



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DIASPORIC SUBJECTIVITY AND AMBIVALENT POSITIONALITY
IN RELATION TO ORIENTALISM IN SELECTED FICTION
BY EILEEN CHANG**

QIAO MENG

FBMK 2012 4

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CHANG**



By

QIAO MENG

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

October 2012

DEDICATION

To my family for their unfailing support



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

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Chair: Associate Professor Noritah Omar, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Eileen Chang, who writes in both Chinese and English, has always been simply categorised as a Chinese writer. Researchers rarely approach her differently, such as a Chinese American writer or a diasporic writer, as if she had been living in China all the time and writing in Chinese only. This study, however, approaches Chang as a diasporic writer by analysing her selected fiction – *Romances* (1947), *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1955), *Naked Earth* (1956), *The Rouge of the North* (1967), *The Fall of the Pagoda* (2010), and *The Book of Change* (2010). The study explores how Chang positioned herself in relation to Orientalism during different periods of her writing, pointing out that although she subordinated herself to Orientalist discourse at times, she also tried to resist it in order to retain her agential subjectivity. The study also investigates the possible implications of diasporic writers' positionality and critics' evaluation on them through Chang's diasporic experiences. A postcolonial

perspective helps unravel the complexity of the construction of her diasporic subjectivity in the Orientalist discourse. Said's analysis of Orientalism and Bhabha's idea about the ambivalence of the construction of stereotypes provide the study with the theoretical basis. The major concept to be explored is diaspora, and Foucault's understanding of discourse is adopted as the critical tool to unfold the analysis. The study demonstrates that Chang can be approached as a diasporic writer based on the analysis of the reason and route of her diasporic journey, her effort to merge into the host society, the indirect traces of her diasporic experiences in her writing, the marginalisation she suffered in the host land, and her nostalgia for the homeland. Treating her as a diasporic writer helps researchers to study her with more possibilities. Moreover, the analysis of her diasporic writing shows that critics can discover more by investigating how the liminal space of diasporic experiences contributes to diasporic writers' articulation of their self-reflexivity instead of merely excluding them for inauthenticity, and that before labelling the diasporic writers as self-Orientalising, critics need to take into consideration the ambivalent nature of the construction of stereotypes in Orientalist discourse. With regard to the positionality of the diasporic writers, this study points out that to maintain the agential subjectivity in the postcolonial era, the diasporic writers need to resist contributing to the epistemic production desired by the hegemonic power for its function.

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

**SUBJEKTIVITI DIASPORA DAN KEDUDUKAN SIFAT AMBIVALEN
BERKAITAN ORIENTALISME DALAM FIKSYEN TERPILIH OLEH
EILEEN CHANG**

Oleh

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Walaupun Eileen Chang menghasilkan karyanya dalam kedua-dua bahasa Cina dan Inggeris, namun beliau seringkali hanya dirujuk sebagai penulis bahasa Cina. Penyelidik jarang sekali mengkaji beliau sebagai seorang penulis Cina Amerika atau seorang penulis diaspora, seolah-olah beliau tinggal di China sepanjang masa dan menulis dalam bahasa Cina sahaja. Kajian ini, sebaliknya, memfokus kepada Chang sebagai penulis diaspora melalui karya-karyanya, *Romances* (1947), *The Rice-Sprout Song* (1955), *Naked Earth* (1956), *The Rouge of the North* (1967), *The Fall of the Pagoda* (2010), dan *The Book of Change* (2010). Kajian ini meneroka bagaimana Chang meletakkan dirinya berkaitan Orientalisme pada masa yang berbeza dalam kehidupan beliau, dan menunjukkan bahawa meskipun beliau tunduk kepada wacana Orientalis pada masa yang tertentu, Chang juga cuba

melawan wacana ini demi mempertahankan kesubjektifan agentialnya. Melalui pengalaman peribadi Chang sebagai penulis diaspora, kajian ini turut menyelidik implikasi yang boleh terjadi akibat kedudukan penulis diaspora dan penilaian pengkritik ke atas mereka. Perspektif pascakolonial juga membantu merungkai kerumitan pembinaan subjektiviti penulis diaspora berhubung dengan wacana Orientalis. Analisis Edward Saïd terhadap konsep Orientalisme dan idea Bhabha tentang keambivalenan pembikinan stereotaip menjadi asas teori kajian ini. Konsep utama yang diterokai kajian ini adalah diaspora, dan pemahaman Foucault tentang wacana diterima pakai sebagai alat kritikal untuk mengembangkan hujah dan analisis. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa Chang boleh dianggap sebagai penulis diaspora berdasarkan analisis 'perjalanan diaspora' beliau, usahanya untuk mengintegrasikan diri dengan masyarakat tempatan, pengalaman diaspora yang secara tidak langsung terkandung dalam tulisannya, peminggiran yang dialaminya di Amerika Syarikat, dan perasaan nostalgia untuk tanah airnya. Mengkategorikan Chang sebagai penulis diaspora juga memungkinkan kajian yang lebih meluas dijalankan terhadap Chang sebagai seorang penulis. Selain itu, kajian ruang *liminal* atau kedudukan tidak tentu dalam pengalaman diaspora Chang juga menunjukkan bagaimana penulis diaspora melahirkan pandangan mereka. Ini menunjukkan bahawa para pengkritik mesti mengambil kira keambivalenan pembikinan stereotaip wacana Orientalis, sebelum mereka melabel penulis-penulis ini sebagai *self-Orientalising* atau penulis yang dengan rela 'tunduk kepada Orientalisme'. Dengan merujuk kepada sifat pascakolonialis penulis diaspora, tesis ini menunjukkan bahawa hanya penulis yang

