

# Malaysian Literature in English as Literature of Reconciliation

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysia has become one of the epitomes of multiculturalism in Southeast Asia due to its richness of diversity. Colonised by multiple European countries and Japan for centuries, the country, formerly known as Malaya, achieved its independence on 31st August 1957. The emergence of inspiring words by Malaya writers and poets during the colonial era became the beacons of hope amongst the Malaya people in forging a new future for their newly independent country. Furthermore, the revival of Malaysian literature in English in the postcolonial era can strengthen the trust, understanding, acceptance, and peace between different races and cultures in Malaysia. Thus, this paper aims to analyse how Malaysian literature in English plays the role of reconciliation in the multicultural communities in Malaysia. For the purpose of this research, a Malaysian English literary novel, *This End of The Rainbow* (2008), written by Adibah Amin will be analysed by using the concept of reconciliation by Fadillah Merican. Pertinence to the study, the novel managed to encapsulate the concept's elements of diversity and the preoccupation with bleak scenarios. The results highlight the importance of reconciling amidst the differences in a multicultural society in Malaysia that fosters unity and resists colonial discourse.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, Literature, Malaysian Literature in English, Reconciliation, Post-colonial study.

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is one of the Southeast Asian countries that are rich with various ethnicities, cultures and religions. Multiculturalism embodies the co-existence of diverse cultures including racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in accustomed behaviours, cultural expectations, communicative styles, ideological contexts and identities that have been made to intertwine and connected, despite the differences in ideological contexts and identities [9], [5], [11]. The English variety of Malaysian English is spoken with great familiarity by a large number of people living in Malaysia. Therefore, though the sole official language of Malaysia was changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia; a language formalised based on Malay, which is identical to the aforementioned language after the independence from Britain, English is widely utilised sometimes fully, and on numerous occasions [29].

Malaysian literature in English went off to a rocky start back in the year 1967, due to the passing of the National Language Act and the references to the even greater marginalising of writing in English with the 1969 racial riots with the subsequent rise of Malay nationalism and specific policies in the name of nation building and national culture which denied 'national literature' status for any writing that is not in the national language [25]. After that, the status of Malaysian Literature in English has been known as sectional literature and the heightening of 'us vs them' began after the establishment of the policies [28].

Brounéus[8] defines reconciliation as a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgement of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace. Reconciliation can also be classified into national and individual reconciliation. National reconciliation can be achieved when there is a strong democratic structure in a country to manage an emerging conflict. Individuals on the other hand can make peace with a difficult past and resume lives without fear or hate towards one's own experience or enemies [19]. As a social concept, it has not been explicitly explored in any Malaysian fiction that directly references the elements of the concept itself despite numerous representations of it in the context of the stories. Hence, this study is crucial to highlight the importance of acknowledging the concept of reconciliation in Malaysian fiction so mutual acknowledgement and understanding amongst all citizens in this country could be transpired through inspired or possible fictional narratives that could imitate reality. In ensuring this matter could be fulfilled, this study will look upon the concept of reconciliation as presented in Malaysian literature in English novel, titled *This End of the Rainbow*(2008) by Adibah Amin.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Notion of Diversity in Malaysia

The focus of reconciliation is on building new and better relationships between former enemies because relationships are both the root cause and the long-term solution of conflict so, relationships must be the core focus. As a locus, Lederach [21] argues, that “reconciliation represents a space, a place or location of encounter, where parties to a conflict meet” where in this place, the traumas of the past and the hopes for the future must be formulated and brought together by discussing the issues of truth, forgiveness, justice, and peace [8].

Martina Fischer stated that with transitional justice, the concept of reconciliation has gained importance among those who engage in post-war regeneration as peace activists in particular see reconciliation as a requirement for lasting peace especially when the concept is also extensively discussed in the academic literature on peacebuilding and conflict transformation [13]. Apart from that, Hayner also [16] shows that reconciliation implies constructing or reconstructing relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday and suggests that three areas can be observed: how the past is integrated and spoken about between former enemies if the relationships are based on the present or past and if the contradictory versions of the past have been reconciled [8].

