu dislike Ngirngemelas and curse his existence. When the Tewid el Ketord invade the village however, Ngirngemelas kills them all. This transforms the villagers’ view of Ngirngemelas, to the extent that they name the road running through their village after him.

Lacking Bagan’s supernatural power or Bolak Sunday’s physical strength, Obirrir takes matters into her own hands by enlisting the help of a suitable man. She finds Ngirngemelas and negotiates an arrangement that satisfies both their goals: Obirrir wants to save her village from the marauding Tewid el Ketord, and Ngirngemelas, who the story makes clear is physically unattractive,⁶⁹ finds an opportunity to acquire a wife. Theirs is a marriage of convenience, one that shows Obirrir’s sexual power when negotiating terms with Ngirngemelas and her knowledge of that power when approaching him for help.

⁶⁸ Loosely translated as ‘The Seven Gladiators’ in Palauan.

⁶⁹ While Ngirngemelas’ unattractiveness is not referenced directly, Roger E. Mitchell, the collector of *Micronesian Folktales*, prefaced ‘The Disguised Warrior’ by mentioning the Palauans’ love of an unattractive hero who saves the day (Mitchell 1973:95). This implies that part of the villagers’ disgust with Ngirngemelas lies in his unattractive physical self.

One aspect of ‘The Disguised Warrior’ that sets it apart from previous stories is Obirrir’s recognition of her inability to defend her village by herself. Realistically, she is unable to win a fight against seven men; a fight other strong men have attempted and suffered a terrible loss. In this case, Obirrir’s capability to recognize her own strength and weakness, that of her sexual power and the limits of her physical strength as a woman, culminates in the acquisition of a husband who is able to protect her village, and defeat the Tewid el Ketord. It can be argued that Obirrir possesses high Emotional Intelligence (EI), an ability to monitor her own and other’s emotions and to use this information to guide her thinking and actions (Reis et al. 2007:1385). It is an important quality to possess because with her high EI, Obirrir is able to save her village. By marrying Ngirngemelas, she creates a safer environment for her future generations; she effectively eradicated the threat of violence from marauding neighbours while creating a reproductive future for herself.

Through these stories, there is evidence that women can be active, and even aggressive at times, in the quest for a happily ever after. Whether it is through the help of supernatural forces or a royal background, the women in these tales are in charge of their reproductive choices.⁷⁰ Even when Obirrir enlists the help of Ngirngemelas, she is actively seeking out opportunities for herself and does not wait coyly, hoping that an ardent male should fall for her. Stories of women who are beautiful and smart show that in the best (or even worst) of circumstances they behave in a more active manner than described in most evolutionary psychology studies. The techniques by which they achieve their successes may not be as transparent and forward as the strategies of men, but they show that the women are in charge of their own lives. It would be interesting to pursue this line of research to see whether the impressionistic findings of this thesis can be replicated in a cross-cultural study, investigating to what extent the old maxim of ‘ardent males, coy females’ is really true. For the time being, the evolutionary analysis of Western Malayo-Polynesian stories show a recurrence of the memetic theme of ‘ardent females’, which implies that there are fitness benefits to ‘active’ rather than ‘passive’ women.

⁷⁰ Aunger and Curtis listed ‘Attract’ as one of the evolutionary motives of the human species (2013:54). In order to copulate and then reproduce, it is important that men and women are able to attract mates by producing ‘displays of sexual attractiveness’ (Aunger and Curtis 2013:54).

4.2 Pleasing the Woman

‘Beautiful’ is an adjective used frequently in fairy tales and folktales to describe heroines; the equivalent adjective for heroes is ‘handsome’. However, being merely ‘handsome’ is not sufficient to attract a woman. A man must also be kind and supportive.⁷¹ Barclay argues that ‘women are more concerned with good character in mates than men are (because abandonment is more problematic for females than for males due to differences in parental investment)’ (2010:131).

In Part 1, altruism has been discussed in terms of kin relations. In this section, altruism will be discussed in regards to a man’s willingness to sacrifice himself for his partner and to engage in a long-term relationship (Barclay 2010:125; Miller 2007:98). Altruism signals to a woman that a man is potentially a good father, someone who is willing to protect his family and also to provide for them effectively. A man’s altruistic acts signal potential love and devotion towards his partner (Miller 2007:98); in evolutionary terms, this romantic gesture shows future dependability. This assurance is essential to a woman who is looking for a partner to assist her in the care of her offspring.

Altruism as a sexual strategy falls under the category of Costly Signalling Theory (CST), whereby a man displays his propensity and his willingness to invest in a woman at some cost to himself (Barclay 2010:124; Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar 2008:386). A man taking a prospective partner to an expensive restaurant and paying for both their meals may indicate that he is willing to share a part of his resources in order to benefit his partner. At the same time, he is able to show off his means in order to impress a prospective partner. However, a man’s generosity is not always a reliable show of altruism. If a man is wealthy, a woman will be unable to ascertain whether or not his sharing of resources is an act of *genuine* generosity. Women in this situation, therefore, need a different type of costly behaviour; one that can truly indicate a man’s inclination to take part in a long-term relationship.

⁷¹ This condition for marriage is also applicable to the women in *kakawin* literature: ‘The selection of a suitable partner for a noble princess of the *kakawin* world calls for something more than a groom who is valorous, or one with whom a princess has found love. (Creese 2004: 114-5)’

When a woman wishes to ascertain whether a display of affection is sincere, she will look for an altruistic act that fulfils three conditions. Firstly, the act needs to be costly to the man. The costliness of his altruistic display is necessary as ‘the costlier the trait, the more reliable the signal’ (Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar 2008:386). Thus, a wealthy man showing off his wealth is not a reliable display of altruism to attract a long-term mate. However, it is more reliable when a man of average means spends the little that he has on a prospective mate. When screening potential long-term partners, women need to separate courtship displays from men sincerely seeking long-term attachments and from those that merely want to enjoy a short-term tryst. A costly show of altruism would signal to the woman that he is willing to invest in her personal well-being, even at a cost to himself, because he is interested in being her long-term partner.

Secondly, when a man displays an act of altruism, it needs to be observable by the prospective partner (Hardy and Van Vugt 2006:1404). When the same man of average income wants to attract a long-term partner, he may spend lavishly on the woman through expensive dinners and dates. It has been hypothesized by Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West (1995:428) that such acts of generosity can be construed by women as signs of resource potential and future investments. Joseph Carroll (2005:211) provides a literary example through Jane Austen’s most beloved hero in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy;

‘[...] he exploits for his own purpose the opportunity Lydia’s folly presents to him. By bribing Wickham to marry Lydia, Darcy does Elizabeth the greatest and most intimate service he could possibly do for her, and at the same time he decisively demonstrates the firmness of his commitment to her’.⁷²

In a study of observable altruistic acts among University of Kent students, Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar (2008) found that men acted more generously in the presence of a female observer than they did in the presence of a male observer, or when they were alone (2008:391).⁷³ The male students’ generosity in the presence of a woman, as well

⁷² While Mr Darcy did not ‘save’ Elizabeth Bennet’s family from ruins as a sexual strategy, the result of his action, whereby Elizabeth reconsiders him as a potential partner, can be construed as a successful (if unintended) display of altruism.

⁷³ This study provided participants with the opportunity to earn money through experimental games. Upon completion of the games, they were asked how much they would be willing to donate to charity.

as Austen's depiction of Mr Darcy's generosity towards Elizabeth's family, reflects an implicit knowledge that altruistic displays will be favourably observed by the opposite sex, increasing men's future reproductive opportunities.

Lastly, an altruistic act needs to show a person's sincerity through intrinsic motivation (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West 1995:428). Intrinsic motivation signals to a woman that the man will invest and care for his future family (Barclay 2010:125; Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar 2008:387; Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West 1995:428; Miller 2007:98). A woman will want to know that a man is sincere in his motivations as this will be a better indicator of his *willingness* to assist in the somatic and reproductive success of his partner (Farthing 2005:172); most importantly, this sincerity will also be a reliable indicator of a man staying instead of straying. Unfortunately, even with these indicators of sincerity, it is still difficult to assess a man's sincerity in engaging in a long-term partnership. In most cases, a woman may only know a man's motivations after she has chosen to be with him. These conflicts in ascertaining men's mating motivations are reflected in stories from oral tradition.

A tale that explores men's sincerity is the well-known Malaysian story of the Princess of Mount Ledang.⁷⁴ In it, the Sultan of Melaka desires to have the legendary fairy princess of Mount Ledang as his wife. He sends a delegation to ask for her hand in marriage, headed by his most trusted men. After an arduous journey to the top of Mount Ledang, they reach her abode and tell her of their mission, and present the princess with gifts from the sultan. The princess is unmoved by the riches presented to her. She sends the delegation back with a message for the sultan: if he wishes for her hand in marriage he must provide her with a bridge of gold and a bridge of silver stretching from Melaka to Mount Ledang, seven trays with the hearts of mosquitoes, seven trays with the hearts

While men donated more in the presence of an attractive female observer, no differences in generosity was found when female participants were either alone or in the presence of same-sex or opposite-sex observers (Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar 2008:391).

⁷⁴ Extensive sociohistorical research on this story had been conducted by Hijjas (2010). Hijjas' (2010) research focused on the many incarnations of the Princess of Mount Ledang, specifically the Princess as depicted in two classical Malay literary works: the *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, and the 1961 and 2004 films of the same name: *Putri Gunung Ledang*. This type of analysis may assist research that views the *character* of the Princess as meme, similar to Zipes' (2006, 2008) works. This thesis, however, will analyse the memetic *themes* of male sexual strategies found in the *Putri Gunung Ledang* stories.

of mites, a vat of young areca-nut water,⁷⁵ a vat of human tears, a cup of the sultan's blood, and a cup of his son's blood. Dismayed, the sultan's men return to deliver her demands. From here the story differs according to the people who tell them. In one version, the sultan shows wisdom and refuses to sacrifice his son for the princess (Times Heritage Collection 1980:6). In another version, the sultan's desire for the princess is so great that he is willing to fulfil all her conditions, even to the extent of sacrificing his own son. However, just as he is about to kill the crown prince, the Princess of Mount Ledang appears before him, admonishing the sultan for his cruelty. She declares that she will never marry a man who is willing to kill his own son and vanishes, never to be seen again (Chek 1976).

In either versions of the story,⁷⁶ whether or not the sultan acquiesces to the princess' demands, the Princess of Mount Ledang's conditions had set him up for failure. This raises the question: why is the Princess seemingly uninterested in marrying a powerful sultan? The most obvious reason is that she created these conditions to subtly reject the Sultan. In this way, she avoids political damage between the two kingdoms, while at the same time retaining her freedom and her rule over her kingdom. The Princess of Mount Ledang is a figure of power, needing neither riches nor protection from the Sultan of Melaka. A merging of the two kingdoms may have even meant a loss of power for the princess. By refusing marriage, albeit in a roundabout way, the Princess of Mount Ledang is able to retain autonomy and the ruling of her kingdom.

Perhaps if the Princess of Mount Ledang had been an 'ordinary' individual, the story may have turned out differently. In this case, the princess is in a similar position to Princess Kemang (section 4.1). Because she is capable of providing resources and security for herself, she has more autonomy and thus can choose to remain unmarried (Eagly and Wood 1999:418-419; Lenton et al. 2012:437-8).). If she is to marry, she will require a mate who has qualities beyond being resource-rich; specifically, a partner

⁷⁵ Areca-nuts are the seeds of the areca palm, also commonly known as the betel nut. To fill a vat with the juices of these seeds is considered an impossible task.

⁷⁶ These two stories are closer to the plot of the literary *Sejarah Melayu* (the sultan does not murder his son in this version). However, it should be noted that the oral telling of this story would have pre-dated the *Sejarah Melayu*. Indeed, the oral variant of the story had been recorded as early as 1613 by the Portuguese Godinho de Eredia in the *Description of Malacca* (Mills trans. 1997 [1930]). The oral tradition of the story continues to today, and thus it is understandable that more variants of the memetic theme of male sexual strategies in the Princess of Mount Ledang have appeared, and have been recorded in text. Two such examples are the stories in this thesis.

of impeccable character. When choosing a long-term partner, a woman aims to find a nurturing man who will care for herself and their children. Indeed, it has been found that ‘men who appear to be disposed to cooperate with their romantic partners, or who show nurturance and altruism, may be selectively preferred over other men’ (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano and West 1995:428). Thus, the Princess sets the final condition as a way to test the sultan’s personality. Needless to say, a man who is willing to kill his own offspring for a woman is a poor indicator of his reliability to commit and invest in his family.

Conditions of marriage continue to be a memetic theme in ‘Boru Toba Najungkat’, a tale told by the Tapanuli people in Northern Sumatra. Boru Toba, the title character, is regarded as different by her fellow villagers; they see her as a woman who has her own rhythm in life. Her character differences are highlighted when a fellow villager, Ama Ni Dung-Dang, proposes marriage to her. Rather than jumping at the chance of marriage, Boru Toba decides to test Ama Ni Dung-Dang’s suitability as her future husband. Firstly, she wants to see whether he is stronger and can work harder than her. Secondly, she wants to find out whether he is eloquent, and finally, she wants to learn whether or not he is musical. He accepts her challenges and they set off to work. They take part in a competition of cutting trees, and through this task Boru Toba is able to witness Ama Ni Dung-Dang’s strength, which impresses her. Upon the completion of the wood-cutting task, they go off in search of refreshment. As they walk, Ama Ni Dung-Dang is able to witness Boru Toba's cleverness when she tricks a farmer into giving them a free durian.⁷⁷ At the end of their day together, they come across a beautiful landscape and Boru Toba is so moved by the scenery that she begins to sing. Seeing her happiness, Ama Ni Dung-Dang joins in and sings in harmony. From that day onwards they live happily together.

Boru Toba is quite clear about what she desires in a man. From an evolutionary perspective, each of her conditions seeks to test Ama Ni Dung-Dang’s capabilities to care for her; by showing his strength through wood-cutting, she tests whether he is able to provide for her and whether he will be able to protect her. By proving that he is eloquent with words and that he is also musical, Ama Ni Dung-Dang also shows his

⁷⁷ A fragrant fruit, which is much desired, covered in spikes, and is commonly found in Southeast Asia.

capabilities as a mate. Taking the time to be acquainted with her potential partner, Boru Toba displays her own character to Ama Ni Dung-Dang. In the end, both individuals are able to form an idea of their compatibility as future long-term partners. This all stems from Boru Toba's forwardness of character. Even though the story acknowledges that her behaviour is not 'normal' for a woman, she is still given a happy ending. Because of this happy ending, the story implies that directness in a woman can be seen as a positive attribute in attaining a suitable mate. Both women and men can find increased somatic and reproductive success by knowing how they can mutually benefit from their relationship.

At first glance, Ama Ni Dung-Dang may strike readers as a strange choice of hero. Being less aggressive in his courtship, Ama Ni Dung-Dang is happy to allow Boru Toba to take the lead. Though he is by no means submissive, he does not show any dominant personality. Male heroes are often depicted as dominant characters, taking charge of the situations they find themselves in. However, a study by Kruger, Fisher, and Jobling (2003:310) of four late eighteenth-century Romantic novels found that the traits of a 'proper hero' were described as 'kind and altruistic', 'weak and passive', nonviolent, and displaying 'low dominance traits'. Described by their feeling rather than their action, all were monogamous.⁷⁸ These traits correspond well with Ama Ni Dung-Dang's character, suggesting that he displayed 'proper hero' traits that are characteristic of English Romantic heroes.

These qualities are exemplified in the next tale from Indonesia. 'The Best Gift of All' opens with the description of a beloved princess who is adored by her father. The king loves her so much that he is intent on marrying her to a man who will be able to truly cherish her. And so the king devises a competition: whoever wishes to marry his daughter must present her with a gift that will show 'how much he loves her and how happy he will make her in marriage' (Sugiura 2001:12). News of this competition reaches a poor young man by the name of Takatorian. Wanting to win her heart, he sets off into the forest. He chops down a tree and fashions the wood into a doll that would

⁷⁸ The evolutionary literary study looked at *Waverley*, from *Waverley* (1814) by Walter Scott, and *Valancourt*, from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe, as representative of 'dads' or 'proper heroes'. George Staunton from *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818) and Clement Cleveland from *The Pirate* (1821), both by Walter Scott, were representative of 'cads' or 'dark heroes' (Kruger, Fisher, and Jobling 2003:311).

epitomize the ‘kindest, smartest, and most wonderful woman in the world’ (Sugiura 2001:12). When the day of the competition arrives, he is humbled by the procession of rich suitors ahead of him and hangs back to wait his turn. One after another, the suitors lavish the princess with expensive items, promising greater riches should she choose to marry them. Finally, when Takatorian offers his doll, the princess asks whether she would have many more such as his. He replies that he has only one, and that he has put all his energy into making her a doll of an ideal woman. She is touched by his offering and chooses him as her husband. At her decision, anger arises from the other suitors but the king silences them, and explains that only Takatorian has offered her everything he has, as a true token of his love. And so Takatorian and the princess are married and live happily ever after.

Takatorian is a man whose social status is far below that of the princess he is attempting to woo. He understands that he is competing with men who will best him in terms of rank and riches. He therefore takes advantage of the competition to show his ‘niceness’. Given the princess’ much higher status, Takatorian attempts to compensate by being much ‘nicer’ than his competition. This display of nicety is supported by Barclay (2010: 131-2), who suggested that ‘altruism [through ‘niceness’] can serve as a courtship display, particularly by males’. As the princess is already endowed with riches from her own kingdom, she needs not worry about wealth. Takatorian takes advantage of this situation because he has nothing to lose and everything to gain; his handmade doll shows his ability for devotion and love whereas the rest of the suitors merely offered resource stability.

‘Ravolamamba and Tsaramiamby’, on the other hand, is a Madagascan tale that provides a different take on the suitability of a long-term partner. Our hero, Tsaramiamby, is born into a wealthy family and has everything that he could possibly want except a wife. He tells his family that he wants to leave in order to ‘dig the earth’; they are puzzled at his refusal to find a bride from his village, but they allow him to leave. Tsaramiamby hides his expensive clothes and seeks work as a servant in a castle. One day, while managing the king’s pigsty, he spies the princess, Ravolamamba. Deciding that he wishes to marry her, he asks the king for her hand. The princess’ father consents but Ravolamamba is unhappy with the decision. Feeling sorry for his prospective bride, Tsaramiamby proposes that she holds a small test: she is to gather all

the people in her kingdom and to ‘push aside’ an orange (McElroy 1999:113). Whoever the orange points to is her fated husband. She follows his instructions and the orange immediately points to Tsaramiamby, indicating that he is the best choice for her. Tearfully, Ravolamamba follows him back to his home and it is there that she discovers his wealth. He explains that he wanted to make his own fortune in the world and had to disguise himself in order to do so. Ravolamamba has a change of heart and wants to marry him immediately. They are wed and live happily together.

Unlike previous stories, Ravolamamba, the princess, is unimpressed by Tsaramiamby’s personal qualities. Tsaramiamby is hard-working, determined, and kind to her. He displays concern over her choice of mate, allowing her the option of another husband, even when her father agreed to wed her to him. Despite Tsaramiamby’s best efforts, Ravolamamba is inconsolable at having to marry a man who is beneath her in status. It is only when she discovers Tsaramiamby’s true background that she becomes excited at the prospect of marrying him. Thus, it is not Tsaramiamby as a person that attracts Ravolamamba, but his wealth and status. This story runs counter to the analysis of previous stories on kindness and altruism being a useful sexual strategy for men. Are the previous stories simply morality tales or do they reflect the ‘real world’?

It has been argued that women in possession of wealth or status of their own, such as Princess Kemang and the Princess of Gunung Ledang, are in the position to marry whomever they choose, indeed if they marry at all. Studies looking at high-status, resource-rich women and their partner choice found that most choose a husband who is of equal, if not higher, status and income (Kruger, Fisher, Jobling 2003:314; Townsend 1989:246). Ravolamamba’s rejection of Tsaramiamby as a mate choice has its roots in thousands of years of human evolution, whereby a resource-rich mate can help ensure that a woman and her children are provided for. Stories such as ‘Ravolamamba and Tsaramiamby’ support current evidence that shows that, despite the pace of change in the modern world, deep-rooted cultural expectations based on ancient evolutionary instincts still prevail.

Looking back at the stories in section 4.2 ‘Pleasing the Woman’, it can be seen that each of the heroes in each of these stories display altruistic tendencies, whereas only a handful can passingly be described as ‘brave’ or ‘dominant’. In all but one instance, a

display of altruism is a successful mating tactic. However, as seen in ‘Ravolamamba and Tsaramiamby’, sometimes kindness and altruism are not enough. It can be hypothesized that most of these stories tell of the hopes for a community where good character is what matters in finding a life partner. In reality, a man’s financial status is important in his suitability as a mate, especially in societies where women rely heavily on men for resources. This does not suggest that stories that tell otherwise are wrong; merely that they remind their listeners that other qualities such as kindness are also important.

4.3 An Unlikely Match?

So far this thesis has focused on the positive qualities in a potential mate as described in WMP oral traditions: good looks, good fortune, good background, and a good personality. But what about the qualities a person would avoid? While these are discussed extensively in evolutionary studies (Paul, Faulkner, Schaller 2003; Shackelford and Larsen 1997; Tybur, Lieberman, Griskevicius 2009; Tybur et al. 2012), they are potentially controversial due to their targeting of specific groups of people and rendering them ‘unattractive’ by ‘normal’ standards. It can be argued that to a large extent, these topics are potentially problematic because of the way the literature frames and discusses groups of people that do not fit into a more ‘acceptable’ physical or even mental form. In a critique of the manner in which evolutionary psychology has treated disability studies, Maeve M. O’Donovan finds that the field provides ‘evolutionary justifications’ for the mistreatment of the mentally disabled as well as for ‘misogynistic behaviour’ (2013). This section aims to discuss human *reactions* to ‘abnormality’ in a dignified and respectful manner, understanding *why* such reactions take place but *does not justify* the reactions.

Humans have evolved mechanisms that search for specific cues in their prospective partners, which include identifying less-than-stellar mates. One type of reliable cue is a person’s physical appearance. In previous chapters, some of the ‘positive’ cues are facial symmetry, low waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) in women, and height in men. ‘Negative’ cues, which signal a person’s weakness in reproductive capabilities, lie in physical disabilities or abnormalities. While ‘positive’ cues help in ascertaining a person’s reproductive capability, ‘negative’ cues have been found to be less helpful

(Tybur et al. 2012:72; Tybur, Lieberman, and Griskevicius 2009:106). In the past, physical disabilities or abnormalities were often indicative of the presence of infectious disease, such as leprosy or syphilis.⁷⁹ Until a modern understanding of genetic diseases, these diseases could have also been considered infectious. However, physical disabilities or abnormalities can also result from accidents. While people are aware that a physical disability is not a reliable indicator of a person's overall health, studies find that participant observers display cues of pity, disgust, or anxiety in the presence of disabled people in general (Park, Faulkner, Schaller 2003:71; Heinemann et al. 1981:3). Why is this so?

The way humans react to their contemporary environment is largely shaped by the ways in which their ancestors reacted to their environments. Park, Faulkner, and Schaller (2003:67) claim that when most humans lived in small tribal groups,⁸⁰ their social concerns included the detection of infectious diseases as well as the avoidance of strangers that could pose potential risks to themselves. The authors speculate that to ensure their safety, a sense of paranoia drove these ancestral humans to ward off individuals that displayed a threat of disease. This disease-avoidant behaviour may have assisted in increasing the rate of human survival (Park, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003:67-8). The authors hypothesize that this disease-avoidant behaviour later became adaptive, and thus is present in modern-day humans.

Disease-avoidant behaviour is triggered through disgust and discomfort where disgust is fuelled by a feeling of 'interpersonal threat' from diseases (Paul, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003:67). Disgust also leads to the avoidance of 'diseased individuals' (Paul, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003:68) and may play a crucial part when selecting a person with whom one might mate. Because there are various risks in sexual intercourse, including the transmission of pathogens as well as potential social risks, sexual disgust has evolved to avoid sexual contact with low quality mates (Tybur et al. 2012:71). Women, in particular, appear susceptible to sexual disgust (Tybur, Lieberman, Griskevicius

⁷⁹ See studies by Paul, Faulkner, Schaller (2003), Crandall and Moriarty (1995), Heinemann et al. (1981), and Schaller, Park, and Faulkner (2003), which addresses the problem of 'negative' physical cues and how they have negatively affected the socialization of physically disabled individuals in society.

⁸⁰ This is technically incorrect; tribes have only existed during the last ten thousand years. For more than 99% of human prehistory, people have lived in small hunter-gatherer bands (see Sahlins (1968) *Tribesmen*).

2009:110, 112); this may be attributed to the higher investment women have in choosing a suitable mate in order to achieve reproductive success. If a woman chooses 'wrongly', she is at greater risk of not being able to pass on her genes.

Myths and legends warn of the danger of strangers. This warning, Schaller, Park, and Faulkner (2003:111-112) argue, stems from a fear of the spread of disease, whereby unknown individuals may convey an unknown threat to the health of a group. However, there are numerous tales that speak of heroes and heroines that not only fall in love with strangers, but overlook 'abnormal' physical attributes. The story of 'Beauty and the Beast' is a classic example. Often, these strange physical qualities manifest themselves through a physical enchantment that turns the hero or heroine into a frightening or disgust-inducing animal. The following stories in section 4.3 'An Unlikely Match?' find both men and women agreeing to marry non-human creatures that inspire disgust and fear. The main question that will be looked at in this section is: what are the evolutionary benefits of stories urging men and women to override their 'natural' instincts and to mate with unlikely creatures?

