

# **ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND***

**PEH YANG YU**

SCHOOL OF ART, DESIGN AND MEDIA

A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts (Research)

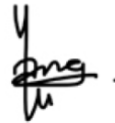
## Statement of Originality

I certify that all work submitted for this thesis is my original work. I declare that no other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement. Except where it is clearly stated that I have used some of this material elsewhere, this work has not been presented by me for assessment in any other institution or University. I certify that the data collected for this project are authentic and the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

3 February 2019

.....

Date



.....

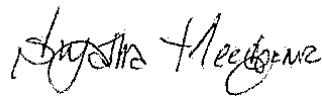
Peh Yang Yu

## Supervisor Declaration Statement

I have reviewed the content of this thesis and to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain plagiarised materials. The presentation style is also consistent with what is expected of the degree awarded. To the best of my knowledge, the research and writing are those of the candidate except as acknowledged in the Author Attribution Statement. I confirm that the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

3 February 2019

.....  
Date



.....  
Sujatha Arundathi Meegama

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Nanyang Technological University, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences for granting me the scholarship for my M. A. (Research) in the School of Art, Design and Media (ADM). I would also like to thank the National Heritage Board (NHB) for giving me the research grant to fund my research.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Asst. Prof Sujatha Arundathi Meegama from the School of Art, Design and Media. Prof. Sujatha has provided immense guidance on my research and writing skills since three years back when I first took her art history module as an undergraduate student at ADM. Her constant assurance and encouragement have also given me the confidence to embrace things that I might otherwise shrink away from.

To my co-supervisor, Asst. Prof Bacsal Rhoda Myra Garces from the National Institute of Education who has believed in my research and selflessly extended her helping hand even though we did not know each other prior to this. Her constant motivation and valuable advice has made my journey in research much more manageable.

To Assoc. Prof Andrea Nanetti, Ms. Chia Hsiao Ching and the faculty of ADM who have supported us through this research journey and being ever so patient with our queries. I am also indebted to fellow researchers from the NTU School of Humanities project “Turtles all the Way Down” who have provided me unwavering motivation and support in making this thesis possible. I would also like to thank my examiners for their valuable comments that have helped to push my thesis further.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the authors (Mr. Pugalenthii Ramakrishnan and Mr. Don Bosco) and illustrators (Mr. Wilkie Tan, Ms. Beryl Kwok and Ms. Sharon Lei) of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* who have taken the time to grant me interviews. I would also like to thank the caretaker of the Chinese temple at Kusu Island, Mr. Seet Seng Huat, for being so accommodating every time I visited the island, and Ms. Marie Lee for sharing her upcoming play on Kusu Island.

To my family and friends who have provided immense support and encouragement throughout my research process, this accomplishment would not have been possible if without them.

Peh Yang Yu, 2019

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Literature Review.....	15
Methodology.....	17
Structure of Thesis .....	20
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGES IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.1 The Evolution of Image in the Illustrated Tales of <i>Kusu Island</i> .....	36
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>MULTIPLE REALITIES IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> .....</b>	<b>47</b>
2.1 Elements of Multiple Realities in the Illustrated Tales of <i>Kusu Island</i> .....	49
2.2 Grounded Theory Analysis .....	56
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>THE FICTIONAL MOTIF OF TURTLE IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> .....</b>	<b>63</b>
3.1 The Usage of Turtle as a Motif in Different Cultures .....	64
3.2 The Motif of Turtle in the Illustrated Tales of <i>Kusu Island</i> and the Implied Child Reader .....	71
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>APPENDIX C.....</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>THE TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> THROUGH THE LENS OF PROPP'S <i>MORPHOLOGY OF THE FOLKTALE</i>.....</b>	<b>115</b>
The Evolution of Text in the Tales of <i>Kusu Island</i> .....	115
<b>APPENDIX D .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF <i>KUSU ISLAND</i> AND THE IMPLIED CHILD READER ...</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>APPENDIX E.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>GROUNDING THEORY ANALYSIS (Based on interview transcripts) .....</b>	<b>145</b>
Coding for Illustrators .....	145
Coding for Authors .....	148
Selective coding of themes from the interview transcripts.....	150
<b>APPENDIX F .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS.....</b>	<b>151</b>
Transcript – Interview with Beryl Kwok, 21 September 2017 .....	151
Transcript – Interview with Don Bosco, 5 September 2017 .....	162
Transcript – Interview with Wilkie Tan, 4 September 2017 .....	165
Transcript – Interview with Pugalenthii, 18 September 2017 .....	189
Transcript – Interview with Sharon Lei, 12 September 2017 .....	227
Transcript – Interview with Marie Lee, 12 September 2017 .....	229

## ABSTRACT

*Kusu* Island is one of Singapore's sixty-three islands and has several names, such as "Pulau Tembakul" in Malay and "Peak Island" in English. Its most popular name, *Kusu*, comes from the Hokkien pronunciation of the Chinese characters 龟屿 (guī yǔ), which means 'Turtle Island'." As a small island city-state with centuries of history, Singapore is filled with traditional tales that have been passed down orally through generations. *Kusu Island* depicts two men – a Malay and a Chinese – who are saved by a giant turtle during a storm and then live on the island together. This island with the aid of the turtle is built through friendship and trust.

There has been scant scholarly research focusing on island creation stories and visual imagery in children's illustrated books especially in Southeast Asia. Moreover, there is a research gap in examining illustrated children's books through an art historical perspective. Hence, this thesis focuses on the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* over the past decades. This includes contextualising the changes in narratives and visual representations of the story with reference to the transformations in society of the time, and how the past and present, fiction and reality collide. In order to respond to the research gap, I used Frank Serafini's journal articles alongside Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scotts' *How Picturebooks Work* to argue that the increased sophistication of visual images over the past decades has enhanced the interplay of image and text in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. The visual narrative adds a complexity and depth to the textual narrative, hence influencing the meaning and experiences of the story. The structural narratives of the tales of *Kusu Island* were also studied using Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, revealing its consistency throughout the decades. Using Lutz Röhrich's *Folktales and Reality* I studied the 'reality' of the age in which the book was written and illustrated, showing the evolution of the folktales. In addition to Röhrich's theories, interviews with the authors and illustrators were also conducted to contribute as primary data to the analysis of the tales of *Kusu Island*. A grounded theory was used to analyse the interview results to show that the creation of these tales is highly dependent on the illustrators' and authors' decisions and influences in the process, and how these tales can affect the implied child readers through its visual and textual narratives.

The significance of this research is threefold. First, it brings forth a working model of visual image analysis in illustrated children's books by creating a framework for future scholarship to build on. The second significance of this thesis heightened the

relationship between cultural development and their defining historical and social features of different epochs, where illustrated books were also products of their time and space despite recounting “timeless stories”. Finally, in researching on the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, this study promotes the appreciation for existing islands creation stories so as to encourage further scholarship into this domain in children’s literature.

## INTRODUCTION

*The Chinese fisherman is helpless against the strong wind and choppy waters, but continues to throw his net into the sea. He loses his balance and finds himself landing in the cold and dark waters. He desperately gasps for his breath and pleads for help, “Help me, God!” “Who will look after my wife and children?” The rain only continues to beat down cruelly on his face.*

*When all hope seems bleak and the fisherman is about to give up, a large turtle appears before him, inviting him to climb on its back. The fisherman quickly did as he was told. It was a rough ride and they soon reach a deserted island.*

*He then realises that he is far from home, and may never see his family again, but decides to settle on the new island. He explores the dense jungle and finds food to stay alive and raw materials to build a shelter. He lives alone on the island peacefully until one day, he hears a familiar voice crying for help. The Chinese fisherman ran to the shore and saw a familiar outline of the turtle who has rescued him carrying a man on its back. The Chinese fisherman welcomes the man to the island, and learns that he is a fellow Malay fisherman. They later become good friends and tell each other stories about their past lives back home. For a long time, the two friends never see their saviour turtle again.*

*As the two friends live happily on the island, they decide to build a Chinese temple and a Malay shrine to give thanks to the turtle for saving their lives (Lim 2005, 33).*

The story of the stranded fishermen illustrates how *Kusu* island got its name. “Kusu” is the Hokkien pronunciation of the Chinese characters [龟屿], and translates literally to Turtle Island.<sup>1</sup> The island is also known as “Peak Island” in English or “Pulau Tembakul” in Malay, after the *tembakul* fish (mudskipper) that can be found around the island. The island, said to be shaped like a turtle, is located south-west (1.2232° N, 103.8611° E) of Singapore (Map 1), and is one of its sixty-three islands (Humphreys 2015). The earliest mention of the island in a textual source refers to it as

---

<sup>1</sup>The Chinese dialects that are spoken in Singapore mainly includes Hokkien, Teochew, Hakka, Hainanese, Cantonese and many more. According to the 2010 Singapore census, Hokkiens form the majority of the Chinese Singaporean at about 40 percent, making them the largest Chinese dialect group in Singapore (Conceicao, 2016).

the Kusu Reef. In 1616, Dom Jose De Silva, the Spanish Governor of the Philippines, claimed the island as the “Governor’s Island”, and was later adopted by the British as the “Governor’s Straits”, and finally renamed as “Goa Island” by the British East India Company in 1806 (Chia 2009, 78). With the arrival of Stamford Raffles in Singapore in 1819, the island was chosen as a reference point for the colony’s new port, and a signal station and a signal mast operated by the Harbour Master’s Department was built in 1822. In the late nineteenth to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kusu Island was a burial site for the immigrants who had died on quarantine for cholera on nearby St John’s and Lazarus Islands (Chia 2009, 77). Currently, it is a popular destination for an annual pilgrimage, where tens of thousands of devotees travel to its shores for two places of worship, the *Tua Pek Kong* Temple and the Kusu *keramat*. Apart from its colonial histories, it is an island filled with stories of miraculous occurrences. Although rendered as myths, these stories provide important clues to people’s lives, beliefs, cultures, and religions across space and time.

Singapore is a small island city-state that has centuries of history (Miksic 2013, 2). It was an excellent location as a trading port even before the arrival of the British in 1819, where it was a link in a chain of seaports connecting China with India and beyond (e.g. along the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea, including countries such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia) in the fourteenth century (Miksic 2013, 20). After the arrival of the British in the nineteenth century, it was a trading hub with many countries from the East and the West coming to Singapore. Later, migrant workers from China and Indians from India and Malaya came to join the Malays, who are the native inhabitants of Singapore (Hu 1996). The assimilation of these people from different culture groups eventually contributed to the colourful stories of Singapore. Many of its old stories includes a variety of genres, from the mystical past of the great Rājās and brave warriors to stories of the common people that embody certain moral qualities, to island-creation stories and how certain places in Singapore got their names. Some of these stories include human interaction with supernatural forces or anthropomorphic animals. The stories of Kusu Island represent just one aspect of a greater body of traditional tales of Singapore and its history.

This thesis focuses on the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* over the past decades from 1979 to 2016. This includes contextualising the changes in narratives and visual representations of the story with reference to the transformations in society of the time, and how the past and present, fiction and reality collide. More specifically, I investigated how the evolution of the tales via visual culture has enabled

timeless elements (including architecture, social values, heritage and culture) to the tales that can parallel their current world, and thus such an analysis can reveal the association between fiction and social reality through the presentation of image and text in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*.

In this thesis, the tales of *Kusu Island* are classified as folktales. Folktales are stories passed down by oral tradition from generation to generation. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a tale is “a fictitious or true narrative or story”, and a folktale is “a story originating in popular culture, typically passed on by word of mouth”. In particular, folktales can be interpreted to include all forms of prose narrative, regardless of whether they are literal or oral (Kong and Goh 1995), since countless stories could have been taken orally from storytellers and then entered into literary collections, or vice versa (Thompson 1997, 4). Although there are no early written records of the *Kusu Island* tales, the available textual and visual sources found locally (e.g. English and Chinese newspaper articles, animations, documentaries, and illustrated books) strongly suggest Chinese and Malay cultural and language influences in these stories.

According to folklorist Alan Dundes, folklores survive through time because of their adaptability to new environments, even within contemporary times (Dundes 1965, 1-26). Hence, the re-telling and reinterpretation of these traditional tales have resulted in the existence of numerous versions of a single tale, probably due to the transmission processes. In the case of *Kusu Island*, between 1979 and 2016, the illustrated folktale of *Kusu Island* was retold on at least seven occasions, signifying the popularity of this tale in the children’s illustrated book format, as well as Kusu Island’s legacy in collections of tales from Singapore.<sup>2</sup> *Kusu Island* is a story, a folktale that focuses on the creation of the island. Although a folktale is largely considered to be fictional, it encapsulates the beliefs and the imagination of the people and their society in each historical epoch. This thesis henceforth examines how both fiction and social realities are reflected through images and texts in the tales of *Kusu Island*.

As ‘folklore is about living manifestations’, and a fundamental experience of human life (Mahmud 2010, 274), it can shape our understanding of the ‘world as a

---

<sup>2</sup> Other popular Singapore tales that are constantly being published in children’s illustrated books include “Attack of the Swordfish”, “Badang the Magnificent”, “Sisters’ Island”, “The Legend of Sang Nila Utama”, “Radin Mas”, and “The Legend of Junk Island”. These stories are usually published as part of a collection of tales from Singapore, just like *Kusu Island*. The seven illustrated books that I am examining in this thesis consist of such collection of tales from Singapore.

shared, social reality' (Mahmud 2010, 161). It is crucial to contextualise the different variations of the tales of *Kusu Island* within the social, economic and political conditions of Singapore during particular time periods when the stories were being illustrated and published. The analysis of the various retellings and re-illustrations of the tales of *Kusu Island* can reveal information about Singapore society and its visual culture at various points of history. Such an analysis offers an opportunity to gain insights into society, its people and prevailing ideas. In *Letting Stories Breathe*, Arthur W. Frank analyses how stories function by focusing on how stories are in dialogue with one another, people's experiences and societies (Frank 2010). Frank offers a theory of how stories shape us through considering the various forms of storytelling from folklore to everyday conversations (Frank 2010, 12).

For instance, Singapore is a multi-cultural society, and this is reflected in the tales of *Kusu Island* through the co-existence of people from different races and religions on the island. The illustrated folktales reflected this unique aspect for children to develop an understanding of themselves and the different cultures that surround them. Children's literature scholar Junko Yokota's journal article, titled "Books That Represent More Than One Culture", investigated the importance of multicultural literature and argued that it helps to enhance the reader's knowledge about themselves and the world, and in showing commonalities across different cultures (Yokota 1994). The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* could also hint at how the people in the past perceived cultural values and behaviours, and these discoveries can be compared with present-day behaviours and the multiple realities of various epochs.

These social realities could be seen through the interplay of images and text in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. The single illustration or several illustrations that are presented together with the text narrative do not simply exist as a visually pleasing element, but contribute to the essence of the stories. The illustrations in the tales of *Kusu Island* are very different in terms of the visual styles. The interplay between images and words are unique to each rendition of the story as well, and this can affect the interpretation and understanding of each story. Each change is significant as it reflects the beliefs and interests of the author and illustrator in the creation of the tale, as well as the historical, cultural and fictional elements being perceived at that time.

The understanding of an image requires a "discernment and ordering of the individual characteristics" of the image, similar to text. However, as the image possesses a different set of characteristics than the text, it is necessary for the reader to

look beyond these characteristics mostly associated with language text in order to completely understand an image (Catalano 2005, 27). An image that exists within an illustrated book is not simply for aesthetic purposes, but provides deeper insights into the narrative. W. J. T. Mitchell notes that the pictorial artist “is as much concerned with the invisible as the visible world” and that the artist could present the viewer with “more than what meets the eyes.” (Mitchell 1986, 39) Through the examination of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, we can see the increase in sophistication of the illustrations in the different versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* over the past decades although the textual narratives remain largely the same. This has allowed the images to affect human emotions and in influencing the meanings and experiences of the story. More importantly, as my analysis shows, it is the image that allows for the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* through the decades so that it can remain relevant and popular for generations to come.

In this thesis, the term “illustration” is used more often than instead of the term “picture” primarily because picture connotes visual imagery as its primary source of meaning-making. Author and illustrator Uri Shulevitz in *Writing with Pictures* explained that picture books are “written with pictures as much as they are written with words,” and meaning is achieved by the reader continuously moving back and forth between image and text (Shulevitz 1985). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a “picture book” is a book with many illustrations, especially one for children. *The Randolph Caldecott Medal* award also defines picture books as distinguished from other books with illustrations, as it is the one that essentially provides the child with a visual experience, of which it has a collective unity of story-line, theme, or concept that are developed through a series of pictures (Association for Library Service to Children 2017).

With this, the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* are still largely considered to be illustrated books despite the increasing complexity of the images, given that the story can be understood through simply reading the texts. In the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, there is a significant amount of written text being presented with the illustration. Unlike that of picture books, illustrated books contain texts that are seemingly complete in and of themselves, where the story could possibly be understood without the illustrations (Catalano 2005, 11). According to the Academy of Literary Arts & Publishing Singapore, illustrated books are defined to consist of illustrations in a book, which helps to enhance the story that is largely narrated through text (Singapore Book Council Academy 2018). However, the study of the various

versions of *Kusu Island* have shown that illustrations have the power to change and enhance the meaning and experience of a seemingly “complete” story. Author Joanne Goodman refers to images and text as differing “agencies.” “Agency... refers to the means or instrument used to accomplish the act”, where she defined the “act” as the narrative (Goodman 1990, 93). Hence, this thesis argues that the increase in the complexity of the images in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* enhances the interplay of image and text, which affects the interpretation of the story. It should be noted that the word “image” is at times used to synonymously refer to illustration.

The seven illustrated books that consist of the tales of *Kusu Island* that I will be examining in this thesis include:

*Favourite Stories from Singapore* (Monteiro and Watson 1979) (Picture 1)

*Myths and Legends of Singapore* (Pugalenthii 2001) (Picture 2)

*Tales from The Islands of Singapore* (Chandran-Dudley 2001) (Picture 4 and 5)

*Myths and Legends of Singapore* (Pugalenthii 2002) (Picture 3)

*Attack of the Swordfish* (Lim 2005) (Picture 6,7, 8 and 9)

*Asian Favourite Stories: Singapore* (Comber 2011) (Picture 10 and 11)

*Island of Legends* (Bosco 2016) (Picture 12, 13 and 14)

## Literature Review

Stories reflect the realities of the age, and the use of traditional tales in reflecting historical epochs and societal values is evident through several scholarly examples.

In her M.A. thesis titled “Fishy Tales: *Singapura Dilanggar Todak* as Myth and History In Singapore’s Past”, Sophie Sim investigated the relationship between literature and history through an examination of different versions of a fourteenth-century myth, *Singapura Dilanggar Todak*. Stephen Greenblatt’s method of New Historicism is used to study the plot, structure and characters (Sim 2005). Sim (2005) found that different authors have appropriated the myth as a platform to convey ideas and cultures of specific historical times, often promoting certain agendas. Similarly, in *Mulan’s Legend and Legacy in China and the United States*, Lan Dong (2011) observed how the depictions of Mulan in children’s picture books are constantly evolving in terms of its visual and textual depiction in response to historical and cultural influences. These picture books offer variations in storytelling and illustrations, and capture the traditional Chinese legacy while adding new messages and implications within the context of contemporary America (Dong, 2011, 125). On the other hand, in *Narrative Structures in Burmese Folk Tales*, Soe Marlar Lwin investigated narrative structures as a way to understand common narrative patterns and social purposes of folktales. In her study, she attempted to relate the form (narrative structure) of a folktale to its function (social purpose) and field (narrative content) by comparing the structural patterns found in Burmese folktales to folktales of other cultures (Lwin 2010).

The examples from Sim and Lwin have shown that scholars have mainly researched on the literature in traditional tales to reflect the social realities of a particular culture. In addition, picture books are the common medium of focus for many scholars such as Lan Dong, for example. Hence, there appears to be a research gap in examining illustrated traditional tales through an art historical perspective, and on the significance of images in the children’s illustrated books of Singapore.

In the region of Southeast Asia, scant scholarship exists involving the tales on island creation, unlike that of East Asia,<sup>3</sup> North America,<sup>4</sup> Oceania,<sup>5</sup> and even the North Atlantic.<sup>6</sup> Given that Southeast Asia is largely made up of islands, it is crucial for us to research on island creation in this region. Hence, my research aims to investigate the significance of island creation stories in Singapore as an extension of the larger tradition of island creation stories in Southeast Asia, in reflecting one's history, cultures and traditions.

---

<sup>3</sup> Koh, Hae-Kyoung. "The Goddesses of Cheju Island: A Study of the Myths of a Korean Egalitarian Culture." Ph.D. D. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2001. Konoshi, Takamitsu. "The Land of Yomi: On the Mythical World of the Kojiki." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 11 (1984): 57-76.

<sup>4</sup> Yellowhorn, E., and Lowinger, K. *Turtle Island: The Story of North America's First People*. Annick Press, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Fraser, John. *The Samoan Story of Creation*. Forgotten Books, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Rosenmeyer, T.G. "Plato's Atlantis Myth: "Timaeus" or "Critias"?" *Phoenix* 10 (1956): 163-172.

## Methodology

This thesis utilised a mixed method for the study of visual imageries in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, and a table was created to provide a clear overview of how the methods are being applied to the analysis of various visual elements. This included references to a number of methodological approaches by children's literature scholars like Frank Serafini (2010) and Maria Nikolajeva (2006) and Carole Scott (2006) who have done extensive research on picture books. Although both Frank Serafini and Maria Nikolajeva have used picture books as their main source of examples in illustrating their methodologies, many of these theories are still applicable to illustrated books. In fact, there are similarities between picture books and illustrated books, where they consist of both image and text, and serve the same purpose as learning materials for children. Hence, I am going to use their methodologies to analyse illustrated books because there is an absence of scholars who have written about illustrated book. Interviews with illustrators and authors were also conducted to reveal the rationale behind their decision making process when creating the story. My artistic observations based on my personal experiences in creating children's illustrated books have also contributed to the visual analysis of the images. The use of such a mixed method is to ensure that there is a comprehensive study of the images of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* from various perspectives as it has not been done before with any of the traditional tales of Singapore.

Serafini labelled the contemporary picture books as "Multimodal texts", where meanings are conveyed through the use of two signs systems: written language and visual image (Serafini 2010, 85). An analytical framework for multimodal texts was created in identifying how readers can have alternate perspectives on the depictions of the world presented, the structures and design elements used, and the ideological influences that affected one's perceptions and interpretations when reading picture books (Serafini 2010, 101). Serafini also highlighted the importance of semiotics and visual grammar in affecting the reader's understanding of the visual imagery. His comprehensive framework is used in this thesis to understand the mechanics and rationale behind the creations of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, and how those have evolved over time to cater to the demands of society.

Meanwhile in *How Picturebooks Work*, Nikolajeva and Scott introduced many different types of interaction between verbal and visual components of a picture book,

namely “symmetrical,” “complementary,” and “counterpoint” interactions (Nikolajeva and Scott 2013). Following this, they discussed how the image and text interaction in picture books can result in various interpretations for specific narrative elements such as “Settings,” “Characterization,” and “Time and Movement.” This book definitely helped in developing a comprehensive system and an international vocabulary about text and image interaction that could contribute to the analysis of the illustrated books of *Kusu Island*.

As it is believed that folktales have a strong relationship with reality (Kong 1995, 2), the elements of reality in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* was investigated with references to Lutz Röhrich ideas in the form of “Storytellers’ reality”, “Fictive reality”, “Historical reality” and “Projected reality” in his book *Folktales and Reality* (Röhrich 1992). The study on the multiple variations of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* over the past decades using Lutz Röhrich’s idea of multiple realities was done to reveal the social, economic and political conditions of Singapore during the particular time period when the stories were recorded. Articles, scholarly papers,<sup>7</sup> documentaries<sup>8</sup> and newspapers were also used to aid my research into the history of Kusu Island and its stories. This was done together with the interviews I have conducted with the local writers and artists who were involved in the artistic and narrative directions of the stories for the visual and textual analysis of *Kusu Island*.

The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* can be a valuable source in understanding how people visualise, understand and perceive folktales in contemporary contexts. A grounded theory methodology was also chosen to analyse the interviews. This is because it can generate or discover a theory that relates to a particular situation grounded in the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Creswell 2008, 441). The grounded theory in this study reflected how the illustrators and authors of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have contributed to the evolution of the tales and how it has remained relevant till today. I have conducted structured interviews with each participant. Four illustrators and two authors who were involved in the creation of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* were invited to participate in the study.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Chia, J. M. T., “Managing The Tortoise Island: Tua Pek Kong Temple, Pilgrimage, and Social Change in Pulau Kusu, 1965-2007.” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 11 (2009): 78.

<sup>8</sup> Producer, Ng Ding Jie, Director Chang Soh Kiak. 18 Aug 2015. Singapore Archipelago – Ep 2. Singapore

<sup>9</sup> I have obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct these interviews. A set of structured interview questions were sent to the participants before the interview. These interviews were held either face-to-face meeting, email interview or through Skype. After the participants gave written

After identifying the realities present in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, it is important to address the underlying fiction that makes the story magical. It was found that the motif of the turtle played a significant role in contributing to the fantastical essence of the tales, and as seen from all the titles of the tales that consisted of either “Kusu” or “Turtle” within. Hence, the symbolic meanings of the turtle motif throughout the different cultures across the world will be discussed, focusing on turtle motifs in island creation tales. The purpose is to reveal the embedded meanings of the turtle motif in the fictional narrative of the tales of *Kusu Island*, as well as introduce the importance of island creation tales. In finding out the symbolic aspects of the turtles motifs in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, a comparative method of analysis according to Kristina Lindell’s *Motif-Index for Southeast Asian Folk-Literature* was used to study the motif, complementing the structuralist method by Vladimir Propp (Appendix C). Methods used by authors to draw relationship between the turtle motif and the implied child reader was also studied through a detailed analysis of how the turtle character was being anthropomorphized in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*.

By analysing and contextualising the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, this thesis attempts to fulfil three objectives. First, by using an art historical lens, I show how the evolution and increased complexity of image and text has enhanced the interplay of image and text in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. Second, I show how the retelling and re-illustration of the tales of *Kusu island* can reveal aspects about the society, thoughts, interests and agendas of the people at that period of time. Finally, I examine how the fictional motif of the turtle in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* is used to draw relationships with the implied reader.

---

informed consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The participants then reviewed through the transcripts and gave their final approval.

## Structure of Thesis

The introduction provides an overview of the history of Kusu Island, and the significance of the illustrated folktales of *Kusu Island* in reflecting the beliefs and imagination of the people and societal values in each time period of each illustrated book (the 1970s, the 2000s and the next decade 2010 – 2019). From Chapter one to three, this thesis focuses on the importance and complexity of the visual imageries, as well as in examining the interplay of reality and fiction in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*.

Chapter one addresses the increased sophistication of various illustrations found in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* over the past decades. It was the image that allowed for the evolution of the tales so that it can remain relevant and attractive for generations to come. Comparative and visual analyses were done on each of the illustrations found in the seven-illustrated tales with references to methodologies by children's literature scholars such as Frank Serafini (2010), Nikolajeva and Scott (2006). The interviews conducted with the illustrators and authors of the tales of *Kusu Island* were also utilised in order to find out the reasons behind their artistic and narrative choices.

Chapter two studies the multiple portrayals of realities found in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*: Storytellers' reality, Fictive reality, Historical reality and Projected reality. Using Röhrich's ideas and the data collected from the interviews with the illustrators and authors, I have analysed the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. This revealed the social reality, its history, politics and societal values as reflected in the interplay of image and text in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. In this chapter, I have also expanded on Röhrich's theory to include the realities of the illustrators since they could be considered as "storytellers" as well, and have played a significant role in contributing to the visual narratives.

Chapter three highlights the fictional aspect of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* through the turtle motif since it is the most prominent magical character throughout all the tales. It was done by discussing its symbolic meaning in different cultures across the world through its various usage and depiction in tales, especially in island creation tales. Comparative analysis on the motif of the turtle in the tales of *Kusu Island* according to Kristina Lindell's Motif-Index for Southeast Asian Folk-

Literature was utilised as the preferred analytical framework. A study is also done on the relationship between the turtle motif and the implied child reader.

In the conclusion, I highlight the insights gained from studying illustrated folktales in general, while introducing the presence of other island creation tales in Singapore that can be studied, as well as the other existing art forms that re-tell or perform the tales of *Kusu Island*. Most importantly, I highlight the possible multicultural aspects of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* that can be further investigated.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGES IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND*

According to W. J. T Mitchell, “Word and image,” are similar to the concepts of race, gender, and class in the study of culture that “designates multiple regions of social and semiotic difference that we can live neither with nor without, but must continually reinvent and renegotiate.” (Mitchell 2012, 60).

The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* contain images that have the power to influence the meaning and experience of the story. It is thus imperative to probe deeper into the images so as to obtain deeper insights into the narrative. This chapter aims to show the importance of images where they have the ability to reveal what the textual narrative may not be able to. Comparative analysis was done on each of the images found in the seven illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* with reference from the methodologies by several children literature scholars (Table 1) and interviews conducted with the illustrators and authors of the story.

Frank Serafini, a prominent scholar in the field of children literature developed a framework for understanding multi-modal texts. He defines multi-modal texts as texts that incorporate a variety of modes, including visual images and design elements along with written text (Serafini 2011, 342). Hence, we may regard illustrated books as multi-modal texts due to the presence of multiple modes (Serafini 2012, 153). Multi-modal texts require readers to work across multiple sign systems to construct meaning. According to Serafini, the mode of written language and that of visual image have different logics: written text is governed by the logic of time or temporal sequence, while visual image is governed by the logic of spatiality and simultaneity (Kress 2003). In decoding written text, readers navigate the design of the text, such as the left to right orientation of English language texts. Unlike the written text, the visual image directs the viewer’s attention to certain details through compositional structures and with certain features of visual grammar (e.g. framing, visual symbols, perspective). For the readers to comprehend and interpret the multi-modal text, they must be able to navigate what has been rendered by the illustrator, publisher or graphic designer, as well as what has been written by the author (Serafini 2012, 155).

The field of text and image are like two countries that speak different languages but have a long history of interaction, migration and cultural exchange (Mitchell 2012, 53). The text is a phonetic sign meant to be read aloud or “heard”, while the image is a visual sign representing the visual appearance of an object. The difference between text and image is the visual and aural experience (Mitchell 2012, 55). Hence, they are equally significant. Moreover, it is important to recognize that images are produced within a system of social power and ideology, and that it is through images that these ideologies are projected (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 21). As a result, the interrogation of the visual images and the elements of multi-modal texts, including the design elements “are just as important as the analysis of the written text” (Serafini 2012, 160). In addition, readers will have to consider aspects of production and reception in order to understand the images and design elements presented in multi-modal texts. The ability of images to affect the readers is highly dependent on the larger cultural meanings they evoke, and the social, political and cultural contexts they are viewed in (Sturken & Cartwright 2001).

Drawing reference from Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Serafini presented three components of visual grammar that are vital for the comprehension of visual images and multi-modal texts: (1) composition, (2) perspective, and (3) visual symbols (Serafini 2011, 345).

Composition refers to the ways objects are organized and positioned in a visual image. The arrangement of the objects determines their importance and their interactions with other visual elements in the image. The three compositional techniques that artists and graphic designers use to analyse images are (1) the relative size of the object, (2) colour and contrast, and (3) foregrounding and focus. In terms of perspective, it refers to how far or close away the viewer is positioned relative to the objects and characters present in an image as this will affect the viewer’s relationship to these visual elements. When the objects or characters are placed in close proximity to the viewers, they will tend to feel a stronger relationship with them. Also, the proximity between the characters and objects in an image also emphasizes their relationship. For visual symbols, it represents ideas that are conventionalized through their use of sociocultural contexts, similar to that of semiotics.<sup>10</sup> They are constructed

---

<sup>10</sup> Semiotics is the theory of signs where it could provide a framework for understanding relationships between the image and society, and image and viewer. Understanding the meaning of the image also requires a consideration of influences injected by the illustrator, viewer and cultural tropes, which create multiple meanings (D’Alleva 2014, 27). In the case of an illustrated book, a message that could either be in the form of image and/or text is sent by the author/illustrator to the reader. For the reader to decipher the

in social setting and being used by artists to convey hidden meanings. Furthermore, as an illustrator, it is my perspective that there will also be a need to consider line and shadow, framing, and the style of illustrations.

On the other hand, Nikolajeva and Scott's *How Picturebooks Work* (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006) introduces different types of interactions between verbal and visual components of a picture book, such as when words describe the same story as the pictures (symmetrical); when words fill in the gap left by pictures (complementary); or where there are contradictory texts and images (counterpoint). Many of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* can be considered to have symmetrical verbal-visual interaction where the image duplicates the verbal text. This is largely so as these tales are quite dependent on historical knowledge, and that the details in the settings would have to be depicted accurately since Kusu Island is an actual place with a Chinese temple and a Malay *keramat*.

*How Picturebooks Work* also discussed specific narrative elements such as "Setting", "Characterization", and "Time and Movement". In "Setting", the authors discussed how text and image interaction in picture books can result in a variety of possibilities of interpretation for the settings. For instance, while words can only describe space and forces the readers to see certain parts of the setting, pictures on the other hand can show the setting visually, allowing the readers to have the freedom to form their own interpretation. In "Characterization", it examines how characters are portrayed through the different techniques of speech and action, as well as spatial positioning. Finally, "Time and Movement" investigates how the flow of time can be depicted through a sequence of pictures or visual devices.

---

message, he/she shares with the author/illustrator, and this reality is known as the context. The message(s) must be transmitted through a medium that the receiver can access and set in a code that the receiver understands (D'Alleva 2014, 30).

Table 1. Methods on analyzing visual images in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*

Methodologies	Understanding Visual Images (Visual grammar)			Image and Text Relationship
	Composition	Perspective	Visual Symbols	
Frank Serafini - Framework to comprehend multi-modal texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The relative size of the object</li> <li>- Colour and contrast</li> <li>- Foregrounding and focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proximity of viewers relative to the objects and characters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Represents ideas that are conventionalized through their use of sociocultural contexts</li> </ul>	
Nikolajeva and Scott - Provides a system and vocabulary to understand the interplay of image and text with relation to narrative elements				Types of interaction between verbal and visual components of the picture book: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Symmetrical</li> <li>- Complementary</li> <li>- Counterpoint</li> </ul> Narrative Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting</li> <li>- Characterization</li> <li>- Time and Movement</li> </ul>
Anne D'Alleva - Semiotics is the theory of signs. - A group of signs work together to create meaning			A message through image is sent by the illustrator to a reader. This message must refer to the common reality (context) that both the sender and the receiver share. The message must also be transmitted through a medium and a code that the receiver	A message through image and text is sent by the author and illustrator to a reader. This message must refer to the common reality (context) that both the sender and the receiver share. The message must also be transmitted through a

			can access, understand and use.	medium and a code that the receiver can access, understand and use.
<p>W.J.T Mitchell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Text as an aural experience</li> <li>- Image as a visual experience</li> <li>- Both are equally significant</li> </ul>				Text is a phonetic sign where it is meant to be read aloud or “heard”, while the image is a visual sign where it represents the visual appearance of an object.
<p>Sturken &amp; Catwright</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Images are produced within a system of social power and ideology, and that it is through images that these ideologies are projected on</li> </ul>			The ability of images to affect the readers is highly dependent on the larger cultural meanings they evoke, and the social, political and cultural contexts they are viewed in.	
<p>Interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews conducted with the illustrators and authors of the illustrated tales of <i>Kusu Island</i> in order to find out the reasons behind their</li> </ul>	Interviews with illustrators	Interviews with illustrators	Interviews with illustrators	Interviews with illustrators and authors

artistic and narrative directions for the story				
Own Artistic Analysis - Given my experiences in illustration for children's illustrated books, I have contributed my own analysis to the various elements in the illustrated tales of <i>Kusu Island</i>	Own analysis and observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Line</li> <li>- Shadow</li> <li>- Brushstrokes</li> <li>- Placement of figures</li> <li>- Shapes</li> <li>- Light</li> <li>- Materials</li> </ul>	Own analysis and observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Space</li> <li>- Foreground, background and middle ground</li> </ul>	Own analysis and observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Function</li> </ul>	Own analysis and observations

Table 1 provides an overview of how each scholar's method is being applied in the analysis of the images in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. While Frank Serafini's framework allowed us to understand the ways to comprehend multi-modal texts through signs systems and visual grammar, Nikolajeva and Scott's *How Picturebooks Work* (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006) provided a system and vocabulary to understand specifically the interaction of text and image with respect to narrative elements (e.g. Setting, Characterization, Time and Movement). Meanwhile, Mitchell theorised that the text as a phonetic sign and the image as a visual sign provide a combination of visual and aural reading experiences. Sturken and Cartwright's idea – that images are part of cultural and ideological production and that its ability to affect the readers are dependent on the cultural, social and political context that they are viewed in – is similar to that of semiotics where a group of signs work together to create meanings. The interviews that I have conducted with the illustrators and authors of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Islands* will also reveal the reasons behind their artistic and narrative directions of the story. I have also analysed each of the images through my own artistic observations in areas such as visual analysis and interpretation, given my experiences in creating children's illustrated books. The purpose of using this mixed methods approach is to provide a comprehensive study on the images from various perspectives.

The oldest rendition of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* dates back to 1979, and the latest publication was in 2016. The number of illustrations found in each book varies from a single to four images, and we can see how the images increased overtime with the introduction of colours into the illustrations. Each image reflects a part of reality, history, culture, and beliefs of the people in that specific time period. The following paragraphs will discuss the significance of images, by looking at all the seven versions of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*.

#### *The Kusu Legend (Monteiro and Watson 1979)*

Monteiro and Watson's illustrated tale of *Kusu Island* only consists of one image. I have analysed the image in detail, looking at the appearance of the characters, setting and the composition, and focusing on the aspects that are not mentioned in the text. In Picture 1, the illustration was carefully rendered with clean outlines that depicted a scene where two men as described by the written text are preparing to leave for the island for prayers. In the background, silhouettes of two small islands could be

seen, where the perspective could suggest that they are a distance away. The sea was seemingly calm due to the lack of ripples on the surface, and the sun shining through the cloudy skies. The Chinese and Arab man getting on a boat and going out to sea were depicted in the foreground. A sailboat that probably took reference from South Asian and Southeast Asian fishing boats was depicted (Picture 15) with the Chinese man seated inside while the Arab man pushed the boat out to sea. The Chinese man was depicted as looking and pointing towards one of the offshore islands, indicating to his Arab companion and the viewers that they are heading in that direction.

According to the text, the setting of the story took place 150 years ago in a village, which is now called Singapore. While the image did not indicate a specific time or place, the text helps to complement it by giving additional details, and helping the readers to situate their understanding of the characters and objects to their era (e.g. costumes and the sail boat). This is especially important since the readers of the illustrated tale would have existed in a different time period, and may not be able to recognise these objects. The mentioning of time would have helped to place the readers' imagination back to the past, and could appear logical to them. The illustration helps the readers to have a sense of the proximity and location of the island that were not indicated in the text. In the text, it was mentioned that "their boat was very simple, and they took nothing to eat or drink". Indeed, the illustration shows that the boat is made up of wood with a simple sail, hence helping the readers to visualize how "simple" the boat looked in the story.

Moreover, while the text only provided a verbal mentioning of characters and setting and names, the illustration was able to actually show it (bringing it to life, the dressing of the characters). For instance, the text provided the readers the names of the characters. The Chinese was named Yam, and the Arab, Dato Syed Rahman, according to how the different ethnicity would have different styles of names. Although the text did not tell us how a Chinese or Arab man is supposed to look physically, the image gave the viewers a rather good idea of how they were dressed culturally. The Arab man was probably wearing a traditional garment known as the *thawb*, and a *keffiyeh* (Middle Eastern headdress). The Chinese man, on the other hand, was shown wearing a plain T-shirt, probably reflecting the common choice of clothing for the men back in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In an interview with *The Straits Times*, the artist also mentioned that he researched on the early period of Singapore's history in deciding what costumes to put on his characters (*The Straits Times*, 23 December 1977, p. 9). In addition, their

facial expressions depicted as if they were contented and were eager to leave for the island, as shown from the Arab man's body movement where he was depicted diligently pushing the boat out to sea; this was not mentioned in the text. Their close proximity shown in the image also indicated that they were in good relationship, since they both have a common interest as explained in the text.

### *Kusu Island (Pugalenthii 2001)*

In this version of the tale, I am going to discuss the artistic style used, as well as analyse the significance of the illustration in conjunction with the text. The single illustration in Picture 2 was done in black and white, over a pen-sketch style, depicting a scene where a huge turtle is carrying the fisherman to an island. We can see in the foreground that the size of the turtle is much larger than the tiny figure on top of its shell. The image shown is likely to be the scene where the Malay fisherman was being saved, as the figure has a dark complexion and was wearing a *songkok* (traditional Malay cap). Moreover, the illustration was being placed on the recto (right page), where the text narrating the scene was on the verso (left page); hence the readers can create a relationship between the verso and recto (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 150). In the background, we can see that a small island is depicted, housing coconut trees and hill-like landforms. A storm was brewing in the scene as represented by pen-sketch swirls in the sky, as well as choppy waters as highlighted by the chaotic line sketches in the sea.

Given that the style of illustration was not refined, it gives a raw rugged tone to the image, which further emphasized the perilous situation the fisherman was in as he overcame the storm with the help of the turtle as narrated by the texts. Unlike *The Kusu Legend*, the time and period where the story took place were not indicated at all in this story, both in terms of verbal and visual ellipses.<sup>11</sup> This thus reflects indefinite verbal and visual ellipses where there are no supporting textual or visual devices to help convey the passing of time (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 159). This also means that the story could possibly take place at any time, since the image only painted a general picture of a scene, hence allowing the story to be timeless.

---

<sup>11</sup> Verbal ellipses can be either definite (e.g. when it is specified that ten months, or six years have passed) or indefinite (e.g. long long ago). Visual ellipses are visual devices that communicate the passage of time (e.g. image of a clock).

Although the image did not depict the two fishermen living in harmony on the island as stated in the text, the illustrator has included an island with signs of resources for them to survive and live on, prompting the readers to fully comprehend the story with the workings of their imagination.

### *Kusu Island (Pugalenthii 2002)*

As Pugalenthii's *Kusu Island* is the only one with just the depiction of a turtle, I focused on the analysis of the turtle and its symbolic significance. Picture 3 was done in black and white, in a pen-sketch like style, depicting a scene where the turtle was resting on an island. The turtle was the main subject of the illustration that occupied the entire scene. It was quite realistically depicted with a peaceful expression on its face. The turtle was shown resting on a sandy beach near the waters as represented by the few wavy pen-sketch lines on the edge of the beach.

In this story, the illustrator chose to depict the scene of a turtle peacefully resting on the island instead of saving the fisherman. This seems to suggest a tribute to the turtle, which saved lives, hence placing visual emphasis on it. As the image was situated on the recto of the page, while the verso was narrating the dangerous plight of the fisherman as he was saved by the turtle, it allowed the readers to infer from the image that the turtle seemed to be a harmless, compassionate, and magical creature, or an embodiment of a guardian of the sea. It is not until the following page that the author narrates the scene of the image "it is believed that the turtle is still around and once in a while you can see it resting on the island (Pugalenthii 2002, 122)."

According to an interview with the author, Pugalenthii Ramakrishnan, he used the same text narrative for both books (See Pugalenthii 2001; 2002), but hired different artists since each artist has different skill sets (Pugalenthii, unpublished data). Hence, we can see that different artists interpreted the story differently. With the freedom of artistic expression, one can choose different aspects of the story to focus on – one that they can relate to, or one that is thought to be a good representation of the story. From here, we can see the importance of illustration in affecting us as readers in different ways according to the illustration style and subject matter, although the text remains the same.

Chandran-Dudley's version of *Kusu Island* is the first of the several books that has two illustrations in the tale. Visual analysis was done on the characters, setting and composition, as well as in analysing the possible reasons behind these illustrative decisions. The illustration in Picture 4 was done in black and white, and was highly stylized with thick angled strokes outlining the characters. It depicted a scene where a couple was huddled on top of a rock-like feature, and approaching an island resembling the shape of a turtle. The viewers are invited to look into the scene from a perspective right behind the couple, as if the readers are a part of it. The coarsely shaded waves on the sea coupled with the dark skies hinted at the terrible storm as narrated in the text.

As the image in Picture 4 is situated on the verso of the page, whereas the recto has not narrated this specific scene, this illustration acted as a mysterious "spoiler" for the reader. This would make the reader wonder where were the couple were in the picture? Where were they heading to? What was the turtle-island about? Would they survive through this ordeal? It encouraged the readers to anticipate what is going to happen next, and to solve the mystery of the illustration. It is only in the later pages of the story that the text narrative filled up the gaps left by the image, such as detailing the names of the characters, the time when it happened and so on. As this is the first illustration that appears for Chandran-Dudley's *Kusu Island*, it is also the most representative one that signified the chain of events which are about to unfold in the story. The emphasis on the couple in the illustration also symbolised a message of overcoming adversity together, as reflected in the sub-title of the tale. With each of their hands on each other's back, it goes to show that one will not abandon the other.

Picture 5 depicted the giant turtle communicating with the two fishermen. It depicted a scene where the turtle appeared to be significantly larger than the fishermen as it occupied two thirds of the frame, and was communicating with the two fishermen who were sitting cross-legged on the beach. Trees were also drawn on the foreground of the image to show that the island has signs of life. This image was placed next to the text narration, hence providing the readers an impression of the size of the turtle in comparison to the fishermen. The close proximity between the characters revealed that they were comfortable with each other despite having different identities (e.g. Malay

fisherman, Chinese fisherman, turtle). This parallels the idea of racial harmony and nation building of Singapore with the diverse range of people.

Furthermore, this story is one of the two versions of *Kusu Island* which included an anthropomorphic character of the turtle. This is in line with much of children's literature, where the rationale for anthropomorphising animals in children's literature is because children tend to find it easier to relate to animal characters (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 92). Wilkie Tan believed that the young children have a soft spot for inanimate objects or even talking animals, and it helped to "give purpose and meaning to life (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data)." Given that the author (Ron Chandran-Dudley) and Tan have a strong working relationship, there is indeed a strong correlation between the image and the text, where neither could work without the other to achieve the same impact.

#### *Kusu Island (Lim 2005)*

Lim's *Kusu Island* book shown in Picture 6 – 9 is the first to use colours to depict the four illustrations in *Kusu Island*. I examined the orientation of the book, along with the depiction of characters. The illustrator used the watercolour technique to illustrate the story, and the characters and settings were painted rather realistically. The orientation of the book is horizontal, and each page was filled with scenes of illustrations, which overwhelmed the text. The artist also used the technique of warping the perspective of the illustration, hence placing emphasis on certain characters in each of the scenes as they appeared closer and bigger to the readers. There was also an emphasis in the use of intense colours used to depict the illustrations, hence adding dramatic effect to the story.

The illustrator also made great use of exaggerated gestures and facial expressions in her paintings that worked in harmony with the text. The use of such techniques enhanced the imagination of the readers by adding visual dimensions to the narrative (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 83). For instance, when the fisherman insisted on heading out to sea for food despite the brewing storm, his wife started praying for his safety and protection. Her worry and concern was clearly highlighted through the depiction of her kneeling down on the ground and praying for his safety, her frantic face looking upwards (seemingly to the godly forces above) for help, with a tear rolling down her cheek – helpless except to pray for his safety (Picture 6). With the aid of

such visual devices, the image guides the readers to empathize with characters and their situation.

Picture 7 shows the giant turtle steadily braving the storm as it loomed over the fallen fisherman, giving him hope for survival. The sheer size and strength of the turtle gives the readers assurance that it has the ability to save the fisherman. Picture 9 visually depicts the harmonious living of the Chinese and Malay fishermen on the island after they were saved by the turtle, where they have established a little settlement with huts. The artist also illustrated the turtle resting in the background of the painting, seemingly hinting of its presence as a guardian of the island. A small Chinese temple was also included in the painting. Although the main narrative text does not mention the temple, the artist has decided to render a part of current-day Kusu Island. The direct reference to the temple can only be found on the following page that provides additional information about the history of the island and the story for educational purposes, probably prompting them to be interested in finding out more about the present-day Kusu Island.

#### *Kusu Island (Comber 2011)*

The introduction of digital painting was evident in Comber's version of *Kusu Island*, where the two illustrations were done in a digital colourful sketch-like style. As this is one of the two *Kusu Island* tales that did not depict the turtle visually, I analysed how the tale is otherwise being illustrated and its chosen illustrative style.

In Picture 10, a Chinese man was depicted drowning in the ocean, accompanied by several fishes swimming around him. There was also a use of framing in this image that resulted in a sense of detachment between the image and the reader, where the reader has a sense of detachment while viewing the image, unlike the other illustrations that invited the reader into the picture (Nikolajeva and Scott 2006, 62).

To illustrator Beryl Kwok, the use of fishes as a visual device in enhancing the image seems to add a melancholic tone to the scene (Beryl Kwok, unpublished data). The man drowning in the water has his face hidden from the readers, and the only hint that he was the Chinese fisherman was through his white skin tone, and the fact that the image was placed next to the page where the text narrated his plight (Picture 10). In this story, Kwok mentioned in her interview that she chose to not depict the turtle in

her illustrations as she felt that the focus of action was on the drowning fisherman (Beryl Kwok, unpublished data). This thus provided readers with more room for imagination since the fishes could be another form of visual representation for the marine lives in the ocean; the turtle is probably not the only guardian in the ocean. In this case, the text and image was not exactly symmetrical to each other, but instead complementary.

Picture 11 showed the Kwok chose to depict a close-up image of the Chinese temple. With her illustrative style, it was a rather modern take on the appearance of the temple. Although the narrative noted the existence of the Chinese temple and Malay *keramat*, Kwok chose to focus only on the Chinese fisherman and the Chinese temple probably due to the fact that she could relate more to her Chinese culture. This thus shows that the illustration chosen for the tale could be affected by the identity and culture of the illustrator.

#### *The Legend of Turtle Island (Bosco and Lei 2016)*

Similar to Comber's *Kusu Island* (Comber 2011), the three illustrations here in Bosco and Lei's *The Legend of Turtle Island* were done in digital painting. I focused on analysing the visual depictions of the characters as they were found to be more detailed and subtle as compared to the other versions of *Kusu Island*. According to Sharon Lei in an interview, the illustrations (Picture 12 – 14) were done taking reference from manga comic, applying the Japanese *Chibi* style to attract their target audience of primary school children (Sharon Lei, unpublished data).<sup>12</sup> The colours used were very controlled throughout the story, and the illustrations appeared to be very cute and minimal.

In Picture 12, it showed that the female protagonist, Shing and her father were depicted looking downcast, and the text helped to explain this illustration by providing a back-story to Shing's plight. Although the text did not explicitly mention that Shing was disappointed that she would be left alone while her father visits his Malay friend, readers will be able to deduce this from her facial expression. As the text did not describe the physical appearance of Shing and her father, the illustration helped to fill in that gap. From the greyish colour of her father's hair, it can be deduced that Shing's

---

<sup>12</sup> *Chibi* (ちび or チビ) is a Japanese word used to describe a caricature style of having cute, dwarf-like characters, usually appearing small, chubby and have oversized heads (AmberlyIn 2013).

father was of a certain age, and hence, Shing would have been an adult; someone who has the ability to execute her own thoughts and ideas. Such information would have been useful for the readers to understand the sequence of events that is to come.

In this scene (Picture 14), Shing, her father and his Malay friend, Mas, were depicted standing happily on the island. Just as the text stated that they would return to the island every year on the same day to give thanks for the miracle of them staying alive, there were also visual clues left by the artist to depict the passing of time. For instance, Shing is now spotted with longer hair, while her father is sporting a whiter hair, signifying that he has aged further. The readers can infer from here that many years have actually passed, and they have been keeping their promise.

### 1.1 The Evolution of Image in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island*

In the seven books that were analysed in this study, we can see several common and different features among them. Through the images of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, we witnessed how the depiction of the story has evolved over the past decades despite the textual narrative showing little changes. Appendix C provides a detailed philological analysis on each of the versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* through the lens of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. A comparative analysis of the texts was also done through looking at the style and register of the text, as well as the characterisation involved (Appendix C). It was found that the narrative structure of the tales largely remained the same with emphasis on friendship, racial harmony and multiple religions, while the style and register of the text remains consistent as well.

Unlike the repetitive and rather consistent textual narrative found in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, the visual depictions of the tales has evolved over the past decades.

#### *The Significance of Colour in the Illustrated Tales of Kusu Island*

The significance of colour in picture books has been widely recognised (e.g. Serafini 2011; Bang 1991; Kress & van Leewen 2002, 2006; Moebius 1990; Nodelman 1988; Painter 2007, 2008). The use of colour serves multiple purposes, which include having strong aesthetical value that can beautify images. Children are also more

attracted to coloured images as compared to black and white images (Werner 2011, 40). They can classify objects and conceptualise things clearer when based on colour as compared to using form and function (Lee 1965; Tomikawa & Dodd 1980). In addition, the use of colours can prompt better recognition and identification of objects while enhancing memory (Hansen et al. 2006; Vernon & Lloyd-Jones 2003). Colour is also crucial as a communication tool, whose symbolic meaning can be immediately understood (e.g. the colour signals used in traffic lights, red for “stop”, and green for “go”). The symbolic meaning of colour may be seen as a form of non-verbal communication in picture books (Werner 2011, 40).

According to Clare Painter (2008), there are different functions of colour in picture books that can be understood through the three “metafunctions” (Werner 2011, 40). The “ideational function” refers to the use of colours to support the content of a story by providing additional information about the appearance of people, objects and animals etc. The “textual function” refers to the support of the story’s organisation by highlighting important aspects through colour choice for particular elements of a picture (Werner 2011, 40). Finally, the third on “interpersonal function” refers to the feelings expressed in the narrative. This is probably one of the most important aspects of colours in narratives, since colours evoke emotions and create an emotional setting or “ambience” (Werner 2011, 40). For instance, bright colours portray a feeling of vibrancy and happiness, while dull and dark colours may evoke sadness. Painter further breaks down the main features of colour in creating the “ambience”, namely “vibrancy”, “warmth” and “familiarity” (Werner 2011, 41). She suggested that vibrancy that consist of highly saturated and bright colours will create an ambience of excitement, energy or even loudness. On the other hand, dull, unsaturated colours will result in a quieter feeling. Warm colours such as red and orange, or cold colours (blue) can create warmth in an image that represents the subjective feeling in a situation, location or the relation between the characters of the story (Werner 2011, 41). Finally, “familiarity” will refer to realistic colours that can correspond to the true colours of real objects. This can create a sense of familiarity within the readers where they can make associations to the real world.

Although people generally prefer coloured images over black and white ones, black and white images can possibly hold its own level of sophistication. Given the nature of black and white images, when used in children’s illustrated books, it can allow for the imagining of colours desired, thus prompting the child’s fantasy and

creativity. The limitation is that it requires prior experience or knowledge with colours, which is lacking in young children (Werner 2011, 48). Black and white illustrations, it has an added layer of complexity. It may appear as simple and clear lines at first, however, it demands a visual system to correctly group the lines belonging to the background from the figures. This may be an easy task for most adults based on their visual experience but may not be as straightforward for inexperienced young children (Werner 2011, 49).

As such, colours could increase the complexity of the narrative told by the book giving an added layer of non-verbal communication, where emotional content is involved. The following paragraphs will be looking into the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* in identifying the role of colours and its symbolic and emotional significance with reference to Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of colours in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*

<b>Black and White</b>			
Picture 1 <i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro 1979)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharp clean line drawing</li> <li>- Background, middle ground and foreground featured</li> <li>- 2 subjects, an object and a landscape depicted</li> </ul>		
Picture 2 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rough pen sketch (comic style)</li> <li>- Background, middle ground and foreground featured</li> <li>- 2 subjects and a background depicted</li> </ul>		
Picture 3 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pen sketch (Still-life realistic style)</li> <li>- 1 subject depicted</li> </ul>		
Picture 4 and 5 <i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rough woodblock print style (Comic style)</li> <li>- Picture 4: 2 subjects and 2 objects depicted</li> <li>- Picture 5: 3 subjects and a background depicted</li> </ul>		
<b>Colours (Interpersonal Function)</b>	<b>Vibrancy</b>	<b>Warmth</b>	<b>Familiarity</b>
Picture 6, 7, 8 and 9 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Tan 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The technique of water colour has made the seemingly dull colours have much more tonal differences, hence resulting in lots of energy in the images.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cool colours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accurate use of colours in depicting human figures, the turtle, the sea and the Chinese temple and Malay Keramat</li> </ul>

<p>Picture 10 and 11 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber 2011)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimal use of warm colours, mainly cool colours</li> <li>- Picture 10: overwhelming display of blue colour that may evoke a feeling of coldness. The figure in bright red gives off a sense of danger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rather accurate use of colours for most subject and objects (e.g. sea, temple), with a hint of fantastical element (green fishes)</li> </ul>
<p>Picture 12, 13 and 14 <i>The Legend of Turtle Island</i> (Bosco 2016)</p>		<p>Minimal use of warm colours, mainly cool colours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Picture 12: dark colours of grey, brown and dark green gives off a dull and cold feeling</li> <li>- Picture 13: use of sky blue colour also gives off a cold feeling</li> <li>- Picture 14: A mixture of warm and cold colours bring a sense of warmth and coziness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accurate use of colours in depicting human figures, the sea and the boat.</li> <li>- The turtle appears too green to be true</li> </ul>

The first four illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* from 1979 – 2001 (Picture 1 – 5) were done in black and white illustrations. Although the methods of illustration ranged from having clear simple lines to rough pen-sketch styles and woodblock print style, readers will still have to visually distinguish the subjects and objects from the lines. Without the use of colours, readers encountering black and white illustrations will have to make use of other visual elements such as form, size and shapes to help them understand the illustration.

The illustrations done in a more graphic or comic style (Picture 1, 2, 4, and 5) might not be as straightforward as the ones done in a realistic style (Picture 3), as readers might have to use their imagination and creativity to relate such illustrations to the real world before understanding the illustration. The three earliest publications of the *Kusu Island* tales only consisted of one accompanying black and white illustration each in representing the entire narrative (Picture 1 – 3). According to Pugalenthii, one of the reasons for the absence of colour was due to high cost and funding issues, as it was more expensive to print in colour (Pugalenthii, unpublished data). This was unlike the reason for black and white illustrations in Ron Chandran-Dudley's version of *Kusu Island*, where the decision was based on his own visual impairment (Tan, unpublished data).

