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# *Misdirection, Moral Awakening, and the Reversal of the Supernatural: Plot-Twist Craft in Lalrammawia Ngente's "Ramhuai Liam Kawn*

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## Abstract

*This article offers an expanded academic reading of Lalrammawia Ngente's short story "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," focusing on how its plot twist is carefully prepared through suspense, cultural expectation, and controlled point of view. The narrative initially frames nocturnal disturbances near Pi Dawli's home as evidence of ramhuai (evil spirits) travelling along a feared spirit-path (kawn). Yet the story's concluding discovery—lost household objects and the husband's missing shoe in a hidden clearing—reverses the supernatural explanation and reveals a human, socially grounded cause: Pu Ngura's secret drinking and related activities. This twist is not merely a surprise ending; it restructures the reader's interpretation of earlier scenes, converting "haunting" into an allegory of addiction and moral decay. Drawing on narrative theory (reliability, focalization, and retrospective re-reading), folklore scholarship (belief narratives and spirit traditions), and studies of orality and religious transformation, this article argues that the twist functions as a double movement: it demystifies fear while intensifying the ethical message of repentance and renewal. Ultimately, the story uses a culturally resonant supernatural frame to dramatize a modern moral crisis and to stage a Christian redemption narrative that reclaims domestic space from secrecy, shame, and vice.*

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## Introduction

Plot twists are important in short stories because the form is brief and compact. A single twist can change the meaning of the whole story and make earlier details appear different. Usually, a twist first leads readers to believe one explanation and later replaces it with a clearer or more meaningful one (Baldick, 2015). A good twist feels surprising but also logical, because the clues were already in the story (Chatman, 1978). In "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," the writer creates strong fear of the supernatural but finally reveals a human cause with a deeper moral meaning.

The story focuses on Pi Dawli, a devoted Christian woman, and her husband Pu Ngura, who suffers from alcoholism. Their house is near a kawn, a place believed to be connected with spirits. One night Pi Dawli hears strange voices, footsteps, and sees lights in the garden below the house. She believes these are signs of ramhuai (evil spirits). Her fear leads her to pray and sing hymns. Pu Ngura's drunken behavior and violent reactions seem to confirm this belief. However, at the end Pi Dawli finds a hidden place with rice, chicken feathers, a pot, and her husband's lost shoe. The supposed spirit path is actually a secret drinking place, and the "spirits" are just ordinary men. The final line humorously suggests that the "ramhuai" who lost his shoe has now found salvation.

This article studies the plot twist as the main artistic and moral element of the story. The twist is created in three ways. First, the events are seen through Pi Dawli's limited point of view, which makes the supernatural explanation believable (Genette, 1980). Second, the story uses traditional beliefs about spirits and the feared kawn, making the fear culturally realistic (Thompson, 1977). Third, the idea of spirits is connected with the problem of addiction. When the truth is revealed, the story shows

that the real "evil" is hidden vice and its effect on family life. In this way, the story changes from a ghost tale into a moral story about repentance and Christian salvation (Ong, 2002; Zipes, 2006).

**Brief Summary of the Story**

Pi Dawli, a devout Christian woman, is frightened by strange night noises and flickering lights coming from the garden below her house, a place once believed to be a spirit pathway (kawn). She suspects ramhuai (evil spirits) are nearby, especially because no footprints or disturbed plants appear the next morning. Her husband Pu Ngura, a habitual drunkard, acts uneasy when she mentions the sounds and later suffers terrifying episodes, claiming spirits are attacking him. Moved by pity, Pi Dawli prays fervently for him, and Pu Ngura experiences a dramatic spiritual change, gives up drinking, and begins attending church. After the disturbances stop, Pi Dawli still wants answers and investigates the garden with her reformed husband. She discovers a hidden spot with a foul-smelling pot, scattered rice, chicken feathers, and other missing household items—finally including Pu Ngura's lost shoe. The "haunting" is revealed to have been secret human activity linked to drinking, and Pi Dawli ends by saying the "ramhuai" who stole their things has now found salvation.

**Plot Twist as Narrative Engine in Short Fiction**

A plot twist is a sudden change in the direction or meaning of a story. It surprises the reader by revealing something unexpected that reshapes how earlier events are understood. In short fiction, where the narrative must move quickly, the twist often becomes the main organizing force of the story. Rather than relying on many complex events, the story builds toward one moment of revelation that changes the reader's interpretation of everything that came before.