Aside from that, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [17] defines reconciliation as a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future as the development of democratic norms in the post-war society is fundamental for this process as IDEA stated that structural injustice creates the basis for new conflict. In the process of reconciliation, peaceful cohabitation, trust and empathy evolve within this basis of democracy for sustainable peace [8].

According to one of the most prominent Malaysian authors and scholars, FadillahMerican [25], reconciliation in Malaysia consists of four factors. They are the element of diversity in the multicultural nation, the preoccupation with bleak scenarios, the reality of complex class divisions and social and cultural dislocations. These factors represent a mutual dedication to centralising differences from one culture to another to cultivate understanding and empathy which could promote integration. These prominent factors could accentuate the diverse voices and problematise issues in Malaysia through Malaysian literature in English which is crucial to nation-building and strengthening a Malaysian identity. Although Merican highlights four factors, this research will solely focus on two factors as they are the crucial ones highlighted in the chosen text for an analysis while the other two factors do not translate into this study's purpose.

## The Notion of Diversity in Malaysia

The diverse races and cultures living together in Malaysia create a society that blends in unique cultural elements that assimilate and intertwine with each of their own. Though multicultural societies exist in the same space and can cohesively work together, they are not necessarily socially united in terms of identity [33]. While the consequence of this manner began way back during the British colonisation when they segregated each different population into multiple societies with little to no interaction, the other culprit of this issue comes from an economic disparity that caused the 1969 riot between the Malays and the Chinese [14]. Even with a plausible solution in subduing the racial uprising from happening again in the future by establishing the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 to eradicate poverty and eliminate the identification of race with economic function [18], economic disparity is still widely present as it serves to cater the Malays and the indigenous to own 30 percent of share ownership [15].

What the Malaysian society is experiencing at the moment is a mere display of social cohesion where it leaves space for explaining ethnic interests and differences, which are fundamental in reviewing the ‘stable tensions,’ which refers to the condition where problems that lead to a possible ethnic conflict are on high-alert [34]. Since the constitution caters to Malay-Muslims, there are still other suitable provisions that protect a multi-ethnic and multireligious society [33]. For example, places of worship like mosques, temples, churches and gurdwaras mark the cultural landscape of Malaysia while religious festivals like Thaipusam for the Hindus, Kwan Ying Goddess for the Buddhists, Ramadhan and Eid for the Muslims are celebrated openly by the community that practices and tolerated by the non-practices. The social cohesion can also be seen in the existence of vernacular school systems that allow the Chinese and Tamil schools that cater to each community’s demand to operate with government support [33]. Besides the architecture, religious beliefs and the education system, other elements that display a form of Malaysian culture in its entirety fall into material and non-material things such as archaeological artifacts, clothing, art, food, pastimes, symbols, customs, knowledge, language, social institutions, and social structure [27].

Although the debate over ethnic disparity due to the country’s economy continues, the idea of having a top-down authoritative approach to reconciliation to bridge the socio-economic gap amongst ethnic is fundamental to fostering unity [26]. The bottom-up approach to reconcile refers to the everyday-defined context in Malaysia like the mamakization where the Indian Muslim ‘mamak’ restaurants attract customers from various ethnic demography to eat authentic foods like roti canai and chicken tandoori while also catering to football fans to gather and enjoy the games on the big screen [33]. Olmedo and Shamsul [30] stated that mamakization magnifies social cohesion and unity as it can lure in multi-ethnic customers to gather in one place. This notion supports the Malaysian socio-economic construct as it promotes an element of diversity and inclusivity within a multicultural nation.