The more recent published illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* from 2005 – 2016 (Picture 6 – 14) were done in colours. These tales have different illustrative styles and their use of colours can evoke different feelings. For instance, *Kusu Island* (Tan 2005) was done in a rather picture book style where pages of the tale were filled with water-coloured paintings. Although the artist used a series of dull, saturated dye colours (e.g. Prussian Blue, Burnt Umber, Raw Umber, Viridian Green) to depict the various scenes, the spontaneous brush strokes of water colour has resulted in more tonal differences, hence giving the illustrations lots of energy and action. The overwhelming use of dull cool colours (blue, green) evoked feelings of sadness and coldness, and readers might feel rather heavy from the illustrations. Given the realistic and accurate choice of water-colours in depicting the human figures, objects and landscape, one might actually associate these characters to the real world causing the readers to be more sympathetic towards the plight of the characters.

The two other illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* drawn by Beryl Kwok (2011) and Sharon Lei (2016) undertook the style of digital painting. Picture 10 and 11 by the

Kwok saw minimal use of warm colours, especially in Picture 10 where there was an overwhelming display of blue that may evoke a feeling of calmness and coldness. The human figure coloured in bright red gives off a sense of danger in contrast with the blue water. In general, while there was a rather accurate use of colours for most subjects and objects (e.g. sea, temple) in the Kwok's illustrations, there was a hint of fantastical element in the form of green fishes in Picture 10. The Kwok's green fishes (in place of the green turtle) might just be one of her abstract illustrative elements that allow for the freedom of the reader's imaginations as they journey through the narrative.

On the other hand, colours in *The Legend of Turtle Island* (Bosco 2016) illustrated by Sharon lei have symbolic significance. Picture 12 depicts dark and dull colours of grey, brown and green that give off a hopeless and cold feeling. Since it was illustrated on the page that explained the sad background story of the main protagonist, Shing and the mentioning of her father leaving home for a while, the use of such colours is timely in transmitting the feelings of the characters to the readers. The use of sky-blue colour to represent the sea in Picture 13 gave off a sense of coldness and loneliness, as Shing was embarking on the journey herself. Picture 14 however, has a good mix of warm and cold colours (pink, green, purple, yellow, light blue) that brought forth a sense of warmth and cosiness as the characters were re-united and found a happy ending. In this version of the tale, there was an accurate use of colours in depicting the human figures, the sea, the boat and the turtle. It was so accurate in the sense that the greying of Woo's hair can be seen from the comparison of Picture 12 and Picture 14 which could represent the passing of time and aging.

As seen from the above analysis, we can see how the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have become more sophisticated overtime. The use of both black and white and coloured illustrations has its own kind of complexity. The difference lies in that black and white illustrations are complex in terms of the difficulty in understanding them (given the other visual skills of differentiating the forms, size and shapes needed to decipher it), while coloured illustrations are complex in terms of their symbolic meaning or feelings embedded that can affect the readers emotionally. This resulted in the coloured illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* being more sophisticated than the black and white versions that were published earlier.

The narration of the tales of *Kusu Island* first started with no pictures. One of the first printed sources of the tales of *Kusu Island* can be found in newspaper clippings before it started appearing in illustrated books. This thesis has shown the evolution of the images from these illustrated books; from traditional black and white illustrations to coloured ones, and then digitally coloured illustrations. Due to the increase in complexity of images (symbolic meaning and in affecting emotions), the interplay between text and image has also become? more sophisticated.

### *Visual Choices in the Illustrated Tales of Kusu Island*

The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* can be considered to be explicit multi-cultural literature since they consist of Chinese, Malay or Arab characters. The visual devices that were used to differentiate the different races largely depended on the costumes worn by them, as well as the colour of their skin tone. With regards to the text, there was a lack of description on the differences between the ethnicity, other than the fact of having strikingly different names (e.g. Siong Chai vs Yusof) according to their cultural norms, and having explicitly telling the readers that the characters were a “Chinese” and “Malay” fisherman, as well as specifying that there was a Chinese temple and a Malay *keramat* on the island. Hence, the illustrator would have the freedom to depict what they feel best represent the “Chinese,” “Malay” and the “Arab” people in the time period when the story takes place. From the examples of these books, there are definitely stereotypical traits of these ethnicities that were included in the illustrations. For example, the Malay man wearing *sarong* and a *tengkolok* in Picture 8, the Arab wearing his traditional *keffiyeh* in Picture 1 and the Chinese man with plain shirt and one spotted with braided hair known as *queue* [辮子](Picture 7).

Since most of the illustrators I have interviewed mentioned that a substantial amount of research was done with reference to Singapore’s history in order to depict the characters, these visual elements could have been selected as defining the physical characteristics of the populace in the early twentieth century. In fact, it can be quite biased to simply use physical traits as a defining feature to identify the ethnicity. Especially since there is a blurring of identifiable traits and boundaries among people in contemporary times, it would be unfair to judge one’s culture according to their skin tones and dressing styles. This could be one of the reasons why the recent illustrations done by Sharon Lei were more ambiguous in depicting her characters, where Shing’s father, a Chinese, looks very much alike his Malay friend (Bosco and Lei 2016, 84).

The names that were being used in this story were also more racially neutral as compared to the earlier Kusu Island tales (e.g. Mas vs Yusof). The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* could be considered as a multicultural literature, in this case defined to “explicitly depict the reality of a multicultural society” by portraying the difference in ethnicity in the tales (Cai 2002, 4).<sup>13</sup> As Junko Yokota wrote (1994), “the importance of multicultural literature lies in the fact that it enhances the reader’s knowledge about themselves and the world, and in showing commonalities across the different cultures.” Such depictions could help to bridge the readers’ understanding of their realities, where people of different ethnicities are in fact similar, and that there should be no form of biases against each other.

In terms of the artistic rendition of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, we have seen the transition from simple black and white illustrations produced in the twentieth century to water-colour paintings and digital illustrations in the twenty-first century. Wilkie Tan, the illustrator of *Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship* mentioned that Polynesian woodcut prints and shadow puppets inspired his illustrations, and that he also referred to several Southeast Asian comic books. He wanted a handcrafted style for the illustration, where the shading and textures of the illustrations are post-processed in Photoshop. He has undertaken an experimental approach to his illustration style since he wanted to try a new medium and technology, while keeping a traditional touch to it since it is a folktale. Similarly, Sharon Lei also mentioned in her interview that the choice of her cute and minimal illustration style was to bridge the jump of era from modern time to olden days, helping the readers to ease into the story through artistic visuals. There were also instances where the colour dominates, coupled with a more playful style of composition where images can flow into the text as seen from *Kusu Island* (Lim 2005). Through this, it is evident that the illustrators find the need to develop an artistic style that can appeal to their audience, while at the same time keeping the traditional essence of the tale. Through these books, we can see how illustrators managed to bridge the generation gap throughout the decades.

In the more recently published books, the interplay between image and text were also more open to interpretation and analysis, thus encouraging the imagination

---

<sup>13</sup> It is acknowledged that the definition of multicultural literature actually goes beyond the stated definition in the thesis. In addition to simply portraying different races in children’s literature, it can also include books about children and adults “regardless of religion, race, ability, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, body image, language, political beliefs, or ethnicity”, and to also consider the unequal power relations between as well as within groups into consideration (Tupas and Bacsal 2016, 40).

of the readers. Contemporary narratives and characters were also created in the stories so as to allow the readers to relate and engage more with the original stories. In contrast to the earlier books, *Kusu Island* (Lim 2005), and *Kusu Island* (Comber 2011) consist of an illustration of the Chinese temple that is currently located on Kusu Island. The drawing of present-day Kusu Island is also found in *Kusu Island* (Lim 2005), and in *The Legend of Turtle Island* (Bosco and Lei 2016).

On the other hand, unlike the previous stories that are largely male-centric, *The Legend of Turtle Island* placed an emphasis on the character of Shing – on her journey to find and save her father. For the first time, Shing, a female character was used as the main character in her quest. It seemed to suggest a feminist take on the traditional tales of *Kusu Island* whereas almost all the other versions have male characters as protagonists. Shing exhibited her quick-witted decision-making skills, courage, bravery and determination in her quest to find her father. These were the values that were not as commonly seen in the body of a female especially in Singapore's traditional tales. This version of the tale might have wanted to keep up with today's world where the female figure is more empowered than before, hence reflecting this in the characterization of Shing. It may have been influenced by other strong popular female characters depicted in contemporary narratives.

Most importantly, in interviews with Tan and Pugalenthii, they have both expressed the increasing need for the stories to appear logical to children of contemporary generations, and they tried to bridge many narratives and visual gaps left by the earlier folktales of *Kusu Island* so that their version of the story can appear more coherent and logical for the children to believe. As Pugalenthii mentioned, “we can stretch their imagination, but not their logic (Pugalenthii, unpublished data).” The later books also included interactive activities and fun facts about the history of Kusu Island and other shortened versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* to engage the children. These activities thus help to initiate a conversation and interaction among children, parents and teachers.

As seen in this chapter, the images of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have shown their ability in affecting human emotions and to reveal what the text narrative could not, hence influencing the meaning and experiences of the story. Although it is found that the texts of *Kusu Island* did not evolve – through close comparative analysis of the various texts over time – the images did evolve and become more complex

especially through the introduction of colours, hence enhancing the sophistication of image and text interplay. It was the image that allowed for the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* through the decades so that it can remain relevant and attractive for generations to come. This chapter has shown that images held more significance over text in impacting reader's experiences and understanding of the story. The various methods used in this chapter to study the visual images in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have highlighted its complexity and sophistication, and its impact on the overall narrative of the story. To Wilkie Tan, 'stories live and die', it is thus important for folktales like the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* to remain relevant and timeless for the centuries to come, such that the spirit, beliefs and the essence of the island can be passed down to the next generation.

## CHAPTER 2

### MULTIPLE REALITIES IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND*

Folktales are generally thought to be products of imagination and fantasy, but there is in fact a strong relationship between folktales and reality (Kong 1995, 2). Lutz Röhrich brought forth a theory of such relationships in the form of “Fictive reality,” “Historical reality” and “Projected reality,” each of which has a particular relation to the “Reality of the narrators’ world”. Fictive reality is an all-inclusive concept that encompasses all folk narratives, while both historical and projected realities are “Fictive when they are part of stories and non-fictive when they are part of the narrators’ world” (Röhrich, 1992, x).

In Röhrich’s original German publication of *Folktales and Reality* (*Sage und Märchen*) in 1976, the “narrator” is written as “Erzähler,” which could mean narrator, storyteller and narrative writer (Collins Dictionary). As this book is a translated text from *Sage und Märchen*, the English translator might have used the meaning of the word interchangeably, resulting in some confusion. This is evident throughout the translated book such as when Röhrich mentioned how “narrators’ status and occupation were the primary determinants of the folktale’s social reality,” the ‘narrators’ he was referring to are the people, the folktale bearers (Röhrich, 1992, 186).<sup>14</sup> In his book, he did not define the “narrator,” the “creator,” or “folktale bearers,” although the “narrator” was most prominently featured throughout the book. In the quoted phrases found in this thesis, it is understood that the “narrator,” “creator,” and “folktale bearer” would refer to the storyteller in the context of Röhrich’s writing, and the words were sometimes used interchangeably. To avoid confusion, I shall replace the term “narrator” with “storyteller” in this thesis when quoting Röhrich. With reference to the Oxford Dictionary, a storyteller refers to a person who tells stories. Author, writer and tale teller are all synonyms of “storyteller”.

Most importantly, even though Röhrich has not addressed the illustrator in his theories, I am also going to give the status of the “storyteller” to the illustrator. The illustrators of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* played a significant role in defining

---

<sup>14</sup> In the chapter “The Folktale as a Mirror of the Real World”, Röhrich mentions about the fact that it is the lower social classes, the poor villages or the people living in poverty who are telling the folktales instead of the landowning class of farmers. He believes that it is problematic to neglect such socio-psychological questions since the storyteller’s status and occupations are primary determinants of the folktale’s social reality (Röhrich, 1992, 186).

the visual narratives along with the textual narratives. Similar to the authors, the realities of the illustrators affected the choice of visual and stylistic elements in the illustrations, hence impacting experience of the story.

According to Röhrich, the fictive reality is presented separately from the storyteller's world in the folktale. The fictive reality could in fact be a part of transformed "Historical reality" as it is not completely a product of imagination but also includes some historical references (Röhrich, 1992, xi). Traditional customs, beliefs, objects and social organization were integrated into fictive reality in the folktale although they may have been eliminated from historical reality according to the narrators. In this case, they have experienced a process of transformation from history to fiction, from reality to fantasy (Röhrich, 1992, xi). "Projected reality" happens when the present is included into the folktales. This happens when the same tale is being told by different storytellers who have incorporated their culture, personal ideas and social class into the fictive realities of the folktale. Röhrich believed that the creative processes that are involved in the narration have their roots in cultural values, religion, ethnic, historical and social experience.<sup>15</sup> This thus results in the variations of narratives as the realities that the storytellers project into transformed their own world to be part of the folktale world.

With the establishment of such forms of relationship by Röhrich, we can see that the fictive, the historical, the projected and the storytellers' realities can mirror a culture, class and personality in the folktales. The following paragraphs will henceforth be investigating the multiple realities found in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* with references to Röhrich ideas and the data collected from the interviews with the authors and illustrators. This could also allow us to investigate the historical epoch and societal values as reflected in the image and text of the tales of *Kusu Island*.

---

<sup>15</sup> In the chapter "Folktale's Inner Reality," Röhrich talks about how the storytellers bring their personal experiences as well as their social environment into the folktale. In this case, the folktale can be a very personal reality, where the personal experiences can provide the storyteller ideas and motifs for the narration. Röhrich also stated military service as one such example of personal experiences and detailed it in his footnote (24) (Röhrich, 1992, 202).

## 2.1 Elements of Multiple Realities in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island*

### 2.1.1 *The Storytellers' Reality*

The nineteenth and twentieth-century printed collections of the tales did not reveal the identity of the individual storyteller because the text itself was considered to be more important than its creator (Röhrich 1992, 199). In recent years, there is a growing need to understand the significance of individual folktale bearers since they are largely responsible in determining the folktale's relationship to reality. This is because the storytellers bring their personal experiences and surrounding environment into the tales (Röhrich 1992, 202). The tales must also connect with the storyteller as well for him to be willing to pass it down (Röhrich 1992, 203). With this, it shows that the folktale bearer lives within the text. It is hence crucial to understand how a folktale grows in its storyteller's mind, as well as historically (Röhrich 1992, 204).

For instance, in my interview with the author Pugalenthii, he believed that there was something special about *Kusu Island*. The visitors of Kusu Island whom he had spoken with also strongly believed in the power of the island, and he thought it is important to keep the mysticism in the tale. Among the many variations that he had heard, he decided to take the liberty to narrate one that could be logically and historically connected (Pugalenthii, unpublished data). When Pugalenthii reminisced about *Kusu Island*, he thought that it could be further improved as he sought new research and knowledge to enhance the story. On interviewing Chinese geomancers, he discovered that Singapore and its islands including Kusu Island, were protected by a turtle, golden carp and the four dragons. In addition, early Indians made use of turtles for sea route navigation, which he thought was fascinating. If there were to be a newly edited version of *Kusu Island*, he would have definitely included this newfound information (Pugalenthii, unpublished data). Pugalenthii's frequent travels and countless interactions with people also helped to enrich his existing narratives (Pugalenthii, unpublished data).

On the other hand, illustrator Wilkie Tan agreed that if someone finds the story worthwhile to retell, the story will live on. He thinks that different communities have different takes on how the tale of *Kusu Island* has evolved to suit their own retellings (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data). To Tan, having an anthropomorphic character in children's stories could help to give purpose and meaning to life. Hence, he chose to

depict the turtle communicating with the two fishermen in his illustration (Picture 5) (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data). Similarly, Beryl Kwok also chose to depict what she associated more with, given the familiarity and the relationship to her Chinese culture (e.g. the illustration of the Chinese fisherman and the Chinese temple in picture 10 and 11) (Beryl Kwok, unpublished data). Meanwhile, author Don Bosco felt that the story has little to do with the island itself. Rather, it is more about the writer, creator or the people who are transmitting the myths. To Bosco, it is primarily the process of imagination and human interactions that influence the story than the actual geography of the island (Don Bosco, unpublished data). From here, we can see that the storytellers' thoughts, knowledge and experiences can affect the outcomes of the story.

When considering the reality of the storytellers' worlds, the next question to consider is how such realities affected the transformation of the tale. It is important to consider the storytellers' perspectives over time and space since a folktale is not an isolated text, and would have to be considered within the context of the cultural group from which the tale originated (Röhrich 1992, 5). For every period, each individual has a different relationship to "reality". Hence, the interpretations of the folktale's reality are heavily dependent on when, and by whom they are written (Röhrich 1992, 6). The storytellers' identity and occupation are critical in affecting the folktale's social reality as well (Röhrich 1992, 186). The period in which the folktales were published had to be considered as it could potentially affect the folktale's reality. It is important to understand the context and period during which the authors and illustrators published during this time. Although the authors and illustrators themselves did not attribute their work specifically to Singapore's social political happenings at the time of the book's publication, it is worthwhile to note the socio-political zeitgeist of the time during the published books. The storyteller, in being influenced, may have created works that were meant to transmit values and messages to the intended audience (the child reader).

Ron Chandran-Dudley who is the author of *Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship* (Chandran-Dudley 2001, 35) was known to be a strong advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. When he became blind due to a rugby accident in his teens, he gave up his dreams of becoming a brain surgeon and instead went into counselling and psychotherapy (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data). Chandran-Dudley thus contributed significantly and worked to promote an inclusive society, it is hardly surprising that the way he wrote the Kusu Island tale reflected his ideals. Since Mr

Chandran-Dudley himself was visually impaired, it was his request that the illustrations in the book be done in black and white (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).

Chandran-Dudley's version of the tale of *Kusu Island* is also suggestive of messages in encouraging marriages, in light of the introduction of Marriage and Parenthood (M&P) Package in 2001 by the Singapore Government. The M & P provided a series of pro-family incentives and benefits to encourage more Singaporeans to marry and have children.<sup>16</sup> Till today, propaganda messages in encouraging marriages and parenthood among Singaporeans are frequently portrayed/featured in various mediums, such as in TV dramas and advertisement .

In his story, the Chinese protagonists in his narrative are acquaintance from the same village, but after experiencing the shipwreck and being stranded on an island, the couple became good friends and fell in love and became husband and wife (Chandran-Dudley, 2001, 38). By including the element of romance and marriage in the story, it showed that Chandran-Dudley had an interest in introducing the concept populating an island to his readers – as if encouraging the growth of Singapore's population. His version of the tale is the only one depicting two couples overcoming adversity together and later living harmoniously on the island. According to Wilkie Tan, who had worked with Mr Chandran-Dudley for the illustrations, Chandran-Dudley made a conscientious decision to make the story different by having a couple, where “it will make sense if you want to populate the island (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).” He might be have been influenced by the social issues that were happening in Singapore in that period of time. Tan believed Chandran-Dudley wanted to relook at the myths and folklores surrounding the Singapore islands to build up the sense of national identity (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data). It seems like Chandran-Dudley was interested to use the tale of *Kusu Island* to achieve certain objectives. Before his death, Chandran-Dudley contacted Tan for a revival of the story on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Singapore's nation building. Tan took this as further evidence that Chandran-Dudley wanted a more elaborate take on the stories where it can target older children (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data). This is a clear example of a writer who not only was actively incorporating his personal beliefs and lifelong goals, but also know the importance to work with his illustrator to have his work better reflect his values and societal values.

---

<sup>16</sup> The package consists of schemes such as the Baby Bonus where cash gift will be given to help reduce the financial burden for the development and education of the children, or the 3CML scheme that allows working mothers to take eight weeks of paid maternity leave when their third child is born (HistorySG).

In 2015, Singapore celebrated its fifty years of independence from Malaysia, and Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, passed away at aged ninety-one. It was a year full of nationalistic sentiments where various stakeholders, ministries and government sectors come together in planning an eventful year to celebrate the milestone in Singapore's history with its citizens. The growth of Singapore economically, socially and politically over the years was also emphasized in the SG50 narrative.

It is during this period of time where there is a resurgence of children's book publications on Singapore stories, myths and legends. The *Island of Legends* (Bosco 2016) is one such example. In it, *The Legend of Turtle Island* is a story to remind readers of what Singapore is made of – a multicultural and multiracial country, and against all odds, a country that moved from a third world to a first. In the story, evidence of multiracialism and multiculturalism could be seen from the Chinese and Malay protagonists, where they are friends who overcome the odds together (Bosco 2016). The financial difficulties faced by the Chinese protagonist in the story could be inspired by the 2008 recession faced by Singapore.<sup>17</sup> With the help of the Malay friend, the Chinese protagonist is able to settle his debt and to live a better life. This narrative parallels the growth of Singapore from a poor fishing village to a wealthy first world nation with the effort of all citizens in building the country.

### 2.1.2 Fictive Reality

The fictive reality could be part of transformed "Historical Reality" where it includes a mix of both imagination and historical references. This section will explore how elements of reality such as poverty, weather conditions, human abilities, and even animals are integrated into the fictive reality of tale. According to Röhrich, every folktale is connected to reality in some way or other. The unfolding of magical events usually affects the common beings – people who exist in reality. The starting narratives of folktales usually begin with possible initial situations (Röhrich 1992, 3). This could be seen from the tales of *Kusu Island* where the initial situations reveal the limits faced by the protagonists (fishermen) where they needed to earn money or to

---

<sup>17</sup> Singapore slipped into an economic recession in 2008 following the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, which was caused by the collapse of American investment bank Lehman Brothers in September 2008. With the ripple effects caused by the banking crisis in the United States, Singapore became the first country in East Asia to succumb to recession, and it was Singapore's worst ever recession (HistorySG). The economic downturn resulted in wage cuts, retrenchments, wage freeze and hiring freeze in many local companies and businesses.

obtain food for the family, hence causing their departure from home despite the interdiction forewarned to them.

Moreover, the folktale provides historical information about the ways of life of the people in the past (Röhrich 1992, 92). In the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* (Lim 2005), one of the protagonists was a married Chinese fisherman who was the breadwinner of his family, while the other protagonist was a Malay fisherman. They were both able to adapt quickly on a deserted island by building a hut for living, and surviving on found fruits, animals and freshwater. This narrative seemed to refer to fourteenth century Singapore when it was known as *Temasek*, and was a fishing village with a thriving city and trading port (Cornelius 2016).

In order to increase tension in the folktale, limitations on human abilities were depicted while having supernatural possibilities. Through this, “heroes are tested; they don’t test themselves (Röhrich 1992, 213).” As seen from *Kusu Island*, the protagonists were tested by the bad weather and fierce storm that caused their boat to capsize. It is way beyond a single human ability to survive such a storm if without the help of a magical helper. With this, the folktale could be more grounded to reality. According to the National Environment Agency of Singapore, Singapore experiences 168 thunderstorm days per year on average, and: it has one of the highest occurrences of lightning activity in the world (National Environmental Agency 2017). The Meteorological Service Singapore also stated that Singapore which is situated near the equator has caused it to have a tropical climate, with abundant rainfall and high humidity all year round (Meteorological Service Singapore). In the story, a giant turtle saved the protagonists when they were caught in a bad storm, but in truth, fishermen may not be so lucky when they encounter a real storm. During the past two decades, there were several reported cases of people drowning near Kusu Island ((*The Straits Times* 26 October 1908, 6; *The Straits Times* 8 December 1957, 9). In 1962, it was reported in the newspaper that a drowned victim, Lee Ah Teck, failed to survive in his attempt to help the other four people in saving their *sampan* from capsizing when it was caught in a strong current (*The Straits Times* 23 October 1962, 5). While in 1972, a father of five lost his wife after their bumboat collided with another boat while on their way back to mainland Singapore after their Kusu Island pilgrimage trip (*The Straits Times* 31 October 1972, 17). The occurrence of these real-life incidents showed that bad weather can indeed impact on human lives.

On the other hand, the animal character in the folktale behaved independently and often played an important role in determining what will happen to the protagonist. The animals usually use their natural abilities to render help through the epic stylizing of the folktale (Röhrich 1992, 74). In the case of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, the huge turtle could save the protagonists probably because of its size, strength and ability to carry them to the island. Turtles are also thought to be wise and patient creatures, symbolizing immortality and power especially in the Chinese culture since it is one of the four animals traditionally thought to possess a soul (Krenner and Ken 2015, 6) Similarly in Singapore, the turtle is popular among the Chinese culture, given its symbolic meaning of longevity, good luck and power (Chong 2018). To the Taoist, the tortoise is symbolic of heaven and earth because its shell resembled the vaulted heavens, while its flat underside represented the earth (Krenner and Ken 2015, 7). In other words, the turtle possesses the role of a guardian in the Chinese culture, hence the depiction of the turtle as a heroic character in the story to save the drowning men.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1.3 Historical Reality

This section shows the historical reality where historical references are included in the tales. All successes in the folktale are results of tests of worth (Röhrich 1992, 212). In this case, the tests of skill, courage, resilience, compassion, patience, intelligence and acumen could be seen through the actions of the protagonist, as he survived through the ordeal and lived on in the foreign island in harmony with the other stranded fisherman after being saved by the turtle. Through this, the folktale also depicts humans' ability to adapt to the foreign environment and making it their new home (Röhrich 1992, xxii). Very often, a small element of the test remains unfulfilled, causing their happiness to be incomplete (Röhrich 1992, 212). For instance, in the tales, despite the fishermen living in harmony on the foreign island after they are stranded, they will still have to suffer from the loss of their family since they are unable to return home. Many could not bring their family along, such as coolies, Samsui women, Amahs and migrant workers. It is known that Singapore's foundation started around 1300 where it played an important role in the development of maritime trade in Asia. In the *Malay Annals*, Singapore was described as the first great Malay trading port (Miksic 2013, 3). The archaeological data suggested that it is also the oldest confirmed site of an overseas Chinese community, where there was

---

<sup>18</sup> I have tried to find if the turtle is of any symbolic significance to the Malay culture, but my research had yielded no results. However, there is a Malay folktale on turtles – the Terengganu tale as can be found in Chapter 3.

collaboration between the Chinese immigrants, local officials and traders from all parts of Southeast Asia, where the Chinese later resided in Singapore. This resulted in a multi-ethnic population similar to the developments after the arrival of Raffles. There was definitely a close relationship between Singapore and China, as well as the settled Chinese community with the Malays who were ruling over Singapore back then. Most importantly, there was no evidence of ethnic conflicts during this period of time, as the different ethnic groups seem to have developed a cooperative relationship (Miksic 2013, 20). Such evidence shows that the relationship between the Chinese and Malays in Singapore goes a long way back in history, even till today where racial harmony is being practiced.<sup>19</sup> The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* might have hinted on this aspect of Singapore's history.

#### 2.1.4 Projected Reality

As mentioned before, “Projected reality” happens when the present is included in the folktales. In the folktale, it is evident that there is a combination of magical and rational explanations for its narrative. This process of rationalization frequently plays a role in the evolution of the folktale (Röhrich 1992, 176). By rationalizing, it proves that the folktale was originally believed since it adapted to the changing picture of reality. In the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, it is evident that the earlier versions of the narratives did not mention or depict the presence of the Chinese temple and the Malay shrine on Kusu Island to commemorate the turtle, unlike its later versions. Some of the modern versions even included the present trends on Kusu Island where thousands of pilgrims even now visit the island. Röhrich also mentioned that the “local landscape often creates a standard” for the region's narratives; where elements of the actual environment are being included as part of the narrative (Röhrich 1991, 179). This might be so as to promote Kusu Island as a destination for pilgrimage purposes by the storytellers. Other efforts at tourism promotion by the Singapore Tourism Board have resulted in an increase of foreign tourist-pilgrims (Lu 2012, 51). In the most recent publication of a story related to Kusu Island, known as “The Legend of Turtle Island” (Bosco 2016, 81), it even incorporated modern day financial woes and consequences in the story while keeping the turtle as a magical helper in the story. The folktale acquisition of modern elements helps modern day readers to relate to the situations of the characters and place.

---

<sup>19</sup> There are still evidence of race riots in Singapore. See conclusion for analysis on race relations in Singapore.

Röhrich also claimed that the folktale is religious in the broadest sense, as the guardians of folk traditions are usually pious people (Röhrich 1991, 214). The source of the miracles that happened in the tales of *Kusu Island* are commonly believed to be performed by the Grand Uncle<sup>20</sup>, as mentioned by Madam Sim Chwee Eng, the then owner and caretaker of the Tua Pek Kong Temple at Kusu Island before she passed away in 2008 (Chia 2009, 78). According to Mdm Sim, the Grand Uncle must have used his magical powers to transform the tortoise into an island to save the drowning men. She also believed that the pilgrimage season to Kusu Island occurs on the ninth lunar month because people believe that the miracles occur during this period of time (Chia 2009, 79). Similarly, the current caretaker of the temple Mr Seet Seng Huat, offered his account which he heard from the old Malay people [甘榜马来人] or [*gan bang ma lai ren*] the Chinese and Malay fishermen who depended on the sea for livelihood came to Kusu Island for rest and shelter when they experienced bad weather long ago (Seet Seng Huat, unpublished data). As such, they brought along a god to the island for protection and assurance. Hence, it is possible that the tales of *Kusu Island* are meant to be taken literally or have been portrayed to fit the expectations of the pilgrims and to enhance the holiness of the island.

## 2.2 Grounded Theory Analysis

The responses from three illustrators (Wilkie Tan, Beryl Kwok and Sharon Lei) and two authors (Pugalenthii and Don Bosco) were further analysed through grounded theory analysis (Appendix E). The purpose of conducting grounded theory in addition to using Röhrich's theories is to show that the creation of these tales is highly dependent on the illustrators' and authors' decisions and choices in the process, as well as the reference materials that they have utilised. The analysis also further supported the status of illustrators as "storytellers", in addition to Röhrich's theory. This is so as it is found that the illustrators not only have their own aims and objectives equal to that of the authors, but that their work did work in tandem to shape the narrative outcome for their children target audience.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Grand Uncle is the main deity in the temple of Tua Pek Kong at Kusu Island, a popular deity for the Southeast Asian Chinese (Chia 2009, 78). The Grand Uncle is also seen as the God of Prosperity, Merchant God and the protector of seafarers. Although the origins of this deity remain debatable – some identifying him as the local representation of the Chinese Earth God and others seeing him as a representation of early Chinese pioneers in the region – it is undisputable that the Grand Uncle remains one of the most prominent deities in the region (Lu 2012, 50).

Out of the seven, the following five illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* that were included in grounded theory analysis:

1. “Kusu Island” in *Myths and Legends of Singapore* (Written by Pugalenthii 2001)
2. “Kusu Island” in *Myths and Legends of Singapore* (Written by Pugalenthii 2001)
3. “Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship” in *Tales From The Islands of Singapore* (Written by Ron Chandran-Dudley and illustrated by Wilkie Tan 2001)
4. “Kusu Island” in *Asian Favourite Stories* (Written by Leon Comber and illustrated by Beryl Kwok 2011)
5. “The Legend of Turtle Island” in *Island of Legends* (Written by Don Bosco and illustrated by Sharon Lei 2016)

Grounded theory analysis is done through a process where the research question is being answered through the coding of interview data that was being collected. This analysis is done based on Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (1990) “Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria”. I conducted structured interviews since this method best captured the experiences of the illustrators and authors in their own words (Creswell 2008, 441). After collecting the data needed, I began the process of coding the data. It started with the identification of “Open Codes”, where it is an analytic process by which the observed data are constantly being compared with an incident (as potential indicators of phenomena).<sup>21</sup> Following this, I proceeded with “Axial Codes” by identifying the main categories from the open codes that I have found. As seen from Table 17 and 18, I have identified six qualitative themes from the responses by the illustrators and three qualitative themes from the authors on the factors affecting the evolution of the image and text in the tales of *Kusu Island*. The final process of coding is the “Selective Code” where I developed my theory by interrelating the main categories that I have found in the axial coding. The process is summarised by the flow chart as seen in Appendix E.

From the coding results, it can be deduced that as the illustrator and author set out to create the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, they have a set of aims, objectives, and perspectives that shape the overall direction of the tale. In the process, there is a

---

<sup>21</sup> The basic units for theory can only be accumulated by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 7).

presence of various factors in affecting the stylistic choice of illustrations, such as due to personal preferences, personal skills, the text narrative as well as publisher's decision. The references and sources that both the illustrators and authors utilized also affect the tale's creation, as these materials are either of primary or secondary sources (mostly). This is probably one of the main reasons contributing to the evolution of the tale, as these references are constantly updated with new additional information to the existing primary and secondary sources, hence allowing the tale to change "realities" to remain relevant to the period in time. In addition, the unwavering belief of the people on the holiness of the island also contributed in keeping the story alive. There are also increased instances of localization in the recent narratives as storytellers aim to bring their folktales more aligned with the demands of their audiences (Röhrich 1992, 182). The indication of specific times and places give the tale a local colouring, and this often reveals much about the story and storyteller's idea of reality (Röhrich 1992, 178). Hence, if the story were to be re-told and re-illustrated, it will have a more elaborate take given the availability of more information as well as enhanced skills set, as well as to cater to the ever-demanding audience.

With the creation of modern technology, particularly the news media (e.g. newspaper, animation, theatre and books) has replaced folktale telling and reading. The modernization of folktales has allowed various means to adapt to current reality (Röhrich 1992, 172).<sup>22</sup>

### 2.2.1 Findings

The following paragraphs depict the qualitative themes that I have found through the grounded theory in discovering the factors that contribute to the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, as well as the role of the storytellers. One of the qualitative themes that I have found in table 17 and table 18 includes the "aims" of the storytellers, which refers to their respective aims and objectives that have shaped the directions and outcome of the narrative. The second theme on "other influences" refers to the storyteller's personal preferences in dictating illustration styles, as well as other external reasons in contributing to their narrative choices. The third, on "references and sources", refers to the various textual and visual materials that the storytellers have used to create the tales. Following this, the theme on "the evolution of the story" will reflect how (in what way) the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* has evolved to the

---

<sup>22</sup> The modern rendition of the tales of *Kusu Island* can be found in the conclusion chapter of this thesis.

storytellers. Finally, “possible future creations” will see the improvements that the storytellers will want to make to their future rendition of the tales.

## AIMS

---

Based on the above analysis, it appears that every illustrator and author has their own set of aims and objectives while planning out the execution of the illustration or the narrative of the story. These aims shaped the outcomes of the illustrated tale. As the illustrator for the tale of *Kusu Island*, Wilkie Tan wanted a style where children can identify and relate to it, and hence the use of manga comic style as an inspiration. Similarly, illustrator Sharon Lei felt that the Japanese *chibi* style will be able to attract their target audience of primary school children as well as their parents. Lei would also like to bridge the gap between modern times and olden days using this style. One of the authors of the tale, Don Bosco, hoped to entertain children through the story, as well as ensuring that the narrative is simple enough for the children to remember and narrate. On the other hand, it was believed that Ron Chandran-Dudley wanted to re-examine at the traditional tales of Singapore as part of national identity.

## OTHER INFLUENCES (REASONS AFFECTING THE STYLISTIC CHOICE OF ILLUSTRATIONS)

---

There is a presence of various factors that can influence the stylistic choice of illustrations. For instance, it was said that illustrators tend to draw things that would relate to their personal experiences, just as what Beryl Kwok mentioned it as “natural associations” where one simply “associate it to what you are most familiar with (Beryl Kwok, unpublished data).” It could also be decided by the type of training or skills possessed by the illustrators, since Tan decided to pick up the style that “is most likely the style that I was comfortable with at that point in time (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).” The choice of subject matter could also be determined by the text narrative, or by the publisher’s decision.

## REFERENCES/ SOURCES

---

Both the illustrators and authors referred to several references and sources for the creation of the tale. For those who had not been to Kusu Island before, they depended heavily on web images and web information of the island, such as Kwok who relied on many online pictures for the temple on the island. For Tan, he took reference from Southeast Asian traditional arts and crafts (e.g. wood carvings, shadow

puppets, Polynesian crafts) in his illustrations so as to suit the context of storytelling. Bosco used the Singapore *Infopedia* website for the narrative as he felt that it was the ‘safest source’ and that it was something that ‘all the kids can access and has been validated as official (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).’ While Pugalenthii used an old textbook published by Cambridge in 1936 which does not exist in the library now.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE STORY (AS PERCEIVED BY AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS)

With regards to their thoughts about how has the story evolved over the past decades, the illustrators and authors gave varied responses. To Tan, he felt that a story could live as long as it managed to remain relevant, and that the “different communities have very different takes to how the story has evolved to suit their own retelling (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).” According to Lei, the symbol of the turtle has been fascinating to many, especially with its auspicious signs, and hence it “sparked much imagination as to what happens on the island (Sharon Lei, unpublished data).” To Pugalenthii, he felt that new research and knowledge has led to the evolution of the story. He also believed that the strong belief and faith by the people on the holiness of the island and the story has allowed the story to live on (Pugalenthii, unpublished data).

#### POSSIBLE FUTURE CREATIONS

Most of the illustrators and artists felt that there are many areas and aspects that they could have improved on if they were to re-create the illustrated tale. For Kwok, she would like to “take note of more nuances of the story” that she felt was lacking (Beryl Kwok, unpublished data). Tan would like to have a “graphic novel approach, where it will have a mix of colours and monochromes, wood carved look, and a more mature take (Wilkie Tan, unpublished data).” Whereas Pugalenthii would like to add more in-depth research, information and narrative to enhance the story and to suit the contemporary times (Pugalenthii, unpublished data). This thus shows that illustrators are not just passive producers of pictures based on the textual narratives; their intentions for future work shows that they have a significant role in the process of storytelling as well.

The aims of the illustrators and authors shape the overall direction of the tale, and it can be seen that the illustrators played equal and vital roles as the authors in affecting it. Moreover, the presence of other influencing social and personal factors and usage of references have resulted in the different outcomes of the tale over the past decades, especially on the visuals. Possible future creation of the tale by the storytellers will include additional information and research, and a more elaborate visual creation. This shows that storytelling is a never-ending process that requires constant research and development, and storytellers have the agency to determine its process and outcome.

This chapter has demonstrated how much the storytellers' (illustrators and authors) realities can affect the creation of the tale, be it through their personal experiences, knowledge, occupation or their surrounding socio-political or economic environment. Most importantly, although every folktale can be considered a fiction, its connection to reality through various methods (e.g. history, society, politics, landscape) have allowed readers to empathize and relate to the tales, where Röhrich calls these elements as "Historical reality" and "Projected reality". As a result, time has not stood still in the tales of *Kusu Island* (Röhrich 1992, 4). It has evolved from time to time, and has possibly been preserved because of its flexibility to reflect the current age. The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* consist of timeless events that people have experienced or can experience. The relationship between folktales and reality is therefore an endless cycle where it takes new shape again and again when it faces a new epoch (Röhrich 1992, 215). The grounded theory analysis has also shown that the creation of these tales is highly dependent on the storytellers' decisions and choices in the process, as well as the reference materials that they have utilised. From here, it can be seen that the storytellers are constantly concerned about bringing suitable and accurate representations of the tale through their creativity to their target audience of the child reader. The following chapter will also be touching in detail on the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* and the implied child reader. More specifically, on how the

---

<sup>23</sup> One of the limitations of this study is that during the time of the interview, some of the participants had forgotten the details of the process of creating the tales as it has been many years since they did it. As they have lost touch with this tale, they do not have knowledge about the current happenings surrounding the tale in the recent years, hence their direct answers to the questions relating to the evolution of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* are rather vague. Also, I did not manage to interview all the illustrators and authors who have worked on the tales of *Kusu Island* that are being studied in this thesis, as only a handful agreed to my interview. Hence, this study does not comprehensively represent everyone who has worked on the story before

storytellers, in being influenced, may have created narratives and visuals through the turtle motif to transmit values and messages to the child readers.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FICTIONAL MOTIF OF TURTLE IN THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND*

This chapter is going to explore the fictional aspects of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* through the turtle motif, and how it affects the implied child reader. According to folklorist Alan Dundes, folklore survives through time because they are constantly recreated to adapt to new environments, even within contemporary urban communities (Dundes 1965, 1-26). It is rather impossible to trace back to the original sources of the folklore because they are created in anonymity (See 2016, 59). One of the most significant characteristics of folklore is the existence of numerous versions of a single tale, probably due to the transmission process of the story. Despite the presence of multiple versions, the main structure of the folklore can be said to remain stable (See 2016, 60). This could be seen in Appendix C where the several versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* are analysed with Propp's *Morphology* and they all exhibited similar repetitive narrative structures. In fact, there are two types of analysis when dealing with folklore. One looks at the narrative structure, while the other looks at the motif. Stith Thompson defined the motif as "the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition" (Dundes 1997, 195). In other words, a motif can be a character, background and even an occurrence such as a greedy or unkind person/animal being punished (See 2016, 60). A tale, as Chinese writer Liu Shou Hua describes, "... is a complete story that is made up of relatively stable motif chain..." Hence, one tale may consist of a single or several motifs (See 2016, 62).

In Chapter 2, I had shown how the different realities and the various creators who had shaped the various realities presented within the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. In this Chapter, I have analysed the fictional aspect of the tales through the motif of the turtle. I chose the motif of the turtle because the fantastical essence of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* lies in the turtle motif and island creation, and such an analysis will shed some light on its significance in affecting the implied child readers. All the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* involve either "Kusu" or "Turtle" in the titles as well, thus highlighting the importance of looking into the turtle motif, where the turtle can be considered another protagonist.

Due to the symbolic significance of turtles in numerous cultures, the turtle motif is very popular. This can be seen from the fact that folktales and turtle myths similar to the tales of *Kusu Island* are present in the oral history of various tribes and cultural groups throughout the world. The following paragraphs will discuss the symbol and meaning of the turtle motif in different cultures through its various usage and visual depiction in tales. This chapter will first focus on the turtle motifs found in selected turtle island creation stories across the world, as their presence in these tales might reveal the symbolic significance of the turtle motif in the tales of *Kusu Island* as representation of the earth, fertility, longevity and as a guardian. A closer study will also show if the use of turtle motif has evolved symbolically and visually over the past decades in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* and its impact on the narrative and hence the implied child reader.

Since the continents of South America, North America, Africa, Oceania, East Asia and Southeast Asia are all connected by the ocean, and the ocean is considered to be a “space of exchange” that surrounds and influences us, examples featuring the turtle motif from every continent were drawn from the various cultures involved. (Bélanger 2014, 3). Oceanographer Kendall Haven proposed two main reasons for tales that involve the ocean. One was that underneath could lurk any manner of sea monsters that may threaten even the mightiest ship on the seas (Haven 2005, xiv). The other was that since the scientific consensus is that life began in the ocean, creation stories therefore often involved oceans and animals that connected cultures, turtles being one of the most obvious marine animals (Haven 2005, 14). Although it was mentioned that no one really knows the real reasons behind the creation of these symbolic creatures, by delving deeper into the religion, cultural traditions and mythological stories of a culture, one might find the motivations of the storytellers and artists who reinvented and depicted them.

### 3.1 The Usage of Turtle as a Motif in Different Cultures

The depiction of a single animal can vary between diverse cultures, and has varied meanings and functions. In the case of turtles, they were thought to be creatures of wisdom, sometimes symbolising the moon, immortality, fertility and water, and could have cosmic associations (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 6). With the variety of

traits and symbolism tying to the turtle, the motif of a turtle played a rather popular role in creation myths, legends and folktales around the world.<sup>24</sup>

The turtle is most commonly known to symbolise longevity in cultures such as Africa, India, Korea, Japan, and China (Knapp 2001, Desai 2009, Saitova, Tskhay and Kenzikeyev 2016). In Japan, it is believed that the tortoise can live for ten thousand years whereas the crane a thousand years, and they are often paired together symbolising Confucian and Taoist ideas (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 7). While in China, since the Shang period, the tortoise is symbol of immortality, longevity and power. It is also thought to possess a soul. This belief might be explained through a traditional tale, where a tortoise supposedly helped the first emperor to control the Yellow River, and the mythical ruler decided to reward the tortoise with a lifespan of ten thousand years (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 7). Although diverse cultures share a similar belief of turtles as symbols of longevity, it is not known where this early belief originated from. It is highly likely that such beliefs are developed by considering the fact that a turtle can live more than hundred and fifty years (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 7).

Animals formed an important part of natural symbolism, and the turtle is a strong symbol of water and water-related features (Miller 2010, 1201). For example, in early Hindu mythology, Ganga (goddess) was associated with Varuna (sea god), the Lord of Rain. Like Ganga, his *vahana* (vehicle) is the *makara* (sea creature), and it was said that both the *makara* and the tortoise (*kurma*) may have represented Varuna himself, with the rivers as his consorts (Darian 1973, 315)

In many African countries, the turtle is identified with wisdom, stability, magic, curative and mediating powers (Knapp 2001, 155). It is also considered the smartest animal, where in Nigeria it is depicted as a trickster.

In some cultures, the turtle was associated with the netherworld. For instance, Ancient Egyptians associated turtles with the Akkadian god Ea, while the Greek god Chelone was a tortoise deity. They also used turtle amulets to ward off evil, and was linked to the afterlife (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 6). Similarly in Malaysian

---

<sup>24</sup> The term “Turtle” encompass all 200 species of the testudine group, which includes turtles, tortoises, and terrapins. The difference between turtles and tortoises are that turtles can be aquatic, semi-aquatic, or mostly terrestrial, while tortoises are turtles that live on land only (Langley 2017). The terms “turtle” and “tortoise” are sometimes used interchangeably in the creation tales across the world.

traditional ceremonies, carved turtles were and are still used to exorcise demons and banish ghosts (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 7). An Indian mythology known as the “Churning of the Ocean of Milk” that recounted the turtle as an incarnation of Vishnu, supporting the deities as they tried to obtain immortality and in defeating the demons. The gods and demons used Mount Mandara as the churning rod, and the snake as a churning rope. Their back and forth movements on the snake’s body caused the mountain to rotate in the ocean. When the mountain began to sink, Vishnu, in the form of Kurma turtle came to their rescue and supported the mountain on its back, and in allowing the churning process to continue. As a turtle who holds the mountain steady, it can be understood as the conduit that connects the sacred rivers of India with the mountain and the netherworld (Reddy 2008, 65).

From here, we can see that there are plenty of different examples of turtle motifs that can be found in various contexts. However, the aim here is not to examine the turtle motif in all its aspects, but to focus on those that could possibly be related or similar to that of the turtle motifs in the tales of *Kusu Island* in terms of its symbolic meaning.

One of the most common meanings which the turtle symbolises include the representation of the earth and the cosmos. In connection to this, it functions as a mythical creature which has the power to support the world and all its living things, as depicted in some of the island creation stories around the world.

The first example of the motif in this context is the turtle motifs in China. It was said that turtles and tortoises were highly regarded in ancient China because their protective shells were curved above and flat below, which symbolised the traditional Asian concept of the cosmos which consisted of a flat earth covered by the overarching sky (Cammann 1985, 228). Similarly, the Hindus regarded the tortoise as a symbol of the three worlds in *Satapatha Brahmana*. Its lower shell represents the earth; the curved upper shell, the sky; and the body is the atmosphere – hence the world in one body (Desai 2009, 317). The Hindus to this day still believe that the world rests on the back of a turtle (Sen 2016, 820). The cosmic turtle can also be found in Japan, where there is a particular "secret song" that involves O-kame-ishi ("Turtle Rock") – the site which follows Kanekake-iwa on the ura-gyaba route of Sanjo-ga-take. A great rock bulges from the earth resembling the back of a turtle. The rock was said to remind people of the mythical mountain island paradise of Horai, which is supported on the

back of a turtle given its strong association with longevity (Gorai 1989, 133). The scene of the turtle carrying Mount Horai on its back and floating on the surface of the water is commonly depicted in Chinese and Japanese paintings.

The turtle as a symbol of earth was also commonly portrayed in Mayan culture. For example, Mayan cave paintings depict the deity of lightning and storms cutting open a tortoise shell to reveal the Mayan deity of corn. In a Sierra Totonac myth of the Maize God, it was said that the deity is born from a grain of green corn sprouting on the back of a turtle. A related Popoluca myth then describes the young corn god crossing the ocean on the back of a turtle (Taube 1986, 62). Turtle shells were also used as drums and have been found in Mayan tombs and in Aztec offerings. The ancients believed that the earth was a giant reptile – “Sometimes a crocodile, sometimes a turtle – floating on the sea, the creature’s back being uneven and roughly textured like the earth’s surface (King 2002, 52).

The North America that we know today was also known as the Turtle Island. The Iroquoians Indians believed that their island is resting on the back of a turtle swimming in the vast ocean (Fenton 1962, 283). The story below from the Haudenosaunee tradition narrates how the turtle island first came about.

According to a tale related to the Iroquoians, there was an island in the sky where the Sky People lived. One day, a hole was torn in the sky when a tree toppled over. A pregnant Sky Woman was curious about the hole, and she came so near that she fell through. She was then saved by the birds who set her down on the Great Turtle’s back. The other animals helped by bringing mud up to the surface from the ocean floor and placed the mud on the Great Turtle’s back. Overtime, there was enough mud for trees and plants to grow. The Sky Woman gave birth and became the mother of the people. This has resulted in the creation of a new world on the Great Turtle’s back, where the land is being called Turtle Island (today’s North America) ever since (Yellowhorn and Lowinger 2017, 6).

A similar tale from Bohol Island of the Philippines could also be found. The Boholanos believed that their ancestors came from heaven and that the people were living beyond the sky. One day, the chief’s daughter fell sick, and the medicine man suggested the roots of wild Balite tree as the cure when her arms touches the root. Hence, they dug around the root and placed the sick girl in the trench, but she

unfortunately fell through the hole, heading to the ocean below. Two gakits (wild ducks: *Anas poecilorhyncha luzonica*) saw the woman fall and caught her lightly on their backs where she rested. The gakits approached the Turtle for help, where he called a council of all swimming animals to help her make a home. The frog and the mouse tried to bring dirt from the tree roots up the surface but failed. The Big Toad later succeeded in bringing sand to spread around the edge of the Big Turtle's shell, that grew into a big island, later known as the Bohol island where the woman resides. If one examines the shape of the turtle's back carefully, he will find some similarity to the shape of the island of Bohol (Demetrio 1969, 66-67).

There is also an account on how Santa Ana, a small coral island off the southeastern tip of San Cristobal, in the British Solomon Island Protectorate was formed. A turtle helped her two children, a girl named Kapwaronaro and the boy Waikariniparisu, to pull up a rock using a fishhook taken from her shell. When the rock emerged, it was Santa Ana complete with vegetation. In other words, Santa Ana was fished up from the sea (Mead 1973, 221).

The tales of *Kusu Island* hold similarities with these stories in the sense that island creation only happened with the aid of the turtle. The motif of the turtle in *Kusu Island* could symbolise the earth as well, especially in the story where the turtle turned into an island in order to save the drowning fisherman, which later became Kusu Island (Bosco 2016). Many people also believe that the shape of Kusu Island resembles that of a turtle.

Turtles also symbolised fertility, rebirth and rejuvenation. Such symbolisms can be found across Asia, Oceania, Southeast Asia and American cultures. Turtles and other aquatic animals are associated with birth and fertility in many Native American cultures. For instance, in the Lakota tradition, a girl's umbilical stub is preserved in a beaded or quilled turtle that signified the protection of the turtle as Mother Earth (Gonzales 2012). While the Iroquois people have drawn associations of female fertility with turtles, since the myth of the pregnant Sky Woman descent from the sky and onto the shell of a turtle could reflect the roles of mothers in sustaining life on earth. In addition, images of deities giving birth on top of aquatic animals such as tortoises were portrayed in pre-Columbian traditions, further supporting the belief that these creation myths mirrored maternal responsibilities and fertility (Gonzales 2012, 40-41).

A similar story to that of *Kusu Island* can also be found in Papua New Guinea, regarding the creation and population of the island thanks to the help of a turtle.

A long time ago there is a great sea-turtle, the mother of all sea-turtles who spent all her time swimming in the wide sea, now known as the Pacific Ocean. When the turtle grew tired of swimming, she will rest just below the surface of the sea. However, she longed to rest on a piece of land in the middle of the ocean to enjoy the warmth and sunshine. One day, the turtle came across a place in the middle of the ocean that has a great hill of sand being raised up from the sea floor and almost touching the surface of the ocean. With that, the turtle worked tirelessly to dig up rocks and sand to add on to the hill, and it eventually became a huge island. The birds started to populate the island along with plants and trees and aquatic animals. One day, the turtle swam down deep into the ocean, and happened to chance upon a dark cave where a man with dark skin had lived alone for a long time. As the man was very lonely, he begged the turtle to bring him with her – and the turtle brought him to her island. The turtle then swam across the sea to the nearest land and found a beautiful lonely woman with black skin weeping – as she was lonely. The turtle then took the woman back to her island as a wife for the man. The man and woman live happily together on the island and produced many children. The island is later populated with people and houses, and the island was later known as New Guinea (Wilson 1978, 13).

On the other hand, the turtle's trait of leaving her eggs in the sand while leaving them to hatch is a symbol of fertility to the indigenous Yolugnu people of Australia. Their life cycle parallels the theme of regeneration and rebirth (Morphy 2011). Similarly, in ancient Mesoamerican culture, it has been suggested that the turtle's act of leaving her eggs in the sand for hatching reflects the planting of corn kernels that germinate and sprint to life even after they have been buried in the ground, hence symbolizing renewal (Nagao 1985, 14).

The symbolism of fertility embedded on a turtle could be applicable to the tales of *Kusu Island* as well, since there is constantly a strong element of populating the island and harmonious living between the Malay and Chinese family in the tales.

In addition, while existing research shows that turtles tend to return to the same beaches to lay their eggs (CNRS 2018), there is a story from Malaysia which sought to explain these phenomena. The tale referred to a pair of husband and wife sea

turtle which wandered through the shore of Trengganu and came across a foreign place when they got lost. A school of fish passing by them told the turtles that it is the sea of Rantau Abang, and there is a garden with stunning scenery. The male turtle got very curious about the garden. However, a passing crab warned them about the garden as there is a rule to obey (to not drink the pond water) or that they will be cursed. The female turtle was afraid, and did not continue the journey with her husband. Upon reaching the garden, the male turtle was so mesmerized by it that he ignored the crab's warning and drank the forbidden water. With that, he was cursed into a stone. When the female turtle found out, she was so sad and decided to return back to the garden to lay eggs near the turtle stone. Ever since, the descendants of the turtle will go there to lay their eggs. The stone is known as Batu Penyu (the Turtle Stone) and can still be found today in Rantau Abang beach (Puteh and Said 1995, 14).

In several versions of the tales of *Kusu Island*, it was stated that the people at present still believe that the turtle could be seen resting on the island. This might be due to the fact that Kusu Island used to have many turtles roaming around, probably because many of them are born from there as well (Chandran-Dudley 2001, 46). The turtle's trait of leaving the eggs on the island could be a symbol of fertility as well. Although Kusu Island today is not populated with people as it is reserved as a pilgrimage site by the Singapore government, the island's fertility can be seen through its fertile soil, coral reefs and turtles.

Most importantly, there are also several instances where the turtles were depicted as saviors or guardians to the people. Such turtle motifs could be found in several folktale and legends. In a Vietnamese legend, a turtle from Hoan Kiem lake had bestowed a divine sword upon the king of Vietnam that he later used to defeat an invading Chinese army. There is a Hawaiian tale that recounted of a mystical sea turtle (Honu), Kauila, who would transform into a human girl and watch over the safety of the children playing along the shore of Punalu'u, in the district of Ka'u on the Big Island of Hawaii (Pukui 1995).

While in the *Jatakas* Tales, there are many stories that involves the Buddha's previous births in both human and animal forms, and the turtle is featured prominently in them as a saviour. One story depicted the Kaccapavadana which revealed the historical Buddha's past life as a turtle (Krenner and Jeremiah 2015, 8). In here, the Bodhisattva-turtle saved the people who faced danger at sea (Benn 2007, 107). At

Borobudur, one of the reliefs also portrayed this story. The Bodhisattva-turtle saved 500 merchants from drowning (Brown 1997, 75). Upon reaching the shore, the turtle took a nap. He then overheard the merchants debating whether to eat the turtle to stay alive. The Bodhisattva then selflessly gave his life up in order to save them. This particular *Jataka* tale almost parallel that of the tale of *Kusu Island*, especially in terms of the turtle saving the men at sea and bringing them to an island.

These examples have shown the different symbolic significance of the turtle motif from various parts of the world that could possibly be related to or similar to that of the turtle motifs in the tales of *Kusu Island*.

### 3.2 The Motif of Turtle in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island* and the Implied Child Reader

We have looked at the turtle motif found in the tales of *Kusu Island* in relation to the symbolic significance of the turtle motifs found across the world. The following parts of this chapter will be looking at how the anthropomorphizing of turtle motifs in *Kusu Island* relates to the implied child reader.

There are various categories of readers, the real and the implied. Maria Nikolajeva summarized the categories into a communication chain: real author → implied author → narrator → narratee → implied reader → real reader (Nikolajeva 2005, 247). The real reader refers to the physical participant, while the implied reader is the authors' idea about their audience, the hypothetical figure of the reader who possesses the necessary knowledge to fully understand the text, as distinct from real readers (Nikolajeva 2005, 247). The difference between them is most obvious in reading works from a period when conventional values were very different, and the real readers may not be able to understand the text fully given the lack of knowledge, experiences and different value systems.

Children's literature is known to contain two parallel reading audiences who are partially aware of each other but never really dialogue with one another (May 1997, 83). Children are first read to by their parents and the meaning of the literature will be explained by the adults. Adults who share literature with children are aware that it is being used as an educational tool. These children's literature is also selected by the

adults before sharing it with the children. In other words, children's literature is not only written but always mediated through an adult (parent, teacher, editor, bookseller, critic, librarian). Hence, the authors cannot avoid addressing the adult co-reader alongside the child, and will have to consider both the implied child reader and the implied adult reader (Nikolajeva 2005, 263).<sup>25</sup> Although it is acknowledged that there is a presence of the implied child reader and the implied adult reader in the creation of children's literature, this thesis will only focus on the implied child reader in the analysis of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*.

