

## Rahman Shaari's Insights in Improving the Political Reality of Malaysia: A Realism Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Literary works have long played a significant role in reflecting and critiquing the political realities of societies worldwide. This intricate relationship between literature and politics reveals critical insights into power structures, societal dynamics, and political ideologies that shape nations. Therefore, this study explores how literature can contribute to improving the political realities of the nations. This is a qualitative study. Content analysis is based on Lukács' theory of realism in his four renowned works (1963, 1978, 1989, 1990), focusing on the works of Malaysia's National Laureate, Rahman Shaari, *Pernikahan di Lubuk Hantu* (2008), *Semoga Molek* (2012), and *Cengkaman Hasrat* (2015). The findings reveal that Rahman Shaari, as a realist writer, places significant emphasis on critiquing and addressing the negative aspects of political activities that harm society while offering constructive recommendations for creating a stable, democratic, and humanistic political reality. His insights on leaders' inefficiency, the belittlement of women, negative political trends involving incitements, and the importance of selecting leaders wisely underscore his commitment to improving Malaysia's political reality. These novels exemplify the dual approach of critique and recommendation characteristic of realist literature, as emphasized by Lukács (1963, 1978, 1989, 1990). Rahman Shaari's contributions provide valuable critiques and foster meaningful guidance for improving Malaysia's political landscape. This study concludes that his literary works significantly benefit societal life and positively shape Malaysia's political reality.

**Keywords:** *Literary works, political, Lukács theory of realism, Rahman Shaari, societal life.*

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literature and politics is intricate and significant, as literary works often mirror political realities, offering critical insights into power structures, societal dynamics, and political ideologies that shape a nation (Barus et al., 2023; Oturgasheva, 2022). As explained by Nie and Zawawi (2023), political institutions rely on the mediatization of politics in their operations. This interplay underscores the broader relationship between literature as a form of media and politics, highlighting its profound and multifaceted impact. This is further emphasized by Lukács (1989), who explained that literature, especially in the realist tradition, functions as artistic expression and a tool for political engagement. Writers have long used literature to comment on, critique, and even influence the political landscapes of their times. By capturing a given period's social and political conditions, literary works can challenge the status quo, provoke dialogue, and encourage reflection on political systems and power relations (Khadafi, 2022; Udovič et al., 2023). For instance, Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (The Prince) offers practical advice to rulers on acquiring and retaining power through manipulation, deception, and realpolitik (Jelahun et al., 2023). Similarly, in 1984, George Orwell critiques totalitarian regimes and how political authorities manipulate language and truth to control the masses (Rose, 2022). In *Das Kapital*, Karl Marx critiques

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capitalist economic and political systems, shedding light on the intersection of literature, politics, and economics (Zhao, 2023).

In Malaysia's context, writers also play a vital role in addressing and improving the political realities of the nation. Through their literary works, they serve as social commentators, critiquing power structures, governance, and societal inequalities while fostering critical awareness among readers (Sim et al., 2024). By capturing the socio-political landscape through vivid narratives and compelling characters, these writers reflect the complexities of Malaysian politics, including issues of corruption, racial divisions, and the struggle for justice (Saharudin & Affendi, 2023). Thus, it can be explained that writers and literary works indeed have a significant influence in improving and enhancing political realities and practices in society. This influence is further amplified by the contributions of distinguished and iconic writers like the National Laureates or *Sasterawan Negara*, who are deeply respected and held in high esteem by society. As prominent figures, they carry a significant responsibility to represent the aspirations and concerns of the people (Jamin et al., 2024). Their works often highlight the tension between democratic ideals and the complexities of political realities, prompting readers to critically evaluate the systems that govern their lives. By offering an insight perspective, these writings shed light on the impact of politics on society, including the interplay between governance and economic disparity, as well as the influence of identity on political decision-making (Jamin et al., 2024).

As one of the National Laureate, Rahman Shaari, through his works, also exemplifies the intricate relationship between literature and politics by addressing the complexities of Malaysian politics, social justice, societal dynamics and governance. His writings go beyond depicting political realities; they actively engage with them, providing readers with a platform to critique and reflect on governance and power structures. In his novel *Mufarakah*, for example, Rahman Shaari explores the complexities of social and economic disparity, delving into the lives of characters caught between traditional values and the pressures of modernity. Similarly, his novel *Suluh Peraba* highlights the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by individuals in a society undergoing cultural and political transformation. Meanwhile, *Tirai Tokoh* critiques political institutions and leadership, exposing the power imbalances that shape Malaysia's governance. Through compelling characters, insightful portrayals of social classes, and incisive critiques of political systems, Rahman Shaari's works raise critical questions about the disparities inherent in Malaysia's political and economic frameworks. By blending political critique with artistic expression, his literature encourages reflection and discourse, reaffirming the role of literature as a catalyst for societal transformation and the evolution of the nation's political ethos (Hamzah et al., 2023; Jamin et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the political realities depicted in three of Rahman Shaari's recent novels through the lens of realism. Focusing on the socio-political themes presented in his literary portrayals explores how his works offer critical insights and perspectives to foster awareness and understanding of political issues, ultimately contributing to societal and national development. Furthermore, the study highlights the enduring relevance of Rahman Shaari's works as tools for analysing Malaysia's evolving political and social landscape. It also emphasizes the indispensable role of literature in cultivating a more informed, engaged, and socially conscious citizenry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Literary works have long played a significant role in reflecting and critiquing the political realities of societies around the world. Through fiction, allegory, and narrative, authors have

engaged with the political issues of their times, offering critiques of power, governance, and societal structures (Ahmed, 2022; Bohovyk & Bezrukov, 2023). Literature has consistently served as a mirror to the political landscape. Writers globally have used their craft to address oppression, inequality, corruption, and the broader struggle for justice (Weststeijn, 2023). These works not only document the political realities of their respective eras but also inspire change by challenging prevailing norms and advocating for reform.