## The Notion of Bleak Scenarios in Malaysia

Cambridge Dictionary defines the term “Bleak” as cold and unpleasant. It could also be defined as having little or no hope for the future. Since we’re examining the notion of bleak scenarios in a post-colonised country, Malaysia had gone through multiple bleak scenarios during the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1942. Formerly known as Malaya, those scenarios regarded the Japanese occupation as the nation’s first national trauma [37]. With the end of the Second World War, Malaya was abandoned in a state of anarchy and a vulnerable society that craved independence and freedom from the communists. The Japanese occupation’s propaganda “Asia for the Asiatic” aimed to eradicate Western imperial powers to nipponize Malayan society with Japanese-oriented moral principles and ideologies, ensuring the subjects into submission [31].

The effort in instilling those cultural elements represented the bleak scenarios that the Malayan society had

to endure as their freedom and agencies were controlled to adhere to the occupation's custom. According to Wen [31] to strengthen and spread their wartime propaganda, they indoctrinated the anti-British Malaya leftists in the local's column to glorify their role as the liberator from the British rule. The propaganda was then expanded through the education system by revisioning the curriculum to be aligned with the Japanese ideology and the portrayal in mass media where the occupation glorified the ancient samurai society in shaping the Japanese mind and character within the Malayan society, eradicating Malayan's cultural identity [20].

The demand to nipponize the Malayan society heightened when the Japanese imperial realised that the Malayan society was accustomed to the Western way of life due to the remnants of the European colonisation. Wen [31] stated that the urgency to transform the society by eradicating the remnants of the European Empire began with the banning of English and Chinese as language instruction in the school system and daily communication. The shift towards the Japanese language became a valuable tool to instil the Nippon spirit and custom into the Malayan society [31]. Another important attempt to nipponize the Malayan society was the compulsory celebration of Japanese holidays like the birthday of the Emperor of Japan with utmost dedication and respect.

The shift in the education system and the indoctrination of mass media [20], Islamic religion and its elite association [1], [2], Malay radicals through KMM (Kesatuan Melayu Muda or Young Malay Union) [35] and traditional Malay elite who disapproved the British ruling [36] and the celebration of Japanese holidays were the major factors that represent the bleak scenarios in Malaya during the Japanese occupation in 1941. These factors drove the Malayan society to unite and rise against the oppressors and strive to achieve their independence.

### **The Role of Reconciliation in Postcolonial Fictions**

The role of literature in reconciling communities with different backgrounds and lifestyles has been known in many multi-ethnic postcolonial countries. There is some evidence from past research that highlights the importance of literature in contributing to the welfare of their society. The study of literature provided here is intended to fill in the gaps on the role of fiction in representing reconciliation in postcolonial nations.

Parent [32] explores the notions of 'healing' and 'reconciliation' as they are used in the literature on peacebuilding where it argues that these notions are used vaguely and that they are deployed to discriminate between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches to peacebuilding. As such, they render invisible complex connections between the psycho-social processes associated with healing and the political processes associated with reconciliation with numerous programmes and processes of peacebuilding conceived upon the distinction between healing and reconciliation. Aside from that, the researcher even examines the effects of this distinction and argues that where healing and reconciliation are disconnected, peacebuilding produces experiences of secondary victimisation that undermine peace. To further prove this point, they looked upon the case of post-genocide Rwanda to support their argument [32].

Aside from that, Bonthuys [7] investigates whether reconciliation may have become a new theme in South African novels and whether these novels could play a role in assisting the process of reconciliation in the country. Socially responsible writing has been a feature of South African literature for many years and many novels dealt with apartheid, as it was one of the main features of their social landscape. However, the end of apartheid did not bring about the end of a need for socially responsible writing as South Africa is still faced with many problems, one of which is reconciliation. Bonthuys analysed three South African works; *Country of My Skull* by AntjieKrog, *Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr and *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee. The result shows that although this is but a small sampling of current "white" South African literature, the theme of reconciliation is prominent, whether as a theme in *Country of My Skull* or as a contentious issue as in *Disgrace* but the fact remains that reconciliation can be found in all these novels, and that they can all assist

in the furthering of reconciliation in South Africa, each in its way [7].

