



The Arab Ethnic Identity Politics in Indonesia: A Female Representation in *Fatat Qarut* and *Fatimah*

Siti Amsariah*

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
Jakarta, Indonesia
siti.amsariah@uinjkt.ac.id

Ali Hasan Al Bahar

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
Jakarta, Indonesia
alihan@uinjkt.ac.id

Sayidatul Ummah

Universitas Indonesia
Depok, Indonesia
sayidatulummah@alumni.ui.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose

This research sought to delve into the representation of Arab women in 'Fatat Qarut' and 'Fatimah' as well as conducting a comparative analysis upon the textual ideologies instilled in both works.

Method

This research was a qualitative study utilizing descriptive analysis. A documentation technique was used as data collection means concentrating on specific passages within the text in order to uncover the strategies employed in representing women through textual quotations. Technically, the quotations were analysed using a comparative literature framework and feminist literary criticism.

Findings

This research demonstrated that the two texts present different portrayals of women based on the narrative strategy used. This variance was attributed to the generational gap between the two authors. 'Fatat Qarut' depicts women as superior and independent, whereas 'Fatimah' portrays women as inferior and submissive.

Conclusion

The study concludes these depictions highlight that the role and status of women within the Arab ethnic group are shaped and dominated by social and cultural stratification.

Keywords

Woman, Arab Ethnic, Representation, Comparative Analysis

*) Corresponding Author

Abstrak

Tujuan

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui representasi perempuan keturunan Arab di dalam *Fatat Qarut* dan *Fatimah* serta membandingkan kedua ideologi teks.

Metode

Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik dokumentasi terhadap bagian-bagian di dalam teks untuk menemukan strategi representasi perempuan yang dihadirkan melalui kutipan teks. Kutipan tersebut dianalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan sastra banding dan kritik sastra feminis.

Temuan

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan strategi narasi yang digunakan, kedua teks menghadirkan representasi perempuan yang berbeda. Perbedaan tersebut disebabkan oleh gap generation antar kedua pengarang. *Fatat Qarut* menghadirkan representasi perempuan yang superior dan mandiri, sementara *Fatimah* merepresentasikan perempuan sebagai sosok yang inferior dan submisif.

Kesimpulan

Kedua representasi ini menegaskan bahwa peran dan kedudukan perempuan dalam etnis Arab didominasi dan dipengaruhi oleh stratifikasi sosial dan budaya.

Kata kunci

Perempuan, Etnis Arab, Representasi, Analisis Perbandingan

المخلص

الهدف

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد تمثيل النساء من أصل عربي في فتاة قاروت وفاطمة والمقارنة بين أيديولوجيات النصين. فتات قاروت وفاطمة هما عاملان عربيان يفصل بينهما عقد من الزمان (فجوة الأجيال). في فتات قاروت وفاطمة هناك تصوير لشخصيات نسائية تعاني من حالة من التوتر بسبب تقاليد الزيجات المدبرة في المجتمعات العرقية العربية. ورغم أنهما يتمتعان بنفس الظروف، إلا أن هناك اختلافات في تمثيل النساء من أصل عربي في العملين.

الطريقة

هذا البحث هو بحث كفي باستخدام التحليل الوصفي. و تم جمع البيانات باستخدام تقنيات التوثيق لأجزاء من النص لإيجاد استراتيجيات لتمثيل المرأة المقدمة من خلال اقتباسات النص. وقد تم تحليل الاقتباس باستخدام المنهج الأدبي المقارن والنقد الأدبي النسوي.

النتائج

نتائج هذا البحث هي أنه استنادا إلى استراتيجية السرد المستخدمة، فإن النصين يقدمان تمثيلات مختلفة للمرأة. و سبب هذا الاختلاف هو الفجوة بين الأجيال بين المؤلفين. و تمثل فتات قاروت المرأة المتفوقة والمستقلة، في حين تمثل فاطمة المرأة باعتبارها أدنى وخاضعة .

الخلاصة

يؤكد هذان التمثيلان على أن دور ومكانة المرأة في المجموعة العرقية العربية يخضع لهيمنة وتأثر الطبقات الاجتماعية والثقافية .

