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In Search of Truth: On Intellectualism in Anwar Ridhwan's *Penyeberang Sempadan*

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Abstract

This article takes exception to the view commonly held by scholars and literary critics alike that Anwar Ridhwan's fifth novel *Penyeberang Sempadan* is replete with intellectual discourses, at the same time it showcases Islamic spiritual philosophy. This view begs further exploration into the question of the novel's intellectualism. This article addresses the moot issue of intellectualism and Islamic philosophy the novel purportedly displays. To this end, the article utilises *Persuratan Baru* (henceforth PB) as its analytical framework. PB is chosen because of its fundamental emphasis on knowledge and intellectualism as seen and understood within the Islamic worldview. Concomitant with this, PB in its conception of a narrative makes a clear distinction between knowledge and the story. In addition, PB's philosophical emphasis on *taklif* is acknowledged as heir to the Malay-Islamic literary tradition of the region, thereby reinforcing its relevance and immediacy. With PB as its theoretical framework the article successfully makes clear that the so called 'philosophy', 'ideas', 'discourse', and 'thought' the novel displays are no more than manifestations of a story and the manipulation of narrative elements in story-making. In addition, *Penyeberang Sempadan* shows a decided penchant for Muslim characters who are weak as well as ignorant about Islam, thereby strengthening further the argument that the narrative is not an intellectual novel about Islam.

Keywords: Intellectualism, *Persuratan Baru*, *Taklif*, 'Knowledge', 'Story'

Introduction

Penyeberang Sempadan is the fifth novel by Anwar Ridhwan, and until recently is his last piece of novel. This work is a product of Anwar's participation in *Sayembara Hadiah Sako 3* (2011) and it won the first prize in 'National Novel' category. In 2012, it also won the *Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia*. As stated above, the presence of this work is accompanied by reports from both prizes. With the above acknowledgements, the work arrived at the hands of readers along with the reports. According to the report from *Laporan Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia 2012* (henceforth *LHSPM 2012*), *PS* is a work that is permeated with 'ideological discourse' (expressed by *LHSPM 2012* itself). This is manifested through the storyline which is said to contain some ideologies such as communism, socialism, and democracy. *LHSPM 2012* also stated that the 'ideological discourse' in *PS* is manifested clearly in the protagonist's story

which is said to have strived for independence by travelling to ideological nations such as China, Russia, and the United States of America. This variety of contexts also puts *Penyeberang Sempadan* to be considered as an international novel, as expressed by LHSPM 2012:

To realise the struggle, he joined the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) before he was forced to flee to Betong, then China, Russia, and the US. In every place that he has been to and lived, he delved and analysed the actual situations of the nation's advocating communism, socialism, and democracy... *This novel presents an international quality not only from geographically foreign contexts, but also from the discoursed subjects by the author which are universal in scope* [italic and translation mine] (LHSPM, 2012, p. 22,24).

With the assumption that this novel presents an 'international' quality, the report justifies its recognition. More importantly, is the presence of 'ideological discourse' which is said to ground every context. Therefore, this finding demonstrates that the presence of *Penyeberang Sempadan* as a 'discourse novel', is recognized, and hence qualifies it for the recognitions discussed above.

Along with the acknowledgements above, the uniqueness of *Penyeberang Sempadan* provoked some critical receptions from literary researchers, who also tend to recognize *Penyeberang Sempadan* as 'discourse novel'. Researchers such as Mohd. Hanafi Ibrahim (2013) (henceforth Mohd. Hanafi), for instance, tends to do so because the novel presents ideologies such as communism, socialism, and democracy. According to him, these ideologies are presented in-depth, as he expressed, "The ideologies of communism, socialism, and democracy are discussed... [Various] forms of dogmatic falsehood and -isms are brought forth" (Mohd. Hanafi, 2013, p. 11). This is entailed by an acknowledgement from S.M. Zakir (henceforth Zakir) who labels it as an 'intellectual novel', which is considered to have explored western ideologies such as socialism, communism, and democracy, aside from the teachings of Islam (Zakir, 2013, p. 20). It is clear from Zakir's description that *Penyeberang Sempadan* came as a platform that discusses critically the ideologies and philosophies of two opposing worldviews, the West and Islam. More pertinently, Zakir opines that *Penyeberang Sempadan* presents Islam as the true religion (Zakir, 2013, p. 12). In other words, *Penyeberang Sempadan* according to Zakir is an 'intellectual discourse' novel. Based on these receptions, it can be observed that *Penyeberang Sempadan* is indeed acknowledged by literary scholars as an intellectual 'discourse novel'.