Presumably, books chosen for children contain a viewpoint approved by adults. It is important, however, to not discount the child reader as an active participant in the creative process. Children read and learn from texts and could possibly be co-creator of the stories. It is argued that literary text is not created by the author, but rather by the reader (Nikolajeva 2005, 252). A book remains a material object if left unread, until a reader extracts meaning out of it. In this case, a text is a living and creative process that can be "created anew at the crossroads of the readers' different experiences." The reader thus becomes a co-creator who can contribute meaning to the text with his experiences and understandings. German literary scholar Wolfgang Iser also views reading as an active conversation between the text and the reader. Iser argues that readers make connection to the text that can relate to their real-life experiences as well as their previous reading. As such, each individual readers' previous experience is key for interpretation (Nikolajeva 2005, 252).

In the following paragraphs, we will be discussing how the motif of the turtle in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* relates to the implied child reader, and how the authors and illustrators use the turtle motif to draw relationships with the implied child reader.

### *3.2.1 The Anthropomorphised Turtle Motifs in the Illustrated Tales of Kusu Island*

The motif of turtle is popular among the Chinese culture in Singapore, given its symbolic meaning of longevity, good luck and power. In fact, many households in

---

<sup>25</sup> One of the types of writing is called *double address*, where the adult author can speak directly to the adult co-reader over the child's head, sharing experience at the expense of the child or even to make fun of the child protagonist. This form of writing can be rather disrespectful towards the child readers. Another way is through a *dual* (or equal) *address* where the child and the adult co-readers are addressed on the same level, where both audiences can enjoy the literature in their own rights (Nikolajeva 2005, 263).

Singapore also welcome the act of breeding turtles and tortoises at home as it is said to bring good luck. Connie Tan, the owner of the one and only Turtle and Tortoise Museum in Singapore and in the world, mentioned in an interview that some of her turtles were adopted by people as it was said to bring them good fortune as well (Connie Tan, unpublished data). Turtle motifs can be found in local temples, shrines, souvenirs, and even in local tales such as that of *Kusu Island* (Chong 2018). The most prominent symbolic meaning of the turtle as seen from the tales of *Kusu Island* is its compassion and its role as a savior and guardian of the people, and this is visually depicted as well.

Keith Barker notes that the device of using animals in early children's books is still being embraced today in modern children's stories (or rather in contemporary times as well) (Hunt 2000, 283). The animals present in these stories embody certain human characteristics that can appeal to young readers in a way that they will not find threatening or disturbing and will teach them a lesson in human nature (Hunt 2000, 283). Moreover, children tend to anthropomorphize animals, toys or even inanimate objects through play and imagination, which makes them better equipped for accepting such characters (Nikolajeva 2010, 36).

According to Barker, there are several types of animal stories. One of which includes animals' interaction with humans, where both animals and humans coexist in a normal way, but the humans are unaware that animals have the ability to talk. In several tales of *Kusu Island*, the savior turtle 'interacts' with the human through its life saving actions, although no verbal communications are involved (Pugalenthii 2001, Pugalenthii 2002, Lim 2005, Bosco 2016). While another type is where animals act like humans and the humans are aware of it. This is evident from *The Isle of Friendship* (Chandran-Dudley 2002, 35) where the anthropomorphic turtle communicated with the fishermen in their language, who in turn took no notice of the turtle's ability to open its mouth to speak. The fishermen and their partners did not deem it strange that the turtle could talk and have facial expressions. Similarly, in *Kusu Island* (Comber and Kwok), the turtle instructed the fisherman to hold tight to ensure his safety and the fisherman complied obediently.

Aidan Chambers examines the various degrees of anthropomorphism in children's literature and their effectiveness in terms of an implied reader. He notes that the most effective characters often portray human emotions accurately while retaining

the animal traits (Chambers 1985, 42). In the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, the turtle is depicted as a turtle: it is a good swimmer, large and possess a hard shell with angular patterns. These traits bring the readers back to reality as it resembles the real-life turtles. However, the turtle also possesses specific human traits that are accentuated through the textual and visual depiction in the various tales of *Kusu Island* as detailed in Table 3 and Table 4.

The fictional character of the turtle motif as a saviour is accentuated through its visual depiction in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. For instance, with reference to Table 3, all five versions of the illustrated tale depicted the turtle in a much larger size as compared to the human figure in order to show that it has the ability to save the fisherman.<sup>26</sup> It also displayed bravery and selflessness when it went out to sea to save the fishermen during a terrible storm (Table 3).

From Table 4, we can also see the compassionate turtle through their anthropomorphised facial expression, such as in Picture 5 where it is given human-like facial features (e.g. eyebrows, eyes and lips), and in Picture 8, the turtle has a determined and concentrated look on its face while saving the fisherman. The compassionate and humble turtle is also evident in several occasions when it tried its best to save the fishermen, and upon reaching the shore, it left almost immediately, without claiming credit for the deed done (Table 3). It could also be shy as the turtle is afraid of humans, just like how humans can be wary of strangers as well. Another instance is where the turtle speaks the human language to assure the fishermen that it is going to save them, and to ensure that they hold on tight as explained earlier. This also reveal the kind, caring and friendly character of the turtle. In additional, the artistic styles that are used to illustrate the turtle also bring us back and forth between reality and fiction, as some are depicted realistically either through black and white drawings or water colour paintings, while others adopt a more fictional approach with comic-styled drawings or cartoon depiction.

The anthropomorphic turtle motif is one of the techniques used by the authors and illustrators to establish a relationship with the implied child reader, so as to have more success in transmitting their messages to the real readers. By depicting the turtle character as the savior, the kind hearted and friendly creature who possesses human traits in the tales, this can encourage the child reader to take its sides if they can

---

<sup>26</sup> There are only five versions of the tale being analysed for the visual depiction of the turtle as the other two versions did not illustrate the turtle motif.

sympathise with it. In addition, the use of tone through the narrator's voice and point of view by the author can affect the child reader's relationship with the text (Appendix D). The child reader's receptiveness to the text will eventually determine the learning experiences, and whether the values of the story is understood by the reader.

Table 3. Textual depiction of the anthropomorphised turtle motifs in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*

	Text	Human traits
<p>Picture 2 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001)</p> <p>Picture 3 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2002)</p>	<p>Just when he was about to give up, he saw a huge turtle swimming swiftly towards him. It was the biggest that he had ever seen! The turtle waved to him and signaled to him to climb up its back. Though he thought he was hallucinating, he just followed its instructions.</p> <p>True enough, the turtle carried him off to safety and later brought him to an island.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brave</li> <li>- Helpful</li> <li>- Compassionate</li> </ul>
<p>Picture 4 and 5 <i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley 2001)</p>	<p>When they were brought to the shallows, they were astonished to discover that their rescuer was a huge turtle. By the time they had clambered ashore, the turtle was gone.</p> <p>The giant turtle said that it was indeed he who had rescued us and brought us to this island, although he put it in a more humble way. You know, Yusof and Zarah, he said that you were brought here by his sister.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mysterious</li> <li>- Humble</li> <li>- Shy</li> <li>- Understand and speaks human language</li> </ul>
<p><i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber and Kwok 2011)</p>	<p>When he was about to give up hope, a large turtle appeared and swam towards him. It was the biggest turtle he has ever seen in his life. "Climb on to my back and hold tight," the turtle told him. "I shall take you to shore."</p> <p>The fisherman did as he was told, and the turtle took him to a nearby island where he climbed off the turtle's back on to the sandy beach. "Thank you, Mr. Turtle," he said, "for saving my life," but the turtle was already swimming far away although he looked back and waved his flipper at Ah Yam.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brave</li> <li>- Helpful</li> <li>- Compassionate</li> <li>- Assuring</li> <li>- Humble</li> <li>- Friendly</li> <li>- Understand and speaks human language</li> </ul>

<p>Picture 7 and 8 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Tan 2005)</p>	<p>The rain only beat down cruelly on his face. The fisherman was about to give up. Suddenly, he saw something large moving towards him. It was a giant turtle!</p> <p>He was even more surprised when the turtle waved its flipper, inviting him to climb on its back. The fisherman quickly clambered onto the hard shell and held on tightly.</p> <p>The wind and the rain continued to play mischief, forcing the fisherman to slip and slide but the turtle kept on going and soon reached a deserted island.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brave</li> <li>- Helpful</li> <li>- Compassionate</li> <li>- Friendly</li> <li>- Determined</li> </ul>
<p>Picture 12 <i>The Legend of Turtle Island</i> (Bosco 2016)</p>	<p>Just then, a giant turtle rose out of the water in front of her.</p> <p>Shing was so astonished that she dropped one of her oars into the sea. When Shing was younger, her mother told her stories about a heavenly turtle. It often came down to protect the villages from monsters and bandits and natural disasters like earthquakes and floods and typhoons.</p> <p>“Last night we were testing a new boat that I made for him,” Woo said. “But there was a storm. It turned the boat over. My friend, Mas, hit his head. He broke his leg too. We were struggling to stay afloat. Then a giant turtle swam towards us.”</p> <p>“It saved us!” Mas added excitedly.</p> <p>Woo lowered his voice. “After that, it turned into this rocky island. We have been sitting here since then, until you came by.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- God-like figure</li> <li>- Protective</li> <li>- Savior</li> <li>- Helpful</li> <li>- Compassionate</li> </ul>

Table 4. Visual depiction of the anthropomorphised turtle motifs in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*

	Physical Appearance, Size	Facial Expression	Artistic Style	Colour
Picture 2 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Angular shapes as patterns on a large shell</li> <li>- Larger than human</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neutral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bold, rough pen outline</li> <li>- Comic style</li> </ul>	Black and white
Picture 3 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Angular shapes as patterns on a large shell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looks serene, as if it is resting on the beach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fine pen sketch with shading and shadows</li> <li>- Realistic style</li> </ul>	Black and white
Picture 4 and 5 <i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Picture 4: it appears to be a towering rock mass/island with turtle-like features</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Picture 5: human-like facial features (e.g. eyebrows, eyes and lips)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bold, rough woodblock print style</li> <li>- Comic style</li> </ul>	Black and white
Picture 7 and 8 <i>Kusu Island</i> (Tan 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Angular shapes as patterns on a large shell and the body parts</li> <li>- Larger than human</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a determined and concentrated look on the face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Watercolour</li> <li>- Realistic style</li> </ul>	Dark brown and light brown
Picture 12 <i>The Legend of Turtle Island</i> (Bosco 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Angular shapes as patterns on a large shell</li> <li>- Life size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cute face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital paint</li> <li>- Cartoon style</li> </ul>	Dark green and light green

### 3.2.2 Symbolic Significance of Turtle Motifs in the Illustrated Tales of Kusu Island

In order to take a closer study at the turtle motif in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, we will have to turn to motif indexes to help us determine the type and motif of the tales, just like how folklorists had done in the past. The most popular indexes include the Aarne-Thompson classification System (AT System) that only considers Indo-European folktale for its tale type index, and excludes folktales outside of these regions (Dundes 1997, 1999). Hence, I have decided to use Kristina Lindell's Motif-Index for Southeast Asian Folk-Literature that is done based on Stith Thompson's AT System, but is applicable to the folklores of Southeast Asia. Although none of the Singapore stories are considered in Lindell's motif-index, I find some of the indexes more comprehensive for the analysis of the tales of *Kusu Island* as compared to the AT System.<sup>27</sup>

Six out of the seven versions of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* involving the giant turtle were studied using the motif-indexes. The purpose of this study was to compare between the different versions of the tale in terms of their turtle motifs, to see if it had evolved over the past decades, as well as the possible symbolic meaning behind the motifs and how they have contributed to the fictional essence of the tales and in attracting the implied readers.

---

<sup>27</sup> Lindell has covered several Southeast Asian countries that includes Vietnam, Laos, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Burma, as well as South Asia that includes India, and East Asia that consist of China and Japan in her examples.

Table 5. Motif indexes in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* according to Kristina Lindell's Motif-Index for Southeast Asian Folk-Literature (Lindell 2006)

Motif Indexes	(Ramakrishnan 2001)	(Ramakrishnan 2002)	(Chandran-Dudley 2001)	(Lim 2005)	(Comber 2011)	(Bosco 2016)
(B875 Giant reptiles)	Just when he was about to give up, the fisherman saw a huge turtle swimming gradually towards him. It was the biggest turtle he had ever seen!	Just when he was about to give up, the fisherman saw a huge turtle swimming gradually towards him. It was the biggest turtle he had ever seen!	When they were brought to the shallows, they were astonished to discover that their rescuer was a huge turtle. By the time they had clambered ashore, the turtle was gone.	Suddenly, he saw something large moving towards him. It was a giant turtle!	When he was about to give up hope, a large turtle appeared and swam towards him. It was the biggest turtle he had ever seen in his life.	“Then a giant turtle swam towards.”
(B491.5 Helpful turtle, B303 Compassionate animals)	The turtle waved to him and signaled to him to climb onto its back. Though he thought he was hallucinating, the fisherman followed its instructions. True enough, the turtle carried him to safety and by bringing him to an island.	The turtle waved to him and signaled to him to climb onto its back. Though he thought he was hallucinating, the fisherman followed its instructions. True enough, the turtle carried him to safety and by bringing him to an island.	“We were also saved by a giant turtle exactly a year ago. That was how we came to live on this island,” replied Siong Chai.	He was even more surprised when the turtle waved its flipper, inviting him to climb on its back. The fisherman quickly clambered onto the hard shell and held on tightly.	The fisherman did as he was told, and the turtle took him to a nearby island where he climbed off the turtle's back on to the sandy beach. “Thank you, Mr. Turtle,” he said, “for saving my life,” but the turtle was already swimming far away although he looked back and waved his flipper at Ah Yam.	“It saved us!” Mas added excitedly.  Woo lowered his voice. “After that, it turned into this rocky island. We've been sitting here since then, until you came by.”

(B211.6 Speaking reptile, B211 Animal uses human speech)			The turtle talked to Yusof and Siong Chai.		“Climb on to my back and hold tight,” the turtle told him. “I shall take you to shore.”	
(B531 Animals provide food for men)			<p>From time to time, clothing and other useful articles were found on the beach.</p> <p>The turtle is thought to be the mystery giver of good things.</p>			
(V1.3 Worship of ancestors, V1.8 Worship of animals)	At the same time, each also built a temple in gratitude. The two temples still stand on the island. Till today, there is a huge turtle sculpture to commemorate the turtle that saved the two fishermen. It is believed that the turtle is still around and once in a while you can see it resting on the island.	At the same time, each also built a temple in gratitude. The two temples still stand on the island. Till today, there is a huge turtle sculpture to commemorate the turtle that saved the two fishermen. It is believed that the turtle is still around and once in a while you can see it resting on the island.	<p>Siong Chai and Ah Siew showed their new friends the altars they had built in thanksgiving. Zarah and Yusof thought it was a good idea and decided to build keramats to give thanks for their miraculous rescue.</p> <p>Their happiness, their strong friendships, and their spiritually blessed island-home, began to be known by others around.</p>	For a long time, the two friends never saw the strange and mysterious turtle. But it has been said that people who later visited the island, now called Kusu or Turtle island, have seen the magnificent creature resting on the shores under the peaceful, sunny sky.	To thank the turtle for saving their lives, they built a Chinese temple on a small hill overlooking the sea, a Malay shrine, and a statue of Mr. Turtle, all of which can still be found on the island which is now known as Kusu Island.	Every year, on the same day, they would go back to the small island and give thanks for the miracle. Mas would also be there, waiting for them.

			Gradually, more and more people began to visit the island so that they too could be blessed with the same gifts of friendship and loyalty.			
--	--	--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--

The following paragraphs summarize the findings that I have discovered through Table 5. In Table 5, all the versions of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* that involves a turtle show the underlying narrative that speaks of a giant turtle that saved the fishermen lives without asking for anything in return (B491.5, B303) (Lindell 2006, 33), thus exhibiting its compassion and selflessness. The sheer size of the turtle is also being emphasized in all the versions of the tale (B875) (Lindell 2006, 38), along with its hardy ground-like shell. Such emphasis could relate the turtle motifs to the symbolism of the earth, where the turtle is commonly believed to be able to support the world on its back.

There are also two versions of the stories that anthropomorphized the turtle by allowing it to communicate with the fisherman through human language and actions (B211.6, B211) (Lindell 2006, 26). The wisdom and feelings of the turtles exhibited through these conversations revealed the human side of them, as though they should be considered as ‘people’ as well, and that they require protection as much as we do. In all the versions of the story, the turtle left immediately after saving the fishermen, as if they are afraid to stay with the humans any longer. One of the books mentioned that “They (the turtles) are very shy people, as many turtles have been hurt and, in fact, killed by human beings (Chandran-Dudley 2001, 47).” It could have been written in a bid to raise awareness of the plight of some turtles as well as to tell the readers that the humans should help to protect the turtle species in repaying their kindness.

To commemorate the turtle for saving their lives, the fishermen built a Chinese temple and a Malay *keramat* as appreciation for their miraculous rescue (V1.3, V1.8) (Lindell 2006, 146). This was mentioned in almost all of the endings in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. One of the reasons for the relationship between the turtle motif and the religious architectures could be simply because the narrators wanted to link the story to the real-life Kusu Island at present. Another reason could be that the Chinese have long recognized Indian influences in their culture through Buddhism (See 2016, 70), and the tales of *Kusu Island* bears a striking resemblance to the *Jataka* tale of the Buddha’s past life as a turtle (Kaccapavadana). The turtle motif in the illustrated *Kusu Island* tales could be tied to religious beliefs, and hence its association to the temple and shrine.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> For instance, the Taoist deity Zhenwu is an anthropomorphic representation of the intertwining tortoise and snake image of Xuanwu, the Black Turtle or Black Warrior (Kohn 2000, 738). The tortoise and snake are associated with Fire and Water, and is one of the Four Symbols of the Chinese constellations (Zhang 2015, 15).

In the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, all the versions concluded with the harmonious living of the Malay and Chinese fishermen on the island that is filled with friendship and loyalty. It was said that the people who go to visit the island hope that they can be blessed with such happiness as well (Seet Seng Huat, unpublished data). The turtle motif in these tales probably contained similar qualities and characteristics as well, since it is known that turtles are loyal and sentimental creatures (King 2014).

This chapter has examined the motif of the turtle by looking at its symbolic significance in turtle island creation tales across the world especially in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. These symbolic meanings have contributed to the fictionalization of the turtle in the story – as representation of the earth and cosmos who is able to support all living things, as well as a symbol of fertility and as a guardian. The relationship between the turtle motif and the implied child reader has also been studied through a detailed analysis of how the turtle character is being anthropomorphized in the tales of *Kusu Island*. It is found that the anthropomorphism through visual and textual representations can appeal to young readers since they possess the necessary skills of imagination and play that allow them to accept such characters.

A further analysis of the turtle motif in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* is done using the motif indexes, where it is found that the turtle is anthropomorphized as a compassionate, sentimental, helpful animal, and as one that is sometimes able to communicate with humans. At the same time, because of their symbolic representations, they are given magical features that are out of the norm (e.g. being bigger than life-sized, being worshipped). The motif of the turtle is also closely associated with religious beliefs in the tales of *Kusu Island* probably because Kusu Island is an existing island, and that it would be necessary for the tales to remain true to the present island that consist of the temple and the *keramat*. The visual depiction of the turtle motif also contributed to its fictional character given its mix of imaginary and real-life features. With this, the motif of the turtle in the illustrated *Kusu Island* tale is a combination of fictional beliefs, non-fiction, as well as imagination. It is the turtle motif along with other narrative elements that brings the magical aspects of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* to life, and therefore in affecting its child readers.

## CONCLUSION

Each successive generation's handling of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between image and text, fiction and reality. As much as the text narrative can influence the making of an image, the image is still an entity by itself, where the messages implied do not just depend on the artist but the influences of a particular visual culture in time as well. There is also a close relationship between fiction and reality, where both mutually influence each other.

Using a system of methods, this thesis examined numerous versions of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* from 1979 to 2016, in order to provide a comprehensive study about the various way an illustrated book could contribute to the interpretation of cultural heritage and nation building issues. These methods allowed for the usage of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* to fulfill the three objectives of this thesis. The first is to study the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* through an art historical lens, which then revealed the evolution and increased complexity of visual images that enhances the interplay of image and text. This study also showed the status of the illustrator as a storyteller. Secondly, to find out what the retelling and re-illustration of the tales of *Kusu island* can reveal to us about the society, thoughts, interests and agendas of the people at that period of time. The final objective examines the multiple meanings and symbolic significance of the turtle motif in the tales of *Kusu island* that represents the earth, fertility and as a saviour or guardian, and how the turtle motif is used to draw relationships with the implied child reader.

As we enter into the new decades, the prevalence of new media platforms (e.g. online, phone and video gaming, movies) have influenced a shift in children's attention away from books (Chia 2011, 25). This has led to a rise in the creation of other platforms for storytelling. In the case of *Kusu Island*, there is an increasing production of the tale through various mediums as outreach methods. One such example involved the Singapore Post issuing a limited-edition stamp set featuring the stories about Kusu Island and Sisters' Islands, illustrated by Lim An-Ling. They held a public exhibition titled *Tales From Our Shores* in conjunction with the special stamp release (Picture 16). A graphic animation about the tale of *Kusu Island* was also produced by student producer Hui Ho in 2014, and was televised on the local childrens channel oktoLIVE! Series (Ho 2014). The animation also introduces the Chinese Temple and Malay Shrine on the island.

In the same year, Marie Lee produced a play for children titled *Quest to Kusu Island*, which depicts a re-imagined version of the original tale with the theme of environmental conservation. In this version, a turtle goes to Kusu Island to find medicine for this ailing grandfather. However, he meets several obstacles along the way, especially when the island is unable to produce any medicine because of oil pollution. With the help of the fisherwomen and the audience, they manage to clean up the pollution, and the turtle obtains freshwater from the guardian to revive the tree that can help to produce the medicine. With it, the tree bloomed, and the turtle's grandfather is saved. Lee aims to encourage younger generations to visit Kusu Island while promoting the importance of environmental conservation through the play (Lee 2017).

The annual Singapore Heritage Festival in recent years has also brought in local island stories into the limelight. In 2017, a live radio play with sound effects titled *Island Stories – Untold Stories of Sisters Islands and Kusu Island* allowed the audience to discover the stories of Singapore's offshore islands through its several screenings throughout the festival. In 2018, storytelling sessions were conducted with the use of props and audience participation in bringing Singapore's myths and legends to life, which includes the tale of *Kusu Island* (Singapore Heritage Festival).

Despite the presence of these various forms of storytelling platforms for traditional tales such as *Kusu Island*, it is still crucial to acknowledge the role of illustrated books in preserving these tales for the future generations to come. Folktales and fables are known to have dominated the Singapore children's literature scene in the 1970s, and with children's books adopting the themes of national campaigns, bilingualism in schools, in creating a multiracial and multicultural identity (Chia 2016, 22). However, the illustrative qualities of the books then were not sufficiently appealing to capture the attention of readers. Even today, with marked improvements in the use of illustrations and quality colours for children's books, Singaporeans still do not value picture books (Bacsal 2015, 105). WZ, the founder of Bookurator, a Facebook community page for parents to share good children's books, mentions that the Singapore picture books are more 'moralistic and parable-like' and that the "illustrations are not very strong". It is known that illustrations serve a significant role in illustrated books given its ability to capture the essence of the story and to enhance the depth of the narrative visually and aesthetically (Bacsal 2015, 109). Hence, it is

important to promote the value of these children's books with illustrations to the readers such that more readers can appreciate the beauty of these books in enhancing their reading abilities to construct meanings across multiple sign systems between the image and text. The co-existence of these various mediums of storytelling will promote a variety of methods for learning and teaching that can impact the children's cognitive ability.

In Chapter 1 "The Significance of Images in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island*", I introduced the concept of multi-modal texts where readers have to work across the different sign systems of visual image and written text in order to construct meaning. This chapter also argued on the importance of visual images in affecting the overall narrative, since its increased complexity can impact reader's experiences and understanding of the story. A detailed textual and visual analysis was done for each of the seven illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, while taking into account the perspectives of the illustrators and authors of the respective books. It is found that the earlier books in black and white tend to be more literal and stereotypical in their visual depictions and narrative as compared to later publications, where their characterization and interplay between image and text are more open to interpretations and imagination. Colours also played a significance role in affecting reader's emotions. A structural analysis was also done on the texts of the tales of *Kusu Island* using Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. It is concluded that there is an increased sophistication in the images over the past decades unlike the structural narrative of the texts that have largely remained the same.

"Multiple Realities in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island*" in Chapter 2 revealed the strong relationship between the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* and reality using Lutz Röhrich theory of "Storytellers' reality," "Fictive reality," "Historical reality" and "Projected reality," together with primary and secondary sources. The analysis of the multiple realities in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* took reference from the data collected from the interviews with the illustrators and authors since they were the people who have influenced the directions of the story. This study also showed the status of the illustrator as a storyteller as supported by grounded theory analysis. Through grounded theory analysis, it was found that other than their personal aims, target audiences, objectives and perspectives that have shaped the overall direction of the tale, the references and sources that they have utilized also affected the creation of the tale – and hence changing realities. This thus allowed the illustrated

tales of *Kusu Island* to evolve and to stay relevant with changing times although the structural narrative of the text did not change.

In contrast to Chapter 2, Chapter 3 on “The Fictional Motif of Turtle in the Illustrated Tales of *Kusu Island*” looked into the fiction of the tales through the turtle motif. It examined the symbolic significance of the turtle motif across numerous cultures in island creation tales, so as to find out possible influences on the significance of the turtle motif in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. Based on this analysis, in many cultures the turtle motif could represent the earth, symbol of fertility as well as being a savior or guardian to the people. This chapter also examines how the storytellers transmit messages and values through the visual and textual depiction of the turtle motifs to their implied child readers. The relationship between the turtle motif and the implied child reader was studied through a detailed analysis of how the turtle character was being anthropomorphized in the tales of *Kusu Island*. It was found that the anthropomorphism through visual and textual representations can appeal to young readers since they possess the necessary skills of imagination and play that allow them to accept such characters. The fantastic element of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* was also accentuated by the visual depiction of the turtle motif.

As mentioned earlier, the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* can be considered as a multicultural literature. Singapore is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. Race-cultural equality is one of the main ideological bases of governance in Singapore, and “racial harmony” is constantly being emphasized (Chua 2009, 243). For instance, this can be seen through the public celebrations of the different racial or religious cultural festivals throughout the year, or the various government policies implemented to promote harmonious living of the various ethnicity. Their peaceful co-existence is considered a source of national pride among Singaporeans.

However, given the co-presence and cultural division of the different races, the threat of a possible racial conflict has always been real. This could be seen from the race riots that happened in the 1950s and 1960s when Singapore was still part of Malaysia.<sup>29</sup> At the moment, the Singapore government seized every opportunity to

---

<sup>29</sup> The Maria Hertogh riot in December 1950 happened between the Europeans and the Malays. Maria was a Dutch Catholic girl whose care was entrusted to an Indonesian/Muslim woman during the Japanese Occupation. When the war ended, negotiations for the return of their daughter failed, and the Dutch parents brought the issue to court in Singapore, and the court decided to give custody to the Dutch parents.

remind its people of these historical incidents so as to emphasize on the fragility and importance of racial harmony in Singapore. In order to prevent history from repeating itself, racial harmony “must be and has been raised to the level of a public good” (Chua 2009, 243). Yet, despite the level of racial harmony achieved, Singapore is never completely safe from potential racial conflicts.<sup>30</sup> As such, Singaporeans have to be vigilant in case of any potential racial conflict, and the government to tread carefully between racial boundaries as it designed initiatives and programmes to promote multiculturalism.

One of the government’s strategies was to advocate the importance of multiculturalism and to instil racial harmony among the young generation through education. For instance, since 1997, 21<sup>st</sup> July had been marked as Racial Harmony Day in memory of the riots. It is a day when students are reminded of the fragility of the relationship between all races and religions, and to reflect on and celebrate Singapore’s success as a harmonious society built on cultural diversity (Han 2014). Textbooks and storybooks are some of the other tools that are also used to infuse the idea of multiracialism and multiculturalism among children, and the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* can be considered as a multicultural literature that promotes and reflect multiculturalism in Singapore through various elements in the story.

A multicultural children’s literature can be defined as a literature that represents any distinct cultural group through accurate portrayal and rich detail (Yokota 1993, 157).<sup>31</sup> Cultural accuracy would mean that issues are depicted and represented in ways that reflect the values and beliefs of the culture, and readers can gain a “true” sense of the culture (Yokota 1993, 159). Such cultural information can be seen in many aspects of an illustrated tale: the description and depiction of the setting, the action, words and dressing of the characters, and the treatment of the overall theme.

---

This resulted in the outrage of the Malay/Muslim community, and a three-day riot with multiple deaths, injuries and destruction of property. In another instance, the 1964 Maulud (Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) celebration, the Malay/Muslim procession started out from the City Hall towards the Malay part of the island, but was attacked by the Chinese before the procession reached its destination. According to official reports, this caused the death of 22 people and 454 were injured (Chua 2009, 243). During post-independent Singapore, another race riot between the Malays and the Chinese happened in 1969 over the course of seven days, and resulted in casualties (Conceicao 2007, 112-113).

<sup>30</sup> In December 2013, a riot that involved about 400 foreign workers, mainly from South Asia erupted when an Indian national had been run down by a private bus while running after the vehicle (*The Straits Times* 2014). This incident came as a great shock to many given Singapore’s image as a peaceful and harmonious nation, and has shown that ethnic conflict is still possible.

<sup>31</sup> Although Junko Yokota uses American literature as examples for her theories, her ideas are still relevant for multi-cultural literature in other cultures. I chose to use Yokota’s ideas as there are currently no available scholars who have studied on Southeast Asia multi-cultural literature for my reference.

The inclusion of traditional dressing in depicting the appearances of each character of the Chinese, Arab and Malay people have revealed the respective cultures in the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*. For instance, the Chinese woman is frequently depicted in a *cheongsam*, which was a traditional dress worn by Chinese women. The depiction of the Malay man could be considered to be the most consistent throughout, with him wearing a *songkok* (traditional Malay cap) and a *sarong*, where the *sarong* is a traditional Southeast Asian garment worn around the waist by men (Koh 2013). The Arab man wore a “Thawb” and a *keffiyah* (Middle Eastern headdress), and the inclusion of the Arab man in the story is probably to pay homage to the small but significant Arab community in 19<sup>th</sup> century Singapore who were prominent in the Muslim pilgrimage industry (Ho 2013).

Other than the physical appearances of the characters, ethnically identifiable names are given to the characters in some stories. For example, names like Ah Siew, Siong Chai, Ah Yam, Shing and Woo are Chinese names, where the characters are mainly referred to by their surname. This is so as surnames are traditionally important to the Chinese as it represents closeness in kinship, especially when there are people with the same surnames and are said to originate from common ancestors (Lee 2011,103). While Syed Abdul Rahman, Zarah, Yusof, and Mas are relatable to Malay names. For the Arabs, especially with the honorific title of *Sayyid*, were thought to be the direct descendants of Prophet Muhammad, thus the naming of the Arab man as “Syed” in *The Kusu Legend* (Ho 2013).

One of the key messages, which all seven illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have in common is the strong friendship between the Arab and the Chinese or the Chinese and the Malay. There is an emphasis on harmonious living between the different races. This is especially evident when most of the tales included the fact that the Chinese and the Malay man built a Chinese temple and a Malay shrine to show their gratitude (that is currently standing on Kusu Island).<sup>32</sup> The repetitive narrative events in the tales of

---

<sup>32</sup> As seen from the example from Kusu Island, after the pilgrims visited the Tua Pek Kong Temple, they would climb 152 steps up the hill to visit the shrines of Syed Abdul Rahman (the Kusu *keramat*), his mother Nenek Ghalib and sister Puteri Fatimah, who are said to have lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lu 2012, 50). This form of saint worship has its roots in early Sufi Islam and pre-Islamic belief that have similarities with Tua Pek Kong worship (Lu 2012, 50). As the shrines are popular with many Southeast Asian Chinese, they have “adopted the practices and the Malay saints too acquired the Sino-Malay honorific of Datuk Kong, a combination of the Malay title ‘Datuk’ and the Chinese title ‘Kong’ (Lu 2012, 50).” ‘Datuk Kong’ thus refers to Syed Abdul Rahman. The Kusu *keramat* is unique in the sense that it has strong Chinese influences in the rituals observed at the shrines. This is so as from the inscriptions in the shrines, the main patrons are the Straits Chinese devotees in sustaining the pilgrimage in its earlier and later years (Lu 2012). As such, upon reaching the *keramat*, devotees will be greeted with Malay caretakers chanting blessings in a mix of Hokkien and Malay, and a sight of devotees burning joss sticks and paper. However,

*Kusu Island* also highlight the main themes of the story – how Kusu Island is built on the basis of friendship and racial harmony and multi religion. Johnson and Mandle mentioned that the “recurring themes of traditional stories are probably a reflection of commonalities in human experience” (Klapproth 2004, 141). The existence of two different religions on a same island also means multi-religiosity, and this parallels to Singapore’s multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity where various kinds of religions are being practised (e.g. Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and many more). Some of these religious practices in Singapore appear to be able and ready to absorb elements from each other (Chen 1998, 167).

Just as what Junko Yokota mentioned, multicultural literature can help readers to understand about their own culture or others’ culture – these experiences can help them understand different backgrounds and influence their decisions on how they will live in this culturally pluralistic world (Yokota 1993, 156). The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* have shown how the authors and illustrators have tried to include elements of multi-culturalism within the story, as well as to advocate peace and harmony between the different races such that it parallels the ideals of Singapore.

The Singapore of today is already experiencing a social structural change. The people will have to be ready to embrace the emerging forms of social identity in the near future. Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew shared in his memoir *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story* that his biggest challenge was to build a nation out of a disparate collection of immigrants from China, British India and the Dutch East Indies. Moreover, a significant foreign population that has been attracted to Singapore to live, work and study. These factors have resulted in a “super-diverse” Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Khoo 2017, 38). Given the presence of globalisation and the increase of ideas across borders, Singapore has indeed become more diverse and colourful. It is important for us to look beyond the differences and to construct a broader identity. During the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference held on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018, Minister Desmond Lee has mentioned that diversity has been our national identity. As a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society, people have multiple other identities beyond race, culture language and religion (e.g. common life experiences, arts, sports and heritage). If we can establish a

---

as a form of respect to the Malay saints, the devotees must rid themselves of pork even before climbing up the steps leading to the *keramat* (*The Singapore Free Press* 1959, 10). It is also rather common to see devotees who are followers of different religions visiting the temple and shrines. The Kusu pilgrimage thus offers a uniquely Singapore experience of assimilated cultures and religions.

broader common identity and draw strength from our differences, diversity can be a method for addition and cohesion (Lee 2018).

One of the factors affecting diversity is the increase of mix marriages in Singapore. According to the Department of Statistics, more than half of the marriages in 2017 involved transnational (35%) and inter-ethnic couples (22%). Due to these mix marriages, more young people are growing up with diverse cultures and with mix race identities. If this trend continues, the children of bicultural homes may even form the majority one day (The Straits Times A15, 30 Oct 2018). As such, it is urged for Singaporeans to look beyond differences and to construct a broader identity, so as to ensure inclusiveness in the society. In addition, there are also concerns over the rise of radicalisation around the world, where there is widespread misinformation about Islam and the Muslim community.<sup>33</sup> It is thus important to cultivate deeper mutual understanding for the different communities to prevent this from happening.

With this, storytelling or children's illustrated books can be a platform for the different communities to come together and in promoting diversity. As seen from the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, there is a lack of the Malay voice as the other authors and illustrators are of Chinese, Indian and British origin. For tales to remain relevant to the changing times, it will be important to have a good mix of the different voices in the future adaptation of the story, as this can help to adopt an unbiased and more accurate perspective, and in allowing the tales of *Kusu Island* to be more diverse and representative.

Moving on, we can aim for the kind of multicultural literature that can have a more 'authentic' viewpoint. For example, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* by Sonny Liew is a graphic novel that touches on race relationships, power and authority in Singapore in an illustrated medium. As compared to a much tamer sanitized version of storytelling to children, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* pushes the boundaries further and challenges the traditional tropes of what constitutes acceptable or not. The illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* would have to escape from its fairytale-like depiction and instead become a narrative that can push readers to question their identity and in embracing change.

---

<sup>33</sup> Islamophobia has spread across many parts of the world and there is a possibility for Singapore to be susceptible to it. This would mean that Muslims are portrayed in terms of global terrorism, Islamic jihadism, fanatic Islamism, fundamentalism, facism and Islamic authoritarianism (Chung 2016, 65).

Identity constantly evolves, changes, and reform as society and aspirations change. In order to have a broader narrative of Singapore, we will have to always strive for inclusivity. The illustrated tales of Kusu Island could be a starting point for the change to occur.

Despite the progression of the tales of *Kusu Island* from oral sources to textual sources and finally into illustrated books in 1979, the current lack of subtlety in imagery would mean that much development is needed in order to elevate the textual narrative of *Kusu Island* further or into a sophisticated picture book. Examples of contemporary picture book folktales that the tales of *Kusu Island* might take reference from includes *Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras* (Tonatiuh 2015) and *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti* (McDermott 2017).<sup>34</sup> Duncan Tonatiuh is an author-illustrator from Mexico, and *Funny Bones* tells the story of how the Mexican Day of the Dead came to be. Tonatiuh addresses the largely forgotten history of José Guadalupe Posada, the nineteenth-century artist who took the holiday tradition of skulls and light verse and developed a comic cast of skeletons. He then skilfully blends his distinctive style of flat perspectives and digital collage to highlight events in Posada's life and to introduce contemporary *calaveras*, hence combining the past and present into a cohesive whole. It also touches on Mexican history and the artistic technique of lithography, engraving and relief etching. Tonatiuh also incorporated exercises for the young readers, a detailed author's note, an informative glossary, a comprehensive bibliography, and a list of U.S. locations to view Posada's art (Stevenson 2015, 117). *Funny Bones* is indeed a good example of folktales in contemporary sense, and how *Kusu Island* can strive towards. This is the level of sophistication that many of the illustrated folktales of Singapore has yet to reach.

The study of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island* is just a beginning for a wider investigation into the island creation stories of Singapore. Given that Singapore consist of sixty-three islands, these islands do form a significant part of Singapore's identity. Other islands such as Pulau Jong<sup>35</sup>, Sister's Island<sup>36</sup> and Pulau Ubin<sup>37</sup> all have histories

---

<sup>34</sup> Anansi the Spider is a traditional Ashanti tale, where Anansi sets out on a long, difficult journey. Gerald McDermott adapted this popular folktale into contemporary context by merging the old with the new, combining bold, rich colour with traditional African design motifs and authentic Ashanti language rhythms.

<sup>35</sup> Pulau Jong is a tiny, uninhibited island located on the Southern part of Singapore. One legend mentioned that Pulau Jong means 'Junk Island' in Malay, because there had been a Chinese junk that was transformed into the island by the spirit of the sea, when the *Nakhoda* of the junk uttered a frightful yell upon realising that the junk was under attack by Malay pirates (Haughton 1889, 78).

<sup>36</sup> Sisters' Island is located south of Singapore, and is made up of two islands. According to legend, there were two pretty sisters, Minah and Linah. They were very close, and vowed to get married to two brothers

and tales behind their creations. The significance of these tales could have been overshadowed by the kinds of entertainment and attractions that are currently happening on these islands.

In addition, the notion of islands disappearing has been very real, and this makes it even more significant for us to keep these stories alive. Due to ongoing land development by the Singapore government, many of these islands have transformed into industrial sites and landfills, or have simply been reclaimed as part of mainland Singapore or to a bigger island (e.g. Pulau Seking, Pulau Semakau and Pulau Damur Laut), while others have been forgotten. When Singapore was founded in 1819, it had more than 70 offshore islands as compared to the 63 that are mapped out today (Cheow and Koh 2014). In fact, many local artists and scholars have started carrying out their investigations and explorations in this field. This include artists like Debbie Ding and James Jack who have projects on the Singapore islands that have ‘disappeared’, in searching for the lost memory and objects (Jack, NTU CCA). Charles Lim *Sea State* examines the new perspectives that are generated in our everyday surroundings in Singapore, from unseen landscapes and disappearing islands to the imaginary boundaries of a future landmass (NTU CCA).

As these islands “live(d)” among us – hence, it is crucial to highlight the presence and significance of these stories in order to promote appreciation for these existing islands and to remember the forgotten ones, as well as the morals values and lessons for the next generation to learn about.

---

so that they can live together forever. They did not manage to find any brothers among their many suitors. One day, Linah caught the eye of the pirate chief while fetching water from a well, and the pirate threatened to marry Linah or he will kill. When Linah was taken away, Minah swam after the boat but drowned. Upon seeing this, Linah broke free from the pirate and threw herself into the waters. A storm broke out and raged until the next day. When it stopped, two islands appeared where the sisters had drowned, and it was named Sisters’ Islands (Cornelius 2018).

<sup>37</sup> Pulau Ubin is an island located on the north-eastern coast of Singapore, near to Selat Johore to the north. It is currently a nature reserve and leisure island popular with outdoor recreational activities. One of the legends states that there once three creatures, a pig, an elephant and a frog. They challenged one another to reach Johor from the island, and the last one will be turned into stone. Unfortunately, none of them made it, and the elephant and pig turned into Pulau Ubin, and the frog into Pulau Sekudu (Frog Island) (Cornelius 2018).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Academy of Literary Arts & Publishing Singapore. "Picture Book Vs Illustrated Book." Alap.bookcouncil. Accessed October 3, 2017, <https://alap.bookcouncil.sg/resources/article/picture-book-vs-illustrated-book>.
- Amberlyn, J.C. *Drawing Manga Animals, Chibis, and Other Adorable Creatures*. Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodale, 2013.
- Association for Library Service to Children. "Caldecott Medal – Terms and criteria." Ala.org. Accessed October 3, 2017, <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecottmedal/caldecottterms/caldecottterms>.
- Aguirre Manuel, "An Outline of Propp's Model for The Study of Fairytales", The Northanger Library Project, October 2011. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.northangerlibrary.com/documentos/AN%20OUTLINE%20OF%20PROPP'S%20MODEL%20FOR%20THE%20STUDY%20OF%20FAIRYTALES.pdf>
- Bacsal, R. M. G. *Asia: land of perennial stories*. Singapore: AFCC Publications, 2015.
- Ballard, G.D. "The Implied Reader in the Hispanic Children's Literature of the "Encuentro" Series" PhD dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2005.
- Bang, M. *Picture This: How Pictures Work*. Boston MA: Little, Brown & Co, 1991.
- Benn, J.A. *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism*. Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism. University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.
- Bélangier, Pierre. "The Other 71 Percent," Harvard Design Magazine 39 (2014): 3. Accessed January 28, 2017. <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/39/theother-71-percent>.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S. "Register, Genre and Style." *Discourse Studies* 12 (October 2010), no.5: 683 – 685.
- Bosco, Don. Interview by author. Tape recording. Singapore, September 5, 2017.
- Bosco, Don, and Sharon Lei. *Island of Legends*. Singapore: Colourscan Print Co Pte Ltd, 2016.
- Brown, Robert L. "Narrative as Icon." In *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, 64–110. University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. <http://www.jstor.org.ezlibproxy1.ntu.edu.sg/stable/j.ctt6wqcvj.8>.
- Bronner, Simon J., ed. *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. University Press of Colorado, 2007. Accessed March 18, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt4cgrzn>.
- Cai, M. "Can We Fly across Cultural Gaps on the Wings of Imagination?: Ethnicity, Experience, and Cultural Authenticity." *New Advocate* 8 (1995): 1-16. Accessed December 2, 2016, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ496057>.

- Cammann, Schuyler. "Some Early Chinese Symbols of Duality." *History of Religions* 24, no. 3 (1985): 215-54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062255>.
- Catalano, Dominic "The roles of the visual in picturebooks: beyond the conventions of current discourse." Electronic Thesis or Dissertation. Ohio State University, 2005. <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.
- Chambers, A. *Booktalk: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children*. New York: Harper, 1985.
- Chandran-Dudley, Ron. *Tales from the islands of Singapore / as told by Ron Chandran-Dudley; with illustrations by Wil-kie Tan*. Edited by Wil-kie Tan. Singapore: Landmark Books, 2001.
- Chakrabarti, Pratik, and Joydeep, S. "'The World Rests on the Back of a Tortoise': Science and Mythology in Indian History." *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 3 (2016): 808–40. doi:10.1017/S0026749X15000207.
- Cheow, S.A., Koh, F. "Singapore islands you may not have heard of," *The Straits Times*, June 11, 2014. Accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-islands-you-may-not-have-heard-of>.
- Chia, K. H. (2011). The growth of Imagination in Singapore Children's Literature in English (1965 – 2005). *BiblioAsia*, 7(1), 20-27. Singapore: National Library Board.
- Chia, J. M. T. 2009. "Managing The Tortoise Island: Tua Pek Kong Temple, Pilgrimage, and Social Change in Pulau Kusu, 1965–2007." *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 11: 72–95. Accessed November 4, 2016, [http://www.nzasia.org.nz/downloads/NZJAS-Dec09/jas\\_dec2009\\_chia.pdf](http://www.nzasia.org.nz/downloads/NZJAS-Dec09/jas_dec2009_chia.pdf).
- Chong, W.L.A. "The Metaphysical Symbolism of the Chinese Tortoise." Master's thesis, Nanyang Technological University, 2018.
- Chung, K.T. "An Analysis of the Chinese Press Reports on Malay and Islamic Issues in Singapore." Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2016.
- CNRS. "How Do Marine Turtles Return to the Same Beach to Lay Their Eggs?" *ScienceDaily*. Accessed April 7, 2018, [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070226131640.html](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070226131640.html).
- Comber, Leon, and Beryl Kwok. *Asian Favourite Stories, Singapore*. Singapore: Talisman Pub, 2011.
- Corbin, Juliet M., and Anselm Strauss. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 1990): 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988593>.
- Cornelius, Vernon. "Sisters' Islands." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed June 19, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_185\\_2005-01-20.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_185_2005-01-20.html).
- Cornelius, Vernon. "Pulau Ubin." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed June 19, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/INFOPEDIA/articles/SIP\\_219\\_2004-12-13.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/INFOPEDIA/articles/SIP_219_2004-12-13.html).

- Cornelius, Vernon. "Singapore River communities." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 6, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_498\\_2004-12-27.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_498_2004-12-27.html).
- Conceicao, Jeanne Louise. "Hokkien Community." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 6, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1498\\_2009-04-09.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1498_2009-04-09.html).
- Conceicao, Joe. *Singapore and the Many-Headed Monster*. Singapore: Horizon Books, 2007.
- Creswell, John W. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall, 2008.
- D'Alleva, Anne. *Methods & theories of art history*. London: Laurence King, 2014.
- Darian, Steven. "The Ganges in Indian Art." *East and West* 23, no. 3/4 (1973): 307-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2975589>.
- Dawkins, R. M. "The Meaning of Folktales." *Folklore* 62 (1951): 417 – 429. Accessed January 13, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1257125>.
- Deborah Stevenson. "Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead by Duncan Tonatiuh (review)." *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 69, no. 2 (2015): 117-118. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed January 31, 2019).
- Demetrio, Francisco. "The Religious Dimensions of Some Philippine Folktales." *Asian Folklore Studies* 28, no. 1 (1969): 51-76. doi:10.2307/1177780.
- Desai, Devangana. "Kūrma Imagery In Indian Art and Culture." *Artibus Asiae* 69, no. 2 (2009): 317-33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20801625>.
- Ding, D. "The Library of Pulau Saigon." September 2016. Accessed January 31, 2019. <http://dbbd.sg/works/the-library-of-pulau-saigon.php>.
- Dundes, Alan. *The Study of Folklore*. [New Jersey]: Prentice-Hall, 1965.
- Dundes, Alan. "The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique." *Journal of Folklore Research* 34, no. 3 (1997): 195-202. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3814885>.
- Dong, Lan. *Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States*. Temple University Press, 2011.
- Evans, Janet. *Talking beyond the page: reading and responding to picture books*. London; New York: Routledge: 2009.
- Farr, Benjamin. "Traditional Literature: Folktales, Fairytales, Mythology & Creationism in Children's Literature." Lecture, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, October 15, 2016.
- Fenton, William N. "'This Island, the World on the Turtle's Back'." *The Journal of American Folklore* 75, no. 298 (1962): 283-300. doi:10.2307/538365.
- Fishman, Andrea R. "Finding Ways In: Redefining Multicultural Literature." *The English Journal* 84 (1995): 73-79. doi: 10.2307/820899.

- Frank, A. W. *Letting Stories Breathe: A Social-narratology*: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Gottschall, J. *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
- Gonzales, Patrisia. "Birth Ceremony: Storying Sacred Knowledge." In *Red Medicine: Traditional Indigenous Rites of Birthing and Healing*, 36-67. University of Arizona Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt181hx6k.8>.
- Gorai, Shigeru, and 五來重. "Shugendo Lore." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 2/3 (1989): 117-42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30234004>.
- Han, Jamie. "Communal Riots of 1964." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 11, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_45\\_2005-01-06.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_45_2005-01-06.html).
- Hansen, T., Olkkonen, M., Walter, S. & Gegenfurtner, K. R. Memory modulates colour appearance. *Nature Neuroscience* 9 (2006): 1367 – 1368.
- Haughton, H.T. (1889). Notes on names of places in the island of Singapore and its vicinity. *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 20, 79. Singapore: Straits Branch, Royal Asiatic Society.
- Haven, Kendall F., and Julie. Stringer. *Wonders of the Sea: Merging Ocean Myth and Ocean Science (Wonders of Nature)*. Libraries Unlimited Incorporated, 2005.
- Ho, H. "ok-to-Learn Episode 3: The Legend of Kusu Island," YouTube video, 01:10. Posted Oct 2014. Accessed January 14, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IUcQyhWueY>.
- Ho, Stephanie. "Arab Community." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 11, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2013-08-19\\_183028.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2013-08-19_183028.html).
- Ho, Stephanie. "Cheongsam." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 11, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2013-09-27\\_171732.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2013-09-27_171732.html).
- Hu, C. C. *Golden legends: Malaysia*. Singapore: Heinemann, 1996.
- Hunt, P. Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Jason, H. 'A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature', in H. Jason and D. Segal (eds) *Patterns in Oral Literature*, pp. 99- 139. The Hague Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1977.
- Khoo, L., M. Living with Diversity the Singapore Way. *Urban Solutions* Issue 10, 1 - 87. Singapore: Centre for Liveable Cities, 2017.
- King, Heidi. "Gold in Ancient America." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 59, no. 4 (2002): 5-55. doi:10.2307/3269153.
- King, B. J. *How Animals Grieve*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

- Kim, Jang Gyem. "A Korean Folktale, Kongjee-Patjee: An analysis of the Concept of Binary Opposition." *Humaniora*, Vol 23, No. 2, (2011): 166-174.
- Klapproth, Danièle M. *Narrative as social practice: Anglo-Western and Australian Aboriginal oral traditions*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004.
- Knapp, Bettina L. "Andrée Chedid—The Mystery of Being: Le Coeur Suspendu." *Dalhousie French Studies* 55 (2001): 152-67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40838303>.
- Koh, Hae-Kyoung. "The Goddesses of Cheju Island: A Study of the Myths of a Korean Egalitarian Culture." Ph.D. D. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2001.
- Koh, Qi Rui Vincent. "Samsui Women." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 11, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_795\\_2005-01-18.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_795_2005-01-18.html).
- Koh, Jamie. "Baju Kurong." Singapore Infopedia. Accessed August 11, 2018, [http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2013-09-06\\_173434.html](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2013-09-06_173434.html).
- Kohn, Livia. *Daoism Handbook*. Boston: Brill, 2000.
- Kong, L., Goh, E. "Folktales and reality: the social construction of race in Chinese tales." *Area*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (1995): 261 – 267.
- Krenner, Walther G. von, and Ken Jeremiah. *Creatures Real and Imaginary in Chinese and Japanese Art: An Identification Guide*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015.
- Kress, G. *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge Falmer, 1996.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. Colour as A Semiotic Mode: Notes for a grammar of colour. *Visual Communication* no. 1 (2002): 343-368.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Kwok, Beryl. Interview by author. Tape recording. Singapore, September 21, 2017.
- Langley, Litz. "How To Tell A Turtle From A Tortoise." National Geographic. Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/12/shell-game--how-to-tell-a-turtle-from-a-tortoise>.
- Lee, Desmond. "Diversities: New and Old." Panel speaker, Institute of Policy Studies, IPS 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Singapore, October 25, 2018.
- Lee, Marie. Interview by author. Skype Interview. Singapore, September 12, 2017.
- Lee, L. C. Concept utilization in preschool children. *Child Development* 36 (1965): 221 – 228.

- Lee, D.Y.W. "Genres, registers, text types, domains and styles: Clarifying the concepts and navigating a path through the BNC jungle." *Language Learning and Technology* 5 (2001), no. 3: 37 – 72.
- Lei, Sharon. Interview by author. Email Interview. Singapore, September 12, 2017.
- Leng, Lee. 2011. Ethnography of Singapore Chinese Names: Race, Religion, and Representation. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*. 7(1): 101-133. Accessed August 11, 2018, from doi:10.2478/v10016-011-0005-6.
- Leong, K.C. "Visualizing Multi-Racialism in Singapore: Graphic Design as a Tool for Ideology and Policy in Nation Building" *Design Issues* 27 (2011): 63-69. Accessed February 23, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40983244>.
- Liew, S. *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*. New York: Pantheon, 2016.
- Lim, Charlotte, Alicia Yen Ping Tan, Ruby Lim-Yang, Singapore, and Board National Heritage. *Attack of the swordfish and other Singapore tales*. Singapore: National Heritage Board, 2005.
- Lim, Patricia Pui Huen. *Oral history in Southeast Asia: theory and method*: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998.
- Lindell, K. 2006. Motif-index of Southeast Asian folk-literature: According to the system of Stitch Thompson: Motif-index of folk-literature. Lund University: Lund.
- "Little India Riot: Violence sparked by accident, alcohol 'major factor', says COI," *The Straits Times*. Accessed August 11, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/little-india-riot-violence-sparked-by-accident-alcohol-major-factor-says-coi>.
- Lu, C. (2012, Spring). The Kusu pilgrimage: An enduring myth. *The Newsletter*, 59, pp. 50–51. Accessed April 25, 2017, <https://jackchia.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/the-kusu-pilgrimage.pdf>.
- Lund University. "Register Types." February 21, 2011. Accessed January 31, 2019.
- Lwin, Soe Marlar. *Narrative Structures in Burmese Folk Tales*, New York: Cambria Press, 2010.
- Lwin, Soe Marler. "Revisiting a Structural Analysis of Folktales: a Means to an End?" *The Buckingham Journal of Language and Linguistics*, Vol.2, No.1, (2010): 69-80.
- "Lightning and Thunderstorms," National Environmental Agency. Accessed April 24, 2017. <http://www.nea.gov.sg/training-knowledge/weather-climate/lightning-thunderstorms>.
- May, J.P. "Theory and Textual Interpretation: Children's Literature and Literary Criticism." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, no. 1/2 (1997): 81 – 96.
- Mead, Sidney M. "Folklore and Place Names in Santa Ana, Solomon Islands." *Oceania* 43, no. 3 (1973): 215-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40330071>.

- Meteorological Service Singapore. "Climate of Singapore." Accessed January 20, 2019. <http://www.weather.gov.sg/climate-climate-of-singapore/>.
- McDermott, G. *Anansi The Spider*. Henry Holt and Company, 2017.
- Miller, V. E. "Water, colour and the Maya" *Antiquity* 84, (2010): 1199-1201.
- Miksic, John N. *Singapore & the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300-1800*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2013.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. "Word and Image." In *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 51-61. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Moebius, W. Introduction to Picturebook Codes. In *Childrens Literature: The Development of Criticism*, P.Hunt (ed.), 141 – 151. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Monteiro, I.A., Watson, J. *Favourite Stories from Singapore*. Singapore: Singapore Offset Printing Pte. Ltd, 1979.
- Nagao, Debra. "The Planting of Sustenance: Symbolism of the Two-Horned God in Offerings from the Templo Mayor." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 10 (1985): 5-27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166732>.
- National Arts Council. "Singapore Heritage Festival 2017." Noise Singapore. Accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.noisesingapore.com/Happenings/2017/5/5/Singapore-Heritage-Festival-2017/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>.
- National Heritage Board. "Toa Payoh Storytelling Sessions." Singapore Heritage Festival. Accessed June 19, 2018, <https://www.heritagefestival.sg/programmes/toa-payoh-storytelling-sessions>.
- National Library Board Singapore "Calvin's success story in Favourite Stories of S'pore" *The Straits Times*, December 23, 1977. Accessed October 3, 2017, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19771223-1.2.37>.
- National Library Board Singapore "Untitled" *The Straits Times*, October 26, 1908. Accessed August 1, 2017, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19081026-1.2.46?ST=1&AT=search&k=kusu+island&P=8&SortBy=Relevance&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=kusu,island&oref=article>.
- National Library Board Singapore "Pilgrim Drowned" *The Straits Times*, December 8, 1957. Accessed August 1, 2017, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19571208-1.2.62?ST=1&AT=search&k=kusu%20island&QT=kusu,island&oref=article>.
- National Library Board Singapore "Search for body near Kusu Island" *The Straits Times*, October 23, 1962. Accessed August 1, 2017, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19621023-1.2.38?ST=1&AT=search&k=kusu+island&P=3&Display=0&filterS=0&QT=kusu,island&oref=article#searchBar>.
- National Library Board Singapore "Tragic Kusu Sea Trip" *The Straits Times*, October 31, 1972. Accessed August 1, 2017,

<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19721031-1.2.96?ST=1&AT=search&k=kusu+island&SortBy=Relevance&P=14&Display=0&filterS=0&QT=kusu,island&oref=article>.

