Music as Poetry and Performance: Arranged Marriages, Past Instabilities, and Razak Abdul Aziz's Musical Performance

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the intersection of music and literature by taking Malaysian musical performance song cycles as examples. The term, song cycles, is often used in musico-literary studies and is usually associated with Cyrus Hamlin and his definition of it as arrangements and reinterpretations of well-established literary narratives. By incorporating poetry analysis and interviews with Razak Abdul Aziz concerning his musical performance of 10 Pantun Settings, song cycles are recontextualised to incorporate vestiges of cultural identities, specifically, the notion of arranged marriages. As such, the article focuses on Razak Abdul Aziz's musical performance of 10 Pantun Settings as he relates his musical experiences across interviews and the consciousness of the song cycle meanings. The article concludes that the fleeting musico-literary works of 10 Pantun Settings as musically composed and performed revealed the pervasiveness of dreariness, displacement, and disappointment across arranged marriages that provides real-life snapshots of loss and, to a certain extent, a vivid description of bereavement and grief from a "death of a marriage." It is argued that through a complex rendering of arranged marriages, 10 Pantun Settings as a song cycle provoked a nostalgic saudade, past instabilities of what it means growing up married in preconfigured environments. Finally, this article references both the interviews and textual analysis of 10 Pantun Settings to the social exchange principles, specifically the consequence of the woman's emotion in the arranged marriage.

Keywords: arranged marriages; Malaysia; musico-literary; social exchange; song cycles

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Katie Harling-Lee (2020) argues that the potential power of music on literature comprises 'snapshots' of real-world circumstances that present 'windows' into human experiences through creative imaginings. Music and literary works are featured and recontextualised by several landmarks work by Werner Wolf (1999), Cyrus Hamlin (1999), and Hazel Smith (2016), just to name a few, reaffirming the contribution of music in literary studies. One invaluable point of reference involves a Malaysian musical composer, Razak Abdul Aziz, who has published several influential works that replenish not only scholars' thoughts, but also students who work on an emerging discipline, musico-literary studies. This article addresses the specifically Malaysian context within which Razak Abdul Aziz's musical compositions construct an interdisciplinary approach to musico-literary studies. Also, the article will show how his musical scholarship appeals to discussions surrounding the possibility of using music to generate responses concerning marriages, specifically, arranged marriages.

10 Pantun Settings is one of Razak Abdul Aziz's earliest works, written as a song cycle. Composed from 1981 to 1990, *10 Pantun Settings* is perhaps the most performed work by Razak Abdul Aziz in recent years (Zamani & Gani, 2020, p. 960). Razak Abdul Aziz began his 10-year

journey on this work when he discovered a collection of Malay *pantun* by Ahmad Abdullah called *Nyanyian Kanak-Kanak* (1938). The *pantun* were a part of a compilation of poems that Za'ba (or Zaaba, depending on the disciplines that investigate the author's work) assembled called *Kalong Bunga Buku 1* (1964), published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Yoshioka, 2018, p. 47). For context, *pantun* is typified as rhyming Malay poetry that generally consists of four (4) lines in each stanza, though *pantun* with two, six, and eight lines are also abundant. The first two lines, *pembayang*, commingle with the next two lines, *maksud* (Arshad, 2017). First, *pembayang* lines typically serve as an allusion to the *maksud*, which commonly bears the explicit messages of the poems. Second, collections of *pembayang* and *maksud* may or may not be directly linked to one another, depending on the message the poet conveys through the *pantun*. Razak Abdul Aziz selected a handful number of *pantun* from this collection and used them as the lyrics for his song cycles. By doing so, he (sub)consciously narrated stories using his artful rendition and imagination by complying with the tradition of song cycles, a practice in which composers generally adapt texts from poems into their songs to narrate stories that may represent creative adjustments that may differ from the poets' original intentions. An illustration of such a creative adjustment in song cycle literature is demonstrated through Robert Schumann's song cycle *Dichterliebe*. In this cycle, Schumann adapted 12 poems from *Lyrisches Intermezzo* by Heinrich Heine and narrated a story of his imaginative rendition, "one which the main character puts the old bad songs and dreams, all his sorrowful love and suffering into a huge casket, in which twelve giants throw into the sea," even though the actual narratives did not exist in Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* (Komar, 1971, p. 5). Using this example as a reference, it is only logical that Razak Abdul Aziz is viewed as the speaker of the selected poems as he arranged them in certain manners to deliver renditions, illustrating the impact of "recognitive response by the listener in and through the living performance of the song cycle" (Hamlin, 1999, p. 123).