Aside from that, Anwar Ridhwan himself in some writings admitted the importance of 'intellectualism' in his literary activities. In an interview in 1993, Anwar emphasised the importance of works of literature in instilling 'intellectual' virtues to readers. In this context, Anwar stressed that distinguished works of literature can play their role as platforms which contribute to humanity (Ahmad Kamal Abdullah, 1993, p. 55-58). Equally important is the fact that Anwar's novels are written in the context of Islam-Malay (Anwar, 1999, p. 17). This shows that Anwar's novels are not only considered to be 'intellectual' but also encompassed within the culture of Islam-Malay. At this point, clearly that Anwar consciously makes use of his literary works as means of 'intellectual' message. With this in his mind, it is no surprise if *Penyeberang Sempadan* that was penned by him is said to be permeated with 'intellectual'

qualities, as can be perused from the receptions of the literary scholars and critics discussed in the above.

Problem Statement and Research Objective

The discussions pertaining to *Penyeberang Sempadan* above shed light on some important tendencies. Firstly, there are some literary scholars and critics who acknowledge the 'intellectualism' in *Penyeberang Sempadan* such as S.M. Zakir and Hanafi Ibrahim. This acknowledgment is further strengthened by the report from *Laporan Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia 2012* which listed down 'intellectualism' as the strength point of Anwar's novels. Aside from these acknowledgments, Anwar himself conceded the importance of 'intellectualism' in his writings.

Based on the observations made on the available research pertaining to *Penyeberang Sempadan* above, this research manages to identify a significant problem which requires a serious study. This refers to the presence of 'intellectualism' in *Penyeberang Sempadan* as acknowledged by the literary scholars and researchers. Be that as it may, these acknowledgements are merely comments and general statements which have yet to be tested in a systematic and comprehensive study with regards to its intellectual aspect. More importantly, all these comments and statements, up until now have yet to be studied based on an analytical framework which emphasises on the question of knowledge, thought and intellectualism. This is, therefore, the purpose of this article. Among the questions that can be raised include whether it is true that Anwar's *Penyeberang Sempadan* is contain with 'intellectualism', as acclaimed by a group of scholars? If the answer is yes, what is mean by 'intellectualism', which is assumed to have manifested in *Penyeberang Sempadan*? This article attempts to untangle these questions by focusing on the 'intellectualism' aspect of *Penyeberang Sempadan*. To do so, this article is structured in a way to achieve two objectives which are, firstly, to analyse the contents of discourse and story in *Penyeberang Sempadan* and, secondly, to summarise the intellectualism aspect in *Penyeberang Sempadan*.

Persuratan Baru as A Framework of Analysis

To achieve the above objectives, this article opted for *Persuratan Baru* (henceforth PB) expounded by Mohd. Affandi Hassan (henceforth Mohd. Affandi) as the framework of analysis. Essentially, PB is based on the worldview of Islam and allocates special attention to the aspects of knowledge, thought and intellectualism which coincide with the focus of this article. A discussion on PB will be conducted later. Important to discuss here are the justifying factors opting for PB as an analytical framework. Firstly, as stated in Problem Statement above, there are acknowledgments on the presence of intellectualism in *Penyeberang Sempadan*. However, these acknowledgments only came in the forms of comments and general statements and hence do not offer a comprehensive discussion on intellectualism. In this context, opting for PB as a framework of analysis is the correct and relevant choice. This is because PB is a framework of literary analysis which emphasises the 'intellectualism' aspect, which can be readily expressed (in the context of PB) as 'knowledge' and 'discourse'. Secondly, the position of PB as a framework of analysis expounded by a local figure, Mohd. Affandi Hassan, makes it more relevant, echoing Anwar's own call to scrutinise Malays works—including his own—based on a local framework of analysis which considered to be much closer, relevant, and just as compared to western frameworks of analysis (Anwar, 2013). Thirdly, as gleaned from the above, *Penyeberang Sempadan* is said to contain Islamic

elements. This renders *Penyeberang Sempadan* not only 'intellectual', but also Islamic which vested itself with an added value. In the context of PB, included in its intellectual evaluation is its moral which conforms to the concept of 'true knowledge' as shall be elucidated later. Thus, PB which is established upon the philosophy of Islam is the appropriate choice as the framework of analysis for *Penyeberang Sempadan*.

Additionally, as a framework of analysis, PB is a proven choice. This is demonstrated in the many studies and analyses in which literary texts, not only local texts but also international ones, are scrutinised using PB as the framework of analysis. Besides, PB itself is widely studied and discussed in many instances as well as employed in plenty of other research. For that reason, it is not necessary to reiterate all the ideas of PB.¹ Instead, it is sufficient to only outline some of its salient features, especially the ones that will be employed in this analysis on *Penyeberang Sempadan*.

