

**REPRESENTATION OF LIBERAL FEMINISM ON WOMAN**

**CHARACTER IN *HALA* (2019)**

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining the

Bachelor Degree in English Department



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Atas perhatian Bapak, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

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**MOTTO**

“Pain is never permanent, but tonight it’s killing me”

Neck Deep



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## **DEDICATION**

This graduating paper is dedicated to:

My Self, Family, and Readers.



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Finally, the researcher perceives that this graduating paper is not the perfect one and that there must be things that need to be deepened and sharpened.



Henceforth, it is always welcomed for readers to give corrections and/or suggestions to improve the study concerned.

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Yogyakarta, 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2023

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

COVER .....	i
NOTA DINAS .....	ii
VALIDATION .....	iii
FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT .....	iv
MOTTO .....	v
DEDICATION .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	x
ABSTRACT .....	xii
ABSTRAK .....	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of Study .....	1
1.2 Research Question .....	4
1.3 Objective of Study .....	4
1.4 Significance of Study .....	4
1.5 Literature Review .....	4
1.6 Theoretical Approach .....	7
1.7 Methods of Research .....	9
1.7.1 Type of Research .....	9
1.7.2 Data Source .....	10
1.7.3 Data Collection Technique .....	11
1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique .....	12
1.8 Paper Organization .....	13
CHAPTER II INTRINSIC ELEMENT .....	15
2.1 Theme .....	15
2.2 Summary .....	15
2.3 Plot .....	17

2.3.1 Exposition .....	17
2.3.2 Rising Action .....	17
2.3.3 Climax.....	18
2.3.4 Falling Action .....	19
2.3.5 Resolution .....	19
2.4 Setting.....	20
2.4.1 Setting of Place .....	20
2.4.2 Setting of Time .....	22
2.4.3 Setting of Social Condition.....	23
2.5 Character and Characterization .....	24
2.5.1 Round Character .....	25
2.5.1.1 Hala Masood.....	25
2.5.1.2 Eram Masood.....	27
2.5.1.3 Zahid Masood .....	29
2.5.2 Flat Character.....	30
2.5.2.1 Jesse Ross .....	30
2.5.2.2 Melanie .....	31
CHAPTER III ANALYSIS.....	33
3.1. Equal Liberty .....	33
3.2 Equal Education .....	45
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION.....	48
4.1 Conclusion.....	48
4.2 Suggestion .....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	50

# **THE PORTRAYAL OF LIBERAL FEMINISM OF FEMALES**

## **CHARACTERS IN *HALA* (2019)**

**By Aulia Bagus Putro**

### **ABSTRACT**

Feminism is an interesting issue to study. Many films raise the issue of feminism. One of them is the problem of feminism which is represented by female characters in the film *Hala* (2019) by Minhal Baig. The problems seen in a Muslim teenager who live in the midst of cultural differences and confusion over their own identity. This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods and the application of liberal feminism theory by Rosemarie Tong. To support the main theory, the researcher uses the Mise-en-scene theory by Ed Sikov which aims to be the basis for collecting research data. The researcher concludes that the densest representation of liberal feminism exists in the female characters in the film. Based on the analysis that has been done, it can be concluded that the data found displays the concept of equal liberty and equal education. The results of the analysis show that a woman's struggle can produce and have equal rights with a man.

Keywords: Liberal Feminism, Female Figures, *Hala*

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# POTRET FEMINISME LIBERAL KARAKTER PEREMPUAN DALAM

*HALA* (2019)