Ortiz Sánchez and de Lima Pacheco (2024), for example, examine the socio-political critiques embedded in the Mexican novels *Tomóchic* by Heriberto Frías and *Nieves* by José López Portillo y Rojas. Written during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, these novels criticize the oppression of the dispossessed and highlight abuses of power, particularly by landowners and political factions. Through fictionalized accounts, these works expose the harsh realities of exploitation and advocate for justice, demonstrating literature's role in resisting oppressive political systems and promoting reform. On the other hand, Guirguis (2024) explores the work of Juan José Saer, emphasizing art's resistance to oppressive political structures through artistic form. Saer's literary approach, interwoven with the concept of friendship, proposes alternatives to rigid state-centric notions of community. His narratives reflect an aspiration for non-identitarian communities, as inspired by Derrida's philosophy. Guirguis also assesses Saer's response to globalization and localization in the literary market, where his representations of friendship and fragmented communities serve as political and ethical critiques. This underscores literature's capacity to question national constructs and foster inclusivity.

Falola's (2024) study on Chinua Achebe investigates the intersection of fiction, history, and Nigeria's political narrative. Achebe's works, including *Things Fall Apart*, depict Nigeria's evolution across precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods. Falola emphasizes Achebe's imaginative cartography, which critiques political systems and projects future possibilities for Africa. Achebe's ability to encapsulate historical and political insights within his narratives demonstrates literature's power to influence societal consciousness and foster political discourse. Similarly, Soltero (2023) examines the contributions of Mexican women writers in narrating Mexico's political struggles, particularly after the 1968 student movement. Works like Eva Leticia de Sanchez's *Alias Lucia* and Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Velvet Was the Night* intertwine personal and political narratives to explore themes of activism, resistance, and systemic change. Soltero emphasizes how these novels reimagine historical events, blending autobiographical elements with fiction to present an insightful critique of political oppression and societal challenges in Mexico.

Colacurcio's (2023) work on classic American literature investigates themes of race, gender, and national identity through the lens of contextual historicism. By exploring religious and secular perspectives in American literature, Colacurcio highlights how these texts question entrenched political and social ideologies. His analysis of the literary evolution from Puritanism to the American Renaissance underscores literature's enduring relevance in reflecting and challenging national identity constructs. Barai and Biswas (2023) analyse the literary evolution in Bangladesh and West Bengal, reflecting on the socio-political shifts between 1947 and 1971. Their study highlights the emergence of "Border Literature," which captures the experiences of marginalized communities divided by geographical and political boundaries. By examining the middle class's role and the plight of border populations, the authors showcase how literature documents and critiques socio-political tensions while advocating for empathy and reconciliation.

On other occasions, Sen (2023) investigates Rabindranath Tagore's political thought through his musical compositions, placing them alongside his literary works. Tagore's songs, advocating Hindu-Muslim unity and India's composite culture, resonate with universalism and fraternity. Sen situates these musical pieces within Tagore's broader political vision, addressing social divisions and cultural regeneration. This study illustrates how non-traditional literary forms, like music, contribute to the political discourse, enriching the understanding of literature's multifaceted nature. Meanwhile, Meyer (2022) examines Friedrich Engels's influence on German literature and political thought, tracing his integration of philosophical, economic, and literary methods. Posthumously, Engels became a central figure in dramas, poetry, and narratives, particularly during East and West Germany's divergent political contexts. Meyer highlights how Engels's writings remain relevant for social critique in modern political systems, including Germany's social market economy. This analysis reinforces literature's role in perpetuating and adapting revolutionary ideas to contemporary realities.

Wu (2022) investigates the translation of Western political novels during late Qing China, highlighting their role in addressing the nation's colonial crisis. Wu argues that these translations prioritized political reform over linguistic accuracy, turning literature into a vehicle for nationalism, constitutionalism, and intellectual enlightenment. By promoting sociopolitical reform through "transcreation," these works exemplify how literature can serve as a tool for national emancipation and cultural reconstruction, particularly during periods of political upheaval. Koval and Kriukova (2022) analyse Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" as reflected in Andrzej Bart's novel *The Flytrap Factory*. This novel scrutinizes the limitations of legal systems in addressing moral and political failures, particularly in the context of historical atrocities. By reimagining legal tribunals as spaces for moral reckoning, the work challenges conventional notions of justice, emphasizing the need for ethical action and public accountability in political life.