10 Pantun Settings received at times, world premieres, at other times, accoladed through world performance, including the Zelanian Ensemble in Wellington, New Zealand (2 December 1992), Kochi, Japan (16 August 1996), Prague Conservatoire, Czech Republic (21 November 2013), and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (4 May 2018), just to name a few (Zamani, 2020). The staging of musical performances of *10 Pantun Settings* highlights the centrality of the theatrical ensemble that is materialised through costumed solo and chorus singers whose stage props offer the image of 1960s idyllic Malay countryside, though possibly unintended by Razak Abdul Aziz (Zamani, 2020). In the following pages, the article will demonstrate that the exchange of immaterial objects such as arranged marriages, emotions, and honour puts one in a disadvantaged position. As such, the centrality of song cycles provide insights "into the intentional form of the cycle as a work" that generates "dynamic" issues of marriage and past (in)stabilities (Hamlin, 1999, p. 127).

CONTEXTUALISING SONG CYCLES IN MUSICO-LITERARY STUDIES

Several characteristics of song cycles as a form of literature result from a complex orchestration of musico-literary studies that is wide-ranging. First, musico-literary studies are relatively a novel approach to literary studies and are typically associated with Benson's (2006) conceptualisation of it as a "music made by the narrative in which it occurs," that "allows us to see, literally and literarily how and why music continues to be valued so highly" (p.4). Second, while Benson's (2006) conceptualisation of literary music refers to narrative fiction as a form of musical performance, the methodology of Razak Abdul Aziz's song cycle as an interlocking example of music and literature

is informed particularly by Hamlin (1999) and Bowker (2021). Third, the use of the word, song cycle, is deliberate because the focus of the forms, the repetitions, variation (Hamlin, 1999), and reflective experiences precisely attend to how musical performers orchestrate songs according to certain stage performance configuration that sets up the readers and audience position (Bowker, 2021). As such, song cycles bolstering the cognitive awareness of the meaning of the cycle emphasise the "accumulative effect of the individual lyrics as they are sung in sequence" (Hamlin, 1999, p.121). One must be aware that song cycles move "through a form of repetition and variation on the first half, whereby a kind of recollection or recognition is achieved through the role of memory. It is primarily through details and nuances of the music that this spiralling effect is achieved, although poems are also said to support this device in the music" (Hamlin, 1999, p. 121).

As such, song cycles generally do not emphasise 'immalleability', but centre rather on a flexible interpretation of lyric poems because "the sequence of lyric poems which constitutes the cycle, however, they may be selected and arranged and by whom, demand consideration as a literary form, while at the same time the musical medium of the cycle as composition, especially concerning the experience of performing for the listener, is essentially defined by criteria of music as an art form" (Hamlin, 1999, p.129). The communal use of the term, song cycles, to cover the intersection of music and literature enhances the perception that song cycles are nuanced, detailed, and configured to capture the intricacies of feelings and emotions. By focusing on the overlap between musical performance and interview texts, it is demonstrated that while many elements of song cycles may not exemplify literary texts, the processes used by the musical performers, in important respects, resemble the methodology of a literary "analyst."

ARRANGED MARRIAGES: SOCIOCULTURAL WORLDVIEWS

Before discussions of *10 Pantun Settings* are presented, it is perhaps useful to dwell on the notion of marriages, particularly from sociocultural perspectives to set the scene. How have marriages emphasising romance and arranged marriages set the sociocultural worldviews? What are some of the tenets established by the reviews of the literature concerning marriages and arranged marriages? The following readings, while not necessarily comprehensive, will shed some light on the depictions of marriage and arranged marriages which could reveal certain assumptions. First, one way to look at marriage is through an established marriage principle, a culturally recognised union between two or more individuals. Marriages, as such, establish rights and obligations, including prospective spouses and family members (Haviland et al., 2011). Second, marriages typically vary across the universally and culturally accepted expectations of spouses and extended family members. Arranged marriages, however, show the centrality of weddings predetermined by individuals, specifically the spouses' parents. Third, a cursory reading of arranged marriage convention demonstrates that arranged marriages are typically regulated across Malaysian communities. For instance, Chinese communities report more arranged marriages as opposed to Malay families (Zang, 2002) while within the Malaysian Chettiar community, women and men have the agency to consent and dissent against such proposals or arrangements (Somasundaram, 2017). As the following pages will show, the song cycle, elaborations of *10 Pantun Settings* will make visible the social relations that take place as a result of such exchanges (vis-a-vis arranged marriages).

Rubio (2014) looks specifically at arranged marriages to study how marriages are used to accord privileges to creating union. Specifically, arranged marriages construct alliances between

two families, tribes, clans as a way to enter into an informal contract, accentuating members to materialise political objectives, realising smooth economic transactions, consolidating power, preserving social status, and keeping property within the group, just to name a few. Marriages emphasising sociocultural, sociopolitical privileges are traceable to Europe, although the practice gradually became rare in the 12th century, particularly among the bourgeoisie following the end of the Industrial Revolution. In the East, such a practice was still common throughout the 20th century. The marriages prioritising position are attributed to property preservation and maintenance of nobility, rank, and status; hence, the protection of lineage. Similarly, Jack Goody (1999) argues that stories of marriages that emphasise political alliances are portrayed in Ancient Greece, Egypt, Israel, the Roman Empire and among the German and Anglo-Saxon tribes. Both William Goode (1964) and Jack Goody (1999) also suggest that the transition from the dominance of arranged marriages to "marriages emphasising romance" takes place due to the lesser restrictions by the Roman Empire and the privileges accorded to Western Europe Catholic Church. As such, their observations show that marriages emphasising romance persist in the face of the spread of major political spectrums, between rulers and subjects.