Oleh Aulia Bagus Putro

## ABSTRAK

Feminisme merupakan salah satu isu yang menarik untuk diulik. Banyak film film yang mengangkat isu tentang feminisme. Salah satunya adalah permasalahan feminisme yang direpresentasikan oleh karakter perempuan pada film *Hala* (2019) karya Minhal Baig. Permasalahan yang terlihat pada seorang remaja muslim yang tinggal di tengah perbedaan budaya dan kebingungan atas jati dirinya sendiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dan pengaplikasian teori liberal feminisme oleh Rosemarie Tong. Untuk mendukung teori utama, peneliti menggunakan teori *Mise-en-scene* oleh Ed Sikov yang bertujuan untuk landasan pengambilan data penelitian. Peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa terpadat representasi liberal feminisme yang ada pada karakter perempuan pada film tersebut. Berdasarkan analisis yang telah dilakukan dapat disimpulkan bahwa data yang ditemukan menampilkan konsep tentang equal liberty dan equal education. Hasil analisis memperlihatkan bahwa perjuangan seorang perempuan dapat menghasilkan dan memiliki hak setara dengan seorang pria.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme Liberal, Tokoh Perempuan, *Hala*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Feminism has some varied meanings. There is no specific meaning that refers to the meaning of feminism. According to Tong, feminism is a movement for equality between women and men. The definition of feminism can change due to the understanding or views of feminists which are based on historical or cultural realities, as well as the level of awareness of perceptions and behavior. It can be between women of almost any type that there are differences of opinion and debate about feminist thinking itself.

Feminism has various types of branches, one of them is liberal feminism. Liberal feminism is synonymous with the demand for the right to be equal in all fields (Tong,2014). In a classical liberal society, the ideal state was envisioned as much as possible to protect civil rights on the one hand and minimal intervention of individuals on the other. Tong selects liberal thinking based on the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill, Betty Friedan, and the NOW (National Organization of Women). According to Tong, women are inhibited (logically and other) because they are not allowed to have the freedom to make their own decisions. Equal education became a central theme of liberal feminist writing in the 18th century (Tong 2004, 18-19).

There are many films with the theme of feminism. Seeing from the background of making the film, the average feminism-themed film is made by a

writer who experiences and feels about the issue, many films have elements of feminism. The researcher decided to take one movie from Minhal Baig for this research from the United States, entitled Hala.

*Hala* (2019) is an American drama film directed and written by Minhal Baig. Starring Geraldine Viswanathan, Jack Kilmer, Gabriel Luna, Anna Chlumsky. The film has already been screened in the U.S. Dramatic Competition at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and premiered on January 20, 2019. *Hala* was released on November 22, 2019, and streamed on Apple TV+ on December 6, 2019, and received positive reviews. Several reviews explain how the film is portrayed.

*Hala* (2019) has variables that will be analyzed by the researcher. The first is women's discourse, and the second is women themselves. This is based on the existing film story and can be seen in several scenes and dialogues between actors. The film's writer also said that some of the issues and events in the film were based on her own experiences because she is also of Pakistani descent. The first issue that becomes clear in the film is a woman's desire for a free life, as felt by one of her friends, Hala. The second issue is the decision of a woman who chooses to live alone without the help of a man. The woman also has a strong desire for equal education that must be obtained for her child. Existing issues are also supported by the cultural differences and beliefs of each individual.

The feeling of wanting to be equal with someone does not always get support from people around. It can be a person's ammunition to deny the thoughts



of people they consider too young and not by the traditions they have been through for generations, especially for someone who adheres to Islam. Islam is a religion that has been perfected from its predecessor religions. So that it becomes the most widely followed religion. The number of Confessions does not ensure that religion is free from internal and external issues. Issues that are still being discussed from several years ago are issues about women who are not by what has been taught. Especially Muslim. This issue discusses the position of a woman in society and the family. Unfortunately, these issues are mostly just a point of view without seeing how the internal conditions experienced by a Muslim woman. Other people who only give their point of view see a female figure is no more influential than a man. Therefore, the researcher here has the opinion that researching this problem can prove the issues of feminism contained in the film. One of the literary works that contain this issue is *The Hala* (2019) which raises the issue of Muslim teenagers living in the United States. Released on November 22, 2019, this film has a story that is quite familiar in real life, namely about a Muslim teenage girl named Hala, who struggles to face her conditions of desire, family, and culture.

Finally, *Hala* (2019) is worthy to be analyzed because it has many resources that can be analyzed. Besides that, raises the issue of a woman experiencing a dilemma of identity that is whether she has the right to get what she wants or not, right or wrong as she has been through many events. The author tries to describe Hala's figure as a woman like that. With the story written and explained by the author, the researcher wants to examine the film whether the

problem exists as the author wants to describe and the researcher uses liberal feminist theory in this research to help reveal the problems. As Rosemarie Tong thought: “Liberal feminists want a woman, a man, a human being, to be able to develop their personality independently” (Tong, 2014). Not always depend on men and try so that women are not oppressed by men. This makes the problem that exists in the characters in the film can be analyzed using liberal feminist theory to make the researcher take the focus and limit this research.