'The Legend of a Mountain', from the western province of Sumatra, introduces us to a strange, almost inhuman creature. In this story, Upik Maneh and her mother are gathering bamboo when they hear a voice asking for help. The voice explains that it is a man, but he had been born with snake-like skin and a long, thin, snake-like body. His parents had abandoned him among the bamboo and he is trapped there; he asks for their help to release him. Upik Maneh and her mother are frightened as they are unable to see anything. Nevertheless they rescue the snake-man, and allow him to live with them. For over a year they care for him, drawing ridicule and gossip among the villagers. Mother and daughter ignore the rumours; they know that despite his appearances, he is kind and good. One night, the snake-man dreams of his grandmother, who tells him that his curse can now be broken. She instructs him to shed his snake skin and to ask Upik Maneh to burn it. As the skin is burned, three explosions occur. During the first two explosions, Upik Maneh is given two wishes. On the third explosion, she is to wish that the snake-like man is released from his curse. Upik Maneh does so and he is transformed into a remarkably handsome man. They marry soon after and live on in prosperity.

Reminiscent of 'Beauty and the Beast', the story introduces us to a character who is cursed with a snake-like body and skin. The man is viewed with apprehension and fear by Upik Maneh and her mother. Their initial hesitance to help him is understandable, considering the situation: they were in a forest, facing a strange creature that may or may not be human. If the creature had been a diseased human, he posed a health risk that could endanger both mother and child. If it was not human, the creature could have been a dangerous animal. In evolutionary terms, Upik Maneh and her mother were initially scared because of the potential harm to their survival. If they had refused help, they would have been acting out of a sense of self-preservation.

In 'The Legend of a Mountain', mother and daughter overcome their fear and assist the unfortunate young man by taking him into their home. Many studies show that people are aware of their prejudices towards the physically disabled or disfigured, and that they occasionally try to overcome these prejudices by performing acts of kindness (Paul, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003:70; Heinemann et al. 1981:2-3). This is perhaps the case with Upik Maneh and her mother; they are aware of their own initial hesitance, but they take pity on the young man and care for him. Living with him without ever coming into physical danger, they realised that his condition is neither infectious nor harmful to their survival. Thus they are able to withstand their community's taunts and jeers, understanding that there is no reason to alienate the young man. They are able to observe his good character and see that there is no threat to themselves or to their society at large.

The unsympathetic treatment towards the young man is, unfortunately, frequently experienced by people with disabilities. The stigma felt by the snake-like man occurred because his 'social identity does not meet society's normative expectations' (Kurzban and Leary 2001:187). With a physical self that does not conform to what is seen as 'normal' or 'healthy', the young man is shunned and is unable to be a part of his community. Ostracised, he is unable to show that while his physical appearance is different, he is of no threat to the society or to its way of life. Upik Maneh and her mother show a contrast to the community's instinctive reaction to the young man; instead of allowing fear to dominate them, they overcome their initial reactions and do not allow their fear to turn into prejudice. This is because, despite being evolutionarily adapted to fear the strange (Park, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003:68), a person is able to

consciously work against a prejudice when it becomes clear that the prejudice is groundless. In short, ‘a person is capable of intentional action’ (Heinemann et al. 1981:4). While fear is an instinctive reaction to protect oneself against potential harm, one is able to make a decision of whether or not to act on that fear. ‘The Legend of a Mountain’ shows that while fear is ingrained, our choices of action are not; that there is a need to overcome instincts that are no longer reliable.

At first glance, Upik Maneh’s marriage to the young man after his transformation seems to be a case of falling in love despite a person’s appearance. I would argue, however, that the ‘moral’ is not about overlooking physical shortcomings when finding a mate. In the story, Upik Maneh did not choose him as her husband despite his appearances. She only marries him after his transformation into a handsome man. However, because Upik Maneh showed kindness and acceptance towards his snake-like appearance, his transformation into a handsome man may have been a reward for Upik Maneh overcoming her prejudices. Hence, the memetic ‘moral’ of the tale is a lesson in behaviour towards people with physical disabilities or abnormalities. The story runs counter to our ‘normal’ instinctive fear of physical deformity and asks its audience to reconsider their prejudices.

A similar tale comes from the Massenrempulu people of South Sulawesi in Indonesia and it is entitled ‘Ulat Berbulu’ (The Hairy Caterpillar). In it, three daughters go deep into the forest to gather firewood. As the sun begins to set and the siblings are stacking their firewood, a great clap of thunder is heard. Startled, the siblings gather their belongings and rush home. One sister is left behind; the rope that tied her firewood together snaps and she is unable to retie it. Unsure of how to escape from the forest, the girl decides to wait for her sisters to rescue her. As night falls and there is no sign of her siblings she fears for her life. Suddenly, a man’s voice calls out and when she searches for the source, she discovers a hairy caterpillar. Noticing her predicament, it asks whether she is willing to marry him in exchange for his help in retying her firewood. She is reluctant to marry the caterpillar, but as the day grows darker, she becomes desperate and agrees. On their way home, they discover they enjoy each other’s company and, on reaching the girl’s house, they fall asleep together. The next morning, her parents are enraged and sneer at her decision to wed the caterpillar. The caterpillar is determined to prove himself as her husband, and goes off to transform himself into a

human. When he returns, the family is amazed to find that he has become both handsome and rich. They implore him to share the secrets of his success; he tells them that he has discovered magical pumpkins full of gold. Excited, the family goes to find these magical pumpkins. However, when they break into them, snakes and vermin emerge, which bite them fatally.

As an animal, the caterpillar is less threatening than a snake, but the girl is still reluctant to marry the creature. However, when her own somatic survival is at stake, she changes her mind; it is better to live with a caterpillar for a husband, than to die and have all chances of reproductive success removed.⁸¹ This action seems opportunistic, but as the plot develops, we see the pair learning about each other and coming to enjoy each other's company. 'Ulat Berbulu' differs from 'The Legend of a Mountain' in that the girl chose the caterpillar as her mate *after* taking into consideration his physical limitations and thereby, it can be argued, she accepts his physical condition.

The punishment given to the scornful family members serves as a 'lesson' that it is unacceptable to be prejudiced towards the disabled. Norms of 'positive and unprejudiced attitudes' towards the physically handicapped, normally associated with Western culture (Heinemann et al. 1981:2), can be found also in tales in Western Malayo-Polynesian societies. But to what extent does this 'moral' attitude affect people's deep-seated anxiety when faced with a physically disabled person? Heinemann et al. (1981:3) argue that there is an 'inconsistency of emotions' in that, while people believe they should behave 'normally' with the disabled, they find themselves 'uncontrollably' uneasy and unable to stop themselves from feeling pity or repulsion.

In the final story in section 4.3, 'The Frog Princess' from the Philippines, an old king sends his three sons to search for brides so that he will see them married before he dies. He instructs them to knock on the first house they come upon and to marry the person who opens the door. The eldest and second sons bring back princesses to marry. The third son, however, arrives at a small hut, and when he knocks upon the door, he is greeted by a frog, which he brings back as his bride-to-be. The king is delighted with his first two sons but is furious with his youngest for bringing home a frog. The

⁸¹ This sentiment is echoed in a review of short-term mate choices by Lenton et al. (2012). When looking at mate choices in a night club, it was found that as closing time drew nearer, the limited options available became more appealing (Lenton et al. 2012:18).

youngest son, Juan, insists that he is in love with the frog and wants to marry her. A few days before the wedding, the king decrees that each bride is to sew her own veil for the ceremony. The brides-to-be of the first and second sons are barely able to make their veils and the results of their poor sewing are sloppy and ugly. The frog, however, weaves a beautiful veil of exquisite quality. On the day of the wedding, the frog asks her groom to crush her beneath his foot, and after some insistence he does so. The frog is instantly transformed into a beautiful princess. Indeed, she is so beautiful that the two other princesses pale in comparison. The frog princess had been placed under a spell that only the love of a prince could break. The king is delighted with this turn of events. He grows to love the princess and his youngest son so much that upon his passing, he bequeaths his kingdom to them.

Juan's attraction and willingness to marry the frog princess is an aspect of the story worth noting. Unlike the two female protagonists in 'An Unlikely Match?', Juan is the only character that has no reservations about marrying his enchanted partner. He decides to marry her, and stands by his decision even when faced by his father's anger. Juan is the only protagonist in this section who chooses his mate despite her repellent physical state. This seems to be in contrast with research in evolutionary science that indicates that men are more fastidious when choosing their female mates based on their physical attractiveness (Bereczkei et al 1997:682).

Stories of 'An Unlikely Match?' can thus be considered along two lines: the first, in terms of allowing its readers to move beyond ancient prejudices of disease-avoidant behaviour, to one that is more accepting of physical disabilities. With greater knowledge of which afflictions are contagious, people can work against their instinctive prejudice towards physical disability or abnormality. As Zipes eloquently puts it:

'The more we give in to base instincts – base in the sense of basic and depraved – the more criminal and destructive we become. The more we learn to relate to alien groups and realize that their survival and the fulfillment of their interests are related to ours, the more we might construct social codes that guarantee humane relationships. (Zipes 2006:152)'

While it will take time to overcome ancient anxieties against the 'abnormal', it does not imply that these instinctive reactions are impossible to change (Kurzban and Leary 2001:199). Secondly, these stories may be a form of sexual strategy that benefits the

proliferation of human genes. Men and women alike tell stories that plead for wider acceptance of 'abnormality'; and while these intentions may assist humans to better themselves 'morally', they may also further the reproductive success of those who find themselves as unlikely matches.

CHAPTER 5: THE UGLY FACE OF LOVE

“All is fair in love and war.”

- English Proverb

There is no such thing as a level playing field in the game of love. Some people are simply luckier than others in possessing qualities that are desirable to the opposite sex. As a result, unlucky people can be pushed to dishonest means in a desperate attempt to find love and, subconsciously, reproductive success (Benz, Anderson, and Miller 2005:306). When seeking love, the sentiment ‘anything goes’ is echoed in stories told worldwide. Aladdin from ‘One Thousand and One Nights’ disguises himself as a prince in order to woo a princess, a woman above him in stature. In ‘Rumpelstiltskin’, a father lies to the King in order to enhance his daughter’s opportunities of marrying a prince. In Chinese folk stories, a female fox spirit disguises herself as a human woman in order to steal a man’s ‘life’s essence’. These stories show that when presented with an opportunity, people will not always play ‘fair’ in order to attain their perfect mate.

In Tooke and Camire’s (1991) influential study on deceptive mating strategies, the authors found that men and women deceive each other through different intersexual strategies. These strategies aim to increase men or women’s statuses in order to increase their appeal to the opposite sex. Given the patriarchal nature of many societies, Tooke and Camire contend that men, generally, are more likely to lie about their resources and interest in commitment, while women are more likely to ‘embellish their physical appearance’ to attract men with resources (1991:346).⁸² While both sexes take part in deceptive mating strategies, women often have the upper hand in that they are generally better than men at detecting deceptive strategies, possibly as an evolutionary result of their greater role in childbearing (Tooke and Camire 1991:360). This hypothesis is strengthened by the results of Benz, Anderson, and Miller’s (2005) study, which investigated the extent to which men and women agreed on gendered deception. They found that while both men and women agreed that men tend to lie regarding their ‘likelihood to commit’ as well as their financial status, they disagreed on women’s

⁸² Tooke and Camire argue that women’s deception is not on the same level as men’s in terms of ‘verbal and non-verbal communication’. They conjectured that women’s style of deception is more ‘passive’ while men’s is more ‘active’ (Tooke and Camire 1991:359-60).

deception (Benz, Anderson, and Miller 2005:313). Men thought that women lie about their physical appearances; however, women believed that their sex lie about 'career goals' (Benz, Anderson, and Miller 2005:313).⁸³

Men and women are aware of deception during mating, and pressure builds for those less lucky in love to detect 'exploitability' in potential mates (Goetz et al. 2012:418). The term 'exploitability' was first used by Buss and Duntley (2008) to refer to an aspect of deceptive mating strategies. The authors introduced conditions that can potentially motivate a person to exploit a potential mate: the ease with which an act can be carried out, the benefits gained by it, the costs involved, the availability of opportunity, as well as a 'comparative cost-benefit calculus' (Buss and Duntley 2008:55). According to the authors, it is important that exploitative persons consider the 'exploitability' of their intended victims because exploitative strategies carry the risk of a loss of sexual status (Buss and Duntley 2008:60). This is exemplified in a study by Lewis et al. (2012) which found that men's exploitative actions depend on whether or not they are currently in a relationship. If they are not in one, there is a higher probability of men taking exploitative risks as they have nothing to lose.

Because exploitative strategies are mainly employed for short-term mating success, these strategies were found to be favoured by more men than women (Goetz et al. 2012:417). This may account for the large number of studies focusing on exploitative tactics by men, rather than by women. Men who 'assess a woman's immediate vulnerability' look for cues that indicate physical, mental, emotional, or self-esteem vulnerability in women; these men also observe for sexual permissiveness, flirtatiousness, or recklessness in women (Goetz et al. 2012:418). However, when looking at men's exploitative sexual strategies, Lewis et al. (2012) found that men were unable to differentiate between women displaying high level cues of exploitability and women who were not (Lewis et al. 2012:142-3). The researchers conclude that these findings 'reflect a general tendency [by men] to perceive [all] women as [generally] sexually exploitable' (Lewis et al. 2012:142).

⁸³ Benz, Anderson, and Miller (2005) argue that this discrepancy is caused by increasing financial independence among women and the worry that this may affect their future reproductive opportunities (2005:313).

What type of man would stoop to such a measure? Surely, it takes a particular type of man to be able to view a woman as ‘exploitable’. Studies describe an ‘exploitative’ man as more interested in short-term mating than long-term commitment and display low levels of empathy, agreeableness, and unrestricted sociosexual orientation (Jonason et al. 2009:12; Lewis et al. 2012:139-40).⁸⁴ Such men would be unattractive to most women because they display a reluctance to engage in long-term partnerships. In order to overcome women’s sexual aversion, these men resort to deceptive and exploitative measures in order to ensure their reproductive success. The traits of exploitative men are often found in people described as part of the Dark Triad of Personalities (Paulhus and Williams 2002). The ‘Dark Triad’ can be defined by their ‘socially malevolent’ personalities, either being Machiavellian, Narcissistic, Psychopathic, or a combination of these qualities (Paulhus and Williams 2002:557).

With an ‘anything goes’ attitude in the male mating effort, women have developed methods of detecting cheaters in the reproductive game. To an extent, this may account for women’s need to generally appear ‘passive’ or ‘coy’; as a result of expecting men to be exploitative, there is a need to ensure that they are not ‘cheated’ into an undesirable partnership. Buss and Duntley (2008) explain that among the defensive strategies that have been employed by women include prolonging courtship in order to ascertain a man’s intentions, developing ‘mind-reading’ abilities, enlisting help from other parties, and also taking steps to minimize the cost of post-exploitation (2008:56-7). It can be argued that some of these defensive strategies spill into the stories people tell, hiding advice on how to deal with the ‘cads’ of the world. In section 5.1 ‘Deception’, stories deal with the struggle between the two sexes, in which each sex is selfishly attempting to obtain reproductive success.

5.1 Deception

Four of the stories in this thesis revolve around the ‘Swan Maiden’ motif.⁸⁵ ‘The Seven Young Sky Women’, ‘Kimod and the Swan Maiden’, ‘Rajapala dan Ken Sulasih’, and ‘The Goddess Bride’. The stories tell of the same plot: a man discovers seven bathing

⁸⁴ Sociosexual orientation refers to a man’s ability to commit in a relationship (Lewis et al. 2012:140).

⁸⁵ In folklore studies, some have referred to this tale type as the ‘Swan Maiden’ motif, though not all agree with the classification due to the many varieties of the tale (Miller 1987:56).

women. It is explained that the women are heavenly beings and are referred to either as 'fairies', 'nymphs', 'goddesses', 'Sky Women' or 'Sky Maidens'. Desiring one of the heavenly women for himself, the man steals either her clothing, her wings, or both. When the women finish bathing, the youngest discovers that she is missing her clothes or wings. As she is unable to return home without them she is left alone on earth. The man introduces himself and convinces the young woman to marry him, promising her safety. They have a child, and not long afterwards she discovers her clothing or wings. From here, the stories differ according to their storytellers. In the first two Philippine tales, 'The Seven Young Sky Women' and 'Kimod and the Sky Maiden', the hero is blessed with a happy ending. In the former, 'The Seven Young Sky Women', a curious detail in the story lies in the Sky Woman's knowledge that her clothes were hidden away by the man, Itung. She threatens to leave him should she ever find it and makes good on her promise when the occasion arises. When she leaves, however, he sets off to search for her. Itung overcomes a series of tests and the Sky Woman is willing to overlook his earlier deception. They are reunited and live happily ever after.

In these stories, the heavenly female character is in a disadvantaged position: she is physically vulnerable because the young man has stolen her clothes, which prevents her from returning to heaven. She is also socially vulnerable as she is without the protection of her kin and at the mercy of the young man. Goetz et al. (2012) describe these states as displaying a woman's 'exploitability', where the heavenly beings can be seen as 'incapacitated', with low levels of physical protection, and are also physically disabled from running away due to having their wings or clothes stolen (2012:418). With the men being in control and also willing to take advantage of the women's vulnerable position, the focus shifts from women's *exploitability* to the 'heroes' that are *exploitative*. I would argue that the women in these stories are not displaying 'exploitable cues' but that the *situation* the men came across is exploitable. To describe the women as displaying 'exploitable' cues has an unfortunate tendency to suggest that these women were able to control their situation and can be held responsible for the misfortunes that fall on them. On the contrary, the women in these stories have no control over their situation and are entirely at the mercy of the male observers. With this in mind, we are able to understand the Sky Woman's anger at her husband and her threat to leave him in 'The Seven Young Sky Women'.

So why does the Sky Woman return to Itung after having been deceived? As Itung has behaved despicably towards the Sky Woman, it is surely more advantageous for her to reject him when Itung reached her kingdom. His deceitful and opportunistic nature, reflective of aspects of the Dark Triad personality,⁸⁶ indicates that he is a poor mate choice who may abandon her in the future (Jonason et al. 2009:12). However, Itung shows his devotion to the Sky Woman by searching for her, and overcoming challenges to win her back. With this display of commitment, his status as a suitable mate is increased in her eyes. In section 4.2, these costly displays signal a man's willingness to invest his limited resources in a woman and her children; this willingness to invest is then translated to a willingness to engage in an exclusive, long-term relationship that will benefit a woman's reproductive and somatic success. How reliable is Itung's display of commitment? It was suggested that earlier in the story, he displayed Dark Triad characteristics. This implies that part of his personality revolves around his coldness and his inability to empathize with other people (Paulhus and Williams 2002:557). Thus, his sudden show of affection and love can be argued to be out of character. Has Itung turned over a new leaf?

Several factors need to be considered when answering this question. Firstly, it is probable that Itung had a change of heart because of his change of status. As he is no longer a bachelor and is wedded to an ideal mate,⁸⁷ he needs to employ more aggressive mate retention tactics in order to discourage mate poaching or defection from the relationship. This corresponds with a study that found people with Dark Triad personalities tend to have their mates poached; this is argued to be due to their apathy and coldness to their partners (Jonason, Li, and Buss 2010:375-6). In order to prevent such an occurrence, Itung employs 'Positive Inducements' through a display of 'Love and Care' as part of his mate retention tactics (Holden et al. 2014:31).

However, according to the HEXACO dimensions of personality, if a person embodies the 'Honesty – Humility' trait,⁸⁸ he or she would not use Positive Inducements as had

⁸⁶ Itung displays characteristics of being a 'charmer' while also being 'exploitative', signs of Machiavellianism (Wilson, Near, and Miller 1996).

⁸⁷ His bride, the Sky Woman, is described as beautiful and desirable. In addition to her physical qualities, she has great wealth and status that confirms her as a 'perfect' mate.

⁸⁸ The HEXACO model 'provides measures of personality across six dimensions': Honesty–Humility, Emotionality, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness (Holden et al. 2014:32).

Itung. A person of true ‘Honesty – Humility’ personality believes in fostering an honest and trustworthy relationship with their partner and will not use Positive Inducements to retain their partner (Holden et al. 2013:34). Thus, Itung’s display of affection is merely that: a display. He experiences no change of heart or change of character. He simply employs a mate retention strategy in order to retain his wife.

From happy endings, we move to more sombre stories from Indonesia. In ‘Rajapala dan Ken Sulasih’ (Rajapala and Ken Sulasih), we find the title characters attracted to each other from the very beginning. While devious in stealing her clothes, Rajapala charms Ken Sulasih in order to convince her to marry him. He declares: ‘I have never seen anyone as beautiful as you and if you cannot be my wife, I will certainly die of a broken heart’ (Rosoff 2012:13). Ken Sulasih is torn as she does not want to be the cause of Rajapala’s death, but she does not want to stay on earth forever. Convinced by his good looks and sweet words, she agrees to marry him but on the condition that after their son has turned six he will return her garments so that she may return to her kingdom. They marry and have a son. When he turns six years old, Ken Sulasih tearfully tells her son that she must leave her family. She explains that if she stays on earth any longer she will die. With heavy hearts, they say their goodbyes and Ken Sulasih leaves earth, never to see her family again.

‘Rajapala dan Ken Sulasih’ is told as a love story. The audience sees that despite being in a vulnerable position, Ken Sulasih is attracted to Rajapala. Rajapala also declares his love towards the nymph. Emphasis is placed on the love that grows between the couple and the sadness felt when Ken Sulasih’s leaves her family. But if their relationship is as strong and affectionate as described, why does it not end in a manner similar to ‘The Seven Sky Women’ and ‘Kimod and the Sky Maiden’? These two stories give romance a smaller role than ‘Rajapala dan Ken Sulasih’, and yet the heroes still prevail, successfully winning back their wives. If theirs was indeed a love story, Rajapala should have gone after his wife and proved himself a ‘worthy’ husband. Why did he do nothing?

Similar to the first two heroes, Rajapala displays Dark Triad personality traits, particularly that of Machiavellianism. He is emotionally manipulative, using flattery to convince Ken Sulasih to become his wife. His flattery can also be seen as a form of

emotional blackmail, threatening to ‘die’ should Ken Sulasih refuse to stay with him. As argued for the previous story, it is improbable that Rajapala had a change in personality after marrying Ken Sulasih. We are not privy to their married life, relying only on the narrator’s assurance that the two lived in wedded bliss. In studies on Machiavellian personalities and their relationships, it was found that they displayed ‘lower levels of relationship intimacy’ (Dussault, Hojjat, and Boone 2013:291; Ali and Chamorro-Premuzic 2010:231), they are also ‘negatively associated with life satisfaction’ (Ali and Chamorro-Premuzic 2010:231), and that they are ‘associated with a narcissistic, manipulative and hostile set of sexual attitudes’ (McHoskey 2001:787). Thus, one might imaginatively surmise that the six years of wedded life left out of the story was filled with personal dissatisfaction on Ken Sulasih’s side, leading her to leave her family forever.

Another curious aspect of the tale is Ken Sulasih’s condition that Rajapala returns her wings after their son’s sixth birthday. While Ken Sulasih provides two reasons for leaving her child: that she will die if she lives on earth any longer and that ‘It is the duty of the *dedari* to look after the gods in heaven. The gods will become very angry if I do not go back’ (Rosoff 2012:21), these two explanations are unrelated to each other. They seem to be excuses to provide the mother with a reason to leave. Coincidental or not, it is around age six that a child begins to live a life of its own. Children of this age are able to walk, talk, eat, and care for themselves largely without the assistance of an adult. I would argue that when Ken Sulasih met Rajapala, she, like all the other heroines in ‘Deception’, had little choice but to marry the exploitative hero. She plans her escape by establishing this condition, knowing that she will leave her son once he is no longer dependant on her. Despite the narrator’s efforts to show a ‘loving’ relationship between the title characters, the subtexts behind Ken Sulasih’s actions and words show that she was dissatisfied with her relationship and wished to leave it from the beginning.

Unlike Ken Sulasih and the Sky Women, the titular character of ‘The Goddess Bride’, is unaware of the young man’s deception when she marries him. He hides her clothes under a pile of rice and never mentions that he has stolen her garments. During their marriage they live peacefully together. One thing that strikes the young man as odd, however, is that no matter how much rice they consume it never runs out. One day, the Goddess Bride leaves the house in the middle of cooking rice. She asks her husband to

tend the pot, but warns him not to look inside it. The husband peeks inside the pot and sees that there is only a single grain of rice. He marvels at his wife's magic and is thankful that they need not worry about ever running out of rice. When his wife returns, she realizes that he has seen her powers and sadly tells him: 'If my powers are seen by a mortal being like you [...] then they disappear' (Sugiura 2001:9). As she can no longer use her magic, the contents of the rice barn dwindle slowly until one day the goddess' hidden garments are revealed. Upon discovering her clothes, she longs to return home and tells of her decision to her husband. He tries to persuade her to stay but she is unmoved and leaves her family forever.

With the exception of 'The Goddess Bride', all the other 'heroes' revealed their exploitative behaviour at the beginning of their relationship. It is a surprising move, considering that deceptive mating tactics work better when the deceived is unaware of the deception (Benz, Anderson, and Miller 2005:306). This is reflected in 'The Goddess Bride' as the goddess stays with her husband of her own accord, assisting him in his daily life, even when her magical powers are taken away from her. That is, until she discovers his deception. In the story, the moment is described as such:

'When she discovered the dress, she suddenly recalled all her memories of her past life, and she wanted desperately to return to her home in the heavens' (Sugiura 2001:9).

The ending glosses over her feelings towards the betrayal, focusing instead on her intention to return home. While she may have been reminded of her home, it can be argued that this intense decision to flee is aggravated by the discovery of her husband's deceit. If drawing lessons from the endings of the Swan Maiden stories, perhaps it is better to confess one's deception from an early stage of the relationship; in doing so, one will not run the risk of being found out, and losing everything.