The arranged marriage between Sultan Mansor Shah, the sixth sultan of Melaka of Malay Sultanate, and Princess Hang Li Po from China is depicted in *Sejarah Melayu* (compiled by Tun Sri Lanang in the early 17th century). Princess Hang Li Po is illustrated here to depict the centrality of marriage as a means of political alliance; the King of China wants to marry his daughter to the King of Melaka so the marriage stabilises the political ties with Melaka, accentuating the Chinese influence in the region:

> *Maka Raja China pun fikir di dalam hatinya, "Baik Raja Melaka aku ambil akan menantuku, supaya ia berkirim sembah kepadaku"* (Translation: So the King of China in his thought, "It is only right to accept the King of Melaka [Sultan Mansor Shah] as my son in-law, so that he will bow to me") (p.80).

While discrepancy exists between versions recorded in *Sejarah Melayu* and *Suma Oriental* by Tome Pires and Armando Cortesão that stretches as far as 100 years prior, the *Suma Oriental* version records that it is the second Melakan King, Sultan Megat Iskandar Shah, who marries a beautiful woman, a common subject from China (Pires & Cortesão, 2005, pp. 242-243). Although there is a dispute between these two historical accounts, the link between arranged marriages and political rank is sustained, particularly "between the King of China and King of Melaka" (Kong, 2001, p.180). As such, Hang Li Po's exchange from her father's household to the Malay ruler's household "exemplifies the cementing of an alliance" between the two kingdoms (Hashim, 2008, p.23). Therefore, the scribes, both derived from *Sejarah Melayu* and *Suma Oriental*, concerning King of China and King of Melaka can be understood, in one sense, the centrality of arranged marriages, as the following discussions will show, by taking examples from popular novels.

Ombak Rindu (2002) is a novel published by Fauziah Ashari that is subsequently adapted into a motion picture in 2011. The protagonist, Hariz, is a young man born into a wealthy family, a family to whom a country girl, Izzah, is sold. Izzah is deceived into thinking that she is indispensable when she is, in fact, 'traded' and prostituted by her uncle. As Hariz and Izzah intend to have sex, Izzah begs Hariz for a marriage. Hariz agrees on one condition: Izzah shall not inherit the rightful terms as a wife, and that their marriage's announcement to the family members shall be kept at bay. Having Izzah and Hariz in the same house, Hariz's mother, Sufiah, strenuously demands that Hariz be married to Hariz's childhood friend, Mila, a well-known model, actress, and an heiress to affluent parents. Following several marriage conflicts between Hariz and Mila, Izzah is involved in a car accident, resulting in severe injuries which require hospitalisation that

leaves her in a distressful position. Subsequently, Mila sheds tears asking for a divorce from Hariz so Izzah and Hariz could resume their lives as a married couple. Izzah, seen as patient and sincere, who goes against the odds, is trapped in the mental and emotional marriage, and who eventually gets together with Hariz (Izharuddin, 2021). Through conflicts at personal and public levels, the snapshots of women in *Ombak Rindu* depict the feminine stratagems at work resisting masculine boldness in exchange for the after-life *anugerah* (bestowal), immaterial objects in the same rank as "gold," "silver," and "jewels" (Hashim et al., 2012). However, this article will not examine the conditions in which Izzah is positioned, rather this article instead focuses on how arranged marriages provide complications in personal and public spaces, particularly involving hopes, desires, and the fate of many women in the context of arranged marriages who are de-socialised and de-personalised. The incorporation of interview texts and *10 Pantun Settings* analysis, as the ensuing discussions will show, depicts some 'windows' into arranged marriages.

Sebenarnya Saya Isteri Dia (2011), a novel written by Zura Asyfar with its 2013 television adaptation series, shores up stories of arranged marriages, depicting 'debtor-creditor' relationships. The central characters, Farish and Syafa, who are acquainted and eventually fall in love during college, decide to call it off when Farish catches Syafa in bed with Farish's younger brother, Firash. As a result, Datin Farizah (Farish and Firash's mother) strenuously demands that Firash and Syafa be married to "save face" from the public outburst:

> *Mama nak Firash kahwin dengan Syafa secepat mungkin. Kita takkan tahu apa yang berlaku. Mungkin Syaf akan mengandung jika perkara malam tadi betul-betul berlaku.* (Translation: I (Datin Farizah) want you (Firash) to marry Syafa as soon as possible. We do not know what really happened (last night). Syafa might get pregnant if what we thought really happened (read: We think Syafa might get pregnant due to the sexual intercourse) (Episode 2)

In retaliation, Datin Farizah's demands are ridiculed because Syafa is four years senior to Firash and that there is no clear indication of intimacy between Syafa and Firash. Following increasing pressure exerted by Datin Farizah on Firash's accountability, Firash agrees to marry Syafa on one condition, that the discreet union is to be kept at bay. Through conflicts exacerbated by Datin Farizah and the public, Firash and Syafa become intimate and immediately, the public is filled with the knowledge of their marriage. While it could be said that this is exemplary of coercion, it could also be argued that Firash and Syafa's relationship characterises arranged marriages because family members who are accorded nobility, seniority, and rank, decide, alter, and make substantial arrangements (Rubio, 2014).