As mentioned previously, PB is established on a concept of *taklif* in Islamic philosophy, which refers to the 'Primordial Covenant' between man and God in the world of spirits (*ruh*), which is to worship Him. In this context, PB puts the purpose of all human activities as solely a form of worship to God. This philosophy of *taklif* encompasses three natures: the Nature of Man, the Nature of Knowledge and Practice, and the Nature and Function of Literature. In the context of the nature of man, man's consciousness in relation to *taklif* paints the picture of his sole purpose of existence, which is total submission to Allah SWT. This is entailed by the manifestation of worship to Him, which is by performing all His commandments and avoid all His prohibitions in every aspect of human life (Affandi, 2005, p. 15). Following this is the nature of knowledge and practice which portrays the purpose of knowledge in Islam, which is none other than to know Allah SWT and enable man to worship Him with certainty and

¹ Please refer to Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir's book title *Kritikan Sastera Melayu: Antara Ilmu dengan Cerita* (Syarahan Perdana), *Dinamika Pemikiran Sastera Melayu, Kedudukan Ilmu Dalam Kesusasteraan Melayu Teori dan Praktis*, article "Persuratan Baru: Anjakan Positif Yang Diperlukan Oleh Sastera Melayu", Mohd. Zariat Abdul Rani title *Seksualiti dalam Novel Melayu*, and his articles, "Sastera Berpaksikan Tāuhid: Satu Penerokaan Terhadap Gagasan Persuratan Baru oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan" and "Gagasan Persuratan Baru oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan: Beberapa Pengamatan Umum", "Kesignifikanan Islam dalam Kesusasteraan Melayu", "Sastera Berpaksikan Tāuhid: Satu Penerokaan Terhadap Gagasan Persuratan Baru oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan (Bahagian 1)", "Sasterawan Sebagai Insan: Satu Penelitian Terhadap Beberapa Pandangan Sarjana", and "Ciri-ciri Kesusasteraan Menurut Islam: Beberapa Pengamatan Awal", "Gagasan Persuratan Baru oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan: Beberapa Pengamatan Umum", book by Zawiah Yahya title *Reading Approaches In Malay Literature: Critical Theory in Making*, R. Sharatha A/P Ramasamy thesis title *Pujangga Melayu: Dari Sudut Pendekatan Persuratan Baru*, Nahari Mastono Arukin's thesis title *Pemikiran dalam Espen-Espen Mohd. Affandi Hassan*, Siti Aisyah Mohamed Salim's thesis title "Sejarah Alternatif Dalam *Duka Tuan Bertakhta*: Satu Analisis Menurut Gagasan Persuratan Baru", article by Rahmah Ahmad Osman and Mohd. Shahrizal Nasir title "Sastera Islam: Satu Perbandingan antara Pandangan Mohd. Affandi dengan Abu al-Hassan Ali al-Nadwi", article by Adli Yaacob title "Satu Analisis Ringkas Konsep dan Teori Sastera Islam di Malaysia" and Wan Ahmad Fahysal Wan Ahmad Kamal article title "Sastera Ilmi sebagai Pemangkin Budaya Intelektualisme".

proper comportment. Consequently, actions that are not preceded by *true knowledge* will lead man to evil, worthlessness, and loss in the sight of Allah SWT (Mohd. Affandi, 2005, p. 19-20). Therefore, PB conceptualises *true knowledge* as knowledge that brings man into proximity with God and motivates mankind to worship Him with certainty and proper comportment. In this picture, encapsulated in the concept of *taklif*, the Nature and Function of Literature asserts that even litterateurs are not isolated from this duty towards Allah SWT. In this context, according to PB, writing (literature) is the means by which their *ibadah* can be performed. And their *ibadah* is to convey *true knowledge*. In the context of thought and intellectualism which is the focus of this article, the degree of *true knowledge* is the measure of a work's intellectualism. To put it differently, the measure of a work's thought and intellectualism decreases when the moral values conveyed in it are in contradiction with the *true knowledge*.

The duty of a writer is to disseminate *true knowledge* is in line with the meaning of *al-qalam* mentioned in the Qur'an (al-'Alaq 96:4-5). According to Mohd. Affandi's understanding, *al-qalam* in this verse refers to *the pen*, which is a tool of writing that conveys *truth*. Therefore, literature which is produced from the use of this *qalam* is established upon the aim to convey the truth of Allah SWT, such that it enables man to distinguish between good and evil (Mohd. Affandi, 2005, p. 23). In relation to this, within the context of literary activities, the concept of *taklif* renders it as an *ibadah*, and therefore should be rooted in 'thought' and the foundation of knowledge, and not from emotions and fictional imagination of the author.

Furthermore, in the context of PB, thoughts are conceptualised in the form of discourse, which refers to the intellectual arguments that are products of the presentation of ideas, explanation and elaboration of examples, firm analyses and summaries, all of which are articulated so to present a robust discourse. This emphasis on discourse which means story is longer as the objective of writing, but merely as a tool to convey a discourse. As a result, the role, position, and manipulation of story are strictly regulated by the need to build up discourse. In this context, a story refers to the utilisation of storytelling tools such as characters and their traits, language, style, and conflict, all of which are made use in a serious manner. At this point, it is clear how PB differentiates 'knowledge' and 'story', and therefore prioritises 'discourse content' rather than 'story content' in the conception and articulation of literary works. This 'discourse content'-'story content' principle enables one to identify the proper focus of a literary work, whether it is built upon 'story' or 'knowledge'.