In Malaysia's context, literary works have consistently served as reflective platforms to address socio-political issues, offering critical perspectives on leadership, governance, and societal values. For instance, Hasmadi and Annuar (2024) analyse Faisal Tehrani's *Perempuan Politikus Melayu* as a novel that critiques political corruption, lack of accountability, and the exploitation of power in Malaysia. Using social realism, the authors argue that Tehrani's work highlights the unethical behaviour of politicians, with characters reflecting a protest against opaque leaders and capitalist manipulation. Through aggressive political criticism, the novel offers a critical view of the political landscape, using storytelling to challenge governance and encourage societal reflection. This analysis demonstrates how literature, through its narrative, plays a role in shaping political thought and promoting reform. Daud (2024) highlights the role of Malay humorous stories (*seloka jenaka*) in offering subtle yet significant commentary on Malaysia's political landscape. Characters like *Pak Kaduk*, *Pak Pandir*, and *Lebai Malang*, often depicted with traits of humour, cunning, and folly, are utilized to address political issues such as kleptocracy, electoral discrepancies, and tensions between political factions. The stories, while humorous in nature, embed moral teachings and figurative language that serve to reflect and critique the behaviours and attitudes of political figures and parties. These stories reveal how humour can be employed to express political criticism and encourage reflection on the socio-political realities of Malaysia.

Ariff et al. (2024) highlight the enduring relevance of *Sulalatus Salatin: Sejarah Melayu*, which chronicles the diplomatic leadership of the Malacca Sultanate. This masterpiece emphasizes negotiation strategies, the use of envoys, and leadership traits such

as wisdom and adaptability, offering timeless lessons for addressing political challenges. The study underscores the importance of fostering diplomatic leadership to navigate conflicts and ensure political stability, advocating for integrating such texts into modern discussions on governance. By analysing these historical narratives, the work provides valuable insights into cultivating ethical and effective leadership for contemporary political realities. Similarly, the analysis by Hamzah et al. (2023) of Faisal Tehrani's *Nama Beta Sultan Alaudin* highlights the role of literary works in shaping leadership and governance ideals. This modern Malay literary text, through the lens of ethos, pathos, and logos, depicts Sultan Alaudin's leadership as a model of ethical integrity, empathetic engagement, and rational problem-solving. The portrayal of his moral credibility (ethos), emotional intelligence in building strong societal bonds (pathos), and intellectual problem-solving abilities (logos) underscores the essential qualities of effective governance. The study highlights how *Nama Beta Sultan Alaudin* exemplifies the influence of literary works in shaping political ideals by promoting ethical, empathetic, and intellectual leadership. Such narratives offer guidance for selecting visionary leaders and fostering effective governance in modern contexts.

Saharudin and Affendi (2023) analyse the poetry of Masuri SN, identifying recurring political themes such as leadership, national defence, and loyalty to the country. These themes are explored through the lens of *Teori Sistem Pemikiran Bersepadu 4K*, emphasizing spiritual, heroism, scientific, and creative principles. The poems of Masuri SN reflect the socio-political climate of Malaysia, serving as a medium to reflect the struggles of the nation and to inspire citizens to consider their roles in national development. The interplay of these political themes not only engages with the past and present political environment but also offers a framework for addressing contemporary political challenges. Furthermore, the novel *Busa Hati* by Arena Wati, as analysed by Musa (2022), provides critical commentary on corruption and political manipulation in Malaysia. Set against the political backdrop of Sabah, the novel explores the issues of money politics, party hopping, and corruption. Arena Wati uses these themes to critique the political dynamics that hinder progress and foster division among ethnic groups. The story highlights how these corrupt practices not only disrupt the development of the region but also damage the unity of its people. Through such a narrative, *Busa Hati* serves as a call to action for political reform, urging readers to remain vigilant and ensure that the moral and political direction of the nation stays on course.

Overall, the relationship between literature and political reality is both profound and enduring, as demonstrated by the diverse global examples explored. Literary works have consistently provided a platform for political commentary, shedding light on the complexities of governance and the impact of political systems on society. Literature has proven to be a powerful tool for shaping public consciousness and influencing political thought. By engaging with and critiquing political realities, literature fosters dialogue, promotes accountability, and encourages societal transformation.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study employs Lukacs' theory of realism as the theoretical framework to analyse Rahman Shaari's works and their insights into improving Malaysia's political realities. Specifically, it applies the principles of realism outlined by Lukacs based on his seminal works, namely *The Theory of the Novel* (1963), *Marxism and Human Liberation* (1978), *Studies in European Realism* (1989), and *History and Class Consciousness* (1990). Through this framework, the study aims to identify and critically evaluate the political insights embedded in Rahman

Shaari's works. Lukacs' principles, particularly his focus on social realism and class consciousness, provide a valuable lens for understanding Rahman Shaari's engagement with political issues in Malaysia. Detailed descriptions of these principles, which underpin the analysis, are provided in Table 1 below. This approach not only offers a robust theoretical basis but also situates the analysis within the broader discourse on realism and political realities (Maxwell & Kiegelmann, 2023), contributing to both fields.