National Library Board Singapore “Marriage and Parenthood Package is Introduced” HistorySG. Accessed January 31, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/da6a99f5-88ed-4758-865d-52e972e7a9f8>.

National Library Board Singapore “Operation Against Jemaah Islamiyah in Singapore Begins” HistorySG. Accessed January 31, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/90267935-71ef-4829-8faf-f6039a086cda>.

National Library Board Singapore “Singapore is First East Asian Country to Slip into Recession” HistorySG. Accessed January 31, 2019, <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/3cacf256-82cc-4776-b7f8-83757723b502>.

NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. “James Jack.”. Accessed January 31, 2019. <http://ntu.ccasingapore.org/residencies/james-jack/>.

NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. “Charles Lim Yi Yong: Sea State.”. Accessed January 31, 2019. <http://ntu.ccasingapore.org/exhibitions/charles-lim-sea-state/>.

Nikolajeva, M. *Aesthetic Approaches to Children’s Literature: An Introduction*. G - Reference, Information and Interdisciplinary Subjects Series. Scarecrow Press, 2005.

Nikolajeva, M., Scott, C. *How Picturebooks work*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Nikolajeva, M. Interpretative codes and implied readers of children's picturebooks, in *New directions in picturebook research*, ed. Teresa Colomer et al. Routledge, 2010.

Nodelman, P. Words about Pictures: *The Narrative Art of Children’s Picture Books*. Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Painter, C. Children’s picturebooks: Reading sequences of images. In *Advances in Language and Education*, A. McCabe, M. O’Donnell & R. Whittaker (eds), 38 – 57. London: Continuum, 2007.

Painter, C. The role of colour in children’s picturebooks: choices of ambience. In *New Literacies and the English Curriculum. Multimodal Perspectives*, L. Unsworth (ed.), 89 – 111. London: Continuum, 2008.

Propp, Vladimir Jakovlevic, Anatoly Liberman, Ariadna Y. Martin, and Richard P. Martin. *Theory and history of folklore*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Propp, V. Ia, Society American Folklore, University Indiana, Folklore Research Center in Anthropology, and Linguistics. *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press. 2009.

Pugalthii. *Myths and Legends of Singapore*. Singapore: VJ Times, 2001.

Pugalthii. *Myths and legends: Singapore*. Singapore: VJ Times, 2002.

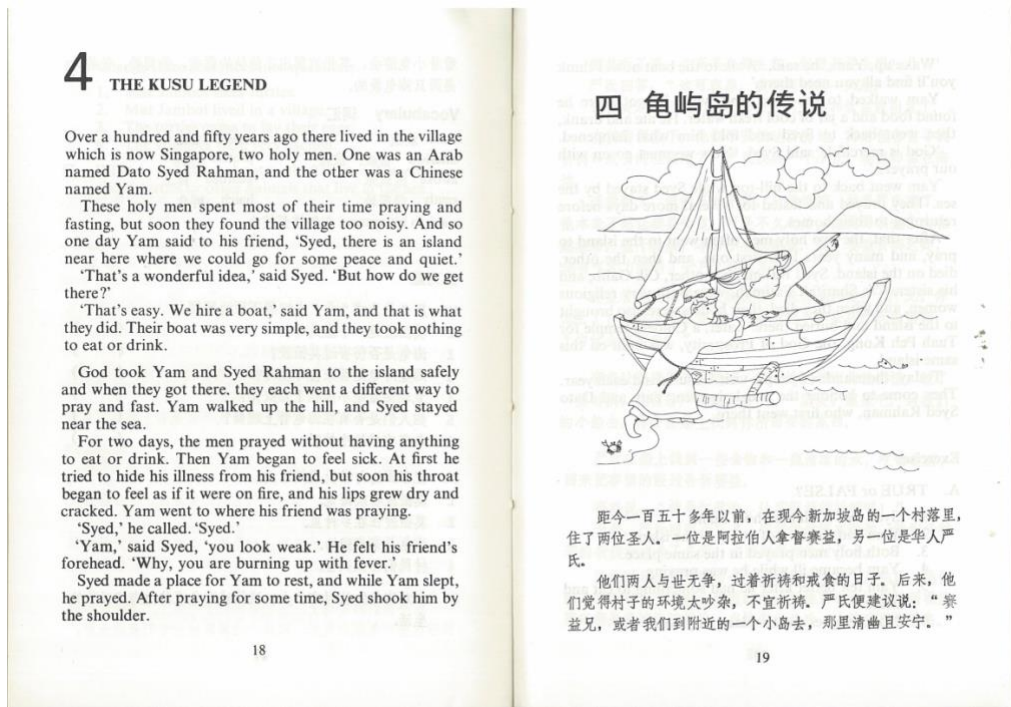
Ramakrishnan, Pugalthii. Interview by author. Tape recording. Singapore, September 18, 2017.

- Pukui, Mary Kawena. *Pukui Legacy Collection: Five Volumes of Treasured Hawaiian Oral Traditions*. Bishop Museum Pr, 2007.
- Putih, Othman. *Himpunan 366 cerita rakyat Malaysia*. Utusan Publications, 1995.
- Reddy, Prabhavati C. "The Narrative Art of the Śrīśailam Prākāra: A Visual Purāṇa." *Artibus Asiae* 68, no. 1 (2008): 57-99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25261888>.
- Röhrich, L. *Sage Und Märchen*: Herder, 1976.
- Röhrich, Lutz. *Folktales and Reality*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Saitova, G.Y., A.S. Tskhay, and R.V. Kenzikeyev. *Korean Stage Dance as a New Trend in Kazakhstan Choreography*. Vol. 14, 2016.
- See, H. P. "A Comparative Study of Malay and Chinese Trickster Tales: Sang Kancil, the Rabbit and the Rat." *Kajian Malaysia* 34, no. 2 (2016): 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.21315/km2016.34.2.3>.
- Serafini, Frank. "Reading Multimodal Texts: Perceptual, Structural and Ideological Perspectives." *Children's Literature in Education* 41, (April 2, 2010): 85 – 104. doi: [10.1007/s10583-010-9100-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-010-9100-5).
- Serafini, Frank. "Expanding Perspectives for Comprehending Visual Images in Multimodal Texts." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 54, no. 5 (February 1, 2011): 342–50. doi:10.1598/JAAL.54.5.4.
- Serafini, Frank. "Expanding the Four Resources Model: Reading Visual and Multi-Modal Texts." *Pedagogies: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (April 1, 2012): 150–64. doi:10.1080/1554480X.2012.656347.
- Serafini, Frank, and Lindsey Moses. "Considering Design Features." *The Reading Teacher* 69, no. 3 (November 1, 2015): 307–9. doi:10.1002/trtr.1416.
- Sim Meijun, Sophie, "Fishy tales: *Singapura Dilanggar Todak* as myth and history in Singapore's past" MA diss., National University of Singapore, 2005. Accessed March 21, 2017, <http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/bitstream/handle/10635/14900/Binder1.pdf?sequence=1>.
- Singapore Book Council Academy. "Picture Books vs Illustrated Book." [academy.bookcouncil.sg](http://academy.bookcouncil.sg). Accessed August 14, 2018, <https://academy.bookcouncil.sg/resources/article/picture-book-vs-illustrated-book>.
- "SingPost issues stamp set depicting folktales from Sisters' Islands, Kusu Island," *The Straits Times*, May 23, 2016. Accessed January 25, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singpost-issues-stamp-set-depicting-folktales-from-sisters-islands-kusu-island>.
- Strunk, William Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Allyn and Bason, 2000.
- Sturken, M., Catwright, L. *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

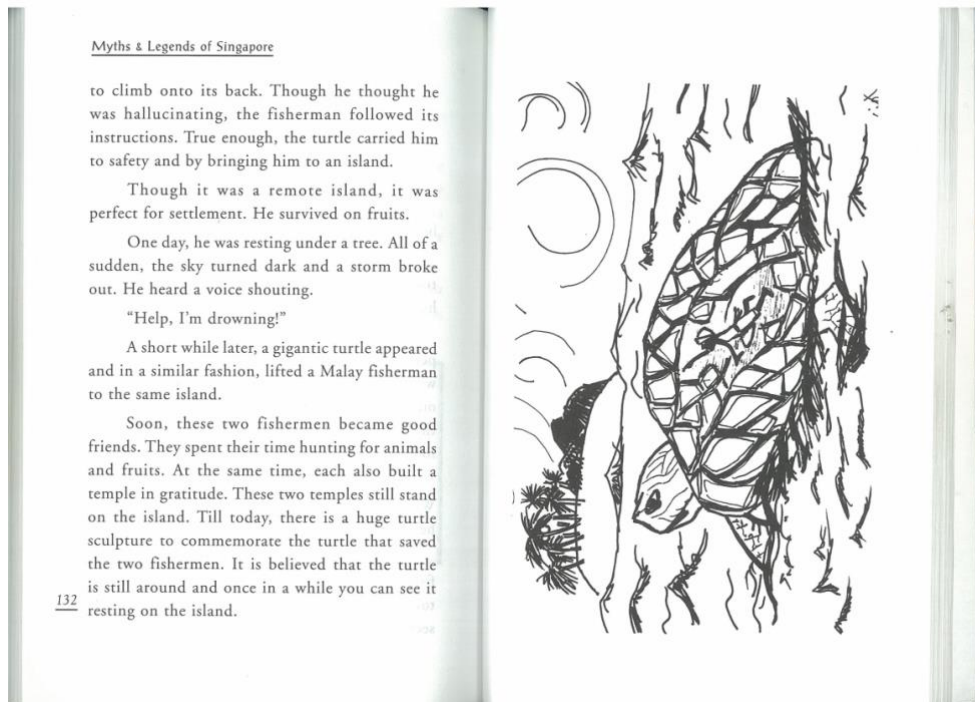
- Tan, Wilkie. Interview by author. Tape recording. Singapore, September 4, 2017.
- Taube, Karl A. "The Teotihuacan Cave of Origin: The Iconography and Architecture of Emergence Mythology in Mesoamerica and the American Southwest." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 12 (1986): 51-82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166753>.
- Tomikawa, S. A. & Dodd, D. H. Early word meanings: Perceptually or functionally based? *Child Development* 51 (1980): 1103 – 1109.
- Tonatiuh, D. *Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2015.
- Thomas, M, Tehan. Review of Narrative Structures in Burmese Folk Tales, by Soe Marlar Lwin. *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, Vol. 9, (2016): iv-viii.
- Thompson, S. *The Folktale*: University of California Press, 1977.
- Tupas, R., Bacsal, R.M.G. "Discursive compartmentalization in a critical multicultural classroom." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, vol 11, no. 1 (2016), 34-50. DOI: 10.1080/17447143.2015.1134543
- Werner, A. Colour Perception in Infants and Young Children. In *Emergent Literacy: Children's Books from 0 to 3*, Kümmerling-Meibauer (ed.), 39 – 54. Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011.
- Wilson, Barbara Ker. *The Turtle and the Island: A Folktale from Papua New Guinea*. New York: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 1990.
- Winstedt, Richard. "Indian Influence in the Malay World," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1944): 186-196. Accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25221977>.
- Vernon, D. & Lloyed – Jones, T. J. The role of colour in implicit and explicit memory performance. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 56 (2003): 779 – 802.
- Yellowhorn, Eldon, and Kathy Lowinger. *Turtle Island: The Story of North America's First People*, 2017.
- Yokota, Junko. "Book that represents more than one culture." *Urbana*, National Council of Teachers of English 71 (1994): 212-219. Accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41961955>.
- Yokota, Junko. "Issues in selecting multicultural children's literature." *Urbana*, National Council of Teachers of English 70 (1993): 156-167. Accessed December 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41482079>.
- Yokota, Junko. "Realism in Picture Books for Children: Representations of Our Diverse World." *Filoteknos*, Vol.4, (2013-2014): 64-71.
- Zipes, J. *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*. USA: Routledge, 2006.

Zhang, Q. *An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. China Academic Library.  
Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2015.

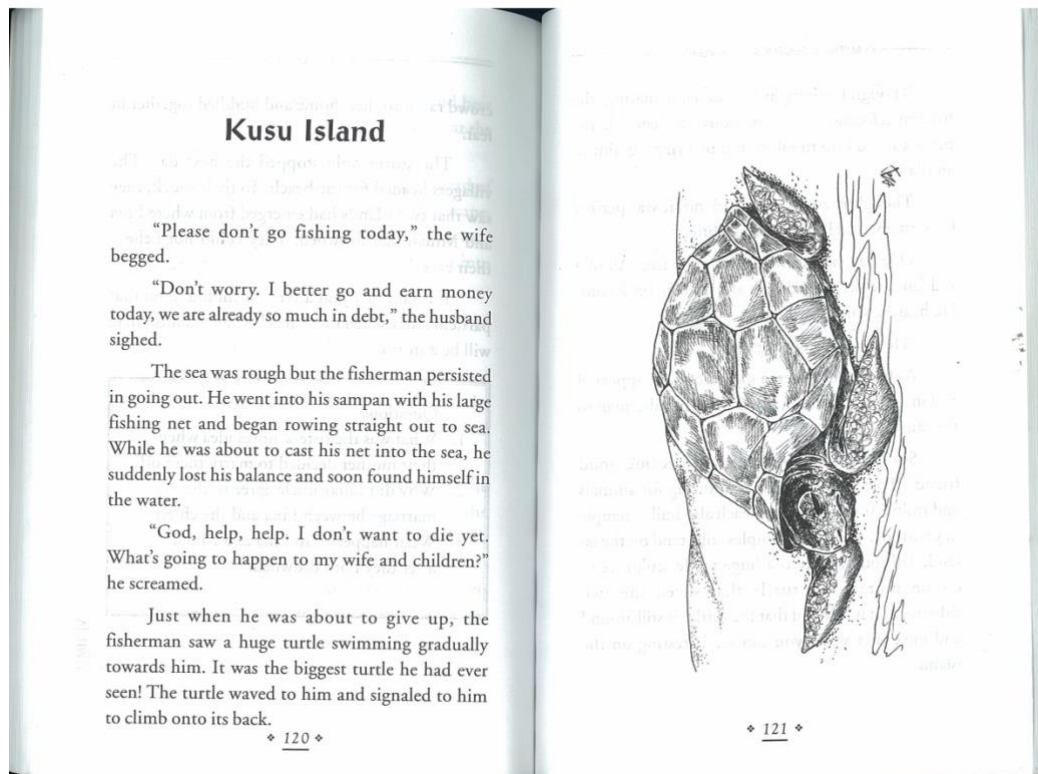
APPENDIX A  
THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND*



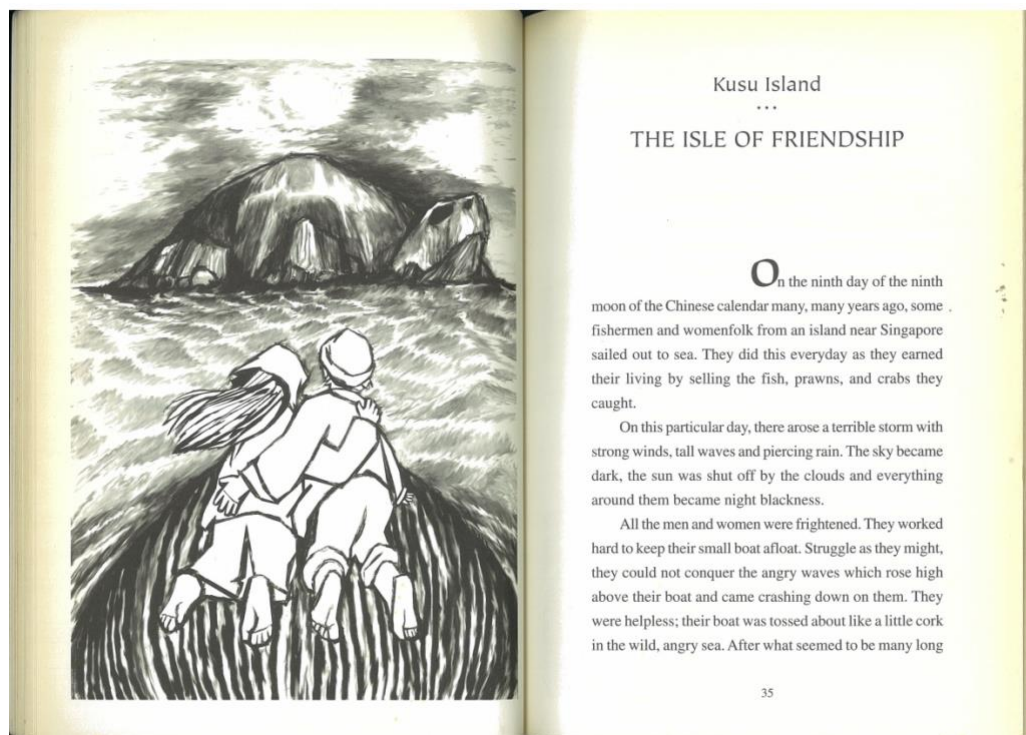
Picture 1. Calvin Sim Chen-Min. "The Kusu Legend." In *Favourite Stories*, by Irene-Anne Monteiro and Jenny Watson. Singapore: Singapore Offset Printing Pte. Ltd, 1979.



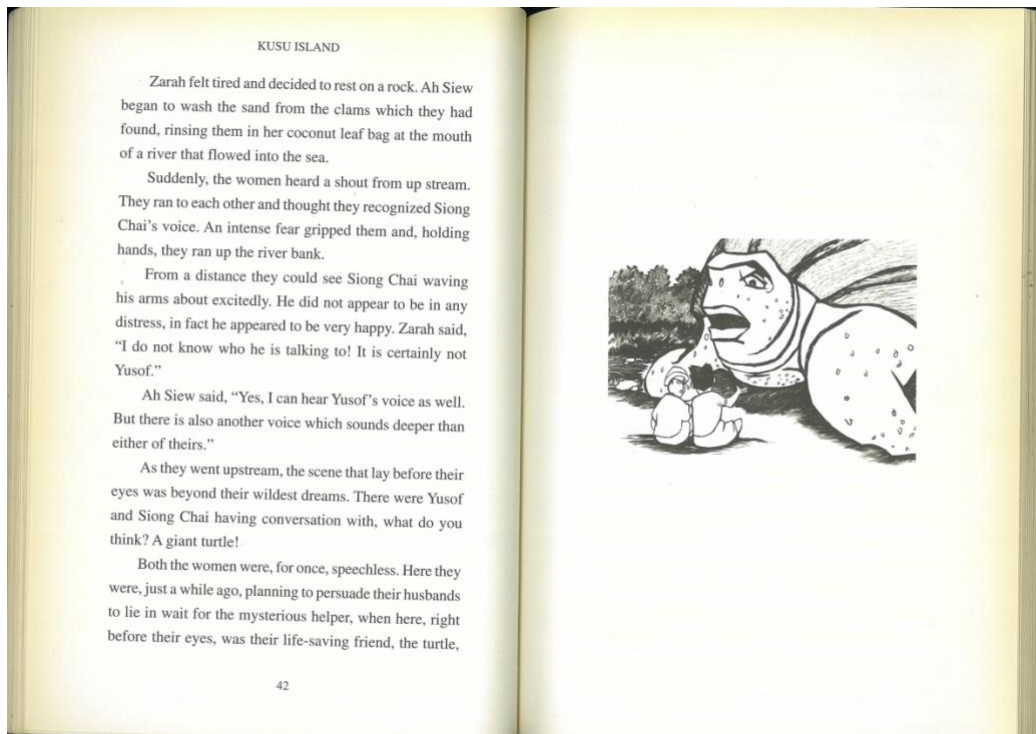
Picture 2. Serene Tan Swee Keng. "Kusu Island" In *Myths and Legends of Singapore*, by Pugalenthii Ramakrishnan. Singapore: VJ Times, 2001.



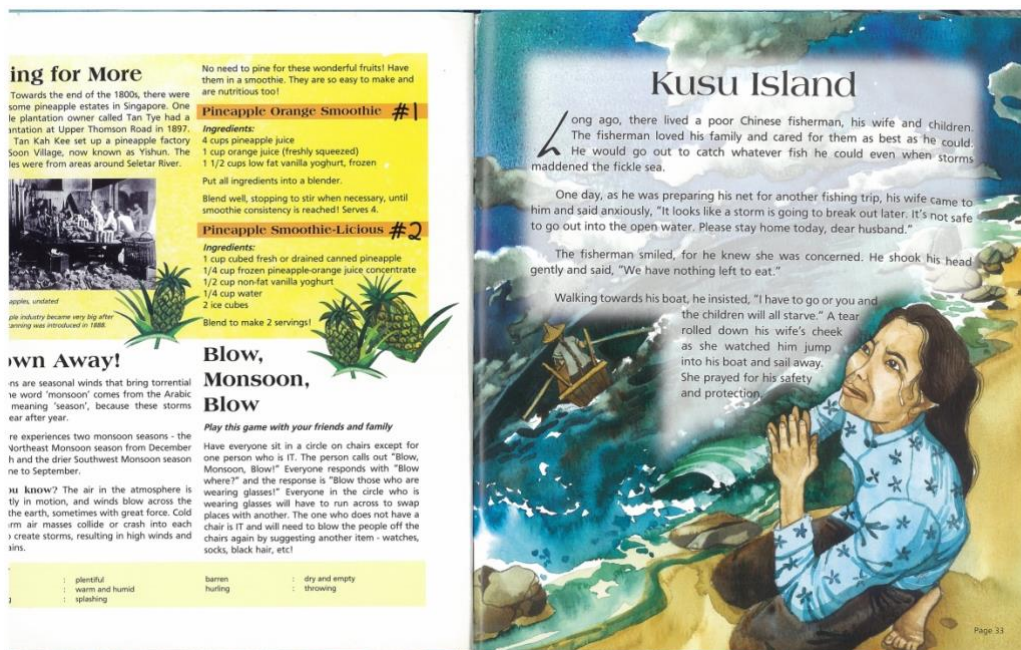
Picture 3. Francis Choo. "Kusu Island" In *Myths and Legends of Singapore*, by Pugalenthii Ramakrishnan. Singapore: VJ Times, 2002.



Picture 4. Wil-kie Tan. "Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship." In *Tales From The Islands of Singapore*, by Ron Chandran-Dudley. Singapore: Landmark Books, 2001.



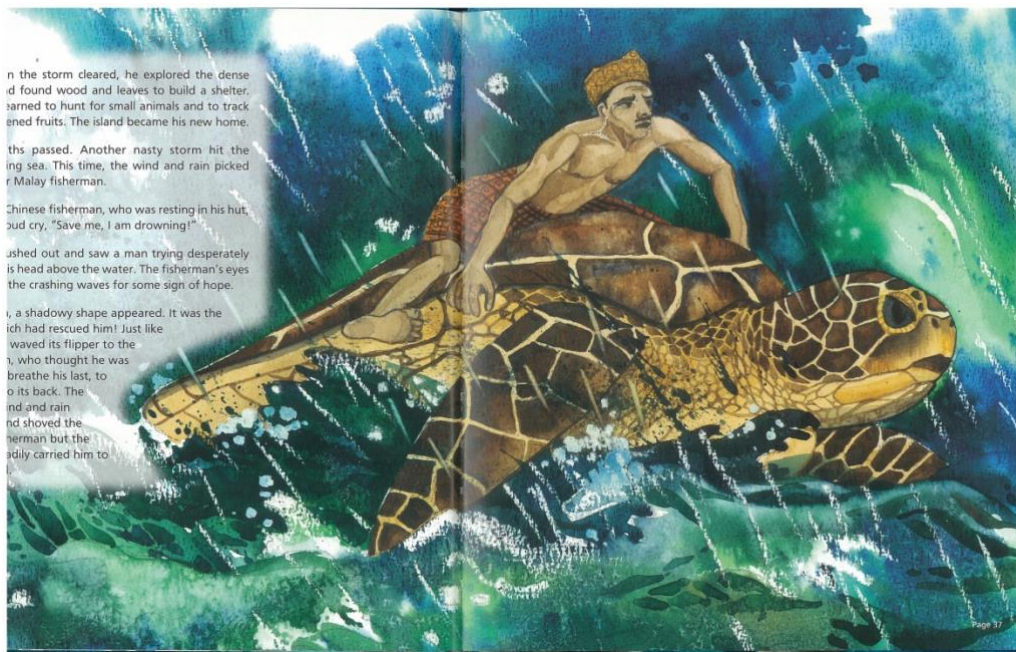
Picture 5. Wil-kie Tan. "Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship." In *Tales From The Islands of Singapore*, by Ron Chandran-Dudley. Singapore: Landmark Books, 2001.



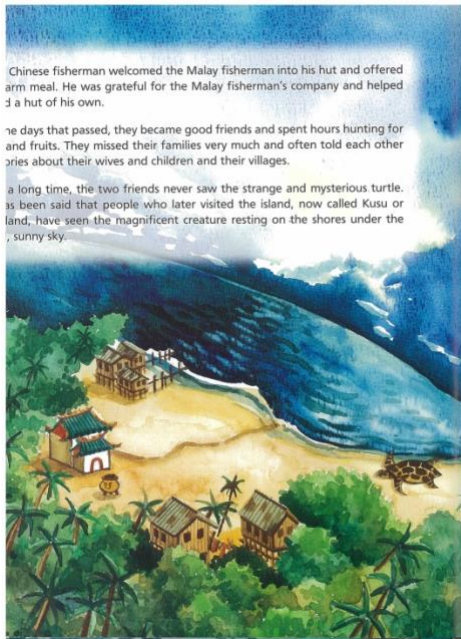
Picture 6. Alicia Ta Yen Ping. "Kusu Island." In *Attack of the Swordfish*. Singapore: Public Education Division, 2005.



Picture 7. Alicia Ta Yen Ping. "Kusu Island." In *Attack of the Swordfish*. Singapore: Public Education Division, 2005.



Picture 8. Alicia Ta Yen Ping. "Kusu Island." In *Attack of the Swordfish*. Singapore: Public Education Division, 2005.



**Story Wise**  
Fun Facts and Activities based on Kusu Island

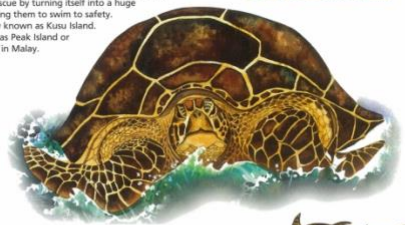
**Did you know?**

On Kusu Island, you can find a Chinese temple and three Malay shrines. This explains why Kusu Island is today largely visited by Taoists and Muslims. A tortoise sanctuary also exists and houses hundreds of tortoises.

**Turtle Mania**

Although the turtle in the legend was the biggest the fishermen had ever seen, Kusu Island is really one of the smallest islands located southeast of Singapore's waters.

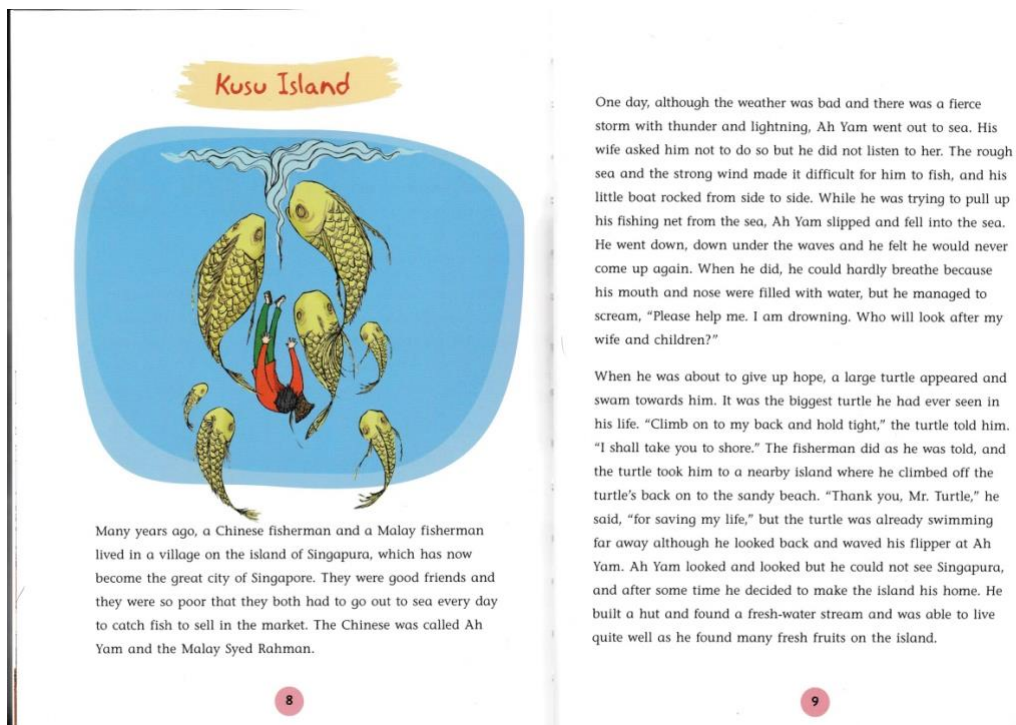
Before the land was reclaimed, the island was shaped like a turtle. Another version of the legend exists. It was said that a giant turtle used to swim freely in the waters of southern Singapore. During a terrible storm, a Chinese fisherman and a Malay fisherman were about to drown when the turtle quickly came to their rescue by turning itself into a huge rock, thus allowing them to swim to safety. That rock is now known as Kusu Island. It is also known as Peak Island or Pulau Tembaku in Malay.



**Try This:**  
If you could create your own version of the legend of Kusu Island, what would it be? Tell your version with actions, add music and perform it with a group of friends!



Picture 9. Alicia Ta Yen Ping. "Kusu Island." In *Attack of the Swordfish*. Singapore: Public Education Division, 2005.



Picture 10. Beryl Kwok. "Kusu Island." In *Asian favourite stories, Singapore*. Singapore: Talisman Pub, 2011.



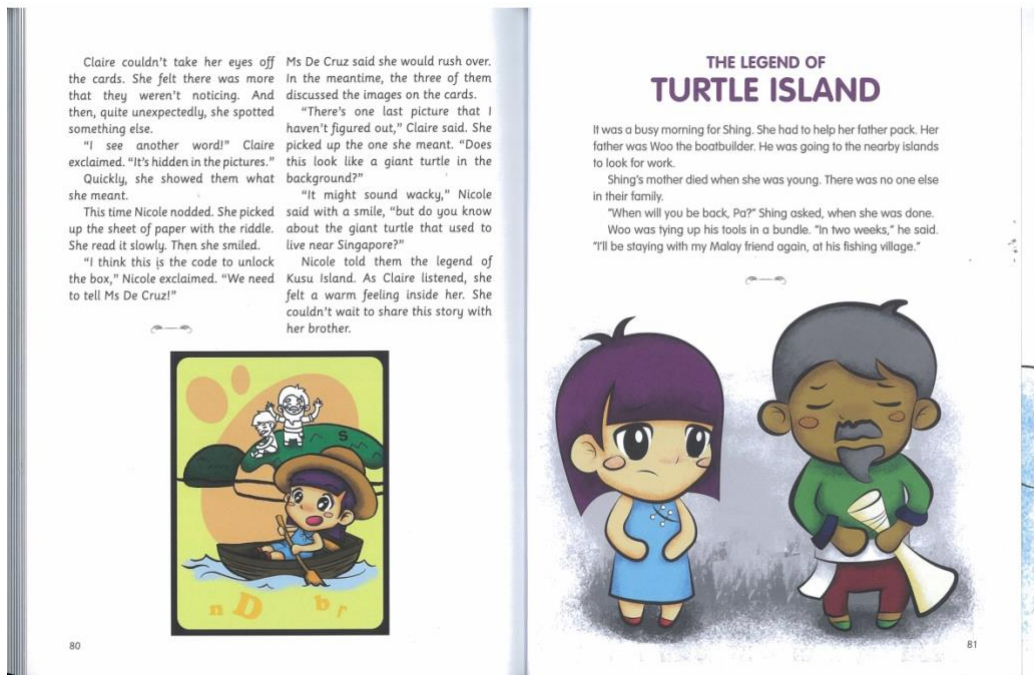
One day, when there was a heavy storm, he heard someone crying, "Help! Help me! I am drowning". He thought he recognized the voice. It was his old Malay friend, Syed Rahman, who was being carried to the island on the back of Mr. Turtle, the same turtle that had helped him. "My dear friend," Ah Yam greeted him, "how pleased I am to see you." The two men told each other their stories. Syed Rahman had been caught in a

fierce storm, too, and his boat had sunk. By this time, Mr. Turtle was swimming away and although they called out to him to come back so that they could thank him for saving their lives, he soon disappeared from sight.

As they could see no way of returning home, the two friends lived happily together and spent their time hunting for animals and fish.

To thank the turtle for saving their lives, they built a Chinese temple on a small hill overlooking the sea, a Malay shrine, and a statue of Mr. Turtle, all of which can still be found on the island which is now known as Kusu Island. "Ku" is the Hokkien word for "turtle" and "su" is the Hokkien word for "island". The temple has an image of Toh Peh Kong in it, looking like an elderly Chinese gentleman with a white beard and red cheeks, who is believed to look after the interests of the Chinese and save them from danger. The Malay shrine is considered a holy place, too, by both Malays and Chinese as Syed Rahman, and his mother and sister, who are considered very holy women, are buried there. Today, thousands of people visit Kusu Island each year by ferry from Singapore to pray at the Chinese temple and Malay shrine which are gaily decorated with flags and banners.

Picture 11. Beryl Kwok. "Kusu Island." In *Asian favourite stories, Singapore*. Singapore: Talisman Pub, 2011.



Claire couldn't take her eyes off the cards. She felt there was more that they weren't noticing. And then, quite unexpectedly, she spotted something else. "I see another word!" Claire exclaimed. "It's hidden in the pictures." Quickly, she showed them what she meant. This time Nicole nodded. She picked up the sheet of paper with the riddle. She read it slowly. Then she smiled. "I think this is the code to unlock the box," Nicole exclaimed. "We need to tell Ms De Cruz!"



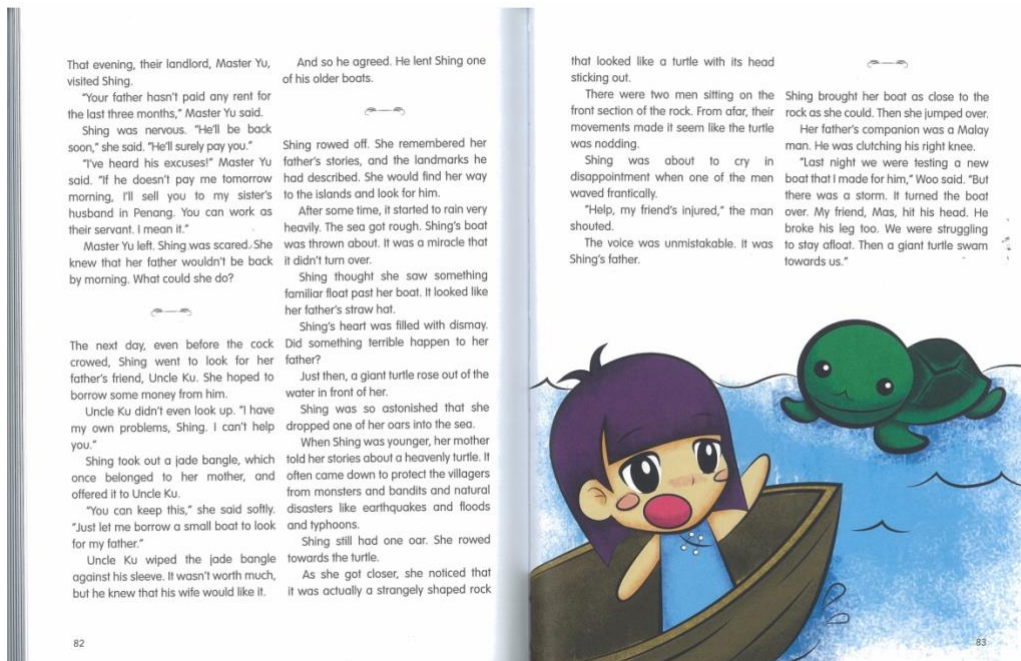
Ms De Cruz said she would rush over. In the meantime, the three of them discussed the images on the cards. "There's one last picture that I haven't figured out," Claire said. She picked up the one she meant. "Does this look like a giant turtle in the background?" "It might sound wacky," Nicole said with a smile, "but do you know about the giant turtle that used to live near Singapore?" Nicole told them the legend of Kusu Island. As Claire listened, she felt a warm feeling inside her. She couldn't wait to share this story with her brother.

### THE LEGEND OF TURTLE ISLAND

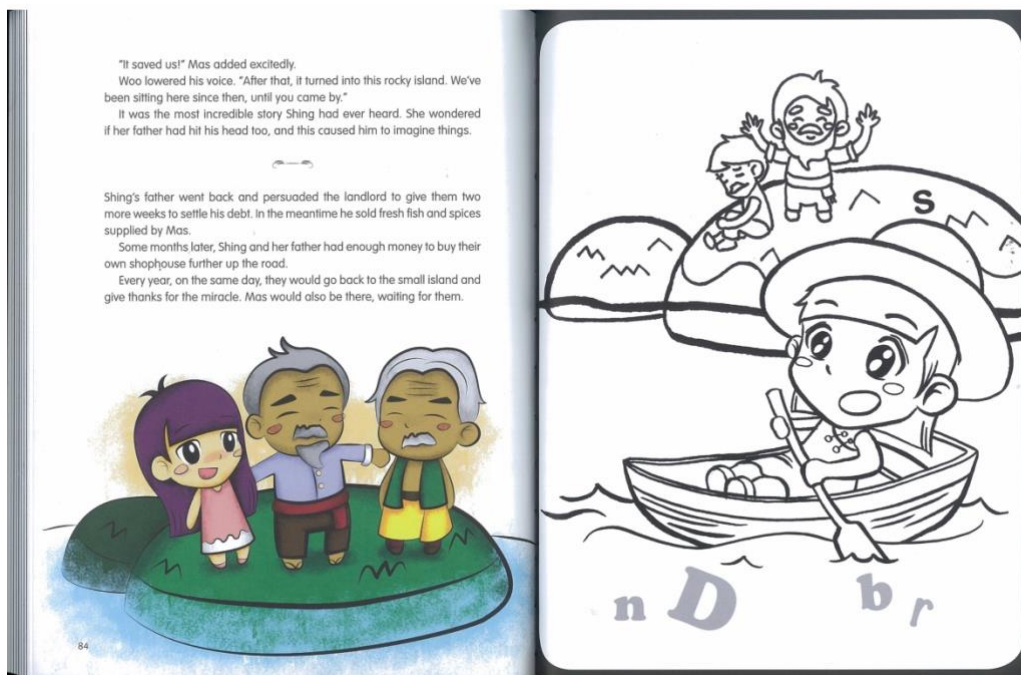
It was a busy morning for Shing. She had to help her father pack. Her father was Woo the boatbuilder. He was going to the nearby islands to look for work. Shing's mother died when she was young. There was no one else in their family. "When will you be back, Pa?" Shing asked, when she was done. Woo was tying up his tools in a bundle. "In two weeks," he said. "I'll be staying with my Malay friend again, at his fishing village."



Picture 12. Sharon Lei. "The Legend of Turtle Island." In *Island of Legends*. Singapore: Colourscan Print Co Pte Ltd, 2016.

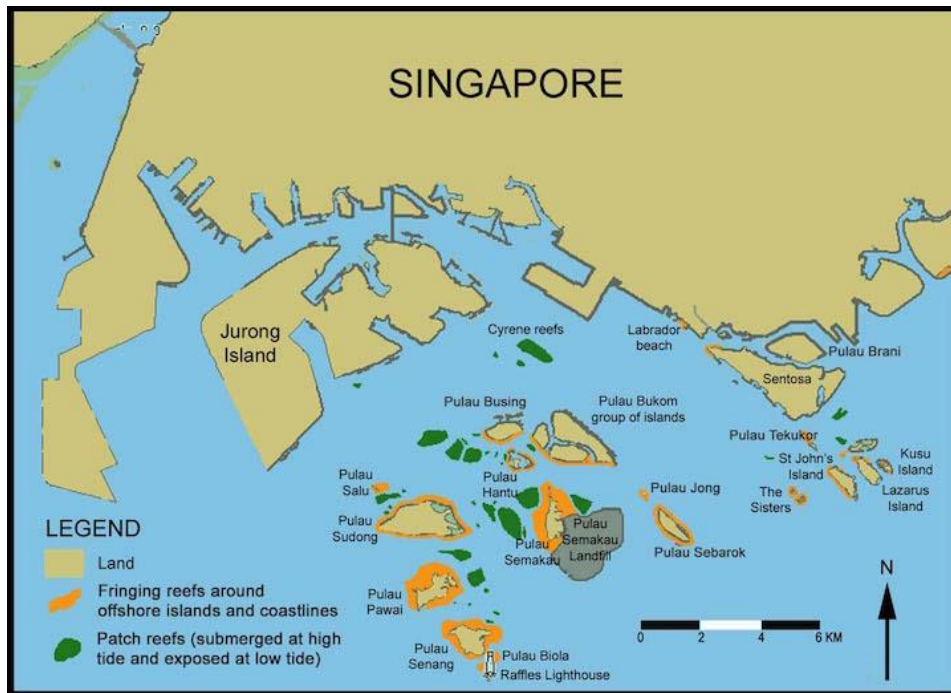


Picture 13. Sharon Lei. "The Legend of Turtle Island." In *Island of Legends*. Singapore: Colourscan Print Co Pte Ltd, 2016



Picture 14. Sharon Lei. "The Legend of Turtle Island." In *Island of Legends*. Singapore: Colourscan Print Co Pte Ltd, 2016.

APPENDIX B  
ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Map 1. National Museum of Singapore. Digital Image. Reef Ecology Lab. Assessed April 14, 2017, <http://coralreef.nus.edu.sg/singapore.html>.



Picture 15. Fishing boat from Sri Lanka southern coast. Digital Image. Flickr. Accessed October 3, 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/whltravel/4376067519>.



Picture 16. Singapore's Myths and Legends - Sisters' Islands and Kusu Island - Stamp Set. Singapore Post. Accessed June 19, 2018, <https://shop.singpost.com/myths-and-legends-ast-csc16ast.html>.

## APPENDIX C

### THE TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND* THROUGH THE LENS OF PROPP'S *MORPHOLOGY OF THE FOLKTALE*

#### The Evolution of Text in the Tales of *Kusu Island*

In the seven books that are analysed in this study, we can see several common and different features among them. Through the images of the illustrated tales of *Kusu Island*, we witness how the depiction of the story has evolved over the past decades despite the textual narrative showing little changes. The following paragraphs provides a detailed philological analysis on each of the versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* through the lens of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. It is found that the narrative structure of the tales largely remains the same with emphasis on friendship, racial harmony and multiple religions.

It is known that folktales from various cultures have been analysed in terms of their structure since they are regarded as the simplest form of narrative (Lwin 2010, 70). The structural analysis of tales originated from Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. According to Propp, fairy tales follow a specific formula, and he identifies thirty-one narrative functions of the dramatis personae as the basic components of the tale in his study of one hundred and fifteen Russian fairy tales (Propp 2009, 64). These thirty-one functions (Table 16) are claimed to occur in an identical sequence: a tale may skip functions but it cannot change their order. By comparing the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole, he concludes that, ultimately all fairy tales tell the same story. Although it is originally devised for the analysis and classification of the Russian fairy tales – defined by Propp as the tales classified by Aarne-Thompson under numbers 300 to 749 (Propp 2009, 19) – this methodology has also been found to apply to folktales from other cultures. His generic and flexible methodology can also apply to other literary forms such as novels and plays, comic strips, motion picture and television plots (Propp 2009, xiv).

Wagner (2009) has also mentioned in his introduction to Propp's *Morphology* that “There can be no doubt that Propp's analysis is a landmark framework in the study of folklore” despite the fact that Propp made no mention of the folktale in his book (Propp 2009, xvi). This is evident from the fact that several scholars have used Propp's methodology in studying Asian and Southeast Asian folktales. For instance, in

*Narrative Structures in Burmese Folk Tales*, Soe Marlar Lwin studied the narrative structures of twenty-seven Burmese folktales using Propp's framework, even further building and expanding on it (Lwin 2010). Meanwhile Kim's paper "A Korean Folktale, Kongjee-Patjee: An Analysis of the Concept of Binary Opposition", provides an analysis of a traditional Korean folktale using Propp's framework in understanding the meaning of symbols, the roles of the characters in the story and how it affects the messages in the story (Kim 2011, 166).

With that, I proposed to analyse the tales of *Kusu Island* through Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, since his methodology has been a basic tool to analyse tales across cultures, and that it has already been used well by other scholars for Asian folktales as mentioned above. The aim of this part of the chapter is to examine and analyse why certain motifs and narrative patterns have been repeated throughout the various versions of the tale of *Kusu Island*, and if they have affected the visual depictions of the story. This is so as folktales have been preserved for generations as a reflection of a particular culture, and also as a means of instilling certain concepts in society.

### *Recurring Narrative Structures*

In Propp's *Morphology*, he classified the characters in the tale into seven leading dramatis personae that will participate in the events (e.g. hero, villain, helper). However, in this case, Propp's categorisation seems to be rather narrow in analyzing the tales of *Kusu Island*. Hence, it was useful to turn to Lwin's modification of Propp's classification, where she labels the characters as Protagonists instead, since Protagonists compete on equal terms (Thomas 2016, vi).

In the tales of *Kusu Island*, there are two protagonists, both of them were set out to achieve the same goals, but were met with the same misfortune and later found a solution with the aid of a helper. The three narrative roles in the tales are distributed as follows.

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1) Chinese fisherman: | Protagonist A  |
| 2) Malay fisherman:   | Protagonist B  |
| 3) Giant turtle:      | Magical helper |

Protagonist A is the main character of the first part of the story before Protagonist B joins in the second part. The plight of both Protagonist A and B are very similar since they both meet with the same fate. The appearance of a magical helper saves both Protagonist A and B in separate occasions. The narrative structure in this type of tales can be considered to be made up of “special devices of parallelism, repetitions” that lead to the fact that “one tale may be composed of several moves.” (Propp 2009, 92). In this case, one move directly follows another (Propp 2009, 93). Figure 1 illustrated the structure of the sequence of events:

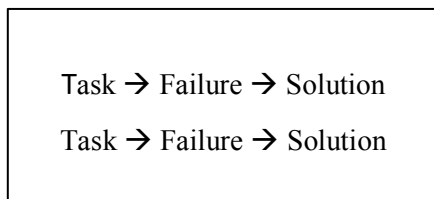


Figure 1. Sequence of events in the tales of *Kusu Island*

From here, the structure of the tales could be understood as repetitive narrative structure.

In addition, since a tale can be made up of more than one sequence of events, there was a need to consider the notions of *move* by Propp (Propp 2009, 92) and *connectives* by Jason (Jason 1997, 104) to explain the connection between events (Lwin 2010, 72). The term *Move* is coined by Propp for a series of events, and Jason later introduces an additional unit of the *connective* to enhance the analysis of narrative structures in oral literature. According to Jason, a connective is a “unit that connects parts of the narrative” (Jason 1997, 104). A connective may be of two varieties:

- a. An information connective: information is given
  1. by one character in the tale to another,
  2. by the narrator to the audience.
  
- b. A transfer connective in (1) state, (2) time, (3) space:
  1. transition in state (transformation from one state of being into another);
  2. transition in time (lapses of time without action);
  3. transition in space (transportations in space).

Such connectives can be regarded as an important device in ensuring that the tales have a well-organised storyline (Lwin 2010, 73).

Based on the available units of analysis (events, moves and connectives), the tales of *Kusu Island* is analysed in terms of its narrative structures in Tables 8 – 13 as outlined in Appendix C.

As evident from Table 14, five out of the seven versions of the tales of *Kusu Island* (from the years 2001 to 2011) have exhibited repetitive narrative structures. Although the first three starting events of each tale differ slightly in terms of the sequence (i.e., 2-8, 0-2-8, 0-8-2), the rest of the events are almost the same, and follow the sequence (i.e., 3-12-13-14-23-26-13-14-26-26). Since folktales are passed on by word of mouth, and are highly dependent on human memory capacities, stories must be structured in familiar and recognizable ways in order for them to be easily understood and remembered (Klapproth 2004, 141), thus possibly explaining the repetitious nature of the tales of *Kusu Island*. Such repetitions are further emphasized especially when the function or social purpose of folktales is to preserve the culture and traditions of a society, to convey important historical and social information, to explain natural phenomena, or to translate moral and ethical issues (Lwin 2010, 71).

#### *Limitations of Using Propp's Morphology*

As mentioned earlier, Propp's methodology was originally devised for the analysis of the Russian fairy tales, hence it is not fully applicable to the tales of *Kusu Island*. One of the limitations is that although the tales of *Kusu Island* contains some of the plot elements that Propp found in the Russian tales, they do not occur strictly in Propp's sequence. Just as Anatoly Liberman pointed out, the sequence of functions is not always the same: Propp had dismissed many exceptions too lightly (Propp 1997, xxxi).

In addition, while analysing the tales of *Kusu Island*, Propp's narrow dramatis personae (i.e., characters as such) categories that involve the use of labels such as Hero, Princess or Villain are not followed as they are deemed to be unsuitable. Instead, Protagonist A and Protagonist B are more suitable labels following Lwin's improvisation of Propp's methodology (Lwin 2010).

Finally, one of Propp's functions, 'The First Function of the Donor' being used here is actually not exactly applicable as there is no actual 'donor' or 'provider' that the protagonists obtained the magical agent from. The Donor is one who sets tests for the protagonist before providing the protagonist a magical agent that permits the eventual liquidation of misfortune (Propp 2009, 39). This is so since it is the storm that causes the fishermen to drown, and then the magical agent in the form of the turtle appeared to save the fishermen.

Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* has helped in understanding the structural narrative patterns of the tales of *Kusu Island* although it is recognized that there are some deviations and limitations to his methodology. It is also used to identify the recurring structures and themes of the tales that could serve as a way to instil certain concepts in society. This eventually offered further insights to the significance of the tales to Singapore, as well as in helping us to understand how the structural patterns of these oral tales are highly dependent on memory, repetition and resolution (Zipes 2006, 50).

### *Comparative Analysis of Text in the Tales of Kusu Island*

In order to ascertain if the text of *Kusu Island* remained consistent throughout the years, other than the structural analysis that has been done earlier, a close comparative analysis of the texts will be done through looking at the style and register of the text, as well as the characterisation involved (Table 6 and 7).

In Table 6 the texts of *Kusu Island* are studied in terms of style, where it includes tone and diction. Style refers to the way in which something is written, as opposed to its meaning (Strung and White 2000). It also affects the reader's impression of the text itself. Tone refers to the author's choice of words, or the attitude of the piece of writing, while diction refers to the formality of word choice, as well as the positive or negative connotations of it. It can be seen that there is a consistent use of tone throughout the seven versions of the tales of *Kusu Island*. The authors have tried to be logical in setting up the background of the narrative so as to make it more believable. The intimacy and emotional aspects of the narrative is when expressive dialogues are included in all seven versions. The tales of *Kusu Island* are all rather formal in diction given the absence of the use of contractions in the texts, except for the dialogues. The choice of words is also rather neutral, with no obvious positive or negative connotations.

Table 6. Comparative analysis of the text in the tales of *Kusu Island* in terms of style

<b>Style (Diction and Tone)</b>	<b>Logical (Tone)</b>	<b>Emotional (Tone)</b>	<b>Intimate (Tone)</b>	<b>Formal Diction</b>
<i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro 1979)	Protagonists leave the village for some peace and quiet for praying.	‘Yam,’ said Syed. ‘you look weak.’	Presence of dialogue between protagonists	No use of contractions throughout the narrative
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	“Help, I’m Drowning!”	Presence of dialogue	No use of contractions throughout the narrative other than in conversational quotes.
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2002)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	“God, help, help. I don’t want to die yet. What’s going to happen to my wife and children?” he screamed.	Presence of dialogue	No use of contractions throughout the narrative other than in conversational quotes.
<i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley 2001)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	They were helpless; their boat was tossed about like a little cork in the wild, angry sea.	Presence of dialogue between protagonists	No use of contractions throughout the narrative other than in conversational quotes.
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Tan 2005)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	“Help me, God!” he pleaded.	Presence of dialogue	No use of contractions throughout the narrative
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber 2011)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	“Please help me. I am drowning. Who will look after my wife and children?”	Presence of dialogue	No use of contractions throughout the narrative
<i>The Legend of Turtle Island</i> (Bosco 2016)	Protagonist goes out to sea in order to earn some money	“Help, my friend’s injured,” the man shouted.	Presence of dialogue between protagonists	No use of contractions throughout the narrative other than in conversational quotes.

Register refers to the use of language for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting, that is, its level of formality. The choice of register for a particular text or part of text will differ depending on the genre and the audience of the text. Hence, the target audience for the text will have an impact on the stylistic choices. When referring to register in writing, there are four choices of “familiar”, “informal”, “formal” and “ceremonial”. In the case of the texts of *Kusu Island*, it will be informal as it is evident that there is a close relationship between the author, the audience and the narrative that has a degree of casualness (Table 7). Parts of the narrative are also conversational, using colloquial language. Given that the tales of *Kusu Island* are published as part of children’s illustrated book, it is important for the author to create a narrative style that can resonate with the child reader.

The main characters involved in the narrative of *Kusu Island* also remain largely consistent throughout the tales of *Kusu Island*, having the Chinese and the Malay fishermen and the turtle as the main protagonists. Although there are occasional changes to the number of protagonists involved, the occupation of the main protagonist as a fisherman remains the same (Table 7). A further research could be conducted in the future regarding the changes in the characterisation .

Table 7. Comparative analysis of the text in the tales of *Kusu Island* (summary)

	Style (Diction and Tone)	Register	Characters
<i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro 1979)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Arab man
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Malay fishermen - Turtle
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2002)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Malay fishermen - Turtle
<i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley 2001)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese couple and Malay couple - Turtle
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Tan 2005)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Malay fishermen - Turtle
<i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber 2011)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Malay fishermen - Turtle
<i>The Legend of Turtle Island</i> (Bosco 2016)	Logical, emotional, intimate Formal diction	Informal	- Chinese and Malay fishermen - Chinese daughter - Turtle

This part of the appendix provides a detailed philological analysis on each of the textual versions of Kusu Island through the lens of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.