The arranged marriages as depicted in these works illustrate the benefits of such a union, at times promising conclusions worthy of attention and joy, and at other times, depicting stories of weeping over the fate of the spouses. Arranged marriages are not necessarily equated with happiness, prosperity, and protection, and on occasions, families sever amicable relationships (Jaspal, 2014). Across the literature, Akhtar et al. (2017) find common issues related to arranged marriages that include but are not limited to 1) developing patriarchy, 2) bolstering vindication, 3) being forbidden, and 4) alluding to detachment. In the following pages, we are less interested in how arranged marriages are (re)conceptualised, but rather how *10 Pantun Settings* will reveal instabilities in the distant past.

MARRIAGES, PAST INSTABILITIES, AND *10 PANTUN SETTINGS*

The investigation emphasising *10 Pantun Settings* combined poetry analysis and interviews with Razak Abdul Aziz. First, interviews were carried out to investigate the extent to which the specific stories make for a stable alliance with the literal and figurative meanings of *10 Pantun Settings*. Second, both interviews and textual analysis were discussed from the perspective of social exchange. Of central concern is the notion of "emotion" in understanding how feelings are (in)consistent with the expectations of married spouses. Third, the semi-structured interviews with Razak Abdul Aziz took place in 2018 and the interviews were repeated in 2019 to help bolster consciousness to Razak Abdul Aziz's configurations of words, phrases, and broader verbal responses and his adjustment to the musical performance of *10 Pantun Settings* (Fossey et al., 2002). In general, the interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes and Razak Abdul Aziz was aware that he could start, pause, and end the interview at his will. Interviews were analysed using a dynamic, fluidic approach because interpretation of interviews could take a plethora of multi-layered accounts (Alasuutari, 1999). As such, Alasuutari's (1999) approach prioritises the intersection of interview texts with multidisciplinary contexts that included, but was not limited to politics, religions, and most importantly, culture that emerged through phrases, expressions, and depictions (Kvale, 2007). Transcripts of interviews were read multiple times to ensure comprehension checks.

It would be relevant to thus dwell on the intersection of social exchange theory and emotion (Frank, 1993; Heise, 1987). First, it is argued that one's immediate *perception and outlook* could stabilise the alliance between emotions and identity. In other words, social exchange theorists believe that one's identity is generally accentuated based on the repetitions of positive or negative emotions; if positive emotion is rewarded with another positive emotion, the positive emotions may be circulated, and vice versa. By being conscious of others' feelings, individuals might mimic or mirror these feelings if the outcome is positive, but resist the feelings if negative. For example, someone with a positive identity (a married mother) typically experiences positively confirming circumstances (a mom of the year award). As such, because the "positive transient meaning" commensurates with the identity, positive emotions are generated (Lawler & Thye, 1999, p. 229). Thus, the tenets of social exchange here emphasise the reciprocity of emotions that cements one's identity. As Peter Blau argues, "an individual who supplies rewarding services to another obligates him. To discharge this obligation, the second must furnish benefits to the first in turn" (1974, p.55). As we shall see later, both the interview and *pantun* 'texts' will demonstrate the extent to which 1) positive emotions are reciprocated or 2) negative emotions are resisted.

Secondly, social exchange theorists believe in status of the relationship of the individuals, between the *giver* and *receiver* of emotions (Gregory, 1982). That is, emotions, as experienced in the exchanges, depend upon actors' identities. As such, certain identities such as caregivers and mothers involve the regulation of emotional display; patients and children tend to be more understanding of caregivers and mothers' roles to generate intense emotions. Thus, emotions are exchanged by individuals who already have cemented social ties, a social exchange practice that hinges on identities. As Frank (1993) puts it, emotions generate social tendencies that are reciprocated, resulting in an assortment of feelings; "a spouse who is considering an affair, for example, may refrain out of love or respect for her partner" (Lawler & Thye, 1999, p. 230). Although one may be tempted to argue that social exchange theory carries Western cultural and ideological baggage, we are reminded that words are never neutral (Holquist, 1990). The above are merely a fraction of examples of emotions as seen central in social exchange theory. One could

certainly find similar accounts of the significance of emotions to reciprocate emotional consistency and identity. Yet, one needs also to be cognisant of the fact that the principal tenets of emotions are integral to the social exchange theory; emotions form the continuum of reciprocity, ranging from emotions to behavioural expectations of married partners. Only texts used for songs 1, 2, 3, 5, and 10 were analysed because it is argued that other song cycles did not necessarily depict the spectrums of emotions, revealed through the understanding of *10 Pantun Settings* texts and interviews.