In "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," the plot twist drives the narrative forward. The story gradually builds a sense of mystery through repeated

disturbances at night. Pi Dawli hears strange sounds—footsteps, whispers, and movements around the house. Each time the characters investigate, they find little clear evidence. This pattern of fear followed by uncertainty slowly increases the tension. Conversations between Pi Dawli and her husband further deepen the suspense, as both struggle to understand what might be happening.

The twist does not appear suddenly without preparation. Instead, it develops from the gap between Pi Dawli's frightening experiences and the lack of solid proof. Because the disturbances occur near a place believed to be a ramhuai kawn (a spirit path), the events seem supernatural. When the missing shoe finally reveals the truth, the earlier scenes take on a new meaning.

Narrative theorist Seymour Chatman (1978) explains that stories create meaning by controlling what information is revealed and when it is revealed. Important details may appear earlier in the story, but their significance becomes clear only later. Once the hidden truth is exposed, readers are encouraged to rethink earlier events. In this story, the lights, footsteps, and whispers that once suggested spirits are later understood as the actions of people moving secretly in the dark.

Ngente uses a twist of explanation rather than identity. The story's question is not who the villain is, but what is truly causing the strange disturbances. This approach allows the narrative to treat Pi Dawli's fear with sympathy. Her belief in spirits is understandable because it is shaped by local traditions about spirit paths and night dangers. The ending therefore does not mock these beliefs. Instead, it reveals how such beliefs can shape people's understanding of events and lead them to reflect on problems within the home.

**Focalization and the Reader's Alignment with Pi Dawli**

A key method of misdirection in "Ramhuai Liam Kawn" is focalization. The story shows events through Pi Dawli's senses and

thoughts. In Genette's (1980) terms, this is internal focalization, where the reader only knows what the character knows. Because Pi Dawli cannot see clearly in the dark and hears only fragments of sound, the reader shares her fear and uncertainty. Limited information creates suspense.

The first night shows this clearly. The electricity is off, and Pi Dawli cannot find a candle. She hears breathing, whispering, and movement, and the house shakes. These unclear signs make the situation frightening. When her blanket is pulled away and she nearly faints, the reader also feels her fear. Later it is revealed that the cause is her drunken husband returning to bed. This small reversal shows how ordinary events can replace supernatural fear.

Later, Pi Dawli sees torch-like lights in the garden but cannot see the people holding them. She believes the lights move by themselves. The story does not correct her belief, which keeps the mystery alive. As Wayne Booth (1983) explains, a character can be mistaken without being dishonest. Pi Dawli misunderstands events because of fear and limited evidence, and readers discover the truth only at the end.

**Folklore, Belief Narratives, and the Plausibility of the Supernatural**

The supernatural idea in "Ramhuai Liam Kawn" is closely connected to local cultural beliefs. Pi Dawli and her husband live near a kawn, a place traditionally believed to be a path used by spirits. In many cultures, certain locations such as forests, lonely paths, or riverbanks are associated with supernatural beings. Because of these long-held beliefs, strange events that happen in such places easily appear mysterious and frightening. When Pi Dawli hears footsteps, whispering voices, and sees flickering lights in the garden at night, it is natural for her to think that ramhuai are moving along the spirit path. Folklorist Stith Thompson (1977) explains that many traditional stories link specific places with spirits, which makes supernatural events seem believable to people who know these traditions.

At the same time, the fear in the story is also shaped by problems within Pi Dawli's own life. Her husband Pu Ngura drinks heavily and often stays out late at night, which creates tension in their marriage. The couple is also childless, and this makes Pi Dawli feel lonely and uncertain about the future. Because she is already worried and emotionally troubled, she becomes more sensitive to the strange sounds she hears at night. Her fears and personal struggles therefore make the supernatural explanation feel even more convincing.

As Jack Zipes (2006) notes, modern writers often use old folklore ideas to talk about present-day social problems. Ngente does something similar in this story. The idea of ramhuai first creates suspense and fear, but in the end it reveals a deeper moral issue within the household. The mysterious disturbances are eventually shown to be connected not with spirits, but with human actions—especially Pu Ngura's drinking and secret gatherings. In this way, the story uses folklore beliefs to explore real emotional and moral struggles in everyday life.