Table 8. The sequence of events in *The Kusu Legend* (Monterio and Watson 1979, 18)

<i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro and Watson 1979, 18)	Sequence of Events	
Over a hundred and fifty years ago there lived in the village which is now Singapore, two holy men. One was an Arab named Dato Syed Rahman, and the other was a Chinese named Yam.	0	<u>Move 1</u> Information connective - Protagonists A and B are introduced  Initial Situation
These holy men spent most of their time praying and fasting, but soon they found the village too noisy. And so one day Yam said to his friend, "Syed, there is an island near here where we could go for some peace and quiet." "That's a wonderful idea," said Syed. "But how do we get there?" "That's easy. We hire a boat," said Yam, and that is what they did. Their boat was very simple, and they took nothing to eat or drink.	8	Lack
God took Yam and Syed Rahman to the island safely and when they got there, they each went a different way to pray and fast. Yam walked up the hill, and Syed stayed near the sea.	23	Unrecognised Arrival
For two days, the men prayed without having anything to eat or drink. Then Yam began to feel sick. At first he tried to hide his illness from his friend, but soon his throat began to feel as if it were on fire, and his lips grew dry and cracked. Yam went to where his friend was praying. "Syed," he called. "Syed." "Yam," said Syed, "You look weak." He felt his friend's forehead. "Why, you are burning up with fever." Syed made a place for Yam to rest, and while Yam slept, he prayed. After prayer for some time, Syed shook him by the shoulder.	12	The first function of the donor
"Wake up, Yam," he said. "Walk to the boat now. I think you'll find all you need there." Yam walked to the boat, and when he got there he found food and a jar of cool fresh water. He ate and drank, then went back to Syed and told him what happened. "God is merciful," said Syed. "Now we must go on with our prayers."	14	Appearance of a helper

<p>Yam went back to the hill-top while Syed stayed by the sea. They prayed and fasted for several more days before returning to their homes.</p>	26	Solution
<p>After that, the two holy men often went to the island to pray, and many years later first one, and then the other, died on the island. Syed Rahman's mother, Cik Galib, and his sister Cik Sharifah Fatimah, were both very religious women, and when they died, their bodies were also brought to the island and buried there. Later, a Chinese temple for Tuah Peh Koh, the God of Prosperity, was built on this same island. Today, thousands of people visit Kusu Island each year. They come to honour the two holy men, Yam and Dato Syed Rahman, who first went there.</p>	27	Recognition

Table 9. The sequence of events in the tale of *Kusu Island* (Pugalentii 2002, 120)

<b><i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalentii 2001, 132) &amp; (Pugalentii 2002, 120)</b>	<b>Sequence of Events</b>	
“Please don’t go out to the sea today,” the wife begged.	2	<u>Move 1</u> Interdiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An interdiction is addressed to the protagonist.</li> </ul>
“Don’t worry. We are already so much in debt. I better go and earn money today,” the husband sighed.	8	Lack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member of the family lacks something or desires to have something.</li> </ul>
The sea was rough but the fisherman insisted on going out. He went into his sampan with his large fishing net and began rowing straight out to the sea.	3	Violation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interdiction is violated.</li> </ul>
While he was about to cast his net into the sea, he suddenly lost his balance and soon found himself in the water.	12	The first function of the donor? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Protagonist A is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper.</li> </ul>
“God, help, help. I don’t want to die yet. What’s going to happen to my wife and children?” he screamed.	13	The Protagonist A reaction
Just when he was about to give up, he saw a huge turtle swimming swiftly towards him. It was the biggest that he had ever seen! The turtle waved to him and signaled to him to climb up its back. Though he thought he was hallucinating, he just followed its instructions.	14	Appearance of a helper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It often happens that various magical creatures, without any warning, suddenly appear or are met on the way and offer (Propp 2009, 45) their services and are accepted as helpers. Most often these are heroes with extraordinary attributes, or characters possessing various magical qualities (Propp 2009, 46).</li> </ul>

True enough, the turtle carried him off to safety and later brought him to an island.	23	Unrecognized arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Protagonist A, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country</li> </ul>
Though it was a remote island, it was perfect for settlement. There were plenty of exotic fruits which he survived on.	26	Solution
One day, he was resting under a tree. All of a sudden, the sky turned dark and a storm broke out in the sea, he heard a voice shouting.		<u>Move 2</u> Transfer connective - Protagonist A meets Protagonist B
“Help, I’m drowning!”	13	The Protagonist B reaction
In a short while later, a gigantic turtle appeared and in a similar fashion, lifted a Malay fisherman to the same island.	14	Appearance of a helper again for Protagonist B
Soon, these two became good friends. They spent their time hunting for animals and fruits.	26	Solution
At the same time, each also built a temple in gratitude. These two temples still stand on the island. Till today, there is a huge turtle sculpture to commemorate the turtle that saved the two fishermen. It is believed that the turtle is still around the island and once in a while you can see it resting on the sandy beach.	27	Recognition

Table 10. The sequence of events in *Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship* (Dudley and Tan 2001, 35)

<b><i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley and Tan 2002, 35)</b>	<b>Sequence of Events</b>	
<p>On the ninth day of the ninth moon of the Chinese calendar many, many years ago, some fishermen and woman folk from an island near Singapore sailed out to sea. They did this everyday as they earned their living by selling the fish, prawns, and crabs they caught.</p>	8	Lack
<p>On this particular day, they arose a terrible storm with strong winds, tall waves and piercing rain. The sky became dark, the sun was shut off by the clouds and everything around them became night blackness.</p> <p>All the men and women were frightened. They worked hard to keep their small boat afloat. Struggle as they might, they could not conquer the angry waves which rose high above their boat and came crashing down on them. They were helpless, their baot was tossed about like a little cork in the wild, angry sea. After what seemed to be many long hour, the boat was lifted up by a strong, towering wave and thrown right into another crashing wall of water.</p>	12	The first function of the donor
<p>When the storm had abated, only a barrel was left bobbing about the choppy sea. Two people were clinging to it. They tried to shout, but their voices were stuck in their throats. Even if they could have shouted at the top of their voices, there was no one to hear them. They were about to give up; they nearly let go of the barrel. Their hands were cut and hurt, and their fingers were numb and cramped. They were afraid. They were lost. They thought they were going to drown.</p>	13	The Protagonist A and B reaction
<p>Wait a minute! Was that another barrel? How was it possible for it to drift towards them? It appeared to be swimming! What could it be?</p> <p>Siong Chai, the fisherman, and Ah Siew, a woman from his village, were afraid. Was it a sea monster that had come to swallow them? They wanted to let go and swim for their lives, but they were too tired to struggle. Before they could fully realize what was happening, the object suddenly disappeared. Then they felt themselves rise above the water. They let go of the barrel and clung firmly to each other in fear. It was as if they were on dry land.</p> <p>It was no island! They could feel themselves moving swiftly over the waves and soon, under the now clearing sky, they could see an island appearing ahead of them that looked like a giant turtle.</p> <p>When they were brought to the shallows, they were</p>	14	Appearance of a helper

astonished to discover that their rescuer was a huge turtle. By the time they had clambered ashore, the turtle was gone.		
Ah Siew and Siong Chai rested under the shade of the trees that fringed the beach and drank deeply from a nearby river. When they recovered their strength, they began to explore the island. They were very happy to be alive, but they were saddened to realize that all their friends had not been so lucky. They had drowned in the mighty ocean during the terrible storm.	23	Unrecognised Arrival
A few days later, Ah Siew and Siong Chai were surprised to find a sampan full of food, cooking utensils and a brick dapor on the beach. In it, they also found mats, blankets and pillows, and some clothes. The man and the woman wondered how the boatful of provisions had appeared when they needed them most. It was such a blessing and they decided to build simple altars in thanksgiving. Siong Chai built one for the worship of Da Bo Gong, the 'God of Prosperity', and Ah Siew chose to dedicate hers to Guan Yin, the 'Goddess of Mercy'.	27	Recognition
The shipwrecked couple found peace and plenty on the island. They soon became good friends and fell in love. They worshipped God and became husband and wife.	26	Solution
Exactly a year after the couple was shipwrecked and saved by the giant turtle – on the ninth day of the ninth moon – a huge storm arose early in the morning. The waves came crashing on the beach and the wind howled about them. When the storm passed and the waters became calm and the sun smiled again, the couple saw, in the distance, something floating towards them. They ran to the beach to find that another man and woman had been washed ashore. Ah Siew and Siong Chai helped the new couple, Zarh and Yusof, to their hut, gave them dry clothes and fed them.	13	<u>Move 2</u> Transfer connective - Protagonist A meets Protagonist B  The Protagonist B reaction

<p>After they had rested, Zarah and Yusof told their story to Ah Siew and Siong Chai.</p> <p>“My wife and I come from a kampong in Teluk Paku,” said Yusof. “We had gone out in a sampan taking eggs, chickens and ducks, fruits and vegetables from our garden for sale, when the boat was caught in a strong current and dragged out to sea.”</p> <p>“Then a heavy storm began to brew,” added Zarah. “First the waves tossed us about and then filled the sampan with water. When we capsized, I was sure that we would have no way of escape. We clung on to the boat and were tossed hither and thither. We were on the verge of letting go and drowning when we saw what appeared to be another upturned sampan coming towards us. When it came closer, I thought it looked like ...”</p> <p>“It couldn’t be!” interrupted Ah Siew, “But it must be you – you were saved by a giant turtle.”</p> <p>“How did you know?” asked Zarah, astonished.</p> <p>“We were also saved by a giant turtle exactly a year ago. That was how we came to live on this island,” replied Siong Chai.</p> <p>“I remember just like it was yesterday,” rejoined Ah Siew. “I was screaming and screaming when the dark shape came swiftly towards us in the sea. I was sure that we would die!”</p> <p>“That was exactly how I felt,” said Zarah excitedly. “And when the giant turtle surfaced and lifted us on his back, I did not know what to feel – scared or relieved. It was such a shock! “</p> <p>Yusof and Siong Chai nodded silently.</p> <p>“Don’t worry now, assured Ah Siew. “You have been saved. That is the most important thing.”</p>	14	Appearance of a helper again
<p>“We are thankful to be safe,” Yusof agreed. “Thank you again, Siong Chai and Ah Siew, for caring for us. We would also like to thank the giant turtle, but do not know how turtles can be thanked.”</p> <p>Siong Chai and Ah Siew showed their new friends the altars they had built in thanksgiving. Zarah and Yusof thought it was a good idea and decided to build <i>keramats</i> to give thanks for the miraculous rescue.</p>	27	Recognition
<p>The couples worked hard on the land and planted many fruits trees and vegetables. They fished and built, laughed and talked, shared with and cared for each other. Their friendship grew and strengthened. From time to time, clothing and other useful articles were found on the beach. Neither of the couples know how or from where these valuable items found their way to their island, but the four great friends were very happy to receive them and shared them all.</p>	26	Solution

<p>Each had their own thoughts of how and from where these things had come and who had been the generous provider, and often discussed the mystery among themselves.</p> <p>One day, while Zarah and Ah Siew were walking along the beach digging for clams and dinner, Zarah brought up the subject of the mystery giver of good things.</p> <p>“Ah Siew, do you think it is the turtle who had been providing us with all the wonderful things?” Zarah asked. “Yes,” Ah Siew replied thoughtfully. “Who else can it be? We have lived here for many months and we have not seen or sensed any other human being.”</p> <p>As they went upstream, the scene that lay before their eyes was beyond their wildest dreams. There were Yusof and Siong Chat having conversation with, what do you think? A giant turtle!</p> <p>Both the women were, for once, speechless. Here they were, just a while ago, planning to persuade their husbands to lie in wait for the mysterious helper, when here, right before their eyes, was their life-saving friend, the turtle, talking to the men.</p> <p>The giant turtle said that it was indeed he who had rescued us and brought us to this island, although he put it in a more humble way. You know, Yusof and Zarah, he said that you were brought here by his sister.</p> <p>Zarah’s wish came true. Every year, on the ninth day of the ninth moon, the turtles appeared on the beach and spent the night with them.</p>	14	Appearance of a helper again
<p>Siong Chai, Ah Siew, Zarah and Yusuf remained goof friends. And when they had children, they too became firm and loyal friends. They valued each other as much as themselves and grew to love the giant turtles who were their silent providers and faithful friends.</p>	26	Solution
<p>Their happiness, their strong friendships, and their spiritually blessed island-home, began to be known by others around. Gradually, more and more people began to visit the island so that they too could be blessed with the same gifts of friendship and loyalty.</p> <p>In time, the island became known as Kusu – which means turtle – in memory of the giant turtles who saved the shipwrecked couples and brought them to live in harmony on the island.</p>	27	Recognition

Table 11. The sequence of events in the tale of *Kusu Island* (Lim and Tan 2005, 33)

<i>Kusu Island</i> (Lim and Tan 2005, 33)	Sequence of Events	
<p>Long ago, there lived a poor Chinese fisherman, his wife and children. The fisherman loved his family and cared for them as best as he could. He would go out to catch whatever fish he could even when storms maddened the fickle sea.</p>	0	<p><u>Move 1</u> Information connective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protagonist A is introduced</li> </ul> <p>Initial Situation</p>
<p>One day, as he was preparing his net for another fishing trip, his wife came to him and said anxiously, “It looks like a storm is going to break out later. It’s not safe to go out into the open water. Please stay home today, dear husband.”</p>	2	Interdiction
<p>The fisherman smiled, for he knew she was concerned. He shook his head gently and said, “We have nothing left to eat.”</p>	8	Lack
<p>Walking towards his boat, he insisted, “I have to go or you and the children will all starve.” A tear rolled down his wife’s cheek as she watched him jump into his boat and sail away. She prayed for his safety and protection.</p>	3	Violation
<p>The wild winds wreaked havoc around the fisherman while he struggled to steady his boat. Not wanting to go home empty handed, he threw his net into the darkness below but lost his balance and fell.</p>	12	The first function of the donor
<p>“Help me, God!” he pleaded. “Who will look after my wife and the children?”</p>	13	The Protagonist A reaction
<p>The rain only beat down cruelly on his face. The fisherman was about to give up. Suddenly, he saw something large moving towards him. It was a giant turtle!</p>	14	Appearance of a helper
<p>He was even more surprised when the turtle waved its flipper, inviting him to climb on its back. The fisherman quickly clambered onto the hard shell and held on tightly.</p> <p>The wind and the rain continued to play mischief, forcing the fisherman to slip and slide but the turtle kept on going and soon reached a deserted island.</p>	23	Unrecognized arrival

<p>The fisherman realised that he would never see his family again. He was heartbroken and prayed that his wife and children would find true happiness and security.</p> <p>When the storm cleared, he explored the dense jungle and found wood and leaves to build a shelter. He also learned to hunt for small animals and to track down ripened fruits. The island became his new home.</p>	26	Solution
<p>Months passed. Another nasty storm hit the surround sea. This time, the wind and rain picked on a poor Malay fisherman.</p> <p>The Chinese fisherman, who was resting in his hut, heard a loud cry, “Save me, I am drowning!”</p> <p>He rushed out and saw a man trying desperately to keep his head above the water. The fisherman’s eyes searched the crashing waves for some sign of hope.</p>	13	<u>Move 2</u> Transfer connective - Protagonist A meets Protagonist B  The Protagonist B reaction
<p>Soon, a shadowy shape appeared. It was the turtle which had rescued him! Just like before, it waved its flipper to the fisherman, who thought he was about to breathe his last, to climb onto its back. The pitiless wind and rain pushed and shoved the Malay fisherman but the turtle steadily carried him to the island.</p>	14	Appearance of a helper again
<p>The Chinese fisherman welcomed the Malay fisherman into his hut and offered him a warm meal. He was grateful for the Malay fisherman’s company and helped him build a hut of his own.</p> <p>In the days that passed, they became good friends and spent hours hunting for animals and fruits. They missed their families very much and often told each other many stories about their wives and Chinese? and their villages.</p>	26	Solution
<p>For a long time, the two friends never saw the strange and mysterious turtle. But it has been said that people who later visited the island, now called Kusu or Turtle Island, have seen the magnificent creature resting on the shores under the peaceful, sunny sky.</p>	27	Recognition

Table 12. The sequence of events in the tale of *Kusu Island* (Comber and Kwok 2011, 8)

<b><i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber and Kwok 2011, 8)</b>	<b>Sequence of Events</b>	
Many years ago, a Chinese fisherman and a Malay fisherman lived in a village on the island of Singapura, which has now become the great city of Singapore.	0	<u>Move 1</u> Information connective - Protagonists A and B are introduced  Initial Situation
They were good friends and they were so poor that they both had to go out to sea every day to catch fish to sell in the market. The Chinese was called Ah Yam and the Malay Syed Rahman.	8	Lack
One day, although the weather was bad and there was a fierce storm with thunder and lightning, Ah Yam went out to sea. His wife asked him not to do so but he did not listen to her. The rough sea and the strong wind made it difficult for him to fish, and his little boat rocked from side to side.	2  3	Interdiction  Violation
While he was trying to pull up his fishing net from the sea, Ah Yam slipped and fell into the sea. He went down, down under the waves and he felt he would never come up again. When he did, he could hardly breathe because his mouth and nose were filled with water, but he managed to scream, "Please help me. I am drowning. Who will look after my wife and children?"	12  13	The first function of the donor  The Protagonist A reaction
When he was about to give up hope, a large turtle appeared and swam towards him. It was the biggest turtle he has ever seen in his life. "Climb on to my back and hold tight," the turtle told him. "I shall take you to shore."	14	Appearance of a helper
The fisherman did as he was told, and the turtle took him to a nearby island where he climbed off the turtle's back on to the sandy beach. "Thank you, Mr. Turtle," he said, "for saving my life," but the turtle was already swimming far away although he looked back and waved his flipper at Ah Yam.	23	Unrecognised Arrival

<p>Ah Yam looked and looked but he could not see Singapura, and after some time he decided to make the island his home. He built a hut and found a fresh-water stream and was able to live quite well as he found many fresh fruits on the island.</p>	26	Solution
<p>One day, when there was a heavy storm, he heard someone crying, “Help! Help me! I am drowning”. He thought he recognised the voice.</p>	13	<p><u>Move 2</u> Transfer connective - Protagonist A meets Protagonist B</p> <p>The Protagonist B reaction</p>
<p>It was his old Malay friend, Syed Rahman, who was being carried to the island on the back of Mr. Turtle, the same turtle that had helped him. “ My dear friend,” Ah Yam greeted him, “how pleased I am to see you.” The two men told each other their stories. Syed Rahman had been caught in a fierce storm, too, and his boat had sunk. By this time, Mr. Turtle was swimming away and although they called out to him to come back so that they could thank him for saving their lives, he soon disappeared from sight.</p>	14	Appearance of a helper again
<p>As they could see no way of returning home, the two friends lived happily together and spent their time hunting for animals and fish.</p>	26	Solution
<p>To thank the turtle for saving their lives, they built a Chinese temple on a small hill overlooking the sea, a Malay shrine, and a statue of Mr. Turtle, all of which can still be found on the island which is now known as Kusu Island. “Ku” is the Hokkien word for “turtle” and “su” is the Hokkien word for “island”. The temple has an image of Toh Pek Kong in it, looking like an elderly Chinese gentleman with a white beard and red cheeks, who is believed to look after the interests of the Chinese and save them from danger. The Malay shrine is considered a holy place, too, by both Malays and Chinese as Syed Rahman, and his mother and sister, who are considered very holy women, are buried there. Today, thousands of people visit Kusu Island each year by ferry from Singapore to pray at the Chinese temple and Malay shrine which are gaily decorated with flags and banners.</p>	27	Recognition

Table 13. The sequence of events in the *Island of Legends* (Bosco and Lei 2016, 81)

<b><i>Island of Legends</i> (Bosco and Lei 2016, 81)</b>	<b>Sequence of Events</b>	
<p>It was a busy morning for Shing. She had to help her father pack. Her father was Woo the boatbuilder. He was going to the nearby islands to look for work. Shing’s mother died when she was young. There was no one else in their family.</p> <p>“When will you be back, Pa?” Shing asked, when she was done.</p> <p>Woo was tying up his tools in a bundle. “In two weeks,” he said. “I’ll be staying with my Malay friend again, at his fishing village.”</p> <p>That evening, their landlord, Master Yu, visited Shing.</p> <p>“Your father hasn’t paid any rent for the last three months,” Master Yu said.</p> <p>Shing was nervous. “He’ll be back soon,” she said. “He’ll surely pay you.”</p> <p>“I’ve heard his excuses!” Master Yu said. “If he doesn’t pay me tomorrow morning, I’ll sell you to my sister’s husband in Penang. You can work as their servant. I mean it.”</p> <p>Master Yu left. Shing was scared. She knew that her father wouldn’t be back by morning. What could she do?</p>	0	Initial Situation
<p>The next day, even before the cock crowed, Shing went to look for her father’s friend, Uncle Ku. She hoped to borrow some money from him. Uncle Ku didn’t even look up. “I have my own problems, Shing. I can’t help you.”</p> <p>Shing took out a jade bangle, which once belonged to her mother, and offered it to Uncle Ku.</p> <p>“You can keep this,” she said softly. “Just let me borrow a small boat to look for my father.”</p> <p>Uncle Ku wiped the jade bangle against his sleeve. It wasn’t worth much, but he knew that his wife would like it. And so he agreed. He lent Shing one of his older boats.</p>	8	Lack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member of the family lacks something or desires to have something.</li> </ul>
<p>Shing rowed off. She remembered her father’s stories, and the landmarks he had described. She would find her way to the islands and look for him. After some time, it started to rain very heavily. The sea got rough. Shing’s boat was thrown about. It was a miracle that it didn’t turn over. Shing thought she saw something familiar float past her boat. It looked like her father’s straw hat. Shing’s heart was filled with</p>	12	The first function of the donor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Protagonist A is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., which prepares the way for her receiving either a magical</li> </ul>

dismay. Did something terrible happen to her father? Just then, a giant turtle rose out of the water in front of her.		agent or helper.
Shing was so astonished that she dropped one of her oars into the sea. When Shing was younger, her mother told her stories about a heavenly turtle. It often came down to protect the villages from monsters and bandits and natural disasters like earthquakes and floods and typhoons. Shing still had one oar. She rowed towards the turtle. As she got closer, she noticed that it was actually a strangely shaped rock that looked like a turtle with its head sticking out.	13	The Protagonist A reaction
There were two men sitting on the front section of the rock, From afar, their movements made it seem like the turtle was nodding. Shing was about to cry in disappointment when one of the men waved frantically.		<u>Move 2</u>  Transfer connective - Protagonist A meets Protagonist B and C
“Help, my friend’s injured,” the man shouted.	13	The Protagonist B reaction
The voice was unmistakable. It was Shing’s father. Shing brought her boat as close to the rock as she could. Then she jumped over.	23	Unrecognized arrival <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Protagonist A, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country</li> </ul>
Her father’s companion was a Malay man. He was clutching his right knee. “Last night we were testing a new boat that I made for him,” Woo said. “But there was a storm. It turned the boat over. My friend, Mas, hit his head. He broke his leg too. We were struggling to stay afloat. Then a giant turtle swam towards us.” “It saved us!” Mas added excitedly. Woo lowered his voice. “After that, it turned into this rocky island. We have been sitting here since then, until you came by.” It was the most incredible story Shing had ever heard. She wondered if her father had hit his head too, and this caused him to imagine things.	14	Appearance of a helper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It often happens that various magical creatures, without any warning, suddenly appear or are met on the way and offer (Propp 2009, 45) their services and are accepted as helpers. Most often these are heroes with extraordinary attributes, or characters possessing various magical qualities (Propp 2009, 46).</li> </ul>

Shing's father went back and persuaded the landlord to give them two more weeks to settle his debt, in the meantime he sold fresh fish and rice supplied by Mas.	26	Solution
Some months later, Shing and her father would go back to the small island to give thanks for the miracle. Mas would also be there, waiting for them.	27	Recognition

Table 14. Comparison of Narrative Structures for the seven tales of *Kusu Island*

<i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro and Watson 1979, 18)* <sup>38</sup>		<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001, 132) & (Pugalenthii 2002, 120)		<i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley and Tan 2002, 35)		<i>Kusu Island</i> (Lim and Tan 2005, 33)		<i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber and Kwok 2011, 8)		<i>Island of Legends</i> (Bosco and Lei 2016, 81)	
0	Initial situation	2	Interdiction	8	Lack	0	Initial situation	0	Initial situation	0	Initial situation
8	Lack	8	Lack	12	The first function of the donor	2	Interdiction	8	Lack	8	Lack
23	Unrecognized arrival	3	Violation	13	The Protagonist A reaction	8	Lack	2	Interdiction	12	The first function of the donor
12	The first function of the donor	12	The first function of the donor	14	Appearance of a helper	3	Violation	3	Violation	13	The Protagonist A reaction
14	Appearance of a helper	13	The Protagonist A reaction	23	Unrecognized arrival	12	The first function of the donor	12	The first function of the donor	13	The Protagonist B reaction
26	Solution	14	Appearance of a helper	27	Recognition	13	The Protagonist A reaction	13	The Protagonist A reaction	23	Unrecognized arrival
27	Recognition	23	Unrecognized arrival	26	Solution	14	Appearance of a helper	14	Appearance of a helper	14	Appearance of a helper

<sup>38</sup> *The Kusu Legend* (Monteiro and Watson 1979, 18) is the only tale that is different from the rest of the tales of *Kusu Island*, as no turtle is involved in the narrative, the focus is placed on the pilgrimage to Kusu Island instead.

		26	Solution	13	The Protagonist B reaction	23	Unrecognized arrival	23	Unrecognized arrival	26	Solution
		13	The Protagonist B reaction	14	Appearance of a helper again	26	Solution	26	Solution	27	Recognition
		14	Appearance of a helper again	27	Recognition	13	The Protagonist B reaction	13	The Protagonist B reaction		
		26	Solution	26	Solution	14	Appearance of a helper again	14	Appearance of a helper again		
		27	Recognition	14	Appearance of a helper again	26	Solution	26	Solution		
				26	Solution	27	Recognition	27	Recognition		
				27	Recognition						

Table 15. Common Narrative Events in the tales of *Kusu Island*

Events	<i>The Kusu Legend</i> (Monteiro and Watson 1979, 18)*	<i>Kusu Island</i> (Pugalenthii 2001, 132) & (Pugalenthii 2002, 120)	<i>Kusu Island: The Isle of Friendship</i> (Dudley and Tan 2002, 35)	<i>Kusu Island</i> (Lim and Tan 2005, 33)	<i>Kusu Island</i> (Comber and Kwok 2011, 8)	<i>Island of Legends</i> (Bosco and Lei 2016, 81)
Departure of the Protagonists because of a lack	Protagonists wanted to find a peaceful and quiet place for praying	Protagonist wanted to earn some money	Protagonists earned their living by selling prawns, and crabs	Protagonist wanted to obtain food for his family	Protagonist wanted to earn some money	Shing wanted to find her father who has went out to find his Malay friend as her father has owed the landlord money
Appearance of a helper/magical agent when the Protagonists are met with misfortune	Magical appearance of food and water when Yam is very sick	Fell into the sea, saved by a huge turtle	Fell into the sea, saved by a huge turtle	Fell into the sea, saved by a huge turtle	Fell into the sea, saved by a huge turtle	Fell into the sea, saved by a huge turtle that turned into an island
Element of friendship between the Protagonists that helped them survive through the ordeal	Syed takes care of Yam when he is sick	Later a Malay fisherman was also saved by the turtle, and became good friends with the Protagonist while living on the island	Later a Malay couple was also saved by the turtle, and became good friends with the Chinese couple while living on the island	Later a Malay fisherman was also saved by the turtle, and became good friends with the Protagonist while living on the island	Later his friend, a Malay fisherman was also saved by the turtle, and they lived happily on the island	They were friends from the start, and the Malay friend later help Shing's father to settle his debt.
Recognition of their savior by showing their gratitude in return (e.g., building the temples and naming the island)	They prayed and fasted to give thanks to the God, and they often went back to the island to pray after the ordeal	Built temples to commemorate the turtle for saving their lives	Built altars and <i>keramats</i> to give thanks for their miraculous rescue	Named the island 'Turtle Island'	Built a temple and a shrine to commemorate the turtle for saving their lives	They all went back to the island to give thanks.

Table 16. The thirty-one functions of the dramatis personae

THE THIRTY-ONE FUNCTIONS		
$\alpha$	Initial situation	(0)
$\beta$	Absentation	<i>One of the members of a family absents himself from home</i> (1)
$\gamma$	Interdiction	<i>An interdiction is addressed to the hero</i> (2)
$\delta$	Violation	<i>The interdiction is violated</i> (3)
$\epsilon$	Reconnaissance	<i>The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance</i> (4)
$\zeta$	Delivery	<i>The villain receives information about his victim</i> (5)
$\eta$	Trickery	<i>The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings</i> (6)
$\theta$	Complicity	<i>Victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy</i> (7)
$\lambda$	Preliminary misfortune	<i>Preliminary misfortune caused by a deceitful agreement</i> (7a)
A	Villainy	<i>The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family</i> (8)
a	Lack	<i>A member of a family lacks something or desires to have something</i> (8a)
B	Mediation	<i>Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched</i> (9)
C	Beginning counteraction	<i>The hero agrees to or decides upon counteraction</i> (10)
$\uparrow$	Departure	<i>The hero leaves home</i> (11)
D	First function of the Donor	<i>The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or a helper</i> (12)
E	The hero's reaction	<i>The hero reacts to the actions of the future Donor</i> (13)
F	Provision of a magical agent	<i>The hero acquires the use of a magical agent</i> (14)
G	Guidance	<i>Hero is led to the whereabouts of an object of search</i> (15)
H	Struggle	<i>The hero and the villain join in direct combat</i> (16)
I	Branding	<i>The hero is branded</i> (17)
J	Victory	<i>The villain is defeated</i> (18)
K	Liquidation of Lack	<i>The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated</i> (19)
$\checkmark$	Return	<i>The hero returns</i> (20)
Pr	Pursuit	<i>The hero is pursued</i> (21)
Rs	Rescue	<i>Rescue of the hero from pursuit</i> (22)
O	Unrecognized arrival	<i>Unrecognized, he arrives home or in another country</i> (23)
L	Unfounded claims	<i>A false hero presents unfounded claims</i> (24)
M	Difficult task	<i>A difficult task is proposed to the hero</i> (25)
N	Solution	<i>The task is resolved</i> (26)
Q	Recognition	<i>The hero is recognized</i> (27)
Ex	Exposure	<i>The false hero or villain is exposed</i> (28)
T	Transfiguration	<i>The hero is given a new appearance</i> (29)
U	Punishment	<i>The villain is punished</i> (30)
W	Wedding	<i>The hero is married and ascends the throne</i> (31)

Source: Aguirre Manuel, "An Outline of Propp's Model for The Study of Fairytales", The Northanger Library Project, October 2011. Assessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.northangerlibrary.com/documentos/AN%20OUTLINE%20OF%20PROPP'S%20MODEL%20FOR%20THE%20STUDY%20OF%20FAIRYTALES.pdf>

## APPENDIX D

### THE ILLUSTRATED TALES OF *KUSU ISLAND* AND THE IMPLIED CHILD READER

Other than having the anthropomorphic turtle motif to attract the implied reader, one of Chambers' theory as discussed in "The Reader in the Book" includes the use of a particular tone by authors to create an implied reader that children can resonate with. Chambers suggests that the tone is made up of the narrator's voice and point of view as conveyed through language and form (Ballard 2005, 96). For instance, in the *Kusu Island* text by Don Bosco, he transmits his point of view through the child protagonist who go through a series of obstacles to save the day. Hence, the child protagonist is the key element of narrative structure that determines the tone of the story and in drawing a relationship with the child reader. Chambers believes that children's literature attempts to "explore, recreate and seek meanings in human-experience" (Chambers 1985, 42). For this to occur, the text will have to connect to the child reader through the use of narrative structure, style and a focused point of view. Chambers also observes that the relationship between the reader and the book is established by the adoption of a child-centered point of view, taking sides and indeterminacy-gaps.

For example, the element of fear or the unknown in the narrative can be of interest to the children (Ballard 2005, 104). Although it is natural for the children to be repulsed by fear, fear can be exciting to them as well (Ballard 2005, 104). In the tales of *Kusu Island*, the element of fear can be found when the fishermen drown during the storm, or the unknown when the child protagonist embark on a journey by herself to find her father. The child reader also tends to empathize and support the victory of the child protagonist (Ballard 2005, 105). In Bosco's story, the focus is centered upon the girl, Shing, an approach that strengthen the relationship between reader and text. As the story progresses, the protagonist (Shing) is in danger of getting lost at sea and the reader will feel compelled to read on. The use of such literary device to ally the child reader with the protagonist makes it more likely for the reader to learn Shing's spirit of bravery and determination. Especially when the child protagonist overcomes a huge obstacle or challenge and emerges triumphant, it endears child readers. In the case of Shing, she is only left with her father as family. This fact can motivate readers to side with Shing in hopes of her reuniting with him.

Of the six tales of *Kusu Island*, there is only one tale that includes the child as a protagonist. Nevertheless, all the other tales of *Kusu Island* consist of problem-solving protagonists (e.g. turtle, Chinese and Malay fisherman) who resolve the challenges in similar ways. The authors use the learning protagonist to show what they want the child reader to learn; on the messages of friendship, bravery, determination and adaptation. Given that all the tales of *Kusu Island* are located at Kusu Island, Singapore, if the target audience of the tales is Singaporean children, the lesson is easily transferable if these children possess the necessary context for the story.

## APPENDIX E

### GROUNDING THEORY ANALYSIS (Based on interview transcripts)

#### Coding for Illustrators

B – Beryl Kwok

S – Sharon Lei

W – Wilkie Tan

Table 17. Coding the data collected from the interviews with illustrators

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Code
<p>Appealing story;</p> <p>Meaningful story; S: “Local myths and stories have always fascinated me. I saw this as an opportunity to learn more about the country I reside in.”</p>	<p>Reasons for the choice of story</p>	<p>The aims of the illustrators and authors shape the overall direction of the tale, while the presence of other influencing factors and usage of references have affected and resulted in the different outcome of the tale over the past decades.</p>
<p>To entertain children, simple narrative;</p> <p>For children to identify with; W: “To have anthropomorphic kind of characters in children stories– I believe it of course goes back to how we have always wanted inanimate objects or even animals to talk to us for one weird reason or another.”</p> <p>To bridge the gap between modern times and olden days;</p>	<p>Goals/Aims of the artists</p>	<p>Possible future creation of the tale will include additional information and research, and a more elaborate visual creation.</p>

<p>Skills possessed; Type of Training; W:” I was media trained; art history background”</p> <p>To illustrate things that can relate to the artist more; B: “It just natural association, you associate it to what you are most familiar with (e.g. Chinese fisherman).”</p> <p>Stylistic choice by artist;</p> <p>Determined by text;</p> <p>Determined by publisher; W: “Publisher wanted the paragraph to be illustrated.”</p>	<p>Factors affecting the stylistic choice of the illustrations</p>	
<p>Taking reference SEAsian art and crafts, storytelling methods; SEAsian, malay batik prints; Polynesian wood carvings;</p> <p>Internet for images and text; D: “The safest source that we used was the Singapore Infopedia website and by the NLB and that’s something that all the kids can access”</p> <p>Textbook for references; P: “1936 textbook by Cambridge, which doesn’t exist in the library now”</p> <p>Oral tales</p>	<p>References/Sources</p>	
<p>To take note of more nuances of the story;</p> <p>To have a more mature take; W: “To have a graphic novel approach as I am more of an illustrator. Will have a mix of colours and monochromes, wood carved look, more mature take.”</p>	<p>Possible future creations</p>	

<p>New knowledge and research;  P: "...to me it has evolved because now I have more information about the tortoise, about the journeys of tortoise, about the route plans of things and all the stuff..."</p>		
<p>Timeless story that remains relevant with the current century;  W: "As long as it remains relevant, or someone finds it relevant to retell the story. then yes it will live on. About how stories live and die. It's – it's a whole the – it's how stories work."</p> <p>Different communities have their own way of retelling;</p> <p>Holiness of the island;  P: "There is some special powers there. I don't know what it is but I just.. there is a vibration there."</p> <p>Strong belief by the people;  P: "People who go to Kusu Island, I swear that good things happen to them"</p> <p>Turtles as a fascinating symbol to people  P: "They always tell the tortoise and the.. the tortoise saved the guy you know. The tortoise will come during prayers."  S: "An island in the shape of a turtle is interesting. Turtles have always been a symbol of longevity to the Chinese. I suppose the fascination sparked much imagination as to what happens on the island. And turtle being an animal with good meaning, it would only be fair to give it a good story to tell."</p>	<p>How has the story evolved/remained relevant?</p> <p>Spiritual connection of the island/story to the people</p>	

Coding for Authors

D – Don Bosco

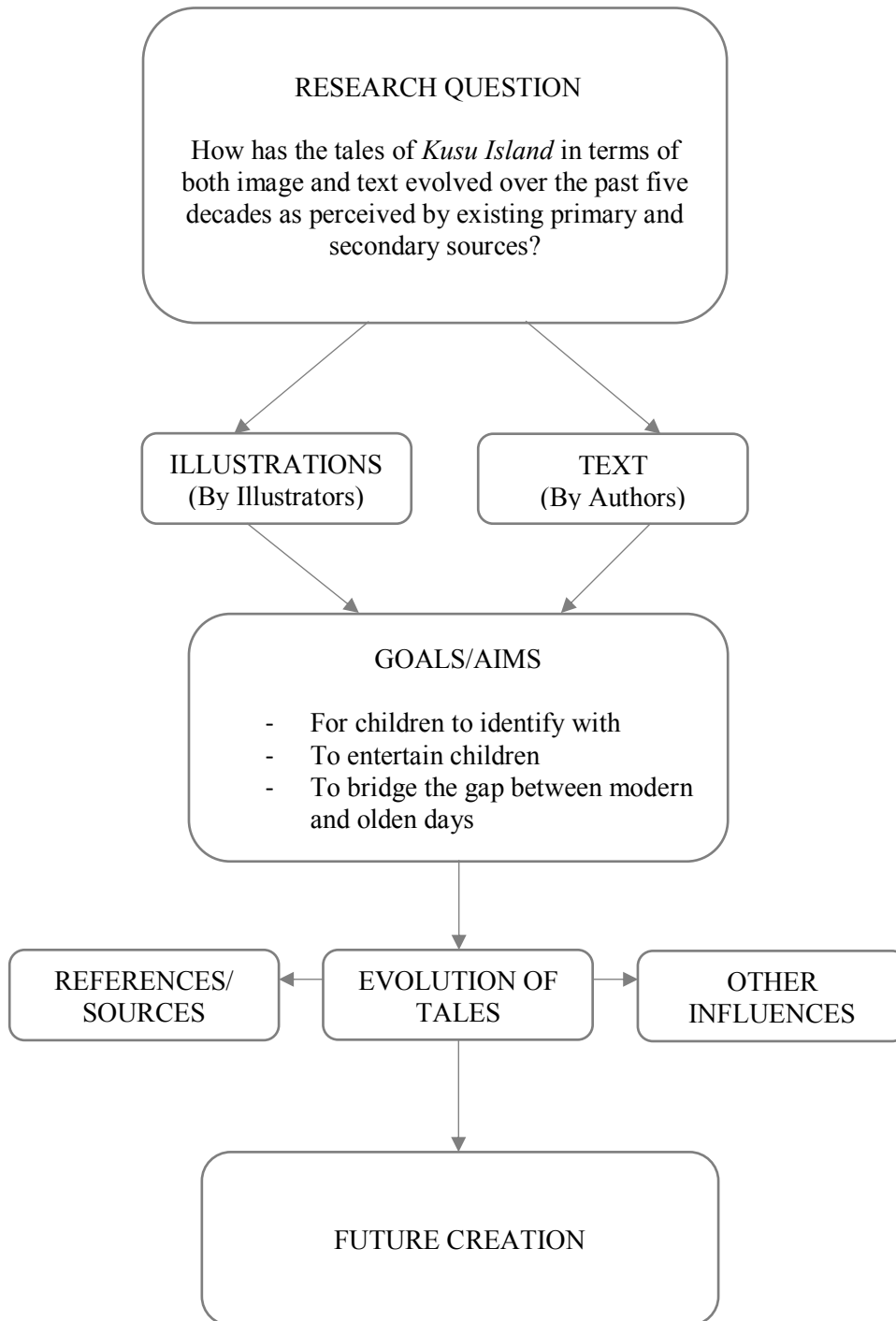
P – Pugalenthii Ramakrishnan

Table 18. Coding the data collected from the interviews with authors

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Code
<p>To emphasize on certain ideas; National identity;                      W: “Believed Ron had wanted to relook at the myths and folklores surrounding these islands, as well as part of the national identity”</p> <p>To entertain children, simple narrative;                      D: “Wanted something simple that they can remember and hopefully they go off and tell some people about it. So I created characters and the context around the basic legend to help kids relate.”</p> <p>For children to identify with;</p>	<p>Goals/Aims of the artists</p>	
<p>Logical narrative;                      P: “Most of the myths and legends had always been the case. There is something there that doesn’t make sense. You know the connection but it is not logically connected.”</p>	<p>Narrative Structure</p>	

<p>A more elaborate take; W: “Mentioned that Ron contacted me on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Singapore’s nation building, and before his death, for a revival of the project. Ron wanted a more elaborate take on the stories. Target audience of older kids”</p>	<p>Changes to make in the future</p>	
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	--

Selective coding of themes from the interview transcripts



APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Transcript – Interview with Beryl Kwok, 21 September 2017

B: Beryl Kwok  
Y: Peh Yang Yu

Y	Ok so..
B	You have two mics? Huh.
Y	Yea this whole thing is the mic.
B	Yea. Ok!
Y	Ok yea so uh, actually my first question is why, why did you choose to illustrate Kusu Island? I know it's part of this book but yea.
B	Um why did I choose to illustrate Kusu Island uh?
Y	Yea.
B	Um, um I think because only the story itself is something that is quite appealing. Because there was a choice between wanting to illustrate it and illustrating other stories. So I would say that uh it's because the story itself is very enticing I think for the reader and then... and uh probably some imagery of what was going on in the story would have been I think more helpful to the reader luh, versus some other stories that I thought didn't need illustrations.
Y	Mmm.
B	Yea.
Y	So, but then I thought you illustrated. You did the illustration for the entire book right?
B	Yea yea yea I did the illustration but the choices of the illustrations also matter.
Y	Oh right right.
B	Yea yea.
Y	Did..
B	Because when they buy illustrations they don't ask you to illustrate everything they give you for example 24 illustrations and it's up to you how, where you want to put those illustrations.
Y	Oh ok.
B	Yea.
Y	Right.
B	Yea.
Y	Then you decided to have two for Kusu Island.
B	Mmm.
Y	So is there a reason why uh you chose to use this particular style? For, for this?
B	Particular style for this uh?
Y	Yea.
B	Um it has been a while ah so I like cannot recall.
Y	Yea I know. I wanted to send you the question.
B	Can you just.. yea um, can you just let me take a look at it sorry?
Y	Oh.

B	Again?
Y	Sure sure sure.
B	Yea.
Y	Uh this one. This is the first one.
B	Oh yes! (B laughs) that's so long ago (B laughs).
Y	This is like the one.
B	Uh, yea.
Y	Right?
B	Uh.
Y	Actually there is a new edition. Uh it's just published in 2016. This is the new. They changed the cover. The, the original one in 2011 wasn't this cover right? Can you remember?
B	Yea it was different. Probably different luh aiyah, it was done very long time ago. That was when I was in ADM.
Y	Oh ok. Do you remember the year when you first drew it?
B	Wa regrets man regrets. Uh (B laughs), uh 201 let me think uh, uh it's the year for internship, so that will be 2013? Maybe? Yea, probably 20, yea cannot be, cannot be, much..
Y	It should be before 2011, because it was published in 2011.
B	Yea yea earlier, much earlier sorry. 20, about 201, yea you are right, about 2011 or 20, yea 2011. Probably.
Y	Oh so it was during your internship?
B	Mmm I did it during.. no I did the job before my internship.
Y	Oh.
B	So, so I after that then I did internship. The same company also.
Y	Oh right. So this is like uh, like uh freelance that you did, like how did you..
B	Mmm.
Y	Even get involved in this? (B laughs)
B	Wa yes. Yea ok the style wise uh, I wouldn't say it's the style that matters because the style is most likely the style that I was comfortable with at that point in time but I think it's the choices of what to use for the story I think is the one that uh, has more deliberation behind it. Um yea. So in this sense I would say the first image, a lot more to do with trying to, because Kusu Island is not, it is not exactly a very realistic story. it's more of..
Y	Mmm hmmm.
B	Uh like a myth right? So the idea was kind of create that sense of wonder in the, that is not something realistic um at least for the first image. But the second image was really just more of reference to what is currently existing. Which is the temple luh. Yea.
Y	Mmm then uh why do you, because uh your book is the only one that didn't illustrate turtles. Because I mean Kusu means turtle right? So I, and then you chose to use fishes instead to, as your main image, with the fisherman drowning right? Is there a reason why?
B	Mmm hmm.
Y	You choose this characters and setting for this?
B	Mmm I think at least for me the choice was because to kind of create, yes it's true that uh island is important which is also the reason why the second image has to do with the tem, the actual temple itself. But then the initial idea of the guy drowning or at least the actions uh, that action in particular for me as a reader

	was like the biggest part of the story. The cause of all the things that happened luh. So that's why I focused on why the guy drowning, not so much the turtle because the turtle on the other hand is not something that might have existed. Yea it was uh, it's a, as in turtle itself exist but not in the, not in the way the story portrays it to be luh. Yea.
Y	Uh then, then uh, so is there a reason why fishes? Why you depicted fishes?
B	Uh the fishes uh?
Y	Yes.
B	Uh no luh, fishes is probably just uh stylistic choice, not too much of anything in particular.
Y	Mmm right.
B	Yea.
Y	Uh then you were talking about the temple so actually there is a Chinese temple and a Malay Keramat on the island, so why do you choose to emphasize on the Chinese temple? In the second image.
B	I think because when I was reading on the, the story and then I went to look for images that I thought could relate to the story. The Chinese temple itself within the Chinese temple has that whole like, I don't know this central area that has a lot of turtles or terrapins.
Y	There is a place yea.
B	Yea yea in it and then um for reason I just felt that it related more to the story and then, that's the choice of the illustration.
Y	Mmm.
B	Yea.
Y	Then uh just curious, the man that you illustrated right? Do you have in mind if he is a Chinese or a Malay?
B	Oh wait. I need to see that.
Y	Need to see it? Ok.
B	Yea.
Y	Just find them. I mean the way you painted the hands is, is like white?
B	Yea!
Y	So..
B	Chinese. Definitely Chinese.
Y	Is there why you choose to emphasize on Chinese and not the Malay?
B	Why did I emphasize on the Chinese and not the Malay? Um most likely was because it's I think it's really association. Um yes you are right. It could have been a Malay fisherman, it could have been a Indian fisherman, you never know coz the story never actually tells you! but it just natural association, you associate it to what you are most familiar with.
Y	Right, then..
B	Yea.
Y	Um did you refer to any sources? When you did this? Like what sort of sources did you see? Like any books or any research you have done? If you remember.
B	Uh ok.
Y	Yea.
B	Uh sources wise definitely I looked through a lot of uh the temples was for sure the one that I spent a lot of time looking for. I think an accurate because number 1 I didn't go to the island so I, I wouldn't know a lot of my sources. Were pretty much internet sources luh. So which is also the, probably the reason why the

	angle of the image was taken also because um I think even though yea you know the people go there but it, you.. easiest way to do illustrations is just to get the imagery on the internet. And then from there form your opinions on how it might have looked like. In a sense.
Y	Right.
B	So, so particularly for temples I think for the fishes wise, fishes wise actually as well. Yea.
Y	Mmm.
B	Fishes like the how you want the fish to look like. But you can see it's a very generic illustration. I think yea.
Y	Yea. Then um, so in your means of research uh, other than, is this your first time you read this story or before that you have known about uh similar versions of this story or other versions of Kusu Island or during your research you also read about other things?
B	You know that is actually very interesting because I, have not actually read this story before and uh, I think the only that I read of, that I know of is the Redhill one. And, and the Kusu Island one not so much actually. Uh it's actually the first time that I read through all these stories.
Y	So when you first received the script for the first time?
B	Yea! So that was actually also quite interesting. I would probably have done it differently but yea (B and Y laugh).
Y	Right how..
B	Regrets regrets.
Y	How, how would you have done it differently?
B	I think um..
Y	You know you going to do..
B	Like, like what you say, mmm probably take note of more nuances of the story. and you are right luh in the sense it's very strange that when I chose to do the illustrations, I didn't think the turtles were a big part of the story strangely even though it's one of the main characters of the story (B and Y laugh) yea.
Y	Then um did you discuss with uh Leon Comber when you did the illustrations or you both worked separately? Like there is no contact.
B	No contact. Because this, this is uh, uh the way they do illustrations at least for this company, this is, is it APD? Is this still APD?
Y	Mmm..
B	Asian Pacific Distribution.
Y	Uh it changed already. It was, now it's Talisman Publishing.
B	Talisman Publishing? Ok maybe a different publisher. Not sure. Uh no usually for publishers if they do this illustration thing they hire the illustration on their own. Nothing to do with the.. I believe the writer didn't get much of a say in terms of what, illustrations came out on the book actually.
Y	Oh. So they actually told him to write.
B	Yea.
Y	And then they passed it on to you to illustrate? So..
B	Yea correct. So, so they handled the process of the writing, illustration completely separately which I, if you think about it, it doesn't really make sense but yea.
Y	Yea because this is the first time I am hearing of that. Because there are other books with like Kusu Island in it and they do communicate. The writer and the artist.

B	Right! Correct but I, I think in the whole process of creation there was no communications.
Y	So you actually don't know, you have never spoken to Leon?
B	No! Actually yea
Y	Oh right so in terms of the publisher, so you have full um, authority in terms of deciding what you want to draw. Or the publisher has some sort of say? When you submitted your drafts.
B	I would say that the publisher had a lot of say in how the imagery, images or not, because like certain images they didn't like it. And then they were like tsk, like change this, change that, change change change that. Colour wise, composition wise I think the publishers have a lot of control in that sense um because they want it to look a certain way. Which is not the way you actually originally envision how certain things would look like. Yea.
Y	So, so that, that, that was what happened to your illustration for Kusu Island? Do you remember if there were any changes made? Or they were, they accepted your first ideas.
B	I would say that if you, if I recall correctly right, I did a lot of the illustrations to be as detailed as possible so that there is little complaints from people who just wanted to make comments about illustrations. Um so, so I think maybe that's also the, that might also led to certain choices that was made in the book. Whether there was a turtle there might have been but it was, most likely if there was, taken out luh. Yea.
Y	So you..
B	Because uh im, illustrations wise not as impressive as say a temple looking thing. Yea that would make sense.
Y	Right so you actually do remember drawing a turtle.
B	I really, there was turtles somewhere. No I actually, no I cannot hundred percent confirm coz it's really too long ago. But I would say that it's, based on other stories that I did uh, a lot of changes to meet in terms of just wanting it to look more technical than bringing out the essence of story I would say for.. coz it's publisher control. Different.
Y	Ah right.
B	Yea.
Y	So then uh, right so uh would you consider like doing just an illustration book on Kusu Island? I know it's a very short story but just wondering.
B	Yea. Yea I would of course. Yea I think it's interesting and yea hopefully like why not alright oh my god sound like [inaudible speech] (B and Y laugh).
Y	Yea then uh..
B	But probably completely differently this time round luh it's um, the style is, whatever you seen in the book does not exist anymore, thank goodness (B and Y laugh).
Y	Right in, there are like some that change, the story, would you have written it yourself? If you are going to do it, and then would there be any possible change?
B	I might change it, I might change. I will not change the story because I think that then, that just takes away from what it actually means.
Y	Mmm.
B	But uh probably a little bit more research into the kind of imagery that is more suitable for the, for the story itself luh.
Y	Mmm.
B	I think that makes more sense yea.

Y	Yea. Then um, have you worked on other island creation stories before? Or even like urban legends? Uh yea.
B	Mmm on my own is it? Um..
Y	Like illustration.
B	Probably not, no actually. No that was actually the one and only time that I touched something that was uh, related to Singapore in that sense. For stories.
Y	Interesting then um, yea so yea yea. Yea one of the questions, have you visited Kusu Island before? And you said..
B	No! (B laughs)
Y	Why not though? I am curious.
B	Why not? Yea um, I have always meant to do it (Y laughs) and I have never done it (B and Y laugh). It's always been like you know at some point in time, I suddenly remember yea I have not visited a couple of islands that is around Singapore. Kusu Island. Yea then I am like. And then I forget about it and it's just never happen yet. Doesn't mean I wouldn't just hasn't have time.
Y	Yea because you were doing on this story I thought uh, you would be interested to know what's happening there before you start illustrating. But I guess the internet does its job. Images.
B	Yea so for, for, I would say a lot of illustrators or maybe artists nowadays uh, to be fair a lot of the, the imageries that we are getting right now is all intext [14:42]. Because it's very complete [14:43]. Not saying it's a good thing but it just happens that way.
Y	But do you think the, the experience of going there itself would change? Um..
B	Uh I think that is for sure like that is a completely given if you experienced it. The way you look at the whole thing change completely.
Y	Mmm.
B	Yea.
Y	Then uh do you believe in this story? Personally?
B	Do I? Do I believe in this story ah? Uh maybe some parts of it but probably for most parts might be an exaggeration of something. So it, it could have happened but uh, it might not be exactly true to the story a hundred percent? Yea.
Y	Mmm. Then uh why do you think that the story of Kusu Island exists? In the first place.
B	Where uh?
Y	Why? Uh why do you think it exists?
B	Why do I think it exists or where do I think it exists?
Y	Uh why.
B	Why do I think it exists. Hmm probably the idea of, the concept of perhaps co-existing with nature.
Y	Mmm.
B	Probably the possibility of co-existing with nature and not uh everything is a hunter-prey kind of relationship.
Y	Mmm.
B	In that sense. Yea.
Y	Right. Uh then do you think this, yea because do you think this story has evolved over the past decades? I mean it, this question will apply if you have seen the other versions of the story. but..
B	Do I think? Uh uh, I haven't so I can't really answer the question.
Y	That's why. Ok then. Then the final question is, do you see any parallels with

	the, yea but you haven't been to Kusu Island.
B	Yea you see.
Y	Any parallels with the current day Kusu Island and, and the story of Kusu Island. Yea.
B	Do I see any parallels uh?
Y	Yea.
B	Mmm not really only because I haven't visited (B and Y laugh).
Y	Right.
B	Yea.
Y	Mmm yea that will be..
B	Will be more accurate if I visited the island before.
Y	Yea true that. So..
B	Yea.
Y	Do you have anything else that you want to add that I didn't ask? Like I missed out any, regarding this project of yours.
B	Mmm I don't, didn't think so. Yea because, yea it was a one, sorry out of quite uh several stories so probably not.
Y	Mmm mmm. Right then I guess that's all that I have for the, for my questions. Do you have any questions for me?
B	Yea like um, so so wait wait. So what exactly are you covering? You said Kusu Island but um.
Y	Uh.
B	Right?
Y	Yea it's not. The swordfish, the story of Badang, uh yea all these are all the famous ones and then I thought that because there are so many people working on that already and then why are there no emphasis being put on Kusu Island because it's there! Like the island is basically there for you to go and see.
B	Oh!
Y	And then it has a history of its own so I thought, there must be some significance you know. To be highlighted. To that island. That's why I picked, I picked that story actually. Was the main reason.
B	Coz I was thinking about it and I was like wondering why, I think you picked a harder path in comparison to today like, the, the swordfish one has a lot of permutations of it and so does the Redhill one.
Y	Yea.
B	Um.
Y	Yea.
B	So, so yea you picked the one that was slightly to get your sources I think.
Y	Yea it's actually very hard because uh not many people write about it and the information on the internet is very very limited.
B	Very scarce.
Y	Yea it's so difficult to do my research on and in terms of book published, it's just that few books. So..
B	Correct.
Y	Just.. yea that's why I was wondering like why, why are there no emphasis on it at all. But I like the idea.
B	Why? Also because it's not part of the main island in the sense. Like it's a, it's an island at the side and I think that in itself, that distance in itself makes people

	not have so much focus on it. I mean Redhill is like Redhill, it is there right? But..
Y	Yea.
B	Kind of can relate back. But then off an, unless I think you, you go do the religious like..
Y	mmm.
B	Every year, I would say that you wouldn't kind of think about the island. I would..
Y	Yea. I mean and actually a lot of them don't even know about the island. I mean I suppose you don't even know about this before you do this thing? Have you heard about it?
B	Before I did? No, no.
Y	Yea.
B	I know some islands and I know that there is a, a St John's Island, there is a Kusu Island and stuff. But do I know more than that? No.
Y	So you.. yea and that is what is happening to a lot of my friends luh. They, some of them do not even know the existence of Kusu Island. Some of them heard of it but they don't know what is going on there and what it is.
B	Mmm.
Y	So I thought it's still part of Singapore history. Coz..
B	It is.
Y	Yea one part of history was saying that uh actually Sir Stamford Raffles, he arrived at Kusu Island first. It wasn't the mainland Singapore.
B	Not the mainland island.
Y	Yea it was actually at Kusu Island first. But..
B	Ok.
Y	I mean it's, I, no matter what I still feel that this island, it has a part to play. So.. yea luh in selecting the story and I thought. Yea lor, since no one has been doing it right? I mean might as well.
B	Yea that's true, I agree. It's interesting. Interesting uh but not easy but I think it's a interesting choice of topic.
Y	Yea and the idea about island creation now is getting popular also right?
B	Mmm.
Y	Among contemporary artists also. So I thought..
B	I have always..
Y	Yea. And yea lor so I chose this. I was torn between the swordfish story and this. Yea at first.
B	Oh.
Y	Yea yea yea I did select tale, in the end I took out swordfish. But in the end I realize there is someone from NUS, she is uh, she did history and then from the history perspective, so she wrote a thesis on the swordfish.
B	Yea.
Y	Yea.
B	But if no one has done something on Kusu Island then yea why not?
Y	Yea especially.. and the problem is most of the time when people write about thesis like that or stories, it's more about the narratives. So they don't really take into considerations the pictures you know. Like they don't put equal emphasis on the illustrations and I really wanted to do that.
B	Oh! Yea that's true.

Y	Yea because I am a artist myself so I feel that like when books appears like that, the text always holds more importance than the image.
B	Mmm hmm.
Y	Yea.
B	It's kind of like you can see like the text per story, is like 2, 2 images or 2 to 3 images max, for the, for the stories. I mean it shows you that for a book, a big part, the illustrations are not, are just there to supplement the text, not the other way around.
Y	Yea.
B	Yea.
Y	Yea definitely but I thought, I mean there should still be some sort of discussion to it. I know there are a lot of discussion on picture books. Especially the western picture books, because..
B	Yea.
Y	The pictures are the ones that speaks. But then we don't have like Southeast Asian picture books on traditional tales and things like that. So illustrated books comes next. Yea.
B	Yea.
Y	So.
B	So are you going to end up like a illustrated book on?
Y	I think I don't have time to do it. I wanted to do it actually but then um, because my Masters is 2 years and then 1 year is gone already. I am left with one.. [B exclaims] year. [B exclaims] To write this thing. So I.. originally my plan is to do a book on Kusu Island. But I don't think it's possible because there is so much research to all the existing books and then if I want to do my book there is another whole lot of research to be done.
B	Like visual research right?
Y	Yea visual research and.. yea so I don't think I will be able to do it within.. less than a year. Like a thesis and a book.
B	It, oh you intended to like put 2 out at the same time?
Y	Because there is uh, 2, 2 types of Masters that you can do. One is the practice led kind, so you just need to write 23,000 words and you produce something and then..
B	Mmm.
Y	Like a FYP luh, just the graded version.
B	Mmm.
Y	And then the other one is like MA with 30,000 words. So you just need to write a full thesis. So actually it's much more time-consuming to do the practice led, because you still need to write..
B	Yea obviously right? Like 7000 difference right?
Y	But you need to do a new thing. So.. but I think next time down the road I might just draw it and yea on my own time. I mean since I have the material already right?
B	Yea you already have it so might as well do something about the materials. It's quite interesting I mean if you have managed to get through your thesis, get information and after that, when you actually do a story about it. I think it's a nice little revival for the story luh. I, the concept and everything.
Y	Yea I was hoping, hoping that it can be done. And nowadays people are um, there is also plays on Kusu Island coming up. So that one, I mean it's not like a exact rendition of it. It's more like a reinterpretation.