### **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of the study, the researcher then formulated a research question, namely “How is the depiction of liberal feminism in the characters in this film (2019)?”

### **1.3 Objective of Study**

The objective of this study is to find out the representation of liberal feminist characters in *Hala*.

### **1.4 Significance of Study**

This research was conducted to find out several significances, namely to understand more deeply about liberal feminism theory on the female characters in *Hala*

### **1.5 Literature Review**

The researcher used several previous studies using the same discussion in this research. That is; “The Portrayal of Immigrant Muslim Teenager as seen in

*Hala* (2019)". Many movies and studies about Islam in America portray the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. One is how immigrant Muslims are treated by non-Muslims in bad ways like discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. However, there is another perspective that discusses the personal and interpersonal relationship of Muslims themselves. Thus, the researcher perceives that it is important to analyze *Hala* (2019) because it tells how Muslims in America connect to another. Particularly, the movie examines the internal problems of an immigrant Muslim teenager named Hala which the researcher criticizes on how it is portrayed. Using a qualitative method, this research applies representation theory by Stuart Hall and *Mise-en-scene* theory by Roy Thompson and Christopher J. Bowen. The researcher finds that Hala represents a cultural Muslim who conforms herself to the American environment. It can be concluded that she: (1) is an unobservant Muslim for skipping prayer, masturbating, having sex, and being reluctant to Islamic law; (2) is an assimilated immigrant for avoiding arranged marriage, being willing to drive a car, not dressing traditionally, rarely speaking her native language; and (3) remains praying but diverges from Islamic common precept by unveiling her hijab.

The other research is titled "Liberal Feminism in the Anime *Kidō Senshi Gandamu Tekketsu No Orufenzu* by Tatsuyuki Nagai" by I Made Dwi Christian Gustiana Putraa, I Nyoman Rauh Artanab, Ngurah Indra Pradhana. This research aims to determine the form and depiction of liberal feminism of female characters in anime. In analyzing it, the theory used in this research is the theory of liberal feminism by Tong and the theory of sociology of literature by Wellek and

Werren. The methods used in this study include descriptive analysis with qualitative analysis techniques and informal methods with narrative techniques. Based on the results of the analysis, it is found that liberal feminism that appears in the anime *Kidō Senshi Gandamu Tekketsu No Orufenzu* contained in the Kudelia character includes the image of women, the position of women, intellectual women, women who have high curiosity, women in politics. Efforts to enforce the existence of women are seen in the presence of female characters using the theory of literary sociology, by looking for the meaning contained in anime.

The second research is "Representation of Feminism in the Film "Spy" by Oni Sutanto. This study aims to see how the representation of feminism is contained in the film "Spy". The type of research used is descriptive qualitative with John Fiske's television semiotics method which consists of three levels, namely the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. By using John Fiske's television semiotics method, the researcher found four categories of feminism, namely feminism in decision-making, feminism in leadership, feminism in intellect, and feminism in women's appearance. The results of this study show how the representation of feminism through the film "Spy". The feminism in the film "Spy" is the first wave of feminism by depicting a woman who is intellectual and can make decisions. In addition, in this film, the representation of feminism is also through women with large bodies who are represented as figures who can work in the field and complete their missions well.

As seen earlier, there are lots of articles or journals that research feminism. This paper will have differences with previous studies. This research focuses on the struggles of a young Muslim who lives in the midst of different cultures and beliefs. The woman in this film is described as having an independent nature and having a desire for her own life.

### **1.6 Theoretical Approach**

Since this research involves a female character, known as Hala as the main character as well as the object of this research, therefore the researcher decided to use feminism theory as the main theory in this research. Feminism is a women's movement that demands emancipation or equal rights and justice with men. Feminism is not like any other view or understanding. Feminism also does not originate from a theory or concept based on a single theoretical formula. Therefore, there is no specific understanding of the application of feminism to all women throughout the ages. The ideas and goals of feminism have evolved and have shaped society. Feminism is a study or thought as well as a methodology that aims to reveal the existence of inequality between genders in social, economic, and even political realities.

