UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

VIRTUAL FICTIONAL/ FACTUAL POSITIONING AS AN APPROACH TO THE POSTMODERN SENSE OF THE SELF AND ITS DIALOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN PAUL AUSTER'S SELECTED NOVELS

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By

FOROUGH BARANI

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2013

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents,

Ali and Mansoureh,

and to my adorable parents-in-law,

Ebrahim and Soghra

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

VIRTUAL FICTIONAL/ FACTUAL POSITIONING AS AN APPROACH TO THE POSTMODERN SENSE OF THE SELF AND ITS DIALOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN PAUL AUSTER'S SELECTED NOVELS

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September 2013

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In this thesis I coin the concept of "Virtual Fictional/ Factual Positioning" (VFP), in the dialogical relationship of the author and the hero, and define it as a methodological approach to the analysis of literary narratives. VFP originates from contributions to psychological studies by Hubert Hermans in Dialogical Self Theory (DST) and the dialogical view of the relationship of author and hero in aesthetic forms by Mikhail Bakhtin in literary studies. By virtue of its interdisciplinary nature, VFP evaluates self-narratives and identifies the possible dialogical participation and coalition of the protagonists' positions as "I-as-artist/ novelist" and "I-as-the-hero-of-my-story" amongst other positions in the novel. Nearly two decades after the emergence and development of Dialogical Self Theory (DST), the literature indicates that far too little attention has been paid to the study of literary texts in the light of it. The present research carries out a qualitative study of three selected novels by the American novelist Paul Auster (1947–), *Oracle Night* (2003), *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006) and *Man in the Dark* (2008), to examine polyphonization of the self in the context of selected postmodern novels. The protagonists of these novels are themselves authors who create a hero in the paratextual story within the main story; therefore, these protagonists/ authors are very central to this dialogical study of the self. This study addresses the following questions: (1) whether the postmodern selves of the protagonists of the selected novels are polyphonized dialogical voices

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or are merely a cacophony of various thoughts with fewer logical and no dialogical qualities; (2) whether the hero created by the protagonist/ novelist is a possible position among his other internal and external positions.

VFP examines virtual fictional and factual positioning in the confrontation between author and hero and then in the encounter between the author's central position and a probable developing one. Consequently, the "core act of coalition" in VFP occurs within the intrinsic and simultaneously inclusive relatedness of the author and his hero's selves' domains. For the purpose of the present qualitative research, Hermans' Personal Position Repertoire (PPR) method is adopted to identify, cluster and analyze I-positions. In analyzing the self-repertoire of the protagonists/ authors, the promoter and meta-position and their significant role in their lives are determined. Besides, by making use of Hermans' questions to elicit valuations, different types of valuations are traced and discussed in the self-narratives of the characters. By doing so, this research aims to bring to the literary research community: (1) a revived interest in Bakhtin and his writings on the author/ hero relation; and (2) a reformulation of DST in the act of self-reflection in light of (1).

The findings of this study demonstrate that in order to get meaning out of their supposedly meaningless lives, these protagonists/ authors are in an active dialogical relationship with their own selves – remembering, lamenting and articulating their past lives. Moreover, the results accurately establish that with reference to the postmodern self of these literary characters, the "freedom-seeker" functions as a meta-position that helps the protagonists/ authors to form a convincing dialogical space in their self-repertoire. Moreover, the "I-as-the-storyteller" or "artist/ novelist" position is identified as the promoter position. Thus, under the influence of a dynamic course of positioning and repositioning, the postmodern self of the protagonists/ authors in the selected novels demonstrates a significant degree of dialogical self by letting go of their past, dealing with their present and generating a perspective for their future – and as a result responding to their postmodern situation in quite a dialogical manner.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PENDEKATAN PASCAMODEN TERHADAP DIRI DAN DIMENSI DIALOGIKAL VIRTUAL FICTIONAL/ FACTUAL POSITIONING DALAM NOVEL PAUL AUSTER YANG TERPILIH