B	Mmm hmm.
Y	So I think it's like gaining attention luh. All these myths and legends of Singapore. Now.
B	I mean I, quite interesting if you had at least thought about it when you were talking about your concept. It's quite interesting if you had a book on Kusu Island, on its own. Because we know the stories right?
Y	Yea.
B	Short but different permutations of the stories throughout and it can be one book on its own and that is actually interesting.
Y	Yea but I mean would publishers want to publish that?
B	It depends I guess on how you.. how, how you, because each story is kind of different.
Y	Yea.
B	And it could be then as a, I don't know, the seven versions or seven series of Kusu Island. I don't know how you want to do it. But yea.
Y	Yea yea that would be a good idea actually. Yea.
B	Yea so..
Y	Definitely.
B	That's a possibility. I would think it's a interesting concept. Why not?
Y	Yea why not? It's just time issue right?
B	It's just a time issue. So if you get your thesis done and you have spare time after that, then perhaps that's a good project.
Y	Yea yea yea sure. Talking about thesis, um if you are interested to read it, I will send it to you um after I am done. With all this.
B	Oh sure! Why not. Yea that's interesting.
Y	Yea, and yea. I will update you on that again and probably around next year. May April? Yea..
B	Ok!
Y	Should be done around that time. Yea.
B	No problem.
Y	Oh thank you so much for, for..
B	Yea.
Y	For like yea, all your inputs.
B	Ok I hoped I managed to help a little bit. I am so sorry I didn't have more.
Y	Definitely you did help alot! I mean.. I really need your inputs on why, why you drew all these things. Because there are some books that, are so long ago, like the 1979 one and then..
B	Oh you can't.
Y	Yea I can't contact them anymore and then there is the one by National Heritage Board that is published in 2005. I can't..
B	Mmm hmm.
Y	I lost them. Like how do I put it? Coz like their English names like Charlotte Lim and there are so many Charlotte Lims like really a lot of Charlotte Lims.
B	Oh!
Y	So I wouldn't know which one, then National Heritage Board doesn't have their contact anymore. So it's kind of like lost. So I can't, I can't ask them like why did you draw it this way and why did you choose this characters. So it was yea, because I wanted to know what was going on when they were interpreting the

	text in terms of image.
B	Mmm hmm.
Y	Yea and then you, because you definitely helped a lot because you managed to provide the answers for that. (B laughs) I mean since you still remember, thankfully.
B	Ok.
Y	Yea.
B	That's good.
Y	Yea so..
B	Alright!
Y	Thank you so much!
B	K no problem.
Y	And um you are working now right?
B	Yea, I am I am.
Y	Right.
B	Yea so, not now luh. But yea just now but earlier.. yea um, that was interesting but let me know if you ever want to do the Kusu Island thing and you decided that it's gonna, you wanted a collaboration of stuff. I will be glad to do it.
Y	Yea yea sure. Definitely.
B	Coz it's interesting and I need to pay for my.. (B laughs)
Y	Pay for your what?
B	Pay for my fees! I am drawing a horrible book. What the shit! (B and Y laugh)
Y	Sure I mean why not? Yea definitely when I..
B	Yea.
Y	Yea.
B	Ok.
Y	Thank you so much. Yea I will update you and there is a consent form that I need you to sign.
B	Oh!
Y	I think I sent it to you. Did I send it to you? I will send it to you again.
B	Mmm ok.
Y	So it's like a consent form that you consented to this interview. It's also paperwork.
B	Can. Sure!
Y	Yea. Thank you so much.
B	Can, no problem!
Y	Yea see you around.
B	K bye bye!
Y	Bye bye! Thank you.

B: Bosco

B	Mic test 1 2 3. These are my interview answers for – Research Project – The Making of an Island. Deconstructing an illustrated folktale from Singapore by Peh Yang Yu. I will be answering these questions uh – in order. So do refer to them as we go along. [clears throat] First question, why did you choose to narrate the legend of Turtle Island in this direction? Because the purpose of my book is to entertain children in a vivid and captivating way. Um something simple that they can remember and hopefully they go off and tell some people about it. So I created characters and the context around the basic legend to help kids relate.
B	Second question, where did you get your original source of the story? Did you refer to any references? Uh for this series, the safest source that we used was the Singapore Infopedia website and by the NLB and that's something that all the kids can access and that's um – it's been validated as official and so that's – that keeps things safe for everyone.
B	How did you decide on the characterization and setting found in the legend of Turtle Island? Um as with anything created that I do, I just sit in my room and listen to music and make notes until something looks interesting. So it doesn't sound very um – orderly or systematic and it's not you know. It's just fun. I think much later after the basic characterization and setting and all the stories have been done, then I go back and look at anything that might be a problem and then I tweak that but um, in the beginning, it's basically just – throwing you know, myself off the cliff and see how far it flies.
B	Did you discuss with the illustrator regarding the directions blah blah blah. Yea we discuss a little uh. We email and it's the third book that we are doing together so – No it's the second book we are doing together, third book in the series so she understands what's going on. Uh but we are going for very stylized look you know? Like a manga comic and we are not aiming for historical accuracy in the clothes and all that. Something that just, that looks plausible and something that communicates you know. It's like putting on a stage play. You put something there and it stand for something and it moves the story along.
B	Next question, who is your target audience for this story? Mainly children eight to twelve years old. And also the parents and teachers who interact with them and share stories with them. And find ways to use these stories to have a conversation.
B	Next question, how have the children reacted to the story? Well this story is embedded within a much larger frame story. About the lion city adventuring club and kids mostly respond to that frame story you know, rather than this particular episode. So they like the legends and it's interesting and they kinda go off and maybe ask a few questions or or they read up more about it. But there are eight legends in the book and every child responds to a different one and depending on what their interests are.
B	Next question, do you think the story has evolved over the past decades? Duh duh duh. Well, I think these past decades uh, the stories about Kusu Island has been more about the tourist potential of the island and this legend of the the – turtle. The tortoise. It's just a teaser in that, that narrative.
B	Have you work on other island stories before or even on urban legends? Yes, quite a few. Um – my lion city adventures series, it's about Singapore as an island. And a lot of stories about how um, how the island was founded you

	<p>know. By uh um – when it was Temasek and then by Raffles. I also spent some time doing research – um many many years ago on urban theory and urban culture. So the role of narratives and story making in creating an urban landscape, that is something that I am very much interested in. but I don't think I – I er was very much motivated from that angle in writing these books. I just wanted to write something that kids will remember and enjoy reading and that would make them feel that you know, Singapore was a, a reasonably interesting place.</p>
B	<p>Next question, regarding the popularity of island creation myths, is there a trend for it? Why? Hmmm. I don't know if island creation myths are very popular but I think um, any myth is like a song. And a song about love, is basically you know. A song and the song is about the song itself. And there is not very much in that song about what love really is you know? To understand love you gotta – feel the love and when you hear a song about love, you just basically appreciating the structure and the – the way the song has been put together. So the same thing for myth, about Kusu Island. Has – has um very little to do with the island itself. The myth of Kusu Island. You want to understand the island you go visit the island. Or you look at pictures of the island but when you are listening to the myths and the legends and the stories, um about the creation of an island, it's more about the writer or the creator or the people who are transmitting the myths, the storytellers and nothing about the island itself. And you know, if you think um – if you think about this on the other hand, there are lots of islands in this world with no stories attached to them. And why not? Does it make them less of an island? No you know? So I think um – yea that's what I think about island creation myths that writers um enjoy writing those myths about those islands and that's why we have those stories with us and there are lots of islands without stories and – that doesn't take away from their – their islandness you know anyway. I hope that makes sense.</p>
B	<p>Next question. Do you foresee the hardback copy of the book duh duh duh duh duh? Um – maybe I am not sure. Um – yea I am not sure. Maybe.</p>
B	<p>Now the next section. Other questions regarding the tales of Kusu Island. Have you visited Kusu Island before? Yes, I have. And uh once I was even part of a documentary team that you know, went down take a look and we were going to film some stuff there. So yes, I have.</p>
B	<p>[clears throat] Have you heard of other version of Kusu Island? Uh well – I am mostly familiar with the main official versions, the ones you see for example, on the Infopedia page and um – I guess these versions. That's very short and and and – they are mostly for tourist brochures and stuff and not very engaging at all and I don't – I – the intention is really not to to – communicate the emotions behind the myths but just you know, hey there is this thing here. Um which may be of interest to you...</p>
B	<p>Do you believe in the tales of Kusu Island? Hmmm. I believe that whatever people have felt and imagined about the island has passed on through the stories are, those things are very real.</p>
B	<p>Why do you think the tales of Kusu Island exist? I think we all need stories to make our existence in our environment seem meaningful and stories justify our intellect and our sense of awareness and so the tales of Kusu Island um – that's just another avenue for us to experience you know. The human intellect and the the – the different flavours that can be communicated through human storytelling.</p>
B	<p>And the last question. Do you see any parallels with current day Kusu Island with the tales of Kusu Island? Hmmm. Any parallels... right now people are</p>

still busy – in their own way trying to create new tales about Kusu Island and I guess these days, using photographs you know to capture what Kusu Island is or what they imagine it to be and all that activities there. I guess if want stories of Kusu Island these days, you might go to Instagram and then you search you know Kusu Island hashtag and then you will find those new stories of Kusu Island. Um – as far as um – the myths and the legends go, that kind of stuff that I looked at or I tried to engage with, with my version of the legend of Kusu Island. Um – in that sense like I mentioned about storytelling, you know Kusu Island is the Kusu Island of the legends, is not really a physical place you know. It's more like some kind of geo-conscious intelligence out there and it wants to grow and expand and make itself felt you know it must interact with the human intelligence so this this – this um – this entity calls and we respond. The few of us or the people you know who er – tune to these kind of stuff. Like myself and you, you know doing this, doing this research project so that that entity calls and we respond and in that process our consensual reality shifts and gets more complex as a result and so – this is a thing that that we engage with and not so much that island itself. Um – it's dimension of experience that's not so much factual but more um – imaginary. And that's where it adds value you know, and and imagination and not, the actual geography of it. Although it might uh, influence, people's actions uh regarding the island itself may be more. People want to visit it or they want to build a resort there. Or maybe a golf course or something you know. The stories. And those will be the new kinds of stories that they will want to write and so it just goes on. And that's the end of my interview answers. Um – good luck with your research project and thank you for including this or considering my story.

Transcript – Interview with Wilkie Tan, 4 September 2017

W: Wilkie Tan  
Y: Peh Yang Yu

Y	[phone ringing] Hello? Hello?
W	Hi!
Y	Hi! Hi Wilkie, I am Yang Yu. Uh nice to meet you.
W	Yea. Nice to meet you.
Y	Yea thank...
W	Yea you...
Y	So – sorry?
W	Not meet but kinda here yes. Erm...
Y	Oh right yea (laughs), not kinda meet yea.
W	So yea – interesting project you have there.
Y	[intake of breath] Thank you! Erm yea and your your drawings as well. When I looked through all the works. So...
W	Uh.
Y	Uh.
W	So I believe you have uh read the story by Ron.
Y	Uh yes. Definitely.
W	Mmm.
Y	Yea so uh, um so I know that story has been erm some time ago (laughs) actually.
W	Yea about twenty years ago. (both W and Y laugh)
Y	Did, did you still remember how um – how you started like doing it? Like how you were roped into this project uh with Ron.
W	Um it was uh – I was roped in by Eck Kheng, the publisher
Y	Oh.
W	Of landmark books yup.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Uh – and I, we may have – I remember vaguely that um – I met up with Eck Kheng some – a bit earlier on. Because I was uh – um introduced by other friend I think I can't remember very much of that detail.
Y	Uh mmm hmm.
W	Yea and I was uh – at NIE then, doing, doing my uh – pedagogy in art education so...
Y	Mmm.
W	Yea that was then. And I met up with Ron about uh – once?
Y	Once.
W	Not before uh – it was actually only the launch that I met him. Uh prior to that, we had – communicated over emails.
Y	Oh.
W	Yup.
Y	Right.
W	So.
Y	So.

W	I mean do you know that Ron is blind right?
Y	Uh no! But I know he passed away already.
W	Yes yes! It was very recently. Actually like last year?
Y	Yea yea yea. Uh I think so. 2...
W	I think it was last year?
Y	Oh 2015 I think. It was quite recent.
W	Yea.
Y	Yea. Oh so he was...
W	It was recent. Yea he was blind. He had a very illustrious career. You should google him up! Hmm yes, he has done so much for the um – visually impaired
Y	Mmm mmm mmm.
W	So – mmm.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh and he is quite a character himself (W and Y laugh). Um yea so – when I got the uh – manuscript from Eck Kheng.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh it was uh – it was a series of short stories based on [door creaks] – Singapore and it's surrounding islands.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh – I – I believe that – uh Ron had wanted to uh – relook at the uh – the myths and folklores that surround these um – these islands. Um – I – I think it's also part of a uh -
Y	Mmm.
W	Growing... Uh – thing about uh – national identity and...
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Uh – I think yea. Something like that.
Y	Mmm. Right. So um – so they just passed you the entire manuscript of the book right? And, and then uh, you are supposed to illustrate um – according to the texts? Like also before that, did you like uh – like email Ron? Like about um – like for example uh – like some specific of the stories? Like Kusu Island and like uh – what kind of style he wanted or – it's just all up to you? Like to decide what you want to depict and how you want to do it.
W	I remembered – hmm – given free rein over the – illustrations style that I wanted.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um – I believe most of my correspondence went through Eck Kheng.
Y	Right.
W	Uh – the publisher.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Um – again like I said uh Ron is blind.
Y	Yea.
W	So he trusted um – a lot of uh – the inputs we give him and I mean both Eck Kheng and myself.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Uh there are – there are parts of the stories which I – I wanted to clarify and I – sometimes I will get a response.
Y	Mmm.

W	From either Eck Kheng or Ron.
Y	Mmm.
W	So that's the um – that's – that's how the working relationship was like uh -
Y	Right.
W	There were of course some uh – I believe some uh constraints on the part of the publisher I think – I don't think the whole idea was to do a graphic novel so (W and Y laugh) uh there was specific parts of the story which uh – he would have felt – needed certain emphasis.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	So the – therefore required certain illustrations be done.
Y	Mmm.
W	Mmm uh – as with all illustration projects uh – I mean what you see in the book is not the – the full set of stuff that I have done so (W and Y laugh) – it's always kind of like uh uh – a bit of like you can choose.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	And then – because it was a work in progress at that point in time.
Y	Mmm.
W	Yup.
Y	Mmm.
W	But I think about eighty to ninety percent of the works – uh were retained uh.
Y	Right. So uh do you still have the drafts of the – all the unpublished um sketches that you – (W and Y laugh) yea.
W	Um – not with me right now. I mean um.
Y	Mmm.
W	I might have in Singapore. I am based in Melbourne now.
Y	Ah right. Yea I saw your photo (Y laughs) profile.
W	Oh my profile? (W and Y laugh)
Y	Yea like your profile that you have written on – LinkedIn and Facebook.
W	Seriously?
Y	Yea.
W	Wow.
Y	So.
W	Ok you watched myself. (W and Y laugh) ok alright. Can't make sense of this but not important
Y	It's – so you wouldn't be back right? Any time soon or something.
W	I was back in May um...
Y	Oh right.
W	In July um – but um – no I wouldn't have a clue where I have left them (W and Y laugh) but like I said, eighty to ninety percent of the stuff – are in the books.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	So.
Y	Right.
W	Yea.
Y	So just now you mentioned that uh – when they specify certain things that they want included, that's Ron or the publisher? Or both of them?
W	Um – it might be both of them. I mean uh -

Y	Mmm.
W	Like I said um – most of the correspondence were done over email and calls.
Y	Yea.
W	I – I am not quite sure whether uh – well I can't really remember.
Y	Mmm.
W	But I do – I do kind of like having – looked at the book again this morning um -
Y	Yea.
W	Luckily I brought a copy over for my kid.
Y	Oh, ok luckily.
W	Uh yea so. I saw in the room, uh still in one piece. Thank god. Um that the – there were about one to three illustrations. No, one to two illustrations per – per story.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	I believe.
Y	Mmm yes.
W	Yea. So it might have been uh – uh – uh a conscientious decision. Not the publisher's and to – to just have that. Hmmm.
Y	Oh right. Then uh – so – so that – I mean. So you can actually say that you had a close relationship with the – the author and the publisher right? Right? Like in doing this project.
W	Uh yes. Yes, yes. Because what I believed was that uh – we actually um – I actually kinda like describe the uh – the – the illustrations in writing and then Ron would have wife who was a very pleasant lady that uh – tell him about it. Um yea.
Y	Right.
W	So that – that's how Ron was able to – give certain feedback from point to point, from time to time yea.
Y	Oh interesting. I am just wondering -
W	Coz yea yea. Coz he was visually impaired.
Y	Mmm mmm mmm yes. So I was uh – wondering do you still have your chain of emails with Ron? (W and Y laugh)
W	I am afraid not. (W and Y laugh)
Y	Yea I know that's ten plus.
W	That was ten plus thirty years ago!
Y	Oh so -
W	How far are you digging in for this research?
Y	Uh no I was just – because um I wanted to interview the writers and the illustrators for all the people who had worked on the story of Kusu Island. Coz there are other variations um over the past two decades.
W	Mmm.
Y	So I wanted to see the writers take on this – the story and the – the artist take on it. So yea.
W	Well – one interesting nugget of info that I can probably say is that um – about a year before he died uh – we got in touch again.
Y	Oh! Ok.
W	It was the fiftieth anniversary of Singapore nation-building.
Y	Mmm mmm.

W	I was already in Melbourne. I – I got a very surprise email from him uh – yea he say he wanted to discuss about uh – possible revival of this project.
Y	Oh really?
W	Because he had a few more interesting stories (W laugh).
Y	Oh.
W	He wanted to uh – do a more elaborate take.
Y	Mmm.
W	So – uh we actually had a very long chat over – over Skype.
Y	Oh.
W	And at uh – no not Skype, at home. Just a normal phone call.
Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
W	And then uh – he – expressed interest that uh – this project should be revived in time for – well not necessarily for NDP but -
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	But around like the uh – the anniversary luh.
Y	Yea.
W	Of the fiftieth year of uh – yea Singapore yea.
Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
W	So that was that. Uh then a few months later before I know it was like – he is gone so – it was kinda sad that way.
Y	Yea, so he was already planning to do it. Like really planning to do it.
W	Um – I don't know how far he got.
Y	Right.
W	In the sense that I had when I spoke to him was that he was having ideas in his head.
Y	Ah right.
W	He wanted to rope me in because I had worked with him on that first project and he wanted uh – somewhat of a continuation at least uh visually?
Y	Mmm mmm hmm.
W	Uh a continuation of sorts so – he did say uh the stories – were gonna be repeated I guess.
Y	Oh repeated? So there will be the same stories? Just that -
W	No no no. No it's a reboot. It's uh – it's probably gonna be a lot more detailed, a lot more – I don't know, a lot more -
Y	Content?
W	I guess longer? Mmm I think the audience will be slightly different, for older kids.
Y	Mmm.
W	That was what he had in mind.
Y	Ah older kids.
W	Yea.
Y	Uh so when he was doing this book that you guys have done, what was the age range that uh – he was looking at?
W	You mean the – the book that was done in 2001?
Y	Yea. Mmm hmm.
W	Um it's a children's book. So -
Y	Yea but...

W	To me that – from reading level, it will be about – lower primary?
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	I mean these days kids read a lot of stuff.
Y	Yea.
W	Um yea but I think in today's context it will probably be about Primary 2, Primary 3. Back in my day, it will probably be about Primary 4, Primary 5.
Y	Oh right back in 2011. I mean, sorry 2001. You mean.
W	Yea that's 2001. That's a good fifteen years ago. Wow.
Y	Yea. Wow.
W	I feel old (W and Y laugh).
Y	I know it has been so long. Yea so it's interesting to see how it changes like – now it's suitable for Primary 2 and 3, and back then it's what – like Primary 4 right? You were saying or Primary 5. Around there.
W	Yea.
Y	Mmm.
W	Yea. Definitely primary school level.
Y	Right. Then I am just wondering like for the new book that Ron wanted, were there the talk of like uh colours involved? Or it's – it's probably black and white?
W	Um – like I said it was pretty much in his head. So I won't -
Y	Yea.
W	I will just help out with brainstorming with him but-
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh I mean it's basically a brainstorm session.
Y	Mmm.
W	So anything goes and everything went. Uh – so in my mind, it will be a lot more um – colourful? (W and Y laugh)
Y	Right.
W	Yea so – like I said it was really just a brainstorm session so nothing concrete. There was no draft or anything that came out. Yea because back then I was also trying to finish up my PhD so I was telling him quite frankly that uh – not gonna happen in the next six seven months (W and Y laugh).
Y	Yea you will be, you will be really busy. If you are going for this -
W	Yea so. Then before I know it he was gone so yea – I feel kinda bad (W and Y laugh) you know. I mean to be honest there was – there was this part of me that felt like you know – yea maybei should kind of like honour him and get something done (W and Y laugh). But that's another project altogether.
Y	Yes yes. It's a big one.
W	It is a big one. It is a big one. But it's – it's gonna be very different, I guess.
Y	Mmm.
W	Anyway there is uh -
Y	Oh ok.
W	Back to your questions before we get time tracked.
Y	Oh right.
W	The what if and the what not. (Y laughs)
Y	True. And uh yea so – uh I was wondering why did you choose this style of illustration for this book, like in and Kusu Island. Like black.
W	Ah.

Y	Like the strokes that you used. Um I mean black and white yea and why – why did you choose to depict um characters in this way. Uh yea basically yea uh why you draw that. Uh especially for Kusu Island.
W	Uh.
Y	Yup. You know that you have two illustrations for that right? Two pictures yea.
W	Yes yes yes. Um this whole project was um – or rather I – I remembered kind of like thinking that I wanted a very um – handcrafted look to it. So -
Y	Mmm.
W	I opted to look at uh wood cuts, print. Uh as – as a way of inspiring these series of illustrations for the book.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Um – of course like uh wood cut prints had a longer tradition than just like uh you know a water colour kind of illustration.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um and uh – it was uh – I felt very apt that the – the characters don't have very fine details when instead it should be quite bold and um – what else? Let me just flip through it again.
Y	Yea sure (W and Y laugh)
W	And there was also the use of um – photoshop? I remembered uh I was uh – I was uh media trained so – at that point in time, all this kind of thing like photoshop, desktop publishing tool was considered new media.
Y	Mmm.
W	Yea yea it's been that long (W and Y laugh), oh dear. Uh – so I – I remembered doing a draft and then showing it to Eck Keng and then he – he was quite – quite impressed at how I married the two together.
Y	Mmm.
W	Like some parts hand drawn and other parts a lot more angular, more – and in between the shadings they – the texturing were all done – do like post process in photoshop.
Y	Oh ok.
W	Yea so – uh it was pretty experimental I guess. At that point in time. I mean you can't quite tell in the small little book but -
Y	Yea.
W	Uh – the – the um – the facts that I wanted was – was uh – was to marry the two luh. Like to have one very – uh – craft look at the same time, you have um – that texturing that new media or new technology was able to afford at that point in time.
Y	Right. Uh is there a reason why you wanted it like handcrafted? Was just wondering if you have any reason.
W	And also because of the – of the context of this story is like uh – we are talking about this and folklores and – and pretty much if you were to look at the uh murals, craft from the Polynesians or the Southeast Asian, you will see like uh wood carvings, or wood – wooden leaf carvings as – as one way of like uh – storytelling? you will find uh very stylized kind of like uh – figures from shadow puppets, from the Ramayana or whatever. So I mean – I had – I had the uh – background in art history. So I was able to – to then tell um – draw inspiration from those and fit that into the illustrations which I thought was apt for the stories that Ron was trying to tell. And I remembered Ron being quite excited about it and then “yea go ahead and then do whatever you want”. So yea. But of course bearing in mind that you know some of this uh

	– conversations that we had were also quite uh – long time ago.
Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm yea.
W	Uh – a – I think the publisher and I also wanted to – to have some kind of uh – rela – uh some kind of – a different style which would be suitable?
Y	Mmm.
W	Which kids would identify with uh so it's a abit of like manga comic look thrown in so you see like not necessarily in – oh actually yea – actually the second illustration where the two men sit down and talk to the turtle.
Y	Yea.
W	That is very like – comic strip-like.
Y	Ah.
W	Yea the facial expressions and then subsequently in other chapters, you have other figures uh – which draws on a very – familiar look. I mean of course the facial details were done very wood carved-like. Yea but the whole rendering of it is still quite um – cartoonish.
Y	Right yea. Mmm. And um so – when you were drawing this, were you referring to any sources? Like certain pictures or any like pictures of characters or – or landscape that you refer to when you draw?
W	Um – I referred to some uh – Southeast Asian – Malay batik uh – prints.
Y	Mmm.
W	I remember looking around for – some kind of like wood carvings – Polynesian wood carvings.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Um yea.
Y	Right. So uh – the depiction of the human character, it was just like uh – you didn't refer to pictures of like uh the people back then in Singapore something like that. No right? I mean this -
W	Well there are – there are existing myths to like Hang Tuah and stuff that appeared in my history textbook when I was younger. Uh – and things from the library, there are – there are other pictures that I remembered reading. I don't recall looking them up specifically for this project. Uh – so I guess those images also stuck and they – they served to influence how these uh illustrations have gone along uh.
Y	Mmm mmm. Right. So um – then – then I realized on your cover page of that Kusu Island. So that main depicted photo uh – illustration is of a man and a woman um on the turtle, heading to the Turtle Island right? So – uh because – I – that's the main picture I suppose. So why do you uh choose to just draw the – the man and the woman and I suppose they are the Chinese? And and not the Malay, coz there is another Malay couple right, at the end.
W	Eh? Sorry uh – which picture are you referring to?
Y	Uh the first one. The main one. I suppose that -
W	Which one?
Y	The – the one with the man and the woman and the turtle. Heading -
W	Oh right! Ok.
Y	Yea. So I suppose that – that's the main uh – illustration right? So I was wondering why –
W	Yea.
Y	Why you depicted them and uh not the Malay couple as well. Or not them instead, something like that.
W	Uh – I don't think it was uh – racial thing. It was more to fit in with how the

	storytelling went uh because the story open with the Chinese couple arriving on the island. So -
Y	Oh.
W	Um – I believe that the publisher wanted uh – that – paragraph be illustrated.
Y	Oh ok.
W	So that’s how -
Y	Right.
W	Yea. Usually that’s how um – illustrations for books go. Like the publisher or the author would specify certain things that they want to highlight.
Y	Oh.
W	So my job then was to just uh – create different drafts for whatever that needs to be highlighted yea.
Y	Ah I see.
W	Unless unless I have something very – particular in mind like uh – for example the mermaid story which I thought you know I will like that. Then I remember telling the publisher that “hey I want – I like to do something a bit more interesting.”
Y	Mmm hmm mmm.
W	Yea mmm.
Y	Ah I see. Right. So uh – if you have to – like re – like redo a new edition of the story, but what – what would have done uh like – what differences would you have made to the 2001 uh – illustration? Just – just a what if question (W laughs) yea but – but yea.
W	Yea I know I know. It’s always interesting to do a what if thing.
Y	Yea.
W	Uh – if it’s up to me to retell the stories or – because I can’t speak for Ron at this point.
Y	Yea.
W	Yea so – it will be uh – somewhat a different take.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um I would – to me – I would probably do like a graphic novel kind of approach because I – I am more of a illustrator.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Uh – I would have – uh – I would definitely have uh – a mix of uh – colours and monochromes yea. Uh – I would try to retain certain bits of the elements like – uh – the wood carved look. But it will be probably more – more mature take I guess?
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	I think now – nowadays uh – uh – the – there is a – interest in um - histories particularly our own nation’s histories. Or even different iterations of that. So – it – I think it would be quite – uh – interesting if there is a – another iteration.
Y	Yea.
W	On how – how folklores should be perceived or can be perceived. By a new generation of readers or storytellers yea.
Y	Right. That was actually what I was thinking. I mean but it would just for the story of Kusu Island (W and Y laugh) yea. Yea so actually that – there is a question um – that asks – do you see any parallels with the current day Kusu Island if you have been – with the tales of Kusu Island, maybe not -

W	Oh! I haven't been there for so long (W and Y laugh).
Y	But you do -
W	I think the last time I was there was like more than twenty years ago.
Y	Twenty years ago.
W	Yea I was uh – it was definitely more than twenty years ago since I was last there.
Y	I think it didn't change much other than the fact that there are much lesser people. Because they didn't -
W	Really?
Y	Do any more renovation after that to the place (W and Y laugh) yea.
W	I remember like stepping of the pier and I could see the temple straightaway and uh – there was lots and lots of turtles dumped there.
Y	Oh. Then – then that is different because they built a new pier I think that's the addition yea.
W	Alright ok.
Y	Right.
W	Probably. And then you could climb up and then on top of the hill that was this uh – Keramat.
Y	(laughs) oh yea yea yea. It's still there. Mmm.
W	Yea yea I am sure it's still there.
Y	Yea.
W	Uh – so sorry what was your question again?
Y	Yea uh – uh I was asking do you see, I mean oh right, maybe I should ask that after I ask the questions like uh (W and Y laugh) after doing, sorry there is so many. Do you have time? Uh.
W	I do have time but uh -
Y	Ok.
W	I – can I? Can you call me back at say three minutes time?
Y	Oh ok.
W	I just need to pop off downstairs and have at something.
Y	Ooh ok sure! So I will call you again. Yea when you tell me
W	Yea three minutes.
Y	When it's fine yea.
W	Yup ok.
Y	Ok thank you yea. Bye.

Y	Ok yea. So uh right – uh if you don't mind, because uh there are actually some questions that I wanted to ask Ron but I am wondering if you might know the answers to it. So if you -
W	I will try.
Y	Yea. So I was just wondering why – why the story of Kusu Island is titled “Kusu Island of Friendship”? if you know. Is -
W	Uh the story is about – these two couples that found each other on the island.
Y	Mmm.
W	And I think it's a story about um – overcoming adversity and -
Y	Mmm.

W	The fact that they were also of different races -
Y	Mmm.
W	Coming together and working together and living harmoniously together.
Y	Mmm.
W	I think goes down very well with the uh – with the – idea of Singapore’s multicultural narrative yea.
Y	Alright.
W	But then again the original – Kusu Island tells uh that I remember when I was young um – has that element as well. So um – I – I don’t know if Ron’s version is a retelling.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh but I think all tales are retelling – retold from time to time anyway.
Y	Yea. Uh so what were the ones that you actually heard when you were young?
W	You mean pertaining only to Kusu Island?
Y	Yes, yea. Just the Kusu Island.
W	Uh – I – remember very similar kind of uh – narratives. Uh – it was uh usually uh – one or the other, meaning – it could have been the Malay couple who was originally there.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Or it could be – uh – the Chinese couple who was uh – shipwrecked separately.
Y	Mmm.
W	I don’t remember so much of the couple.
Y	Oh.
W	Like a man or a wife. I remembered like uh – it’s usually quite male-centric.
Y	Mmm (W laughs) yes (Y laughs). I agree.
W	Uh – and I – remembered that there was a version about uh – a very wise Malay man who – who people came to venerate and hence the – hence the –
Y	Kera-
W	The whom. Uh yea the Keramat.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um – then of course the – the link with Tua Pek Kong and Mazu or um – Guan Yin Ma tends to be of course the Chinese uh – take on. On shipwreck.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	I – I can vaguely remember – that’s how the – my grandma would tell me.
Y	Mmm.
W	Especially when we go to Kusu Island because uh – I guess being Chinese so usual stop would be the Chinese temple.
Y	Mmm, mmm hmm.
W	Yea so – deities the – the figure of the deity in the temple, therefore becomes quite um – quite -
Y	Significant to the story?
W	Yea quite, I think so. I think it kind of like puts a face to the whole thing I think.
Y	Mmm right.
W	Mmm I think you then, you draw on uh – you then draw on that visual uh –

	memory and – and whatever um -
Y	Mmm.
W	Subsequent tales you would tell your own children. I remember telling my child story about the Turtle Island as well but, of course it's not as elaborate as Ron who has written his book. Yea.
Y	So how did you tell it to your kid? Uh like the short version.
W	Uh – I think shipwreck, saved by a turtle um – survive – live happily ever after.
Y	Yea right.
W	That kind of thing.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um – I guess uh – they – Ron would have definitely – uh made a conscientious decision to keep uh – the two couples different?
Y	Mmm. Mmm hmm.
W	Mmm.
Y	Right.
W	Yea.
Y	Be – because his story um – is the only with couple. The other versions.
W	Yea.
Y	Was just um – two men. One Chinese and one Malay.
W	Yea.
Y	And the most recent one in 2016 by Don Bosco um – it's – it involves a little kid, a little girl. But the main character is still a man.
W	A boy.
Y	Yea, a Chinese and a Malay man. So I thought his version is really different, the way he retell.
W	Yes. Uh I mean it will make sense if you want to populate the island.
Y	Yea yea that was what I was thinking actually. (W and Y laugh) is it to like reflect Singapore? But Kusu Island is like the mini version of Singapore?
W	Uh -
Y	I don't know.
W	Possibly possibly. Um – yea, it's a – it's not a very big island but it's neither a very small island for four person so -
Y	Yea that's true. So uh do you believe in these tales of Kusu Island personally?
W	Hello? Sorry?
Y	Do you believe in these stories of Kusu Island? To you, personally? Do you believe them?
W	Well I believe in Santa Claus (W and Y laugh) um – I believe that they are good stories.
Y	Mmm.
W	And they are endearing stories.
Y	Mmm. Right, so uh do you think that – that's why that's the reason why the stories have been existing and it will be passed on. Like it should be passed on. Do you think so?
W	As long as – as long as it remains relevant, or someone finds it relevant to retell the story. then yes it will live on.
Y	Right.

W	Um it's just like American gods isn't it? Like you know, like the, if you have read the American gods and then the whole premise about -
Y	American gods.
W	Gods living and dying. About how stories live and die. It's – it's a whole the – it's how stories work.
Y	Yea.
W	Yea. I think for Singapore it is important that there are such stories that remain relevant.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	For future generations.
Y	Right. So – yea. Oh right, back to the text, I was just wondering why, why the ninth lunar month, when the people go out to fish. Is it um – Ron wanted to mix in the Chinese uh – Chinese what's, what's – because during the like ninth lunar month, pilgrimages, pilgrims tend to go for pilgrimages right? And they go to the temple to pray? Is it? Because he wants to depict that, that's why he emphasized that in the story? because he mentioned it twice right? First time on uh – on the ninth lunar month.
W	Mmm.
Y	Then they went out to fish and then another uh – then later on he mentioned that ninth lunar month again, uh the Malay couple met with the – misfortune right? So is there a reason why he wants to emphasise?
W	Possibly.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh – possibly I think. I think there is a long tradition of pilgrimages to Kusu Island since god knows when. Uh – I cannot- I cannot remember when the pilgrimage takes place, I believe you probably have that down on you.
Y	Yea.
W	Um – is it on the ninth? Ninth ninth?
Y	Yea yea, it's during the ninth month. Where most people go to Kusu Island during that time.
W	Yea.
Y	Yea. So -
W	So he – he might – he might have uh – I can't answer for him.
Y	Right.
W	So – but I believe that he tried to link in the existing uh – practices?
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	And then making it.
Y	Right. Yea ok. So um in – in this – not just in this story, but but specifically to this story and other stories. Why the temple, I mean the Chinese couple comes first, then the Malay and then yea. Some stories were depicted temples go first and then Malay uh the Keramat but in actual fact, actually the Keramat um – was on the island first. But is there a reason why people tend to depict the Chinese first rather than the Malays in all these stories. I mean specifically -
W	Uh -
Y	This as well.
W	I – I am no historian.
Y	Yea.
W	To be – to be told uh – I think different communities have the very different

	take to how the story has evolved to suit their own – own retelling – so
Y	Mmm mmm right.
W	I really can't answer that. Uh -
Y	Ok.
W	And I think it is also not a very – uh you won't get very good answers out of these questions.
Y	Yea.
W	Because it really – yea. I don't think it pertains very very relevant to the – to to the folklore itself. The before and after thing – is – is potentially quite tricky to deal with.
Y	Yea. I know it is.
W	I mean yea.
Y	Yea because I was reading these stories and yup.
W	I mean most of the – Malay archipelago tales were written um – since like uh – long time ago – I mean has very different kind of take to what these islands or what the symbolism holds for them.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um – it's interesting that you brought them out. But I am just saying right out that you probably are not going to get very satisfactory answers for that question.
Y	Yea yea. It's alright but I thought it's worth trying. Yea because -
W	Yea well I mean I can't speak for Ron again I hope that to me when I read the story, um – I knew that it was retelling and it didn't – I don't remember asking him why he had the Chinese first or the Malay later.
Y	Ah right.
W	Um back then I – I wasn't uh – I wasn't that aware perhaps?
Y	Mmm mmm right.
W	Yea.
Y	Then another interesting thing about this story is that the turtle can talk in human language, coz there are others. The turtle never never -
W	They probably speak Singlish too.
Y	Yea so it's um – is there a reason why he – he input this characteristic in this story for the turtle? Is to – so that kids can kind of relate more to the stories? I am just guessing so -
W	Yea most likely. Most likely.
Y	Yea ok.
W	I think uh – you tend to have anthromorphic kind of characters in children stories anyway. Most of the time uh – have ponies that speak English, fly around and yea do rainbow.
Y	Yea.
W	Um so a talking turtle is not gonna be out of place when a child reads in a book.
Y	Yea.
W	Um – I believe it of course goes back to how we have always wanted inanimate objects or even animals to talk to us for one weird reason or another. We find greater purpose in life (W and Y laugh).
Y	Yea kind of actually. When I was young yea.
W	Yea.
Y	Um right.

W	So yea.
Y	Yea ok.
W	But it serves as a narrative too I think, I think to have the turtle talk to – to the protagonists, it's always uh, it's always a good way to kind of wrap up the story I think?
Y	Mmm.
W	To kinda give purpose, meaning in life.
Y	Yea.
W	Yea I mean rather than to have like a rock that shaped like a turtle talk to them I think (W and Y laugh). A real giant turtle talk to them sounds better in a story.
Y	Right it makes more sense in that way.
W	Yes.
Y	Yea. Right so uh – would you – um all this – stories of Kusu Island is always like part of um a book with many other stories on Singapore. so I am just wondering like – do you think it's like, will you consider doing a illustration book just solely for Kusu Island? Like a book by itself or you think the publisher wouldn't allow it? I am just wondering like yea because these short stories are always together.
W	Uh – I mean from a commercial point of view.
Y	Yea.
W	It is – I don't think any publisher or any person is going to bankroll such a project.
Y	Ok.
W	Yea because seriously like the, the content wise, it takes a whole new level of re-imagining and retelling to make that into uh – uh I don't know like two hundred page thingy so -
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh – I am not saying that it's not possible, I am saying that maybe one day someone will throw in maybe a car chase or two and make that a different take. That may be more interesting. So um – it may always happen.
Y	Mmm, hmm mmm. So for you -
W	Yea.
Y	You wouldn't think about it luh, I mean as a picture book or illustration book. I mean maybe more for picture book if you want short publications right. Like thirty page.
W	Yea.
Y	Yea.
W	I think, I think it depends on how you scope the project, I mean a story on it's own can be a book uh – like you look at a lot of children books especially pre-school books they are very simple stories and there are also very successful books that are built around simple stories.
Y	Mmm.
W	So like I said, it depends on how you scope the project.
Y	Right.
W	Um and that if there is – a market for it, say there is a market for – a mythical kind giant turtle saving the world, well yea why not? I mean like – the world creation myth of like world on a tortoise shell is like one of the most endearing stories of all time.

Y	Yea.
W	I mean it has been retold countless of times! I mean that itself is a very short story.
Y	That is, that is true. Yea. So do you think that um- actually that books published out there, they are mainly um like for commer – they do definitely taken into account the commercial reasons right? Like actually there might be some stories out there that they wouldn't publish and yet it's not known to us. Right, is it? I mean -
W	Uh -
Y	Coz you have deal with the publishing before -
W	Of course.
Y	Mmm.
W	Uh – yea, I think uh – they are commercial entities and commercial entities mean that they have to make sure that it's uh – profit at the end of the day.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	In their books. So um – I think if you are trying to look at the – uh – look at the situation of uh – publishing in Singapore, I mean the climate uh I guess uh – you will probably have to speak to someone else on that.
Y	Yea yea.
W	I am no expert.
Y	Yea it was just a passing question.
W	But yea, but I think uh – they - getting a book out in public is a long process uh. You have to satisfy quite a few criteria and I am sure publishers hold back manuscripts, they reject manuscripts and they stagger projects just to make sure that uh – certain things hit the markets first for – for very obvious reasons luh.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Yea and how that - how that uh impacts on reading and hence later on storytelling uh is – is I don't know. Is quite an open ended kind of question. Um but if you are just looking at uh folklores and how there are being retold, I think we have quite a substantial amount of those, many iterations out there in libraries, on bookshelves.
Y	Mmm.
W	And even now with the digital publishing e-books.
Y	Yea.
W	That, that has made. That has made all these tales and folklores more accessible to parents who want to retell it to their kids.
Y	Mmm mmm mmm. Right speaking of e-books, do you think um –
W	Oh wow.
Y	It will replace. I know it's a very tough question because we have been debating on that but I am just wondering. Like how you feel about it. Since we are on this.
W	About?
Y	Yea this.
W	You mean uh – replacing -
Y	Hardback copies.
W	Print?
Y	Yea yea print.
W	Um – I guess at the end of the day you – have to – attribute um – value to

	things right? Um – if you – if we continue to attribute uh certain financial value to books or maybe something even less tangible like um – like uh I don't know, like could be sentimental value to – to books then there is a – there is a place uh – in our human history. For things like that.
Y	Mmm.
W	And it's always been a place for – for things like that, once you are able to have both attributes uh recognized and then uh – picked up by larger population.
Y	Mmm.
W	Um – I think the – the current state of affairs in terms of news is a lot more different compared to say uh – like non-fiction or even fiction books.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Yea I think because of the nature of the news cycle which is so rapid, a lot of times, these uh newspaper – the newspapers uh – they – companies they – the publishers they find it difficult to sustain.
Y	Mmm.
W	But for books I believe that there is an upward trend in and uh – in – in books sales.
Y	Mmm.
W	I was just reading it a couple of months back yea. And yea. Um – especially children books. So I am not surprised.
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	Mmm.
Y	Yea right. 21:01
W	So I hope that – that kind of like gives you some idea of where I stand.
Y	Yes definitely, (Y laughs) yea I know. Mmm hmm. Alright then uh for the last question yea. So have you worked on like on other island stories before or even like urban legends? Or any, any stories that has something to do with like island creation. Or you know of any -
W	No.
Y	Stories. No? Ok. Or have you heard of any island, other island stories? As well.
W	Uh our projects? Or -
Y	Yea yea yea, for your case, your own projects. Have you worked on -
W	Oh no no – this was the only island project that I have done.
Y	Oh ok.
W	Um – I have had um – when I was teaching, I had uh given assignment projects about uh – Singa – about narratives in Singapore and some students have come up with their own uh – projects. That pertain to the Singapore.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Yea so – that's that.
Y	Right. Mmm ok. Right uh, do you have anything else that you want to add? That I didn't ask? Or I mean missed out (Y laughs).
W	Tell me more about your project!
Y	Oh ok! Right so um – I was interested in – so actually how I started doing this, I am actually, I did my degree in Vis Comms so I am actually a painter myself and for my FYP I did um -
W	At NTU?
Y	Yea at NTU. Uh so for my FYP I actually did it, illustrated books for

	Nagaland uh I did on Nagaland folktales if you have heard of Nagaland. It's in Northeast India.
W	Mmm.
Y	So – so I was working on their stories and I was drawing it and then – then I thought that I should do something – something regarding Singapore because I know that we have a lot of traditional stories as well so that's how it got me to Kusu Island and then I have been there when I was young and I thought it was a really interesting place that a lot of my friends have not heard of or been there before. So I wanted to do something to it uh for my MA and then at first I was thinking of like doing a book for it but then – I feel that the research part of this um – project will need a lot of time so I decided to just study on it. And see what have been done in the past years and – maybe after doing this in my own time I can create another one. On my own. Yea so – so for this uh -
W	Oh.
Y	MA my thesis, wanted to see how – how these stories have a life, like you have mentioned before and um how it has evolved. Like the texts and the images, how it has evolved over time to actually um – according to how the society works probably. And uh how it suit um – the people of today as it – as um the years passed. Like you can see the difference actually when you look at the 2016 publishing which is the latest on – on how the Turtle Island story actually included like modern day woes like having rent problem and stuff into the story. So I wanted to see how
W	Oh rent?
Y	Yea really, you should take a look at it, by Don Bosco.
W	Ok (W and Y laugh).
Y	So it was like how this girl and her dad, they are facing housing issues like they do not have enough money um to – to pay the house rent and then the dad will have to go out fishing or find his friend. Uh his friend is a Malay guy but -
W	Wait so they are settled in – on Kusu Island?
Y	Sor – sorry? They are?
W	So wait wait wait. They were settled on Kusu Island?
Y	Uh no it was -
W	They got shipwrecked -
Y	It was by accident so – it was shipwrecked as well but then it was a long narrative like the one done by Ron. It was in the contemporary context. More contemporary context.
W	Ok.
Y	So yea – I thought it was interesting to look into um things like that so – so I wanted to write – write something about it. And – and to see how -
W	Ok.
Y	Stories – traditional stories can actually um – evolve to suit the contemporary world. Something like that. Yea that was my -
W	Yes yes as long as it -
Y	Entire thesis.
W	It hmm – I think, I think it's a good project. I think uh – especially in a place like Singapore where a lot of things gets eroded very fast -
Y	Yes.
W	I mean change is the only constant back in a small island.

Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
W	I mean uh I remember looking back uh – on the map of Singapore, it has like changed so much in the past fifty – no, sixty over years.
Y	Yea.
W	Actually and then yea – it could just very well be a super island project (Y laughs). Uh very soon and uh every small little island gets kind of reclaimed, (Y laughs) you know. As long as there – there is a relevance for things like stories. Hopefully -
Y	Mmm.
W	Some form of a legacy still remains uh.
Y	Yea.
W	Well...
Y	Yea that's what I hope (Y laughs), I mean because Kusu Island, there are many stories that – um are like Kusu Island. Like you have the story, the fiction and then the real island is there in front of you. That's why I have the question asking you do you see any parallels with the current day Kusu Island and the tales of Kusu Island. So, I was thinking like maybe if stories can reflect the real – the real out there, maybe people will be more interested? Like I thought it's – it's really interesting how Singapore emphasized on like – how Singapore came about and like Badang, the tales of the swordfish but then like Kusu Island (W laughs) is like effectively left out (Y laughs), yea.
W	It is a small island.
Y	Yea yea.
W	Yea um -
Y	But it's like...
W	Well you need to pick and choose then.
Y	Yea.
W	What fits into your national narrative.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Um.
Y	But because yea...
W	As long as – sorry you were saying?
Y	Uh no, because I thought uh – Kusu Island is like a symbolism of friendship and racial harmony like for all the past versions that – they have been publishing so, so it's like there is a message in Kusu Island that um the government wants to – uh tell the people? But I just – yea it's not as emphasized luh. So – just wondering why the difference in treatment of stories (Y laughs), yea.
W	Well, maybe next NDP there will be a Kusu Island chapter (Y laughs).
Y	Hopefully.
W	Uh it's uh – I think it all takes certain players to -
Y	Yea.
W	Take note of certain things and then put it upfront into the – into the public consciousness.
Y	Yea.
W	Um I think that as writers – as um researchers -
Y	Mmm hmm.
W	We do – we do our bits.

Y	Yea.
W	We try to kind of like put things out there and you know, yea just who knows?
Y	Yea I know right, a little bit may just worth our effort and stuff. It's maybe than no one -
W	Yea.
Y	Right (W and Y laugh). I hope, I hope it will end up well.
W	Well I am sure you will do a good job and yea, I mean it's better than someone doing it than no one doing it right?
Y	Yea yea yea.
W	Then you go on to do a PhD in – in Kusu Island (W and Y laugh).
Y	I am not sure if that is possible (Y laughs), although I am considering a PhD.
W	You can do a PhD on anything, trust me.
Y	Yea yea yea. Where do you do yours? I am just curious (Y laughs).
W	I did mine at Monash.
Y	Ah.
W	I just finished and yup.
Y	How was it? Did, did – what uh if you don't mind, what did you work on?
W	Oh I was working on how preschoolers could better or rather should I say, migrant – migrant preschoolers could better learn their um – home language? With uh – mobile devices.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	So – but it – the whole hypothesis is that um – mobile devices suck and they require an – a mediatory kind of um activity like a craft?
Y	Mmm.
W	Maybe a tangible object, like craft.
Y	Right.
W	And very structured kind of uh -
Y	Mmm.
W	Presentation by adults to – to make things work. And yea see, I told you you could do a PhD on anything (Y laughs).
Y	No I thought that was interesting! It's important actually because – I mean there is globalization and everyone has to move around. And you probably – I mean you have to bring your kids, like you too. And then that would be very useful (Y laughs), I mean (W laughs) if you have your entire framework and your methodologies and then people can use them, right? That will be so useful.
W	Yea that's the whole idea. That's pretty much the whole idea in a PhD (W and Y laugh). It's not too – it's not too far of from a M – from a Masters by a research.
Y	Yea.
W	For yours it's a MA, does it include a studio component or it's just purely by a thesis?
Y	Uh actually it's by research, mine is two years. My MA. So it's longer than normal and um it's – they have two tracks for NTU um. The one track is MA by the research in coursework and then one is by thesis. So – so uh at first I wanted the coursework, I thought my coursework could be the – a illustration work on Kusu Island right? It makes sense and then -
W	Uh.

Y	And like the new version, so somewhat. But then I just figured that I wouldn't have enough time so I just decided that I will go with the thesis, which is like full 30,000 words on – on that. Yea so we can choose either track luh, for the MA.
W	Ok.
Y	Yea so -
W	That's a good thing.
Y	I am just hoping -
W	Who is running the programme now?
Y	Sorry the programme?
W	Sorry sorry.
Y	Sorry sorry. You were saying?
W	Yea. No no no, then you finish first.
Y	Uh no no no, I lost my train of thought. It's alright. It's not important (Y laughs).
W	Uh ok.
Y	Yea. You were saying the programme.
W	Oh I was just wondering who was uh – who is running the uh – the programme at NTU. You are with uh -
Y	Sujatha.
W	School of Art Design right?
Y	Yea yea I am with School of Art Design Media. And then the research chair is um Andrea Nanetti and then he is like our research chair. Uh yea and then my supervisor is Sujatha um – she is an art historian actually. So she is working on like shrines and sculptures and stuff so – and there are several profs around. I mean we can use any prof in school actually if they want to take up our project. Um any prof in ADM.
W	Yup.
Y	And then actually I have a co-supervisor in NIE and I don't know if you know her. She is called um Myra, Myra Bacsal. She – she is a psychologist.
W	Hmm no.
Y	So she does child psychology yea. But anyway she was in – uh if you have heard of the AFCC, the Asian Festival Children's Content that's held in Singapore every year, she is the organizer there (Y laughs).
W	Uh nope.
Y	Yea that's how I got her as my co-supervisor. Coz I thought yea.
W	Nice nice.
Y	So it's kind of like flexible? In NTU and can like uh get supervisors, co-supervisors from other faculties. And then yea. And then that, yea from ADM also. Main supervisor, but they – they – coz I am working on something that the prof is not studying on so – I mean they are flexible in that too, as well as they have the methodologies and the structures to teach us. Something like that. I guess. Because I -
W	Hmm yup.
Y	In Singapore they don't have like uh full um – children's literature prof you know. I just can't find anyone in that area.
W	Ok.
Y	So – I mean if there is it will be good.
W	Ah.

Y	Yea it's difficult, I couldn't find anyone but I guess it's – I can just make it do (W laughs), I am almost there. Yea just, just to write this paper.
W	Yea well. Just get the word count there and then make sure it makes sense (Y laughs) from top to finish yea. It is not so difficult. I am sure you are almost there and you can pretty much just get it printed soon enough so – don't worry about that ok?
Y	Yea yea sure. And thank, thank you so much for today! I took up so much of your time. So sorry about that.
W	Ah no problem, no problem about that.
Y	That was so helpful, talking to you. Um actually you are the first artist that I have talked to (Y laughs), yea. (W laughs) Because the funny thing is right, this book has been published so long ago, and then it's so hard to track them down. Uh – and then like there is a book from NHB, National Heritage Board that they published, it's called the Attack of the Swordfish and then inside there is Kusu Island. I don't know if you have seen that book. Uh It's published in 2005.
W	Uh I can't remember much.
Y	Hmm.
W	It's a very thin book I think.
Y	Yea yea yea yea yea, it's that one. And it's very colourful.
W	Squarish.
Y	Yea yea yea somewhat squarish, I mean a bit more rectangular. Slightly, slightly more but it's about that size.
W	Hmm.
Y	So – so the funny thing is that it's published in 2005 and then – I can't find – no one knows who are the authors and the illustrators. Although the name is there, but.
W	[Inaudible speech] 35:27
Y	Yea and then I ask NHB and they couldn't – they said oh um the people who helm the project has quit so we can't track them down.
W	Ah. Oh it's done by NHB?
Y	Ah it's published by them. But then the authors and illustrators I think it's outsourced.
W	Yea.
Y	Yea.
W	Probably Chinese.
Y	Yea yea yea. Oh you know?! Yea yea they are Chinese. So -
W	Yea yea.
Y	It's difficult.
W	It's that timeframe where you know – you need to see in a larger timescale, when certain projects are done. 2005 – what happened during that time you know (Y laughs) and what NHB was trying to push for.
Y	Mmm.
W	Things like that. I believe they have a series of stuff that was done during – around that time.
Y	Yea I think I have to read – look into that but I was hoping to find someone that I can talk to but I can't. Can't be helped either.
W	Ok.
Y	So -

W	Yea just go with whatever you have. I don't think your – your assessors are going to pin you down on things like that.
Y	I hope not.
W	I mean it just so happen that it just so happen that me details are all online (W and Y laugh).
Y	Yea.
W	And that Ron is unfortunately no longer around so yea.
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	I hope I – I was able to speak to my best ability about what he might have thought through.
Y	Yea definitely definitely.
W	Yea.
Y	You actually gave a very detailed account of what happened back then. It was quite amazing (Y laughs), your memory because – [inaudible speech].
W	Um – I mean you can try to speak to um – Eck Kheng from Landmark Books. He is the publisher. I mean he would definitely have a lot more stories to tell you.
Y	Oh really? Do you have his email or something?
W	Uh well you can find him on the internet I am sure. Goh Eck Kheng.
Y	Uh how do I spell his name?
W	E - He is the chairman of the Speak English Campaign.
Y	Oh is it? Ok Goh Eck Kheng.
W	Yea so I mean. He is – he is uh - he is someone in Singapore so (W laughs).
Y	Oh ok.
W	Definitely. Try to look him up and try to see whether you can uh – catch up with him. And he would probably have a lot more stories about Ron -
Y	Mmm mmm.
W	Uh to tell and hmm I believe uh – he – because uh his interest is also in uh – more – like Singapore related books and stories.
Y	Mmm hmmm.
W	Uh recently he has gone into like whole – whole line of like uh – Asian cookbooks. Peranakan heritage stuff.
Y	Oh.
W	Um yea – check up Landmark books.
Y	Ok.
W	And give him a tinkle. And then uh – I am sure he might be able to help you out in other ways because he is in this line, so maybe he has other contacts.
Y	Oh right. That's that's true. Ok I will look him up on Google and yea. Come beg him. Hopefully he replies.
W	Hmm yea but don't – don't dig yourself into a hole. Because like you know it's just 30,000 words so right...
Y	Yea that's true. Yea.
W	Ok just [inaudible speech] and then uh yea just it – get it out especially when you are that near the finishing line. Save the other stuff for PhD, like I said.
Y	How long did you take to finish it?
W	PhD? 3 months.
Y	Yea yea yea.
W	Uh just kidding just kidding just kidding.

Y	3 months -
W	Uh I did it part time so um – so it's over like the course of 6 years?
Y	Right it's about there I think if it's part time.
W	Yea – yea it's about there. I mean you need to dig around and then wait for the sun to set and things like that.
Y	Oh right. Did you enjoy it?
W	No (W laughs).
Y	No?
W	PhD enjoy? Uh – no way! Uh I – I enjoyed the research bit, the actual kind of writing bit is a pain um – mine is research and studio as well.
Y	Oh ok.
W	So I had to put up a show.
Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
W	And to do, do the prototype so – uh – it – it is uh – it was interesting towards the end but anything in the middle wasn't that great. Well -
Y	Mmm yea that's what I always heard – from my profs.
W	Yea.
Y	So yea.
W	It's still ok. It's ok. Uh – nothing about it but I think uh – there will be a lot more – areas to consider if you want to do a PhD but uh - seriously for now yea don't don't sweat. Don't sweat on small stuff and get it done and you know, see how it – see how – how that brings you.
Y	Sure sure. Definitely yea I just need to get this done. Mmm hmm.
W	Yea.
Y	Yea. Yea sure.
W	Ok um – any further questions just uh pop me a line and if I can come out with a decent answer I will let you know.
Y	Ok sure. Thank you so much! Thank you so much for the time really.
W	No prob no prob.
Y	Yea and uh -
W	Ok.
Y	Have fun in Australia. If you – if you do drop back by in Singapore, do do tell me. Can probably catch up.
W	Ok sure! Sure sure.
Y	Yea thank you so much!
W	Hmm will definitely serve that up. Thank you!
Y	Thank you.
W	Aye take care.
Y	Take care, bye!