In the final story of 'Deception', we move away from the Swan Maiden motif to investigate a story from Malaysia entitled 'Ikan Jantan' (Male Fish). In the story, Princess Khamariah spies a handsome gardener named Yusuf with whom she falls in love. She knows the impossibility of such a romance, yet she confesses her love to Yusuf. She explains that because of the differences in their status she is unable to marry

him. She tells him to disguise himself as a woman and promises that she will employ him, and that only then will she be able to act on her 'intentions' (Hitam 1972a:2). He does so and applies for work in the palace, introducing himself as 'Kalthum'. Meanwhile, Princess Khamariah is married to Raja Adnan. To demonstrate his love for his new bride, Raja Adnan sends her a gift of two chickens. Princess Khamariah sends one of the chickens back, affronted that a rooster has been sent to live within her enclosure. Raja Adnan admires his wife's sense of modesty and grows to love her more. Princess Khamariah, however, is delighted that Yusuf/Kalthum is working in the palace and installs him as her lady's maid. With Yusuf/Kalthum by her side, the lovers are able to freely 'have fun every day' (Hitam 1972a:5). One day, Raja Adnan sends two goldfish to his wife's chambers. She sends one of them back, admonishing the messenger, saying that 'if I will not allow a rooster into my chambers, why do you think I will allow a male fish? (Hitam 1972a:6).' When Raja Adnan hears of her complaint, he wonders how she was able to tell the male and female fish apart. His royal advisor, Johari, is dumbfounded and asks for permission to investigate the matter. Johari travels widely but fails to find the answer. Siti Zabedah, Johari's wife, notices his sadness; Johari confides in her, telling her of the 'male fish' conundrum. Siti Zabedah suggests that he holds an athletic competition for all the people of the kingdom. During this competition, Yusuf/Kalthum stands out as the most impressive among the womenfolk, and Princess Khamariah is visibly proud of her lover's athleticism. Siti Zabedah notices the princess' reactions to Yusuf/Kalthum. Based on Princess Khamariah's reactions and Yusuf/Kalthum's extraordinary athleticism, Siti Zabedah concludes that Yusuf/Kalthum is a man. She suggests that Princess Khamariah only pretended to identify a 'male fish' in order to show her pureness of character. In reality, one cannot distinguish the sexes of fish and Princess Khamariah used her supposed innocence to harbour a lover in the palace. The truth is revealed; Yusuf/Kalthum and Princess Khamariah are sealed in a barrel and thrown into the sea, never to be seen again.

'Ikan Jantan' is an example of a woman displaying Dark Triad personality traits: Princess Khamariah is scheming and manipulative, and willing to take advantage of her position as a person in power. She attempts to win her husband's favour by appearing to be pure of thought, thus implying that she will also be sexually pure. He is taken in by this deception and she is able to employ Yusuf as her lady's maid. Through emotional manipulation, she is able to retain the benefits of her husband's protection while

enjoying extramarital sex with a handsome man. However, she goes too far in attempting to assume her innocence of character, and her deception is discovered. It could be argued that the severity of Princess Khamariah's punishment lay in the fact that by committing infidelity, she exposed her husband to the possibility of raising a child that was not his own. Men in such situations are prone to react with violence against women (Shackelford et al. 2005:452).⁸⁹

5.2 Aggression in Mate Competition

Anyone looking for his or her Future Wife or Prince Charming knows that the 'ideal mate' is in limited supply. From an evolutionary perspective, being an attractive mate means that one displays a mixture of physical attractiveness, intelligence, a kind personality, resources, and a willingness to commit to a relationship. An *ideal* mate will have all these qualities. When everyone is searching for Mr or Mrs Right, competition is bound to arise. Since this perfect man or woman does not appear every day, a person may be driven to act in certain ways or say certain things in order to attract this high quality mate. In doing so, he or she hopes to eliminate competition for the same person. This phenomenon, when two or more same-sex individuals compete for the same person, is termed 'intrasexual competition' (Simpson et al. 1999:159, Buunk and Massar 2012:818, Buss 1988c:616).

The word 'competition' often draws up an image of a tangible, physical event. One imagines the act of stealing away a princess á la Sheriff of Nottingham or displaying one's strength in a Ulyssean-type contest. This type of intrasexual competition can be considered a more 'direct' tactic to show off one's strengths. Direct competitive tactics are employed by both men and women, though more often by men. Stealing away princesses and taking part in high-risk contests, however, are not acts performed by an average person. When searching for tactics that can be employed in everyday life, it was found that more men than women self-reported using direct competition tactics such as 'Assert superiority', 'Just be self', and 'Use humour' to separate themselves from same-sex competition (Simpson et al. 1999:165). In another study by Walters and Crawford (1993), more men were also found using direct tactics such as 'Demonstrate status',

⁸⁹ This aspect of infidelity will be discussed further in Part 2 Chapter 6.2: 'Fear of Infidelity'.

‘Attract attention to athletic ability’, ‘Manipulate resources’, and ‘Acquire status’ in intrasexual competition (1993:17). These tactics can be seen as male methods of asserting dominance, where dominance is a signifier of resources that can ‘enhance reproductive success’ (Campbell 1999:207).

While men use direct intrasexual tactics to show off or exaggerate their possession of resources against other male competitors, women often use direct intrasexual tactics to *acquire* resources for their young or to attain access to mates that are resource-rich (Rosvall 2011:3, 5). In times when resources and resource-rich mates are in short supply, direct intrasexual competition between women may intensify; a woman who is able to distinguish herself in a direct manner from the rest of her competitors may be in a better position to secure her survival (Rosvall 2011:5, 6).

Normally, women do not take part in direct intrasexual competition. It has been established that when women use direct tactics to fend off rivals, they were perceived as being less sexually attractive by potential mates (Simpson et al. 1999:170). Women are particularly unlikely to use aggression as a direct intrasexual tactic. Anne Campbell (1999) argues that this reluctance to use direct tactics, particularly physical aggression, can be attributed to a long history of patriarchal oppression. Female directness is considered ‘manly’ and thus ‘unfeminine’, and a woman who is too direct in her tactics is thought to have ‘permanent or temporary loss of rationality caused by mental illness or hormonal disturbance’ (Campbell 1999:212). With female directness and physical aggression being equated with a lack of femininity and mental instability, women who employ these tactics are often considered sexually unattractive by men.

As female direct tactics are considered unattractive, women evolved complex methods to thwart potential competition, namely through ‘indirect aggression’. It is defined by the ability to harm another person in such a circuitous manner that one avoids detection and thus, responsibility over those actions (Björkqvist 1994:179). Similar to direct intrasexual tactics, indirect aggression is employed by both men and women; the difference being that it is mostly employed by women. Because these tactics are often unidentifiable, it is only recently that women’s use of indirect aggression was considered worth studying. However, upon recognition of the occurrence of female

indirect aggression, researchers faced another difficulty: gauging its effects (Walters and Crawford 1993:21).

In the children's cartoon programme 'The Fairly Odd Parents', a twist is made on an old saying:

'Sticks and stones may break my bones, But words will leave psychological wounds that will never heal' (Sullivan 2011).

Female indirect aggression seems to take advantage of this sentiment as one of the most common tactics employed is the derogation of a female competitor (Rosvall 2011:6,; Vaillancourt 2013:1; Vaillancourt and Sharma 2011:574). In particular, women derogate other women who display cues of sexual availability. In a fascinating study by Vaillancourt and Sharma (2011), a group of female participants were placed in a waiting room. A woman posing as a member of the research team⁹⁰ approached the female participants wearing two different outfits: firstly, she appeared in a conservative dress, and secondly, in a more sexually revealing outfit. The reactions of the female participants to this woman were secretly recorded. The results, which were observed and codified by another pool of female participants, are as follows:

'In the presence of an attractive female who defied social convention by dressing in a sexually provocative manner, almost all women randomly assigned to this condition aggressed against her. The women in this condition were more likely to roll their eyes at the confederate, look her up and down, stare at her without conveying any emotion, and show anger while she was in the room. When the confederate left the room, many of them laughed at her, ridiculed her appearance, and/or suggested that she was sexually available. In contrast, when the same attractive confederate was dressed conservatively, the women assigned to this condition behaved well. They greeted her in a friendly manner, and none of them discussed her when she left the room' (Vaillancourt and Sharma 2011:574).

When women display cues of sexual availability, they do so through a presentation of their best physical assets. This includes a show of cleavage, a display of the shape of their body, and also accentuating their face through make up. It has been argued by

⁹⁰ This woman is referred to as 'confederate' in the study's report (Vaillancourt and Sharma 2011).

many that these physical aspects attract men's attention as they imply good health and good genes (Buss and Schmitt 1993:226; Szepeswol, Mikulincer and Birnbaum 2013:196; Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:16). When women displaying these physical aspects catch the attention of men, particularly the attention of eligible bachelors, other women will have a reduced probability of attracting these ideal mates. This puts 'attractive women' in a precarious position as they 'have been shown to be more successful at mate poaching than their less attractive peers' and because 'they are able to directly reduce the mate value of competitors' (Vaillancourt 2013:4). Rather than removing their competition using direct measures, such as striking them down with 'sticks and stones', most women know that words are a more effective tool to lessen the attractiveness of their competitors.

While women are aware that physical and sexual attractiveness command the attention of men, women are conscious of factors that can sway men's opinions. Women capitalize on this knowledge and use it to denigrate competitors. One point of gossip is to socially 'ruin' a woman's reputation, thereby lowering her attractiveness as a potential mate. This can take many forms: putting down a woman's appearance, questioning her moral integrity, or creating rumours about her sexual activity. These are among the many indirect ways that can leave injurious effects on a woman's reputation. Benenson's (2013) study found that indirect aggressive behaviour stems from childhood. Girls between the ages of two to five years old were found to create social groups, performing acts of inclusion or exclusion of other girls, and take part in competitive behaviour with other girls (Benenson 2013:3). These tactics continue to be employed by women because of their effectiveness; in a world where resources are dominated by men, it pays for women to lower the success of other women in order to ensure the increased survival of their own children and grandchildren (Benenson 2013:7).

5.2.1 Direct Female Aggression

In this section, there are five new stories of women directly aggressing with each other and two stories of indirect aggression. The first story of female direct aggression tells of the Indonesian 'Putri Bunga Melur' (Princess Jasmine). In the tale, a woman receives a prophetic dream that she will bear a child destined to travel the world and marry a

prince. Not long after, the woman gives birth to a daughter who she names Putri Bunga Melur. Putri Bunga Melur never grows bigger than a stalk of jasmine, but nevertheless, she is adored by her parents. When Putri Bunga Melur grows into adolescence, she falls ill. Doctors and healers are sought but none can cure her. Remembering her dream, the mother decides to send Putri Bunga Melur on a journey. Her parents tell her: 'Take good care of yourself, daughter and remember, if you happen to meet wild lily, don't you ever greet her or pay her any mind' (Bunanta 2001). Putri Bunga Melur sails away on a banana flower boat but soon forgets her parents' advice. She invites an ugly thumbling named Tuntung Kapur from the wild lilies into her boat. Tuntung Kapur is mean and orders Putri Bunga Melur around; dismayed, Putri Bunga Melur makes the best of the situation. They arrive at a kingdom where the king has a son the size of a thumb who is destined to marry a woman in a banana flower boat. Tuntung Kapur deceives everyone by saying she is the prophesized princess, and claims Putri Bunga Melur to be her servant. Thus Putri Bunga Melur is sent to the stables while Tuntung Kapur lives in the palace in order to be married to the prince. The prince, however, dislikes his betrothed. The situation is worsened when she tries to cook for him but he finds the food inedible. Fortunately, the prince meets Putri Bunga Melur and falls in love with her. However he does not dare go against his father. One day, the king, the prince, Tuntung Kapur, and Putri Bunga Melur travel together on a boat, and an animal choir sings of Tuntung Kapur's deception. Suspicious, the king and his son interrogate her and discover the truth. Tuntung Kapur is banished from the kingdom, and the prince marries Putri Bunga Melur.

Tuntung Kapur is the embodiment of being 'bad' and everything she does should be considered as such. She is ugly, deformed, and described as 'rude, spiteful, and lazy' (Bunanta 2001). When Tuntung Kapur begins to employ direct, aggressive tactics against Putri Bunga Melur, we are under the impression that these acts are also 'wrong'. She uses aggression as an attempt to overcome Putri Bunga Melur's advantage of beauty and kindness: Tuntung Kapur plants herself in Putri Bunga Melur's boat and orders the other girl around; she makes the boldfaced claim that Putri Bunga Melur is her servant, and is used to living in stables. Because she does not use physical aggression against Putri Bunga Melur, these tactics seem indirect. However, Tuntung Kapur's lies were known to her victim, Putri Bunga Melur, and they were easily re-traced to their author. Had the tactics been indirect, neither Putri Bunga Melur nor

anyone else in the kingdom would have been aware of Tuntung Kapur's deception. 'Putri Bunga Melur' thus warn listeners about the dangers of blatant deception as Tuntung Kapur is severely punished for her lies at the end of the story.

To engage in direct aggression is a risky endeavour that, if unsuccessful, can lead to the endangerment of one's somatic and reproductive success.⁹¹ I would argue, however, that from the description of Tuntung Kapur, she had little choice but to use direct aggression as an intrasexual tactic. Described as heavily deformed and secluded, her only chance at survival was to take advantage of Putri Bunga Melur. When faced with the opportunity to advance her reproductive opportunities, Tuntung Kapur was at a disadvantage when compared with the beautiful Putri Bunga Melur, and thus used direct tactics in order to make herself attractive to the prince.

A similar fate befalls the antagonist Magapid in the Philippine tale, 'The Dangerous Swing'. Magapid is jealous of Bugan's happily wedded life and invites her to climb onto an ominous-looking swing. Bugan is reluctant at first, but Magapid assures her that she will be safe. Bugan relents and takes off her jewellery, giving them to Magapid for safe keeping. Bugan initially enjoys being swung by Magapid but later becomes dizzy and asks her to stop. Magapid ignores her request, and continues to push her until Bugan loses her grip on the swing, falls, and breaks her neck. At first, Magapid is stunned, but she quickly realizes that with Bugan's jewellery, she resembles the late Bugan. She goes to Bugan's home and pretends to be her, fooling everyone, including Bugan's husband. Meanwhile, Bugan is revived by crows who give her wings, and teach her to fly. Bugan flies home, where she is taken in as a pet by her son. He quickly realizes that the crow is his mother and helps her by secretly bringing food from the kitchen. The father becomes suspicious at his son's secretive activities and spies on him. When he discovers that his true wife is living in the granary, he is struck by the realization that he had been manipulated and longs to be reunited with her. He shows himself to his wife and promises to deal with Magapid. When the imposter returns home, he throws her onto a mat of thorns, rolling her over them 'till her body bled and

⁹¹ Vaillancourt and Sharma (2011) find that women are less prone to be directly aggressive because it 'runs the risk of injury or death, which historically (and currently in some places around the world), would have hindered the reproductive success of a female by increasing the vulnerability of her offspring' (2011:575). A child will face reduced survivability if its mother is unable to care for it; mothers are aware of this fact and thus will take lesser risks in order to ensure that she and her child will survive.

blistered' (Lambrecht 1995:169). Magapid rolls to the end of a precipice and falls to her death. Bugan is happily reunited with her family.

There is no question that Magapid has employed direct aggression against her competition, Bugan. While she may not have intended to kill Bugan, the antagonist undoubtedly intended to hurt her. It can be argued that even by hurting Bugan, Magapid might have felt a rise in her status and a lessening of her jealousy. If Bugan had not been reanimated, Magapid would have successfully been rid of her intrasexual rival, acquiring a 'perfect mate' and an 'ideal mated life' for herself. Thus, while her actions are considered morally despicable, Magapid's somatic and reproductive success would have dramatically improved by her employment of direct aggression against Bugan.

Magapid's deception, like Tuntung Kapur's however, was easily detectable. The difference between Magapid and Tuntung Kapur is their attractiveness. Magapid is described as being physically similar to Bugan, and as the latter was able to attract a mate, it stands to reason that Magapid should have been able to find one herself. Her downfall lies in her jealousy over Bugan's happiness, and in taking unnecessary, high-risk actions. Because she is in a more secure position than Tuntung Kapur, she has more to lose when her risk-taking fails to pay off. Her gamble is thus different from Tuntung Kapur's. Tuntung Kapur had nothing to lose when she took a high-risk, aggressive route. Magapid had everything to gain but also everything to lose. Because she causes direct, grievous harm, Bugan is able to identify Magapid as the perpetrator, and Magapid pays for her actions with her life.⁹² 'The Dangerous Swing' thus implies that a direct type of aggression is an undesirable female intrasexual strategy.

The severity of punishments for female intrasexual competition is mirrored in past stories such as 'The Merchant's Two Daughters' (section 1.3.1), 'Molek' (section 2.1.1), 'The Three Princesses and Andriamonhamona' (section 2.1.1), and 'Puteri Santubong' (section 2.2.2). While these stories have been discussed in terms of sibling rivalry, they also contain memetic themes of intrasexual rivalry for the 'ideal mate'. In these stories, the female antagonists are punished for their direct aggressive behaviour. Princess Sejenjang and her sister Princess Santubong are both turned into mountains;

⁹² A fear of physical danger, at times as a repercussion from physical aggression, has been attributed to women's reluctance to engage in direct forms of aggression (Archer 2009:251).

Bawang Putih and her mother are banished from the kingdom, and Sandroy's sisters are banished and eaten by lizards. Only Molek's sisters are forgiven in the tale, despite the fact that they attempted to kill their sister in order to obtain her husband for themselves. I would argue that Molek forgives her sisters because they are kin, and this is an exception rather than the rule. In most cases, female aggression is warned against; women are cautioned against employing directness in their intrasexual tactics. This may have affected the manner in which women evolved a sense of fear of direct aggression, while men did not (Archer 2009:251).

5.2.2. Direct Intersexual Aggression

In most societies, female aggressiveness elicits a different response from male aggressiveness. This phenomenon is reflected in the following stories. In the tale of 'Puteri Bosu' (Princess Bosu), the title character is a beautiful young girl, whose beauty is so great that her parents keep her in an attic, far away from prying eyes. However, news of her beauty travels to a young man by the name of La Mandjuari. Wanting her for himself, he sneaks to the roof of her house, intending to catch a glimpse of her beauty. While he is on the roof, his *keris*⁹³ falls from his belt and strikes Puteri Bosu's heart. She dies instantly. La Mandjuari runs away from the scene but is quickly discovered. La Mandjuari confesses to his crime and asks that he be sailed away with Puteri Bosu's body. Her parents agree to his request. When they are out at sea together, La Mandjuari heals Puteri Bosu's wound and she awakens. At first she is troubled by her strange surroundings, but La Mandjuari comforts her. Because of his sweetness of character and good looks, Puteri Bosu becomes attracted to him. When they reach land, La Mandjuari asks that Puteri Bosu look after him while he sleeps. She agrees to do so but as soon as La Mandjuari falls asleep, a group of men discover Puteri Bosu. They are struck by her beauty and she is coerced to follow them to the palace. She is imprisoned upon arrival, and the king prepares to marry her. He wishes to take her on a flying ship and readies the vehicle. When La Mandjuari awakes, he discovers that Puteri Bosu has been kidnapped and quickly devises a plan. He steals onto the king's flying ship, and when Puteri Bosu boards it, La Mandjuari sets it off, leaving the king behind. The king and his people are unable to stop them from flying away and yell at the couple from

⁹³ A *keris* is a Malay type of dagger.

below. Puteri Bosu and La Mandjuari laugh at their anger and go on to marry, living happily ever after.

‘Puteri Bosu’ depicts multiple forms of intersexual aggression, where the aggressor is male and the victim is female. Firstly, we see that the ‘hero’, La Mandjuari, attempts to secure his reproductive future by directly seeking Puteri Bosu and inadvertently causing her death. Unlike female directness in approaching a mate,⁹⁴ his actions, even when lethal, does not cause condemnation. Instead, he is given her dead body as a form of ‘reward’ for displaying his interest in her. As discussed earlier, a man’s directness in actions is instinctively thought of as displays of power, and thereby related to his ability of attaining resources (Campbell 1999:207). This may be the reason Puteri Bosu’s parents do not seek justice for her death and give her to La Mandjuari as a way to reward his display of romance. As the intention of the ‘hero’ can never be empirically determined, Puteri Bosu’s parents and the audience rely on cues of La Mandjuari’s intentions. By requesting to be shipped off with Puteri Bosu’s corpse, and thus putting his own somatic and reproductive success at jeopardy, it can be argued that he is displaying signs of sincere devotion.

The second form of male to female intersexual aggression is seen in the behaviour of the king and his male subjects. Their aggression is portrayed as villainous when compared to La Mandjuari’s, who appears as Puteri Bosu’s saviour. This is strange considering La Mandjuari’s own questionable actions towards her. Like the hero, the king is attempting to secure his reproductive success by marrying the beautiful Puteri Bosu. His directness coincides with his own power and it is curious that Puteri Bosu is not attracted to the king, considering he is an evolutionary ‘better bet’ than La Mandjuari. Perhaps Puteri Bosu’s choice of La Mandjuari lies in his show of devotion to be shipped off with her corpse, reviving her, and then saving her from her kidnappers; the king, on the other hand, has only shown force. This may have indicated to Puteri Bosu that while he is richer and more powerful than La Mandjuari, he may be more prone to aggress against *her*. Thus, while male intrasexual aggression and male to

⁹⁴ Female directness, often considered ‘manly’, has been found to be a less successful method of approaching a mate (Simpson et al. 1999:170). In an experiment observing how women reacted to men they considered attractive, it was found that they took great care not to display cues of ‘being too forward’ (Simpson et al. 1999:170).

female direct mating tactics can be a positive display of prowess, male to female *aggression* is a less effective mating strategy.

Another tale that features both male intrasexual and intersexual aggression is ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’. This Palauan story tells of a magical young man who is born from a breadfruit. His adoptive mother takes him to a village where a chief is looking for the most handsome man to marry his beautiful daughter. She is dissatisfied with the local suitors but spies the handsome breadfruit man sitting next to his mother. Every time she draws nearer, however, he disappears. Finally, she sits next to his mother and decides to chew betel nuts with her. The other men vying for her hand become jealous of her attention towards the mother, and poison a betel nut. They offer the mother money so that she gives the poisoned betel nut to the girl. Upon eating the poisoned betel nut, the girl falls sick and her body is covered with boils and sores. No one is able to cure her and the girl’s condition worsens. Her parents decide to sequester her away. Meanwhile, the mother of the breadfruit man gives her son ingredients to cure the girl. When the breadfruit man finds the girl, his advances are initially rejected. She tells him: ‘Go away because I’m so ugly now that I’m worth nothing to you’ (Mitchell 1973:122). He manages to persuade her to allow him into her hut, and he is finally able to cure her. She becomes even more beautiful than before and they are eventually happily married.

In ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’, the title character is punished by her suitors because she has placed her sexual interest elsewhere. The men band together to poison the girl, creating boils and sores all over her body. While the target of the men’s aggression is the female, I would argue that the reason behind the anger is male intrasexual competition. A woman’s beauty is her main sexual advantage when searching for a mate,⁹⁵ and a man who marries a woman of great beauty is considered to have landed himself a great ‘catch’. When the girl’s beauty is marred, she sees that she has lost her ‘worth’ as a potential bride because of her loss in physical attractiveness and health. If the breadfruit man had not been given the cure to her illness, the suitors’ aggression against the girl would have kept the man from becoming her mate. Thus, the men’s

⁹⁵ Buss (1988c) asserts that ‘men, more than women, prefer a mate who is physically attractive or good-looking’ (1988c:619).

attack on the girl's beauty can be argued to be an effective, though horrific,⁹⁶ way to remove the sexual advantage of both the girl and the breadfruit man. These actions denote a 'If I can't have her, no one can' mentality. Because she chose one man over the rest of her suitors, it can be hypothesized that the other suitors viewed him as the 'winner'. By focusing their competitive actions towards the girl instead of the man, they ensure that the scores are made even.

There is only one story in this thesis that addresses female to male intersexual aggression. 'The Story of Gaygayoma Who Lives Up Above' from the Philippines tells of a husband named Aponitolau who grows a magnificent crop of sugar cane. The crop is so magnificent that it attracts the attention of Gaygayoma, the daughter of the Star and the Moon. She begs her father to bring Aponitolau's sugar cane to her. He fulfils her request and Gaygayoma happily dines on Aponitolau's crop. When the morning arrives, Aponitolau finds that some of his crop is ruined. He notices a piece of gold on the ground and deduces that a beautiful girl must have been the culprit. He decides to wait until nightfall for her appearance. The stars appear in bright lights, streaming into his field, and Aponitolau becomes frightened. He manages to muster up courage, however, and confronts them. Upon seeing Aponitolau, Gaygayoma introduces herself and apologizes for eating his crop. She declares:

'And now, Aponitolau, even though you have a wife, I am going to take you up to the sky, for I wish to marry you. If you are not willing to go, I shall call my companion stars to eat you' (Cole 1916).

With no choice but to follow her orders, Aponitolau becomes her husband. They have a child together, but Aponitolau frequently worries about his wife on earth. He begs Gaygayoma to allow him to visit his earthly wife and she relents – although Gaygayoma threatens to have her stars eat him if he does not return. When Aponitolau is reunited with his wife, she is so happy to have him back that she refuses to let him leave again. Gaygayoma's stars rain around their house, and demand that either Aponitolau follows

⁹⁶ In a recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 'Global and regional estimates of violence against women', it was found that: '35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. While there are many other forms of violence that women may be exposed to, this already represents a large proportion of the world's women' (WHO 2013:2).

them back to the sky or they will destroy him. He reluctantly obeys. Thereafter he divides his time between the earth and the sky, his two wives and his two sons.

The type of aggression committed by Gaygayoma can be considered direct because of the way she confronts Aponitolau. She does not attempt to use a circuitous method to make him her mate; instead, she understands her power and uses the threat of it directly unto Aponitolau. By doing so, she is able to secure her reproductive success with her chosen husband. This story shows that direct aggression can be employed successfully by a woman. But what is arguably more important than gender is her possession of power, and her understanding of the risks involved. Gaygayoma does not stand to lose anything by being directly aggressive towards Aponitolau; should she fail, Aponitolau will die but she will be able to obtain other partners. Because of her status and power, she is also unaffected by any retaliations that might occur. In this case, she has no fear of Aponitolau's wife. Indeed, by allowing Aponitolau to continue visiting his first wife, it can be said that she displays her own charitable character. If Gaygayoma had been of a lesser status, like Tuntung Kapur or Magapid in earlier stories, she could not employ such directness in attaining a mate.

