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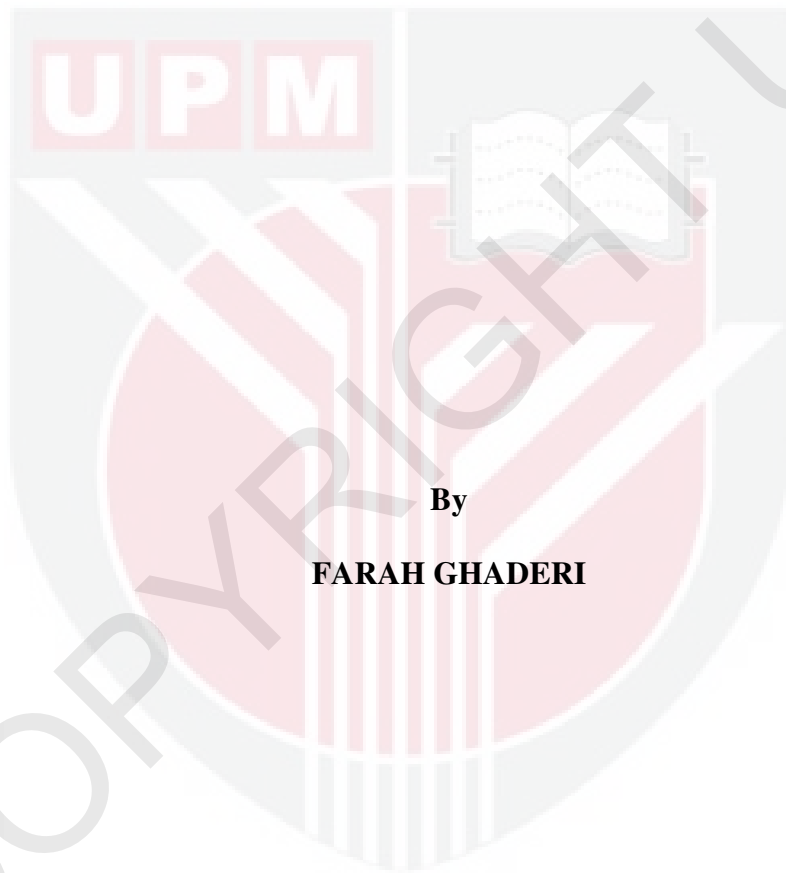
***RETHINKING EXOTICISM IN SELECTED TRAVEL TEXTS ON PERSIA  
BY VICTORIAN WOMEN WRITERS***

**FARAH GHADERI**

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**RETHINKING EXOTICISM IN SELECTED TRAVEL TEXTS ON PERSIA  
BY VICTORIAN WOMEN WRITERS**



By

**FARAH GHADERI**

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

**May 2013**

## DEDICATION

*For Nader, Tara and Daniel—my travelling companions*



Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**May 2013**

**Chairman: Associate Professor Wan Roselezam bt. Wan Yahya, PhD**

**Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication**

Exoticism in Western travel writing of the colonial era, i.e. travellers' representations of differences encountered in the contact zone as exotic, has been found by postcolonial critics to be profoundly informed by the asymmetrical power relations between representer/colonizer and represented/colonized. As a result, it is argued that exoticism in these travel texts was appropriative, since it tended to construct the dichotomy of self/other in such a way as to justify colonial interventions in other countries. Even though, recently, there has been much scholarly work theorizing and exploring exoticism, it has skirted around the vital variable of gender by generally focusing on male-authored texts.

This research seeks to rethink and re-examine exoticism by writing gender into its theorization and investigating the impact of the uncertain in-between position of Victorian women travellers in Persia as a colonial context for their responses to the Persians and their cultural practices, as well as their portrayals of self-other relations. It addresses the relatively unexplored area of Victorian women's travel

writing on Persia and focuses on Lady Sheil's *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (1856), Bird Bishop's *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (1891) and Gertrude Bell's *Persian Pictures* (1894). I draw from recent scholarship on exoticism and the notions surrounding it, such as cultural translation, appropriation of difference, reflexivity, reciprocity, colonial exoticism, Segalenian exoticism, the "static" traveller and the "exote", among others, in the textual analysis. The political and Orientalist discourses of the time as well as the degree of political affiliation these travellers had with Britain's colonial interest in Persia and their religious leanings are deemed crucial factors in moulding their positionality towards the differences encountered in the context of travel. Thus, they are taken into account when scrutinizing the ethnographic representations of Persians in the selected travel texts.