**Suspense as a Pattern of Return**

In "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," suspense does not come from a single frightening event. Instead, it grows slowly through repeated disturbances that return again and again throughout the story. Pi Dawli hears strange noises in the garden at night—whispers, heavy breathing, footsteps, and flickering torchlights. These events do not happen only once. They appear, disappear, and then return later with greater intensity. Each time the sounds come back, Pi Dawli becomes more anxious and curious. This repeated pattern keeps both the character and the reader in a state of uncertainty.

The structure of the story therefore resembles a series of small tests or trials. Each time the strange noises occur, Pi Dawli must confront her fears again. She moves between different feelings: fear of supernatural spirits, trust in her Christian faith, and determination to understand the truth. Sometimes she trembles with fear, but at other moments she gathers

courage, prays, and even tries to confront the supposed spirits. Through these repeated encounters, the story gradually explores her inner struggle between superstition, faith, and rational explanation.

This pattern of repetition also reflects a technique often found in oral storytelling. Oral narratives frequently repeat certain images or events so that listeners can follow the story more easily and feel the emotions more strongly. As Walter Ong (2002) explains, repetition helps audiences remember key details and recognize patterns within the narrative. In Ngente's story, several elements return again and again: the windy nights, the whispering voices, the flickering lights, and the sudden retreat of the unseen figures into the dark forest below the garden. These recurring details create a kind of narrative rhythm that slowly builds suspense.

However, this repetition also plays an important role in misdirecting the reader. Because the disturbances occur mostly on windy or stormy nights, Pi Dawli begins to see a pattern and interprets it as a sign of supernatural activity. The reader is also encouraged to make the same connection: wind, darkness, and strange lights seem to suggest the presence of spirits. As the pattern repeats, the belief in a haunting becomes stronger.

The twist at the end of the story changes the meaning of this pattern. When Pi Dawli later discovers the hidden drinking place in the forest—along with the pot, chicken feathers, and her husband's lost shoe—it becomes clear that the disturbances were caused by people, not spirits. The windy nights that once seemed supernatural now appear practical. Stormy weather would provide cover for secret gatherings, masking sounds and reducing the chance of being seen by neighbours.

In this way, the repeated events in the story work in two different directions. Before the final revelation, the pattern appears mysterious and supernatural. After the truth is discovered, the same pattern can be understood in a realistic and social way. This ability of the story to support two different interpretations—first supernatural, then human—is one of the reasons why the plot twist feels convincing and effective.

**Alcohol, Fear, and the "Internal Devil"**

In "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," Pu Ngura's alcoholism is presented as the central moral problem in the story. Much of the fear surrounding the supposed ramhuai can be connected to the effects of his drinking—secrecy, confusion, and emotional tension within the household. Throughout the narrative, Pu Ngura frequently stays out late at night, returning home drunk and uneasy. His behaviour creates a sense of instability in the home, and it also makes Pi Dawli anxious and lonely. In this environment of uncertainty, it becomes easier for ordinary sounds and movements to be interpreted as supernatural events.

The story even suggests that people who drink heavily are more vulnerable to ramhuai. Within traditional belief, this idea implies spiritual danger: a person who lives carelessly may attract evil forces. At the same time, the statement can also be understood in a more realistic way. Alcohol often causes fear, confusion, and hallucination, making a person imagine threats that do not actually exist. Pu Ngura himself seems to experience this kind of confusion when he becomes drunk.

One of the most dramatic moments in the story occurs when Pu Ngura suddenly grabs a dao and begins striking at invisible enemies in the darkness. He shouts angrily, claiming that the ramhuai are trying to capture him. The scene is frightening, especially for Pi Dawli, who fears that in his drunken state he might accidentally harm her. At first, the event appears to confirm the presence of supernatural forces. However, as the story develops, it becomes clear that the real cause of the disturbance is not spirits but Pu Ngura's addiction.

In this sense, the "devils" in the story can be understood as internal devils—the destructive effects of alcoholism. Drinking has clouded Pu Ngura's judgment, created fear in his mind, and damaged his relationship with his wife. It has also led him and his friends to gather secretly in the

forest to drink and cook, wasting household resources and creating the mysterious noises that Pi Dawli interprets as supernatural.

Ironically, the fear of ramhuai eventually becomes the turning point that leads Pu Ngura toward repentance. When Pi Dawli prays for him and speaks about God's forgiveness, he begins to reflect on the emptiness of his life. His spiritual awakening allows him to give up drinking and start a new life.