5.2.3 Indirect Female Aggression

One of the few stories on indirect female aggression is the Philippine tale 'Aponibolinayen'. The title character is described as the most beautiful woman in the world and her brother, Aponibalagen, receives many marriage proposals on her behalf. But he is unwilling to marry her to any ordinary man; he wants her to marry the most powerful man he can find. Coincidentally, a great, handsome man by the name of Gawigawen lives in the neighbouring land. Although he has met many beautiful women, he has yet to find one whom he wishes to marry. When news of Aponibolinayen's beauty reaches him, he decides that she will become his bride. After agreeing on the bride price with her brother, the preparations for the wedding begin. There is only one problem: Aponibolinayen does not want to marry Gawigawen because a pretty young woman, who is jealous of Aponibolinayen's good fortune, tells the latter that her future husband has three noses. Aponibolinayen flees. On her journey, she comes across creatures who tell her that this rumour is false and that the person who told it must envy her good fortune. Aponibolinayen fails to listen to them and continues

on her journey. A man named Kadayadawan falls in love with her and they are married soon after. When news of their marriage reaches Gawigawen, he attempts to steal her away. Kadayadawan becomes angry and is about to fight Gawigawen when he discovers the truth of the matter. Kadayadawan realizes that he had taken away Gawigawen's fiancée and so he settles the dispute by paying Gawigawen the bride price that had initially been paid for Aponibolinayen.

The drama that unfolded in the second half of 'Aponibolinayen' can be attributed to an unnamed character: a girl who is jealous of Aponibolinayen. Her lie causes Aponibolinayen to flee and to marry another man, and it costs Gawigawen a prospective bride. Furthermore, her lie nearly causes a fight between two men who are strangers to each other. Yet, with all the commotion she causes, the girl remains anonymous and is only given one sentence throughout the entire story. This stealth of character is reflective of the key aspect of indirect aggression: to be unidentifiable (Björkqvist 1994:179). The audience almost forgets that there is a 'villain' in the course of this story and it is neither Kadayadawan nor Gawigawen. Both men realize this when they almost come to blows. The jealous girl evades mention but if she had been caught, she may have faced grievous recrimination.

On the other hand, the jealous girl's lie was effective as an indirectly aggressive tactic. The unknown girl changed both Aponibolinayen and Gawigaen's reproductive future. Gawigawen was described as someone of great fortune and who could equal Aponibolinayen's physical beauty. He had won over Aponibalagen and proved himself worthy. Thus, it can be argued that the unknown girl had effectively separated two people who may have been 'perfect' for each other. Aponibolinayen marries another man, presumably 'lesser' than Gawigawen, leaving Gawigawen free to be with another woman. The jealous girl effectively creates an opportunity where she can advance her own reproductive interests. The girl, described as 'pretty' (see Cole 1916), may have stood a chance of being with Gawigawen as her lie had not been discovered by any of the parties involved.

When revisiting the tale of 'Tattadu' (section 2.1.1) with a focus on indirect aggression, we see that the married older sisters make use of this tactic to denigrate their youngest sibling. While the sisters are happily married and are of higher status than Youngest

Sister, they use indirect aggression in order to cement this gap in status. Employing mockery, the older sisters create a feeling of despair in their unmarried sibling. Vulnerable in her ability to attain a husband, Youngest Sister makes the desperate decision to marry a lowly caterpillar. While Youngest Sister is happily married to the *tattadu*, her sisters are initially victorious in their indirect aggression. If the caterpillar husband had retained his lowly status, the elder sisters would have also retained their higher position over Youngest Sister.

‘Tattadu’ is didactic in warning its audience of the pitfalls of indirect aggression. It tells of risks that one undertakes when committing an invisible aggression; if one is successful, one may tear down a competition and improve one’s chances of reproductive success (Vaillancourt and Sharma 2011:575, Vaillancourt 2013:4). However, reproductive success is not guaranteed, as seen in the case of the unknown girl of ‘Aponibolinayen’. When aggression is unsuccessful, it can worsen reproductive conditions for the perpetrator. This is the case with the elder siblings in ‘Tattadu’; instead of elevating their own selves, they persuade their husbands to change in order to compete with the *tattadu*. This fails spectacularly and the elder sisters are left with animal-husbands, and much worse off than before.

All in all, while each person can take part in either direct or indirect mating tactics, their tactics rely on their victim’s reaction. The element of reaction is important, as seen in the stories of ‘Aponibolinayen’, ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’, ‘Puteri Bosu’, ‘The Dangerous Swing’, and ‘Putri Bunga Melur’. A person may act as desired by the aggressor, such as in ‘Aponibolinayen’. However, a person may also act against what is desired, such as the breadfruit man in ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’, who heals the afflicted girl and, in a way, ‘defeats’ the aggressors. Risk assessment of possible reactions and outcomes is crucial when deciding to use aggression as a mating tactic. In ‘The Story of Gaygayoma Who Lives Up Above’, Gaygayoma’s risk assessment of outcomes is more accurate than that of the king in ‘Puteri Bosu’, who finds unexpected competition with La Mandjuari. However, since eight out of eleven stories in this section warn against the use of aggression, it can be safely concluded that the overall memetic message is to avoid such mating tactics, especially for women.

5.3 An Unfavourable Mate

Upon putting one's best features forward, fighting for the man or woman of one's dreams, perhaps even resorting to deception to attain a partner, what happens after making the big decision? If a person is lucky, he or she may attain a fairy tale 'happily ever after'. In evolutionary terms, this translates into a man and a woman helping each other to survive, and having numerous children who grow up to have offspring of their own. This scenario, quite obviously, will not play out well for everyone. There may be obstacles along the way and some may have a bumpier ride than others. In the latter instance, some difficulties might fracture a relationship. Which leads to the question: what happens when upon choosing a partner, one is not living 'happily ever after'? How would one know that this partner is not 'the one'?

To summarize previous discussions on searching for romantic love, the qualities a person tries to find in a potential mate include 'sexual attraction, commitment, and emotional bonding' (Fletcher et al. 2015:22). Sexual attraction signal sexual compatibility, which increases the likelihood of genes being transmitted into another generation; and with a show of commitment and emotional bonding, both partners may receive mutual investments towards their somatic and reproductive success. These qualities for romantic love correlate with neurological findings that marital satisfaction is 'strongly associated with neural activation in multiple brain areas involved in reward, self-concept, empathy, and affective regulation' (Acevedo et al. 2012:28).

In a study on marital satisfaction of Batangueño couples, Carandang and Guda (2015:62) explain that in order to achieve marital success, a couple will need to seek 'adjustment, happiness, and permanence' in their relationship. When there is a happiness gap between the couple, particularly if the wife is less happy than the husband, there is an increase in the risk of separation (Güven, Stenik, and Stichnoth 2011:119).⁹⁷ Upon finding and choosing one's mate, further steps are needed in ensuring that the relationship will withstand the difficulties of establishing a new family unit. The man and the woman are no longer people with individualistic goals, but are

⁹⁷ Güven, Stenik, and Stichnoth (2011) qualify their findings by stating that the risk of divorce is subject to: when the happiness gap began; whether or not the couple formed their relationship directly after a break-up; and whether the happiness gap widened as the couple continued their relationship.

now a team that needs to find a middle ground in ensuring the happiness and permanence of their relationship.

A man or a woman may face the probability of reduced somatic and reproductive success when they have misinterpreted romantic signals or when they find themselves incompatible with their mates. A mate can be considered ‘unfavourable’ if they do not satisfy the factors described above. This is especially so in the case of women, who have already taken considerable caution over their mate choice as these choices have heavier impacts on their reproductive success (Kenrick, Li, and Butner 2008:9). In ‘An Unfavourable Mate’, stories will investigate the different ways women have discovered that their chosen mates were not ‘the one’.

5.3.1 External Disapproval and Pressure

‘[F]or as long as Homo Sapiens have existed, parents have tried to control or influence the mating behavior of their children’ (Buunk, Park, and Dubbs 2008:49). Whether it is by trying to find a mate for their child, expressing approval or disapproval at a mate choice, or completely rejecting their child’s mate choice, parents all over the world can influence who their child chooses as a potential partner. Because parental approval has become a normalized aspect of finding a mate, some parents may feel that their opinion is vital in their child’s mate selection (Buunk, Park, and Dubbs 2008:48; Goode 1959:42). Indeed, it has been found that in many cultures parents wield considerable power in the selection of mates for their children (Buunk, Park, and Dubbs 2008:49; Goode 1959:42; Zhang and Kline 2009:5; Fisher and Salmon 2013:100; Bejanyan, Marshall, and Ferenczi 2015:2). Why is this so?

The answer can be found in the differences in fitness interest of the parents and the children. While the children may seek a more personal and affective connection with future partners, parents are less concerned with how well their children and their potential mates match in terms of personalities. It was found that parents look for cues that indicate the ability to ‘maximize the fitness of their grandchildren’ in their children’s potential mates (Buunk, Park, and Dubbs 2008:50; Bejanyan, Marshall, and Ferenczi 2015:19). In other words, parents want their child to have a partner who is able to provide for his or her offspring, ensuring the survival of the family line. If a child’s

partner is insufficiently committed to the relationship, the child's parents may have to provide support for the child and any resulting grandchildren. In doing so, this may result in an uneven distribution of care among the parents' other offspring (Buunk, Park, and Dubbs 2008:50).

Andersen's 'The Little Mermaid' (1837) and Shakespeare's '*Romeo and Juliet*' (1597) faced the same problem in their memetic quest for reproductive success: upon selecting their mate, they faced resistance from their parents. Disney's 'The Little Mermaid' (1989) portrayed a happy ending for the young mermaid and her chosen partner; King Triton, the mermaid's father, consents to his daughter's union with a man who lives in a different world. However, Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale (the source material for the movie) ends on a note similar to that of Shakespeare's most famous tragedy. Neither the Little Mermaid nor *Romeo and Juliet* are able to obtain their parents' approval of their mate choice and both stories end with the characters dying terrible deaths. Many stories emphasize this memetic theme of parental disapproval of mate choice, to the extent that it can cross boundaries of culture as well as storytelling mediums; this suggests the centrality of the theme in mate selection and reproduction.

The Malagasy tale of 'Raharinora and Randriantsara' emphasises the horror of parental disapproval. In the story, Randriantsara is in love with the beautiful Raharinora, a woman who lives in a neighbouring village. He tells his parents that he wants to search for the woman he loves and they are puzzled; they ask: 'If you need a lady to love from somewhere, why don't you take one from here? There are several eligible ladies here, so you have no need to get one from far away' (McElroy 1999:105). To which he replies, 'But I love this one' (McElroy 1999:105). And so he sets forth on a journey, courting Raharinora's hand by working as her father's slave. Raharinora's father sees that Randriantsara is in love with his daughter and, after receiving approval from Raharinora, gives her in marriage to him. The newlyweds move to Randriantsara's parents' home but things do not go well; his parents hate her on sight. The couple is forced to move away and the husband has to leave her to sell cattle. Raharinora exclaims: 'What exactly do you want? You loved me very much and that is why you took me from very far away. Why do you want to leave me and go far from me to sell cattle?' (McElroy 1999:106). He explains that he wishes to be independent and to provide for her, in order to make her happy. And so he leaves, and his parents take the

opportunity to plan her murder. They invite the entire village to take part in their scheme; the villagers call Raharinora to the parents' home where Randriantsara's parents poison her food. Raharinora dies. When Randriantsara returns, bringing jewels and clothes for his beloved wife, he realizes what has happened. Overcome with grief, he kills himself.

Cross-cultural studies have shown that 'parental influence is particularly strong for daughters compared to sons' (Fisher and Salmon 2013:100). This may be attributed to the weight placed on females to select a 'good' partner in order to ensure reproductive success of both their own selves and child. 'Raharinora and Randriantsara', however, shows that the intensity of parental disapproval does not change according to their child's gender. The storyteller seems to contradict Fisher and Salmon's (2013) claim that parental influence over mate choice seems stronger for daughters than sons. This is reflected in the ending of the story, which goes: '[and] from this time, it is customary to hear people saying: "Daughters-in-law are always hated by parents-in-law". And the people say it is so because Raharinora died from eating the food from her parents-in-law' (McElroy 1999:107).

The complete rejection of Raharinora by Randriantsara's parents is unsettling because it seems unfounded. There is no mention of why they despise her and are willing to kill her; they seek her out even when she is no longer a part of their lives. Perhaps an answer can be drawn from an earlier section of the story, where they tell Randriantsara that there are plenty of 'eligible ladies' (McElroy 1999:105) and that he need not search elsewhere. This implies that the parents have already identified certain women who they think are appropriate for their son. They have recommendations to make should their son want it. It can thus be hypothesized that the parents felt slighted because their son did not incorporate them in his decision to marry Raharinora. According to an expert on family life and divorce, William J. Goode;

'Both the child's placement in the social structure and choice of mates are socially important because both placement and choice link two kinship lines together. Courtship or mate choice, therefore, cannot be ignored by either family or society. [...] If the family as a unit of society is important, then mate choice is too (Goode 1959:42).'

Randriantsara's act of marrying Raharinora can be seen as breaking that social structure, by failing to consider his parents' views.

There is evolutionary truth in the danger of disregarding the opinions of one's kin. An individual's family and relations can provide safety and resources, which may be important in times of hardship. Such support may be integral to one's survival. To eschew one's family completely would be unwise, as seen in the effects of Randriantsara's carelessness. This does not excuse his parents' actions; it merely explains that their rage comes from feeling unappreciated, a sentiment explored through stories in Chapter 1: 'Mother Knows Best'. Perhaps this story is less a warning to daughters-in-law in regards to their parents-in-law, than an admonition to be sensitive to one's kin network and the support it can offer.

This concept of social structure and kin disapproval can also be widened to analyse the taboo of intercaste romances. Chamorro societies in particular, whose story we will look upon next, have two distinct social castes: the upper caste, known as the *chamorri*, and the lower caste *manachang* (Tolentino 2014). The *chamorri* generally inhabited areas close to the coast and took part in 'higher' work such as trading or fishing while the *manachang* lived deeper inland and were either servants or labourers to the *chamorri* (Tolentino 2014). A popular tale among the Chamorro people, 'Puntan Dos Amantes' tells the story of a young *matao* (a higher caste) man who falls in love with a beautiful *manachang* (a lower caste) girl. They run away together but find no sanctuary from other native groups in their lands. The lovers live together in poverty, away from both their villages and in complete despair. They have a child that dies as soon as it is born. This tragedy seems to be the last straw for the lovers. They build a tomb for their child and walk aimlessly to a high summit by the sea. Binding their hair together, they hold on to each other before throwing themselves off of the peak into the waters. This story has been retold over and over, and has even been updated following the arrival of the Spaniards in the Mariana Islands. In later versions, the young woman is from a rich family and she is engaged to a Spanish man. She, however, falls in love with a lower caste young man. They run away after their villagers give chase and throw themselves off a cliff with their hair bound together.

The elements in 'Puntan Dos Amantes' seem to condemn and discourage romance between different castes in Chamorro society. The lovers are shown as being spurned by their communities, as well as other neighbouring villages. It suggests that an intercaste couple will not be awarded safe haven by any community. The story paints a picture that those who attempt to take part in intercaste marriages will find themselves without support in their basic survival. This is reminiscent of the sentiment pervading the tale of 'Raharinora and Randriantsara'. 'Puntan Dos Amantes' shows that while the couple is able to reproduce, they are unable to raise the child to adulthood without the support of their community. In short, the ending of 'Puntan Dos Amantes' warns intercaste couples with a fate that eliminates any chances of propagating their genes to future generations.

The hatred felt for an intercaste union is further intensified by the complexities that lie behind the structure of a caste-based society. In an article on disease and caste systems, Elena Esposito (2012) argues that 'caste stratification is very frequently supported by ideological-religious beliefs of purity-pollution' (Esposito 2012:5). Based on her study, she claims that 'diseased environments spurred the development of [the] caste system' (Esposito 2012:32). As lower castes are generally responsible for handling waste, this taboo against an intercaste union could be understood as a manner to keep members safe from disease. It can be argued that stories such as 'Puntan Dos Amantes' are a method to further ingrain these values into Chamorro society, where individuals are discouraged from intercaste romances as a method of disease-avoidance.

In recent years the story has been received less as a cautionary tale than as a story of 'true love'. The cliff from where the lovers jumped to their death has become a tourist attraction in celebration of that love (Murphy 2014). This reinterpretation of the tale signifies a change in social values; the intention of the tale is no longer to provoke fear but to teach tolerance and to shed light on the pitfalls of a caste-stratified society. Rather than being led by disgust and fear of disease,⁹⁸ improved technological circumstances

⁹⁸ Curtis, de Barra, and Aunger (2011) explains that 'An important way to acquire knowledge of what to avoid is to pay attention to specific social cues such as expressions of disgust in conspecifics [...] A similar social triggering is probably required for some cues to become disgusting as well' (Curtis, de Barra, and Aunger 2011:393). Thus, it can be argued that when society no longer gives cues of disgust regarding different caste members, caste-based societies will be able to slowly evolve to no longer seeing different caste members as potential disease threats.

led to wider cooperation to increase survivability of all Chamorro people instead of specific caste groups.

‘Puntan Dos Amantes’ is an example where a tale’s ‘lesson’ may transform without many changes to the plotline. ‘Puntan Dos Amantes’ is a testament to the evolving nature of culture; it takes into account new understandings of the world in order to provide stories that assist in the propagation of the human species. Rather than remaining stagnant and possibly endangering the survivability of the Chamorro people, the story and its lesson changes. This change can be seen as a method to positively affect the inclusive fitness of all Chamorro families.

5.3.2 ‘Stranger Danger’ in Malagasy Oral Tradition

The three stories discussed in this next section, ‘Betombokoantsoro: Faralahy Bikesa, the Monster’, ‘The Cowhide that Turned into a Cow’, and ‘The Defiant Girl in Madagascar’, have been analysed in terms of sibling helpfulness in Part 1: Tales of Family Life (section 2.3.1). In ‘Stranger Danger’, these stories will be analysed in terms of the unfortunate mate choices made by the sisters. At first glance, the stories seem to advise against marriage to psychopathic strangers.⁹⁹ The monsters that disguised themselves as men are reminiscent of psychopathic individuals that had been discussed in regards to the Dark Triad of Personalities. These monsters display ‘callous, remorseless manipulation and exploitation of others’ (Lee and Ashton 2005:1572), deceiving protagonists into harmful marriages. While individuals with a component or a mixture of the Dark Triad personality can be viable short-term mates, they are less favourable as long-term partners. The initial glamour of their appeal masks short-term intentions and may jeopardize women’s reproductive success.

However, when looking at the tone and ‘message’ of the story, it can be argued that these tales were told by worried parents who were overcautious about their children. Fessler et al. (2014:110) have proposed that parents are inherently cautious concerning their children's safety, showing ‘more conservative error management strategies’ in ambiguous situations with unknown persons. The somatic survival of children is

⁹⁹ Indeed, this tale is reminiscent of the ‘Bluebeard’ fairy tale which Zipes had analysed according to the evolution of male violence (2006:165, 192).

integral to the parents' reproductive success; thus it is better for parents to be overcautious than to be sorry. Because some parents view the world as a 'dangerous place' for their children (Eibach and Mock 2011:694), they may try to warn them about these potential dangers through stories.

The 'monsters', Betombokoantsoro, Tsangarira, and Mandrongana, symbolize a parent's worst nightmare. They tell of a parent's worry that their child will be taken in by a mysterious stranger, led away and then harmed. While statistics have shown that the number of children abducted or harmed by strangers is far lower than popularly imagined,¹⁰⁰ they do little to allay a parent's instinctive fear that their child will be harmed by an unknown person (Hahn-Holbroke, Holbrook, Bering 2010:4). This fear may have stemmed from the human ancestral past where the presence of a stranger, particularly that of a *male* stranger 'aligned with out-groups', indicated a high probability of violence (Hahn-Holbroke, Holbrook, Bering 2010:14). A parent's fear of strangers can thus be seen as adaptive, as it would assist in ensuring that children are kept away from the possibility of death.

This fear of strangers can also be used to understand parents' fear of their children marrying unknown people. Not knowing the background of their children's partner can lead parents to fear for their children's well-being. It is a theme similar to the ones found in 'Raharinora and Randriantsara' and 'Puntan Dos Amantes'. How can parents know that these strange men (or women) have their children's best interests in mind? Who will the parents turn to should their children be harmed by their partners? In an attempt to safeguard their children, these stories of monstrous husbands are warnings by parents of the dangers of the unknown, in addition to providing psychopathic cues to look out for in potential partners.

¹⁰⁰ According to a summary of statistics in 'Snakes, Spiders, Strangers: How the Evolved Fear of Strangers may Misdirect Efforts to Protect Children from Harm', Hahn-Holbrook, Holbrook, and Bering (2010) find that 'Stranger abductions and homicides account for less than 1% of the actual harm that befalls children in the United States (Center for Disease Control and Prevention,1982)'.

5.3.3 I Will (Not) Always Love You

When choosing a mate, women tend to select men who show kindness, a sense of altruism, and a willingness to share their resources (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West 1995:439). It has been argued, to a certain extent, that women have honed the ability to detect deception in order to ascertain male intentions towards them (Tooke and Camire 1991:360, 361). Sometimes, however, things do not go according to plan as signals can be feigned by a prospective suitor. If a woman is misled by a signal and has chosen an unreliable man for a mate, the woman may find herself in a marriage to an uncommitted husband (Barclay 2010:124; Iredale, Van Vugt, and Dunbar 2008:391; Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West 1995:428).

In the Palauan tale of ‘The Beheaded Lover’, Surech finds herself in such a situation. She is in love with a young man from Ngkeklau, a neighbouring village. The couple meet daily on top of a hill, remaining together until evening falls. One day, the chief, Maderengebuked, from the village of Ngaraad, hears of Surech’s beauty. He wants to meet her and so calls on her young man. Maderengebuked requests that he bring Surech to him but the young man misinterprets the request; he thinks that he is to bring Surech’s head to Maderengebuked. When the young man attempts to tell Surech of his orders he is rendered speechless. When she lies down to sleep, he takes out an axe to behead her. As he raises the axe over her, Surech awakens. Shocked and enraged, Surech yells at her lover: ‘What are you trying to do? Are you trying to kill me? If you want something, why don't you tell me straight, instead of trying to kill me or let me go to sleep while you do something’ (Mitchell 1973:114). She rises and weaves a basket large enough to carry her head. When she has finished, she tells her lover to kill her. He does so and delivers Surech’s head to Maderengebuked. The chief is enraged to learn that Surech has been killed and sends his villagers after the young man. When they find him, the man is killed.

In an introduction to the story, Roger E. Mitchell explains that the memetic theme of lovers separated by others is prevalent in Palauan society where ‘the parents have a great deal to say in the picking of their children's spouses and wealth is an important factor in arranging marriages’ (Mitchell 1973:112-3). However, unlike the stories on parental disapproval, the couple’s separator in ‘The Beheaded Lover’ is neither their

parents nor the chief, Maderengebuked. Instead, it is Surech's unnamed lover who kills her. The betrayal is foregrounded because it is *she* who has selected the wrong mate. She has not been coerced by her parents, nor has she been coerced to leave her mate because of another man. It is her chosen partner who has shown himself as unsuitable and she pays for her mistake with her life.

Surech's dilemma is in contrast with that of Boru Humala, in 'Polosit'. The Indonesian tale tells of a king who has the habit of marrying the most beautiful women in the kingdom and then divorcing them in order to marry younger, even more beautiful women. He is hated by his subjects not because he wants to take numerous wives; as a king, it is expected of him. Instead, they despise the fact that he does not care for his wives during and after marriage. When one wife dies of a broken heart, he decides to marry the most beautiful woman available, Boru Humala. Unfortunately, Boru Humala is already engaged and her villagers reject the king's proposal. They tell the king that if he tries to marry Boru Humala, they will rise against him. The king is enraged at their disobedience. He resorts to supernatural magic, using a *polosit*¹⁰¹ to threaten the villagers. Boru Humala's family and kin are frightened of the supernatural threat and finally cave in to the king's demands. The young beauty is distraught, crying and praying for days so that she will not have to marry the king. But the ceremony takes place, and Boru Humala is brought to the palace, where the king anticipates his first night with his young bride. Upon seeing her beauty, the king is so overcome with emotion that his heart gives way and he dies. Thus Boru Humala escapes having to marry the evil king.

The king in 'Polosit' is described as a heinous character, whose carefree attitude in marrying and discarding his wives invited the wrath of the villagers. Even though he is king, he is an unfavourable mate because women who marry him know that he will be an unreliable partner. Marriage, as a mark of commitment, is not respected by the king and thus the women are aware that to be married to him will not guarantee security over their self or their children. The king's wives may enjoy his riches while being married to him, but his personality of continuously searching for other mates renders him disagreeable and thus unattractive (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, and West 1995:438). As

¹⁰¹ According to the story, a *polosit* is a child that has intentionally been killed in order to serve supernatural purposes.

had been mentioned before, marital success needs 'adjustment, happiness, and permanence' (Carandang and Guda 2015:62), all of which is absent from marriage to the king. The fact that he will be a terrible mate choice and yet he is still able to marry anyone despite these failings creates feelings of animosity amongst the villagers.

And so, all is definitely fair in love and war: one cheats, one lies, one commits violence, one may even resort to supernatural powers in order to achieve love. This is all done, according to evolutionary theory, in order to find a compatible mate in order to reproduce. What can be concluded from section 5.3 'An Unfavourable Mate' is that love, or the search for reproductive success, does not end with the selection of a partner. For it is only upon choosing a mate that one will be able to determine the suitability of one's partner. At times, it is discovered that the person one has chosen is not Mr or Mrs Right, and thus the search for a partner begins all over again.

CHAPTER 6: KEEPING A HAPPILY EVER AFTER

“Despite the formal wedding vows, the laws that legally bind couples, and the collective pressure of friends and extended kin to remain coupled, marriage carries no guarantee that a mate gained will be successfully retained.”