MARRIAGE AND PAST INSTABILITIES

Razak Abdul Aziz took ten years to complete *10 Pantun Settings*. First, in an interview with Razak Abdul Aziz on 5 May 2018, it was unintended that *10 Pantun Settings* contained ten songs. However, when the tenth song was completed, he felt that there was a prospect to cease putting in more songs, before identifying the complete cycle with the name, *10 Nyanyian Settings*. It was on November 24, 2013, that Razak Abdul Aziz intended to re-name the song cycle, *10 Pantun Settings*. Second, during the interview in 2018, Razak Abdul Aziz refused to acknowledge the various multicultural, multifaceted narratives accompanying the song cycle. However, subsequent interviews revealed that *10 Pantun Settings* is, indeed, foregrounded with complex, multi-layered accounts. According to Razak Abdul Aziz, while *10 Pantun Settings* was published as a song cycle, the song cycle revealed stories of an imaginary woman who was in an arranged marriage in the 1960s. For context, she was said to have gotten married to an imaginary man from India whom she never met. The marriage was materialised to maintain the nobility and rank of two Indian-descent families although the woman in this story was of Malay-Indian ancestry (Razak Abdul Aziz, personal interview, 7 December 2018). After a few years into the marriage, the woman was fooled into believing that the man returned to India to 'visit' his parents when the man fled with no news, relegating the woman to single-handedly run the family and raise their daughter.

Drawing from the story of the imaginary woman whose marriage is controlled, Razak Abdul Aziz (sub)consciously composes the song cycle based on her story through an autobiographical account of an abandoned wife, using sets of *pantun* chosen from Ahmad Abdullah's *Nyanyian Kanak-Kanak* (1938) and Za'ba's *Kalong Bunga Buku 1* (1964). The story "begins with the wife, portrayed as a sad woman, swaying her baby in a cradle in the open space of her house, and possibly trying to stay strong for the child. She then starts to daydream into her past, remembering a cake-making scene, a make-believe game she possibly had and her playful game with her husband, including other scenes in the cycle, before returning to reality sometime later at night, at which point realising that she had been abandoned by her husband for another woman (persistently holding on the belief for his return)" (Zamani & Gani, 2020, p. 989). *10 Pantun Settings* (2013) was sourced for the translated text. The translated text was published by the late Badriyah Salleh and Patricia Matusky. Badriyah Salleh was an academic trained in Columbia University who specialised in the fields of history and Malay studies. Besides serving Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) as an academic for over 15 years, Badriyah Salleh served in the Melaka Museum Corporation following her retirement, an instrumental position that helped secure the listing of Melaka and George Town as UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Kratoska, 2015). Patricia Matusky is a renowned academic in Malaysian ethnomusicology. Specialising in Malaysian traditional music, her research focused on Malay shadow play music, Malaysian musical instruments, folk and classical Malay music, music of Sarawak, and other forms of theatrical music. As she spent a significant amount of time in Malaysia as a researcher, serving Universiti Malaya, USM, and *Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan*, just to name a few,

she became fluent in Malay. Razak Abdul Aziz mentioned that he deliberately chose these scholars to translate the selected *pantun* into English after considering their accomplishments. He understood that the translation could be different if the *pantun* were to be translated by other scholars, as he was "keen on the literal translation over contextual translation", as the *pantun* were also translated into several other languages in the published book (Razak Abdul Aziz, personal interview, 11 November 2018).

In the following pages, analysis of texts and interviews incorporated the musical expressions and song identification to show how the song cycles demonstrated "reinterpretations of well-established literary narratives" (Bowker, 2021, p.78):

No. 1: "Buai Adik" (Sway, Child)

Ayun adik, ayun
Ayun sampai laju
Bangun adik, bangun
Bangun pakai baju
Swing, child swing
Swing faster and faster
Awake, child awake
Awake and get dressed

Baju bercekak musang
Corak belang sawa
Hendak menghebat tunang
Hendak senyum dengan ketawa
A shirt with a Malay collar
A shirt with stripes
Go impress your loved one
Go and smile with laughter

Di pangkal pulai muda
Ada sarang induk tupai
Datang kapal dengan nakhoda
Tanda dagangan sudah sampai
At the bottom of the young Pulai tree
Is the mother squirrel's nest
A ship arrives with its captain
A sign that trade has arrived

"Buai Adik" takes readers to glimpses of past emotions. First, by using "awake" and "faster", Razak Abdul Aziz juxtaposes the condition of time and the relations between being "awake" and "faster" to the moment-by-moment opportunity, in this case, preparing oneself to meet a familiar 'figure' for routined 'transactions.' Second, for Razak Abdul Aziz's speaker, past emotions are doubly configured; the opportunity to meet the person gives the chance to make oneself visible, and that the heritage and to a certain extent, lineage (vis-a-vis "loved ones"), are evoked to emphasise the importance of the identity that is acquainted with the person-in-arriving. Third, the interview with Razak Abdul Aziz, however, revealed that instead of illuminating desirousness and events reminiscent of pleasing past emotions, Razak Abdul Aziz visualised dark, perilous events, that of a woman swaying her child in a cradle, shedding tears over her fate, and trying to conceal the poignance and dejection at the "bottom" of a "nest" (Zamani & Gani, 2020, pp. 964-965). As Razak Abdul Aziz says, the music played at the beginning embellished "very slow, almost without feeling" narratives (Aziz, 2013, p. 50).