In addition, to identify the priority of discourse and the manipulation of story, PB also proposes the concept of 'narrative axis' which is conceptualised as the 'stance' that reflects the view and tendency of a text towards an issue, theme, or problem that it perceives. This 'stance' can be identified through the emphasis, priority and weight afforded by a story or narrative which are manifested through the utilisation of storytelling tools such as characters their traits, language, style, and conflict. Aside from this, PB also proposes the concept of 'narrative space'. This 'narrative space' conceptualises a text as a neutral 'space' confined within the walls of the beginning and the ending of a story. As a 'space' a literary work can be filled with 'story contents' and 'discourse content', the definitions of which are already explained above. With this concept of 'narrative space', the focus of a literary text such as a novel, whether on 'story' or 'discourse'/'knowledge' can be identified clearly and objectively (Mohd. Zariat and Ungku Maimunah, 2008, p. 384). In consequence therewith, the analyses

in this article shall be divided into three subtitles according to the principles outlined by PB, which are: The Establishing of Narrative Axis and the Formation of Narrative Space'; the Manipulation of Story Content, and the Evaluation of Story's Moral.

On Intellectualism In *Penyeberang Sempadan*: The Establishing Of Narrative Axis And The Formation Of Narrative Space

The discussion begins with the observation on the external aspect of the novel. Among the most significant is the publisher's blurb which describes the novel thus, "*Penyeberang Sempadan* is embroidered with a magical narrative around the protagonist who proclaims himself as 'the saviour and defender of his motherland'; a crosser of geographical and ideological borders who eventually arrives at the origin of Truth again". The publisher's blurb that is printed at the back of the book invites some pertinent observations. Firstly, on the story that is said to have revolved around the protagonist who crosses geographical and ideological borders, and eventually returns to his true origin. This statement lets the readers understand that the story that is presented revolves around the wayfaring of the protagonist who doubts the 'Truth' that he inherited, and therefore travels through different ideologies, and finally returns to his origin. Secondly, this understanding of the publisher's blurb is also supported by the caption that is printed at the front cover of the book which says, "abroad there is Truth that is the mission and vision of life". From this caption, it can be understood that the wandering undertaken by the protagonist is driven by his goal to find 'Truth'.

As already indicated by the publisher's blurb, 'Truth' refers to his origin. In other words, based on the publisher's blurb and the caption, it can be expected that the story in *PS* revolves around the restlessness of the protagonist who doubts his original 'Truth', and therefore sets out on a journey from one ideological territory to another, and finally returns to his origin which he believes as the 'Truth'. This is further strengthened by the choice of title, '*Penyeberang Sempadan*', which literally means someone who travels from one territory to another. It can be said that these 'territories' refer to the ideologies such as socialism, communism, and democracy, aside from Islam. In consequent, Islam which is the religion of the protagonist is referred to as the 'Truth', as also pointed out by the panel reports and critical receptions. The fact that Islam is referred to as the 'Truth' is further solidified by the illustration on the cover of the book which presents a compass, and the colour green which serves as the background of the illustration. The compass can be interpreted as the guidance to 'Truth', whereas the green colour represents Islam. It is also significant that Anwar himself admitted that the novel addresses the question of religiosity, as he said, "It [*Penyeberang Sempadan*] is about a search of the true and absolute soul. It is a herculean process, which is laced with psychology, the search for God..." From the outer aspects of this novel, it can be expected that the story in *Penyeberang Sempadan* revolves around the doubt by the protagonist on Islam, and therefore sets out on a journey from one ideology/'territory' to another ideology/'territory', before eventually returning to the 'territory of Islam' which is his origin. This also means that the novel has mapped out a route that will be tread by the protagonist in his journey. This expectation proves correct after an early reading finds that the story does revolve around the journey of its protagonist, who is told to have travelled to several countries, came across various ideologies, and finally went back to his original religion which was initially doubted, and later rediscovered as being true. The direction of this story then establishes the narrative axis which is the 'journey in search of God'.

With the 'journey in search of God' as the axis narrative, the novel simultaneously forms a narrative space, which begins with the doubt by the protagonist on Islam and ends with his return to Islam which shall be demonstrated in the following.

The Manipulation of Story Content

To establish the axis narrative which is 'the journey in search of Truth', and to simultaneously fill the narrative space, the novel is found to manipulate some storytelling tools. Among the most significant is characters. This analysis finds that the novel presents in its narrative space a protagonist named Kuay, a young and strong man (Anwar, 2012, p. 112). From the story point of view, the youth and strength of the protagonist is vital to enable him to set out on the journey through the mapped-out route. In addition, the protagonist is found to have been born and raised on a Malay-Muslim family. This opens the probability that the protagonist may have been already exposed to Islamic education that has been part of the Malay culture such as reciting Qur'an and the basics of Shariah, including the ways of managing the dead and slaughtering animals (Anwar, 2012, p. 35). It can be said that the Islamic 'knowledge' that was taught to the protagonist is merely a superficial exposure. Such level of knowledge results only in a ritualistic understanding of Islam with certain rules, manner, and does not extend to a much deeper understanding and appreciation. This can be gleaned from the death of his father, and the backwardness of Muslim society which shattered his belief in Islam (Anwar, 2012, p. 33-37, 201). This clearly points to the weak faith held by Kuay, the entirety of which is due to his superficial understanding of his religion. In other words, the protagonist in *Penyeberang Sempadan* is a Muslim with shallow knowledge, whose knowledge of his religion is questionable and therefore does not base his faith in the roots of firm knowledge. Nonetheless, as described on his physical appearance, he is a man of vigour and endurance. It is important to understand that with a strong physical and a shallow understanding of Islam, the novel opens the possibility for him to leave the 'territory of Islam'. Thus, it establishes the axis narrative, which is 'the journey in search of Truth'.

