

## ICMR 2019

### 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research

#### BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ISLAMIC THOUGHTS IN RUANG PERJALANAN

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#### *Abstract*

This study highlights the relationship between excerpts in a chosen Malay novel. It discusses the relationship and the process associated with intertextuality. The framework of this study adopts Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality. The intertextual formula comes in the forms of relationship between hypertext (short stories) with hypertext (novels) to analyse its meanings, process and rationales. This research engages the authorship of S. Othman Kelantan and his works' discourse intertextual trend consistency. The analysis involves the novel, *Ruang Perjalanan* (1989). Additionally, the findings present that by employing the framework, the authorship of Kelantan, S. O exhibits loyalty to the original text in the genre of short stories, which is later developed into novel. This process happens when the text *Ruang Perjalanan*, which is elaborated from a short story *Aku dan Anakku*. In fact, his authorship is evident with the presence of his sensitivity assimilating the personal and educational background of Islam in producing *Ruang Perjalanan*. The study deduces that S. Othman Kelantan's intertextual process does not only exist physically (short stories to novels). Nevertheless, it is essentially the impacts of his environment and personality of Malay-Muslim that existed within himself that is being translated into his literature.

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**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Julia Kristeva, S. Othman Kelantan, *Aku dan Anakku* the short story, *Ruang Perjalanan* the novel.



## 1. Introduction

The choice of S. Othman Kelantan as a Malay author is based on multiple factors that fulfil the demands of the intertextuality as the main base. Kelantan, S. O's inclination to deliver intertextual novels that has been observed since the 1960s, that later has been extended to the 80s through the novel *Ruang Perjalanan*. This novel discusses human mind and not a mere story. *Ruang Perjalanan* includes a long-winded dialogue from chapter 1 until chapter 15. As stated by Kelantan (2008a, 2008b), creativity emerges from the mind and the thoughts. Nature grants knowledge to human. Thought exists as the principle for the nature of human creativity. The mind, the passion and the heart (faith) have long rooted within the first human being until now. Thinking modes serve as the foundation of creative writing such as novels and short stories, chiefly scholarly books. Other elements such as plot, background and character are not as vital except to function as the basis for creative writing. It is undisputable that, through the *Ruang Perjalanan*, the author accentuates prominently on Islamic philosophy and thoughts. No character name is found, just like most of his writings. Thus, generally, the novel is a reflection to his ideas. In short, the *Ruang Perjalanan* revolves around of "me", a retired university lecturer who lives with the values in the past. For "me", mind, the passion and the heart (faith) are abstract organisms that intertwine within the human being to think, believe and accept the existence of God. "Me", is characterized as having to deal with "my son" who possess contradictory character, who is being materialistic and focuses on his/her belief in science and technology. The novel leads the readers to delve into philosophical debates or dialogues. The aspiration of the author's adoption of the idea of humanism in the character of "me" is to acquaint "my son" on the truth of Islam in the coming modern life.

## 2. Problem Statement

The fundamental at the germinal stage of consideration of this author is due to his charisma in the Malay literature realm. Based on the readings of S. Othman Kelantan's preceding novels, it is commonly observed that S. Othman Kelantan has a propensity to "reiterate" several components or subjects such as themes, questions, plots, backgrounds and characters in the short story, to his novels later. It is assumed that déjà vu or already written effect allows S. Othman Kelantan a distinctive authorship mode in building up his creativity. Hence, this study addresses three chief issues; what are the changes that take place in the novel, how they are transformed and why they are created by the author. These three dimensions promote insights into the form of Malay authorship depicted by Kelantan, S. O. The purpose of the previous texts in reference to the production of later texts concerned a series of processes that formed the "new" work not only in terms of manifestation, but also the facet of meaning that was affected by the style authorship of S. Othman Kelantan.

## 3. Research Questions

There are two important research questions in this study. Firstly, what are the principles of intertextuality that will be implemented in the studied? Secondly, how to perceive the creative process of Kelantan, S. O.?

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

This study accentuates elements of the relationship between short and novel from the intertextual dimension. Ergo, the objectives are as follows:

- a) To identify the principles of intertextuality relevant for usage as an analytical framework based on the text studied.
- b) To demonstrate the creative process of S. Othman Kelantan intrinsically employing the principles of intertextuality.
- c) To establish the factors that impact the manifestation of “textual relationships” in S. Othman Kelantan’s novels.