From the perspectives of social exchange theory, what does "Buai Adik" reveal concerning the "silencing" of the incoming "loved one"? As Razak Abdul Aziz described in our interview, "…the woman in the arranged marriage had to prioritise the marriage as opposed to making herself happy, leaving her well-being behind" (Razak Abdul Aziz, personal interview, 11 November 2018). Perhaps such silencing with no overt depiction of the "loved one" deflects wretched emotions. The "silencing" of the grim marriage prospect magnifies the ruin of emotional stability since such "silencing" might foreshadow the speaker's mysteriously wanting for bonding. Though the word *induk* (mother) is used as a *pembayang* in this *pantun*, the composer had a different view when adapting this *pantun* as the lyrics. He mentioned that he "figuratively referenced the imaginary woman in the arranged marriage through *induk*" (Razak Abdul Aziz, personal interview, 11 November 2018). The words, as depicted above, illuminate the lively-quiet continuum (Heise, 1987). Precisely because the lively-quiet continuum is referenced, the unity of the soul, in this case, the woman-in-waiting, is seen as disintegrated, highlighting the emotion of a joyful, routine expectation ("go and smile with laughter") that does not equate with the emotions of the same valence ("very slow, almost without feeling").

No. 2: "Buat Kuih" (Cake Making)

Ada satu baulu
Pecah telur dalam pasu
Dilebuk dengan lidi baru
Sudah masak, orang tua pilih dulu
There is a *baulu* cake
Break an egg into a bowl
Beat the eggs with a whisk
When it is baked, the elders choose first

Buah Melaka ke atas gugur
Di luar tepung, di dalam gula
Digolek-golek kelapa kukur
Budak-budak sangat suka
Molasses on top of crumbs
Batter on the outside, sugar on the inside
All rolled on grated coconuts
All children really like it

Satu kuih cucur kodok
Masaknya berbentuk-bentuk
Sudah masak dicucuk-cucuk
Banyak dimakan mata mengantuk
A small fried banana cake
Made in various forms
Baked on bamboo skewers
Eat a lot and you fall asleep

Satu lagi kuih koci
Bungkusnya tiga segi
Di luar tepung, di dalam inti
Dimakan orang tua tak bergigi
Another cake the *kuih koci*
Wrapped in a triangle shape
Outside is the batter, inside is the filling
Old folks without teeth eat it

"Buat Kuih" reveals certain meanings associated with past recollection. First, Razak Abdul Aziz gravitates to the mixed bag of Malay *kuih* (cookies or delicacies) to evoke a sense of past contentment. The Malay *kuih*, particularly, *baulu*, *Buah Melaka*, *cucur kodok*, and *kuih koci,* accord the privilege to delectable, impeccable confectionery, imagery that highlights and renders youth's considerable beauty and attraction and the expectations of youth that are generally met and acknowledged, hence the employment of "molasses" and "children like it." Second, the density and varying use of the following verbs, "wrapped," "made," "baked," "break," and "beat," emphasise actions that are equated with a sense of accomplishments and the transient impression and gratification that appear simultaneously with the demands and goals that are fulfilled. By focusing on how *kuih* are prepared, baked, and plated, "Buat Kuih" signifies the interdependence of *kuih* textures and flavours to symbolise the permanent, invaluable, sweet past remembrance.

If we incorporate the lens of social exchange into the reading of *Buat Kuih*, the multifarious emotions of the imaginary woman in the arranged marriage are exposed. First, the poem celebrates the depth of the woman's cultural lineage, hence, the use of "batter on the outside, sugar in the inside" and "outside is the batter, inside is the filling," delineating the delicate emotions that are met consistent with the diverse identities of the woman (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Second, the imagery of an assortment of *kuih* also signifies the various cultural elements that are rich in description and in practice may represent the various facets of multiculturalism. Third, when being juxtaposed with "the elders choose first" and "old folks without teeth eating it," the multiplicity of delicacies, however, centralise the involvement of the elders, possibly the imaginary woman's parents who meddle into her future and life, specifically by placing her in a preconfigured environment, the arranged marriage. Viewed from the lens of social exchange, therefore, the identity of the imaginary woman in the arranged marriage is consistent with the performance that was "lively, full of excitement" but "with uncontrolled agitation" (p.52) to "slow, lazily-saucily" (p.78) musical performance in the middle, before reverting to the earlier excitement (Aziz, 2013). By focusing on the inconsistent emotions at the beginning and conclusion of "Buat Kuih," it is argued that "the emotions experienced in exchange are contingent on the actors' identities" (Lawler & Thye, 1999, p. 229); in this case, the imaginary woman's cultural identity is fraught with the complications of exchange and marriage, as her fate is configured by the hands of the "elders" or "old folks."