I argue that the ambivalent in-between position of these women travellers in Persia, as an effect of Victorian gender ideology and the concomitant dual affiliations with the British self and Persian other, was positive and empowering for them in the sense that it brought about a flexible viewing positionality towards difference, allowing for a shift between the perspective of the exote and that of the static traveller. This opened up alternative perspectives, other than the conventional Orientalist ones, on the Persians and their culture, which, in turn, allowed for a more nuanced treatment of difference, adding more layering, texture and complexity to exoticism in their travel texts. My findings reveal that there is a plurality of exoticisms in the selected texts, which are too ambivalent, versatile and multi-layered to be reduced to Britain's political control over Persia. Furthermore, they indicate that exoticism in the hands of these women travellers finds new

directions and significations. Indeed, exoticism in the selected travel texts involves reflexivity and reciprocity and becomes a malleable medium for a dialogue with the self, hence questioning its pejorative connotations in colonial travel texts.



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

**PERTIMBANGAN SEMULA UNSUR EKSOTISME DALAM TEKS-TEKS  
KEMBARA TERPILIH MENGENAI PARSİ OLEH PENULIS-PENULIS  
WANITA ZAMAN VICTORIA**

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Eksotisme dalam penulisan kembara Barat era kolonial, iaitu tindak balas para pengembara terhadap gambaran berbeza yang dialami di dalam zon hubungan sebagai eksotik, telah dianggap oleh pengkritik-pengkritik pascakolonial sebagai sesuatu yang dipengaruhi secara mendalam oleh ketidakseimbangan hubungan kuasa di antara seseorang yang menggambarkan/penjajah dan yang digambarkan/dijajah. Oleh itu, pengkritik-pengkritik ini menyatakan bahawa eksotisme dalam teks-teks kembara ini telah diadaptasikan kerana ia cenderung membina dikotomi sendiri/'other' yang bertujuan untuk mewajarkan campur tangan kuasa kolonial ke atas negara-negara lain. Walaupun karya-karya ilmiah terkini banyak ditumpukan kepada perbincangan dan penerokaan teori eksotisme, namun begitu kepentingan dari aspek jender telah diketepikan kerana pengkritik lebih gemar memberi fokus kepada teks-teks hasil karya penulis lelaki.

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mempertimbangkan dan mengkaji semula unsur eksotisme dengan mengambil kira aspek jender dalam proses perbincangan melalui siasatan terhadap impak yang ditinggalkan oleh keraguan posisi perantaraan pengembara-pengembara wanita zaman Victoria di Parsi dalam konteks kolonial ke atas tindak balas mereka terhadap orang-orang Parsi dan amalan-amalan budaya mereka serta gambaran perhubungan sendiri-‘other’ mereka. Ia memperlihatkan aspek penulisan pengembaraan wanita-wanita zaman Victoria mengenai Parsi yang belum diterokai serta memberi fokus kepada *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (1856) hasil karya Lady Sheil, *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan* (1891) oleh Bird Bishop dan *Persian Pictures* (1894) hasil karya Gertrude Bell. Melalui karya-karya ilmiah terkini, saya memanfaatkan teori eksotisme serta idea-idea yang berkaitan dengannya seperti penterjemahan budaya, adaptasi perbezaan, reflektiviti, kesalingan, eksotisme kolonial, exotisme Segalenian, pengembara statik dan eksotik, antara lain, di dalam analisis teks. Dalam konteks pengembaraan, wacana politik dan Orientalis pada masa tersebut serta tahap fahaman politik yang dibawa oleh para pengembara ini mengenai kepentingan penjajahan Britain ke atas Parsi dan pegangan agama mereka dianggap sebagai faktor-faktor yang penting dalam membentuk kedudukan mereka terhadap perbezaan yang dialami. Oleh itu, unsur-unsur ini akan diambil kira dalam penelitian gambaran etnografi orang-orang Parsi di dalam teks-teks kembara yang dipilih.