#### 5. Research Methods

“Intertextuality” is derived from the Latin word *intertexto*, which means mesh yarn during weaving. It is broadly argued that the theory of intertextuality was the consequence of the early work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure engages a debate on the fundamental question of language signals that are classified in two categorizations specifically concept (signified) and sound image (signifier). Semiotics is particularly efficient for analysing abstract and absurd literatures. With the feeling that there was a flaw in the structuralism of Saussure’s concept of evaluating Russian works in his day, motivated Mikhail Bakhtin to exploit another approaches to interpret Russian works. Bakhtin started to implement the features of language onto the literary genre around the 1920s (as cited in Sikana, 2006). In his book of *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin employs the dialogic concept. The fundamental of Bakhtin’s “dialogue” theory is that past speech impacts today’s or there is no speech without any connection with another speaker.

Julia Kristeva is a figure who further develops Bakhtin’s dialogical theory. Kristeva no longer employs the phrase “dialogic” but instead replaces it with “intertextuality”. The theory of “intertextuality” was first coined by Kristeva to a French literary audience in the 1960s through her writing “*Le mot, le dialogue et le roman*” (Safei, 2009, p. 22). The intertextual comprehension of this study is established on Kristeva’s main definition of “... any text is the absorption and transformation of another” in *Semiotics and Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (as cited in Sikana, 2006, p. 197). Kristeva then pursues the Bakhtin dialogue process by detailing on various elementary principles like excerpts, absorption, transposition and transformation (Safei, 2010a, 2010b).

Kristeva’s intertextual formulation proposes that the creative process of an author commences from the earlier text by some process of alteration, absorption or excerpts. Kristeva regards a text created from multiple of earlier texts, elaborating on three elements: what was the process happened, how it was done, and why it was created by the author. As claimed by Kristeva, an individual’s creativity is determined by the external and internal components that govern their thinking. In the upper structure of the mind, all external elements accumulate, while the inner elements reside within the subordinate structure of the mind. External elements comprise author experience, culture, religion, beliefs, traditions, social aspects, history, morals, education, philosophy, attitudes, ideologies and everything else that promotes the production of a literary work. While the interior elements engage the aesthetics, imagination and illusion of the author him/herself.

The mixture of the two ingredients, external and internal, will affect the creativity of the author throughout the process of creation. External factors will impact his/her thinking in terms of theme selection, background and character appearances in the creative works created by the writer. Even though intertextuality interprets a work as a reflection of the author, everything in the mind of the author flows into his/ her literature in the course of the creation process since the external elements cannot be removed during the process of creation. As a matter of fact, all of these features are absorbed into the text created by the author and can be traced in his/ her writing. This process is vital to observe the function and significance of the presence of the text (Safei, 2009).

Short-story shift to a novel concerns a process of creating new works not only in terms of form but also meaning. This phenomenon is regarded as one of the idiosyncrasies of Kelantan, S. O's authorship that tends to experiment specifically with the recreation of the early texts and his persistence in introducing the theme of Malay life in Kelantan in majority of his works.

## 6. Findings

It is recognized that S. Othman Kelantan is in the process of transferring and developing the story of "Me and My son" into a new form titled *Ruang Perjalanan*. This is in accordance with S. Othman Kelantan's statement that the creation of the novel *Ruang Perjalanan* is based on the short story "Me and My Son" (Abdullah, 1993a). Hence, the hypertext created is akin in terms of idea alignment and does not portray any real contrast from the hypothetical. The bond between these two texts is through a process named parallel. The persistence of S. Othman Kelantan's tendency proves that this author has made it part of his way of writing.

The textual work or text input by Kelantan, S. O. through the expression of thoughts and methods of storytelling in the *Ruang Perjalanan* (1989) is obviously different from his other conventional novels. S. Othman Kelantan adopts his knowledge in philosophy and Islam to strengthen the subject of the story (Abdullah, 1993b). As being mentioned by Safei (2009), such novels are complicated to comprehend through one reading and are not favoured by readers who commonly opt for conventional storytelling. Nevertheless, preparatory thinking is needed to help the audience to react to the novel and to avoid boredom (Zakaria, 1990). It is proposed that these details are ground-breaking from the context of creativity, challenging innovation and eventually delivering a different meaning than the original text.

Kelantan (2003) has mentioned that in *Ruang Perjalanan*, there is no direct story, except for a series of events and dialogues portraying significant and scientific arguments comprising science, religion and logic. This novel, is an extension of the incomplete ideas and thoughts of Islam in the novel *Pertentangan* (Conflict). It is too, a continuance of ideas and thoughts that were later recorded in the novel *Naghogho Astana* work. This novel has been debated scientifically by some scholars and is treated as scientific text.