- Buss and Shackelford (1997:347)

A quick Google search for ‘How to maintain a marriage’ draws up the following results: ‘12 Bold Ideas for a Happy Marriage’, ‘11 Ways to Make Your Long-Term Marriage Happier’, and ‘9 Smart Ways to Keep Your Marriage Healthy at Any Age’¹⁰² among many others. The plots of many television programmes, films, and hit singles on the radio revolve around the memetic theme of retaining one’s love interest. The pervasiveness of the topic implies that many individuals, having found a partner, are searching for ways to preserve their relationship. While searching for a partner is a finite process, retaining a partner is a continuous challenge. Indeed, the ‘ubiquity of divorce suggests that failures of mate retention represent a common and enduring adaptive problem’ (Buss and Shackelford 1997:346). When viewed from an evolutionary perspective, defection from the relationship signifies the loss of future reproductive opportunities with one’s partner (Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford 2009:214). Constant effort is needed to ensure a lasting relationship. Buss (1988a) refers to these efforts as ‘mate retention tactics’, whereby both men and women use specific strategies in order to ensure a lasting relationship.

There are low-risk and high-risk mate retention strategies. Low-risk mate retention strategies can be described as behaviours where they are unlikely to cause a partner’s defection from the relationship (Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt 2009:135). They are characterized by ‘benefit-provisioning behaviours’ such as buying gifts for one’s partner or showering him or her with affection (Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford 2009:214). These behaviours can further be described as providing one’s partner with ‘Positive Inducements’ to stay in the relationship (Pham and Shackelford 2013:185). Utilizing

¹⁰² These titles are from simplemarriage.net, Huffingtonpost.com, and Health.com respectively.

benefit-provisioning behaviour as a mate retention strategy, especially by men towards their female partners, may increase women's 'self-esteem and relationship satisfaction' (Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt 2009:135). However, in order to provide gifts, one must have access to 'material resources', while affection may require 'psychological resources', both of which may only be available to higher mate-value men (Starratt and Shackelford 2012:459).

For individuals who do not have the resources to demonstrate benefit-provisioning behaviour, he or she may be inclined to use high-risk forms of mate retention strategies. This can be described as 'cost-inflicting tactics' that run a higher risk of relationship defection (Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford 2009:214; Starratt and Shackelford 2012:459). Among the types of cost-inflicting tactics are 'direct guarding, intersexual negative inducements, and intrasexual negative inducements' (Pham and Shackelford 2012:185).¹⁰³ McKibbin et al. (2014:67) suggest that women are more sensitive to men's cost-inflictive behaviours as these types of behaviours are predictive of future violence in their relationship. Needless to say, when men utilize cost-inflicting strategies, women are less likely to stay in the relationship. So how and when do these strategies work?

6.1 Conditions of Marriage

A widely used high-risk mate retention strategy is the derogation of one's partner (McKibbin et al. 2007; Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2005; Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt 2009). It is often used by men to cause a feeling of devaluation, creating a sense that their partner 'cannot secure a better relationship partner, or that no one else would want her as a partner' and thus she is less likely to leave the current relationship (McKibbin et al. 2007:239). According to the Partner-Directed Insults Scale (PDIS),¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ In Buss' (1988a) Taxonomy of Tactics and Acts of Mate Retention', it was specified that direct guarding can include 'concealment of mate' whereby a man would not take a woman to a party where other men will attend, or would not allow their partner to talk to other men. For intersexual negative inducements, a man may 'threaten infidelity' by openly flirting with other women in front of their partners. And finally, for intrasexual negative inducements, a man may commit violence whereby he would fight another man who 'made a pass' at his partner or 'vandalized the property' of the man who made a pass at his partner (1988a:299).

¹⁰⁴ The Partner-Directed Insults Scale (PDIS) 'is the first scale designed to assess explicitly the prevalence and frequency of specific insults that men use to derogate their female intimate partners' (Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2005:703).

the derogation of one's partner can involve 'Derogating Physical Attractiveness, Derogating Value as Partner/Mental Capacity, Derogating Value as a Person, and Accusations of Sexual Infidelity' (Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2005:703). Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt (2009:138) showed in their study on mate value and insults that men's use of 'partner-directed insults successfully decreases their partner's self-esteem'. However, how successful are partner-directed insults as a mate retention strategy? Negative mate retention tactics may have the opposite effect as women distance themselves from such verbal abuse from their partners.

This seems to be the case in the following Western Malayo-Polynesian tales. 'The Legend of a Lake (Toba Lake)' from North Sumatra warns against the usage of partner-directed insults. In the tale, a young man catches a large fish and hauls it home. He leaves the fish in his kitchen and goes to find a pot to cook it in. When he returns, the fish has disappeared and he finds a beautiful girl in its stead. She explains that she is the fish that he had brought home, and that she is destined to marry the man who caught her. She makes him promise that while she is his wife he must never mention her lowly origins. He agrees, and they are married. They have a child, who grows up big and healthy. Unfortunately, the child has a bad habit of eating too much. One day, the child is tasked with bringing his father food. On the way, the child becomes hungry and eats the food entrusted to him. His father becomes angry when he sees that his son has eaten his lunch; hungry and frustrated, he exclaims 'Just like a fish's child, eating is the only skill!' (Bunanta 2003:98). The mother overhears his scolding and is humiliated by his words. She transforms herself back into a fish and a great flood drowns all the inhabitants of their village, killing even her husband and son.

The wife in 'The Legend of a Lake (Toba Lake)' appears to be embarrassed by her previous incarnation as a fish, causing her to be intolerant of insults. Her concerns over future verbal abuses may not be entirely unfounded as 'women who perceive themselves to be of lower mate value [...] report that their partners level more insults against them' (Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt 2009:137). When a woman's mate value is higher than a man's, however, she faces fewer chances of being derogated by her partner (Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford 2009:215). Thus the wife's condition of marriage can be seen as a way to protect herself from future derogation and further loss

of mate value. By asserting herself as being of a higher mate value at the start of the relationship, she attempts to reduce the chances of being insulted by her partner.

Is the husband actually insulting his wife? At first glance, his anger seems to be directed at his child, as opposed to his wife. However, his choice of insult shows that there is more than meets the eye; as he berates his son, he insults his wife's origin. When looking at the types of insults men use against their partners, Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper (2005) found that those who derogate their 'partner's worth and intelligence are the most dangerous to their partners' and are more likely to use 'controlling behaviours and violence in their intimate relationships' (2005:704). It could be hypothesized that through his choice of insult, the husband is inadvertently displaying his potential to be a dangerous partner. The young wife, feeling vulnerable of her perceived lower mate value, leaves her family because she feels a further threat of violence from her husband.

In the 'Tale of the Golden Pigeon' from Malaysia, a similar marriage condition is made and then broken. In the story, a man named Johan saves a golden pigeon from being abused by neighbourhood children. Johan takes pity on the bird, and provides it with food and shelter. The golden pigeon is touched by his kindness and wishes it could be of help to Johan. It prays, and one day a fairy godmother appears; the fairy turns the golden pigeon into a beautiful girl named Mariam. The pigeon-girl and Johan marry, but the fairy warns Johan that he must never mention his wife's origins; if he does, she will be transformed back into a bird. The couple live in harmony, and are blessed with a child as well as with riches. Their neighbours are jealous of their happiness and decide to pry into the secret behind their wealth. They take Johan out for drinks, and alcohol soon loosens his tongue. He tells his neighbours that his wife is actually a pigeon and that she is indebted to him for saving her life. When Johan returns home, he discovers that his wife has been transformed back into a bird. Worried over the fate of their young child, the man and his wife pray to the fairy godmother for help. Luckily, the fairy realizes that Johan has been tricked by his jealous neighbours. She warns them to be more careful in the future and transforms the pigeon once more into Mariam.

Unlike the young man in 'The Legend of a Lake (Toba Lake)', Johan uses neither his wife's origins to denigrate her nor does he try to lower her mate value through his

knowledge of her origins. He answers questions about her, pried from him through alcohol by his inquisitive neighbours. He is able to win her back because he did not divulge her secret purposefully or maliciously. Indeed, the audience is able to witness his devotion to his wife as he is adamant at retaining his relationship with her. Thus he presents himself to be a more ‘worthy’ partner and by extension, a mate of higher value than the earlier man in ‘The Legend of a Lake (Toba Lake)’.

While female mate value was discussed in the previous tales, male mate value has yet to be explored. Miner, Shackelford, and Starratt suggested in their 2009 study that a man’s mate value (whether perceived by the man himself or by his partner) can predict a man’s use of insults against their partner. In particular, a man of lower mate value will be more prone to high-risk acts of mate retention. It has been hypothesized that ‘partners of low value men in the environment of evolutionary adaptedness were more likely to be unfaithful than the partners of high mate value men’ (Miner, Shackelford, Starratt 2009:138). It can thus be proposed that Johan, when compared to the young man in ‘The Legend of a Lake (Toba Lake)’, is of high mate value as he does not ‘deploy [...] partner-directed insults’ (Miner, Shackelford, Starratt 2009:138).

6.2 Fear of Infidelity

While individuals may not face outright defection from a relationship, they may face other problems in their ‘happily ever after’. One such problem is potential sexual competition. Buss and Shackelford (1997:346) emphasise the prevalence and severity of sexual competition as ‘sexual infidelities [...] afflict 20-50% of American married couples and represent a partial loss of the reproductively relevant resources of a mate’. The problem of infidelity is particularly pertinent for men as they face the problem of ‘paternity uncertainty’ (Kaighobadi, Shackelford, and Buss 2010:414; Starratt et al. 2008:523; Starratt and Shackelford 2012:459). Women can always be assured that a child is biologically theirs; men, on the other hand, are less likely to be a hundred percent assured. Men who have been cuckolded thus face a higher probability of ‘investing in offspring that is not genetically related’ (Miner, Starratt, and Shackelford 2009:214), instead of investing their resources to their own biological children.

This may account for one of the types of insults a man uses to derogate his partner: ‘Accusations of Sexual Infidelity’ (Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2012: 703). These insults focus on whether or not a woman is being faithful to her partner. Examples of these types of insults include ‘My partner called me a whore or a slut’ and ‘My partner accused me of wanting to have sex with another man’ (Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2012: 693). This form of partner-directed insult ‘uniquely predicted men’s mate retention behaviours’; specifically, men who accuse their partners of sexual infidelity are prone to ‘perform more negative mate retention behaviours’ (McKibbin 2007:239). One of these behaviours includes the propensity to commit partner-directed violence (McKibbin 2007:239; Goetz, Shackelford, and Schipper 2012: 703; Shackelford et al. 2005:449).

The derogation of a partner’s perceived sexual infidelity has been interpreted as stemming from a man’s fear of investing and rearing a child who is not his own. Men are found to have been ‘more prone to initiate divorce proceedings on grounds of sexual infidelity than women’ (Kruger et al. 2013:162).¹⁰⁵ This may be due to paternity uncertainty, or ‘genetic cuckoldry’; a common problem in human mating and is unique to men (Kaighobadi, Shackelford, and Buss 2010:414). Women can always be assured that the child they rear is theirs, given that they experienced giving birth to their child. However, due to women’s concealed ovulation, men need to be convinced of sexual exclusivity to ensure that the child is biologically theirs. Among the triggers that may cause a fear of sexual infidelity is the ‘time spent apart since last in-pair copulation’, where the longer the time spent apart from one another, the higher the chances that the woman has taken part in extra-pair copulation (Starratt et al. 2008:524). It thus stands to reason that mate retention behaviour significantly increases with time spent apart (Starratt et al. 2008:524).

The types of mate retention behaviour against infidelity are: direct guarding of a partner, a show of jealousy, and also punishment at the threat of or occurrence of infidelity. In the first two instances, these types of behaviour are indicative of potential male violence against his partner (McKibbin et al. 2007:239; Shackelford et al. 2005:448). Some of the examples of direct partner guarding include derogating one’s partner, derogating

¹⁰⁵ This is perhaps surprising, considering that Kruger et al. (2013:162) also found that ‘men are more likely to commit adultery than women’.

potential sexual rivals, greater concealment or sequestering of partner, and vigilance over their partner's actions (Buss and Shackelford 1997:358; Shackelford et al. 2005:448, 461). It has been proposed by Shackelford et al. (2005) that 'male sexual proprietariness' evolved as an 'adaptive solution to intrasexual competition but has been shown to be costly for women' (2005:449). When women's sexual autonomy is curtailed, there is a higher probability of violence occurring within the relationship; a violence justified by the perpetrator as a form of 'punishment' against infidelity.

So far, there has been greater emphasis in evolutionary research on men's fear of infidelity rather than women's. Kruger et al., however, have asserted that sexual infidelity causes 'distress [...] for both men *and* women' (Kruger et al. 2015:47, emphasis mine). Indeed, a different study discovered that *women*, and not men, find 'sexual and erotic behaviours' more indicative of cheating (Kruger et al. 2013:166-7). Indeed, there have also been suggestions that women 'punished their mate's infidelity threats as a mate retention tactic' more often than did men (de Miguel and Buss 2011:579). These findings imply caution in attaching certain types of fears or actions as either overtly male or female, especially when employing these findings to stories from oral tradition.

The first tale on the memetic theme of 'Fear of Infidelity' is 'The Adulteress Rat', a story from the Manuvú people in the Philippines. In it, a male rat goes fishing, leaving his wife home alone. Another male rat notices the fisher rat's departure and goes to visit the fisher rat's wife. Meanwhile, the fisher rat decides to go home. He says: 'I am getting suspicious that my wife is doing something bad in the house' (Manuel 1978:252). As he approaches his house, the wife ushers her lover out the back window. When the fisher rat arrives, he hears a thud at the rear end of their house. His wife says that it is probably the node of a sugar cane that had dropped to the ground. He then notices that her anus is wet and asks her about it as well. She explains that it is the urine of their child. The fisher rat is unconvinced. Before he leaves to fish the next day, he sets up a trap at the back of their house made of sharpened bamboo sticks. As soon as the fisher rat leaves his house, the second male rat appears and rushes to meet his lover. But the fisher rat quickly returns and calls out to his wife. With haste, the second male rat jumps out of the window and is impaled on the bamboo sticks.

‘The Adulteress Rat’ reflects a man’s fear of a woman’s potential to commit infidelity; the fear that if a man does not guard his mate properly, she will stray. In the story, the fisher rat is described as ‘uneasy’ at leaving her alone, suspicious of his wife’s activities. While the fisher rat’s wife has not shown any implications of suspicious behaviour, the audience sees that the fisher rat is correct in his instinct, and that his wife is indeed cheating on him. The story seems to show a specifically *male* fear, and I would argue that this focus on male fear is also pervasive in the study of evolutionary psychology and infidelity; emphasis is often placed on the man’s *fear* and the woman’s *potential to cuckold* her partner.

An angle that is less looked into, but is beginning to gain more attention, is how male ‘sexual proprietariness motivates behaviours designed to regulate and restrict women’s autonomy’ (Shackelford et al. 2005:449). When looking at ‘The Adulteress Rat’ from this perspective, the story can be interpreted as an attempt to regulate and restrict women’s freedom, both sexually and also in other aspects of her life. The fisher rat’s attempts to restrict his wife’s movements through a series of actions can be viewed as negative mate retention behaviour: he confines his wife to their home while he is at work, he is suspicious of her fidelity, and he devises a manner to punish the suspected lover. In one version of the story, the fisher rat’s wife is also punished for her transgressions (Manuel 1978:252). The fisher rat’s actions mirror the description of men who suspect their wives of infidelity: these men show ‘greater wife concealment; exacted greater punishment for a known, suspected, or threatened infidelity; and derogated rivals more than men who did not anticipate future infidelities’ (Buss and Shackelford 1997:358). The murder of his wife’s lover further amplifies the argument that these negative mate retention behaviours are cues of future violence. Thus, while the story attempts to ‘warn’ men of their wives’ future infidelities, it also ‘warns’ women of the types of men who may be prone to violence.

‘Ikan Jantan’ (Male Fish), examined in section 5.2, reflects a similar fear of female infidelity. Princess Khamariah is scheming and manipulative; added with her sexually assertive personality, she can be seen as the ultimate male nightmare. However, Princess Khamariah is making decisions that are beneficial to her own reproductive success. As she is under the protection of her husband, the king, it can be argued that she is subconsciously attempting to attain the best genetic partner in order to seek better

reproductive opportunities.¹⁰⁶ While her husband might have ample resources, Princess Khamariah is subconsciously searching for a partner who will be the best biological father of her children. In a sense, Princess Khamariah is opting to have the best of both worlds and is taking a risk to do so. If successful in her sexual adventures, she will procreate with an attractive man while retaining the protection of a powerful partner. However, she is unsuccessful and thus she and her lover are punished with death, an act that shows the seriousness of adultery and, by extension, creating uncertainty regarding the paternity of the child born in the marriage.

The subject of punishment against the threat of infidelity is also represented in 'Mahsuri', a well-known Malaysian oral story. The titular character is a beautiful maiden admired by Dato' Pekerma Jaya, the village headman. He desires to have her as his second wife but Wan Mahura, his first wife, denies him the opportunity. Since he is unable to marry Mahsuri, Dato' Pekerma Jaya decides to marry her to his brother, Mat Darus. Wan Mahura agrees to this arrangement, and the couple are married. Their lives are disrupted, however, when Mat Darus is called away to fight. While he is away, Mahsuri stays with her parents. One day, a handsome traveling minstrel, Deramang, arrives in their village. Deramang is much admired by Mahsuri's father. He takes pity on Deramang, who has no place to stay, and invites him to stay with his family. He and Mahsuri develop a close friendship; Mahsuri even gives him a ring and a sash as a sign of her appreciation. Touched and honoured by her gifts, Deramang shows them to the villagers. Wan Mahura becomes jealous of the attention Deramang bestows upon Mahsuri and her family and convinces herself that Mahsuri and Deramang are lovers. Wan Mahura demands that her husband punish Mahsuri for adultery, and villagers come forward to falsely testify that Mahsuri has taken Deramang as a lover. Dato' Pekerma Jaya therefore has no choice but to punish her. Mahsuri pleads for mercy, maintaining her innocence. When she is stabbed to death, white blood flows from her body, and the villagers realize that they have killed an innocent woman.

It has already been shown earlier that women are better than men at interpreting deceptive messages because of their greater need for care in selecting a mate (Tooke

¹⁰⁶ Symons (1979:207) hypothesized that there are three benefits to women taking on extramarital affairs: to obtain more resources, to remove herself from a current relationship, and to attain better genes for her future children.

and Camire 1991:360). It can be argued that this ‘mind-reading’ quality can also be applied to women’s understanding of men’s fears; in this case, men’s fear of infidelity. Using this knowledge, women can signal fidelity, similar to Princess Khamariah in ‘Ikan Jantan’. But Wan Mahura utilizes this knowledge against her perceived sexual rival; and it proves to be an effective measure to remove her competition. It can be argued that Wan Mahura uses her knowledge of men’s fear of infidelity as a weapon; while she has no evidence of Mahsuri’s sexual infidelity, she uses the threat of it to summon her husband home and to punish Mahsuri.

While Mahsuri might not have been guilty of sexual infidelity, it can perhaps be argued that she had committed emotional infidelity. In the story, Mahsuri and Deramang spend many hours together, developing a close bond, and Mahsuri even gifts him with personal items to show her affection for him. In a review of infidelity in committed relationships, Blow and Hartnett (2005) list an array of ways one can commit infidelity; among them being involved in ‘emotional connections that are beyond friendships’ and also having ‘friendships’ itself. Further, men view emotional infidelity as a ‘stronger predictor of sexual infidelity’ (Kruger et al. 2015:46). It can thus be suggested that if Mat Darus, Mahsuri’s husband, had witnessed the closeness between his wife and Deramang, he may have been driven to kill his wife himself.

The threat of emotional infidelity turning into sexual infidelity is again seen in ‘The Tale of Sirih Pinang’. The two brothers in this tale are named Tulus and Ikhlas. Described as being almost identical in physical features, they are often mistaken for twins. When Tulus marries, his wife Murni moves in to live with the brothers. She stays home while the brothers are out at work, and always rushes out to greet her husband at the door. One day however, Murni mistakenly greets Ikhlas instead, holding onto his hand by way of welcome. The younger brother quickly tells her that she has made a mistake but it is too late. Tulus witnesses her error and grows suspicious of their relationship. Murni tries to clear the situation, but Tulus ignores her and his brother. Ikhlas moves out of the house, guilty at causing discord in his brother’s marriage. He wanders for a long time and one day falls ill and dies. Because of his love for his family, his body turns into a giant limestone. Meanwhile, Tulus is unhappy from missing his brother and feels that he has misjudged Ikhlas. He searches for his brother, embarking on the same journey, falls ill like his brother, and dies beside the giant

limestone. His body becomes an areca nut tree. Finally, Murni searches for her husband when he does not return; she also makes the same journey and dies by her husband and brother-in-law, becoming the betel plant. The three elements taken together in a wedding ceremony: the areca nut, betel leaf, and limestone, represent eternal love.

Murni's unintentional show of affection for Ikhlas, instead of her husband, Tulus, damages her marriage as well as the relationship between the two brothers. Murni's transgression, accidentally holding Ikhlas' hand, is arguably smaller than that of Mahsuri's. However, because her husband witnessed the transgression, the act is blown out of proportion. Tulus punishes Murni and Ikhlas by ignoring their attempts to assuage his worries; this display of jealousy can be argued to be a mate retention tactic. If such a minor act of affection caused Tulus to become jealous and suspicious of his own brother, it may be argued that Mat Darus might have felt similarly with Mahsuri and Deramang. Glass and Wright (1992:373) contend that this sensitivity to emotional infidelity is caused by men's implicit knowledge that women view 'Love and Emotional Intensity' as the most compelling 'justification' for an extramarital affair. Similar to how women understand men's fear of sexual infidelity, men understand that women are more prone to leave a relationship when they find greater emotional intensity with another partner.

Stories such as 'The Adulteress Rat' and 'Ikan Jantan' can be interpreted as reflecting men's fear that women will cheat if given the opportunity to do so. In 'The Tale of Sirih Pinang' and 'Mahsuri', a new perspective is provided. The audience is confronted with examples of women being unjustly accused of a crime, and the audience is encouraged to empathize with the female victims. Instead of focusing on men's fear of adultery, the stories emphasise a women's experience of violence stemming from that fear. It can be argued that the telling of such stories aims to mediate societal perceptions on infidelity and the ways in which people react, in order to increase the possibilities of women's survival.

6.3 Masculinity, Power, and Spousal Conflict

The threat of punishment pervades many of the tales in Chapter 6: Keeping a Happily Ever After. However, none directly addresses the subject of partner violence. The only

tale in this thesis that deals specifically with spousal violence is 'La'bo Balida' a tale from the Massenrempulu people of South Sulawesi. It allows a glimpse into marital disharmony between a poor, married couple. Despite working all day, the father struggles to support his family of four. His wife becomes suspicious; she does not believe that he works all day yet brings home so little. She follows him to work, and discovers that he is wasting his time hunting geckos instead of cultivating their land. Dismayed, she confronts him and her husband becomes angry. He takes out a sword (the *la'bo balida*) and attempts to kill her. Shocked by this act of violence, the wife flees. Her children are distraught at the loss of their mother and embark on a journey to find her. After many adventures, mother and children are reunited. The father is no longer mentioned throughout the story.

'La'bo Balida' is unique in this thesis in its telling of the darker side of marriage. Victims of domestic violence are normally 'isolated from the normal support systems in our society' and this places them in a vulnerable position for abuse (Wallace and Roberson 2011:19); when a story such as 'La'bo Balida' is told, a 'private affair' is made public and the audience is able to reflect on spousal violence from a safe distance. In this instance, the decision of the wife to leave her husband provides a powerful example of a victim who leaves her abuser: when a woman abandons a violent relationship, she may increase her chances of survival. But an aspect that is not considered in this story is the fact that a woman may be dependent on her partner for resources to survive.

This complex situation is further aggravated by societal customs that firstly, normalize male-female spousal violence and secondly, stigmatize women who leave their marriages. An Indonesian study on physical and sexual violence of wives by their husbands showed a correlation between how a woman views the acceptability of violence as 'punishment' and the probability of being a victim of violence (Hayati et al. 2011; Hayati, Emmelin, and Eriksson 2014). It was found that if a woman feels that it is the husband's place to 'punish' her, she will be more likely to experience violence in her marriage. This is opposed to women who feel that there are no conditions that warrant violence, where they are less likely to experience physical abuse in marriage (Hayati et al. 2011:3). These findings emphasize the gravity of the wife's act of leaving

her husband. Stories like ‘La’bo Balida’ enforce the idea that women should combat societal norms that inhibit their somatic survivability and reproductive choices.

‘La’bo Balida’ is also a case of male *powerlessness* instead of power. The husband’s violence stems from his wife’s scorn at discovering his secret. Shamed by her bitter words, he reacts with anger and violence. It is not a sense of power that drives him to strike her; his violence arises from a sense of powerlessness. In *The Gendered Society* (2011), Michael Kimmel argues that rather than acting out of a feeling of power, men tend to react violently when they feel that their position is being threatened (Kimmel 2011:266-8). Kimmel describes this as ‘instrumental violence’ where men become violent in order to reaffirm their position and authority over a woman. The wife in ‘La’bo Balida’ finds herself in this situation when she denigrates her husband’s efforts as a provider. His reaction is immediate and potentially lethal; by trying to kill her, he is attempting to recover his dignity. This instinctive act is important as power is seen as a desirable male quality related to status, a quality which can attract a female mate (Regan et al. 2000:5).

The following tale is analysed in terms of gender roles and the distribution of power in a marriage. One of the frequent justifications for male dominance over women is the ‘responsibility’ that men have to provide for their wives and families (Hayati, Emmelin, and Eriksson 2014:5; Dew and Dakin 2011:26-7). The Palauan tale, ‘The Dissatisfied Wife’, questions this gender role division and the assumption of its ‘naturalness’. In the story, a poor man, Odiurengos, falls in love with Dirakauderael, a woman from a different village. Odiurengos leaves his village to marry her and lives among her people. He proves to be a hard worker by day, and a devoted husband and father by night. Dirakauderael, on the other hand, serves her husband dinner, but never stays to eat with him. Instead, she asks permission to visit her friends while he eats his dinner. Odiurengos wonders why she never eats with him and decides to secretly follow her. He hears his wife complaining about him to her friends; she laments that despite working all day, Odiurengos brings in a smaller income than do other men of her village. Odiurengos returns home heavy-hearted and suspects his wife of cheating on him. The next day, he tells her:

‘You know, I think maybe we should think of something better, because you see I have come to this place to look for you because I was in love with you. In fact, this place is not my home place, my homeland, and I don’t have as many friends as other fellows in this place do. And I don’t have any property of my own where I can work hard and at the same time find some money for our family. Maybe I should go back to my own place because I think you will be able to find someone new to be your husband, who has more that can make you satisfied, make your living more enjoyable (Mitchell 1973:146).’