The study of feminism has the ideology like other theories. Some thoughts are *liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodernist feminism, and psychoanalytic feminism* (Tong, 2009: 1), and each of these studies has certain differences in it. This research uses liberal feminist theory popularized by Rosemarie Tong. Liberal feminism aims to liberate

women's views from oppressive gender roles. This role refers to the social roles attached to women by the general public, which justifies placing women under men in all social fields. According to Rosemarie Tong (2014: 11-12), Liberals claim that "rights" should be prioritized over "goods". In other words, our whole system of individual rights is justified because these rights are a framework within which we can all choose our separate things (Tong, 2014:11-12) in other words, a liberal is the freedom of choice of each individual to choose what they want without looking at other factors. Individual freedom of choice covers many aspects, such as education, life, love, career, etc.

The Researcher has an argument about liberalism which is the stand of someone who understands and respects the views of others especially when they feel different from what is. The liberal feminist only advocates for a woman to be equal to a man, but she also understands what is realized and she is also aware of what has just been activated. According to Tong, liberal feminism occurred in several periods, namely *Eighteen-Century Thought: Equal Education*, *Nineteenth-Century Thought: Equal Liberty*, *Nineteenth-Century Action: The Suffrage*, *Twentieth-Century Action: Equal Rights* *Twentieth-Century Thought: Sameness Versus Difference*.

To support the movie analysis, the researcher use the Mise-en-scene movie theory from Ed Sikov. Film theory is also important in this research because the scenes in the film can be taken as the main data for compiling this research. Sikov argues that Mise-en-scene is an early stage to understand what meaning is in the film produced. (2010: 5). According to Sikov, Mise-en-scene has several elements



that exist and are placed on the camera to take pictures: lighting, setting, property, makeup, costumes, figure behavior, angle, and cinematography (Sikov, 2010:5).

## **1.7 Methods of Research**

### **1.7.1 Type of Research**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate the portrayal of teenage girls, particularly focusing on the character Hala, within the context of social sciences and human behavior. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand the subjective experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of individuals or groups (Kothari, 2004). It involves a deep analysis of various factors that shape people's behavior and preferences.

Qualitative research methods are well-suited for this study as they allow for an in-depth examination of the portrayal of teenage girls in the film Hala. By analyzing the film's visual and textual elements, researchers can gain insights into Hala's thoughts, actions, and the issues she encounters. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how social and cultural factors influence her character development and experiences.

Through qualitative analysis, the researcher can identify and interpret patterns, themes, and underlying meanings present in the film. This research design allows for a rich exploration of the social and psychological aspects surrounding Hala's life as a Muslim teenager, shedding light on her interactions, decision-making processes, and the challenges she faces within her family and community.



### 1.7.2 Data Source

The research study relies on two main sources of data: primary data and supporting data. These sources provide the necessary information to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of Hala as a teenage girl in the film.

**Primary Data:** The primary data for this study is derived from the visual and textual elements of the film *Hala* (2019). These elements include scenes, dialogues, character interactions, cinematography, and other audiovisual cues that contribute to the overall portrayal of Hala as a teenage girl. By closely examining the film, the researcher extracts relevant information and data points related to Hala's thoughts, behavior, relationships, and experiences. This primary data serves as the foundation for the analysis and interpretation of Hala's representation in the film.

**Supporting Data:** In addition to the primary data obtained from the film itself, supporting data is collected from various external sources. These sources include relevant books, academic journals, and internet publications that discuss the issues addressed in the research. The supporting data serves as supplementary information that provides additional context, theoretical perspectives, and background understanding of the topics explored in the film. These sources may offer scholarly insights, critical analyses, or theoretical frameworks that help in interpreting and contextualizing the primary data. The supporting data aids in enriching the analysis by drawing upon existing knowledge and scholarly

discussions related to the portrayal of teenage girls, religious identity, cultural norms, and other relevant themes addressed in the film.

By combining the primary data extracted from the film with the supporting data obtained from external sources, the research study can provide a comprehensive and well-informed analysis of the portrayal of Hala as a teenage girl, grounded in both the cinematic presentation and the broader academic discourse surrounding the subject matter.

### **1.7.3 Data Collection Technique**

The data collection procedure involves several stages that allow for a systematic and organized approach to gathering the necessary data for the research study.