The twist at the end of the story reinforces this moral message. When Pi Dawli discovers the hidden drinking place and finds her husband's lost shoe, the mystery is solved: the so-called ramhuai were simply men secretly drinking in the forest. The revelation shows that the true danger was never supernatural. Instead, the real threat to the household was addiction, secrecy, and moral weakness. Through this discovery, the story reminds readers that the most destructive "devils" are often the ones that exist within human behaviour itself.

**The Conversion Scene as Pivot Between Frames**

An important turning point in "Ramhuai Liam Kawn" is the moment when Pu Ngura experiences a spiritual conversion. Until this point, the story is filled with fear and confusion. Pi Dawli believes that ramhuai are troubling their home, while her husband continues his life of drinking and secrecy. The strange noises in the garden and Pu Ngura's drunken behaviour make the supernatural explanation seem believable.

The situation becomes more serious when Pu Ngura, in a drunken state, grabs a dao and begins attacking invisible enemies, shouting that the ramhuai are trying to capture him. This frightening moment shows how deeply his drinking has affected him. Seeing her husband in such a helpless condition fills Pi Dawli with compassion. Instead of blaming him, she prays for him and speaks about God's love and forgiveness.

During this prayer, Pu Ngura experiences a powerful emotional change. He feels peace and relief, cries out "Hallelujah," and embraces his

wife with joy. At this moment, the story moves from fear to hope. Pu Ngura gives up drinking and begins a new life, and the strange disturbances near their home soon disappear. For Pi Dawli, it seems that faith has defeated the devils troubling their household.

However, Pi Dawli still feels that something about the earlier events remains unexplained. When she later investigates the area below their garden, she discovers the hidden place where people had been secretly drinking. There she finds missing household items and, most importantly, Pu Ngura's lost shoe. The truth becomes clear: the supposed ramhuai were actually connected to her husband's old drinking life.

This moment shows how the conversion scene acts as a pivot in the story. Pu Ngura's spiritual change also leads to real changes in daily life. Once he abandons drinking, the secret gatherings stop and the mysterious disturbances disappear. The story therefore suggests that moral transformation can bring both spiritual peace and practical change.

**The Material Clues and the Ethics of Evidence**

In "Ramhuai Liam Kawn," the final discovery in the garden is striking because it is very physical and concrete. After the strange disturbances stop, Pi Dawli decides to investigate the area below their garden more carefully. What she finds there is not anything supernatural but a series of ordinary objects: worn patches of ground, scattered chicken feathers, bits of cooked rice, a large pot giving off a sour smell, and finally a mouldy shoe. These simple objects become important pieces of evidence. They show that people had been gathering secretly in the forest clearing to cook and drink. The discovery also reveals that household resources had been quietly used and wasted in these hidden meetings.

Among all the objects, the missing shoe becomes the most important clue. Unlike the mysterious lights, whispers, and footsteps that frightened Pi Dawli earlier in the story, the shoe provides clear proof that real people were involved. It is not only a sign of human presence but also a personal

object connected directly to Pu Ngura. When Pi Dawli places the shoe in front of him, his guilty reaction confirms what has happened. At that moment, the mystery of the supposed ramhuai is finally solved.

This discovery also carries an important lesson about how people interpret events. Pi Dawli's fear throughout the story was genuine, but it was based on unclear signs—sounds in the wind, flickering lights, and movements in the darkness. Because of local beliefs about spirit paths, these signs easily appeared supernatural. The truth, however, becomes visible only when she carefully observes the physical environment and finds real evidence. The worn ground, the cooking remains, and the pot all point toward a human explanation. Through these clues, the story shows that the strange disturbances were actually caused by secret drinking in the forest. Once the truth is revealed, peace is restored in the household.

This gradual revelation also reflects an important narrative technique. As Seymour Chatman (1978) explains, stories often control the reader's understanding by revealing information step by step, delaying key details until the right moment. In Ngente's story, the secret drinking has been happening for a long time, but the narrative hides this fact until the final discovery. When the material evidence appears, readers are forced to reconsider the earlier scenes of whispering voices, torchlights, and windy nights. What once seemed supernatural is now understood as human activity. The twist therefore encourages both the characters and the readers to rethink the entire story in a new light.

**Irony, Tenderness, and the Rewriting of "Ramhuai"**

The last line is the story's final craft move: it reframes the entire supernatural vocabulary with gentle irony. Pi Dawli says the ramhuai who stole the pot and lost the shoe has now attained salvation. The sentence does several things at once.