Odiurengos leaves and his wife follows him, bringing their child along. As he makes his way towards his original village, his wife pleads for his return again and again. Finally, he turns to her. Odiurengos motions towards their baby; he says that their child looks tired and that Dirakauderael should care for him. They stand for a while before returning home.

When faced with financial difficulty, many married couples entertain thoughts of divorce. This sentiment is echoed in research on marital happiness, one of which found that ‘financial stressors were a significant negative prediction of marital satisfaction’ (Archuleta et al. 2011:11). In the same study, it was shown that the reason for marital dissatisfaction among women was not a lack of money itself, but their husband’s ‘negative behaviours’ that stemmed from being unable to provide adequately (Archuleta et al. 2011:5). This does not mirror the situation that took place between the married couple in ‘The Dissatisfied Wife’. It was not Odiurengos’ attitude that affected Dirakauderael, but the other way around. Odiurengos felt that he had done all that he could to provide for his family and only becomes saddened upon learning of his wife’s dissatisfaction. With the sacrifices that Odiurengos made for his wife and family, why was Dirakauderael dissatisfied and entertaining thoughts of separation?

Dirakauderael’s dissatisfaction lies in her observance of the traditional role of the man as the ‘provider’. It does not matter to Dirakauderael that Odiurengos is hard-working; she is dissatisfied because she expects greater financial stability from her marriage. The story finds its resolution with the reconciliation of Dirakauderael and Odiurengos. It poses the question: will women find greater happiness with a wealthier man? Dirakauderael must answer this question when Odiurengos decides to walk away from

their marriage. Odiurengos works hard to provide and care for his family. His only ‘error’ is his poverty. The wife has an evolutionary gamble to make: should she stay with a man who is unable to provide what she needs or wants, but is kind and caring to herself and child? Or should she risk finding a more productive man but who may not be as kind and caring to herself and child? In section 1.3, it has been shown that a child from another man is in danger of abuse, and even death, in the hands of a stepfather (Daly and Wilson 1996a:17). In the end, Dirakauderael chooses kindness over wealth. She is immediately rewarded for her decision as Odiurengos’ first words imply his continued devotion to his wife and child.

Positive gestures and actions by both spouses are needed in times of financial frustrations to maintain marital happiness (Dew and Dakin 2011:24). Dirakauderael hides her dissatisfaction from her husband, and chooses to unload her feelings onto her friends. From the conflict that ensues, this is a poor course of action. Women may receive support from female friends, specifically in terms of somatic and reproductive success (Smuts 1992:6), but this does not deny the importance of communicating with one’s spouse. In addition to having support from her friends, Dirakauderael needs to resolve her problems with her husband. Her inability to confide in him results in Odiurengos’ offer of separation. Only after Odiurengos discovers Dirakauderael’s grievances are the couple able to commit fully to the relationship. If Mitchell (1973) had provided a memetic ‘moral’ at the end of ‘The Dissatisfied Wife’, he would have probably written: ‘Talk to your spouse’.

6.4 Maintaining Marital Harmony

‘The Dissatisfied Wife’ and ‘La’bo Balida’ act as warnings to their audience, cautioning of potential difficulties that can fracture or break a relationship. The stories discussed problems that can arise in marriage and methods to overcome them. ‘Gawigawen of Adasen’, a story from the Philippines, tells of a happier marriage. Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen are in a devoted relationship. As the tale opens, Aponibolinayen is pregnant and craves a particular type of orange, one that comes from the orchard of the monster Gawigawen of Adasen. Her craving is so intense that she sighs aloud: ‘Oh, I wish I had some of the oranges of Gawigawen of Adasen’ (Cole 1916). Working nearby, Aponitolau overhears a part of her wish and asks her to tell him what she

desires. Aponibolinayen is faced with a dilemma: she knows that all who enter the monster's grove will die; she also knows that her husband's love for her is so great that he is willing to face death for her. She names another fruit and Aponitolau brings it to her, but the fruit does not sate her craving. Three times she wishes and each time she names a different fruit. Aponitolau's efforts are in vain as Aponibolinayen remains unsatisfied. Intent on uncovering the truth, Aponitolau hides underneath their house to better hear her words. When he discovers her real craving, he goes in search of the fruit. Aponitolau finds the oranges but as he is about to leave the grove, Gawigawen of Adasen finds him. Desperate to fulfil his wife's wishes, Aponitolau attaches the oranges to his spear, and with the last of his strength, he flings the spear towards his house. His wife is rejoiced at being able to eat the fruit but realizes that the task has killed her husband. When her son, Kanag, is born, she asks him to restore his father from death. The son does so, kills the monster, and brings his father home.

In evolutionary terms, Aponitolau's actions can be understood as examples of 'relational sacrifice', 'the act of foregoing one's immediate self-interest for the interest of the partner or relationship' (Ruppel and Curran 2012:509). Ruppel and Curran have described the positive aspects of relational sacrifice as being able to facilitate trust, communicate a spouse's care and concern by improving the immediate circumstances of their partner, and also strengthen the image of being a 'good partner' in a relationship (2012:509-11). It is important to maintain good relations between spouses because 'satisfying pair-bonds are adaptive' (Acevedo et al. 2012:28); when one works for the happiness of a relationship, one also works to continue the somatic and reproductive success of oneself and one's family. Aponitolau's devotion provided him with a happy marriage and the birth of an extraordinary child. His sacrifice is also returned by Aponibolinayen, who risks her only son in order to retrieve her husband from death. 'Gawigawen of Adasen', which encourages relational sacrifice, can be argued to be evolutionarily beneficial to the communities telling them. When stories such as this are passed down through subsequent generations, they encourage husbands and wives to build cooperative households; households that foster an environment that helps their children to survive and perhaps, like Aponitolau and Aponibolinayen's son, even thrive.

Aponitolau's relational sacrifice, however, is extravagant. Aponitolau is willing to suffer more than hardship in order to satisfy his wife's craving; he is willing to die for

her desires. It begs the question: is there a point where sacrifices create a negative instead of a positive effect on the quality of a relationship? In a fairy tale-like world, where rules of death do not apply, sacrifices can afford to be extravagant. Understanding this extravagance in evolutionary terms, one may view it as signifying the *importance* of relational sacrifice to retain a mate, and to allow for better opportunities in continuing one's genes. It does not, however, signify that one should *literally* die for another person. Indeed, a person should only go as far as to assist in the continuation of his or her genes, and stop when sabotaging his or her survival (Ruppel and Curran 2012:511-12). Neither man nor woman should be willing to die for the other because to do so would terminate his or her own chances of reproductive survival. With 'Gawigawen of Adasen', it can perhaps be argued that Aponitolau is willing to die for his wife because he has a son, and thus his genes have been successfully passed on.

'Two for the Husband and One for the Wives' hails from Madagascar and addresses a more modest type of sacrifice. Unlike 'Gawigawen of Adasen', this tale has no clear 'happily ever after' ending. A husband and his two wives are getting ready to eat. The main dish is prepared and the husband orders the second wife, who has recently joined the family, to carve the meat. She apportions the game into three pieces. Seeing this, the first wife intervenes, saying that the second wife does not understand how to distribute the meat. The first wife pronounces that the first piece is for 'the master' to eat; the second piece is also reserved for 'the master', which he will eat the following morning. The third piece is to be shared by the two wives. The story ends with the husband declaring his approval of her technique.

This Malagasy tale discusses the appropriate division of resources between husband and wives. The lesson is imparted by a senior wife to a younger wife with the approval of the husband. Why is the second piece of meat reserved for the husband to eat the following morning? We are not told why; perhaps the husband needs additional sustenance so that he can bring home more food for the family. What is not portrayed in 'Two for the Husband, One for the Wives', however, is the wives' opinion regarding the division of resources: are they content with what they have? Can they survive and thrive under the conditions they are living in? While the stories depict methods for both husbands and wives to make each other happy, one should not sacrifice one's own happiness at the expense of another. The wives in 'Two for the Husband, One for the

Wives' and the husband in 'Gawigawen of Adasen' need to ensure that while they are making sacrifices, they are also looking out for their own interests. A balance needs to be reached; if only one party is constantly sacrificing his or herself for the other, this can lead to a detrimental effect on the marriage, which jeopardizes the reproductive success of husbands and wives (Ruppel and Curran 2012:512).

A curious detail in 'Two for the Husband and One for the Wives' is that the resource division does not take into account the existence of children. How would such a system work when the family grows in size? If the father continues to be given priority, this implies a lesser provisioning of resources to the children. While the wives may not begrudge the lesser portion of food allotted to them, it can be argued that there is a higher chance that they will not allow their children to be treated in the same way. It has been found throughout evolutionary research on sexual strategies that women will be more interested in men who display a willingness to share his resources with his progeny; if such a quality does not emerge in their marriage, there is a greater tendency for women to feel dissatisfied with their husbands and terminate the relationship.

Children generally experience a better quality of life if their parents are in a happy relationship (Baumeister and Leary 1995:514). This is exemplified in the 'Gawigawen of Adasen' and 'The Dissatisfied Wife'. In both stories, when conflicts are resolved and the parents' relationships have stabilized, the child is placed in a positive environment that is conducive towards growth. In 'Gawigawen of Adasen', the extraordinary strength of Kanag can be attributed to the fruit that was given to his mother by his father. He is able to overcome all obstacles, monsters, a perilous journey, and death, as a result of his parents' devotion to each other. It can thus be argued that these stories, which try to provide a guideline on how to achieve marital happiness, work towards ensuring not only the woman's somatic survivability, but also her children's.

Throughout 'Tales of Searching for a Partner', it has been shown that women employ various sexual strategies – these strategies being dependant on women's circumstances. If a woman finds herself in advantageous circumstances, where she has the support of kin and is in possession of resources, she may not seek wealth in a potential mate. A woman can also be ardent and, knowing her own worth, she may have the option of testing the worthiness of potential suitors. However, the search for a partner is not

always smooth sailing and when one is not in an advantageous position, one may resort to using less palatable tactics. This may include deceiving or exploiting an unsuspecting potential partner, and taking part in competition either intersexually or intrasexually. Upon obtaining a mate, the reproductive process does not end with marriage. Relationships must be worked on to ensure long-term relationship stability and the raising of children into adulthood. 'Tales of Searching for a Partner' thus shows that the human mating process is a long one; 'happily ever after' has its own story and it involves plenty of effort from both partners to ensure a sustainable relationship.

**PART 3: TALES BEYOND FAMILY
AND PARTNERS**

CHAPTER 7: THE CHILDFREE WOMAN

“I have had it from men at dinner parties, stuff like: ‘Oh my God, is she mad? You can almost see it in their eyes. A woman and she doesn’t want to get married and settle down and have babies. There must be something wrong with her”

- ‘Sally’ from Rosemary Gillespie’s (2000) study on voluntary childlessness

There is a small but persistent number of women who have decided to remain ‘childfree’ (Avison and Furnham 2015:46-7).¹⁰⁷ The term ‘childfree’ has been used to describe people who neither desire nor plan to have children. This is in contrast to those who are ‘childless’, which denotes that individuals are *unable* to conceive for biological reasons (Agrillo and Nelini 2008:347). The most important element that differentiates the childfree and childless is personal choice. Unlike the women in ‘Beginning a Family’, who went through great lengths to have children, the women of this chapter are childfree. They are happy to remove themselves from the reproductive process by actively choosing to remain unmarried. Pre-modern societies do not normally condone the birth of children out of wedlock; women who do so often find themselves without social assistance and may even be stigmatized. As such, it can be argued that *choosing* to remain unmarried can be inferred as a choice to remain without children. When the fate of the human species is dependent on women giving birth, what happens when women decide to forego motherhood?

In ‘Beginning a Family’, it was established that most societies are pronatalist, being strongly in favour of human reproduction. It was argued that the need for children is often seen as a ‘natural’ part of womanhood, therefore it is no surprise that childfree women are frequently thought of as ‘unnatural’, ‘deviant’, and ‘unfeminine’, and that their choice to remain childfree is ‘unhealthy’ (Gillespie 2003:124). In a study on social reactions to childfree women, Rosemary Gillespie (2000) found that such women

¹⁰⁷ In industrialized nations, it has been found that 4-9% of couples are childfree (Avison and Furnham 2015:47).

usually face three different types of reactions. Firstly, people tend to ‘reframe’ the situation. Instead of focusing on the women’s choice to be without children, some interpret these women’s childfree state as the result of becoming ‘career women’. The act of ‘reframing’ transforms a woman’s active choice into that of an unfortunate consequence pursuing a career. Other times, the decisions of childfree women are ‘disregarded’, where their choices are seen as immature and uninformed, and thus ‘invalid’. Finally, others react by informing childfree women that they will regret their decision, and that they will want children later in life (Gillespie 2000:227-9). These reactions are all illustrated in stories from ‘Beginning a Family’.

In pronatalist cultures, childfree women find different ways of managing the social stigma of childlessness. In her study on childfree individuals and stigma, Kristin Park (2002) found that some women attempt to avoid scrutiny by ‘passing’, a method that involves using circumstances to make it appear as if they may have children one day. This is a method mostly used by younger women who claim that it is not yet time to have children (Park 2002:32). If one is unable to ‘pass’, one might attempt to draw attention to a different stigmatized identity; for example, Park’s female respondents tell people that they are *biologically* unable to have children in order to deflect attention away from their decision to be childfree (Park 2002:33). Some childfree women speak of the fulfilment they gain from their choice, or challenge the ‘naturalness’ of parenthood. In these three strategies, a certain level of stress is felt at having to justify a decision regarding their own bodies (Park 2002:32-6).

The intensity of negative social reactions against childfree women can be explained by an evolutionary understanding of human behaviour. It is not an explanation that can be used to *justify* the stigma experienced by these women, but it can clarify why such opposition occurs towards an inherently personal decision. I would argue that these negative social reactions arise from a deep-seated drive to propagate the genes of the human species. This drive causes people to react strongly against those who seem to show an apparent disregard for the reproduction of society. This begs the question: if the desire for children is integral towards gene transmission of the species, why does the rejection of childbearing continue to be a genetically selected trait among humans (Shapiro 2014:2)?

To provide nuance to the evolutionary understanding of meme transmission theory, a possible ‘answer’ to the question above, it is perhaps prudent to understand the reasons that may motivate the choice to be childfree in real life. In advanced Western societies, one of the main reasons for women to remain childfree is a desire for freedom or independence (Avison and Furnham 2015:57). This notion of freedom and independence has been expressed in many ways: as needing a ‘freedom of lifestyle’ (Gillespie 2003:127), ‘freedom from child-care responsibility, and greater opportunity for self-fulfilment and spontaneous mobility’ (Agrillo and Nelini 2008:350), and also more indirectly through the expression of concern about careers, unequal distribution of childcare responsibilities, and a child’s future (Avison and Furnham 2005:58). Women who express this need for freedom and independence are often labelled as ‘selfish’ (Gillespie 2000:230). Their need runs counter to the assumption that women are inherently nurturing and caring, and that there is an ‘unnaturalness’ to their ‘selfishness’ and rejection of mothering. However, women’s concerns over a lack of freedom resulting from child-rearing are arguably a valid one; as shown in Part 1: Tales of Family Life, birthing and the care of a child takes a toll on women’s bodies, mobility, personal lives, and resources.¹⁰⁸

Another reason often given by women who choose to remain childfree is that they reject the *idea* of motherhood itself (Gillespie 2003:129). Describing the state of motherhood as a ‘sacrifice, a ‘duty’, and a ‘burden’, many childfree women find the nurturing and caring aspects of motherhood ‘repellent’ (Gillespie 2003:130, 132). This finding is complemented in a study by Maher and Saugeres where women without children were critical of the traditional expectations of mothering and thought that becoming a mother was too ‘all-encompassing and limiting’ (2007:10,13). Social expectations required women to be the ‘perfect mother’ and these childfree women rejected motherhood as a way to reject these impossible ideals. In contrast to childfree women, however, it was found that while women with children are aware of the traditional expectations of motherhood, they do not define ‘good motherhood’ so stringently (Maher and Saugeres 2007:6). Instead, they were able to negotiate ‘maternal duties with other life goals’ (Maher and Saugeres 2007:19). Through these studies, it can be argued that both childfree women and mothers are challenging the idea of the perfect mother: the former

¹⁰⁸ Refer to section 1.1 Mother Knows Best.

through removing themselves from the reproductive process, and the latter through the inculcation of a new idea of ‘mother’ by being mothers themselves.

Thus far, the sociological aspect of childfree individuals has been discussed. But how does evolution explain this rejection to reproduce? Are there any evolutionary benefits that can be conferred when a woman decides not to reproduce? One evolutionary theory may provide a thought-provoking take on the decision for women to be childfree. Lonnie W. Aarssen and Stephanie Tzipporah Altman (2006) have argued that at the heart of the motivation to reproduce lies genes that promote behaviours ‘associated with a desire for immortality’ (Aarssen and Altman 2006:293). Rather than investing in a child through gene transmission, a person may be driven by a need for ‘meme transmission’; that is, to leave behind a ‘personal legacy’ (Aarssen and Altman 2006:293-4). This can be achieved through a number of ways: by improving one’s status or family name, through philanthropy, or even by becoming an inventor or explorer (Aarssen and Altman 2006:294-6). The authors emphasize that women’s drive for memetic descendants is historically scarce because women have rarely had the freedom to make such choices (Aarssen and Altman 2006:296). With growing personal and financial independence in recent decades, women can now take part in ‘meme transmission’, showing a greater need to improve themselves through their careers rather than investing in children.

Still, the question remains: why would a process such as meme transmission continue to exist if it does not benefit the reproduction of genes? Aarssen and Altman (2006:297) argue that meme transmission has not been selected out because in the past, women could exert little control over their own reproduction:

‘[...] this byproduct has been allowed to compete with (and suppress) gene transmission only in very recent times as females have acquired significant freedom from patriarchal subjugation, including greater control over their own fertility, combined with greater independence for pursuing both their own accomplishment-based memetic legacy, as well as their own leisure—both of which compete with time and energy required for producing offspring (Aarssen and Altman 2012:38).’



Figure 2 Meme transmission theory. Taken from Aarssen and Altman's (2006:295) study, this figure illustrates 'the proposed competition between gene transmission and meme transmission in humans. Behaviours promoting meme transmission are proposed as by-products of selection for behaviours promoting gene transmission; i.e. behaviours associated with a desire to "leave something of oneself" for the future – i.e., "legacy drive."'

It is understood that stories featured in this chapter may contain more than one memetic theme. One could analyse the failed sexual strategies of the king in 'Princess White Hair' or one could analyse the importance of kinship to 'Princess Pinang Masak'; however, the focus of 'Part 3: Tales Beyond Family and Partners' is to explore stories that continue to be told even when their themes do not initially seem to benefit human fitness. This chapter on 'The Childfree Woman', specifically, will highlight the memetic theme of women who forego marriage, and thus motherhood, through the theory of meme transmission.

The first story in this chapter hails from Perigi Village in South Sumatra, Indonesia. It tells the story of a young woman who possesses a strange magical power. Extraordinarily beautiful, she is desired by men from all over her kingdom. However, she shows no interest in marriage and expresses her disgust by spitting at her suitors; her spittle turns the suitors' hair white. Because of her arrogance, the villagers name her

‘Princess White Hair’. It so happens that the king also hears of her beauty, and is determined to have her as his wife. When he sends his chief commander to ask for her hand in marriage, he receives the same treatment as her other suitors and returns to the king with a head of white hair. The king is undeterred and is determined to marry the elusive Princess White Hair. He investigates her background, attempting to find a weakness that he can exploit. The king discovers that the young woman has a brother, Langkusa, who possesses great strength and mystical powers. It is his magic that keeps Princess White Hair safe from harm, allowing her to behave in an unreasonable manner. The king attempts to kill Langkusa but to no avail; desperate, the king attempts to kidnap Princess White Hair; but fails. Humiliated, the king casts a curse: no one shall ever marry the princess and anyone who tries to do so will suffer. And so the princess remains single all her life – ‘Not that the arrogant princess ever showed any intention of wanting to be married!’ (Bunanta 2003:47).

An initial reading of this story may prompt the reader to view the curse as a form of punishment for Princess White Hair’s arrogance. I would argue, however, that more than her perceived arrogance, the curse had been spurred by the *humiliation* felt by the king upon being rejected. His reaction to curse Princess White Hair is similar to the reactions of the failed suitors in ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’ (section 5.2.2). Unable to attain Princess White Hair for himself, the king ensures that no one else will be able to attain her. By making her ‘unmarriageable’, he removes Princess White Hair’s reproductive opportunities. What sets ‘Princess White Hair’ apart from ‘The Sore-Covered Girl’ is the ending:

‘Thus the conceited Princess White Hair remained unmarried all of her life. No man dared propose marriage to her. Not that the arrogant princess ever showed any intention of wanting to be married! (Bunanta 2003:47)’

The last few lines turned the story on its head. It showed that Princess White Hair never intended to marry and was perfectly happy to remain single. Further, because of the social norm requiring marriage before having children, it can also be tentatively concluded that by being happily unmarried, she is also happy to remain without children. If so, the king’s ‘curse’ on the young woman is a blessing in disguise. After being cursed by the king, it can be argued that Princess White Hair is able to live an unmarried, and thus a childfree, life without being bothered by suitors. The curse itself

has the additional effect of enabling the audience listening to this story to ‘reframe’ her childfree state as an unfortunate event.

The story does not give the reader much opportunity to understand Princess White Hair’s character. Described as ‘beautiful’ and ‘arrogant’, the readers are meant to find her ‘unnatural’ in the sense that she refuses to marry any of her suitors, even the king. The audience rejects her refusal to be part of the reproductive process because subconsciously, it makes no evolutionary sense: a woman as beautiful as Princess White Hair should be using her sexual allure to make the best reproductive match with the king. It would seem that Princess White Hair’s suitors and the villagers believe that she is displaying confidence as a mating tactic that would enable her to obtain the best match. When she refuses the king, the villagers see her display of ‘confidence’ rebounding on her, and translate her earlier confidence into arrogance.¹⁰⁹ Her ‘punishment’, according to the villagers, for showing overconfidence in her mate attraction abilities, is being cursed to remain unmarried, and unable to further her reproductive success.¹¹⁰

Evidence from evolutionary research, however, suggests that the young woman does not show ‘arrogance’ as had been interpreted by the villagers and her suitors (as well as the listeners). Neither is she ‘overconfident’ in her mate value. She is merely confident of her elder brother’s protection, of her security over resources, and of her own physical attractiveness. According to Aarssen and Altman (2006), women possessing both independence and wealth will be more prone to take part in ‘meme transmission’ and thus will look for partners who will support them in doing so (Aarssen and Altman 2006:297). As they do not need men in order to obtain resources and protection, they focus on finding partners who fulfil other criteria. The audience is not privy to what these criteria are for Princess White Hair; but she needs neither the King’s protection nor riches.

¹⁰⁹ This is not altogether surprising as ‘confidence is often confused with ‘arrogance’ (Murphy et al. 2015:1042).

¹¹⁰ This is a typical finding amongst shows of overconfidence and arrogance in attracting a mate; these traits may be interpreted negatively and thus repel potential mates (Murphy et al. 2015:1039).

From another village in South Sumatra comes the story of Napisah, a young woman who is also known as Princess Pinang Masak.¹¹¹ Stories of her beauty travel far and wide and men vie for her hand in marriage. One is the king, a ruler with a reputation for capturing beautiful young women and holding them prisoners in his palace. The king wants to see whether Princess Pinang Masak is as beautiful as reputed; Princess Pinang Masak hears of his interest and attempts to hide her beauty by covering herself in dirt and rags. The king is disgusted and orders her to be removed from the palace. However, stories of her beauty persist and the king wonders whether he has been tricked. He attempts to kidnap Princess Pinang Masak and so she flees from her village. Four trusted friends and two guards follow her, swearing to protect Princess Pinang Masak from harm. They settle far away from the king and they are welcomed by the locals. Slowly, their residence grows into a small village. Princess Pinang Masak changes her name to Senuro and, because the villagers love her, they name the village after her. There she lives a long, peaceful life. When at last she is on her deathbed, she swears an oath saying: ‘I beg God Almighty that my descendants¹¹² should not be as beautiful as I am. Beauty can cause calamities such as have befallen me’ (Bunanta 2003:49). To this day, some believe that the oath is the reason ‘the girls in Senuro Village are less beautiful than the girls from other villages’ (Bunanta 2003:49).

The most popular theory in evolutionary psychology, as shown in ‘Tales of Searching for a Partner’, is that physical beauty is a woman’s greatest asset in finding the best possible mate (Buss 1988c:619). Physical beauty is held to increase mating opportunities and to provide a woman with greater choices for reproduction. Princess Pinang Masak thinks otherwise, finding beauty to be burdensome. This may be due to the fact that, unlike previous heroines in ‘Tales of Searching for a Partner’, Princess Pinang Masak seems to show no inclination towards finding a partner. As readers of her story, we are unaware of the details of Princess Pinang Masak’s life; we only know that she is extraordinarily beautiful. However, we can draw several hypotheses on her character based on various aspects of the story: we know that she has a supportive network of friends that provide her with protection from the king. We also know that

¹¹¹ ‘Pinang masak’ in Malay means ‘ripe areca nut’. Bunanta muses that Napisah was named as such because the villagers found her to be as ‘beautiful as a ripe areca nut’ (2003:48).

¹¹² Here the present author believes that Bunanta (2003) is not writing of biological descendants, but communal descendants of Senuro village.

she possesses a pleasing personality; she is much loved by a group of strangers when she settles into her new home. And finally, we also know that she is able to sustain herself financially throughout her life without the aid of a partner or other family members. Based on these qualities, it can be concluded that while Princess Pinang Masak finds support from her community, she is also a highly independent woman.