Table 1: Lukacs' principles of realism

Lukacs' Works	Lukacs' Realism Criticism Principles
<i>The Theory of the Novel (1963)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depicts the truth of societal life realities.</li> <li>Focuses on societal unity.</li> <li>Looks forward to using the past as a lesson.</li> <li>Identifies problems through social interaction with the environment.</li> <li>"Re-experience" to feel reality.</li> </ul>
<i>Marxism and Human Liberation (1978)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dynamics of future social, moral, and psychological development.</li> <li>Integrates literature with the social dimensions of community life.</li> <li>Connects the self (individual) with social movements towards a democratic and humanistic society.</li> </ul>
<i>Studies in European Liberation (1989)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocates for rights and truth.</li> <li>Committed to human freedom.</li> <li>Fights for the plight of oppressed social classes.</li> <li>Eliminates all forms of falsehood.</li> <li>Cultivates awareness for a humanistic life.</li> <li>Rejects capitalist domination.</li> </ul>
<i>History and Class Consciousness (1990)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The dialectical relationship between the creator and society.</li> <li>Reflects the reality of societal life.</li> <li>Social interaction to influence and raise awareness.</li> <li>The capability of art to present new meanings.</li> <li>Liberates humans to become natural again.</li> <li>Fulfils oneself as a whole human.</li> <li>Transformative power to educate and mobilize society.</li> <li>Focuses on political oppression and economic injustice.</li> <li>Liberation from any form of oppression.</li> <li>Establishment of a humanistic life.</li> </ul>

In terms of study design, this study adopts a qualitative research design, employing content analysis to examine three of Rahman Shaari's recent novels: *Pernikahan di Lubuk Hantu* (2008), *Semoga Molek* (2012), and *Cengkaman Hasrat* (2015). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena within their natural settings. Additionally, this approach allows for an in-depth examination of meanings, experiences, and perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Weyant, 2022). By utilizing content analysis, this study aims to uncover Rahman Shaari's insights into improving Malaysian political realities, in alignment with Creswell's emphasis on qualitative methods for a rich exploration of context. Krippendorff (2019) and Park et al. (2023) highlights content analysis as a systematic approach for analysing textual and communicative data, making it particularly effective for identifying themes and patterns within literary works. This method will systematically analyse the political insights embedded in the novels and explore how these insights relate to current political issues in Malaysia. Furthermore, the study incorporates library research methods to investigate the influence and relationship of Rahman Shaari's perspectives with broader Malaysian political realities. Maxwell (2022) notes that library research provides a comprehensive approach to accessing and analysing existing literature,

enhancing the contextual understanding and theoretical grounding of the study's findings. The following methods of content analysis and library research are outlined in Figure 1, which illustrates the step-by-step methodology guiding this study.

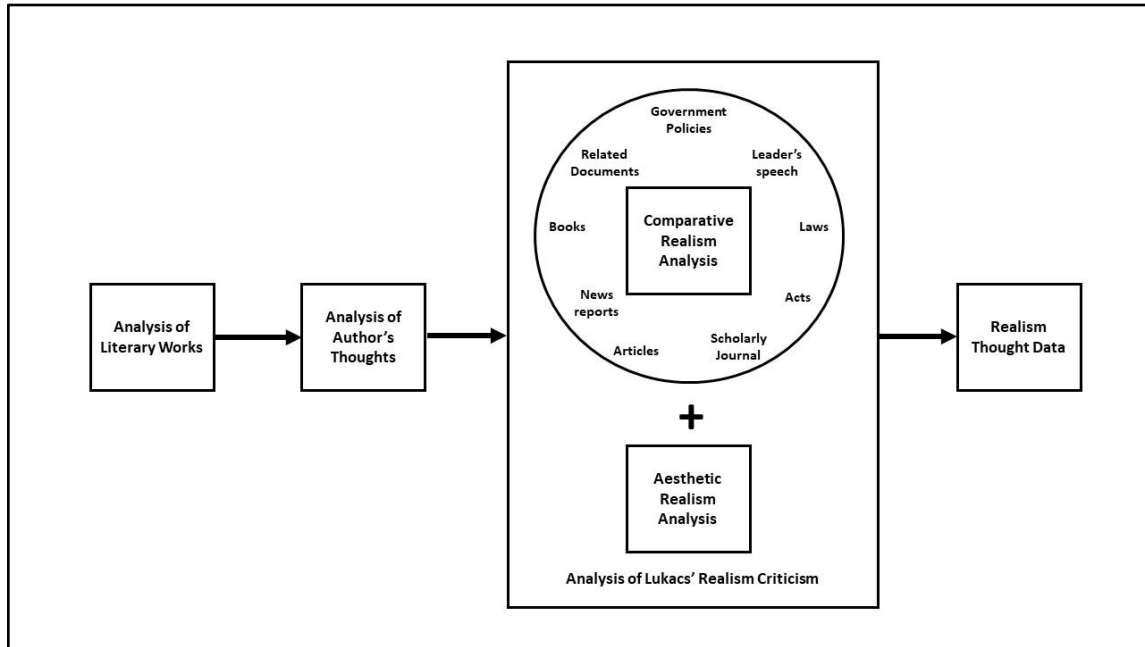


Figure 1: Flow diagram of the proposed method of analysis  
(Adapted from the original works: Jamin et al., 2024)

The detailed description of the method of analysis employed in this study is outlined as follows:

*a. Analysis of Literary Works*

The analysis of the literary works aims to collect thematic and conceptual data from the novels under study. Content analysis is employed, which involves careful and systematic reading to identify the concepts of realism as presented by Rahman Shaari. This analysis portrays societal realities, particularly those reflecting the Malaysian political landscape. The data collected is recorded as raw data for further analysis.