*Ruang Perjalanan* is packed with its philosophical offerings. In short, philosophy is defined as the wisdom of adopting the mind to know the ultimate truth. In Arabic, the word philosophy is related to the term wisdom. In the Qur'an, there is no word for philosophy, but that does not suggest that it does not exist in it at all. In actuality, the term wisdom is more than a philosophical term. The position of wisdom in the Qur'an has a higher value than philosophy. The weight of philosophy is seemingly revealed by the author in the following excerpts:

“... And that is what I am waiting for to urge it with thoughts of the past in the integrated education system; true knowledge, philosophical debate and Islamic guidance. Real knowledge emerges from the Qur’an, philosophical debate grows from the depth of faith and understanding of the absolute truth based on all the teachings of Islam...” (p. 91).

“... While in the integrated education system, knowledge is still beneficial to people in all fields including science and technology, but human beings still have a sense of humanity that can associate with one another in the true philosophical manner, and that truth is founded from the teachings of Islam. Therefore, that knowledge is not just favourable but it also positions people in the proper disposition; and that truth develops from the Qur’an, which is the truth of Islam...” (p. 93).

S. Othman Kelantan is observed as embodying a philosophy of science. As Safei (2010a, 2010b) proposes, literature is not only “beautiful” in terms of language and style of storytelling but also the knowledge it offers. Kelantan S. O. works to blend knowledge in the “issue impacts” and delivery mode. S. Othman Kelantan’s knowledge of science is highly related to his personal background as a scholar. His vast wisdom of philosophy field has been employed in writing this novel. In fact, it is admitted by himself that all the learning and ideas about philosophy acquired during his university years are introduced in this novel.

The character “me” was established by the author as “a retired literature lecturer” (p. 22). The academic competency of “me” is used to make “My son realizes” (p. 13). The “me” background is from a group of humanities researchers blended with some religious studies experience as a result of Shah Waliullah al Dihlawi’s thought (p. 236). Motivated from this mixed disciplines, “me” is portrayed as seeking to awaken “My son”. Meanwhile, the character of “My son” is reflected by the author as a smart child (p. 41), being educated in the science stream since childhood and grew up in the culture of Western secular education and philosophy (p. 39) reaching to a point of total abandonment of religious role (Zakaria, 1990).

In the opinion of Tahir (1990), The novel *Ruang Perjalanan* may not be contemplated a mimetic (imitation) fiction, but rather it is a more precisely classified as dream fiction. When it comes to dream fiction, it normally initiates the story in the form of dream, however, this novel does not only offer it in the form of a dream but it also gives the readers the whole story. In fact, there are even dreams within dreams. It is more suitable to be reminded that the complete contents of the novel are a dream of a “me” character who monopolizes the story.

This novel is actually a dream; the dream of a “will” (future) world that has the potential to happen, in fact, it is already taking place now. In point of fact, a “will” (future) started from the current age that is being observed and experienced by the author. Hence, the anticipated future may happen at least three centuries from now, or it may be earlier than that. Advancement is not only evident in the realm of science and technology but also in the elements of socialization and human life itself (Tahir, 1990).

Chapter three onwards suggests to be the beginning of a dream (not as a dream but a flashback). The entire story is a world, a life that “will” (future) happen. After that, the whole thing is solely a dream. The author never suggested that he was awake from his dream. This proposed the readers that the whole story

is a dream comprising “me”, “my son” and my “grandchild”. This is apparent when the author mentions that “I will dream like this” (p. 32).

Tahir (1990) felt that this technique unveiled the author’s weakness. The usage of the words “will” such as “I will dream”, “I will say” and “my son” will answer” entails that something that will occur in the future or may not happen at all. At the same time, the author’s daily notes are not futuristic in nature. Nevertheless, S. Othman Kelantan appears to contradict this claim by mentioning that this dialogue technique is exploited as an argumentative tool for signifying their truth without using external action. Additionally, Kelantan, S. O. mentions that, the difficulty for a writer like him in creating a work lies in the techniques of presentation and language creation. This is because readers will be wearied of the same writing techniques as well as restricting the creativity of an author.

With reference to Islamic literature, it is an evaluation that refers to the demands of Islam in working (Sikana, 2006). As a holistic religion, Islam too promotes the world of literary creation in accordance with the teachings, *tasyrik* and righteousness of its people in the world and the hereafter. S. Othman Kelantan created multiple conclusions and definitions of the theory of the true teaching or character of Islamic literature. Firstly, the creative work produced is based on the stories that are presented in the Qur’an and the hadith. Secondly, Islamic literary works that are based on the interpretation of the Qur’anic teachings and hadiths, which are a distinct base of moral education, love of God, having sympathy for one another and others exhibiting humanity that signifies the purity of one’s nature. Lastly, it is the creative work of Islam that conveys all truth and goodness from an Islamic viewpoint and is composed by a Muslim.