First, it confirms Pi Dawli's new understanding without humiliating Pu Ngura. She does not shout, "You were the devil!" She uses the story's

symbolic language to name his former self while also affirming his change. Second, it keeps cultural vocabulary alive but reassigns it: "ramhuai" becomes a metaphor for sinful behaviour rather than a literal spirit. Third, it shifts tone from dread to domestic reconciliation. The twist could have ended in anger and shame; instead, it ends in a shared smile.

This tonal choice matters because moral narratives often risk becoming punitive. Here, the ending emphasizes transformation over condemnation. In a Christian ethical frame, salvation is not earned by perfection but received through repentance and grace. Pi Dawli's line enacts that theology in everyday speech, turning fear into forgiveness.

**Deeper Theoretical Implications: Tradition, Modernity, and Narrative Authority**

"Ramhuai Liam Kawn" can also be understood as a story about the tension between traditional beliefs and modern ways of thinking. At the beginning of the story, Pi Dawli and her husband dismiss the old belief that their house stands near a kawn, a path once believed to be used by spirits. They see such ideas as superstition and feel confident that modern life has moved beyond these fears. However, when the strange disturbances begin—whispers in the night, flickering lights, and footsteps in the garden—Pi Dawli gradually begins to remember the warnings of the elders. The old stories about spirit paths suddenly feel relevant again. This shift shows how traditional beliefs often return during moments of fear and uncertainty, when people search for explanations that make sense of troubling experiences. As Walter Ong (2002) notes, older cultural beliefs and storytelling patterns often remain powerful in people's minds, even when societies appear to move toward modern rational thinking.

Yet the story does not end by simply confirming traditional superstition. Instead, it introduces another form of authority: Christian faith and moral transformation. Through Pi Dawli's prayers and encouragement, Pu Ngura experiences a deep personal change. He gives up drinking and

begins to live a new life. In this way, the story shifts from an explanation based on supernatural fear to one based on spiritual and moral renewal. The title "Ramhuai Liam Kawn" takes on a symbolic meaning. The true "devil's path" is not the old spirit trail near the house, but the destructive path of addiction, secrecy, and moral weakness that Pu Ngura had been following every night when he went out to drink. When he abandons this lifestyle, the mysterious disturbances also disappear, suggesting that the real danger had always been human behaviour rather than supernatural forces.

From the perspective of folklore studies, the story skillfully uses traditional motifs—spirits, night noises, dark forests, and mysterious lights—to express deeper social and moral concerns. Folklorist Stith Thompson (1977) notes that many stories use supernatural elements to symbolize real human problems and anxieties. Ngente draws on these familiar motifs to create suspense, but he ultimately uses them to highlight the harmful effects of alcoholism on family life and relationships. In this sense, the narrative transforms what initially appears to be a ghost story into a story about social responsibility and personal reform. Jack Zipes (2006) has observed that modern writers often use folklore themes to comment on contemporary social issues, giving traditional motifs new meaning in modern contexts.

At the same time, the story treats belief and emotion with sensitivity. The narrative does not ridicule Pi Dawli for believing in ramhuai. Her fear is presented as sincere and understandable because it grows from both cultural tradition and the difficult circumstances of her life. As literary critic Wayne Booth (1983) suggests, an author's moral perspective often appears through the tone with which characters' beliefs are treated. In Ngente's story, the implied author shows sympathy for Pi Dawli's faith and anxiety. The final twist corrects the misunderstanding about the supposed spirits, but it does so gently and compassionately. Rather than mocking belief, the story suggests that fear, faith, and moral reflection can all lead to deeper understanding and change.

## Conclusion

"Ramhuai Liam Kawn" is a strong example of an effective plot twist. The twist shows that the "ramhuai" disturbances were actually caused by people connected to Pu Ngura's secret drinking. This twist works because the story builds suspense through Pi Dawli's limited viewpoint, local beliefs, and repeated mysterious events.

The twist does more than explain the mystery. It also gives a moral lesson. The real "devil" is not a spirit but the harmful path of addiction and secrecy. The haunting seems real at first, but it actually shows how the family is suffering because of drinking. When Pu Ngura reforms, the strange events stop.

In the end, the twist reveals both the truth of the events and their moral meaning. The reader moves from fear to understanding, just as Pu Ngura moves from wrongdoing to renewal. This shows that a good twist ending not only surprises but also deepens the meaning of the story.

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