*b. Analysis of Author's Thoughts*

The raw data from the initial analysis is assessed for its relevance and impact on the theme of Malaysian political realities. Data that does not contribute to or influence this theme is excluded. Only data that significantly informs the theme of Malaysian political realities is retained as the author's thought data for further analysis.

*c. Analysis of Lukacs' Realism Criticism*

The analysis of Lukács' realism criticism aims to assess the thought data identified in the previous stages. In line with the study's objectives of systematically identifying, evaluating, and understanding Rahman Shaari's portrayal of political realities, this analysis consists of two phases: comparative realism analysis and aesthetics realism analysis.

The comparative realism analysis examines the relationship between thought data and societal realities. This phase involves library research, comparing the author's insights with evidence from various sources, such as government policies, laws, speeches, scholarly journals, news reports, and related documents (see Figure 1). The alignment of the author's thought data with these sources of realism serves to validate its reflection of societal realities.

The aesthetics realism analysis assesses the societal impact of thought data based on Lukács' realism principles (see Table 1). This phase evaluates how effectively the thought data aligns with these principles and its potential influence on societal dynamics. Only thought data that meets Lukács' realism criteria and demonstrates significant societal impact is retained as realism thought data.

#### *d. Realism Thought Data*

The realism thought data accepted in this study constitutes its final findings. This data is presented descriptively, outlining its coverage of Malaysian political realities, its alignment with societal contexts, and its impact on political life, particularly in improving Malaysia's political landscape. The findings indicate the significant role that literary works, especially those by the National Laureate, play in shaping society and advancing the nation.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Realism and realist works, according to Lukács (1989), emerged and evolved in nations deeply shaped by political struggles. From a realist perspective, the interrelation between literary works and political realities is inseparable. Lukács (1978) further argues that literary works permeate all dimensions of societal life, encompassing political matters and social, educational, economic, and even religious aspects (Jamin et al., 2024). Consequently, realist literary works hold transformative potential in shaping and driving societal life. Concerning politics, Lukács (1978) underscores the role of realist works in cultivating an understanding of social movements to establish democratic and humanistic societies. Consistent with this view, society should be equipped with comprehensive knowledge of political principles and frameworks to engage rationally and effectively in political processes at both national and institutional levels. Focusing on Malaysia's democratic and ethnically diverse political context, the public should be exposed to knowledge about the principles, concepts, and foundations of democracy practiced in the country. This exposure is essential to safeguard individual rights, uphold collective interests, and drive the nation's development and progress. Hence, this study contends that examining political realities within literary works is crucial and highly significant, especially when discussing works by prominent authors such as National Laureates, who profoundly influence Malaysian societal life.

Rahman Shaari, through his novel *Pernikahan di Lubuk Hantu*, is identified as presenting a critique of certain leaders in this country for their failure to seriously address the problems faced by society and the nation. Additionally, Rahman Shaari condemns the behavior of leaders who are excessively outspoken and lack empathy for the people, often making inappropriate jokes that touch on sensitive issues such as sexuality and gender. From a realist perspective, Rahman Shaari's critique in this work aligns closely with Lukács' (1990) focus on confronting political oppression and injustice. Such behaviors, as highlighted in the novel, stand in contrast to the principles of self-fulfillment and the holistic development of individuals, ideals that Lukács (1990) emphasizes as essential to a just society. This critique is further exemplified in the following excerpt:



*“Mari kita tinjau isu kebocoran bangunan. Bangunan mahkamah bocor, bangunan Parlimen bocor. Isu ini serius betul. Tapi, setelah dijenakakan, bagaimana? Yang menjenakakannya pula tidak tahu adat, walaupun orang besar. Dikatakan perempuan pun bocor setiap bulan. Saya kira, orang yang bercakap tentang kebocoran perempuan, tidak berhati perut. Pertama, dia tidak serius membicarakan masalah semasa yang dihadapi negara. Yang kedua dia mempermain-mainkan wanita, yang bererti dia mempermain-mainkan ibu, kakak, dan anak perempuannya. Betul-betul tidak berhati perut.” Hadirin bertepuk tangan.*

Translation:

“Let us examine the issue of building leaks. Court buildings leak, Parliament buildings leak. This is a very serious issue. But what happens when it is turned into a joke? The one making the joke, despite being a prominent figure, shows no decency. It was said that women also leak every month. In my view, anyone who speaks about women leaking in this manner is utterly heartless. First, they are not serious about discussing the current problems facing the nation. Second, they are mocking women, which means they are mocking their own mothers, sisters, and daughters. Truly heartless.” The audience applauded.