In their paper called *Creative Approaches to Reconciliation*, Cynthia Cohen explains why the arts and cultural work are critical to promoting coexistence and reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict. They lay out a theoretical framework for reconciliation and the nature of aesthetic engagement that explain why the arts and cultural work should be effective resources for peace-builders. Supported by the structures of rituals and the arts, the artists or the authors are addressing painful history and grappling with conflicting narratives in ways that help them, gradually, build the trust they need to cooperate in the reconstruction of their societies and contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilders who incorporate cultural work in their practice that could benefit from opportunities to share their learning with colleagues and to reflect on the ethical questions that inevitably arise in their work. According to Cohen, the arts and cultural work can be crafted to contribute to coexistence and reconciliation; both by facilitating the necessary learning about self and other, and by nourishing and restoring the capacities required for perception, expression, receptivity and imagination and become important resources for coexistence and reconciliation; in the aftermath of ethnic violence and long-standing oppression as they warrant investment [10].

Another thesis on discourses of forgiveness and reconciliation examines the representation and production of these discourses in contemporary fiction [24]. The paper argues that although they disconcert or astound the critics situated in postmodern contexts, the rhetoric and rituals that structure reconciliation processes may be crucial to a departure from colonialist and racist relations, and to the commencement of a more democratic future. Using a postcolonial methodology, *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation* challenges assumptions that discourses of forgiveness and reconciliation necessarily involve a rush to closure, repression of memory, or recuperation by power. Ultimately, they suggest that if the privilege of oppressed groups to devise their terms is granted, forgiveness and reconciliation may render radical revision to prevailing systems of violence and injustice imaginable [24].

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To identify the elements of reconciliation in a postcolonial novel, this study will be analysing a Malaysian English novel, *This End of The Rainbow* written by Adibah Amin that was first published in 2008. Specifically, we will look at the main character, Ayu and how she could be represented as a symbol of reconciliation in Malaya, especially in her upbringing, relationships with friends and family and her hope for the betterment of her society.

Therefore, the concept of reconciliation that will be used is based on Fadillah Merican's statement of reconciliation in Malaysia:

“The diverse voices and issues taken up in Malaysian creative writing in English have, for too long been regarded as separate, discordant, even recalcitrant articulations that do not contribute much to nation-building, integration and a Malaysian identity. It is our belief that the diversity, the preoccupation with bleak scenarios and the reality of complex class divisions, and social and cultural dislocations ironically represent a collective commitment towards highlighting differences to promote integration. This is very much a literature of reconciliation, offering various perspectives on the rocky path to nationhood. As part of the nation's discourse, Malaysian creative writing reveals, in the art, the state of the culture.” [19].

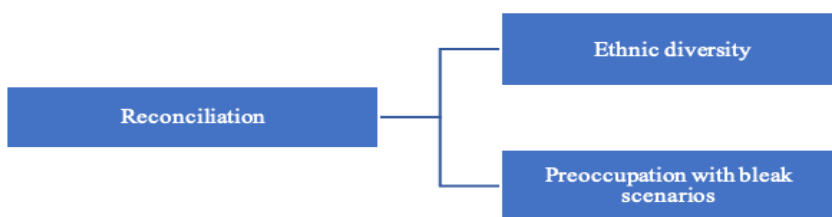
According to Fadillah Merican, there are four elements to be regarded as reconciliation in Malaysia, which consist of ethnic diversity that shapes multiculturalism. While primary dimensions of diversity that influence our identities are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics and shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views, secondary dimensions of diversity are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include educational background, geographic

location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organisational role and level, income and communication style and have more impact on our self-esteem and self-definition [23].

The second element would be the preoccupation with bleak scenarios. Besides the distinctive diversity, Malaysians can be seen to unite to engross against depressing scenarios. To reconcile, they need to put aside their differences and begin to reach a certain understanding and respect towards each other. Aside from that, the reality of complex class divisions is also part of the elements of reconciliation. Having barriers implies a level of social segregation and spatial fragmentation because in the neoliberal city, those inside the walls are more commonly affluent than those outside and they use the enclosure to exclude others [38].