Comparing Princess Pinang Masak and Princess White Hair, we see that the personalities of those who choose to be childfree can differ considerably. While Princess Pinang Masak is loved by her neighbours and has many friends, Princess White Hair is less popular amongst her fellow villagers and her only protection comes from her brother. Based on personality studies on the childfree, it can be suggested that Princess White Hair's personality fits better with the general childfree population than does Princess Pinang Masak's personality. Avison and Furnham (2015) found that the childfree are usually 'those who are highly Independent, less Agreeable, less Extraverted',¹¹³ or a combination of these personality traits (2015:63). Despite their differences in personality, Princess White Hair and Princess Pinang Masak are connected by their sense of independence. This link seems to support research that name 'Independence' as a quality shared by childfree individuals. While this analysis would benefit from the inclusion of more stories featuring childfree female characters as well as more evolutionary research on childfree women, it can still be tentatively argued that the two stories reflect the tendencies shown in the budding research of the childfree (Avison and Furnham 2015:57, 62).

'Putri Mandalika' (Princess Mandalika), the final story from Indonesia, takes a different turn on childfree women. Upon the king's death, Putri Mandalika is made ruler of her kingdom, Sekar Kuning. The princess rules with wisdom and grace, unaware of troubles brewing in neighbouring kingdoms. Two kings rule two separate kingdoms to the east and west of Sekar Kuning, King Bumbang and King Johor. Both are unmarried and childless. Their people tell them that: 'we don't see any sign that Your Highness is making plans to get married. It wouldn't be good for a great king like you not to have a queen' (Bunanta 2005). Hearing of the esteemed Putri Mandalika, the kings' subjects

¹¹³ Avison and Furnham (2015) explain that in women 'higher Agreeableness is associated with more children, earlier childbirth, and a higher probability of marriage, regardless of birth cohort or education level' (50).

suggest that they ask for her hand in marriage. The kings, wanting to appease their people, send delegations to the princess, hopeful that she will be their queen; the princess, however, rejects both offers of marriage. Putri Mandalika worries over her decision. Had she chosen one over the other, she would have caused a rift with the other kingdom. On the other hand, her decision to reject both kings may invite attacks onto Sekar Kuning. One day, Putri Mandalika finds a solution to her problem: she invites both kings to the coast of her kingdom, and agrees to marry both of them. Curious as to how she will be able to marry both King Bumbang and King Johor, subjects from all three kingdoms travel to the coast to witness the event. When the princess makes her appearance, illuminated against the sunset, everyone is stunned by her beauty. She says: ‘I’ve come to surrender myself. But not only to the two kings who proposed to me, but to all the people present here’ (Bunanta 2005). As soon as she utters these words, a wave crashes over her, and sweeps her into the sea. Shocked, the people try to find the princess but find only small, glittering sea creatures. It is later discovered that these creatures are edible. And so it is said that this ‘might have been the intention of the Princess when she said that she will surrender herself for the sake of mankind’ (Bunanta 2005).

Unlike Princess White Hair and Princess Pinang Masak, Putri Mandalika is the only heroine in ‘The Childfree Woman’ who actively rules her own kingdom. The performance of her responsibilities to her subjects can be seen as a type of ‘career’. In order to carry out her duties, Putri Mandalika may have consciously or subconsciously decided to postpone motherhood, a situation similar to many contemporary women wanting to succeed in their chosen career paths.¹¹⁴ In addition, Putri Mandalika needs to ensure that whomever she marries is an appropriate match, as their child will be the future ruler of Sekar Kuning.¹¹⁵

It can also be argued that Putri Mandalika is searching for a partner who will not restrict her intention of attaining ‘memetic descendants’. One of the ways to create ‘memetic descendants’ is through the ‘promotion of status for an individual or for a family name’

¹¹⁴ A study by Budds, Locke, and Burr (2013) looked at British newspaper rhetoric on childfree women. It was found that the press often presented the decision of childfree women as a way to ‘have it all’ where women who focus on ‘education and careers [before] pursuing motherhood [...] may be able to enjoy a successful career alongside having a family’ (133).

¹¹⁵ This situation is reminiscent to the Princess of Mount Ledang, discussed in section 4.2.

(Aarssen and Altman 2006:294). By elevating one's importance, one can create a legacy that transcends one's historical existence. In the case of Putri Mandalika, had she married one of the neighbouring kings, she may no longer have had control over her kingdom, and therefore would lose the opportunity to create a personal legacy. Her initial decision to reject the marriage proposals of King Bumbang and King Johor might be interpreted as a wish to remain childfree in order to attempt to create 'memetic descendants'.

It is unlikely, however, that Putri Mandalika explicitly sacrificed herself in order to attain lifelong adoration. Hence the need to view her sacrificial act as separate from her initial rejection of the kings. Her sacrifice should instead be viewed as a form of kin altruism. While childfree women do not desire children, their family and wider communities continue to be a part of their lives. For example, it has been documented that childfree aunts and uncles, as compared with other relatives with children, are more commonly found to assist with their nieces and nephews (Tanskanen 2015:405). This tendency to nurture those who are not one's own biological children can be related to the Grandmother Hypothesis, where a person may sacrifice future reproduction for the sake of caring for his or her family's inclusive fitness (Williams 1957:32-39, Jamison et al. 2002:68-69).¹¹⁶ Thus, while Putri Mandalika obtains a personal legacy from her sacrifice, it is not everlasting life or a remembrance of her good name that she expects from her act. Rather, she is looking to further the genetic interest of her kin. Future research should thus investigate the motives to remain childfree by looking into kin altruism in addition to meme transmission theory. As shown in 'Putri Mandalika', it is not always oneself that one thinks about when choosing to be childfree.

Certain trends can be identified through the analyses of stories on childfree women. Firstly, there is a lack of evolutionary studies regarding childfree individuals; most are sociological studies that focus on the personal experiences of the childfree. The 'meme transmission' theory proposed by Aarssen and Altman (2006) can be argued to be the most original and interesting evolutionary option into explaining the phenomena of childfree individuals. However, as seen in stories on 'The Childfree Woman', the theory needs expanding in order to account for instances where women are neither postponing

¹¹⁶ See section 3.1 'Why Grandmothers?' for further discussion on the role of grandmothers.

children nor choosing their childfree status because of careers. Princess White Hair and Princess Pinang Masak may be aspiring to live an independent life, but lack motivation in terms of ‘career’.

Secondly, it can also be argued that research on childfree individuals is still preoccupied with the idea of ‘women as mothers’. These stereotypes are evident when a remarkably large number of research projects focus on analysing the lives of *women* who choose not to mother, rather than *men*. I would argue that there is a definite need for a deeper understanding into the evolutionary underpinnings of childfree men. In Western Malayo-Polynesian cultures, as seen in Putri Mandalika, it is not only women who must marry, men must also. Only when both childfree men and women are taken into consideration will it be possible to develop a more inclusive *human* understanding of the childfree phenomenon, rather than one that is primarily focused on ‘unnatural’ women.

Finally, the three stories above also reflect society’s reluctance to accept the idea of childfree individuals. Despite the main characters showing no inclination to marry or reproduce, the stories in ‘The Childfree Woman’ do not focus on the characters’ *choice* to remain childfree. Instead, each ‘reframes’ their choices. With Princess White Hair, her arrogance is used to explain her ‘curse’ of singlehood, while unsuitable mates are used to explain Princess Pinang Masak and Putri Mandalika’s unmarried states. Thus these stories could be seen as a manner for humans to rationalize the ‘anomalies’ of childless individuals; in doing so, providing a template in how to deal with childfree individuals.

CHAPTER 8: THE HEROIC WOMAN

“Settle down, are you kidding? I'm at the top of my game! I'm right up there with the big dogs! Girls, come on. Leave the saving of the world to the men? I don't think so.”

- Elastigirl from ‘The Incredibles’ (2004)

Heroes are people who perform extraordinary deeds at great personal risk for the benefit of others. When we talk of heroes, however, we often think of courageous men. Readers of popular American comics may imagine Clark Kent, or his more popular alter-ego Superman, saving the day. If we pause to consider a little more, we might think of someone like Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi, men who fought at great personal cost for the liberation of their societies. Heroism is generally linked with masculinity, but why is this so? Why do we equate heroism with men? The word ‘hero’ can describe both men and women, but we often think that to be heroic is to be masculine. What does it really mean when we say someone is being heroic?

Heroes are generally imagined to be ‘individuals who choose to *take risks on behalf of one or more other people*, despite the possibility of *dying or suffering* serious physical consequences from these actions’ (Becker and Eagly 2004:164, emphasis mine). Often, to perform a heroic act involves taking a risk for a person to whom one is not related. Social stereotypes of the masculine man tend to focus on their involvement in risk-taking activities. Numerous evolutionary studies have shown that men tend to be greater risk-takers than women (Becker and Eagly 2004:164; Archer 2009:257).¹¹⁷ There is a tendency also for men to display more aggressive behaviours, and to indulge in more sensation-seeking behaviours in order to acquire status (Campbell 1999:204, 206). This show of bravado can be a form of sexual strategy, which aims to impress women and to compete with other men for reproductive opportunities (Daly and Wilson 1988:142-45; McAndrew and Perilloux 2012:52). In the past, men who were more prone to take risks were often warriors who protected their people and attacked rival tribes. Such men were

¹¹⁷ Indeed, this perceived greater risk-taking by men may be the reason masculine heroism is often associated with action while feminine heroines are known for their endurance in Malay *syair* (Hijjas 2011:117).

able to access more sexual partners than men who were not warriors (Van Vugt, De Cremer, and Janssen 2007:19). Through generation upon generation of successful genetic transmission, 'heroic' risk-taking has been established as a male trait.

Perhaps this analysis is too simplistic. In a psychological study on the effects of heroes, it was stated that to be a hero one needed to be more than just the reflex of one's physical body; one also needed to 'excel in the domains of both competence and morality' (Allison and Goethal 2015:2). When considering morality in the case of heroism, it refers to the act of doing a good deed for another person out of a concern for their well-being, rather than as a means to gain status for oneself (Becker and Eagly 2004:166). This concern for others, or the capability to nurture or empathize with others, is a trait that has often been stereotyped as 'feminine'. Women are often portrayed as non-aggressive, preferring to 'share norms, build cohesion, [and to] resolve conflict through discussion' rather than be involved in a physical brawl (Campbell 1999:205, 208). Thus, the act of heroism can be 'androgynous' (Becker and Eagly 2004:166). It can appeal to a man's more risk-taking type of behaviour or to a woman's more nurturing 'nature'. In evolutionary terms, both men and women are equally fit to become heroes. So why do we constantly focus on male heroism?

I would suggest that this focus boils down to the nature of a heroic act. Humans enjoy being entertained, and it can be argued that men's heroism is more apparent than women's heroism. When men take risky but heroic action, it can be argued that they are more willing to do so in front of an audience in order to subconsciously ensure that they achieve a rise in status, increasing their reproductive opportunities (McAndrew and Perilloux 2012:52). This tendency is reflected in a study on the different types of heroism between men and women by Becker and Eagly (2004). They found that a startlingly large number of recipients for the Carnegie Hero Medal were men, and that only 8.9% of the recipients were women (2004:167). Because it is an award that called for a dangerous type of heroism, a greater level of physical prowess is needed; this may have created an advantage for men over women because of their strength and general preparedness for dangerous situations (Becker and Eagly 2004:166, 173). Becker and Eagly (2004:174) also hypothesize that the discrepancy in numbers may be due to 'the public nature of their prosocial act, the necessity for immediate action, and the demand for emotional control in the face of extreme danger'. Again, these acts favour men

rather than women. A public show of daring and heroism, a type of heroism that garners an exuberant amount of praise and awe from the people, is one which is also more *popular* and also, more male-dominated.

Acts of heroism just as dangerous as those undertaken by Carnegie Hero Medallists were performed during the Second World War by gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews during the Nazi holocaust (Becker and Eagly 2004:168). Such individuals are known as the ‘Righteous Among the Nations’. Any attempt to save Jews during the Nazi occupation was done under the imminent threat of death, thus the dangerousness and riskiness of the endeavour. However, because of this threat, these individuals kept their heroic deeds secret. Allison and Goethal (2015) argue that this type of heroism inspires ‘personal growth’ as it teaches others on how ‘to deal with crisis situations’ (2015:5, 8). To be one of the Righteous Among the Nations is to be truly heroic – and women seem to dominate their numbers (Becker and Eagly 2004:70).¹¹⁸ It can be argued that women, unlike men, are not seeking status when committing heroic acts; rather, when they take part in dangerous, life-risking behaviours, they do so out of a sense of empathy that is drawn from an arguably evolutionary origin, namely the need to protect one’s child and kin (Campbell 1999:204; Becker and Eagly 2004:166, 174).

Humans subconsciously accept these gendered types of heroism. This acceptance is reflected in the types of stories we tell, and in how we portray the heroes or superheroes in our stories. In a study of female superheroes, Victoria Ingalls found a fascinating difference between characters produced by men and characters produced by women. Female and male superheroes created by men tend to be less family-oriented, being either an orphan or part of a problematic family, in possession of a superpower, and usually possess a crafted weapon that will be used in the ultimate battle against his or her enemy (Ingalls 2012:214, 215). Female superheroes written by men are also surprisingly more physically powerful than those written by women (Ingalls 2012:219). Female-generated female superheroes, on the other hand, more often than not are surrounded by a supportive kin group, are not in possession of a superpower, and solve problems through non-violent means, often with the help of friends and family (Ingalls 2012: 214 - 219). Ingalls (2012) argues that these differences in portraying female

¹¹⁸ The number of women who have been named as Righteous Among the Nations increase when married couples are excluded from the tally (Becker and Eagly 2004:70).

superheroes are rooted in the same evolutionary psychology that drove the different sexes into taking part in different acts of heroism.

‘The Heroic Woman’ aims to look at three different stories of female heroism from the Western Malayo-Polynesian society. The heroes in these stories are not fighting to save a mate or their immediate family, but are protecting their communities. The first story to be discussed hails from the Philippines. The title character of ‘Catalina of Dumaguete’¹¹⁹ is described as beautiful and strange. The daughter of a respected man in the village, she has occasional bouts of standing erect and clasping her hands, remaining ‘for a long time looking up at the sky as if she saw something that no one else could see’ (Miller 1904). The villagers believe that her strange acts are proof of her possession of magical powers. They are unbothered by her unusual behaviour, and the villagers live in harmony. One day, however, their peaceful life comes to an end: the Moros people of the island of Mindanao invade their land, killing many. Among the dead is Catalina’s father. The Moros gather as many Dumaguete women as possible and set sail for home. Catalina, who is among the women captured, is silent throughout the ordeal. But suddenly she springs up and leaps off the boat. A miracle is then witnessed: instead of sinking, Catalina walks on water, continuing until she reaches land. She does not stop in her village, however, and walks towards Mount Dalugdug. She walks until she reaches the top of the mountain and vanishes. The surviving villagers rebuild their homes and several years pass. When the Moros reappear over the horizon, the people of Dumaguete are spurred by their memory of loss. This time they fight with all their might. At first the Moros seem to be losing, but they call for more warriors; the tide turns and the villagers find themselves once again on the defensive. All of a sudden, Catalina appears in a cloud, a beehive in her hands. Upon her command, bees fly out and transform themselves into little black men with spears. These little men kill all the Moros. Triumphant, Catalina returns to the top of Mount Dalugdug, along with her little black men, and is never heard from again.

‘Catalina of Dumaguete’ is part of a collection of Philippine folktales collected and translated by John Maurice Miller (1904). Certain elements of Catalina’s character fit

¹¹⁹ Like ‘Mangita and Larina’ (see Part 1, section 2.2.2), Miller (1904) does not provide any details of the story’s influences. However, given the Christian undertones of Catalina’s name and her walking on water, as well as the Moros (a Muslim community) being the enemy, it may be hypothesized that ‘Catalina of Dumaguete’ is a hybrid oral story (see Introduction for definition of ‘hybridization’).

the stereotype of male-generated female superheroes described by Ingalls (2012). While Catalina's father is a part of her initial story, she is orphaned by the Moros, and she is left to her own resources. She has superhuman powers: she is able to walk on water and up the side of a mountain; she is able to command bees and is able to transform them into warriors. Her superpowers and her act of saving her village are publicly displayed. These aspects of her heroism coincide with Ingalls's (2012:214-15) study that found that 'the driving force behind the hero's actions may be revenge, [...] or a desire to save everyone, [...] motivations that are not shared with any of the heroes in the stories written by women'. Ingalls (2012:215) explains that these predictions are based on 'the hypothesis that evolution has shaped a male psyche that is focused on having and displaying power'.

Reconsidering the story, however, one might ask about Catalina's motivations for saving her village. Is it really acting out of revenge for her fallen father and her abducted female villagers? What does she gain from killing the Moros and then retreating to a life of solitude? It has already been discussed that Catalina's character is affected by the evolutionary motivations of her author. But the question is whether women stand to gain any evolutionary benefits from Catalina's story. Referring back to the theory of meme transmission, the answer can arguably be 'yes'. The story of Catalina may inspire women to be more confident in their heroism, where publicly heroic women can also leave a personal legacy through meme transmission (Aarssen and Altman 2006:293-4). They will be able to pass on a less diluted version of themselves while still assisting in the somatic survival of their kin.

When Catalina defeats the Moros in the second attack, she saves her villagers from certain death. The saving of others for a cause other than one's own interest is testament to whether an act is heroic or not (Allison and Goethal 2015:2; Becker and Eagly 2004:166). It shows that heroism as a form of altruism is a feature of human society, in which mutual assistance and support is needed for the continuation of the group. Female readers can thus gain a two-fold evolutionary advantage from listening to Catalina's story: by being heroic, one can establish a legacy through meme transmission and can assist in the continued survival of one's kin.

The second story introduces a different type of heroism. ‘The Origin of Rice’ takes us to the once-infertile lands of Tanah Lingo, a village in Indonesia which suffers from drought. There is no food, and the people of Tanah Lingo are facing starvation. They go to their *datu*,¹²⁰ Beritu Taun, to seek help. He points out that many of the villagers have ‘violated prohibitions of their ancestors’ and committed many sins (Bunanta 2003:79). He explains that in order to obtain forgiveness from their ancestors, a voluntary human sacrifice is needed. No one volunteers. A discussion sweeps through the crowd as the villagers seek an alternative solution, but the *datu* is adamant; they need a voluntary sacrifice. Beritu Taun’s daughter, Princess Liung, then approaches her father and volunteers to die for the sins of her people. Her family are horrified at her decision and implore her to change her mind. Beritu Taun is torn: here is his daughter sincerely offering herself as sacrifice, but his heart breaks at the thought of losing her. Eventually he agrees and announces that Princess Liung has volunteered to sacrifice herself for the people. The villagers of Tanah Lingo are moved by her act of selflessness, and pay respect to their *datu*; a man who is so dedicated to his people that he is willing to sacrifice his own child. When Princess Liung is killed, her blood flows over the lands of Tanah Lingo. It does not take long before the ancestors accept her sacrifice and gift her people with an abundance of rice.

There are plain differences between Princess Liung and Catalina of Dumaguete. While Catalina appears in a glorious cloud with an army of transformative warrior-bees, Princess Liung offers her help quietly to her father. The only people who truly understand the magnitude of her sacrifice are her family. While the villagers are in awe of Princess Liung’s offer of sacrifice, their attention is quickly diverted to her father, the *datu*, who is seen as admirable for being willing to sacrifice his daughter for the village. It is her father who gives voice to her choice of sacrifice, which diverts the attention that could have been given to Princess Liung. However, similar to Ingall’s (2012) finding on the motivations of female heroes, it is not the spotlight that Princess Liung desires. Princess Liung is determined to save her village, including her family and extended kin members, from the onslaught of starvation. She does not seek attention when she sacrifices herself; there is no one to impress, only her people to save.

¹²⁰ A *datu* is the leader of all the village headmen (Bunanta 2003:79)

Becker and Eagly (2004) have theorized that women's empathy is derived from an instinct to maximise the survival of their children. Other forms of female heroism focus on an 'empathetic concern over others' welfare' (Becker and Eagly 2004:174). For example, women are more numerous than men as kidney donors, as volunteers for the Peace Corps, and as Doctors Without Borders. Findings from evolutionary psychology supports the idea that women, in general, are endowed with a greater capability to empathize and nurture than are men, in order to provide selfless investment to their child, and to assist in raising them to adulthood.¹²¹ In the case of Princess Liung, her capability for selflessness can be argued to stem from an evolutionary drive to care for her family; if she had chosen to reproduce, she would have been relentless in ensuring her child's survival to successfully transmit her genes into a new generation. In the story, she channels her devotion towards a care for her kin and also her fellow villagers to ensure their survival.¹²²

The final story on heroic women, 'The Young Maidens That Save Guam', explains how an island came to look as it does today. It starts with the mystery of the shrinking land between Hagatna and Pago Bay; if the land continues to shrink, Guam will become two separate islands. A discussion is held but no one is able to solve the problem. One day, a fisherman at sea notices a giant fish eating large chunks of the bay. He rushes back to shore with the news to inform everyone; the people are filled with outrage and swear that they will catch and kill the monstrous fish. The next day, the men leave to look for the fish but fail to find it. Stories of the men's efforts reach the young maidens at Hagatna Springs as they wash their hair, rinsing it with 'fresh water scented with

¹²¹ Becker and Eagly (2004:174, 175) argue that 'the greater tendency for women than men to put themselves at risk in most of the settings that we studied [aiding the Jewish community during the Holocaust and giving kidney donations] is not congenial to the evolutionary psychology arguments whereby men possess a general evolved disposition to take risks and women to avoid risks. The behaviors that we have studied, especially those of holocaust rescuers and Doctors of the World, possibly would reflect relational self-construal to the extent that others are helped mainly in dyadic and small-group contexts. In fact, among the Carnegie medalists, a higher proportion of rescues by women than men were directed toward relatives or people known by the rescuer (53% vs. 32%; Johnson, 1996)'.

Campbell (1999:204) strengthens this argument by showing that 'the mother's presence is more critical to her offspring's survival and hence to her reproductive success than is the father's. This point is important because it forms the basis for the argument that females should be more concerned with staying alive than are men and this in turn accounts for their low-risk and indirect strategies of dispute resolution'.

¹²² A similar decision was made by Kusuma in 'Asal Mula Upacara Kasada', discussed in Part 1, Introduction: Beginning a Family as well as Putri Mandalika in 'The Childfree Woman'. Both Kusuma and Putri Mandalika sacrifice themselves to save their people, an act similar to Princess Liung. Kusuma and Putri Mandalika's selflessness can also be seen as a reflection of their heroic personality.

lemons', and leaving the pool 'covered with lemon peels' (Guampedia 2015). A young woman from the opposite end of the island, Pago Bay, finds these lemon peels. She realizes that the giant fish must have eaten its way underneath the island and reveals her discovery to the other maidens. They come to the conclusion that the giant fish is hiding underneath the island and decide to catch it themselves. They cut off their long, dark hair, with which they weave a magical net. As they swim out to sea, they sing an enchanting song to entice the fish. The fish swims closer and closer to the maidens, until finally the maidens throw their net over and capture it. 'In triumph, the maidens then summoned some of the men to help dispose of the giant fish (Guampedia 2015).' That is how the young maidens saved Guam.

A key aspect to the women's heroism in this story lies in their cooperative effort to find a way to solve the problem together. While they are in possession of supernatural power, it is not to be compared with that of Catalina's. Their power stems from their hair, which is transferred to the net, and captures the fish. The net is not an individualistic weapon, and has been made from working together as a group in order to capture the fish. This style of cooperative behaviour is characteristic of female-generated superhero stories (Ingalls 2012:213). It may also be noted that the maidens are non-confrontational with the monstrous fish, merely attracting it with their song and capturing it in their net. There is no mention of killing the fish, as was the intention of the men in Guam.

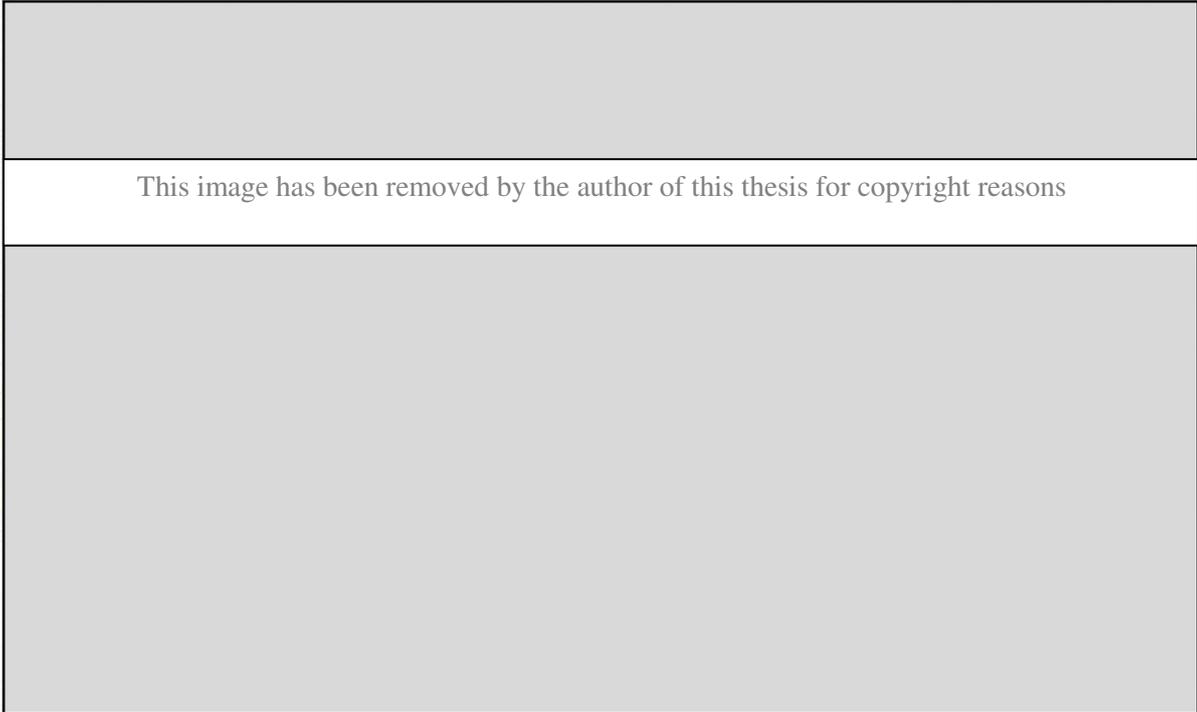
In 'The Young Maidens That Save Guam', the men's need to display their heroism can be related to a need for status: should one of the men become successful in killing the fish, he would gain status and perhaps even access to a desired mate. This need to publicly display prowess is an attribute often identified as male (McAndrew and Perilloux 2012:52, 63; Ingalls 2012:215; Becker and Eagly 2004:165). Daly and Wilson (1988) argue that men's visible display of heroism can be attributed to their need to showcase their attractiveness to a prospective mate. As seen in the story, the men's inability to kill the fish was noted by the young maidens; it may be suggested that had the men been successful, the young maidens would have similarly noticed and they might have been interested in taking the heroic men as their partners.