Next, also in the context of establishing the axis narrative, the novel equips the protagonist with two important traits, which is impressionability and of weak willpower. Both of these traits collectively contribute to the possibility of the protagonist leaving the 'territory of Islam' and approaching new territories or 'ideologies'. Hence, the novel can fill the narrative space with the backwardness of the lives of the Malays in Malaya, which corners the protagonist into religious scepticism. To put it differently, the protagonist thinks that Islam cannot guarantee the wellbeing of human life. His doubt of Islam is later replaced by his interest in the ideology of communism. In the 'territory of communism', the narrative space is filled with stories of the protagonist joining the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (Awakened Youth Organisation), his acquaintance with Pak Suharto, his official membership in the *Parti Komunis Malaya* (Malayan Communist Party), and his appointment as a Malay communist representative to China (Anwar, 2012, p. 38-42). As for the plot, the development of the story enables the context to move from Malaya to China. Then, the impressionability of the protagonist also makes possible for his loss of faith towards the 'territory of communism' under the chairmanship of Mao [Zedong], who he thinks is not able to actualise the promised justice, as he himself laments, "It is the ruling elites who are living in luxury and lavishness. The brilliance and the genius of the people are ignored and levelled in the name of the communal" (Anwar, 2012, p. 337). This then drives him out of the 'territory of communism', to approach another 'territory' which is the 'territory of socialism', which he thinks able to be fair towards the

people. In the 'territory of socialism', the narrative space is filled with the journey of the protagonist in Russia and his meeting with Helena. This portrayed by the protagonist's experience in Russia, seeing the wealthy lives of the farmers and his introduction to Russian literature (Anwar, 2012, p. 226-233). Physically, this development moves the story from China to Russia. Again, his impressionableness leads him to lose interest in the 'territory of socialism' after he is made aware the reality of the people living in poverty under the ideology, as he himself deplores, "Now I know, while I live in the house of farmers, while I come as a guest of Russia, all the luxurious food is just a propaganda to cloud me from the actual situation" (Anwar, 2012, p. 235-236). This then sways him towards an interest in the 'territory of democracy' which he believes to be more just. In the 'territory of democracy', the narrative space is filled with his journey in the United States of America, and his acquaintance with Shafi'aa. This is shown by Kuay's active participation in a pro-democracy party, and his enjoyable life there (Anwar, 2012, p. 341-342). Again, this enables the story to move from Russia to the United States. And again, his weak-mindedness leads him also to lose interest in the 'territory of democracy'. This happens when Shafi'aa convinces him that all these man-made ideologies are flawed and do not promise everlasting justice. This invokes in Kuay a sense of repentance and returns to the 'territory of Islam' which is his origin. Physically, the story moves back from the United States to Malaya. After that, the narrative space is filled with the efforts by the protagonist to familiarise himself with Islam again as soon as he lands in Malaya. Among the efforts is where he develops his piece of land for the purpose of developing Islam physically and spiritually (Anwar, 2012, p. 427). More significantly, after returning to the 'territory of Islam', Kuay marries Shafi'aa, the woman who enlightened him on the false man-made ideologies and the truth of Islam (Anwar, 2012, p. 406-407). His return to 'territory of Islam' marks the completion of the protagonist's journey through the mapped route, and therefore his journey ended. What is important to be comprehended is how the protagonist's impressionability and weak resolution enables him to move from one ideology/'territory' to another. This transition from ideologies/'territories' to ideologies/'territories' enables the story to move, develop and maintain the movement until the end of the story.