No. 3: *Mandi-Mandi* (Bathing)

Ketam berdayung-dayung
Rama-rama berkemudi
Kembangkanlah payung
Anak raja turun mandi
The crabs paddle along
The butterflies flutter in a line
Open the umbrella
A royal child is bathing

Moh ke sana, menyelam
Di sana tempat dengkat
Air penuh, hati geram
Baik kita pergi cepat
Come along, let us dive
Over there it is shallow
At high tide, we are all eager
Quickly let us go

In "Mandi-Mandi," the possibility of being connected to convivial, past contentment is obvious here. The landscaped experiences that commingle with "crabs" and "butterflies" illustrate the union of somewhat perfect equality, both concerning material objects (umbrella) and immaterial objects (sentiments such as "flutter" and "paddle"). In the "leisure, stately" manner (Aziz, 2013, p. 84), Razak Abdul Aziz uses the imagery to be read in conjunction with the speaker to make visible lived experiences to keep their dreams alive regardless of the tortuous route vis-a-vis "high tide" to remain committed to their lives. As such, the imagery of a place that houses "crabs" and "butterflies" are conjured hand-in-hand with areas that are prone to "high tide" to indicate points of demarcation of necessities, identity, and to a certain extent, spirituality, because these places have long served their dwellings, and their happiness depends upon the longevity of the ecosystems. As the composer says, the musical composition alludes to a particularly melodious tone that emphasises several young children cementing an alliance with the landscaped environment, "pretending to be princes and princesses in a world so different from theirs" (Zamani, 2021, pp. 117-119).

However, social exchange theory highlights the dynamics of the woman's emotions. Her emotions, which dwell upon the mysterious husband to "play house," bear significance to the social nature of social exchange; emotions insure "the continuance of a relationship" (Komter, 1996, pp. 39-40). That is, "Mandi-Mandi" carefully threads and treads the notion that the spouses' relationships in the arranged marriage not only incorporates obligations and long-term connections, but the imagery used by Razak Abdul Aziz's speaker highlights that for arranged marriages to sustain, one must be conscious and raise suspicion of the possibility of being left behind or "faithfully" violated. "Come along, let us dive" could signify one holding fast to the belief that nobody protects the woman's emotion; it is herself that she holds accountability to, to not look foolish without her husband, and certainly to not look as if her emotions are unpalatable. "Mandi-Mandi" hints at the one-way exchange between the woman's household and the danger that lurks behind the arranged marriage. By focusing on the social exchange theory, unrequited love in arranged marriages affects the spouses' dignity and honour because "long-term committed relationships prosper only when emotional reactions are coordinated at the dyadic level" (Lawler & Thye, 2021, p.230).

No. 5: "Sorok-Sorok" (Hide and Seek)

Tam-tam buku
Kerakap daun pudding
Siapa hendak suku
Tangkap bulu kucing
Hit, hit the fist
Old dried pudding leaves
Whoever wants to be part of the group
Catch the knob on the cat's tail

Pit-pit!
Patah paku, patah puting,
Cari aku balik dinding.
Pit-pit!
Break the nail, break the handle,
Find me behind the wall.

Cak liku buku tebu
Cari aku balik pintu
Hantu kopek ada situ

Kopek besar, takut aku!
Chew on the sugarcane stem,
Look for me behind the door,
The big breasted ghost is there,
A big breasted ghost, I am afraid!

Kap-kap hudang,
Di mana serampang hendak jatuh?
Di lubuk ikan banyak.
Um-m-m pecak!
The shell of the prawn,
Where has the spear gone?
In the pool where there are many fish.
Um-m-m I got the fish!

Razak Abdul Aziz's speaker cherishes by romanticising past recollection that was once experienced by young children. The game in which the young children used to play is celebrated with the nostalgic imagery that was all in a day's fun, so much so that the transitivity (Halliday, 1994; Idrus et al., 2016, 2017) is used to conjure images of materiality and behaviour, for instance, "wants to be," "catch the knob," "break the nail," "break the handle," "find me," "chew on," "look for," and "got the fish." Transitivity as a linguistic device is repeatedly used in almost all stanzas to evoke the sense of accomplishments of tangible objects ("fish" and "cat's tail") that are used to emanate from the routined expectations of young children from the surrounding areas, a signification of the "natural" pace of social conditioning. Each stanza bears the resemblance to "snapshots" of the qualities of being nonchalant and unbothered, as the young children could count on their closest relatives and their network of influence to sustain happiness.