(Pernikahan di Lubuk Hantu, 2008, p. 160)

Rahman Shaari, through the excerpt, addresses the reality of incompetent leaders who, in his view, fail to take seriously the responsibilities they are meant to uphold, specifically resolving the problems facing society and the nation. He also cynically critiques leaders who, without hesitation, turn women’s menstrual cycles into subjects of mockery, labelling such leaders as uncultured and lacking empathy. In reality, Ali (2022) stressed that the leaders or politicians are responsible for diligently addressing societal and national issues to ensure the comfort and well-being of the people are always maintained. In a democratic political setting, society relies on leaders to demonstrate integrity and commitment in addressing any issues and safeguarding the welfare, comfort, and overall quality of life (Ali, 2022). When it comes to welfare and well-being, society expects leaders to act rationally and to be mindful of the sensitivities of all groups, including in areas such as gender and sexuality. Ali (2022), for example, emphasizes that leaders should serve as role models by striving to understand and respect differences, fostering harmony within society. Focusing on issues of sexuality involving women, as highlighted by Rahman Shaari, leaders in actuality are urged to cleanse their minds and abandon stereotypes that demean women (Loh, 2020). Loh (2020) further asserts that women’s issues are societal and national concerns requiring leaders’ wisdom in formulating approaches that prioritize individual well-being at every stage of life. From an intellectual perspective, Rahman Shaari’s work clearly aligns with the current political realities in Malaysia, as evidenced by its connection to realism-based evidence. Consequently, this study considers Rahman Shaari’s insights to be highly significant in improving the nation’s political reality. Moreover, from a realist perspective, these ideas also support Lukács’ (1990) vision of creating a humanistic society that is balanced physically, mentally, and spiritually, regardless of status or gender. This work also effectively manifests Lukács’ (1989) principle, which highlights the role of realist literature as a medium for advocating rights and truth.

From the perspective of its impact on the political reality of Malaysian society, the ideas presented by Rahman Shaari are identified as having a significant influence. They serve as both guidance and a reminder for society in the process of selecting leaders. These ideas also function as a critique for leaders or politicians, urging them not to neglect their responsibilities as community leaders. Through these ideas, society can develop and establish criteria for evaluating leaders who will represent their voices. This, in reality, aligns with the suggestion made by Karim (2022), who advises Malaysians to choose competent and trustworthy leaders capable of addressing the issues faced by society. Concerning the inefficiency of leaders, as criticized by Rahman Shaari, Karim (2022) also emphasizes the need for society to be more selective, avoiding the hasty acceptance of leaders who do not meet the necessary criteria, including fundamental values such as respect for all segments of society. Karim's (2022) suggestion is clear evidence that the ideas put forward by Rahman Shaari indeed offer a significant impact in improving the political reality of the nation. They also contribute to ensuring the welfare and realization of a humanistic life, a central tenet of realism, as emphasized by Lukács (1990), through the empowerment of society's mind in selecting leaders capable of fulfilling their responsibilities and advocating for the well-being of society.

From the aesthetic perspective of realism, this impact clearly shows that Rahman Shaari's work serves as a transformative force, educating and motivating society toward a humanistic life, as outlined by Lukács (1990). Regarding the issue of women's rights, which is also addressed by Rahman Shaari, these ideas are seen as an effort to advocate for the welfare of women, who are often regarded as inferior by men. From a realism perspective, these ideas align with Lukács' (1989) emphasis on the role of literature, particularly realist works, as a medium for advocating for oppressed classes. In contrast, these ideas also serve as a call for men to stop undervaluing and belittling women in any context. Thus, from Lukács' (1990) viewpoint, these ideas represent an effort toward human fulfilment, especially for men as leaders, to become complete human beings. Overall, these ideas profoundly impact the improvement of the political reality in this country, particularly in fulfilling a leader's responsibilities and ensuring rights and equality, regardless of class or gender. As a realist work focused on shaping a better future for society, this work stands as evidence that literature can provide new meanings to societal life, as envisioned by Lukács (1990).

Turning to the novel *Semoga Molek*, Rahman Shaari, through this novel, is identified as focusing on the issue of sentiment or political propaganda with an inciting nature within the Malaysian political landscape. From a realist perspective, this situation is recognized as a negative political trend, as such incitements can provoke public unrest, disrupt societal harmony, and, more concerning, escalate tensions among communities, potentially leading to chaos. The adverse effects of this negative political trend, as viewed through the lens of realism, are in clear contrast to Lukács' (1990) vision, which emphasizes the creation of a humanistic society. Therefore, the discussion of this political reality, which involves elements of incitement, is highly pertinent to preventing society in this country from experiencing its harmful impacts. Rahman Shaari's critique of this negative political trend is evident in the following excerpt:

*"Dalam politik bahagian apa pun sama. Bahagian agama, bahagian kebajikan, bahagian penerangan, ah, bahagian apa pun, sebenarnya satu saja tugasnya. Tugasnya menghasut orang ramai."*

*“Oh, gitu. Jadi, Bang Madon masuk parti untuk menghasutlah ya?” Dahi Mak Nisah berkerut.*

*“Kalau tak hasut, macam mana nak himpun orang. Nisah baca tak surat khabar? Sana demonstrasi, sini demonstrasi. Itu kerana hasutanlah.” Pak Madon tersenyum. Kemudian dia menyambung kata, “Esok aku bawa surat khabar pembangkang. Dalam surat khabar tu ada si Husam tulis, kerja pembangkang ialah menghasut.”*

*“Husam tu sapa?” tanya Mak Nisah.*

*“Oh, kau tak tahu ya? Aku ingat aku sedang bercakap dengan ahli PKSR. Husam tu orang kuat PKSR. Dia ada pengetahuan yang luas. Dia kata menghasut tu tak salah, sebab kerja pembangkang memang macam tu.” Pak Madon sudah seronok bercakap tentang politik.*

Translation:

“In politics, it’s all the same no matter the area. Religion, welfare, information, ah, whatever the area, the task is really just one thing. The task is to incite the public.”