**Film Viewing:** The first stage of the data collection procedure involves watching the film *Hala* (2019) in its entirety. The researcher actively engages with the film, paying close attention to its intrinsic elements such as scenes, dialogues, character interactions, cinematography, and other audiovisual cues. This process entails carefully observing and taking notes on the relevant aspects of the film that contribute to the portrayal of Hala as a teenage girl. The researcher aims to capture the nuances, themes, and representations depicted in the film that are pertinent to the research objectives.

**Note-Taking:** During the film viewing, the researcher takes detailed notes on the observed elements and issues revealed in the film. These notes serve as the primary data for the research. It is important for the researcher to be attentive and

meticulous in documenting key moments, dialogues, character traits, and any other information that contributes to the understanding of Hala's representation as a Muslim teenager. These notes provide the raw material for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Categorization and Grouping:** After completing the film viewing and note-taking process, the researcher proceeds to categorize and group the collected data into variables that are relevant to the research focus and theoretical framework. This categorization step involves identifying patterns, themes, and recurring motifs in the data that relate to the portrayal of Hala as a teenage girl. The researcher organizes the data based on these identified categories, which may include traditions, religious issues, romantic relationships, decision-making, and the dynamics within Hala's parental relationship, among others.

#### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

The data analysis technique involves a systematic examination and interpretation of the film data collected during the research study. After categorizing the film data into several categories related to adolescent problems, particularly those concerning Muslims, the researcher proceeds to conduct a detailed and rigorous analysis to align with the research focus and objectives.

**Identification of Relevant Scenes and Dialogues:** The researcher narrows down the focus of the analysis to scenes and dialogues that revolve around Hala's character. These specific scenes and dialogues provide valuable insights into Hala's experiences, thoughts, and behavior as a Muslim teenager. By selectively

analyzing these key moments, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of Hala's representation within the film.

**Interpretation Based on Categories:** The categorized film data serves as a framework for the analysis. The researcher examines the scenes and dialogues, interpreting them through the lens of the identified categories. These categories may pertain to traditions, religious issues, romantic relationships, decision-making, and the dynamics within Hala's parental relationship. The researcher pays attention to how these aspects influence Hala's experiences and shape her character development within the film.

**Drawing Conclusions:** Through the analysis and interpretation of the data, the researcher draws conclusions about how Hala, as a Muslim teenager, is constructed in the film. This involves synthesizing the findings from the categorized data and identifying overarching themes or patterns that emerge. The researcher critically reflects on the portrayal of Hala's character, considering the cultural and societal contexts presented in the film.

## **1.8 Paper Organization**

This chapter consists of 4 parts. The first chapter is the introduction to this research. The introduction consists of a background of the study, research question, objective of the study, significance of the study, literature reviews, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter discusses the intrinsic elements of *Hala's* movie which consists of plot, setting, character and characterization, and theme. The third chapter is the core of

this research, which is analyzing the data that has been obtained based on the research questions. The fourth chapter is the conclusions and suggestions regarding the research that has been researched.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the research findings, it can be concluded that there are elements of liberal feminism seen in the female characters, particularly Hala. They struggle to express herself, choosing decisions based on her own choices without any influence from others. The female characters who have a strong value towards the element of feminism are Melanie and Eram. They both want to obtain or fight for freedom of life and one of them is equality for education. They both do not want to feel the things they used to feel, such as the absence of freedom over the actions of their body control and freedom over their own lives. Hala herself also has elements of feminism. It was seen when she decided to keep playing with a boy even though her parents and even the Muslim community were very against it. Hala also finally has a decision and control over herself after she lived alone with her mother without a father figure.

#### 4.2 Suggestion

In addition to exploring the concept of liberal feminism, it is suggested that future research on *Hala* should consider applying other theoretical frameworks to analyze different aspects. One potential area of focus could be the problem of identity crisis portrayed in the film. By utilizing theories of identity formation or identity politics, researchers can delve deeper into the exploration of Hala's struggle with her personal identity and the conflicts it creates in her life.

Furthermore, while the current research has been conducted to the best of the researcher's abilities, it is important to acknowledge that there may still be limitations and areas for improvement. Therefore, it is encouraged for researchers to provide feedback, suggestions, and criticisms to enhance the quality and depth of future studies. By engaging in constructive dialogue and incorporating diverse perspectives, the research on *Hala* can be developed and serve as a valuable reference for various stakeholders seeking to explore new research avenues and examine different aspects of the film.



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