menghasilkan karya atau buah fikiran yang serasi dengan khayalan (*imaginary*) para imperialis dapat mempertahankan kesubjektifan mereka sendiri, dan tidak menjadi mangsa wacana Orientalis. Justeru, dengan mengambil kira kedudukan penulis diaspora, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa untuk mempertahankan kesubjektifan agential dalam era pascakolonial, penulis diaspora perlu melawan daripada menyumbang ke arah pengeluaran epistem seperti yang diinginkan oleh kuasa hegemoni untuk fungsinya.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As my thesis draws to an end, I wish to show my deep gratitude to all who have contributed to my research. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr Noritah Omar. Her zeal as a postcolonial scholar, in terms of the construction of cultural identity which challenges Western definitions, encouraged my exploration of diasporic writers' agential subjectivity. Her enlightening questions constantly encouraged me to delve deeper into my study. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without her.

I am also indebted to the members of my supervisory committee. Dr Shivani Sivagurunathan cautioned me against the possible problems that I might come across in the process of research, and Associate Professor Dr Lim Choon Bee kept me from making wrong claims concerning modern Chinese writing. Besides, I am very grateful to Dr Washima for the great Malay translation she did for my abstract. And I would also like to thank Farah Ghaderi for all the discussions about Foucault and Said, which helped to clarify my understanding.

Last but not least, I am very grateful to my family. My parents' hopes, my husband's support, and my daughter's independence at such a young age motivated me to conduct my research with determination. Their love means more to me than they will ever realise.

I hereby certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 5 October, 2012 to conduct the final examination of Qiao Meng on her thesis entitled “**Diasporic Subjectivity and Ambivalent Positionality in Relation to Orientalism in Selected Fiction by Eileen Chang**” 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 any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

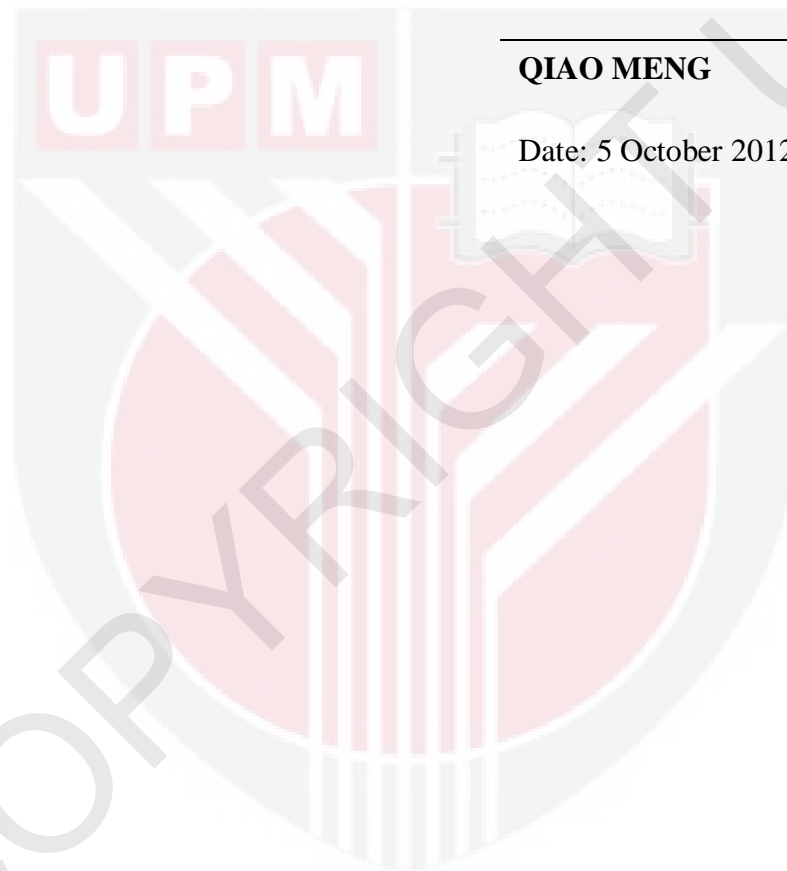


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