



The Islands are Inhabited Only by Women: Ethereal Worlds, Ethereal Others and Selves Depicted in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017)

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Abstract Tamīm Al-Dāri is an enigmatic historical figure who is often associated with Islamic eschatology. His story became the basis for various medieval stories in the Arab, European, and Classical Malay worlds. In the *hikayat*, there is a story fragment that is similar to the film *Wonder Woman* (2017) related to a journey to strange island inhabited only by women. I will compare these two things within the framework of travel writing. This study aims is to examine how the self, the other, and the world are reported in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017). This Study is based on Carl Thomson's theory of travel literature related to the self, the other, and reporting the world. The hermeneutic phenomenology method is used ti analyze how *Tamīm Al-Dāri's* journey is seen as lived experience and structured through consciousness that is open to interpretation as an inevitable configuration of "being in the world". The resultof the study show that *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017) use Janused-face technique in reporting ethereal realms; othering to explain the others encountered in the ethereal world; and uses fashioning in reflecting the core of the self.

Keywords: Tamīm Al-Dāri, Wonder Woman (2017), comparative literature, travel writing, Carl Thompson

1 Introduction

Narratives of journeys to ethereal realms inhabited by mysterious beings or featuring unusual places, have long been a significant part of literature and mythology across cultures. These stories not only reflect human imagination of the unknown but also cultural view on the self and the other [1], [2]. Tamīm Al-Dāri, a historical figures associated with Islamic eschatology [3] and early Islamic art [4], inspired various medieval narratives in the Arab, Europa, and Classical Malay world through his travels to such realms. A notable element in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* is his journey to a mysterious island inhabited solely by woman, which striking resembles the storyline of the film *Wonder Woman* (2017). This similarity offers an opportunity to compare both narratives within the framework of travel writing.

One aspect that is a key word in travel writing is travel, which Thomson defines as a movement through the space [5]. The definition of travel writing is complicated, but *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017) meet the criteria of travel writing,

in both of which there is movement of characters across space. Thomson underlined that to begin any journey or, indeed, simply to set foot beyond one's own front door, is to encounter difference and otherness. In this regard, the two narrative structures that I used as material objects for this research also meet these criteria. Both *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017) narrate the traveler's encounter with different and foreign world. In other words, the journey of the characters in that two works can be seen as a negotiation between self and other which is brought about through movement in spaces.

Research on the *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* has been conducted by several previous researchers with several tendencies. The first examines the figure of Tamīm Al-Dāri as a historical figure. The research was conducted by David Cook [3], Francesca [6], and Avinoam Shalem [4], specifically examining Tamīm Al-Dāri as an artist figure from the early Muslim era. The second tendency is a comparative study carried out only by Kuncoro [7] which examines the similarities in the characteristics of Jin in the *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* translated by Haniah [8] with the novel *Bartimaeus: The Amulet Of Samarkand*. As for *Wonder Woman*, there are several previous studies that focus on the study of literary psychology, gender and feminism [9], [10], [11], [12], but none of them compare with *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* from the perspective of Thomson's travel literature theory

This study aims to explore *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017), using Carl Thompson's theory of travel writing that focuses on the interplay between the depiction of the traveler and the places they visit throughout three key concepts: Reporting The World, Revealing The Self, and Representing The Other.

2 Methods

The comparative approach will be adopted throughout this study. One point or idea will be compared with another in both *hikayat* and film is based on Carl Thompson's theory of travel literature. This research uses the hermeneutic phenomenology method which involves formulating a hypothesis about the travel experience, analyzing the narrative and cultural contexts, and presenting findings in a structured format that represents the interwoven between the world, the self, and the other in the two works. [13].

3 Result and Discussion

The comparative approach, grounded in Carl Thompson's theory of travel literature, provide a robust framework for examining the narratives in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017). This study focused on how the world, the other, and the

self are reported and depicted in both stories, utilizing hermenetic phenomenology to understand these journeys as lived experiences structure through consciousness.

3.1 Reporting The (Ethereal) World: From The Fourth Layer of The Earth to Homogeneous Nation of Women

Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri and *Wonder Woman* employ the Janus-faced technique to describe their respective worlds, juxtaposing the familiar with the foreign, the real with the ethereal. In *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri*, the protagonist, Tamīm, embarks on a journey from the real world to the ethereal realm. One night, he ventures to a lake and finds himself entering the jinn world in the fourth layer of the earth. In this otherworldly domain, he visits many strange places. He is imprisoned and later freed by the King of the Islamic Jinn. He finds himself on a devil's island, where the inhabitants revel in sin and cruelty. He also becomes stranded on a peculiar island inhabited solely by women. Despite their strangeness, the elements of the ethereal world are not entirely different from his own world: composed from familiar components, but arranged in ways that are impossible in his world. The places Tamīm visits are not just strange and different, but also inferior to his original home. There is a sense of cultural essentialism in his perspective, but not always expressed in dialogue, which makes him long for home.