الكلمات الرئيسية

المرأة؛ العرق العربي؛ التمثيل؛ التحليل المقارن

INTRODUCTION

Women are an important part in the dynamics of Arab ethnic identity formation in Indonesia. At the beginning of their arrival, together with Chinese, Arab ethnic groups were the driving wheels of several economic bases, especially in the fields of industry and trade. However, their role gradually faded and shifted towards gaining rapid recognition as highly esteemed figures in the Islam. This notion was largely attributed to their direct lineage to Prophet Muhammad (Alatas, 2019; Syukri, 2022). Apart from religious considerations, marriage holds an important role in defining the Arab ethnic community's existence in Indonesia. In the early stage, most of the Arab immigrants were predominantly male. Upon their arrival in Indonesia, many of them were married to Indonesian women, which then gave birth to a generation of individuals of mixed descendants known as *'muwallad'*. This journey of identity negotiation encompassed various aspects, including the experiences of Arab women (De Jonge, 2009; Prayogi & Al-Asyari, 2021).

The participation of women of Arab descent in shaping the Arab ethnic identity in Indonesia is readily apparent across various facets of life, spanning from religion, marriage, and education. These prevailing traditions find continuity through familial and communal organizations. Up until the 20th century, Indonesian women of Arab descent were frequently labeled as *'Gadis Pingitan'* or *'Confined Girls.'* Within the cultural practices of the Indonesian Arab community, women of Arab descent predominantly centered their lives around their homes and families, with a deliberate avoidance of public engagement. This arrangement was often driven by concerns about safeguarding them from external temptations (Hayaze, 2017; Suratmin; Kwartanada, 2014).

When it comes to marriage, the tradition of arranged marriages and early unions remains deeply ingrained in Arab communities, especially for women (Syafa'at, A; Rusdiarti, 2023). As for education, up until the early 20th century, Arab women were confined to their homes because parents firmly believed that women did not require higher education and were even discouraged from enrolling into colonial schools. The aforementioned circumstances have confined Arab women as a secluded existence which, in turn, led to a sense of apathy and indifference towards their surroundings (Fatimah & Thalib, 2017; Shahab, 2018).

These aforementioned context played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Indonesian Arab Union (PAI) in 1934. Numerous discussions and movements led by Arab women found a platform in the *'Taman Keputrian'* (Women's Corner) column of the INSAF magazine, published by PAI. (Maisarah, 2020, p. 99-101). In addition to media and newspapers, discussions about women and identity also manifested in literary works. *'Fatat Qarut'* (1928) by Ahmad bin Abdullah Assegaf and *'Fatimah'* (1938) by Hoesin Bafagih are two literary works that vividly depict the evolution of Arab ethnic identity. These two literary pieces hold particular significance as they were authored by representatives of two distinct generations, the *'wulaiti'* and the *'Muwallad.'* *'Fatat Qarut,'* written in Arabic by Ahmad bin Abdullah Assegaf, belongs to the *'wulaiti'* category, while *'Fatimah'* penned in Malay by Hoesin Bafagih, hails from the *'Muwallad'* tradition. The importance of these works lies in their historical documentation of the ongoing struggle for identity within the Arab Hadrami community over the course of a decade, spanning from 1928 to 1938."

This study focuses on the narratives of two compelling novels namely *'Fatat Qarut'* and *'Fatimah'*. *'Fatat Qarut,'* penned by Ahmad bin Abdullah Assegaf in Arabic, unfolds its tale within the context of Pasundan region, particularly Garut, during the colonial era. The novel introduces Ipah, a character who is later called *'Neng'*, who embarks on a profound quest for her identity (Assagaf, 1997). In contrast to *'Fatat Qarut,'* *'Fatimah'* (1938) is a Malay-language drama text authored by Hoesin Bafagih. It was set against the backdrop of colonial-era in Java and Makassar. The drama revolves around the character of Fatimah, a young woman of Arab descent entangled in the patriarchal traditions and conservatism that characterize a segment of Arab community. Fatimah's future, as an Arab

woman, lies in the hands of her father and older brothers (Bafagih, 2018).

The selection of these two works as the focal point of this study stems from the author's acknowledgment of the narratives concerning women within the context of identity dynamics of Arab ethnic identity. While both works delve into women's issues in their respective texts, their generational origins and distinct languages of composition remain intriguing. Moreover, the temporal gap between the creation of these two works is significantly crucial to comprehend the struggle of Hadrami ethnic identity during the early 20th century.