The final element of this concept by Fadillah Merican would be the social and cultural dislocations. Dhivyapriya [12] stated that multiculturalism suggests the co-existence of several different cultures, but, it does not prescribe homogenisation and conformity directly nor does it encourage overtly different ethnic religious, lingual or racial constituents of a particular society to denigrate and alienate each other to such a society is damaged or destroyed permanently. This is why the basic problem of diaspora writers is the feeling of dislocation without roots as they feel hopeless and alienated in the foreign land when the dispersal of roots involves pain, alienation, identity crisis and other feelings to the familiar ones [12].

In this small-scale study, only two key elements of reconciliation were examined: ethnic diversity and preoccupation with bleak scenarios as they were frequently found in the subject of investigation.



**Fig. 1.0:** Conceptual Framework: Reconciliation in Malaysia

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This *End of The Rainbow* by Adibah Amin tells a story about Ayu, a Malay college student who navigates her life as a Malaysian citizen. First published in 2008, the story was set in the 1950s postcolonial era and deals with the aftermath of colonisation where Ayu and her friends deal with racial issues and social injustice. This paper will analyse Ayu's character from her upbringing, her circle of friends and the ways she handles issues that arose after Malaysia was decolonised to identify how her character symbolises reconciliation in Malaysia.

### The Diversity

This novel manages to capture the essence of cultural diversity as there are representations of several different characters that come from different backgrounds, races, cultures and religions. In Malaysia, there are three major cultures which are Malay, Chinese and Indian alongside the indigenous people of Iban, Kadazan, Murut, Melanau and many more that represent their own community. In this novel, the writer manages to portray as many characters with different cultures so that the readers can see the reality and

depiction of cultural diversity back in the early postcolonial era. During this timeline, people from different culture lived together and learned from each other in acceptance and harmony without paying attention to their different lifestyle and cultural background. These characters are all acknowledged and described according to their nickname given by Ayu, the main character to show that their roles create a positive memorable impact on her life and to show the strong bonds that they have with each other. The three excerpts below are a few examples that portray the cultural diversity in this novel:

Excerpt I: There was Khoon of the Chinese-schoolgirl look; Moira, delicate and graceful with a baby face; Hui, bright and open; and Aiza with her limpid eyes and dewy skin. (Amin 6)

Excerpt II: There were other striking ‘tables and chairs’ among the ‘freshies’: P.S., smart and dashing; Hafiz, sturdy and gentle; Kin, a specialist in playful provocation. For Ayu, however, the three were brothers, having been her classmates in Form six. (Amin 7)

Excerpt III: The ‘freshies’ were ordered to sing. When her turn came, Ayu sang ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star’. Dilip shouted, ‘Wrong accent!’ He taught Ayu and the other ‘freshies’ to sing the nursery rhyme with an exaggerated Indian accent ... (Amin 7)

Aside from the variety of representations of multicultural characters, Ayu, the main character can be seen embracing the diversity of her community. Since Ayu is a Malay girl, the dominant race and culture in Malaysia, she is comfortable and happy with the multicultural friends that she has without developing any cultural or racial preconceptions towards any of them. Her views and perception might derive from her own upbringing where her parents, Husna and Amri raised her and her siblings surrounded by non-existent racial and cultural discrimination in their household. The two excerpts below are the examples from the novel that showcase this element:

Excerpt I: Husna supported the peaceful way. ‘It’s not easy,’ she often reminded herself and her family. ‘The British are wily. Just as we think that we are succeeding, they find ways to make us fail. To fight them we must unite. All races. Sincerely, not just lip service.’ But even as she said the sobering words that morning, her voice was vibrant with optimism. (Amin 13)