“How Allah Subhanauh wa Ta'ala will save me from the dangers of this place?”

3.2 Othering The Other: Amazing but Still Overwhelmed

Othering in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* manifests as a process of self-differentiation and self-assertion over other cultures. In the ethereal world, Tamīm encounters numerous fantastical beings—such as the King of the Jinn, Sahar, and the one-eyed elephant—that are impossible to find in his own realm. Yet, despite their strangeness, these creatures are not entirely alien to him. Although jinn are envisioned as beings from another dimension, they possess familiar human traits. For instance, the jinn Tamīm meets can express emotions, like longing and weeping for the Prophet Muhammad, similar to humans.

When he (the King of the Islamic Jinns) heard the story from Tamīm Al-Dāri he cried and shed tears. He said, “... let me take care of him because I want to ask for intercession from the Messenger of Allah SAW and later on.”[8]

Moreover, the world of the jinn mirrors the human world with its own social structures, where subdued jinn must pay tribute if they refuse to convert to Islam. Despite their magical abilities and the capacity to travel at speeds 405 times faster than human walking, jinn are not omnipotent and can be imprisoned within their own realm. Similarly, although Tamīm finds himself stranded on an island inhabited solely by women, a scenario that feels extremely bizarre to him, still he must have met women

before in his world. From that Tamīm identifies and emphasizes the differences between himself and those from another world (culture), engaging in othering.

Likewise with Steve Trevor, he also experienced the same thing as Tamim. Appear there othering, which is refers to the specific processes and strategies used to depict one culture by another, not merely illustrating differences but also establishing a hierarchical relationship between them [5], [14]. It happened in the case of Steve Trevor when he arrived at Themyscira, a mystical island inhabited solely by women, much like the island in *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri*. To Steve, this place felt extraordinarily foreign and enigmatic. The enchantment of Themyscira lies in its timeless existence, sustained as long as no man sets foot upon it [15].

“...Where are we? What is this place? Who are you people? Why does the water do that? ... How can you speak English so well?”[16]

Trevor encountered a myriad of peculiarities on the island, such as the rope of Hestia, which compelled people to speak the truth, the formidable and immortal warriors of The Amazons, and their ability to converse in hundreds of languages. Although not manifested in the dialogue, cultural essentialism appears in the scene when The Amazons, despite their valiance, were overwhelmed by the modern German forces. The Amazons' expertise in horseback riding, swordsmanship, and archery seemed inadequate against the Germans' advanced firearms and bullets, even though the German forces were relatively smaller in number.

3.3 Revealing Self: Romantic and Cartesian Self in a Nutshell

Tamīm makes his travels a form of fashioning, projecting a self-image to his wide potential readers with unaffected Cartesian form. Tamīm remains true to his faith and simply wants to return to his world, not tempted to become like a devil or stay on the island of women. While in *Wonder Woman*, Steve Trevor embodies a Cartesian self, unaffected by his journey. When stranded on the uncanny island of Themyscira, his main focus is on gathering useful information, driven by his background as a spy. His time on Themyscira does not lead to self-reflection or a reaction to the strange world; he simply observes and continues his mission to thwart a new weapon of mass destruction and end the war.

In contrast, Diana of Themyscira—or Diana Prince, the main character in *Wonder Woman*—travels to the human world motivated by her sacred duty as an Amazon to save the world. Initially intent on killing the mastermind behind the deadly gas weapon, she reconsiders after reflecting on her encounters with others, particularly Steve Trevor, who shows her that humanity possesses inherent goodness. Unlike Trevor, who remains detached from the foreign world he explores, Diana Prince is open to change through her experiences, especially through the others she meets. This openness, as Thompson describes, is characteristic of a romantic [5].

4 Conclusion

The research concludes that both *Hikayat Tamīm Al-Dāri* and *Wonder Woman* (2017) depict ethereal worlds that are simultaneously familiar and fantastical, combining elements from the real world in impossible arrangements that evoke wonder. However, the encounters with these ethereal realms also lead to cultural essentialism in representing the other. Both Tamīm and Steve Trevor perceive the foreign worlds they explore and people they meet as inferior to their own world and self, reflecting a hierarchical view of culture. Finally, the journeys shape different expressions of the self: Tamīm and Trevor maintain a Cartesian self, largely unchanged by their experiences, while Diana Prince embodies a romantic self, open to transformation and growth through her interactions with the other world.

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