From the perspective of social exchange, the song, "Sorok-Sorok," may be seen as operating within exchange relations that stabilise or subvert emotions. Weiner's framework (Lazarus, 1984) uses the social exchange lens as a unit of analysis in which the repetition in subconscious imagination is equated with the feelings of "good or bad as a result of the exchange; they are motivated to reproduce the positive and eliminate the negative emotions" (Lawler & Thye, 1999, p. 235). By evoking the elements of exchange relations in the woman's imagination so important to the mysterious existence of the husband, "Sorok-Sorok" raises our expectations that the woman's impossible union with the husband will confirm the suspicion that she uses her imagination to set up her instances of contentment and rules; she frees herself from the pain of being abandoned as a consequence of the arranged marriage. At the same time, "Sorok-Sorok" exposes her coping mechanism to mend her fragmented emotions by visualising the creative imagining of intimacy between married partners. In an interview with Razak Abdul Aziz on 24 November 2018, the composer emphasised that his interpretation of "Sorok-Sorok" was realised through various sections to depict different parts of the game, the slower sections orchestrated the woman hiding, while the speedier sections resembled the playfulness of spouses before the sexual intimacy took place (Zamani & Gani, 2020). As such, Razak Abdul Aziz's musical performance of "Sorok-Sorok" restores and boosts the woman's hope and honour because the woman's coping mechanism bears a resemblance to outcomes of exchange of emotions and identities.

No. 10: *Ba, ba, Cak!* (Ba, ba, Cak!)

Ba, ba, Cak! Cuba pandang
Bulan atas pucuk kayu ara
Apa kena abang tak pulang?
Terkurung dalam bilik anak dara

Ba, Ba, Cak! Try to see,
The moon is at the tip of the fig tree,
Why has my lover not come home?
He is trapped in the maiden's room!

Apa kena bulan tak terang?
Terlindung pokok kekabu,
Apa kena abang tak pulang?
Sudah terkurung dalam kelambu!
Why is the moon not bright?
It is hidden by the cotton tree,
Why has my lover not come home?
He is trapped in the mosquito net!

Ba, ba, Cak! appears last in *10 Pantun Settings* as a mark of the final song cycle. According to Razak Abdul Aziz, the song has a long music introduction to conclude the long daydream of the woman in the arranged marriage, juxtaposed to conceal her grief. At this point, the song cycle reflects the various options before her, to accept her fate or shed tears over a broken marriage. The lens of social exchange shows, then, that the song cycle texts demonstrate probable estrangement and dissolution of relations, between imagination and reality, between the abandoned woman and imaginary husband. That is, the imaginary woman is free to choose and adopt the way of life she picks. On one level, the woman as marginalised in her marriage, is mocked for her insignificance in Ba, ba, Cak! The woman is doubly punished for her lack of visibility (vis-a-vis "Why has my lover not come home") and restrictions to architect her future (hence the arranged marriage). On another level, she is thought of as a subject with no apparent agency; in Ba, ba, Cak! the woman is illustrated merely in thoughts, but not actions. Through the lens of social exchange, the woman is ultimately ridiculed for her presence, not receiving compassion from her mysterious husband. As Lawler and Thye (1999) argue, "mutual dependencies (or interdependencies) produce joint activities to produce stronger/weaker individual-collective ties" (pp.237-238). In Ba, ba, Cak! the woman in the arranged marriage is depicted as being peripheralised because her husband does not need her; instead, he needs the "maiden." On the one hand, the text, according to Razak Abdul Aziz, is cynical, on the other, the text is musically orchestrated in an ambivalent, depressing mood. Eventually, the composer confirmed that the motif used in this song was "nuanced based on the first song of this cycle, *Buai Adik,* concluding the finality of the work" (Zamani & Gani, 2020, p. 989). These various meanings of exchange of feelings, desires, and emotions evoke how the imaginary woman react to the arranged marriage.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above has been primarily to conceptualise the fleeting song cycle, *10 Pantun Settings*, as musically composed and performed. The textual and interviews above revealed the pervasiveness of wretchedness, peripheralisation, and disappointment across arranged marriages that provides real-life snapshots of loss and grief. As Razak Abdul Aziz said, "The woman in the arranged marriage had to put the marriage first and herself second…she became emotionally ill and suffered a long-term grievance, probably to this day" (Razak Abdul Aziz, personal interview, 11 November 2018). It is argued that through a complex rendering of arranged marriages, *10 Pantun Settings* provoked a nostalgic saudade and past instabilities of what it means growing up married in preconfigured environments. In "Buai Adik," "Buat Kuih," "Mandi-Mandi," "Sorok-Sorok," and "Ba, ba, Cak!", we observe the fate of the woman in the arranged marriage between

being pushed to the margin and signifying her silent presence (read: the imaginary husband only focuses on the "maiden" and his own well-being by fleeing the marriage with no news). As such, the application of social exchange theory in Malaysian musico-literary will remain and continue to highlight slippages involving (imaginary) wives and husbands who may find themselves in contentment or difficulties, destabilising the ideal and lived experiences of arranged marriages.

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