Excerpt II: On the first day of Aidilfitri, Lin and her parents came over bringing fruits and the two families enjoyed getting really acquainted over chicken ‘rendang’ and ‘ketupat’... Two days before Lin’s Chinese New Year, the Lims brought oranges for Ayu’s family, saying they would be going to their hometown, Ipoh, for the traditional reunion dinner on the eve of the first day but would be back in a week. They invited Ayu’s family to come over to their house any time after that... Amri and Husna offered to keep an eye on the Lims’ house while they were away, wished them a happy and prosperous new year, and promised to visit them when they returned. (Amin 33)

Aside from her childhood friend, in university, Ayu makes friends with anyone that she seems comfortable with and shares similar views with her, especially her Chinese friend, Po Po. She also maintains her relationship with her childhood best friends Nimmi and Surmeet, who are both Indians. Ayu shares her life, interests and secrets while their family also treat her like their own every time she visits them. They serve her their own ethnic food and Ayu would enjoy them as much as they enjoy it themselves. There are no boundaries or restrictions for her as a Malay to be totally transparent with her best friends of different race and culture. Just like her mother, Ayu can be seen as a firm believer in seeing that all citizens in the country should be presented as one instead of just as different races living together. Presented below are some of the excerpts to show Ayu’s relationship with her close friend from the university and her best friends from her hometown:

Excerpt I: Though their friendship was new, it was as if they had always known each other. They were a

contrast in looks and style: Ayu small and sassy and still a tomboy, Nimmi a tall, shy teenager blossoming into a beauty...Ayu was welcomed with warm smiles and delicious Malayali food. Nimmi's mother and younger sister Sheri kept heaping fresh helpings of fragrant steaming rice, fish curry, vegetables, yoghurt and crackers on Ayu's plate. Ayu's first taste of tairu, the yoghurt, and of aviel, the vegetable dish, captivated her for life. She felt totally at home. (Amin 17- 18)

Excerpt II: The next day, Surmeet said almost the same words. Surmeet was slim, with chiselled features, dark-lashed grey-brown eyes and a teasing smile. That afternoon, she spotted Ayu from afar and stood waiting on the front steps of her spacious wooden house on a hill with a view of the straits...The sharing had to wait. Papa and mummy, Surmeet's parents who treated Ayu like one of their daughters, were at home. So were the younger girls including little Tess, who jumped into Ayu's lap, demanding a 'horsie ride'. Mummy, comely and affectionate, hugged Ayu and gave her laddu, milk sweets, from a wedding. (Amin 21)

Excerpt III: News items on students being expelled or suspended for ragging excesses came out in newspapers on the peninsula and in Singapore. These were followed by reactions from individuals and groups through interviews and letters. An article written by Po Po appeared in a Singapore newspaper. Reading it, Ayu noted its candour and balance. It was in the Saturday paper. She could not wait till Monday to talk to Po Po about it. Ayu took a bus to the campus but there was no sign of Po Po; tried again on Sunday, to no avail. Since that first day of ragging, Ayu had often come across Po Po but their hectic schedules had made a real chat impossible...On Monday morning Ayu waylaid Po Po en route to a lecture they did not share, and walked with her. When Ayu told her what she thought of the article, Po Po replied with a wry smile, 'I wish more people felt that way.' (Amin 38 – 39)

### **The Preoccupation with Bleak Scenarios**

The novel portrays subtle impacts and the aftermaths of colonisation. During the era of colonisation, the Malayan people faced a lot of death, difficulties and discrimination that scarce them until the present day. With this similar experience, they have been through a lot together and it reflects their views and desire for what they want for their own nation. Ayu and her family are the example of a family that does not withhold any racial or cultural prejudice amongst others as they see other people as equal as they are. Their time spent together with the Lims during the happy days and willingness to sacrifice their own safety to help them escape the cruelty of the Japanese colonisers who wanted to assassinate all the Chinese in the country shows that when at times of hardship and oppression towards others, they do not just ignore the threat but partake in finding out ways on how to save their friend. For them, killing the Lims means that the Japanese are also killing one of them and it shows their uneasiness with that depressing scenario. Below here is the excerpt:

Excerpt I: Lin and Ayu were five years old when word came to their parents that the Japanese had invaded Malaya from the north and would soon be upon them. The soldiers on bicycle would show no mercy, it was whispered, especially to the Chinese, because of the enmity between the two peoples. Amri and Husna rushed over to warn the Lims in case they had not heard. Ayu went with her parents, fearing for her friend. Mrs Lim said they knew, but her husband had gone out in a hurry to find his pupils and fellow teachers and organise an evacuation to a safer place. Ustazah and her children came to ask their neighbours to join them in their trek to Hutan Kempas, a forest several hours' walk away. At that moment Mr Lim returned. He thanked them but explained that his family's presence would only endanger them further. Farewells and best wishes were hurriedly said. Ayu and Ima hugged Lin. The woeful look on Lin's face as they went their separate ways was forever etched on Ayu's heart. (Amin 34 – 35)

Apart from that, the existence of this element is depicted among Ayu's university friends who decided to start a movement to achieve unity for the Malayan people on the verge of Independence. Her friends, who consists of multiple races and cultures, Han, Badri and Chye united to form this movement as they were



frustrated with the constant racial preconception that each of their races which are Malays and Chinese had with each other, especially during the aftermath of Japanese colonisation. They even ask Ayu to join them as they see that she holds no racial or racial presumption within herself. This shows that as much as they face conflict at the very beginning and in the past due to their racial and cultural differences, they put aside their differences and work towards something that they all want at the end, which is to see the unity and freedom for all Malayan people. These are the excerpts from the novel that shows this element:

Excerpt I: Like his parents and neighbours, Badri began life thinking in terms of ‘our people’ and ‘others’. It seemed to him that though more and more of his people were moving to the town, they were still outnumbered and outpaced by other communities...After the incident with Han, he went home one weekend and somehow got into a fight with Chye, a former classmate who was working in a shop in the town centre. (Amin 103)

Excerpt II: They were at a crucial stage, Badri felt. The different races still wanted peace, but prejudice and resentment would explode into violence more and more often if immediate action was not taken...” You think Badri and Chye and I are crazy? Dreaming? It’s not a KL youth group anymore. It’s a movement, growing and spreading every day, though we’ll go on calling it a group, or groups for a while. When the time is right, we’ll become a political party. We may not win elections at first, but we’ll make our influence felt. Our much-needed influence.’...’I know you want to go on studying,’ Han said, ‘but I also know you want to serve. You can’t do both. We need you now. We need everyone, but you are one of the rare ones with no race prejudice.’ (Amin 103– 104)

Excerpt III: ‘...Let me just say this: the races were friendly but didn’t really know each other. So prejudice grew. To your people, mine were communists or communist supporters. To my people, yours were Japanese collaborators...There was a power vacuum for many days after the war ended...’Actually,’ Han said, looking straight at her, ‘from something you said once, I know you too have been struggling with prejudice. You need to join us. Only but working together in one movement, really knowing one another, can we forget race and see everyone as a fellow human being.’ (Amin 105 – 106)

For Ayu, this element can be seen within her with the way she thinks of other people from different races. As she at once refers to the people of her race as ‘us’ and others as ‘them’, it progresses when she grows up as she begins to refer to all Malayan people as ‘our’. This means that Ayu realises the impact of colonisation towards everyone as she grows and gains proper education throughout the years. Her view also changes due to her parents’ early exposure to their family on the equality of all human beings, regardless of race. Apart from that, Ayu’s dreams at the end of the novel also represent her views and desires for her country. The vision of seeing herself and a few of her friends who consist of different races and cultures play together even with a war happening in the background shows how despite how the occupational force or the colonisers will try to drive them apart and cause chaos and destruction in their nation, Ayu will always see everyone as equal, no matter what and she bears high hopes that the Malayan people will continue to share similar views in accepting one another, despite the multiple differences between them. She had hopes that her people will remain strong-minded and steadfast despite the brutality and injustice of the colonisation. Below are the excerpts from the novel portraying these elements clearly:

Excerpt I- ‘I can’t understand it,’ Ima said. ‘You are even more steeped in Malay literature and culture than I am. Yet now I recall so many things I tried to forget: like that time when AminuddinBaki quoted the proverb about the fate of us Malays in our land,” Chickens in the granary dying of hunger, ducks on the water dying of thirst.” Remember what you said?’” The memory of her response to the words of the Malays student leader came up fresh and clear from the depths of Ayu’s mind. Ayu had expressed her feelings to Ima, ‘He’s right. He’s making us realise the plight of our poor in this rich country. I hope student leaders in other communities are doing the same. They have their poor too, in estates, mining areas, slums.’ Ayu also remembered Ima staring at her and saying, ‘I think you’ve got his message wrong.’ (Amin 128)

Excerpt II: In the distance, there were explosions and flames. Little boys and girls with blond, golden, auburn, brown and black hair ran towards the tree for shelter, then hesitated just outside its shade. Ayu called out to them, ‘Come! Let’s all play under this tree!’” The dream recurred over the years, encompassing places Ayu lived in or visited, and people she met and opened her heart to. Sometimes the distant carnage drew menacingly close, but the children went on playing together, unafraid (Amin 160 – 161)

Throughout the analysis, this novel seems to highlight the issue of racial and cultural prejudice. Hence, there are only two elements of reconciliation by Fadillah Merican (2004) presented in the novel which are diversity and the preoccupation with bleak scenarios. The excerpts presented in this analysis are some of the many examples that are prominent that portray those elements from the novel. From both of the elements and examples presented in the novel, we can see that Ayu represents parts of the reconciliation by looking at her upbringing and the way she views everybody without any racial preconceptions regardless of their different background, races and cultures. She befriends everyone whom she shares a similar view as she does in life. Besides that, as she grows up and associates herself with more people in her life, she begins referring to the Malayan people as ‘our’ people inside of the term ‘us’ vs ‘them’ because she desires everybody to unite and come together as one in the road for the country’s independence, especially after all that the discrimination that they face together against the colonisers.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, this study managed to see how Malaysian literature in English plays the role of literature of reconciliation in multicultural Malaysia as presented in a Malaysian English novel, *This End of The Rainbow* (2008) by Adibah Amin. The story manages to highlight two out of the four elements of reconciliation by Fadillah Merican [19] in the main character, a Malay girl named Ayu. As the story portrays the diversity through representation of diverse characters from different races and cultures, it also shows Ayu’s upbringing and her relationship with her diverse and multi-ethnic friends. This element is important in showcasing reconciliation despite the cultural differences to inspire unity in Malaysian society.

Besides that, the representation of bleak scenarios is also present in this novel as it deals with the hardship and discrimination towards the minority living in a post-colonised country striving to achieve its independence while promoting integration and understanding between different races to achieve it. The existence of this element in this novel helps readers to understand and consider the struggles that our ancestors had gone through to obtain independence so we could put aside our differences to reconcile and alienate the term ‘us’ vs ‘them’. Seeing the representation of this element in Malaysian literature in English could open up discussions amongst Malaysians as they try to navigate, apprehend the feelings and combat criticisms that some Malaysians might face for a long time from ignorant others.

Although this novel manages to capture some of the essence of reconciliation, two of the elements which are the complex class divisions and social and cultural dislocations are not present in this novel as its focus is merely on the complexity of racial prejudice back in the 1950’s. For future research on this topic, it is suggested that future researchers should analyse a Malaysian English novel that could highlight the concept of reconciliation that has been proposed by other scholars to ensure the diversity of the concept itself and to see the parallel between the elements presented and the ones used in this paper. Last but not least, it is also recommended that future researchers analyse other 21<sup>st</sup>-century Malaysian English novels to analyse whether the time gap between the fiction author’s perception, experience and preference could form a parallel analysis with the ones presented in this paper.

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