“Oh, I see. So, Bang Madon joined a party to incite people, huh?” Mak Nisah frowned.

“If you don’t incite, how can you gather people? Don’t you read the newspapers, Nisah? Demonstrations here, demonstrations there. That’s all because of incitement.” Pak Madon smiled. Then he added, “Tomorrow, I’ll bring an opposition newspaper. In that paper, Husam wrote that the opposition’s job is to incite.”

“Who’s Husam?” asked Mak Nisah.

“Oh, you don’t know? I thought I was talking to a PKSR member. Husam is a key figure in PKSR. He’s very knowledgeable. He says incitement isn’t wrong because that’s just how the opposition works.” Pak Madon was now thoroughly enjoying talking about politics.

(Semoga Molek, 2012, p. 75-76)

Rahman Shaari, through the excerpt, is identified as addressing the behaviour of political members and parties who frequently use inciting ideas as propaganda to gain public support. Moreover, the ideas presented also highlight the normalization of incitement practices in political activities in the country, where such actions are considered customary and regarded as a politician’s duty. This perspective clearly indicates irregularities in the political landscape of this country, as these negative political trends are treated as normal and are readily accepted by society, particularly by politicians who are community leaders. In terms of its impact on society and the nation, this negative political trend raises concerns about potential chaos and the disruption of societal harmony, as evidenced by the series of demonstrations mentioned by Rahman Shaari in the excerpt. Additionally, it may cultivate groups of fanatical or excessively zealous supporters that could threaten the nation’s political stability. Realistically, a political culture or trend based on incitement, including other negative elements such as slander, falsehoods, and manipulation, is identified by Hamid (2024) as a toxic political practice. Its effects can cultivate conflict, discord, hatred, and animosity among politicians and their followers, leading to chaos and political instability. The

adverse effects of incitement-based politics are also realistically explained by Hameed (2022), who states that it can cause anxiety, discomfort, provocation, and disrupt the harmony of a multi-ethnic society in the country. As a result, Hameed (2022) emphasizes the importance of avoiding any harmful actions, particularly by politicians, that could undermine societal unity in a diverse community or violate the country's legal framework. Based on this call, Rahman Shaari's thought is seen as highly relevant in ensuring that political activities in the country remain positive to preserve stability. From the perspective of realism, curbing the culture of incitement in political activities aligns with the principle of eliminating all forms of falsehood, as emphasized by Lukács (1989). In Rahman Shaari's critique, this falsehood can be interpreted as the fanaticism that arises within society, particularly among political supporters who may be misled by incitement.

From the perspective of its impact on the political reality of Malaysian society, the ideas presented by Rahman Shaari are identified as contributing to creating and preserving political stability by rejecting negative political trends, such as the culture of incitement to gain public support. In reality, political stability is crucial for supporting efforts to improve the quality of life for society and to enhance the nation's economic standing (Bernama, 2023). Therefore, Rahman Shaari's perspective, which rejects the continuation of negative political trends in the country, is significant because of its potential to improve the standard of living for society. Furthermore, Hamsin (2023) emphasizes the importance of preserving purity in politics, as he believes that political purity is the key to realizing national aspirations and the desires of society. Consequently, Hamsin (2023) reminds society that political practices based on malevolence, including elements of incitement, as discussed by Rahman Shaari, must be prevented from becoming a culture in the political reality of this country. Societal well-being may not be achieved if people remain trapped in an unstable political environment, driven by the negative political culture outlined by Rahman Shaari in his work. Ultimately, Rahman Shaari's work is seen as successfully fulfilling its role as a realist work, offering a transformative impact, as emphasized by Lukács (1990), in educating society to become politically aware and not easily deceived by inciting ideas played out by politicians. Following this, the ideas presented contribute to the creation of a humanistic society, a central focus of Lukács (1990).

Shifting to the novel *Cengkaman Hasrat*, Rahman Shaari is identified as focusing on the elements of evaluation and justification that should be given attention by society when assessing the ideas presented by political leaders or parties. In the context of Malaysia's political reality, which practices a democratic system, society needs to be educated and equipped with the knowledge regarding the considerations involved in the process of choosing a leader or selecting a government that will represent their collective voice. Therefore, society must carefully consider all the ideas or manifestos presented by both government and opposition leaders before making an informed decision. From a realism perspective, this aspect clearly aligns with Lukács' (1978) emphasis on social movements aimed at creating a democratic and humanistic society. Thus, examining these ideas is not only relevant to political reality but also significant for improving the overall quality of life for society. Rahman Shaari's thoughts on this matter can be seen in the following excerpt:

*"Tadi, seorang pelajar Malaysia bagi tahu saya, esok pagi ada ceramah lagi. Ceramah esok oleh wakil pihak Kerajaan Malaysia. Kita hadir boleh tak?"  
Raizah membuat cadangan dalam bentuk pertanyaan.*

*"Oh, elok, elok. Tadi kita dengar suara pembangkang, dan esok kita dengar suara pihak kerajaan. Barulah betul-betul berimbang." Shahab tersenyum.*

Translation:

"Earlier, a Malaysian student told me there's going to be another talk tomorrow morning. The talk tomorrow will be by a representative from the Malaysian government. Can we attend?" Raizah made a suggestion in the form of a question.