P: Pugalenthii  
 Y: Peh Yang Yu

Y	Outside now.
P	Ok good.
Y	Uh so.. Uh I guess I will just start with the questions..
P	Sure, no problem. Ok.
Y	And then you bring in your stuff. Yea so uh for.. for your series of books, so why did you choose to narrate Kusu Island? In this direction, if there are..
P	Oh because I was compiling all the tales of Singapore.
Y	Yea.
P	And that point of time, uh I think you right, uh 1996 right? When I first started, this book was done. So uh, 1 of the stories was Kusu Island. So.. based on what we knew then. So that draft that you see now is always the same draft. Uh has been for the Kusu Island, about a guy being saved, brought back and they built a temple on it. And that was the story.
Y	So the first one was in 91 right, like 1991 right?
P	Yea.. no I think it was, yea 1991. My mistake. 1991.
Y	Ok. So uh where did you get the very first story from? Like did you hear it from someone? Or you read from some sort of sources?
P	Yea ok uh.. ok um most of the stories, when I first wrote. There was gist of it in um, 1936 textbook by Cambridge, which doesn't exist in the library now. Which I was quite surprised. That was one of the biggest reference I used for all these tales. And that.. when I.. when I started the work was in 87 I started it. When I started compiling these. And that was well. The Kusu Island was written about it. Then later, in Malaysian stories, you were talking about the Kusu Island but of course they made it different there. A friend I can't remember the Malay name for it. They have a different tales on it. Ah so if you are referrals checking, do check Malay tales, from Malaysia side. They also talk about uh islands and stories.
Y	You have..
P	So..
Y	Sorry.
P	Yea sorry. So my.. but of course lah, I felt really bad because I only wrote 2 pages on it. So we were rushing for the book and at that time that's all we had. So that's how the story was driven. Not based on what I know now. So we finish your question first, then we go.
Y	Oh. Oh ok.
P	Ok.
Y	So, so you were saying about textbook but you don't remember the title?
P	No, it was a, it was a primary school textbook.
Y	Ok.
P	Uh, that was, but if I remember the year was 1936.
Y	That was very little, have to check..
P	No better check. I remember to check it again. Because I want to redo the as a drama for Sang Nila Utama, I wanted to go back and uh check it again

	one more time but there was no sources in the library. I was surprised also. I was surprised also. I don't know whether it is in uh puzzle why is it not there luh huh.
Y	That's why.
P	That's why I was quite puzzled.
Y	Right. And you were saying about Malay tales. Uh I tried to get one of my Malay friends to look at newspapers..
P	Yea.
Y	And things like that but couldn't find anything that is similar to this.
P	Uh yea some of it they also translated my work into Malay. I know two publications in Malaysia, they actually tsk, took my book and came out Malay styled stories. Then I went to ask them, eh where you get the stories from? Your sources. Ok tsk (P laughs).
Y	Oh so they referenced your book.
P	Yea referenced my book and they went to get it that way.
Y	Oh interesting.
P	Yea.
Y	Will check that again.
P	Ok.
Y	Oh yea and uh how do you decide on the characterization and the setting?
P	Uh based on, because we know that the.. we knew there was a turtle that helped the fisherman.
Y	Mmm.
P	Across, to save the life. And suddenly that, the fisherman and this one built a small temple and became very powerful. And everybody go there were blessed. So all the pirates and the ones that escaped the pirates came there. So based on this, we thought ok, ok so I tell ok, let one fisherman be there, one fisherman be uh, being helped by the turtle and then ask, and then we.. we write the story based on that.
Y	Uh huh.
P	That's all. I came with the idea that point. Ok lets do it this way. And then we wanted to make sure that it was a Malay fisherman, I wanted to show off that. Because it was a Chinese temple, so I wanted to make sure it was uh.. it was tsk. Because at that point of time Singapore was not like Singapore. The whole of islands was Riau Islands was called Singapore.
Y	Mmm.
P	Uh so it wasn't like Singapore means this. Singapore means all the 54 islands plus this plus the Riau Islands, all were called Singapore. So I set uh Singapore lor. That.
Y	So um in the Cambridge text, it wasn't specified as Malay or Chinese. It's just fisherman?
P	Yea. Fisherman. So when you talk to older people and um I told a couple of old people and they also told me that uh this is the story sir. This is the story, encik. Ok I say ok fine. There are so many drafts like that. And there were no sources or dissertations about this. Nobody told a story about the.. uh so, so I had to come.. ok there is something there. Most of the myths and legends had always been the case. There is something there that doesn't make sense. You know the connection but it is not logically connected. So I had to make the um like the sisters islands I had to go and do uh. I have to plot a story for the.. see even the sisters island I had to do a plot of a story.

	To make it.. yea.
Y	Mmm to [inaudible speech] the stories does right?
P	Yea yea.
Y	So uh, are there any reasons why uh, that you have in mind that you make it a Chinese and a Malay?
P	Yea yea.
Y	Inside the.. other reasons like why?
P	Because the Chinese was already here, even before Raffles came.
Y	The Chinese?
P	The Chinese were already here even before Raffles came. They were, they were abound by [coughs] and the pirates were all different from the Malay race. They were either Bugis, or Minangkabu race, they were different races, not Malay Malay as in, there are so many different races. So I thought, [coughs] lets say a Malay and a Chinese, I mean they live on a island to build this temple. That's what my idea was.
Y	So you actually took a..
P	I liberty. Took a lot of liberty (P and Y laugh).
Y	Interesting. Does? I thought um, coz for the stu.. for the story of Kusu Island the one I realized from the rest of the book is um, they had.. there is this very significant idea behind that there is a Malay and a Chinese family living together on the island.
P	Yea. Correct yea.
Y	So it feels like kind of this nationalistic sentiments going on as well.
P	Yea but that was.. even then, even then so.. yea.
Y	Oh yea. So um the next question is, so you have several versions of this book.
P	Yea.
Y	So uh, and there is like a very slight change in narrative details in between.
P	Yes. Much.
Y	Are there any like reasons why you decided to add the word or [inaudible speech].
P	No for other stories I changed. But not for this. For grammatical reasons I changed. Uh so you got it written better now. Grammatical error, was written quite fast. Uh but um.. but now if you ask me to write it again, it would be different. It would be added on. It would be much in-depth because the research still goes on and so it's uh.
Y	Actually I am interested to hear what you were at?
P	Ok now, now what I heard from the, coz I did research work because I.. other than myths and legends I also wrote from 15 countries. Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, Japan, all that. What we published was only so far is Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. I didn't publish the other 14 yet. For 20 years it's still in my house and uh everything. I haven't publish the Korean one, the Japan one and the US one and all that. It's still like what.. this is like a personal interest? So some myth, mythology I feel is always the same. Like the 7 sisters and the guy who saved the girl who, marries, the six sister ghost stories. It's also a Burma tale, it's also a Scottish tale. Every I, that's I find it very interesting. So this turtle tale also comes in Indonesia, also comes in other tales, where they have this particular story. But lately when I found from the Chinese geomancers and all the stuff, I found out that not that part of sea is protected by a turtle. Like

	they say there is a 4 dragon that protects the Singapore right? Underneath? Like the turtle is on top, the golden carp is on this side. So there is a turtle, uh tortoise inside the geomancers. And I found it very fascinating. It was exactly where the Kusu Island is and all the stuff. I was like, so the, so the I found it very fascinating, that that particular..
Y	How do you find out, I mean what resources..
P	Check with the geomancers, they will tell you what's the..
Y	Geomancers?
P	The feng shui, feng shui guys. And they find they will have uh tortoise which protect Singapore, golden carp and the 4 dragons underneath the Singapore (Y laughs). So if I read right, if I do now the, I will rewrite the tales on, on this aspect also.
Y	Oh I didn't know there is a turtle looking after, I know there is that dragon.
P	Uh yea 4.
Y	There was emphasised on.
P	Uh and also there is the, the golden..
Y	Carp.
P	Uh carp? And a golden turtle.
Y	Golden turtle?
P	Yea I think so. Do check with the geomancers! I have my some notes somewhere but if you go and check back, that could be one of the, tsk what do you call, reasons for these stories to come out I think.
Y	Mmm.
P	I.. Now when I, when I, coz I haven't touched this for, oh my god. Wait uh, coz there is one story which I want to write but I never wrote it down, Sentosa. There was another story about Sentosa.
Y	Yea.
P	Which I got it from the.. when I went to Bintan.
Y	I thought that was a fake one?
P	Uh which one uh?
Y	The Sentosa. Oh no that was the Merlion.
P	Ah no, Merlion is fake.
Y	Uh yea.
P	Sentosa was a different tale. Which so far nobody has written it.
Y	Yea yea yea I haven't..
P	Yea because it wasn't called Sentosa, it was called Pulau Blakang Mati right?
Y	Yea.
P	So the idea was that the.. what the Bintan professors or the teachers told me was that the tale when the pirates, they have to kill this dragon. So they actually chase dragon, they chased the dragon, and caught it in between the Singapore and the island. And it was slaughtered there. And that is why the teeth of, of the dragon is..
Y	Is there.
P	Is there. Which the British blew up. Because it lay this way, down and that's why it was caught in the centre. This was told by the, when I went to Bintan. Because I always meet, when I go to Australia I was couple of years. I go and talk to Aborigines and stuff. Why? That was an interesting tale which I always wanted to write that as part of the.

Y	Stories?
P	Stories and another additional one more story.
Y	Yea I haven't heard of that.
P	Yea that's why the teeth was there.
Y	Mmm that make sense now.
P	Ah so why was there a teeth?
Y	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
P	So that's how.
Y	Oh so that area where the turtle lie, is near Kusu Island? That area?
P	I think so. Think so. You can check.
Y	That probably makes sense.
P	Yea.
Y	Yea.
P	Next Question?
Y	Right next. Uh so yea. And there is only one, I mean from here I only managed to find one.
P	One.
Y	Illustration in 2002?
P	Yea.
Y	But you mentioned that there is.
P	Yea just now when I showed you?
Y	Yea. Uh is there a reason why, the illustration only appeared in, after 1996? Coz they didn't include that in..
P	Oh what.. you have seen the first book right?
Y	91.
P	Uh you seen the colour illustrations all that?
Y	Uh, yes. Somewhat.
P	Uh so the budget was spent on the colour illustrations. The idea was to have the colour for all the illustrations but we didn't have the time or the funds to get it all done.
Y	Oh.
P	If not, like now if I redo the book again, I will do the illustrations for the sisters islands, for the.. I will do for everything.
Y	Right. I mean and then back then, the style and illustrations, is there a reason why you all decided on that? That style. Uh in the earliest, earliest book.
P	The earliest book we used the arts students. From NAFA. All art were done by NAFA students.
Y	Ah I see.
P	Yea.
Y	So uh, that's like a teamwork between.
P	Yea. Because I will tell them what I want, so the Mount Faber or the trail of this of this, the king going under, I will tell them what's the story like and then they will come back with a draft and if it's ok, that's it. And then after that is their imagination and all that they will go and get it done.
Y	So you just give them freedom to.
P	Yea to, to come out with their.. coz I will tell them what exactly like the, you look at the first book, you will have the guy going underneath the

	bubble and all the stuff.
Y	Mmm yea yea.
P	So after that how they want to show that, they can get it done.
Y	Ah interesting. So um when that, is this the same case for the 2002 and 2001..
P	Yea. Uh this one wasn't because we had no choice but we couldn't get the guy. The guy couldn't draw a guy on top of it. But in the other edition you would see a guy there.
Y	In the 2001 edition?
P	Uh this one you will see a guy that but it wasn't that well done but you can at least see uh two tortoises and a guy there.
Y	It's supposedly on the tortoise.
P	The tortoise and then it came to the shore. Came to the shore.
Y	Yea and I realized that it's all black and white.
P	Yea.
Y	For some reason.
P	Funds.
Y	It's still funding?
P	Funding, funding, funding.
Y	Right. So.. but then if you have funding and stuff, you will do a coloured version?
P	Yea coloured version and then uh.. because now what I know is that um, now, I would, I would have plot the.. see because I, I did another legend currently um, I found out that turtles uh Indians uh early Indians, used turtles uh.. way of moving the sea as, as their route plans for sea routes. The phoenicians use the stars but the Indians use turtles.
Y	Oh.
P	Turtles because turtles have ways to cross the sea. And they, they will use the same passageway. So Indian uh ship in the early Roman Empire before the Indians used the turtles way to travel across the whole globe. And I was like quite surprised.
Y	Seriously?
P	Seriously, I am not joking aside.
Y	So they really?
P	The plan, no they will follow. Ok this turtle, they pro.. that's why they were great merchants, Indians, they go to Rome, they, they did business, they came back. What they plot according to the turtle routes. That is why we noticed very well in the Nemo, we will have see the turtles always have a pathway of going.
Y	Huh?
P	Yea because that's based on turtles always have, the way they travelled across migration across the whole globe. So Indians used that as their..
Y	That's really smart! (P and Y laugh)
P	And you can't go wrong because if you want to go from this um, cold hot water, cold they just follow the turtle and plot the phase into the turtle paths.
Y	Oooh.
P	So that is why I think logically this turtle would have shown them a navigational route out, tsk whichever this turtle was. Coz that's what I, now

	if I write it, I will put that all in.
Y	Yea it make sense now.
P	Uh probably I will put all that inside.
Y	It's kind of like the turtle bring them to a safe place.
P	Yea, yea. I remember the turtle left or turtle stayed in the island, we don't know yet also.
Y	Yea. There is one that says that the turtle transformed into an island right?
P	Yea. But, but it doesn't make um, sense because then, then how did the guy was there in the island, for you to go to the island?
Y	True. Yea that.
P	Yea why would anybody travel, a fisherman travel so out into the sea? For fishing. Coz a fisherman won't go more than a few kilometres out of the sea what.
Y	True.
P	And there is no island then how do you..
Y	Put the person there.
P	Put the person there.
Y	Yea I mean that was what the caretaker told me as well. I asked him if he knows the current Chinese caretaker and then he was like, I don't know much but he believes that it's called the turtle island because it simply looks like a turtle.
P	Mmm. (Y laughs)
Y	I mean that was very unexpected because it was supposed to be like a holy land. Where miracle should be associated but..
P	He doesn't..
Y	Yea he doesn't believe.
P	How is the place now? I haven't been there for so long.
Y	Um I think it is still.. when was your last time?
P	Well I went twice. Uh first time I went was I didn't, I was in SAF when I went. [inaudible speech] but this doesn't, ok this doesn't come out in the thing. I was in charge of plotting the defence for the island. So I was in the team which went all the islands in Singapore and cover everything. That's why when the first time I stepped into an army boat, so this island is very fascinating you know? And that was in 70.. no that was about in 80.
Y	80 already?
P	Yea.
Y	So I think they did the renovations already.
P	Minimal, minimal renovation. Now it's better.
Y	So now they have like toilets and then they have dedicated space for during the pilgrimage period, they will, the hawkers will set up their food stalls there.
P	Ah. Now it's high tech uh.
Y	Yea and there will be souvenirs stalls. But the temple is still there. The shrine is, I think they still look the same.
P	Ok.
Y	Yea because the renovation was done when you were there already.
P	Yea.
Y	So basically it's still a very small island.

P	Yea that's right. Quite small.
Y	Yea.
P	Ok.
Y	There were.. there is a changing of dynamic though because supposedly the Malay caretaker would be staying at the shrine, but then when we talked to him, he kinds of live in Singapore now. So uh..
P	Oh.
Y	He will occasionally go back and look after it but it's not so as a case as the Chinese family living on the island.
P	Oh ok.
Y	Yea. They kind of like.
P	Went their way uh?
Y	Yea. So you can see the contemporary world workings at that. And he was telling us that his kids are in Singapore studying.
P	Oh ok.
Y	So it's hard to maintain that sort of lifestyle.
P	Oh yea interesting.
Y	Yea so I mean, because um the latest story of Kusu Island had this nationalistic story vibe but I kind of see the opposite is happening. I mean that's why people want to emphasize more on it right?
P	Yea.
Y	Before it disappears.
P	Yea but the, but the prayer will not disappear.
Y	The what?
P	The prayers will not, I think people will still go there right?
Y	Yea yea they still do.
P	Yea the only, only place that the prayers is completely stopped is uh Fort Canning.
Y	Completely stopped?
P	Yea. Because uh if you, if you check heritage board, the photographs which I saw last time, they are on, on the east side then suddenly, the whole hill, will be for all the Buddhists will come there. I have seen photographs of it. The whole hill! That, that was before the shrine was, very big shrine lah. They just come down on Vesak Day or, the whole hill you know for prayers.
Y	Oooh yea.
P	Which was yea, which was very fascinating for me because mmm tsk, I should have, should have bought the photograph, taken the photograph. But it was, it's still there. But now.. coz this one must go back.. heritage has a lot of stuff.
Y	You mean heritage board?
P	Yes. They have a lot of stuff.
Y	Oh.
P	But the prayers have stopped uh. For the Sang Nila Utama the prayers have stopped. Yea.
Y	Interesting, I haven't seen it.
P	Yea.
Y	I didn't know that.

P	I must go back and if I really want to go back Singapore I must really go back and research uh (P and Y laugh). Ok another next question?
Y	Yea uh so um, yea and 1 more regarding the book, uh is there a reason why you didn't choose 1, just 1 illustrator for the book? That you, instead you have different illustrators for the different stories.
P	Um probably became the theme, of the whole story.
Y	Mmm.
P	Yea that's probably what I wanted lah.
Y	The theme of the?
P	Yea like, like whenever when I go to Francis, then I will tell him all the stories. Because you got, you got to hang on to the illustrator a lot, so if it's Roy Hui [artist], when I first worked with first myths and legends, so I uh, I will tell him lor. Then he will ask all the questions. What about this? What about this uh? What about this? Then I will tell him ok, all the ornaments uh. I say choose this, then what about this? The shoe, ok this. So, you will be discussing a lot on..
Y	Mmm. Right. No but then the illustrations is done by a few artists right?
P	Yea the later books, this books. They only didn't do for this, they also did all for all four. There is this four and uh there is Malaysia part 1 part 2, Indonesia, uh no Philippines. So, that one I did was that I, I sort of like, because this are colour photographs which are made into smaller.
Y	Mmm mmm mmm hmm.
P	But the rest all were reused, different illustrators now.
Y	Yea because I see the style is all different. And I think and..
P	Yea.
Y	Know that it's done by different people.
P	Yea different people.
Y	So I was wondering why. Why is it not just 1 artist.
P	Yea initially yes but now because we did the whole myths and legends and everything.
Y	Oh so they cannot do everything?
P	Yea. So each one ok do this, coz some can draw animals very good, some can draw people very good, some can draw this very good, some, some..
Y	That makes sense.
P	Yea so tag on their expertise and you want to do a mammoth project, that means the whole 20 books. We have to do a lot of work for it.
Y	So uh they kind of have to do their own research as well right?
P	Yes yes. Yea.
Y	Ok so.. I supposed um..
P	So now the question was whether to draw a tortoise or a turtle. That was the biggest question. Because they said Kusu Island means the Tortoise Island yea then how can the tortoise be in the sea?
Y	So how do you deal with that?
P	Uh so if it is a turtle the question is how big the turtle? How ever big the turtle can grow? To become.. so it doesn't make sense to become an island because.. it cannot, it possibly cannot.
Y	Yea.
P	Unlike like a junk island or something, it's a different story. So logically it doesn't hit. So some stories you got to be very careful because nowadays

	kids when their time I wrote the books, the kids are.. it, it cannot, it can stretch imagination but you cannot stretch the logic.
Y	Yes I agree.
P	So have to be very careful in that uh. Some more some people came to argue, you should call it tortoise not turtle. I say but it doesn't make sense because turtle, tortoise would not go into the sea.
Y	That's why.
P	So I got a lot of flak when I wrote the first book (P laughs).
Y	So but in the end you decided to stick with the turtles right?
P	Mmm turtle.
Y	It has to..
P	Has to be turtles.
Y	I know some people use it interchangeably but they are actually different.
P	Yea it's like the, I used garfish instead of swordfish because it was garfish, cannot be swordfish. But later stages, like you know..
Y	Mmm. I see.
P	You cannot (P and Y laugh).
Y	Yea it's different thought sometimes.
P	Yea so you take the liberty and you..
Y	But for the very first book, you didn't have like audience to consult with?
P	Yea.
Y	So you just went with your instincts first?
P	Yea instincts.
Y	Yea.
P	Yea because, uh when we did the first book, there was no other book you know.
Y	Yea.
P	Yea there is no other set for me to say ok, this is what will do. So I say ok, lets, lets do it this way. Which is totally avant-garde from the time. In fact now when I did my Australian myths and legends, there is no Australian myths and legends so far written after 1950s. What is, is again a lot to write uh. Myths and legends in Australia.
Y	Why?
P	Uh because only Aborigines can write that. So I wrote a book already but I haven't publish it yet. I wrote a book while that was about 15 or 10, 10 years ago. And I am still keeping it. So I haven't publish it yet but I, that's why the last question was interesting for me, whether to go digital or not. Yea.
Y	Are you going to publish?
P	Yea I will, I will.
Y	So you have to get permission from..
P	No I don't, now I am a foreigner, I am from Australia.
Y	Oh you know they didn't have this law that you can't do it right?
P	Yea, only Australians cannot.
Y	It's a very strange law.
P	Yea yea. It's a very strange law, interesting uh.
Y	Yea but I can see why. I mean like they want their own traditional tribes to retain their.. because I was working uh for the Nagaland stories.

P	Uh ok.
Y	Back then for my FYP and then um, I was drawing for my, I was drawing their stories and because it wasn't done before.
P	Mmm.
Y	And, and then uh the funny thing is that when we were asking if they want to publish it, and this tribe because there are several tribes so one of the tribes that I worked with, they are, they are like so insistent that, no it can't be publish it. Woah I was like, it's only for us. It's been in this community, this is our story. So..
P	K.
Y	And but then the other tribes is like no, we want to let the whole world knows about this.
P	Yea.
Y	So.. we have provoking behind the scene.
P	Yea yea. Yea they don't uh, they don't uh. It's interesting because uh even Mongolia, there is no myths and legends of Mongolia, only only copy is with me. Coz I met this, this monk who actually wrote it out in English and, and we met in Frankfurt and he give me a copy and I said if you do read up because he saw all my collection, if one day, you are willing to write, you write it out ok? Then he give it to me. I still haven't wrote, rewrote the whole thing and but it's still a.. in my library.
Y	So precious.
P	Yea yea so it's like um, and it's a very different authentic tales. Different tales that you see read books which is touched by Persian and uh Arabic tales and um Persian tales have affected a lot of the stories.
Y	Yea. And actually Kusu Island, uh one of the version actually has a Arab character.
P	Yea because they try to, the Malaysians what they did was they took my stories, they tried to make it Islamic, which I went there to fight, and then I told the professor and then said look, don't do that. You know? Paramisulamary, Paramisu was never a Muslim you know? So, lest lest historically and then both wrong heh.
Y	Oh they kind of changed the character.
P	Yea they changed, they changed everything. You know all the Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat were Chinese. There were no Malays. So.. (P laughs)
Y	Ooh. And they didn't seek your permission? When they do that? Did they?
P	No no. Malaysia didn't (P laughs).
Y	Ah I see.
P	So they take the stories, they, they also tsk, so the, the onus of the whoever the storyteller of the time, like for me I was then.
Y	Mmm.
P	It, it's to be fair to, the original story.
Y	Yea.
P	So so I wanted to make sure that there was a, there was a mysticism there, don't take that mysticism out. There is something special about the island. Due to some tortoise. Or turtle. So don't take it out. Keep it there. Though you don't have any answers, to, to support it, but leave it there. Because in years to come, research will come, and they will figure out what, then one day they will dig the island and find uh, tsk they will find something underneath, you will never know.

Y	Yea.
P	One fine day they say lets dig this island ah then maybe they will find uh, skeleton or remains of something which unheard of. You will never know. That's why the Orang Laut was telling me that the turtle is buried there. But I wasn't sure, I wasn't sure. And I don't want to write it because hey (P chuckles).
Y	Yea. It's not..
P	Because in Indian beliefs is that if that saint is buried there, then the place becomes a shrine.
Y	Mmm mmm.
P	Some great man buried there, becomes a shrine. Or some special animal or creatures buried there. Other than that, there is no other reasons for an island to have something that is spiritual power or mystical power.
Y	To the Indians?
P	For Indians and Indian mythology, it's always the case.
Y	Ah.
P	So something has to be there but..
Y	What?
P	Uh so I uh.. in my, in my view when I wrote my notes I told myself ok, it has to be buried there but I know, stories that correlate and I didn't want to push the envelope too far.
Y	Yea I get what you mean. Right, so um there was this Orang Laut that you interviewed who is living in uh..
P	Oh no, when I travelled.
Y	When you travelled?
P	Yea.
Y	So they have heard of the story?
P	Yea they heard of the story, so you, you talk to fisherman, you talk to uh, so long.. it's the same way to do with the Aboriginals, they just talk and talk and talk, they will tell 10 things, 9 things you there is one thing do not know.
Y	Mmm.
P	So if you shut your mouth and listen, that one thing that you don't know he is going to tell you and that's how I learnt my..
Y	Stories?
P	Stuff. Yea that's why in my life, I learnt things.
Y	Right you talked to the right people.
P	Yea lucky because you talk and then they will tell you eh, talk to my.. since I know Malay, I can listen to them talk and..
Y	Ooh.
P	Uh so it's different, it's very uh.. of course the next question comes why the, why the turtle never came back to help anybody. And it's never cited up that..
Y	Yes.
P	Yea. Which that was one of my questions in my earlier notes. I lost a lot of my notes. There is another set part of it, but I lost a lot of my notes so it's all the questions I wrote in my second, coz when you asked me the questions I was.. another, another question I wrote was that why, what, what is so auspicious on the particular day they are doing it.

Y	Yea.
P	So that's another thing I wrote in my notes.
Y	Ooh.
P	Which I never found. So since we were pushing the book part early, this was just 2 pages. Uh so we just say look never mind, forget about the islands, we just.. rush and finish this first.
Y	Yea that, that is.. and actually before you published this in 1979 there is this book by um, Jenny Watson and..
P	Mmm hmm.
Y	On the Kusu, it's called the Kusu Legend. And then it was nothing to do with turtles.
P	Oh ok.
Y	I thought you read about it.
P	No no I didn't. I haven't.
Y	Uh it was about this Chinese and Arab uh man who, they are not fisherman, they are meditators. So they wanted to go to this island to meditate.
P	Ok interesting.
Y	And to get out of their house. So they actually went on that pilgrimage trip to this island which is Kusu Island now but back then they didn't know. So they were there. Once they reached uh the Chinese man uh fell sick. So he was very sick. And then this Arab uh man, he, he prayed, he prayed for his friend's recovery like for someone to come and save them and then miraculously a boat of like food and water appeared on the island.
P	Oh.
Y	And they are saved.
P	Ok.
Y	So they kind of believed that it's, that the island is uh miraculous. So, so they continued their praying on the island and then they went back to mainland and then from time to time, they go back to the island to pray. That was the story.
P	Ok. Island. Uh never mind never mind.
Y	That was published in 1979. That was the earliest book uh before yours.
P	Ok.
Y	So the next one would be 1991.
P	20 years later.
Y	So I thought it was very different. The story. There is nothing to do with tortoise at all.
P	Yea.
Y	It's just about and it kind of sound more like the current happening of Kusu Island. Which is about the pilgrimage.
P	Mmm.
Y	So I mean I cannot find the people who worked on the story.
P	But they, but they called it tortoise right?
Y	The Kusu Legend.
P	No but they called it the tortoise island right?
Y	Uh...
P	Or turtle island?
Y	If you translate Kusu to turtle then I say yes.

P	Yea.
Y	Yea so it's very strange.
P	And then there is no turtles there you know.
Y	In the story? Not at all.
P	No no no, the thing is tsk, even now.
Y	There is tortoise.
P	Yea but..
Y	There is a sanctuary.
P	Yea a sanctuary but it's not like the tortoise used to come and lay eggs and go off like that. You know it's like what, Kelanu or Kelantan.
Y	Yea it's not like that. Yea so I thought it was um I thought you might have heard.
P	Oh no I haven't I haven't I will be honest. I didn't. I didn't.
Y	So that's why that was the first time that Arab appeared.
P	Oh ok.
Y	Why the Arab appeared. Yea.
P	Why they go to the particular island?
Y	Mmm. Right. Sorry?
P	Why they want to choose that island so out of the [inaudible speech]
Y	Uh mean other than why I chose?
P	No no why that two people, see whenever people tell me legends..
Y	Yea.
P	Because a lot of people will tell me a lot of legends, then I will always, I will always ask ok, fine I agree with the story now, I just want to know one thing.
Y	Mmm hmm.
P	Why these two particular people went to this particular island when there is so many 54 islands. So there must be something there right?
Y	Yes. It didn't.. it was just a very short story.
P	Yea yea yea it's ok ok. Yea.
Y	And the illustrations is really, fine outline, something like that but it's thinner than this, uh two man pushing a, a mini boat.
P	Ok.
Y	Was that. So it was very strange to me. Yea. Yea so right, yea my next question. So when your books, when you published them, who are your audience?
P	It was students.
Y	Any?
P	Uh Primary 2 onwards.
Y	Primary 2.
P	Primary 2 onwards.
Y	So it can be anyone older as well?
P	Yea it can be, because this book became a bestseller. Back then it was the top bestseller in the yea 91 or something. If you look at the Times uh bestseller list, this book was number 3 or number.. yea.
Y	Oh that's amazing.
P	Yea it is. We were.. Brittle was a cardinal mistake we did. Because we

	printed ten thousand copies. Too enthusiastic. And during the book fair, the book didn't take off. At all. And we were like oh my god, we wasted our lives or something but then we had another book then, Black Powers which started selling. So we knew that this profit will cover this. But in the long run, this book has been steadily selling. And finished the ten thousand and then we filled in another five thousand seven thousand five thousand seven.. just kept on. I think we, I don't know easily fifty thousand copies have gone so far from this? And it's not in print at all, after the last print.
Y	Yes.
P	After this we haven't printed it at all.
Y	Yea. I couldn't find.
P	Yea at all. Unless I did it one more time again uh. (P laughs) one more time..
Y	So it was sold out? All the prints?
P	Yea gone uh.
Y	No wonder I couldn't find it. (Y laughs).
P	Yea it's totally uh, that's why might do it again one more time but it, I want to rewrite some of the stories and uh.
Y	Oh.
P	Coz recently I just did a play on Sang Nila Utama in Tamil. Uh so whole, whole play of the kings and Sang Nila, the whole play I did for Tamil language one we did, based on the book.
Y	This book?
P	Uh yea. Since somebody is going to read one of them after I died, so means I might as well do it. So I did a classical Tamil version of it.
Y	Ooh. How was the reception?
P	Oh full house full house. Thousand people saw it.
Y	Wow. Where was it at?
P	Uh last April, no, last April. This April I did something else. Last april.
Y	It was last year already?
P	Yea it's in a video somewhere I don't know. It's interesting.
Y	So that, hopefully when you come out you will publish a new version.
P	Yea I intend, I think I have two others, the signs are there already. There are a lot of signs that..
Y	Do you think there is a reason why this book is the one that is constantly sold out where every time you published it? Is there a reason behind? Because the stories are.. timeless or..
P	Yea I think so, I think so. See after you, this thing came out I went to read again. And my mum say why you reading your own book? (P and Y laugh) I say no, (P and Y laugh) I say no, I want to.. You wrote it what, you should know better than anything. I know but it.. it get caught with it.. you get caught with the thing you know. Of course every time I look, uh I should write it better, I should write it better you know. Yea. Some of the stories have become plays in uh schools and all the stuff. They asked me for permission I say go ahead and do it. Some have become texts somewhere like Radin Mas was a play Bukit Merah was a play, so they asked me don't need money just do it. Coz I, because I, I never felt this for my stories.
Y	Mmm.
P	It never.. it never occurred, it never, I just felt like I need to write Sentosa inside.

Y	Mmm.
P	Uh Sentosa inside. And uh there is another two more stories. Legends. Which is not at all.
Y	Mentioned as well.
P	Sentosa was never written on.
Y	Yet.
P	And another two more if I am not mistaken. Two more uh about the hills.
Y	Hill?
P	Hills. So my notes, my notes (Y laughs).
Y	Singapore hills and then Singapore stories.
P	So now the hills uh, stories and all that.
Y	Interesting. I will look forward.
P	Uh yea hills mean no no, there is a horse. A horse. Horse. The legend of a horses. Yea because it's, not many people know that the current turf club, is actually the same spot as a, as a horse temple which was in the 1920s.
Y	Seriously?
P	Yea not the, not the Bukit Timah one, when they shifted to Turf Club, there was actually a temple there last time in the 1920s where the houses will appear. So Indians there, workers all built a temple because the horses appeared out of nowhere. So they, they built temple just for horses. So there was a temple that's why I am trying to find the details. Then suddenly, when, when some time back when I recently went back, one of the trees fell, was telling me sir, you know the fellow said still got temple. I say what temple you talking about? The this.. yea yea yea I have heard of a story but you know the turf course is exactly the.. and now they built a big horses there just exactly where it was. What are the chances? I say that's interesting (P laughs).
Y	Oh! It's kind of like lost.
P	Yea! It's lost you know so I, so I wanted to get a 1920s map from the library and check where the turf then put on top and then maybe then the legend will be quite good. The legend of horses. So now when I tell you it's like oh really uh the horses there was an Indian temple there. Just right smack there in the, and they didn't touch it.
Y	The temple is still there?
P	No no no, the gone.. but that was exactly where it was.
Y	So, so but there will be, there must be somebody holding who knows..
P	Yea yea.
Y	The existence of that temple.
P	There are still people who do.. yea so that is one legend, Sentosa is the other legend. What are the chances of turf club going exactly there? You know.. (P laughs) yea. Out of Bukit Timah they came all the way to this particular place where it used to be a station outlet. I thought that was an interesting tale.
Y	Yea it is.
P	So far I haven't record it yet anyway.
Y	Haven't.
P	Haven't haven't. Never sell before.
Y	But when was the, sorry when was the very first time you heard about this story?

P	Uh.
Y	By who?
P	Uh k this was, I know about the horses temple. You know? So this particular guy who works for me was telling, his father was telling me this story,
Y	His father?
P	The father was, because they do prayers and all the stuff. Jungle prayers. So he was telling me this story then I was like ah interesting then when I went to the turf club, I went to [inaudible speech] oh interesting. Then I must get the map but I never got to go down to doing.
Y	Yea the very old maps.
P	Yea the stack is under the correct space or not.
Y	Right. They wouldn't recorded the temple right?
P	No they have they have. The old ones they have. They have. They have.
Y	That will be great.
P	Like like you can take the Woodbridge uh, also another ghost story I will check the map. Like people tell me ghost stories so I will, I will the block, Hougang. I will take the Woodbridge older map and then I see whether where the road ends or this is where the blocks are now. This is where the ghost stories happen. Ok fine makes sense. Uh then this is how I justify some of my ghost stories. When I go research and all that, people tell me. Whether it's bluff or not bluff you know.
Y	Yea yea.
P	Yea so these are things I do for a lot of legends (P and Y laugh).
Y	Yea that was one thing that I question as well when I read urban legends.
P	Yea.
Y	I mean I feel that there must be some sort of truth in it.
P	Yea yea yea I gave a speech on a rotary club and a France lady was telling me that um, 3 of us made a speech and the France lady was telling me because I liked your stories because uh they depict historical events in a lighter form of toast. So but people remember the places, that's why they create ghost stories.
Y	That's true.
P	Uh so every place you hear a ghost story, let it be Sentosa where the Japanese kill the guy, let it be everything. You will find that the ghost stories depict historical events or places in Singapore, across. Let it be Mohamed Sultan Road, let it be the Madam Wong place, let it be this. So all the ghost stories written have made so much money for me and I sit back and look at it, after the places of historical references. That's why we create ghost stories, or the ghost stories stays.
Y	Mmm that's true. Because it makes sense to people.
P	Yea. Because people, tsk need to tell the story without uh what you call, political times you cannot tell a lot of stories. So they tell ghost stories. And the place remembers, and that's how people keep on telling led stories. So legends also the same you know, certain spots certain places still has vibrations, still has some significance. But the tales do not change that much but tales are, you know has a life I feel lah.
Y	Mmm.
P	So the, the story that you tell if I do write it now I will go and check with it.
Y	Yea.

P	I will write the story as second part of this story. There is all these shrines and it makes sense for these guys to go there.
Y	Yea.
P	And do prayers.
Y	You know that will be very interesting coz..
P	Yea I will probably connect it.
Y	Yea.
P	Now you tell me I will go and check it and I will, it makes sense now with an X.
Y	Yes. It's funny on how I find that story first then I found your..
P	Yea. So it should be the other way round right? It makes sense.
Y	Mmm.
P	It, it, it makes sense this way now. So is this a juxtaposed in the..
Y	Uh.
P	Tsk.
Y	But uh you interviewed the people regarding the story of Kusu Island. The way they remembered it is always like, uh do you find any similarities?
P	People who go to Kusu Island, I swear that good things happen to them (Y laughs). They will tell me come, you must come and pray. It's ok you know (P laughs). So the, the, their, their belief is so strong, it's unshakeable, it's like.. it's like how you doc, what you do there? Offerings and all the stuff, ok fine. Then how do you, the, the belief is so strong.
Y	So um those people who go there and pray, they, they do know about this story?
P	Yea they always tell the tortoise and the.. the tortoise saved the guy you know. The tortoise will come during prayers. Uh they will tell you things like when you, on the day, of the rushboard [42:20] day, the full moon day, you can see tortoise, a huge tortoise will be there. People have seen but nowadays we can't see. Because the ships are travelling so they can't see the thing. They will tell you the thing but on earlier people have seen big tortoise there when it was on full moon and all the stuff. You can see you know. So, I am talking about this uh 1978 um, people are telling these stories.
Y	Yea because that is very important because now you chose pilgrims that are sticking with the stories.
P	Yea.
Y	We saw the story on the board. There is a board that says the legend.
P	Is it?
Y	So they saw that story.
P	Yea! Things. Yea some people told me that's my story there. I think they took from me and put it there.
Y	Yea yea yea, I think I saw it.
P	I am like ok ok, never mind. My, my guy was telling was going to take photographs when they saw. The sisters islands also it seems like they have uh, my story there. Linah and Minah. That's another story.
Y	Yea it's so different from back then when you asked, they really do..
P	Yea yea yea, coz their grandfather told them to do this and this you know.
Y	So it was passed down by their relatives?
P	Yea yea they can see a, the blessed will see a huge turtle. It's ok. You know

	so it's like..
Y	So interesting. I mean it's so sad that it's kind of dying out now.
P	Mmm.
Y	Yea and especially the youngsters all haven't heard of Kusu Island. Even best.
P	Yea.
Y	They can't heard of the island.
P	Yea yea.
Y	So it's very difficult for me to ask the pilgrims nowadays, yea it's kind of like a dead end.
P	Mmm.
Y	They don't know the stories.
P	Yea. This is what it was in 1990 when I published this book. So even my group of..
Y	Mmm.
P	They all say why you want to publish this? Tsk then I said it's all gone you know.
Y	Ah.
P	Here I am reading a book in 1936, 1930, 36, 39 book about this story. After that we do not know anything. And the you know and I felt quite sad about it. That's why I did the book in 1990. Because it's like tsk, end of the day all the, stories you have written all will go.
Y	Yes.
P	These stories will keep on going.
Y	Mmm.
P	Yea that's what I, because within the myths and legends there is Sang Nila Utama. When I did the play, in uh, I was surprised that a lot of the people watched was 50 percent of the Indians are new Singaporeans. Didn't know about Sang Nila Utama.
Y	So it's the first time that they..
P	First time they hearing it. Coz it's not in the textbook (Y laughs).
Y	How is that possible? It should be in Social Studies in my time.
P	Yea now it's just a..
Y	Gone.
P	So they do not know. So when the reference is made in the earlier part of the introduction that all the kings in the whole of India, all the places have gone. All the places they have named have changed. By the British or somebody. The only place named by a king that has never changed for Tamil in Singapore. The Singapore, it has never changed. Singapore never changed.
Y	Oh.
P	It's still Singapore. Singapura.
Y	That's really interesting. All the more it's important to..
P	Yea maybe should do a next book uh. Should do a next book.
Y	Yea.
P	Yes next question?
Y	Oh yea sorry um, how did the children reacted?
P	Oh very well, very well. It was a big success. All the primary schools were

	using this textbook and all the stuff.
Y	Using as textbook?
P	Last time, back then. That's why uh in um, if you noticed this section was done because the Malaysia, they used it as comprehension for English.
Y	Oh.
P	So the, the publisher in Malaysia, the distributor say Mr Puga, can you add the questions inside? So the teachers can use it as a English comprehension and I.. they can answer the questions. So that's why we have questions at the end of it.
Y	Right! That's the newer version.
P	Uh newer, uh oh my god. This is newer, I must do something.
Y	Because you don't have it in this right?
P	Yea no.
Y	Yea.
P	Yea.
Y	So that was why, I thought the questions were for you know nowadays the families newer books, they have things to get the kids to think about?
P	Yea. This is oh my god yea.
Y	Oh so it's for project.
P	Yea. Yea this is long time, 2002 uh.
Y	Yea the time stops there (Y laughs).
P	Yea yea. Time stops there uh.
Y	Yea.
P	My god it's.. 15 years. Oh.
Y	The very last book that I saw on the legends of Singapore is in 2006? By uh.. Don Bosco.
P	Don Bosco ok.
Y	He wrote it and the more recent one is by Leon Comberbee, its published in 2000, 2011 but he re-published it this year.
P	Uh.
Y	But it's the same stuff if I am not wrong.
P	Ok, I got that one.
Y	Yea so that was the more recent one.
P	Yea.
Y	Yea but then there are some stories that inside yours that are not in those. So that's why your book is still the one (P laughs) that I had to refer to.
P	Yea.
Y	When you are finding the other stories. So um..
P	Yea.
Y	Do you think the stories, this story of Kusu Island has evolved in the past decades?
P	Yea.
Y	I don't think you have seen..
P	Because I haven't seen the others. Other uh, but to me it has evolved because now I have more information about the tortoise, about the journeys of tortoise, about the route plans of things and all the stuff. Yea.
Y	So because you as author, you being pulling that and that..

P	Yea, yea it will be addition because now, now I got another tale of, of a travelling turtle. Which was in um, Macedonian or some other legends we have this. Travelling turtle which travels across the globe and all the stuff so, so I can actually connect (P and Y laugh). So connect.. so I was quite lucky because this was my 15, 20 year project, the myths and legends of the world. So I did Africa, I did all the countries I did. I mean.. This is tsk, this is just to make money lah, so I just view it as a passion all the way I did. But it's always in my house when I did, never published it. So this is something I did and I get tired of everything and then I just locked away from writing. So at that point of time I got so much, so much stuff in my, I say ok. One day I will do. Yea maybe 15 years already uh. Yea need to reform this (P and Y laugh). That's why my friend Kenny, [inaudible spec] come back to publish so.
Y	I am pretty sure he will be interested,
P	Yea I don't know.
Y	Yea so..
P	But need to upgrade the stories. Yea need to..
Y	Then um, yea I was, I was going to ask, have you worked on other island stories..
P	Yea.
Y	In Singapore? The legends. Just that. So the other island stories, sisters island.
P	Sister island.
Y	The junk island.
P	Junk island, sister island also interesting because I named the sisters.
Y	Oh yea! That was the..
P	So I came out with the idea. Linah and Minah. It doesn't sound Chinese, it doesn't sound Indian, it doesn't sound Malay. So I came out with the Linah name then after one and a half, one month or so, I said ok we will name it this.
Y	Is that why, why you want uh very neutral..
P	Yea. Yea.
Y	Because you don't want kind of..
P	Yea.
Y	Racial connotations?
P	Yea yes. I was very clear on that. The gaps lest the name of the sisters where every race can say this is makes sense. In 50 years from now, it will make sense.
Y	Yea actually it does.
P	Linah and Minah. Yea Chinese name uh, Malay Indian name what. So..
Y	How about..
P	Yea. And it had to rhyme because it's sisters.
Y	Oh. Right.
P	So this were the liberties I take as a writer and author and to say how the story can travel.
Y	Mmm mmm.
P	Will travel some time or not you know.
Y	Yea yea yea. I think after that they used the name.
P	Everywhere they now using Linah..

Y	Yea!
P	And Minah. Yea (P laughs).
Y	The, the later version.
P	Yea the later version is all Linah and Minah. Ok interesting I thought.
Y	So it started from you?
P	Yea started from me (P and Y laugh). Now you know.
Y	Yea now I know (P and Y laugh). And. And yea the Junk Island is another one that, that wasn't very popular as well.
P	Yea.
Y	Yea.
P	Now there is a new island, called Lazarus right?
Y	Is there a story on that?
P	I don't know, I don't know, they meant, it's a new island which I saw on the, my friends have been going there now. They are going to come in a boat and have a look at it. But it's very interesting right, they are all completely white and all the stuff but it's never been around. I say why they named it Christian name Lazarus (P and Y laugh). So they called it Lazarus, I say how do you name. they don't know but it's a very popular destination where all the rich men yacht and everything there now. You go off Singapore you can park your boat or yacht there then you go picnic there because water supplies is everywhere, then they come back after one two days.
Y	Oh.
P	And the, and the photos were beautiful. White beach, white sand. In Singapore.
Y	Interesting. I saw that because when I go Kusu Island, there is a booth.
P	Yea.
Y	It's not very open. I think you need to book it. Or something. So you it's not like just open like Kusu Island.
P	Yea.
Y	St John Island.
P	Yea.
Y	So I didn't know what the use was it.
P	Yea. So it's like interesting.
Y	Yea that might be a story on it.
P	Yea yea doesn't make sense. Yea. These Portugues guys are doing research now um. By right some two thesis, not thesis uh two papers, article papers on why Singapore name is Singapore and all the stuff. So they did the English, I was, I was reading it recently. Just published in 1 year back I was reading all these. I got nothing else to do I did all these kind of stuff (P laughs). I was reading it and oh interesting, interesting how they, that's when I knew it's, the whole islands was, Riau islands also part of Singapore.
Y	Mmm. Mmm hmm.
P	Yea.
Y	Who wrote the papers?
P	Uh that was the Portuguese guys.
Y	Portuguese guys?
P	Uh if I find it in my notes I will, I will just photo for you.

Y	Oh yea yea sure.
P	And all the stuff.
Y	That will help so much.
P	Uh this guys were thinking how the name Singapore came about.
Y	Ooh.
P	So, so it doesn't go in by these legends something else is..
Y	From another perspective.
P	Another perspective. It was quite good. Look at the different view. Oh that's interesting.
Y	Yea.
P	Right so.
Y	So um, regarding the popularity of island creation myths, is there like a trend for it? Or actually there is no trend?
P	I think every twenty years, thirty years there is a cycle. People go back to the legends, people go back when uh, people go back to save stories I think. I have, I have noticed that in my.. publishing and reading. Coz I was watching how the books trend in American and all the stuff. There is uh, there is a season where we will all go back to legends so they will all go back to certain things. I find it very fascinating.
Y	Yea is there a reason why?
P	It skips one generation I think. Yea.
Y	And then they need to tell the new generation?
P	Yea.
Y	That goes.. right.
P	Uh so 91, then after ten, after the now I think it's about.. if you take 1990, talking about usually twenty years earlier.
Y	Yes.
P	Now it's already, now it's about..
Y	Time.
P	Time to..
Y	For a new cycle.
P	Yea yea new cycle. That's why those who come out in earlier time will not match it.
Y	Yea.
P	That's why when I left the ghost, ghost story writing and all the stuff, Alaric say why you leave? The peak it was selling like 40,000, 50,000 copies. I tell him no, I was bored to death and I said no. I want to leave. I will leave because um, I was writing about 5 to 8000 words a day and everything and all the stuff because what I take one month or 1 week or 2 weeks to write, they did it one day and come back, anymore or not?
Y	Yes.
P	And and my travel has to be on all the places to look for ghosts and stories and tales and people and meet and all the stuff. Across the whole of Malaysia I have to go and then come back writing it you know. It's uh, it's uh tedious uh work, workload. But after I left, the ghost stories just went down.
Y	Mmm.
P	They, they are not selling as much as what they used to sell last time. The, the cycle is down.

Y	And then what came?
P	It will come again, hasn't come in again. It's always a wave I feel. It's always..
Y	Do people get bored of things as well?
P	Yea one more [inaudible speech] 54:53. Yea what more new story, ghost story can you tell?
Y	Uh.
P	Uh you know what I mean? And what more legend because that batch, all have read. Your friends would never know. Unless you are interested in this topic.
Y	Yea.
P	Across the board, I am talking about the whole cohort of 40,000 kids.
Y	Right.
P	Probably 5% that is really very good. If not most of them will not know. Will not care will not know.
Y	Yea.
P	Then the trend goes again.
Y	Mmm. Right yes.
P	Yea. They wouldn't know.
Y	I think it kind of affects as well like friends, who is reading what and..
P	Yea.
Y	Share.
P	Yea but like when your paper comes, there will be somebody who is interested in illustrations and things all the stuff. But now I go ok, I want to do this book, I go and talk to LASALLE. And tell them ok, do this as a school project. Do illustrations for the whole book. As your school project, and then we will publish it. Then tsk, things will start again you see.
Y	Yea.
P	But that, that takes work, because like..
Y	It is! I actually wanted to do the illustration for my MA, because I can even choose a full thesis on..
P	Oh ok.
Y	But it's just too much work.
P	Yea.
Y	It needs a lot of research.
P	Uh.
Y	So I only have two years.
P	Yea yea.
Y	I wouldn't have try for that.
P	Recently I do a lot on Sang Nila Utama, I need to ask the girl to do for me a boat.
Y	Make a boat?
P	A boat of the Sang Nila Utama.
Y	Mmm mmm mmm.
P	The boat, the prop itself.
Y	Yea.
P	And I didn't want it to be a normal boat. Coz so and the, and the girl, she is really very good but she says mister because there is no reference! How to

	do a boat with Sang Nila Utama, without following, without having a Bugis style Pengulu Semangkebu style, no boat style. Cannot be Indian style everything, so how do you come and create it. So I actually gave..
Y	You drew it?
P	No I told roughly what I want on the boat and what is significance of the dolphin and things and all the stuff I wrote because based on the legends I have done in India, this is fellows would come under the sea whatever you see. And have a Malay touch to it.
Y	Ah.
P	And then it came at the boat but she do it beautifully!
Y	Oh.
P	And when the boat came then it was a four middle boat and then everybody was like wow, they accepted it as yea. That could be the work.
Y	Mmm do you have pictures of it?
P	Yea yea somewhere, it's on Facebook. Yea so, so it's altered, we have to add in the tsk, the dolphin this this same as the stories. To to, to help the legend move to the next generation.
Y	Mmm because..
P	Because uh sorry just give me a one minute.
Y	It's alright.
P	Sorry apologies, I am supposed to pass somebody something.
Y	Oh ok.
P	[phone dialing] eh so sorry I am at the library now inside. [phone conversation] ok. [phone conversation] Snake costumes.
Y	Snake costumes?
P	We did the play recently, so we, the guys, we borrowed the snake costume (P laughs). For the legend. So.
Y	So all the props are like uh specially made?
P	Yea yea but, but this within only the other group owns it. So they helped us to.. [plastic wrinkling] ah.
Y	That's the snake head right?
P	Ah snake head. It's for dancers to use it. So.. I will keep it, I will keep it. Because uh national library asked us to do the same thing one more time. Uh so we should be doing one more play, one more time we did just uh, the, the Sang Nila throwing in the crown. So and the crown also we designed our own crown and all the stuff. So we did that.
Y	Mmm.
P	Now my ease is to uh , now the Tamil drama group is doing all the plays in CCs, so I want to do a Chinese play on Sang Nila Utama.
Y	A Chinese play?
P	Yea I am trying to get um, work it out where, do a 1 hour play on Sang Nila Utama. We give all the costume, do a Chinese play and all that. So I at least, and CCs have the funds for it now. And at least, commence it uh there were a lot of new Singaporeans.
Y	Mmm.
P	So they will get to see like what the Indians, oh this is the story ok, now we know the lion you know. Oh this is.
Y	Yea.
P	That's that's the kind of uh thing we did, I am thinking of reviving you

	know.
Y	Yes.
P	So this activity group is about 5 years old now. I was one the people who helped started it and then uh.
Y	Mmm.
P	We did a lot of plays. So we are trying to.. change the perceptions of..
Y	Yea.
P	Takes time.
Y	It's Kusu Island going to be more..
P	Yea. You see uh, sometimes it's like this you know? We talked and then say we are inspired to write something.
Y	Yea.
P	And then and then it..
Y	Comes?
P	It happens. It happens. This way it happens.
Y	Yea. Uh recently I talked to one student from, she graduated from LASALLE and she did a play on Kusu Island for her..
P	Oh really?
Y	FYP. Yea.
P	Wow!
Y	She is called Marie Lee.
P	Oh ok.
Y	So um I think she is going to publish her script so..
P	Oh ok ok. I would like to..
Y	Like a trial run of like uh, she wouldn't call, she said she wouldn't call it like a play because it was a very simple storytelling session with some simple props. Yea and then she kind of uh, re, recreate the story of Kusu Island to the contemporary sense and she kind of add in some conservatory notes and she add in her own ideas.
P	Ah that's cool that's cool. I would love to see that.
Y	Yea.
P	Yea that's cool.
Y	It's really cool. So I was asking her if she is going to come up with a real play. And then she was like I need someone to approach me. Like a theatre company.
P	Yea yea.
Y	Or something. Yea that will be interesting. To see a Kusu Island play.
P	But why are you interested? Because it's an island story. You are interested.
Y	Yea it's an island story. I was actually between, choosing between uh tale of swordfish and Kusu Island. But tale of swordfish, someone wrote a paper on it. From the history perspective.
P	Uh is it?
Y	From NUS.
P	Uh must, must really read.
Y	Yea so he also has a different methodology and she didn't study on images because my, the ultimate uh main thing about my thesis is on the illustrations as well, not just the text. Yea I am from the Arts Design Media..

P	Oh ok.
Y	Yea so, and then I feel that in terms of illustratory oh. A lot of focus is being put on the story, the text, rather than the image as well. Because they both work together right?
P	Yea yea yea.
Y	So I wanted to bring that to prominence luh. So that's why uh.
P	Yea.
Y	It's very hard for me to find other papers that has this uh especially in Southeast, on Southeast Asian stories. I mean, if on fairytales, western stories, they have a lot of..
P	Yea.
Y	Studies on picture books.
P	Yea.
Y	But not on our stories.
P	Yea.
Y	Yea.
P	In fact Kusu Island, there is only 1 photo where the, my, the other 1 where the guy is on top of it. But the guy couldn't draw it well you know.
Y	There is there is?
P	The the, this one is the guy on top of..
Y	Yea.
P	Of the thing but that's what we wanted.
Y	Yes.
P	Have the turtle with the guy on top.
Y	In.
P	Balancing himself and then all and then the thing is..
Y	Yea.
P	With the sea waves and everything you know. My idea was to have the storm and everything and the..
Y	Yea.
P	Guys on top but the limitation of artists (P laughs).
Y	There was a book published by the National Heritage Board.
P	Ok.
Y	And uh I think 2005 and then it was done in a watercolour version.
P	Serious?
Y	And then I think..
P	Oh I would love to see that.
Y	I can send it to you actually.
P	Yea yea.
Y	Sorry let me try and see where I saved it. Should have brought my stuff. Oh there it is, there it is. I can just show you all the images actually.
P	Yea yea!
Y	This is the very first book that I was talking about. By uh Jenny Watson.
P	Oh ok.
Y	The 1979.
P	Ok.
Y	Book. So it's yea.. and then this is by Wilkie Tan, I just talked to him

	recently as well. Because Ron passed away already, so..
P	Oh.
Y	He was a very important person for me to talk to. And that was..
P	So so this, this guy also wrote about the 2 guys on the turtle right?
Y	Yea yea yea. But he is a longer version of the story.
P	Oh.
Y	It's like a husband and wife. Instead of their. But they are fisherman. But he brought his wife along. And then..
P	Oh.
Y	There is another Malay couple.
P	By Singapore Landmark Books uh.
Y	Yea.
P	Ok.
Y	That's the old version.
P	Ok.
Y	There wasn't any other new edition for this.
P	Yea this is mine.
Y	That is yours. Uh that's the new one. From..
P	Oh!
Y	It's not that new but it's by National Heritage Board.
P	Oh I have seen, I have seen this. I have seen this.
Y	Yea. They have the swordfish tale and I think Linah and Minah is in there.
P	Yea (P and Y laugh). Uh yea.
Y	They used as yea..
P	Yea these are husband and wife story. They wrote. So this are husband, they took Landmark story.
Y	Uh.
P	Yea.
Y	The, you mean the one by Ron?
P	This one.
Y	Uh this one I think the story is more similar to yours. Actually.
P	Oh ok.
Y	Yea.
P	Mmm.
Y	But I thought that this is the most colourful one that I have seen, in terms of illustrating .
P	Yea see this is where they made a mistake on the illustration. Because the colour of the turtle is different. The turtles are different colours.
Y	Yea different breeds.
P	Different breeds, different colour.
Y	Yea.
P	So must look for one where they have a giant take, giant turtles.
Y	You mean to build the giant size?
P	Uh giant size one. And then if I am going to do this book again.
Y	Yea.
P	I will ask the guys to do research on uh British fellows have done it. They

	have this huge uh and then try to copy as much as possible.
Y	Mmm.
P	And then things and all the stuff. And then into the thing.
Y	Right.
P	And then because the, the top part of the turtle.
Y	Mmm.
P	If I am, if I am giving some instructions now to the guy, scale to the part of that, that. That means go back uh discovery and uh, the British guys have done it uh. I saw it somewhere. It's in one of the books I have saw where the, they, they hauled the turtles and 3 story cages and things like that. Very old turtles. So you, you, I will ask our illustrator to go and take reference from that and put it.
Y	Right.
P	And so it looks.. uh not like a, this kind of turtle where we give authenticity to the..
Y	Yea would you matter, would you mind if the turtle must be from this region as well?
P	Um turtle, the turtles were never in around regions. Especially travelling turtles what.
Y	Ok ok right.
P	So the passage of the turtles you will see a lot of turtle from that side coming here. It's like the birds. Singapore has so many types of birds they don't even stay here. Russian birds, everything.
Y	Right.
P	So likewise, the turtles that come here, doesn't have to be our, our turtle from Kelantan or all these places what.
Y	Right.
P	Because it's a mythological turtle. Don't have to be a normal turtle. So if I. Yea I think. When I do this book I will probably ask the guy ok go and do this research. Try to come to this stuff.
Y	Mmm yea. Yea I mean but that's also 10 years ago already.
P	Yea yea yea. I know where the reference is coming from.
Y	But I thought it was, in terms of the colour it was..
P	Yea yea beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. And there is no reference as to why they actually built the temple uh. Or who built the temple.
Y	Uh they didn't eh I think.
P	Right didn't.
Y	But they wrote, they included a last page on what to know as well. Yea like things to note. Like what's happening at Kusu Island right now.
P	Oh.
Y	They added a page for every story, like same for sister island. But I think there isn't any more reprint. So I couldn't find this on, in the market as well.
P	Ah.
Y	And I couldn't find the author and the illustrator. No information at all and I approached the National Heritage Board, they don't have their contacts. They would have Rudy's contact.
P	Beryl Kwok uh?
Y	Beryl Kwok uh I managed to find her, it's the one, the one from um the

	National Heritage Board. Yea that one I couldn't find.
P	Alicia Tan.
Y	Yea Alicia.
P	Yea because they worked for the.. school division.
Y	Oh. You know them?
P	No no, because based on their publication.
Y	Mmm.
P	It's from uh.. now National Printers may have a copy of this. Check with National Printers. SNP. Uh Singapore National Printers. They bought over uh EPB and all the stuff right?
Y	Singapore National Printers?
P	Uh check with them. They, those printing stalls they might still have.
Y	Oh ok.
P	These artbooks all they still have. Because mine was, because I, I used to own this right? So..
Y	Yea so is this..
P	It's still there but I just put this as a down one.
Y	Oh.
P	I left, I left the business so I didn't want to..
Y	Right so I was searching up because I was trying to find your contact and I couldn't find.
P	Yea how did you find it uh?
Y	Yes. So it was Marie who told me your contact.
P	Marie.
Y	Marie the girl who worked on..
P	Ah ok.
Y	Kusu Island play. She told me that she contacted you before.
P	Oh ok.
Y	Yea so she Facebook messaged you.
P	Ah.
Y	So you replied her. She was like so she sent me your LinkedIn account and I actually tried to contact you using LinkedIn but you didn't reply.
P	[inaudible speech] Facebook (P laughs).
Y	And I tried to contact you using Twitter.
P	No.
Y	I tweet to you. You didn't receive my..
P	No I don't follow tweet I just, I just..
Y	You just post?
P	No I don't post it. Tsk it's connected to my Facebook, whatever Facebook I put, I go into the Tweet account.
Y	Oh right right right ok. So I tweeted to you then you didn't reply so and then I went back to Marie and she told me Facebook, you have a Facebook. So I, coz I couldn't find your name. Coz I typed in this name.
P	Yea.
Y	And I couldn't find you.
P	Eh there what.
Y	So but I had to type in full name. Then you came out.