There are certain problems with attributing a display of prowess as a uniquely male trait. In the story, the young maidens enlist the help of their men to bring the fish to shore. By enlisting help from the opposite sex, it could be implied that the young maidens are creating a situation in which their prowess will be recognized. Ingalls (2012) writes;

‘Although little has been written on the subject, males, if forced to choose, should prefer as mates females who can dominate other females in addition to possessing the physical cues associated with fertility. Given that the male’s death prior to old age was a likely event in the ancestral environment, and given that females who are able to dominate other females are likely to acquire better resources and are better able to protect their offspring [...] males should prefer these capable females as mates (2012:218).’

This implies that when choosing a mate, a man will want a woman who is able to care for his offspring, should he not be able to. While it is not the norm for women to publicly display their prowess, these young unmarried women might nevertheless be increasing their sexual attractiveness through a display of their capabilities. Further research on women and public displays of prowess may deepen our understanding of female acts of heroism.

CONCLUSIONS



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Tom Gauld, Guardian Print

9.0 Contributions and Limitations of Evolutionary Literary Theory to Oral Tradition

The aim of this thesis was to present female-led oral narratives from the Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) language group and to analyse them from an evolutionary perspective. Research findings from evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, as well as evolutionary biology were then used to explore memetic themes that emerged from these stories. I attempted to show that there is a universality to human behavioural drives, and that these universal drives are evident in the stories humans tell each other. In emphasising ‘sameness’ in Western Malayo-Polynesian stories, I sought to remove a sense of ‘exoticising’ or ‘othering’ the phenomena studied. Instead of focusing on differences, this thesis hopes to show the universality of human concerns, as reflected in their stories. Among the most prominent concerns are efforts to maintain harmonious kin relations for somatic survival, as well as to promote strategies for reproductive survival, complimenting an evolutionary understanding of *human* survival strategies.

This thesis contributes to efforts in applying evolutionary theory to oral tradition. Specifically, it provides a manner of understanding oral stories that have been recorded

as texts, but have not necessarily become a part of the literary fairy tale tradition. Unlike Jack Zipes' (2006, 2008) discussion of fairy tales and folktales as memes, this thesis looks at the wider memetic *themes* that are present in arguably all oral stories. To illustrate, Zipes (2008) would have considered the title and characters of 'The Frog Princess' from the Philippines as a meme of 'The Frog Prince'. The former tale seems to draw on popular knowledge of the latter fairy tale in its name, thus exemplifying the persistency of 'The Frog Prince' as a meme. However, when looking at memetic *themes*, I would argue that a more similar story to 'The Frog Prince' is 'Ulat Berbulu' (The Hairy Caterpillar) from Indonesia. While 'Ulat Berbulu' does not feature memes characteristic of 'The Frog Prince' (no frog, prince, or princess appears in 'Ulat Berbulu'), the Indonesian tale shares the memetic evolutionary theme of 'Searching for a Partner'. In particular, when considering the fact that these stories discussed similar anxieties over unconventional long-term partners they can then be further categorized under the specific theme of 'An Unlikely Match'.

The decision to categorize tales according to *universal* memetic themes instead of *specific* motifs, as found in the more widely-used Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Classification of Folk Tales, has shown to be a worthwhile endeavour as categorizing many of the Western Malayo-Polynesian stories in the ATU system proved problematic. Again, taking 'Ulat Berbulu' as one example, the story does not fit neatly into any one of the ATU 'Tales of Magic' categories. 'Ulat Berbulu' featured motifs that included 'a young woman lost in forest', 'heroine accepts a proposal of marriage in return for assistance from a caterpillar', 'heroine grows to love the caterpillar husband despite taunts from her family', 'caterpillar journeys to prove self-worth to bride's family', 'caterpillar transforms into handsome man and family is punished'; these motifs would have crossed several ATU categories such as ATU 425 'The Search for the Lost Husband', ATU 440 'The Frog King', and ATU 441 'In Enchanted Skin', but it would not have found a satisfactory home in any of them. The difficulty in categorizing certain WMP stories in the ATU system may lie in the fact that they do not follow a European structure of oral storytelling. This hypothesis is strengthened when considering 'The Frog Princess' from the Philippines, which bears strong Spanish influence. 'The Frog Princess', unlike 'Ulat Berbulu', easily fits within ATU 402 'The Animal Bride', in which the Philippine tale finds an uncanny similarity with a Russian variant entitled 'The Princess Frog'. Still, the present author finds that this category is an unsatisfactory

one as there are obvious thematic similarities between ‘The Frog Princess’ and ‘Ulat Berbulu’; the ATU system classifies them into different categories because one focuses on magical *wives* and the other on magical *husbands*. I would argue, however, that whether one consists of a wife or husband is irrelevant when categorizing these tales. Both tales share and is better organized according to the *evolutionary memetic theme* of ‘An Unlikely Match’, or tales of choosing a partner whose suitability is not immediately known.

To the present author’s knowledge, this manner of categorizing multicultural oral stories according to their evolutionary themes is unprecedented. This thesis has thus attempted a new and arguably more inclusive way of discussing universal themes in oral stories. Sorting multicultural stories according to a particular recurring character or plot, as is the case of the ATU classification system,¹²³ may prove problematic as this assumes that there is a universal stock of specific characters and plots in oral stories. While the categories in the ATU system allow for cultural variants to occur, there are limitations from the manner it organizes the stories. For example, while ‘The Clever Fox (Other Animals)’ concedes that the ‘fox’ character could be a ‘bear’ or ‘other animals’, it supposes an arguably Eurocentric perspective by discussing a character such as the ‘fox’ as the norm and WMP characters such as the mouse-deer as ‘others’.¹²⁴ I believe that by organizing Western Malayo-Polynesian stories according to universal human themes such as struggles within the family and searching for a partner, it allows a more inclusive engagement with a wider corpus of oral stories from around the world.

Previous studies on female-centred Western Malayo-Polynesian literary texts, especially one steeped in oral traditions, have noted that most women’s stories revolve around family life and marriage partners. Of particular interest to this thesis are Creese’s (2004) study on the Javanese *kakawin* literary tradition and Hijjas’ (2011) study on the Malay *syair* tradition. Both works discussed the importance of finding and securing a suitable partner through marriage for nineteenth century Javanese and Malay women. This thesis

¹²³ See Introduction, section 0.2 ‘Tools for Analysing Stories’ for a list of categories in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index.

¹²⁴ Other examples that can be briefly mentioned here are ‘Jests about Christ and Peter’, which places the Christian religious story as the norm, or the extraordinarily specific classification of ATU 858 ‘When the King Sneezes the Shephard Refuses to Cry "God Bless You!"’, implying tales from cultures without shepherds as ‘other’.

explored many of the themes evident in Creese's (2004) and Hijjas' (2011) studies through an evolutionary perspective, particularly in terms of women's effort for reproductive survival. The stories analysed in Creese's (2004) and Hijjas' (2011) studies, however, were written down by court women and were also about the lives of these same women. Analyses of these stories were thus restricted to noble women and those who worked in the courts with them. While this thesis provided evolutionary insights into the lives of court women, it also showed the lives of those outside the palace. Alongside royal figures such as Princess Kemang, Princess White Hair, and Putri Gunung Ledang, this thesis looked at characters such as Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah (daughters of a merchant), Catalina (daughter of a 'respected' man in her village), and Sirena (daughter of 'ordinary' parents). With female characters from various backgrounds, this thesis was able to shed light on stories about women who live inside and outside the palace courts, and it was also able to show that despite the differences in background, there is universality to the human struggle for somatic and reproductive success.

Because this thesis focused on identifying memetic *themes* that transcend geography and culture, analysis of stories heavily leant towards analysing the *universal* human struggle for evolutionary fitness. In order to determine the universal theme of a story, the search for stories was widened to include any type of oral story that had been recorded as text, without limiting the search to a particular historical or literary background. By doing so, I hoped to extract memetic themes that go beyond a particular time or genre; themes that were selected and retold in numerous forms because of their importance to human survival. While this approach has been helpful in finding the universality of themes in oral stories, it may find its limitation when cultural context is needed. For example, in section 1.3.1 'The Reluctant Stepparent', a sociohistorical perspective of polygamy is given in order to provide a stronger argument for the evolutionary tension between individual and inclusive fitness. Again, because the aim is to find universally memetic themes, this two-pronged approach is not often carried out in this thesis. However, should future research on oral stories intend to conduct an evolutionary analysis on a more specific time period or culture, it is of course prudent to incorporate further historical and cultural perspectives to illustrate the manner in which these perspectives interact with each other.

As most of the stories in this thesis revolve around reproductive strategies, it is worth emphasising that all the analysed stories feature cissexual characters involved in heterosexual relationships. This has provided a fairly uncomplicated analysis of male-female sexual relations from an evolutionary perspective in the Western Malayo-Polynesian oral traditions. This heterosexual bias in the WMP stories is surprising considering the fact that the Bugis people, one of the largest ethnic groups in South Sulawesi in Indonesia, recognize five types of gender: makkunrai (similar to a cisgendered woman), oroané (cisgendered man), bissu (androgynous shamans), calabai (similar to a trans woman), and calalai (trans man).¹²⁵ These genders were not found in the stories in this thesis; if they had been, they would have complicated a cissexual and heteronormative evolutionary analysis of gender and sexuality. Indeed, categorizing the human gender into ‘male and female’ may limit discussion of queerness in oral stories. Therefore, while future research on queerness and homosexuality in oral studies may be conducted under an evolutionary perspective, it may also benefit from sociohistorical context as well as inclusion of queer theory.

The heterosexual and cissexual bias evident in the collected stories exemplifies one of the concerns of this thesis: the problem of authorial bias. It was understood that the evolutionary findings applied to the analysis of stories were affected by the perspectives of their researchers, complimenting Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) assertion in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that there is no paradigm-neutral view of reality. This issue is further complicated by the fact that the storytellers themselves may have had their own personal motivations in the particular telling of the stories. Each story attempts, either subtly or overtly, to influence the reader. In this case, it exemplifies one of the storytelling models posed by Michelle Scalise Sugiyama (2005); namely that of Machiavellian Intelligence. In this storytelling model, stories are a tool to ‘influence the opinions, beliefs, and behaviour of the audience in ways that serve the storyteller’s ends’ (Sugiyama 2005:189). These potential biases complicate analysis, as certain themes in the stories may not be the result of adaptive qualities, but rather, reflections of cultural practices that storytellers seek either to maintain or reject.

¹²⁵ See Davies (2006) and L. Andaya (2000) for further discussion on these gender categories.

This does not distract from the fact that under the cultural and historical complexities of a story there are universal human concerns of somatic and reproductive survival. These concerns may be expressed in various forms according to their sociohistorical context, but I firmly believe that an evolutionary literary perspective, which relies on an understanding of how the human mind calculates the best way to behave to maximise evolutionary fitness, will still provide a fascinating perspective into why certain stories are told and continue to be told. An example of a prevalent memetic theme would be that of ‘The Reluctant Stepparent’ (discussed in section 1.3.1), where a popular story is that of ‘Cinderella’. Marina Warner (1994) has noted the ubiquity of the story across cultures but is tentative to argue that there is a *universality* to the theme of ‘Absent Mothers’ (and by extension, the stepmothers who fill the shoes of these absent figures), preferring to unravel specific historical contexts for each ‘Cinderella’ tale (Warner 1994:213). Daly and Wilson (2005) provided a strong case for the evolutionary underpinnings of the ‘Cinderella’ story, showing that the tale’s theme is memetic because of the universally human problem of ‘discriminative parental solicitude’ (2005:1). The stories in this thesis, such as ‘The Merchants’ Two Daughters’, ‘Bata Mama and Bata Bahi’, as well as ‘Raja Omas’ further strengthens their arguments by showing that similar evolutionary struggles are evident even beyond their research scope¹²⁶ in Western Malayo-Polynesian oral narratives. With these potential benefits of applying evolutionary theories to oral stories in mind, one will still need to be cautious of the potential biases both in the stories studied and the views provided by evolutionary research. In the following sections, I will discuss two topics that I have found to be particularly difficult to navigate when applying evolutionary theories to Western Malayo-Polynesian oral tradition, and I will suggest manners in which further research in this field can be developed.

¹²⁶ Daly and Wilson (2005) provided higher statistics of stepparental disfavor of stepchildren (including lethal and non-lethal abuse) in North America, Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Sweden, Korea, Tanzania, and Dominica.

9.1. Suggested Developments in the Application of Evolutionary Science to Western Malayo-Polynesian Oral Tradition

Gender Stereotyping and the Female Experience

One of the constant issues that appeared throughout this thesis is the problem of oversimplification of sex differences. I would argue that David M. Buss and David P. Schmitt's (1993) sexual strategies theory needs more critical examination, along the lines of research by Anne Campbell (1999, 2002) and Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (1999). More thought needs to be given to male-female roles in childrearing, male-female conflicts in sexual selection, as well as male-female conflicts over the control of resources. In evolutionary psychology, women are generally described as the more cautious sex, due to their greater role in childrearing, while men are described as greater risk-takers; these stereotypes persist even when studies have found that this is not always so (Hrdy 1986:119). The Western Malayo-Polynesian stories examined in this thesis lend support to these new studies by providing examples of ardent women in search of a partner.¹²⁷ In regards to a woman's ideal mate, countless evolutionary psychology articles have argued that women are primarily looking for men who are resource-rich and of high status (Buss and Schmitt 1993). In order to obtain these types of men, women make efforts to enhance their physical appearance, as beauty is seen by men as a marker of physical and genetic health (Buss and Schmitt 1993:226; Szepeswol, Mikulincer and Birnbaum 2013:196; Ferguson, Winegard and Winegard 2011:16). However, Eagly and Wood (1999:418-19) showed that when there is greater gender equality in a society, women place less emphasis on a man's 'earning capacity' and have less preference for an older man. In the present writer's opinion, this is confirmed by the Western Malayo-Polynesian stories examined in this thesis. Stories such as 'The Choosy Maiden of the Fourth Heaven' from the Philippines, 'The Best Gift of All' and 'Puteri Bosu' from Indonesia go against the commonly accepted idea that women search simply for resource-rich, successful men. Future research on female-led oral tradition should shed further light on the subtleties of male-female relations and their relevance to evolutionary psychology.

¹²⁷ See Chapter 4: The Ardent Female.

‘Tales Beyond Family and Partners’ examined women who defied stereotypical definitions of womanhood. The stories in this section, ‘Catalina of Dumaguete’ from the Philippines, ‘The Origin of Rice’ from Indonesia, and ‘The Young Maidens that Saved Guam’, centred on women who were risk-takers, a characteristic often attributed to men (Campbell 1999:204, 206). While men are generally regarded as greater risk-takers than women, risk-taking is not a uniquely male trait. Why do some women take risks and others do not? How does risk-taking function in a woman’s survival strategies? These questions need to be addressed in future research, with particular attention to women’s changing roles in contemporary societies in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the female human experience.

Addressing Contentious Issues

A particular challenge that arose during the writing of this thesis was finding an appropriate manner in which to discuss evolutionary research on controversial topics such as violence in stepfamilies and physical abnormalities in individuals. Daly and Wilson have argued that stepparents do not experience the same degree of emotional rewards when caring for their step-children when compared to parents with biological children (1996b:80). With no genetic link to their stepchildren, stepparents have been found to be less investing, and at times even violent towards their step-children. Unsurprisingly, this finding has been met with criticism. This criticism tends to be built around the argument that while ‘evil’ stepparents exist, so do ‘evil’ biological parents. However, Daly and Wilson (1996a:17) have repeatedly shown that statistics on family violence demonstrate that children who share no biological link with their parents are at greater risk of abuse, and even murder. Well-known European fairy tales such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’, ‘Snow White’, and ‘Cinderella’, alongside Western Malayo-Polynesian oral stories in this thesis such as ‘Batu Mama and Bata Bahi’ and ‘The Merchant’s Two Daughters’ suggest a subconscious knowledge of this phenomenon. Despite the understandable sensitivities involved in dealing with these issues, the prevalence of this phenomenon in real life and in fiction warrants attention.

An even more difficult subject to navigate is that of physical ‘abnormalities’. Evolutionary science has been accused of being cold and tactless in the language used when discussing disabled people (O’Donovan 2013). This is especially true when discussing the emotions of fear or disgust that sometimes arise when regarding

individuals who are physically different from others. It has been hypothesized by several researches that this fear is a reflex against a sign of poor health that might jeopardize a community's wellbeing (Paul, Faulkner, and Schaller 2003; Crandall and Moriarty 1995; Heinemann et al. 1981; Schaller, Park, and Faulkner 2003). The subject of abnormality is a difficult area to navigate, especially if beauty is considered an 'asset' and physical 'abnormalities' are seen as 'disadvantages'. However, it has been shown in multiple researches that these physical abnormalities are unreliable indicators of ill health; most physical 'abnormalities' occur because of accidents and have no genetic origins. The stories in this thesis, 'The Legend of a Mountain' and 'Ulat Berbulu' from Indonesia, and 'The Frog Princess' from the Philippines, seem to show recognition of this fact and reflect an empathetic concern regarding the welfare of stigmatized 'others'.

9.2 The Inculcation of Personality and Emotion Studies

An unexpected outcome from this thesis is the suggested application of personality and emotion studies to understand recurring character archetypes in oral stories. Characters in oral tradition tend to exhibit extreme traits, being either parables of virtue or epitomes of evil. Three types of models have been used in this thesis to investigate these archetypes: the Big Five Personality Traits, the HEXACO scale, and the Dark Triad of Personality. I have attempted to show how these three models can be used to add flesh to the archetype and reveal the primary traits that give life to the character. These models also help us understand the norms of behaviour in a society; what is required, admired, disapproved of, or rejected. Similarly, the characters in the Western Malayo-Polynesian stories in this thesis can be analysed according to simple emotions such as Arrogance, Confidence, Anger, Fear, Jealousy, Shame, and Pride. It would be interesting to investigate whether certain emotions are linked to certain situations in a predictable manner across oral stories worldwide. It would be fascinating to see whether there is a universal pattern of behaviour, reactions to specific situations, and common repercussions of such reactions.

9.3 Considering Meme Transmission Theory

Roughly four-fifths of the stories in this thesis consist of tales of family and searching for a partner. Because these stories reflect evolutionary tendencies that assist in human

survival, analysing them was a relatively straightforward process. However, when analysing stories that do not revolve around kin or reproduction, finding evolutionary theories to explain them became more difficult. Fewer than ten percent of the stories in this thesis deal with tales of women who choose a life that did not revolve around family or searching for a partner. And while this number shows that this type of story is in the minority, these stories are still being told and may pose evolutionary advantages to those who tell or listen to them. Because they do not fit into the categories of ‘kin’ and ‘mate’, they have also been difficult to analyse, and more research into this area needs to be done.

One of the more interesting theories examined in this research is the idea of meme transmission, as opposed to gene transmission. In ‘Tales Beyond Family and Partners’, meme transmission theory has been used to understand the motivations of women who choose neither to attain a partner nor to reproduce (Aarssen and Altman 2006). In particular, meme transmission was applied to understand stories on childfree women and female heroism. Women in ‘Tales Beyond Family and Partners’ appear to be childfree without a need to transmit any type of legacy, and thus there is a sense that the meme transmission theory can only be applied in a limited way to these tales. In order to fully understand the phenomenon of childfree and risk-taking women, there is a need to move into new territories of research.

9.4 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has analysed various aspects of womanhood as portrayed in oral stories. These stories include happy and dissatisfied wives, striving and thriving mothers (and daughters), warring sisters, and power-hungry women. Despite having examined almost a hundred tales in this thesis, I feel there is still a need for more research on female-driven stories; especially female-driven stories told, and collected by women themselves. To reiterate, there is no paradigm-neutral view of reality, as had been asserted by Kuhn (1962). However, a scientific approach, one that employs methodologies that can be tested and falsified, is arguably more neutral than one that is untestable and unfalsifiable. Such an approach can be further improved by anticipating

biases, one of which is gender.¹²⁸ I would therefore suggest that future research on female-generated and female-led stories would benefit from a female analysis. As Hrdy (1999) confessed, even after years of studying the experiences of mothering, her perspectives on the subject changed radically once she herself became a mother, and thus provided depth to the manner in which she viewed her research on motherhood among primates.

In regards to the methodology used in this thesis, the application of evolutionary findings to oral traditions provides compelling new insights into these stories. In Western Malayo-Polynesian societies, a fascination with family and partner-oriented stories is particularly telling; the memetic themes of these stories include struggles from childbirth to the roles of a post-reproductive woman in her twilight years. Future research may benefit from a more focused investigation into each period of the human life cycle, using a larger pool of stories from a smaller area. It has been suggested that this type of research would benefit from the application of sociohistorical perspectives to provide depth to the discussion. Thus, it has the potential to add on to both a literary-based analysis of the tales and also render statistics that would support a more quantitative-based analysis of such stories. In the meantime, this thesis has provided a general overview of Western Malayo-Polynesian women's reproductive struggles and has suggested several evolutionary themes that can be used as a blueprint for future evolutionary-based research on oral stories.

In addition to family and partner-based stories that correspond with evolutionary findings, it bears repeating that there is a need to look into areas that are less frequently studied in evolutionary research, particularly the phenomenon of trans, homosexual, and childfree women. While women who do not take part in the reproductive process are a minority among the human species, they continue to persist without having passed on their genes. Insights into this evolutionary phenomenon may be found through the intensive study of oral traditions. It goes without saying that these studies need to focus on a large number of societies before any conclusive universal findings can be derived from them. New theories may arise from these studies and provide a deeper understanding into both the phenomenon of stories and human beings alike.

¹²⁸ See Introduction, section 0.5 'Women, Stories, and Their Life History' for discussion on this issue.

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Appendix List of Stories

Region	Source	Title	Page(s)
Guam	Guampedia (accessed 2014) Online resource of Chamorro heritage and culture, which includes oral stories. Contributions are made by scholars whose area of study is Guam.	Puntan and Fu'una	87
		Puntan Dos Amantes	157
		Sirena	50
		The Young Maidens that Saved Guam	199
		The Folktales of Micronesia (1973) Stories in this collection were collected by or under the supervision of the author Roger E. Mitchell.	The Mermaid
Indonesia	Dongeng Daerah Sulawesi (1959) A small collection of stories in Bahasa Indonesia by the Cultural Centre (Djawatan Kebudayaan).	Asal Usul Gunung Batu Banawa	34
		Puteri Bosu	146
	Dongeng: Ragam cerita rakyat Tapanuli Bahagian Selatan (2012) A small collection of stories in Bahasa Indonesia by Ch. Sutan Tinggibarani Perkasa Alam.	Asal Mula Upacara Kasada	26
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Indonesian Tales of Treasures and Brides (2001)	The Best Gift of All	120
	The Goddess Bride	136
A small collection of illustrated stories in English by Kuniko Sugiura.		
Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus (2001)	Janda Miskin dengan Ikan Gabus	100
An illustrated storybook by Hardjana HP in both English and Bahasa Indonesia		
La'bo Balida: Cerita Rakyat Massenrempulu (2009)	Beristerikan Daun Pacar	96
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	Ulat Berbulu	127
A small collection of stories in Bahasa Indonesia by authors listed as Arham, St. Ramlah Amran L., Nadirah, M. Fajirin, Sardiana, Fatimah, Tamrin, and Kurniawati.		
Putri Bunga Melur (2001)	Putri Bunga Melur	142
An illustrated storybook by Murti Bunanta in both English and Bahasa Indonesia.		
Putri Mandalika (2005)	Putri Mandalika	190

	An illustrated storybook by Murti Bunanta in both English and Bahasa Indonesia.		
	Rajapala & Ken Sulasih (2012)	Rajapala & Ken Sulasih	135
	An illustrated storybook by Yolanda Rosoff in both English and Bahasa Indonesia.		
	Tradisi Lisan dalam Cerita Rakyat Sumatera Utara (2012)	Polosit	161
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	A small collection of stories in Bahasa Indonesia by author Shafwan Hadi Umry.		
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	A small collection of oral stories by folklorist Lee Haring.	Two for the Husband, One for the Wives	178
	Over the lip of the world: among the storytellers of Madagascar (1999)	Betombokoantsoro: Faralahy Bikesa, the Monster	86
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	A collection of oral stories by author and scholar Colleen J. McElroy.	Raharinora and Randriantsara	155
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A small collection of stories in English by an unknown author.		
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Standalone illustrated story by an unknown author.		

	The Princess of Gunung Ledang (1980)	The Princess of Gunung Ledang	118
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Palau	The Folktales of Micronesia (1973)	The Beheaded Lover	160
	Stories in this collection were collected by or under the supervision of the author Roger E. Mitchell.	The Disguised Warrior	113
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	An edited collection of stories by Richard M. Dorson.	The Adulteress Rat (by E. Arsenio Manuel)	169
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		Philippine Folklore Stories (1904)	Catalina of Dumaguete
	A collection of stories by John Maurice Miller, who published this anthology while the Philippines were being colonized by the United States of America.	Mangita and Larina	81
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		Philippine Myths, Legends, and Folktales (1998)	Tale of the 101 Brothers and their Sister
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during and after the United States of America's colonization of the Philippines.

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