Furthermore, in ensuring the smooth transition of the journey plot of the protagonist, the novel also includes some side characters in its narrative space. These characters play their roles as agents who lead the protagonist to move from one held 'territory' to a new 'territory'. These characters refer to Pak Suharto, Chairman Mao, Helena, and Shafi'aa. For storytelling purpose, these characters play an effective role in the story, whether by presenting to the protagonist the grandeur of other ideologies (which the protagonist has not believed in), or inciting doubts in the ideologies which are held by the protagonist at the time. For example, Pak Suharto (who appears when the protagonist believes in Islam) and presents to him the glory of communism, and therefore shakes the protagonist's conviction on Islam. Similarly, the character of Chairman Mao (who appears when the protagonist was still believing in communism) is responsible for making the protagonist feel unwanted, and hence making the protagonist lose interest in communism. As also the case with Helena (who appears in the 'territory of socialism') and incites doubts about socialism), by exposing to him the life of poverty under its regime. Lastly is the character of Shafi'aa (who appears in the 'territory of Islam') and helps protagonist to question the misgivings of all the man-made ideologies, and to return his faith in Islam. It is clear that the inclusion of the secondary characters in the narrative space of the novel is afforded with the role as agents to motivate the protagonist to

leave one held 'territory' and journeys to a new 'territory'. It is this travel from one 'territory' to another which allows the protagonist to return to Islam, which he holds dearly as the true religion, and therefore further asserts the axis narrative of the 'journey in search of Truth'.

Further, in the context of establishing the axis narrative and narrative space, this analysis also identifies another manipulation of a storytelling tool, which is plots, that are chained together and shape a story. In *Penyeberang Sempadan*, the plot structure of choice is chronological, which refers to a form of story development that opens with a beginning and closes with an ending which can only be known in the closing chapter of the novel. In manipulation this chronological, this analysis finds that the novel divides its plot into several parts. It is significant that the borders marking the parts are defined by the different religions/ideologies, namely Islam, communism, socialism, and democracy. These are the religions/ideologies that accept the labels 'territory of Islam', 'territory of communism', 'territory of socialism', and the 'territory of democracy'. These different 'territories' are tied together with cause and effect. The knot between these 'territories' is made possible by the journey of the protagonist who crosses them. To rephrase, it is his journey that serves as the tying mechanism, and therefore solidifies the plot of the novel. This mechanism and the structure of the plot is also alluded to by the title of the novel itself. Equally germane is the chronological structure of the plot, which forms a circular journey, beginning with the 'territory of Islam', followed by the 'territory of communism', the 'territory of socialism', the 'territory of democracy', and finally completing the circle with a return to the 'territory of Islam'.

By this plot structure, the novel begins with the 'territory of Islam' which is furnished with the protagonist's background information who was born and raised in a Muslim family, the death of his father and the backwardness of the Muslim society in Malaya, both became the cause which effected in his doubt about Islam. The fragility of faith in Islam is further worsened with the appeal towards communism, introduced to him by Pak Suharto. This fragile faith caused him to leave the 'territory of Islam', and crosses into the 'territory of communism' to find Truth. The 'territory of communism' is then filled with the protagonist's experience who participated in the Communist Party in China, only to leave it later due to his dissatisfaction with Chairman Mao's cronyism. This dissatisfaction is the cause that resulted in his departure (effect) from the 'territory of communism' to the 'territory of socialism' to find Truth. Then, the 'territory of socialism' tells how the protagonist met with Helena, through whom he was able to witness the poverty of the Russian people under the regime of socialism. This experience is the cause which forced the protagonist to leave the 'territory of socialism', and crosses into the 'territory of democracy' to find Truth. The 'territory of socialism' is then furnished with the protagonist's acquaintance with Shafi'aa, who showed to him the state of moral deprivation of the American society under the tutelage of democracy. This acquaintance is the cause that impelled the protagonist to doubt democracy and leave it to return to the 'territory of Islam'. It is important to note that this 'territory' is now held as the true religion, which suggests that he has now found Truth for which he sought. This ends the protagonist's journey. His return is marked definitively by his marriage with Shafi'aa, who helped him to rediscover Islam.

With this ending, the novel completes the plot structure which it builds with the cause-effect mechanism that ties the different 'territories' together. The tie between the 'territories' is

structured chronologically (in a circle), beginning with the ‘territory of Islam’, and ends with the same ‘territory’. This structure shows that the other ‘territories’ in the narrative space are only ‘transitional checkpoints’ in the protagonist’s journey. What is important here is that the plot in *Penyeberang Sempadan* is manipulated to enable the story to be commenced, moved, and maintained of its movement from one ‘territory’ to another, creating a solid story.

At this point this article identifies two storytelling tools, which are characters and plot, which is fully utilised to fill the narrative space of *Penyeberang Sempadan*. Both of these tools are manipulated to allow the story to sustain its axis narrative, i.e. ‘journey in search of Truth’. More significantly is the manipulation of these tools itself—such as characters and plot—that enables the story to initiate, move, and maintain until its end. This means that *Penyeberang Sempadan* is built upon the manipulation of the story. This conclusion generates discussion on the status of the novel which is presented by some literary researchers as a ‘discourse novel’, as is stated earlier. *LHSPM 2012* is among one of many who acknowledges *Penyeberang Sempadan* as a novel that contains ‘ideological discourse’, as is reported, “The structure of the novel is in the form of a journey and is brimming with ideological discourses and the history of malaya from new perspectives” (*LHSPM*, 2012, p.18). Mohd. Hanafi also acknowledges *Penyeberang Sempadan* as a ‘discourse novel’ based on the ideologies addressed therein such as communism, socialism, and democracy, as he writes, “The ideologies of communism, socialism, and democracy are discussed... [various] forms of dogmatic falsehood are exposed” (Hanafi, 2013). This acknowledgment is further supported by S.M. Zakir who is inclined to label *Penyeberang Sempadan* as an ‘intellectual novel’ which elevates Islam as the true religion (Zakir, 2013). Referring to these acknowledgments, it can be said that the labels ascribed to *Penyeberang Sempadan* as a ‘discourse novel’ and ‘intellectual novel’ are all based on the story told in it. This is clear based on the report prepared by *LHSPM 2012* that recognises the journey of the protagonist as the manifestation of the intellectual discourse on the ideologies. The report states:

Penyeberang Sempadan brings the question of the self-struggle of a young Malay man, Kuay, who got involved in the Malay nationalist movement and became a fugitive from the English authority. Kuay fled to China, Russia, New York, Cairo, and Amman. Throughout the journey, he familiarised himself with different ideologies of the East and West. As a young man, he is easily influenced by the slogans and propagandas of the communist, socialist, and democratic ideologies. However, based on his experience living abroad under the regimes of the said ideologies, the realities were not as sweet as their rhetoric and propagandas. The character of Kuay was then enlightened by Shafi’aa, a Palestinian woman who at the time resided in the US, by emphasising to him on the importance of Islam as the best guide to life, as compared to other man-made ideologies (*LHSPM*, 2012, p. 18-19).

From the passage above, it can be observed how the ‘discourse’ aspects are manipulated as storytelling tools to propel the story. This is clear when *LHSPM 2012* mentions character, background, conflict (described as ‘struggle’) and plot (described as ‘journey’). It can be further observed that the passage above does not address the novel’s ability to discuss the ideologies at all, which are included in the story, and are presented with concise arguments of its ‘Truth’. As concluded in the above, this analysis shows that the ideologies of

communism, socialism, democracy and even Islam itself are only presented in the novel as 'territories' which serve only as 'transitional checkpoints' for the protagonist's journey. This is shown through his journey, where the ideologies are merely represented in political and social terms—struggles within the political parties, poverty, oppression, and moral depravity of the community. This analysis also finds that the discourse in PB terms as 'ideas' that are built through arguments, analyses, and reinforcements are not equipped in the narrative space of *Penyeberang Sempadan*. To put it differently, *Penyeberang Sempadan* does not portray the traits that qualify it as a 'discourse novel' or 'intellectual novel'. This begs a question on the credibility of the comments by Mohd. Hanafi and S.M. Zakir.

Therefore, what is referred to as 'discourse' and 'intellectualism' by the scholars are merely storytelling tools such as character and plot, and not discourse in the sense of intellectual ideas presented and built in a systematic way through arguments, analyses, and reinforcements. What is presented in this novel, consequently; is story, not discourse.

Evaluating The Moral of The Story

In the above analysis, it is made clear that story is the only content that is utilised to build *Penyeberang Sempadan*. In consequence, the subsequent discussion focuses on the question of evaluating the moral of the story, which is based on an Islamic framework, specifically the concept of *taklif*. The significance of reading *Penyeberang Sempadan* in an Islamic framework conforms the status of Anwar as a Muslim novelist, and therefore acknowledges Islam as an element which influences his writings. Upon this is added Anwar's own admission in his Anugerah Sastera Negara speech (2009), where he acknowledged Islam as the core of Malay literature (Anwar, 2009).

Even with the acknowledgements by the literary scholars and critics as well as Anwar's own admission, the claim that *Penyeberang Sempadan* is an intellectual novel that discusses the truth of Islam is difficult to defend intellectually. This analysis finds that *Penyeberang Sempadan* does not essentially present values that can be clearly ascribed to the truth of Islamic teachings, and therefore does not qualify him as bringing the discourse of Islam, especially in his portraying the protagonist who propels the story. This is clear when the narrative space of the novel is filled with a protagonist whose knowledge of Islam is superficial, and therefore is not able to carry the discourse on the truth of his religion. As mentioned, from the story point of view, the ignorance of the protagonist enables him to leave the 'territory of Islam', and therefore to travel to other non-Islamic 'territories'. In his journey, he acquainted himself with characters that not only do not adhere to Islam, but also oppose it such as Chairman Mao (in the 'territory of communism') and Helena (in the 'territory of socialism'). This per se does not enable the discourse of the Islamic truth to appear. As a matter of fact, when the protagonist was in the other 'territories', he was even portrayed to have done things that are contrary to the teachings of Islam such as the omission of the five daily prayers, under the pretext of safety (Anwar, 2012). Another weakening factor of the moral of the story is the cause and effect that has brought out the return of the protagonist to Islam, which is his affection and love towards Shafi'aa. In other words, the motivation to return to the 'territory of Islam' is not intrinsic, i.e. to enhance his understanding of Islam. Rather, it is extrinsic in that he is awed by the character of Shafi'aa (Anwar, 2012, p. 354-357).