The writings produced by non-Muslims is regarded as a “Islamic work”. Hence, it is proven that *Ruang Perjalanan* is a reflection of the author’s comprehension as proposed in his book of *Pemikiran Sastera Malaysia* (The Malaysian Literature Thoughts). Ergo, the novel was made utilizing the Qur’anic approach apart from the preaching and teaching equipped in it.

S. Othman Kelantan is observed to insert several *surah* (verses) of Qur’an, such as surah al-Ahzab verses 33 and 72, surah al-Rum verse 30, surah al-Qasas verses 28 and 77 and others. It is admitted too that the thoughts that are based on Islamic teachings are not easy to produce (Zakaria, 1990).

*Ruang Perjalanan* exhibits a reflection of S. Othman Kelantan’s standpoint on Islam, as well as his personal family background. In reality, he adopted the medium of creative work as a platform for his ideas to flow. His insertion of few verses in the Quran functions to argue with “My son” who is so obsessed on technology. The transfer of Qur’anic verses in hypertext concerns the process of transformation. This method is founded on the main archetype of the Qur’an. It leads the readers directly to the original source text. It discusses aspects of Islamic thought of the author who indirectly contributes facts to *Ruang Perjalanan*. According to Tahir (1990), Kelantan, S. O. materialization of Islamic preaching is efficiently conveyed.

*Ruang Perjalanan* addresses several issues of social and religious life in the future (Tahir, 1990). To demonstrate this point, the author suggests a theory known as “thesis”, “antithesis” and “synthesis” as highlighted in the characters of “my son”, “my son’s wife” and “my grandchild” as follows:

“... Is it not the position of my grandson in this world serves as development of the human mechanism in the form of thesis, antithesis and then synthesis? My son creates an early thesis as a

man. His wife forms the existence of antithesis. That thesis and antithesis is what produces synthesis and the outcome is my sweet and educated grandchild. As a synthesis, my grandchild, of course, inheriting both his/ her parents in terms of looks and beauty, as well as their intelligence ...”(p. 105).

It is through this thesis, antithesis and synthesis that the character of “me” becomes the motivating force of the story. This was acknowledged by the author of *Dewan Sastera*, (Literary Council, July 2003). Other than that, it portrays the “me” relationship with “my son” and “my grandchild”, the purpose of “me” in the situation of reinstating the faith of “my son” and “my grandchild” based on Islamic knowledge. It is this function that makes this novel an Islamic gnosis and later a gnostic novel, a science novel packed with teaching and preaching (inclusive mystic knowledge) (Tahir, 1990). This is in conformity with the author’s ideology that the notion of Islamic literature should be based on 3 main features as stated in the *Arah Pemikiran Sastera Malaysia* (Malaysian Literary Thought) book.

Islamic purity is promoted by S. Othman Kelantan through the wisdom and capacity of “me” character who balances traditional and modern religious and secular knowledge and attempts to portray that in the synthesis phase that man will succeed if Islam is acquired, appreciated and acclimatized accordingly with the times. Through this novel, the author elaborates the role of Islam in the future of science and technology. This proves that the author believes that religion is the best alternative to modern times (Zakaria, 1990).

*Ruang Perjalanan* exposes a reflection of S. Othman Kelantan’s impression of Islam. The thoughts that are produced based on Islamic teachings are not easy to establish. In actuality, he adopted the medium of creative work as a medium for his ideas to flow. As maintained by Tahir (1990), Kelantan, S. O. display of constituents of preaching and Islamic teachings are well crafted in this novel. In reality, he admits that the Islamic and religious components presented by S. Othman Kelantan are much better than those tendered by Shahnnon Ahmad through *Al-Syiqaq I* and *Tuk Guru*. It seems that Kelantan, S. O. has done exhaustive research prior to writing this novel.

## 7. Conclusion

It is generally suggested that throughout this novel, S. Othman Kelantan desires to produce a novel that is futuristic and disparate from other conventional novels. Through its intertextual work, the novel is equipped with more Islamic values and philosophy. The intertextual processes convened in the *Ruang Perjalanan* are parallel and transformative. Nonetheless, the most dominant textual process is parallel. This is because there is a coherent idea of Islamic philosophy and thought that exists between the two texts and it worked more convincingly in hypertext. *Ruang Perjalanan* is not just merely a realistic novel, it is actually a postmodern novel that does not convey a story but idea. Yet, this approach is somewhat less favourable because it accommodates tough questions that are difficult to comprehend and calls for close reading.

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