P	Oh ah.
Y	Yea yea so that's how I found you.
P	Ok.
Y	Yea and because actually I tried to go through the National Books Council they couldn't find you as well.
P	Yea I stayed away from everybody.
Y	Coz I thought they would have known you.
P	Yea yea. Who you check with? Ramachandran? Is it? The tall guy?
Y	Uh no I checked with the Alicia, Alicia something. Yea coz my prof is my associate, my associate my other close supervisor she is um, Myra. Myra, she does, she is a psychologist so she, but she has these interests in children's books.
P	Oh ok.
Y	So you know that at AFCC the Asian Festival Children's Content.
P	Uh huh.
Y	Yea she is the organizer for that.
P	Sorry just one moment.
Y	Yea sure.
P	Hello? [phone conversation] so that she is AFC, yea they did the Asian book.
Y	Yea so she is the organizer for that. So I thought she will have contacts. But they couldn't find you.
P	Weird. I have totally uh..
Y	Disappeared from..
P	No because they they, yea you will get pulled in uh. That's what I am afraid of.
Y	Oh.
P	Coz, coz this is my passion, I did it for so many years. So tsk, it's like a love affair. You don't go back, you don't want to go in. Once you go in..
Y	Stuck there.
P	And then you say right now tell me a story. My brain is like ok I can do this. I can do this illustration. Oh can do this also oh you can take this one. So my brain will work on that then. Then I will come up with some idea right, can do this book now you know. Yea then I leave everything uh so you need I should, you should know luh, illustrator. Suddenly you find a painting style and then you say oh, I can do this. You are influenced by then. Yea.
Y	Yea.
P	Uh maybe next year luh, maybe I will come out with a book and see how.
Y	Sure.
P	Coz we were already planning to come out with this book.
Y	Oh.
P	Planning. And then I didn't want to, I want to rewrite but [flip pages] then rewrite means I must go back and do research already (P and Y laugh) one more time, need to revise which means I have to, really has to.
Y	Keep up with times?
P	Yea stories have to.. and I didn't want to rewrite it so much.
Y	Oh yes. The essence will be..

P	Because, no because the flow of the story, is somebody told me is very simplified, the way I tell my story.
Y	Mmm.
P	But it works with uh 8 to 10 year olds. The format doesn't, doesn't affect them so it's, so why want to, and I am very clear on this, I, I am not writing an academical piece.
Y	Yea.
P	So if I write an academical piece, I will, I will probably write 50 words in a sentence and it will be bored to death with the kids. And I have a lot of dialogues because kids, easier for them to..
Y	Mmm.
P	So I don't want to change the pattern.
Y	Yea.
P	But what I like to tell like the Kusu Island, the sister island, like the Hantu Island and I will really like to write a few things, um Radin Mas I will like to write a few things. Radin Mas is a few things.
Y	Yea.
P	And I wanted to write about the Minangkabu race which is very interesting.
Y	Mmm.
P	Coz the three things came out, the brothers separated. One started Minangkabu race but what was interesting was the, the person of the Minangkabu race was Yusof Ishak. Who was became the head of the Singapore. Which was actually the, the circle. Which I was like wow! I didn't use for Minangkabu race. Obviously I read something and I say oh my god, it connects back!
Y	Minangkabu race?
P	Yea yea because the, when the when the three sons came out, one went and started the Minangkabu race, one went to start another race, one came to uh, uh down and that son became Sang Nila Utama who came to Singapore and all the stuff. So this Minangkabu fellows, who also came to Singapore because their, their descendant is Yusof Ishak, who became the head of Singapore.
Y	This is fact.
P	Fact! In the, Yusof Ishak book! I was reading the Yusof Ishak book that day, this things are oh my god! It connects! It, how do you answer that, how do you answer that? (P and Y laugh) so now when I tell you it's like it connects back! It really connects back.
Y	Yes.
P	Yea.
Y	It does.
P	So it's from this island the guy went down, have 3 kids, he came up, he left the place. The 3 kids come out not the princes, they separated into these 3 regions and later the dynasties or whatever we see now, the Malay race. Minangkabu, 2 more races right? 1 of it came to Singapore rule. This Minangkabu guys descendants also came and then they also came to Yusof Ishak.
Y	The other 2, they..
P	Ah now we have to go and do research uh (P and Y laugh). That's why I would love to see Halimah earlier people. You will be surprised. All these works you see. It's like sometimes the myth is, it works you see. Some

	people say oh no, you connected. There will always be connections.
Y	Yes.
P	Like basically there was an Indian guy and I was talking to him, he was telling me his history then I told him you know your great grandfather was actually a prisoner here? He was like how, how do you know that?
Y	Yea how do you know that?
P	Yea because I said you are on, go and check out the convict list, from this story it's in Penang, there is a story of this guy being sent to Penang. But he was here for 4 months before he was sent there. And that is actually your ancestor and you are now working in Singapore.
Y	And he didn't know about that?
P	He didn't, he don't know. He don't know. He always thought his ancestor was in Penang. I said no no, he was actually in Singapore then I asked him and go and check this reference. Yea. So now they are working in Singapore. And probably going to become a Singapore citizen and all that. So it's..
Y	So interesting.
P	So, I find it very fascinating for me.
Y	Yes!
P	The story is like as you said, uh this legends.
Y	Yea.
P	Now you tell me but I will also go back there one more time again luh you know. And actually actually I wanted to find out who built the shrine, and also I wanted to find out about um uh who sponsored the money for the, the temple. Initial stages, who did.
Y	Yea. That yea.
P	Uh huh.
Y	There is this guy, Chinese businessman.
P	Mmm.
Y	Who donated.
P	Yea.
Y	A lot.
P	And then got to find out who the guy is and how his connections are.
Y	That's a long way to trace.
P	Yea like for an example like the earlier people who traded Riau island were, were Thaksins and Thaksins went to Thailand and Prime Minister and all the stuff. And they were the two banking holders. Hok, Hokkiens were banking holders and Thaksins were another bankers. And these two people were the ones fighting for Singapore in 19 uh 1819s. When the, when the British had to money or all the money transactions were done by these two banks what. Of of of China, of Chinese. People (P laughs).
Y	Oh (P laughs). That..
P	Interesting and this and this are documented histories in the heritage. Coz I also attend the Chinese uh when they give talks in Chinese about Chinese Singapore and all that. Yea. Hello? [phone conversation] yes next question?
Y	Yea right, um.
P	He can hang in here for a while right?
Y	Yea yea yea sure.
P	Might be fine. Might be fine.

Y	I think.
P	Yea do you see a hardback copy or a digital? Digital?
Y	Usually saying it replacing it completely.
P	Huh?
Y	Like it really the.. the digital copy will be replacing.
P	No. It will work [inaudible speech]
Y	But the fading of the book.
P	Yea yea I won't be able to read it. But for me I still have books. I still buy books. Every month, every week, I will buy one or two books. So pull me you know. Even alien turtle book I am going to buy.
Y	I think it dropped.
P	Uh sorry. Oops sorry.
Y	You have to..
P	Uh sorry my mistake.
Y	Wait uh.
P	Uh sorry. The electronic book I will also buy, reading it on the Kindle. But the next generation..
Y	Mmm.
P	But what will make a difference is as long as these books stay as uh children's book, below the age of uh 12 or 14.
Y	Yea.
P	And it's illustration book. Then they will last in book form. Not in print. Not in digital form.
Y	Is there a reason why?
P	Yea because children will love to see colour, love to see which cannot see on a computer.
Y	They can what.
P	No you can't. if you if you read the, if you notice, Oxford says that um you cannot have the words and the illustration on the same page right? Uh have a seat have seat, sorry. [conversation with phone contact who arrived] so these two cannot mix. A lot of illustrations make a mistake by putting the illustration and the print together.
Y	Yea.
P	Should never do that.
Y	Some of them do that.
P	It's it's a worst mistake that you can ever do. Oxford university will also never do that at all. That's why all my illustrations will never mix. Coz the children cannot see a difference between a black print and a drawing and a writing. Scientifically proven.
Y	Even when the illustration is coloured?
P	To.. even if it is coloured, the children cannot see the difference. So that's why the illustration must always be on a different page from the print page.
Y	But then the, the NHB that book just now you..
P	Yea they don't know, they don't know anything about publishing (P and Y laugh). Don't quote that! (P and Y laugh)
Y	Yea yea yea.
P	Yea that's a total of error.
Y	Oh ok.

P	The child cannot see a difference.
Y	You mean for younger kids?
P	Younger kids. They cannot see the difference. That's why all western books, British books, illustrations and words will never be on the same page. Will always be on separate pages. Go and check Eric the Caterpillar, everything will check. But Asian people publication they still do not know that.
Y	It's not their style, it's just they didn't know that.
P	They, they don't know that. I read it somewhere and I followed it for all the visual times books.
Y	Ah. I see. So um so if it's um in digital form, it's not possible.
P	Yea but for me book wise I still am a book, book guy. But I foresee all the books going to digital in a matter of time.
Y	Yea.
P	I know it hurts you but that's the..
Y	I was just wondering because for this question I wanted to see like what will happen in this myths and legends in what kind of form it will be published. In near future.
P	Because the publishing cost is so high, for colour formats and everything so digital form will be the best form to publish it.
Y	That's what I thought as well because they were saying that there were some constraints.
P	Yea but, but the problem with the digital form for thing is that um there is so much to read, so why would a child pick up uh..
Y	This story?
P	This, this stories. [conversation with phone contact]
Y	Unless it is done in a way that is mandatory but they will have to read.
P	Yes yes yes yeah authoritarian style (Y laughs) ok! Yes I have visited..
Y	Yea I wanted to know before uh when you did this, the very first book that you did, did you hear of other versions.
P	No because the, the first version was told to me bu my dad.
Y	Sorry?
P	The first version was told to me by my dad. Was a, was a seafarer you know. He used to work in the seas and all the stuff.
Y	Oh.
P	So I took it as well, yea that's the story. So that's it.
Y	That's it.
P	A eight year old boy. That's it and then whenever you meet people they always tell the same stories. So it never occurred, only later still when I say oh there is a temple there. Ok. Ah that's how it come you know.
Y	Right.
P	So, it didn't contradict the stories that my father was..
Y	Telling you.
P	Yea because, because they, he was uh, they travelled all the way up, rivers in India, Indonesia all the stuff. So they, they hear stories.
Y	So your dad is a storyteller?
P	Yea yea have to, he is a good storyteller.
Y	Oh. That's very interesting. And you are a storyteller (P laughs).
P	Yea. So it's its, you know when, when it doesn't contradict so I assume oh

	yea yea the tortoise was there and the next thing was this.
Y	Ah.
P	And there were no other references. Ideally Janice [1:22:18]. That contributed to that particular story. And those who went there were told the same story. So even when we went in the boat and about to land in Kusu Island to go to the thing. The other guys were telling, the Chinese fellows were telling, sir must take out the shoes you know. Coz we, we you know tsk must shrine must take out shoes you know. I say I wearing the boots and everything you know like. Yea yea we can go sir, must, this is must praise you know. This is.. pantang you know. This is.. tsk.
Y	But..
P	So ok ok so we..
Y	Ooh.
P	So, so this is 1980s we were talking about in 79, uh 80 and people are still at that time you know, ok ok.
Y	Ooh now they don't have that.
P	They don't have that because we can land on the thing and then must tsk, [inaudible speech] you know.
Y	Yea yea yea.
P	Then they pay respect ok I am coming here, I want to be safe. Then got to go down all this, so these are things that the boatman will tell you. Oh ok ok.
Y	Oh.
P	But now it's like I haven't been to Kusu Island yet. I..
Y	Now it's, everything is very simplified. Even for, because I was asking the caretaker if there is any sort of ritual that we have to follow like..
P	Uh.
Y	Yea it's on a holy island.
P	Yea yea.
Y	Then was like no, it's up to you. I think to make it easy for people to get people to come. They have to make it simple. I guess. When you have so much rules, people wouldn't. They kind of reach out to the new generation. I suppose.
P	Yea but now it's, they dwindled right? The mosque thing, got more people go right?
Y	Yea kind of I guess.
P	Yea yea there is some fantasy in the place.
Y	Yes. Uh yea and yea, do you believe?
P	Yes yes. There is some special powers there. I don't know what it is but I just..
Y	Feel that.
P	Yea there is a vibration there. There is a, there is holiness there and there is uh..
Y	And why do you think the tales of Kusu Island exist?
P	K lets assume one tsunami comes, wipes out the whole place. Ok? And I will still think there will be stories told. About the place. Because that, there was this place. In the memories of people and all that stuff.. That, that, that could be you know.
Y	Mmm mmm.

P	That's what I believe. I, I believe. Yea so that, that personally is what I believe.
Y	Mmm.
P	Because among all the islands submerged when the sea has rise up and all the stuff, so we do not know what's underneath. We do not know a lot of things. Like last time I saw the map in uh Britain, where in certain century, where we can actually walk across the Straits of Malacca. The water wasn't that deep and that's why the prahau [boat] was small.
Y	Oh.
P	Yea so the sea is very, because it's land all the way. So there was a time when Kusu Island all the way down you know.
Y	It's land.
P	It is land. And we do not know what was there, what was there and all the stuff. Coz the water deemed rise to this level right?
Y	Yea yea.
P	Yea so we do not know what are the stories there are. So there is some significance there I feel luh.
Y	Mmm.
P	Yea.
Y	Right.
P	Ok.
Y	And yea last question, do you see any parallels with the current day Kusu Island and the story?
P	Ah I didn't know the prayers have gone down, until you told me. I didn't know it has dwindled. I thought it was still strong and all the stuff.
Y	I guess everyone has different methods.
P	Yea so I didn't know until you..
Y	You should go visit.
P	Yea I will I will, now you are.. now you have told me, I will probably, probably go and visit it and other stuff.
Y	The ninth lunar month is coming. You know that?
P	Yea ninth.
Y	Yea so it's only in late October.
P	Yea after Diwali I think. Usually after Diwali period.
Y	Oh is it?
P	Yea because, because that particular period is Diwali celebrations. Not talking about Diwali.
Y	Yes.
P	Was a prayer month for, for Indians.
Y	Oh.
P	Because that's they felt that extra, extra world is opened up and all the ancestors will bypass you I think like that and come and bless you. That's why they light up the houses. And later stages when the Hinduism of a different nature came, they, they took this particular Tamil culture into the Diwali. So they still light up the houses all over the world. Because on this month you know, the Chinese now they say it's earlier but ours was that October the Aypasi month, where the ancestors will come and bless you as long as your house is lighted up.
Y	Ooh.

P	But you must understand those early days, they were living in jungle. Nothing can be seen, and I was always fascinated because they have put the lights in a single row. Everything has to be in a single line. It cannot be circle, that's why the word Diwali means row of lights in a straight line. So imagine in a jungle, you have houses, all the lines will be straight lines. So maybe, people could see on top, where the lines are or people from far can see, that's where the people are living. And I found it very fascinating. That particular story when I tell you.
Y	Yea. That's very interesting.
P	Yea.
Y	It's like showing the way.
P	Yea showing the way. From the top, you can imagine the jungle in the, in the eighth century or the seventh century, not much lights and everything. People light up their house in straight lines and you know no blocks like these, all are straight lines so you know this is where, this is where..
Y	He lives. Yea.
P	Quite fascinating story as well uh?
Y	It is.
P	I am sure. Last one and that's it.
Y	Yea yea. That was the last question.
P	Yea. How would you draw it? Now my, how would you have drawn it?
Y	Drawn you mean?
P	There is this tortoise uh.
Y	Uh I don't know, oh actually I can show you some of my illustrations.
P	Sure sure.
Y	I think there will be..so I actually did um 3 books for Nagaland.
P	Oh.
Y	2 for um the Ao tribe, and 1 for the Angami tribe. So I think the Angami tribe is the biggest over there. The Ao tribe is the second biggest. So the Ao tribe is the one who don't want to spread their stories.
P	Oh! Strange.
Y	And their stories are very.. actually I can stop it.
P	Ok.
Y	Yea sure.

S: Sharon Lei

Y: Peh Yang Yu

Y	Why did you choose to illustrate The Legend of Turtle Island?
S	A friend was the designer of the book and she invited me to illustrate for the series. As I am not local (I'm from Macau), local myths and stories have always fascinated me. I saw this as an opportunity to learn more about the country I reside in.
Y	Why did you use this particular style of illustration for The Legend of Turtle Island?
S	Don, the editor and I agreed to pursue this style after much discussion. We reckon this Japanese Chibi style would attract our target audience (primary school kids) as well as their parents. The narrative of the book goes from modern time to olden days. We reckon this style could bridge that jump of era. The brush stroke was used to add a little traditional touch to the colourful setting of the stories.
Y	Did you refer to any sources?
S	Yes. In the process of illustrating this book, I researched on the actual folk lore (as Don's version was a bit more realistic) as well as how they were portrayed in different art form. I also did research on the fashion choice for different races during the era mentioned in the book to get a modern depiction of a traditional tale right.
Y	Did you discuss with the author regarding the directions for the illustrations or that you both work separately?
S	We discussed and agreed on the illustration style before kicking start the entire book.
Y	You have done this illustrated book back then, what kind of changes will you make to it if you were to come up with another edition of the same story in the future?
S	Perhaps water colour could be explored to add to the dreamy vibe of different stories.
Y	Will you consider doing an illustrated book solely just for The Legend of Turtle Island?
S	Sure. I'm sure the landscape and stories about the island can inspire a lot of fun adventures!
Y	Have you worked on other island stories before, or even on urban legends?
S	Yes. It was another book from the same series called "Secrets of the Heartlands" by Don Bosco as well.
Y	Do you foresee the hardback copy of the book being replaced by digital ones in the future?
S	It is definitely possible to have a digital or even interactive version of the book. However, I think the printed copy of it can coexist.
Y	Have you visited Kusu Island before?
S	No.
Y	Do you believe in the tales of Kusu Island?
S	No.

Y	Why do you think the tales of Kusu Island exists?
S	An island in the shape of a turtle is interesting. Turtles have always been a symbol of longevity to the Chinese. I suppose the fascination sparked much imagination as to what happens on the island. And turtle being an animal with good meaning, it would only be fair to give it a good story to tell.
Y	Have you heard of other versions of Kusu Island? If yes, please share.
S	No.
Y	Do you think the story has evolved over the past decades? If yes, why?
S	Definitely. Perhaps the basis would stay, but with more discover and understanding of the island itself, I won't be surprise that new stories would follow.
Y	Do you see any parallels with current day Kusu Island with the tales of Kusu Island?
S	Never visited so I can't tell.

Transcript – Interview with Marie Lee, 12 September 2017

M: Marie Lee  
Y: Peh Yang Yu

Y	Yup ok.
M	Ok.
Y	Hi!
M	Hello! Hi Yang Yu!
Y	Hi Marie, thanks for..
M	Yea.
Y	Giving me your time.
M	Yea (M and Y laugh). Yea. Amazing how you managed to come so fast to here for interview (M laughs).
Y	I know right. Uh thankfully Alicia just introduced you to us.
M	Oh?
Y	Yea.
M	Actually I am wondering how they might end up there because I have never recall like passing them my contact or anything for, in that matter. That's strange hmm.
Y	Yea that's interesting. In fact I can ask Alicia one day.
M	Yea. Yea that's right. Because the only form of contact is that probably Alicia is a friend of my friend. You know, who is in the same class as me. So that's the only connection I can think of. But yea not for book council that is strange.
Y	Don't make sense?
M	Yea (M laughs) yea but anyway, yes luckily yea you also doing another project on Kusu Island which is I am very glad for.
Y	Mmm.
M	Yea (M laughs).
Y	Right so..
M	Yea?
Y	Was that like your FYP or? Was that like a project that the school, like your, your play? Was it like for a specific project?
M	Was for a specific project.
Y	Yea.
M	Actually that is my final year project. Yea.
Y	Mmm.
M	So I also focusing on Kusu Island. But it's more like writing the play. Yea. So I was just you know like, I did some research. Whether reimagining uh, the Kusu Island folktale would be a better choice. Rather than just writing it directly from the play itself. From the story itself. Mmm because, if I look at the storylines, actually they are very brief. Yea if you go to Kusu Island, you will see a signboard by Sentosa Leisure Group that has 5 variations of the story. But you noticed that they are very short, or like ok that is not very exciting. So I try to reimagine the play in a different context which what you see here in the play I send you.
Y	Mmm right. So speaking of the board, but is the board the only place you first know about the stories? Or did you hear from, like did you hear about

	the stories of Kusu Island before? Uh you started doing this? Like from your grandmother, from your friends or from your parents? Have you ever heard? Of the stuff?
M	Uh regarding that, actually I read about the story in the internet and when I was very young, probably from hearsay I hear about the story itself. But I cannot remember where I first remembered the story (M laughs).
Y	But do you remember the, the version that you hear when you were young? Like uh..
M	Yea! The version when I hear when I was very young maybe because I was reading a comic book or something, yea it, it was about a turtles saving two fishermen. That's all I remember. Yea and I was very young (M laughs).
Y	Right, I think that's the common version.
M	Yea! That's the starting point. So that's what got me to visit Kusu Island as well.
Y	Right so you visited once? That, Kusu Island?
M	Yea actually I visited there twice. I.. one is in February 2014. And then the other time is after I finish writing the play and stage the play. Yea but the, the play that I set up is not like a play really but rather than an actual play itself. The play is really more like my actors will read from their scripts rather than you know a full play being staged. So yup.
Y	Oh. But uh they are dressed up in costumes. And..
M	Um..
Y	They have props as well.
M	Yea there are props. Uh so that there is more action. But the, there is no costume so they are just wearing their plain black attire. Yea.
Y	Oh right.
M	Yea mmm. If you get what I mean, yea.
Y	Yea so that was [M clears throat] only once staging?
M	Yea there is only one staging (M laughs).
Y	Was it very crowded or anything?
M	It was recorded but that was a long time back. Uh in order to get the record, recording I have to get back to the school. LASALLE school where they yea..
Y	Oh ok.
M	So you can watch it all (M laughs).
Y	Right, it's not in their library or anything right?
M	Uh it was held in the LASALLE school. So it's like a black box. Black box and uh, the kind of audiences we have is quite mixed. Yea most of them have not watched like theatre, or rarely watched theatre performance, some of them are theatre practitioners with their children. So it's quite a mix. Mmm.
Y	Oh but uh when you first created the play right, who was your target audience?
M	Target audience is actually meant for children. 7 to 10.
Y	7 to 10.
M	Yea. But I find somehow quite difficult to uh, get children to watch a play because partly, it is because how to say? Yea I am just starting out as a playwright that is one thing. So they don't know about me. And uh second thing is that like targeting schools, uh you have to go through a lot of processes. If you want to stage a play. Yea.

Y	Mmm right. Yea now that you mention about that.
M	Mmm.
Y	Then uh..
M	Yea.
Y	For those children who are present right, how they reacted to your play? At that time?
M	Oh actually, uh that is a good question. Mmm.. they, how to say? Because I put in a lot of elements like audience participation and action scene, so they love it very much. Yea and they also came forward to tell me that they would love to visit Kusu Island in the future. Yea but because right, in the audience there are about, out of 20, there is only like less than 6? Children?
Y	Mmm.
M	So it is quite hard to see. Yea and the rest of them, you know they have either visited Kusu Island before. They are much older. Or they are theatre practitioners. So it's like quite mixed. Yea.
Y	Oh right I see. So uh..
M	Mmm.
Y	Coz you didn't specify that your audience must be children right? You kind of open it to them.
M	Yea that's right.
Y	Yea I see.
M	Mmm one of the feedback that I got from a theatre practitioner after the play reading is that you know the play, need not be targeted towards children but also towards families. He say it is more family oriented than children oriented. Yea.
Y	Oh right.
M	Yea.
Y	It's because the nature of the text itself? Did he state the reason? That..
M	Uh I think it's because like, he says he feels that uh.. like quite a number of older adults, they have recognized or visited Kusu Island before.
Y	Mmm.
M	So it's always refreshing for them to see in a new light, like because the play that I written is not catered towards a religious theme but much more towards a environmental conservation theme. Like for example, turtles may be protected and so forth. Yea so the older audience member may say like oh! Turtles, yea! I remember turtles in school so I learn over there. You know, so they started talking.
Y	Ah.
M	Uh..
Y	I see I see.
M	Mmm.
Y	That makes sense. Yea.
M	Yea.
Y	So, so um right, just now I, I didn't ask you yea. So why did you choose to narrate uh, your play in this direction? I know you mentioned about uh the environmental conservation thing. Do you mean uh if you say it again?
M	A little bit more detail?
Y	Yea yea yea yea. More detail.
M	Yea yea, can can, no problem. Uh for this Kusu Island, uh just now I

	mention that the, the variations of Kusu Island folktales, they are pretty brief. So I was thinking instead of just rewriting the tale, it is better for me to reimagine the folktale. So by reimagining, I can put in new characters. In a new story plot.
Y	Mmm.
M	But at the same time I still can attain this sort of relevance to Kusu Island. Yea it's just that it's more in a modern context. If you get what I mean. Yea.
Y	Mmm.
M	So let say in the original folktale, as you remember uh two fishermen being saved by a turtle. That transformed itself into an island. That is the original one.
Y	Yea.
M	So called the original one. Yea.
Y	Yea.
M	Then, then we have the reimagine uh folktale. Uh not really reimagine folktale but it's reimagined story of Kusu Island folktale. It is about a turtle visiting Kusu Island. Yea based on his grandfather.
Y	Yea.
M	And then I got captured by two fishermen who tried to attack the turtle. But it still managed to save the island with the two fishermen and the guardian. So you can see a lot more action going on in this sense.
Y	Mmm.
M	Yea by doing so, um.. it's much easier to.. be more imaginative in a sense?
Y	Mmm.
M	Yea and also I am able to tie in like uh much more.. like.. how to say? Relevance? Because at that time I visited Kusu Island, there is a lot of oil pollution. Going on. So I was able to write it in that, into the storyline as well. Yea.
Y	That was in 2014?
M	Yea 2014. So if you managed to read some of the articles in 2014, there are like uh, 3 ship collisions near Singapore straits there. Yea.
Y	Oh.
M	It's quite amazing so, when the, when the time, when I brought my brother and I to Kusu Island, the island, the.. how to say? Yea, it is not at the centre, but it's around the fringes area, it's like there is a lot of oil slicks in that area. Yea.
Y	You actually saw them?
M	Yea. It also came at a time where there is very low water level. It's like almost drought season.
Y	Ah.
M	Yea. So that's why you can see these 2 elements come in. That's why you can see them in my play.
Y	Mmm right now I see.
M	Yea. Now you see yea.
Y	Yea (M laughs).
M	Yea.
Y	Yea I do, it was the drought part that hmm, I didn't get because now it's very different. There is a lot of the water.

M	Yea there is a lot of water now right?
Y	Yea.
M	But previously 3 years ago, it's like very little water. Very and yea. It is not just the southern islands that are affected but it is also Sento, uh Singapore itself is affected as well.
Y	Mmm.
M	The reservoirs, water level is pretty low at that time, yea. Mmm.
Y	Ok.
M	Mmm.
Y	Then um, did other than where the stories are on the board on Kusu Island that you read, are there any, did you take uh sources from anywhere else? As reference for your play?
M	Mmm references for my play.
Y	Yea, or any other original sources that you find as research materials for your play.
M	So far like other than the board in Kusu Island, the board that shows the 5 variations, I recall that there is this book, but didn't use it much as a reference. Uh but it is still quite useful. I think it is by Pugalenthii, the Singapore folktales yea.
Y	Mmm.
M	If I am not wrong it's more like a comic book. Is it? Yea the story of that one. So I used it a little bit from there. And other references I draw from the, the internet sources. Usually it's from the internet most of the time. Mmm.
Y	Oh, so you just googled like Kusu Island and then..
M	Yea yea yea there is surprisingly a lot of references from that source. So I was like wa ok that is cool (M laughs).
Y	Right so speaking of Pugalenthii, you know him personally?
M	Actually no, I don't know him personally. I know his works yea.
Y	Oh.
M	Because I think he is uh, founder of his own publishing company if I am not wrong. I am not sure yea. But it seems like he has his own book. That is all I remember. Mmm.
Y	Yea he has actually. I was trying to contact him but uh the LinkedIn account doesn't allow you to write to them.
M	Oh.
Y	So.
M	Oh maybe you try Facebook? Yea because I remember I managed to send a message to Pugalenthii through Facebook.
Y	Oooh.
M	He managed to reply back. So you can try that.
Y	But I couldn't find him on Facebook eh. Maybe you don't mind sending me his name later.
M	Aye no problem I can send you the link later.
Y	Ok sure.
M	Yea yea.
Y	And uh so yea. How did you decide on the characterization and the setting found in the play? So like uh, why did you choose Chinese Garden as the residing place for the turtles? And then uh..

M	Mmm.
Y	How you decide on the characters' name. Like the race and..
M	Mmm.
Y	Why are they female instead? Because I know usually in the stories, the, the protagonist is like two male fishermen right?
M	Mmm yea.
Y	Yea so I am just wondering, yea your characterization and setting. Like how did you decide on that.
M	Oh that is a interesting question haha but interestingly they supported it. So the, to address the first one. Deciding on the characterization does, the setting especially.
Y	Mmm yea.
M	Because I want to draw a parallel between the modern-day Singapore and the Kusu Island.
Y	Right.
M	So Chinese Garden, yea naturally that is where the tortoises and the turtles are.
Y	Mmm.
M	So I used that as the starting point. Then after that it's like Kusu being the modern day Singaporean you know. Young Singaporean, hearing from grandparent, oh I want to go Kusu Island and then go get the herbs because it's like some miraculous island. So this is where I printed it, the storyline based on this point. Then for the fishermen, because uh, uh my actor's, or rather my actresses, both of them are female, and then you know, they find it a little bit difficult to play the role of male fishermen, so I was like ok, lets make it female! So we decided to make it female and it's quite, it's quite comical (M laughs) to create the fishermen as female. But I find it that it also doesn't make the story any less uh, in exciting or interesting you know. Yea. So whatever input that my actors give me for each of the rehearsal, I will also do my best to use them for my play as well hmm.
Y	Oh so uh like being female there wasn't, it was because of like logistical issues kind of..
M	Yea! You know yea. Because it's trying play so hard to be a male but yea it's still a female in the end. Yea so I was like yea! Might as well make it more natural by changing the gender. Anyway, it was much more about the action of the play so yea it doesn't deviate that much. Mmm.
Y	Ah right. I thought at first was some feministic ideas behind (M and Y laugh).
M	Yea.
Y	Because it's the first story that I see with female characters.
M	Yea.
Y	In this story. Yea.
M	Mmm.
Y	Which I thought was really interesting.
M	Really? Yea. So what did you think? I mean like when you see the fishermen as the female instead of male characters? Yea.
Y	Uh I was really surprised! I mean.. because first things first I mean we don't, the idea of female being fishermen is a bit hard to link it up. Because usually it's fisherman.
M	Yea that's right.

Y	Yea so uh..
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	That was my first thinking. I am like oh so why is it female? I mean there must be some special reasons behind you putting it as female. Maybe some characteristics of female that you need to be in the play?
M	Mmm.
Y	Something like that.
M	Mmm.
Y	That's what I thought.
M	Yea.
Y	When I read your, your introduction of characters.
M	Mmm hmm mmm hmm yea (M laughs).
Y	So..
M	That's true.
Y	Yea. Then um, yea and why did you make the, the guardian delusion? Versus the..
M	Huh the guardian? It's..
Y	Yea.
M	Its illusion?
Y	Delusion. You make him like um.
M	A little bit delusion oh.
Y	Yea a bit.
M	Uh.. probably it's because like how to say? Yea there is not a lot of significance but in the sense that, that's how I view the, some of the older people out there. Yea. Because you know like superstitious people they are always seen as delusion in one sense. Yea because it's something that not many people can accept, you know superstition. Yea so that's why I made that point over that side there (M laughs).
Y	Ah I see.
M	Yea but uh for that case, it's just also because it is old.
Y	Mmm (M laughs). Seems like the idea of old and delusion.
M	Yea.
Y	Uh did you manage to talk to the caretaker when you were at Kusu Island?
M	Yea I did. I did. I managed to have a short interview with him. So it was very exciting to learn from him, like what kind of visitors he received. Even Arabs uh visitors also arrive at the island. And then..
Y	There are Arab visitors?
M	Yea that's right and also he used to tell us that uh there used to be puppetry performance on the.. ninth month. If I am not wrong. Yea.
Y	Oh!
M	But not that much in Kusu Island anymore. Mmm hmm.
Y	Puppet?
M	Yea puppetry. So you can take a look at the archives, in the internet. They will tell you about Kusu Island. Uh when it's the most happening events in Kusu Island. And you probably can see pictures [coughs].
Y	Oooh. Ok coz uh I know there is this Nanyin music performance there every year. But I didn't know there is this puppet thing. Going back then.
M	Mmm mmm there is puppet. Mmm mmm yea.

Y	Oh.
M	Then uh sometimes I.. even near my house, my HDB when it comes to the ninth month, there is also some puppetry performance. Yea but it's like on and off thing.
Y	Mmm.
M	Once every 2, 3 years. Mmm hmm. Yea so..
Y	Right.
M	Yea.
Y	I will look out on that then. Internet.
M	Yea you can look up on that. It's very interesting (M laughs).
Y	Yea it is. Uh right and then uh right, so this play, it was like a team effort right? So um, so each of you has like a specific role to.. to, to do? Or that um you are the main person, who is planning everything?
M	Uh initially.. I was thinking that I will be the main person who plan everything.
Y	Mmm hmm.
M	But ever since I collaborate with my friends and had also receiving input from my mentor, he is much more familiar with children's theatre than me. So this is where I, you know there is a lot of good feedback coming in. And that is when I decided to ask more from them. Because I believe that their ideas may be much better than mine. So yea.
Y	Ah right. So, so you consider this like a collab, collaboration?
M	Yea it's more like collaboration effort. Even though the structure is still there, the main structure and the main point about the conservationists be there. But when it comes to anything else like uh how the characters will say, you know uh, what kind of place it will be better be staged. Yea it's.. I depending much more on my actors and my mentor.
Y	Oh right so um, like the names of the characters, did you decide them as well? Or like the..
M	Yea initially I decided the names of the characters. [My team members and I help to brainstorm the names together, not just the actresses alone]. Uh initially the name of the turtle is called Titus. Yea.
Y	Ok.
M	Titus.
Y	Titus.
M	Titus yea. Yea so but then my mentor was like, hmm when not you call it Kusu instead? You know? It will make more sense. Then I was like, yea maybe that makes more sense. So I changed it to Kusu instead (M laughs).
Y	Oh right.
M	Yea.
Y	Titus yea it's.. then the, the Yan and Shahidah..
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	Is there a reason why? Why you choose the name for the Chinese and a Malay?
M	Ah! Ok. Because the.. initially right, it was uh totally different names for the 2 fishermen. But now they are changed to fisherladies, so I asked my actresses, what kind of name do you want? So they say oh Yan and Shahidah would be better? Then I was like, ok I will put that.
Y	Oh ok so that was their idea?

M	Yea that was their idea. Yea.
Y	Oh ok yea. Interesting.
M	Mmm.
Y	And um so, yea do you think uh.. so after working on this do you think the stories of Kusu Island has like evolved over the past decades? Uh if yes like why? Like do you think they have changed according to times?
M	Uh so far.. it's very hard for me to say. Like the so-called original, they are still there.
Y	Mmm mmm.
M	Yea but I have not.. yet seen anyone creating like uh, reimaged story of the Kusu Island yet. So far. Yea.
Y	Right.
M	So with regards to that, I will say it has not evolved, over the decades yet.
Y	Mmm hmm.
M	I believe that those who want to.. know about Kusu Island, they are much familiar with the, the, the original..
Y	Mmm.
M	Uh stories. But I.. compared to other versions. Yea.
Y	Right.
M	Mmm.
Y	So uh.. so actually you only refer to 1, Pugalenthii's book luh?
M	Pugalenthii's and also the Sentosa Leisure Group, that signboard.
Y	Oh ok.
M	But if you go to Kusu Island. Have you been there yet?
Y	Yea I have been there, a few times already actually.
M	A few times already right?
Y	Yea.
M	Yea so you would have seen that signboard that says the 5 variations.
Y	Yea yea. So actually I am looking into those 5 variations.
M	Uh huh!
Y	Yea and recently there is a new one by Leon Comber, so it was like favourite stories from Singapore. The book.
M	Really?
Y	So they have.
M	Oh you have it? Mmm.
Y	Yea but then it uses like, it's still based on the original story.
M	Mmm.
Y	Although um, yea it's, it's largely the same. And then there is another book, uh by Don Bosco. That one I think he changed a little bit.
M	He changed a little bit uh?
Y	Yea like he started off saying about how um, this uh, this dad and, and his daughter, they are facing a rent issue..
M	Mmm.
Y	With the housing rent issue.
M	Yea.
Y	So they had no money.
M	Mmm hmm.

Y	Yea and then the story goes on. So he kind of changed a little bit at the start? Like, because back, uh the normal story states that the fishermen are pulling in the fish. So now it kind of like, situated in contemporary sense.
M	Ah! I see.
Y	I guess that's the change that I can see luh. For now luh. Yea like what you say, I think there is not much. That has evolved.
M	Yea. Oi!
Y	Yea.
M	Yea. I can actually recommend to you 3 playwrights. One of them is Chandran, I think he wrote a book. Or he wrote a play about the Bukit Merah tale. Then there is another one from, another playwright. His name is Brian Seward. He is from I Theatre. He also wrote a folktale about the, the, the swordfish tale. If you remember what I mean. Yea.
Y	Yea yea yea.
M	And the last one is.. Jean Tay. Jean Tay she wrote uh, a play that is related to sisters island. Yea.
Y	Oh.
M	Yea that's right. So these 3 playwrights, you can take a look. I would say you can take a look at Jean Tay's um, sisters island play. You can take a look at it. Yea.
Y	Ok. Jean Tay.
M	Yea.
Y	So uh.
M	J-E-A-N, T-A-Y. Yea.
Y	Sisters island. Yea ok, I will look into that.
M	Mmm.
Y	So.
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	Yea I was also trying to find um tsk, artists and writers who have worked on island stories in Singapore.
M	Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm yea.
Y	To see what they have done.
M	Yea that's right.
Y	Uh because not many of them actually work on like the less famous tales like Kusu Island.
M	Ah is it? (M and Y laugh)
Y	Like um, yea it's, it's not many, even Pulau Ubin um, Pulau Jong, all these, they are not that popular. Like compared to like the tale of the swordfish.
M	Mmm.
Y	The, yea that one that, how Singapore came about (M laughs). Those are what they emphasize on usually.
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	Yea so it's a bit difficult yea for me to find resources on that.
M	Ah.
Y	So I was glad like oh someone did something.
M	About Kusu Island so you will be like, I better grab the person now (M and Y laugh).
Y	Yes. That was my first reaction (M and Y laugh). But thankfully you did something like, like change from yea. So that was like, this is like my first

	example that really changes from the original, story.
M	Ah.
Y	Your example.
M	Ah.
Y	Because I needed one, like to say that yea we need like a change to you know, remain like, like uh, so that you know the new audience can actually relate to it? Kind of.
M	Mmm.
Y	Yea so. Yea I needed that (M and Y laugh).
M	Yea who knows you can create a collection of the new place [M exclaims].
Y	I know right (M and Y laugh). I got to look into theirs.
M	Yea that's right. Yea so Jean Tay will be the best one. Coz she.. I think in the play she has, two pairs of sisters no, one is the olden day, the other is the modern-day, so yea. Can look into that as well.
Y	Oh ok.
M	Sisters island. Mmm.
Y	Sure sure.
M	But I can't remember what's the title of the play. Yea so you have to..
Y	I will try to google I guess. Yea.
M	Ok you just type Jean Tay sisters island you know (M laughs) it will pop up terdeng (M and Y laugh). Yea.
Y	Uh right, so yea and do you, so you read all these stories of Kusu Island, so do you believe in them?
M	Do I believe in them?
Y	Yea.
M	It feels like uh, how to say? It's very hard for me to believe that a turtle can transform into an island to save the 2 fishermen (M and Y laugh). But it's much more believable if, uh if like, they say oh we created the stories you know, so as to help people remember the place. Yea because you take a look, Kusu Island is quite round so probably they say oh, it looks like a turtle. We just draw a reference to that. Yea and also like because it's a sacred island.
Y	Mmm.
M	Like yea, to, there is uh quite a few religious sects as I remember and as you also see, like Taoism and Sikhism in the island as well. So, there is still some elements of miracles and also of uh religion that people are familiar with. Mmm.
Y	Right.
M	Yea.
Y	So..
M	I mean what is your perspective? Like when this people, create stories. What you think? What kind of agenda do you think they have in mind? Yea.
Y	Um.. I think most of the time, the people who pass down the stories, they, for example if the caretakers pass down the stories, probably they want to emphasize on the miraculous aspect of the island.
M	Mmm hmm mmm hmm.
Y	Or uh, or maybe like just a very, innocent..
M	Mmm hmm.

Y	Kind of motif, like the grandfather just want to pass down a story to the grandson or the grandchildren.
M	Mmm.
Y	Or yea but.. I guess to..
M	Mmm.
Y	Yea yea I think that's the, yea. It still has to..
M	The thing go right?
Y	Yea that's the main thing. Yea.
M	I remember what you say, yea. Because you mention about this passing down, so you also reminded me of Jean Tay she did mention before about like folktales, it's like part of the legacy you see. So, so in a way she say, by writing these plays is like passing down the legacy. To the daughters. In a sense. Or that now the daughters are also part of this legacy as well. Yea.
Y	Yea yea yea.
M	Mmm.
Y	That's why they are called folktales right?
M	Yea that's right. That's why they are called folktales for a reason. Yea.
Y	Yea. So uh you do see the story of Kusu Island as a folktale? Or you see..
M	Yes as a folktale.
Y	Not, not a legend? Or uh..
M	Not a legend or so forth but it's a folktale yea. Because I have been wondering about this for a long time while I was writing my play. Is it a legend or is it a folktale? And then I was thinking and thinking and I was like ah it feels more like a folktale so I put it folktale. Yea.
Y	Yea it is a question that I have to deal with now as well. Because a lot of people actually um label it as a legend. Back then.
M	Mmm.
Y	Like the Legend of Kusu, even in uh Kusu Island.
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	Right. Some of the story they label it as that so.. but probably it could be a legend at first and then slowly evolve into a folktale.
M	Probably yea I guess. Yea.
Y	That's the most, that's the way I can explain best as I guess.
M	Yea (M and Y laugh). Yea.
Y	Yea. So..
M	That's true.
Y	Yea. Yea so uh, do you see any parallels with like current day Kusu Island? With the stories of Kusu Island like today? [M coughs]
M	Uh..
Y	Like what is happening in Kusu Island. Do you see any parallels with Singapore today?
M	Wa it's very hard to say (M and Y laugh).
Y	Yea I know.
M	Uh the only parallel I can draw is that uh, they are part of the legacy that's one. In our Singapore folktales legacy yea.
Y	Mmm.
M	And secondly it's uh, they are both seen as sacred. The folktales of Kusu Island you know. The stories depicted about it. It depicts the island as

	sacred. And even until now, modern-day Singaporeans, I am still pretty sure there are some uh older generations of Singaporeans still visiting the Kusu Island. Yea. Just not that many but they still see the island as sacred so that's the second point I remember.
Y	Right.
M	Mmm. Yea.
Y	Yea yea. That..
M	So 1 is legacy the other one is uh, the sacredness part of it. Yea. It's like a land of miracles (M laughs).
Y	Yea yea yea.
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	And I, and do you think um, it's important to pass this down? To the like, the idea, the whole idea about Kusu Island through the stories to the new generation, the younger ones.
M	I believe it is. Yea because, I mean like even when they are, they seem to be just folktales to us but that's how we remember the existence of this islands. Yea if we don't remember the existence of these islands through another perspective, I am not sure how (M laughs). Yea I don't think the younger generations will probably remember or bother to remember. Uh for Kusu Island hmm, yea there is some form of environmental theme in the third variation of Kusu Island. Yea I know it feels like, like you know a turtle saving two fishermen. So it seems like oh you know uh animals are something that we can all relate to yea. And..
Y	Yea.
M	Mmm hmm so that's why I weave in the theme of the environmental conservation. So far it's seem to be working.
Y	Mmm.
M	Young children actually love animals a lot. And actually shortly after I wrote this play and staged it and I graduated from LASALLE. I went to work in sea aquarium and until now I am still there. Yea.
Y	Ah I work at underwater world (M and Y laugh).
M	Awesome! (M and Y laugh) ah what you work ah?
Y	But it closed down.
M	Huh what?
Y	But it closed down already.
M	Oh it closed down already? Yea.
Y	Yea oh you still working there as their? Uh what..
M	Educator.
Y	Educator?
M	Yea so I take care of uh school tours, I take care of VIP tours. Overnight camps. Yea I have been working there for 3 years and it's still ongoing. Mmm hmm.
Y	Oh so it's like a part-time basis thing or full-time?
M	Ah it's full-time. Yea.
Y	Ah.
M	So everyday I meet children, Singapore children, international children and they all love turtles (M laughs). Really love. Yea.
Y	Uh when, when, so did you like tell them this story? Do you ever like during your 3 years? Did you happen to share the, this story of Kusu Island

	to them?
M	Oh I share with the families. Yea.
Y	Oh you did?
M	Yea I did. So I did share the, the families like, because the first habitat they see in sea aquarium is a ship wreck habitat and in the ship wreck habitat there are 2 sea turtles (M and Y laugh). So, so I told them do you remember? Do you know that we know we have sea turtles ah, at Kusu Island. Yea sometimes they get stranded in Kusu Island you know.
Y	Mmm hmm.
M	Because of the direction yea so they did lay eggs and the eggs, somehow did hatch yea so this is where I tell them, very interesting things and besides Sentosa is just above the Southern Islands.
Y	Mmm yea.
M	So this is where I told them, yea. So they were like oh, Kusu Island ah the story (M laughs) yea.
Y	So do they uh, from what you remember, do they know the story or until you tell them then they know about it? It was..
M	Yea I, they probably will say it's like uh hearsay, like very young, when they were young, they hear it from someone about the Kusu Island. They know it's a very brief story, so that's how they remember. Yea.
Y	Oh they do?
M	So I, mmm they do remember. So I see that as they probably remember the story because 1 is brief, and secondly it's like how they remember Kusu Island (M laughs). Round circle island? Turtles yea. Mmm.
Y	Oh as in like the third, the island itself look like a turtle, is it?
M	Yea yea yea, it does. Looks like a turtle. And remember fishermen being saved by a turtle. Yea hmm.
Y	Oh interesting. So uh will you say that like your job, eh you working as sea aquarium while doing this play? Or that was after this play already? Then you started working?
M	Actually after this play. Then I work in sea aquarium. Yea so I decide to try something see, yea whether you know using the folktales right, uh would they remember the Southern Islands better? Or even without the folktales they will still remember the islands? You know hmm. So it does make a difference.
Y	It does make a difference.
M	Yea. It does.
Y	Especially for children right?
M	Especially for children yea.
Y	Right.
M	Mmm.
Y	Ooh interesting I didn't, so uh, so the part where you bring in the environmental thing here, in this play was your interest and as well as the fact that you wanted to bring up the issue of the pollution. Is it?
M	Yea that's right. So when I first wrote the play I have 2 agendas in mind. The first agenda is you know to impart or encourage children to read up more about Southern Island folktales.
Y	Mmm.
M	Yea. Yea and also in Kusu Island. And then second agenda is to encourage younger generations to visit Kusu Island. So this is my 2 agendas here. Yea.

Y	Mmm hmm. Right.
M	Mmm.
Y	And that is one of my agenda as well. To encourage them to visit (M laughs).
M	Yea that's right! Yea.
Y	Because yea they are kind of the audiences, that it has been going down and every year right.
M	Mmm hmm.
Y	To Kusu Island.
M	Mmm.
Y	Which is kind of sad I mean.. the stories is here and the island is just there. But you are not visiting.
M	Yea they are not visiting you see. Yea.
Y	Yea so.
M	Coz partly it's quite far away and the ferry ticket price is not cheap I think.
Y	Yea. 18 dollars.
M	18 dollars. Is it 18 dollars now? Mmm ok so it hasn't risen yet (M and Y laugh).
Y	Oh so that time when you went it was 18 as well?
M	Huh?
Y	That time when you went is 18 dollars as well?
M	Uh yea.
Y	Oh.
M	That's right. And the, and that time, the, the MRT station wasn't there yet. It was like faraway. So my brother and I had to walk and walk and walk all the way to the ferry terminal.
Y	Oh my god.
M	Then we got lost along the way. So we got to ask a taxi to bring us there (M laughs). Uh..
Y	Yea now, now it's much more convenient because of the Marina South Pier.
M	Yea yea exactly. Yea so it's more convenient mmm.
Y	Yea but the ride is still very long. Especially during the non-pilgrimage period. It's like an hour and a half. Because you got to go to St John Island first, and then wait and then they go to Kusu Island. So it actually takes quite long.
M	Yea yea yea that's right. Mmm.
Y	Yea so.. ok uh, so I think I have asked all my questions. Is there anything that I didn't ask that you wanted to add in?
M	Add in uh?
Y	Yea anything.
M	Haha. Let's see. Aye I have no idea (M and Y laugh).
Y	Oh I asked everything (M and Y laugh). Alright regarding the props, oops I am sorry. Regarding the props.
M	Yea.
Y	Regarding the props. Ok yea. So regarding the props um, because I didn't see the actual play. I am just wondering, the props. What kind of props you guys used?

M	Oh.
Y	And..
M	Oh that's a good question. Wait a minute ah.
Y	Oh ok.
M	Hi. You know the sea spirit found in the characters in the play, the sea spirit that constantly whacks the turtle.
Y	Ah yes yes yes yes.
M	Yea we used this one, this is the Chinese fan. Yea.
Y	Chinese fan?
M	I was hoping to use something visual so that they can see it from here. You know this thing here?
Y	Oh.
M	This is what we used. Uh it's quite simple props. Yea uh.. and uh we also use flower wreaths but just like this. We don't have uh stage design coz it's just a play reading. Yea.
Y	Oh ok ok so it's very simple style?
M	Yea it's very simple style. But it will be cool if let's say if a theatre company wants to stage my play.
Y	Mmm.
M	And they want to ask me what kind of criteria would I need to set. I would say it's better to use puppets. Yea.
Y	Ah so ultimately that's the medium that you are imagining? It's puppets.
M	Yea. That's right. Puppets. I think that will be great if they use puppets. Because the protagonist of the play itself.
Y	Mmm.
M	Is a turtle. And how do children know it's a turtle? It's either we use puppets or we dress up the actor as a turtle. Yea.
Y	Yea that's what I was thinking. I mean the play was really interesting but I was trying to play it in my head so..
M	Mmm.
Y	So I was wondering what you would be doing. If it..
M	Yea that's why (M laughs).
Y	Ah ok so it was puppet. Puppetry right.
M	Puppetry yea.
Y	Other than logistical issue um is there any other reasons behind why you choose puppetry? For this?
M	Mmm so far.. probably it's because I think.. there is not much puppetry performance in Singapore. Yea.
Y	Mmm.
M	And also like you know when you see puppetry performance, near HDB flat in the ninth month. String puppetry. Yea then I was like wow you know, I rarely get to see this nowadays. So it will be great if someone uses such a medium to convey the story.
Y	Right.
M	There is this olden feel about puppetry as compared to..
Y	Mmm.
M	Using live actors on stage. But I am not sure. Because I am quite, I am still quite open to other theatre companies you know that say oh you want to use puppetry we want to use live actors then I was like, sure, no as long as, you

	know how to convey their identity to the audience. Yea.
Y	Ah right. So um in terms of this kind of stage performance right? You, you would have to, you as a writer, always have to work right closely with the company? Like they actually um, do they really have like a lot of influence over what can be shown and what's not. Or you yourself will have the ultimate decision? I am just wondering because um like for illustrators and writers for books, they will have to work with the publishers as well and sometimes they set limitatitons.
M	Mmm limitations.
Y	Yea so I wonder uh if you guys might have, will be facing some sort of limitations if you act out this play.
M	Oh uh limitation yea. Yea there are certain limitations. Yea because uh [background voice speaking] yea sorry that's my mum (M and Y laugh). It's ok. Uh regarding the limitations right uh.. hmm actually I am quite ok what the other companies are doing as long as the main message of the play is clear. Yea.
Y	Oh right.
M	As long as they don't change the characters you know from a guy to a female you know and so forth. If not they will need, I will have to do some re-writing over again. Yea.
Y	Oh ok ok.
M	Yea.
Y	Right.
M	Mmm and I, yea. As far as stage directions are concerned, if he wants to make uh, big stage, a big stage, or like a puppetry you know there is always a screen.
Y	Yea.
M	I am ok with that. Yea. So it depends on what they view the thing as. Mmm hmm.
Y	Right so main thing to use the message luh.
M	Yea use the message uh. Mmm yea (M laughs).
Y	Mmm right. So.. yea that was a wonderful play. I really hope to see it acting out one day. I mean, you will be uh, I heard that you will be combining this with other plays that you have right?
M	Yea! Because I was thinking of publishing it I think next year? Along with other plays. Currently I am writing a play about sharks.
Y	Oh ok! Interesting.
M	Yea sharks is the main topic in especially you see aquarium?
Y	Yes I agree.
M	Yea (M laughs) that's right. And we just finished our shark [week], so I was thinking how do I use this you know as part of my uh conservation series. Yea.
Y	Mmm mmm. So it will be part of the conservation series?
M	Yea that's right. Turtles, sharks and corals. 3 of them (M laughs).
Y	Oh interesting! So it could be a series of plays. Or?
M	Yea. It will be a series of plays. Because so far I have not yet to see any, like many playwrights writing about environmental conservation stuff. Yea.
Y	Mmm mmm mmm.
M	I remember the closest I get to see is like a folktale Bukit Merah you know. Uh they talked about swordfish being angry (M laughs) because they were

	being overfished. So that's why they are angry and start attacking the people (M laughs).
Y	Oh ok. I haven't heard of that version.
M	Yea.
Y	I just heard about the one that they randomly attack. For no reason.
M	Yea they randomly attack for no reason right? Yea in one of the plays that I read uh they seem to attack for a reason (M and Y laugh).
Y	But that's quite funny but, but it make sense.
M	Yea it does make sense. I was like wa this is a new perspective I have not seen but that makes sense. Yea (M and Y laugh).
Y	Yea do you remember who was the person who wrote it?
M	I think it's Brian Seward.
Y	Oh the guy who you mentioned just now.
M	Yea his is. Yea I have a lot of fun reading his play (M laughs).
Y	Do you know the people that you mentioned just now? Like Jean Tay and Brian. Do you know them?
M	Uh.
Y	Personally?
M	Think for Chandran, I know him a little bit.
Y	Oh.
M	But that is only through my lecturer. Yea.
Y	I see.
M	He also works in children's theatre. Uh but for Jean and Brian yea it's only through their plays that I read, that's all I remember mmm.
Y	I see. Uh yea and do you have any questions for me?
M	Nope. I don't have any questions for you. Just hope that my, my uh my humble opinions or information that I have can help you.
Y	Uh definitely I mean it's very very useful. Your inputs. So uh I will be, I will try to do up a transcript and then um to just make sure that whatever you said is right on paper.
M	Yea.
Y	And then I will be using them in my analysis.
M	Yea no problem!
Y	And then after I finish my thesis, I will and.. and it's approved and everything I will send you like if you are interested to read it.
M	Yea sure no problem. Yea!
Y	That will be on the illustory books on Kusu Island. Yea. It's just a study but because tsk my, my MA I wouldn't have time to create a illustory book although I wanted to. So..
M	Illustrated book? Oh that's cool!
Y	I was thinking of that but um like a illustrated book that is situated in the contemporary sense.
M	Oh!
Y	But it's maybe like a, a play no, a book version of your play but not exactly like that but the idea may be something like that. But I think..
M	Oh!
Y	It takes up too much time and I wouldn't have enough time for it.
M	Yea you will be writing your thesis and [M exclaims and laughs].

Y	Yea it's really a lot of research to do and I didn't expect that much things.
M	Mmm.
Y	Yea. So..
M	That's cool.
Y	It's only when I start then things started getting oh wow, I need to consider this, this. Ok.
M	Yea looking forward to it (M and Y laugh).
Y	I am looking forward to showing you as well. I hope it ends up well.
M	Mmm I am sure it will end up well. Yea even before this limitations that you face here (M laughs).
Y	Yea oh oh yea and uh do remember to send me Pugalenthii's um, the Facebook address if you have?
M	Oh the Facebook right? Yea sure sure no problem.
Y	And um there is a consent form that I need you to sign.
M	Mmm mmm.
Y	If you need me to send it. Do you have it? It's in the email. A consent form that you agree to me interviewing you actually.
M	Can no problem! I will sign that thing and then I will email it back to you there.
Y	Oh ok thank you so much! Thank you so much for today.
M	Yea welcome thank you Yang Yu!
Y	Yea thank you!
M	Yea update me on your progress yea.
Y	Sure!
M	Take care!
Y	Thank you bye!
M	Bye bye!
Y	Bye! [logging off sound]