"Oh, that's good, that's good. Earlier, we listened to the opposition's voice, and tomorrow we'll hear from the government's side. That's how we ensure true balance." Shahab smiled.

(*Cengkaman Hasrat*, 2015, p. 211)

Rahman Shaari, through the excerpt, is identified as presenting ideas in the form of recommendations to society. Rahman Shaari emphasizes the importance of evaluation and justification in assessing and selecting leadership. He suggests that society should adopt an open-minded attitude by first listening to the ideas and arguments of leaders or political parties from both the government and the opposition. This recommendation from a realism perspective aligns with Lukács' (1989) principle of eliminating all forms of falsehood, including in political activities. By being open to listening to diverse perspectives allows society to make informed justifications before deciding on their political support. Rahman Shaari's focus on leader selection is strongly emphasized in societal practices realistically. Yusof (2019) asserts that selecting leaders must be approached earnestly because it is a responsibility and obligation for every individual in society. Yusof (2019) also highlights the importance of adopting a *tabayyun* (investigation) approach by verifying information before believing it. In the context of contemporary political reality, where ideas are widely disseminated through media, including social media, the principle of *tabayyun* proposed by Yusof (2019) is also supported by Allam et al. (2024), through their emphasis on the importance of media literacy skills for society, particularly young voters. Skills such as identifying and synthesizing information play a crucial role in shaping young voters' political participation, guiding their decisions and support, and ultimately influencing political stability and national progress.

Thus, Rahman Shaari's recommendation for society to listen to both sides aligns with this principle, effectively preventing society from being misled by a one-sided narrative. In terms of the importance of these ideas for societal life, Sobian (2022) explains that voters must understand the proper conduct of leader selection to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. He further highlights that voters should evaluate a candidate's stance on public policy issues and assess their performance in previous roles, especially in areas that directly impact societal well-being (Sobian, 2022). Therefore, the ideas presented by Rahman Shaari support the need to prepare society with comprehensive political knowledge, ultimately benefiting the improvement of their overall quality of life. Undoubtedly, these ideas resonate with the principle of social progress toward a democratic and humanistic society, a key aesthetic of realism emphasized by Lukács (1978).

From the perspective of its impact on the political reality of Malaysian society, Rahman Shaari's ideas are identified as providing knowledge and fostering understanding among the public about mature political practices, particularly in selecting leaders or governments within Malaysia's democratic system. From a realism standpoint, these ideas demonstrate their

transformative power in educating and mobilizing society, as emphasized by Lukács (1990), while also shaping Malaysian society into a democratic and humanistic community, in line with Lukács' (1978) recommendations. Examining the impact further, the political knowledge and understanding developed through these ideas enable society to elect leaders who can represent and defend their interests. Moreover, it helps prevent negative consequences from mistakes in choosing leaders or governments. In practical terms, Mohamad (2024) highlights that such mistakes can result in hardship and suffering for society, with lasting consequences over time. Furthermore, he emphasizes that education in leadership selection is crucial to ensure that only truly qualified leaders are chosen to lead the country's administration, thereby guaranteeing society's well-being and progress (Mohammad, 2024). Thus, equipping society with political knowledge and understanding is essential to creating a humane life free from oppression, as Lukács (1990) envisioned. In essence, Rahman Shaari's ideas can be seen as an effort to educate society to adopt an open-minded attitude by making thoughtful considerations based on evaluating ideas, facts, and the performance of leaders or leadership candidates. These ideas also remind society to remain open-minded and cautious, avoiding blind trust in any matter without first hearing from both sides. Ultimately, the impact of Rahman Shaari's ideas is profoundly significant in cultivating a society that is not only democratic but also humanistic. This is achieved through deep political knowledge and understanding, which shield society from becoming victims of political oppression.

#### CONCLUSION

Collectively, based on the realist perspectives on political themes presented in the three novels studied, this study finds that Rahman Shaari places significant emphasis on improving the political reality of Malaysia. As a realist writer who holds the title of National Laureate, Rahman Shaari consistently critiques the negative realities of political activities in the country that he believes harm society. Beyond criticism, Rahman Shaari also suggests creating a stable, democratic, and humanistic political reality. This dual approach of critique and recommendation aligns closely with the principles of realist works emphasized by Lukács (1963, 1978, 1989, 1990). In the novel *Pernikahan di Lubuk Hantu*, Rahman Shaari critiques the inefficiency of leaders and their lack of seriousness in addressing societal and national issues. Additionally, he cynically condemns the behavior of leaders who disrespect society by belittling women arbitrarily. In *Semoga Molek*, Rahman Shaari critiques the reality of politically charged incitement that adversely affects societal well-being and the country's political stability. Meanwhile, in *Cengkaman Hasrat*, Rahman Shaari adopts a more suggestive approach by encouraging society to adopt an open and rational attitude by considering ideas and arguments from all sides when evaluating and selecting leaders. The ideas presented across these novels benefit societal life and contribute positively to Malaysia's political reality.

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