Saya ingin menekankan bahawa perihal berbelah bagi posisi ‘in-between’ di kalangan para pengembara wanita di Parsi ini adalah akibat daripada ideologi jender zaman Victoria serta hubungan dwi seiring dengan diri British dan ‘other’

Parsi, merupakan sesuatu yang positif dan memperkasakan kerana ianya telah menjana kedudukan pandangan yang fleksibel terhadap gambaran perbezaan, yang membolehkan berlakunya anjakan kedudukan di antara pengembara eksotik dan statik. Ini telah membuka suatu pandangan alternatif, selain daripada pandangan Orientalis lama terhadap orang-orang Parsi dan budaya mereka, yang sekaligus membenarkan suatu layanan yang berbeza dengan penambahan lapisan, tekstur dan kerumitan unsur eksotisme dalam teks-teks kembara mereka. Hasil penemuan saya mendedahkan kehadiran eksotisme majmuk dalam teks-teks terpilih yang dianggap terlalu berbelah bagi dan berlapis serta tidak boleh hanya diperkecilkan semata-mata kepada isu penegasan politik Britian ke atas Parsi. Tambahan pula, kajian saya menunjukkan bahawa eksotisme yang dipraktik oleh para pengembara wanita ini memberikan arah penemuan baru yang penting. Sesungguhnya, eksotisme dalam teks-teks perjalanan yang dipilih melibatkan reflektiviti dan kesalingan yang menjadikannya suatu medium yang mudah dibentuk untuk dialog sendiri; seterusnya mempertimbangkan semula maksud penindasan dalam teks-teks kembara kolonial.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 28 May 2013 to conduct the final examination of Farah Ghaderi, on her thesis entitled “Rethinking Exoticism in Selected Travel Texts on Persia by Victorian Women Writers”, in accordance with the Universities and University College 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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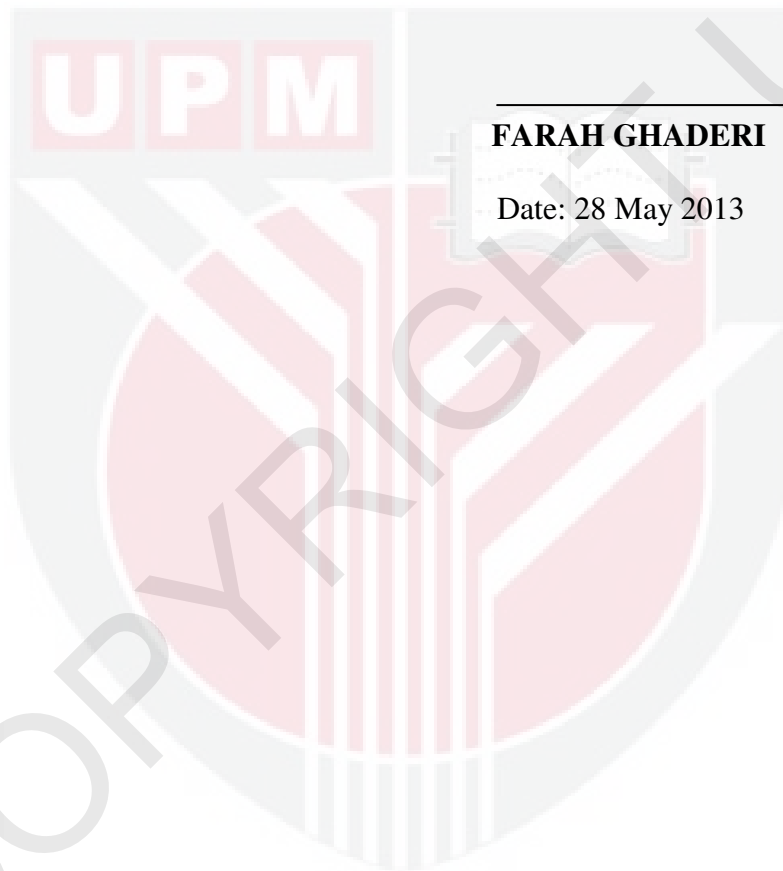
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## DECLARATION

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 any other institution.



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