Oleh

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Melalui tesis ini, saya mencipta konsep "*Virtual Fictional/ Factual Positioning*" (VFP) dalam hubungan dialogikal pengarang dan wira yang ditakrifkan sebagai pendekatan metodologi untuk menganalisis cerita sastera. VFP berasal daripada sumbangan kajian psikologi yang dibuat oleh Hubert Hermans dalam *Dialogical Self Theory* (DST) dan estatika hubungan sudut pandangan dialogikal pengarang dan wira oleh Mikhail Bakhtin dalam kajian sastera. Dengan adanya sifat interdisiplin itu, VFP menilai *self-narratives* dan mengenal pasti kemungkinan penyertaan dialogikal dan gabungan watak protagonis sebagai "I-as-artist/novelist" dan "I-as-the-hero-of-my-story" di kalangan watak-watak lain dalam novel. Hampir dua dekad selepas kemunculan dan perkembangan *Dialogical Self Theory* (DST), namun perhatian terhadap kajian teks sastera berdasarkan teori ini terlalu kecil. Kajian ini merupakan kajian kualitatif terhadap tiga buah novel yang dipilih daripada penulis Amerika Paul Auster (1947-terkini), *Oracle Night* (2003), *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006) dan *Man in the Dark* (2008), untuk melihat *polyphonization* diri dalam konteks novel pascamoden. Watak protagonis novel-novel ini adalah diri penulis yang mencipta seorang wira dalam cerita paratextual dalam cerita utama, oleh itu, protagonis/ penulis sangat penting terhadap kajian dialogikal diri. Kajian ini menangani soalan-soalan berikut: (1) sama ada diri pascamoden ialah watak protagonis dalam novel yang dipilih merupakan *polyphonized* dialogikal atau mereka sekadar watak-watak yang berpemikiran yang kurang logik dan tiada kualiti dialogikal, (2) sama ada wira

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yang dicipta oleh protagonis / penulis merupakan watak utama di kalangan watak dalam atau luaran.

VFP meneliti watak fiksyen dan watak sebenar dalam konfrontasi antara pengarang dan wira kemudian menghadapi masalah antara watak utama pengarang dan watak yang dihidupkan. Oleh yang demikian, "*core act of coalition*" dalam VFP berlaku dalam intrinsik dan pada masa yang sama termasuk hubung kait pengarang dan *hero's self's domains*. Untuk tujuan penyelidikan kualitatif ini, kaedah *Hermans' Personal Position Repertoire* (PPR) diguna pakai untuk mengenal pasti, kelompok dan menganalisis *I-positions*. Dalam menganalisis *self-repertoire* watak protagonis / penulis penganjur dan *meta-position* dan signifikan main peranan mereka dalam kehidupan ditentukan. Selain itu, dengan menggunakan soalan yang dibuat oleh Hermans 'untuk memperlihatkan penilaian, jenis penilaian akan dikesan dan dibincangkan dalam *self-narratives* watak-watak. Dengan berbuat demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menjadikan komuniti penyelidikan sastera: (1) Menghidupkan semula kepentingan Bakhtin dan tulisan-tulisan beliau mengenai hubungan pengarang / wira; dan (2) yang merumuskan semula DST dalam act of self-reflection yang dijelaskan dalam (1).

Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa untuk mendapatkan makna daripada kehidupan yang kononnya bermakna mereka, protagonis / penulis mempunyai hubungan dialogikal aktif dengan ingatan dalam diri mereka, tangisan, dan menceritakan kehidupan mereka yang lalu. Selain itu, keputusan yang tepat dapat diwujudkan dengan merujuk kepada watak-watak dalam diri pascamoden sastera, "freedom-seeker" berfungsi sebagai *meta-position* yang dapat membantu protagonis / penulis untuk membentuk ruang dialogikal meyakinkan dalam *self-repertoire*. Selain itu, kedudukan "I-as-the-storyteller " atau "artis / novelist" dikenalpasti sebagai tempat penganjur. Oleh itu, di bawah pengaruh penentu dinamik bagi *positioning* dan *repositioning* pascamoden daripada protagonis / penulis dalam novel yang dipilih menunjukkan signifikan terhadap darjah dialogikal diri dengan melupakan kisah lalu, dan berurusan dengan perkara terkini dan menjana perspektif untuk masa depan mereka dan hasil daripada tindak balas pada keadaan pascamoden dengan gaya yang agak dialogical.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 17 September 2013 to conduct the final examination of Forough Barani Karbasaki on her thesis entitled "Virtual Fictional/Factual Positioning as an Approach to the Postmodern Sense of the Self and its Dialogical Dimensions in Paul Auster's Selected Novels" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for other degree at University Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

FOROUGH BARANI

Date: 17 September 2013

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