The fact that Kuay's love towards Shafi'aa becomes the dominant motive that led to his return to Islam is clear when after his marriage with her, the discourse on the eternal truth of Islam and the falsity of the other man-made ideologies is no longer addressed until the end of the story. As in this context, the statements by *LHSPM 2012*, S.M. Zakir and Anwar's own admission that *Penyeberang Sempadan* presents the idea about the Truth of Islam (religiosity) can be put to question. It is clear that what is stated by *LHSPM 2012*, Zakir as 'an idea on the Truth of Islam' and 'religiosity' as claimed by Anwar, in reality are only referring to ending in which the protagonist returns to Islam. Again, this demonstrates that the arguments that portray *Penyeberang Sempadan* as a 'discourse novel' or 'intellectual novel', are essentially based upon the story content, and not discourse content as conceptualised by PB in the introduction. In the context of the moral of the story, the manifestation of which is ascribed only to the ending of the story, it is clear that it does not even strengthen the notion of Islam as the true religion. Rather, it is only an unconvincing veneer.

Conclusion

By applying the ideas of *Persuratan Baru*, an analysis on *Penyeberang Sempadan* produces some important findings. Among them is the axis narrative which is found to revolve around the question of human ignorance and perversity. In effort to affirm this axis narrative, the novel is found to have filled its narrative space with the manipulation of storytelling tools that conforms to the requirement of the axis narrative. Among the utilised tools are character and traits. In conformity with the axis narrative, the novel presents the protagonist, Kuay, as an ignorant Muslim who loses his faith towards his religion. To further highlight the aspect of ignorance, the novel presents other characters all of whom are also ignoramuses such as Chairman Mao. This research finds that the character and traits utilisation strategy enable the narrative space to be furnished with all sorts of human tyranny, whether through physical representations or through human emotions of the characters.

It is necessary to emphasise that, in the context of the concept of *taklif* which underlies the ideas of *Persuratan Baru* (as a framework of analysis), the presence of such characters includes them as ignorant, confused, and weak secondary characters. This does not allow for the intellectual discussions of ideas, thought and discourse to take place. This is because such discussions can only be carried out by characters of high moral comportment, wise insight, and strong persona. This means that the narrative space in *Penyeberang Sempadan* is not equipped to contain intellectual discourse. Therefore, this article finds that what is depicted by the literary scholars and researchers as 'thought', 'discourse' or 'philosophy', in the final analysis, refer only to the manifestations of the story that are results of actions and physical expressions of the characters.

Further strengthening the above conclusion is the finding that, aside from character, this novel also tends to manipulate certain plot building elements as a storytelling strategy. This manipulation is clear with its chronological plot. This plot structure is further refined with a strategy of gradual plot building. In addition, it also tends to employ certain storytelling techniques such as including fragments that represent certain backgrounds. It is important to clarify that the strategies and techniques utilised are already regularly used in western fictional literature, as is acknowledged by some scholars and literary critics, aside from Anwar himself. Following this, what is important to be concluded is the obviousness of the novel's tendency in building its story through the employment of storytelling strategies and

techniques. As is shown, the employment of the storytelling strategies and techniques are considered by many scholars and researchers as something different and the strengths of the novel. More significantly is that the employment of the storytelling strategies and techniques also considered as a manifestation of intellectualism in the novel. In the context of Persuratan Baru, what can be starkly noticed from the manipulation of these storytelling tools is the tendency to exaggerate the story, and not the intellectual ideas itself.

Therefore, equally important is the manifestation of the story itself. The employment of the philosophy of *taklif* which underlies the ideas of Persuratan Baru is not able to acknowledge the supposed philosophy and worldview that are said to have manifested in *Penyeberang Sempadan*. This refers to the manifestation of confusions and moral ambiguities that are reflected by the ignorant protagonist who led his life in contradistinction to the teachings of Islam. This weakens *Penyeberang Sempadan*, even in its status as a story. 2013.

Research Contribution

As has already been shown, the use of the Persuratan Baru developed by a local scholar and critic, namely Mohd. Affandi Hassan succeeded in solving the problems that arise in this study, which is the 'intellectualism' in novel title *Penyeberang Sempadan*. This can be done effectively by utilizing the theoretical and practical aspects contained in the Persuratan Baru. Theoretically, Persuratan Baru provides a systematic description on the concept of 'knowledge' and 'intellectualism', while at the same time distinguishing the concept of 'knowledge' from 'story' which is often used loosely in literature. However, through the Persuratan Baru, the concept of 'knowledge'-'story' can be clearly distinguished and understood, and unravel the problems of this study. In addition, Persuratan Baru also provides practical analytical tools to answer research problems, which is 'narrative axis' and 'narrative space'. This makes Persuratan Baru a complete literary idea in terms of theory and practical and is sure to be used in other studies especially in Malay literatures. Surely, this will make a meaningful contribution to the tradition of contemporary Malay literary criticism.

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