On the other hand, research focusing on the text '*Fatimah*' was conducted by Ummah (Ummah, 2019) in her work entitled '*Representation of Indonesian-ness in 'Fatimah' (1938)*.' Through its analysis, it was evident that the drama of '*Fatimah*' (1938) is among the literary works that articulate the concept of Indonesian-ness among the descendants of Hadrami origin. Indonesian-ness, as a sense of belonging, transforms through the notion of the 'Indonesian Dream' and serves as a critique of complacency that symbolizes resistance against colonialism. Notwithstanding its inclination towards Indonesian narratives, '*Fatimah*' retains the elements of Hadrami identity.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, emphasizing detailed descriptions and rich data. Moleong (Moleong, 2019, p. 286) underscores that qualitative research does not prescribe a specific sample size. Qualitative methodology involves the analysis of written works and scholarly insights to observe behaviors. This approach aligns with this study's objective of portraying the representation of women in two literary works. Consequently, the focal point of this research is the creation of meaning within the context of women's representation and the ideological variances within the main character's, particularly regarding women.

This research focuses on two novels: *Fatat Qarut* (1928) and *Fatimah* (1938), with a specific emphasis on the theme of women's representation. The primary data for this study comprises the text from both novels, while secondary data are drawn from relevant books and journal articles that address the central themes of this research. The data collection technique employed is observation, in which the researcher conducts a detailed and analytical examination of women's representation within the text. This approach is commonly known as a close reading technique.

Theoretically, this research adopts a comparative literature approach. According to Wellek, Rene; Warren (2016), the comparative literature approach involves the study of literature that compares works from different languages and origins to comprehensively analyze their interrelationships and the impact of specific literary works on others, as well as to understand their unique characteristics. On the contrary, as per Damono (Damono, 2005, p. 7), the comparative literature approach does not exclusively involve comparing two distinct literatures from different countries and nations. Instead, it serves as a method for a more in-depth exploration of specific literary works originating from a particular country or nation, offering a more nuanced approach.

Supporting Damono, Endraswara (2011) states that comparative literature is a study of texts 'across cultures'. This study primarily focuses on the relationship between literature in terms of time and place. From a temporal perspective, comparative literature can compare two or more different periods, while in the context of place, it binds comparative literature according to geographical regions. Based on these definitions, this research falls into the category of comparing two works in two different languages and times. Meanwhile, the geographical region is the aspect that ties together '*Fatat Qarut*' and '*Fatimah*' because both were 'born' in Indonesia.

To examine the discourse of women within the two texts, this research employs feminist literary criticism. Feminist literary criticism is a form of literary analysis that arises with an awareness of gender constructs within both the writing and reading of literary texts. The theory utilized in this study is feminist literary criticism, and more specifically,

it employs the concept of "reading as a woman" approach introduced by Jonathan Culler and Elaine Showalter. Specifically, the feminist literary criticism employed in this study is ideological feminist literary criticism and In ideological feminist literary criticism, women are positioned as readers (*reading as a woman*). This criticism is used to unravel the workings of patriarchal ideology in dominating the creation and interpretation of literary works.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research delves into the realm of women's representation, as portrayed through the female characters in two Arab ethnic literary works. It adopts a comparative literature approach, traversing distinct time periods while remaining rooted in the same geographical context. Within this study, the focus lies on scrutinizing variances in narrative structure and societal dynamics within the literary works. The narrative framework encompasses themes, plot development, characters, settings, and points of view, while the social aspects delve into cultural elements, prevailing value systems, thought patterns, and more. By scrutinizing recurring keywords, myths, ideas, and actions, this analysis aims to unveil both commonalities and disparities within the texts.

Similarly, to explore the author's tactics in depicting Arab descent women, this study employs a feminist framework to analyze how the writer crafts the discourse of women's representation through the female narratives. As elucidated earlier, the discourse surrounding women in Arab ethnic communities is pivotal in sculpting and articulating their identity as a minority ethnic group. In the upcoming discussion, we will delve into the portrayal of women of Arab descent through the central female characters, Neng and Fatimah.

The representation of Neng in *Fatat Qarut*.

In '*Fatat Qarut*' we encounter the character of Neng, also known as Ipah. She is an Arab descent woman who was born in Mecca and arrived in Indonesia at the age of 15. In the late 19th century, there was a notable surge in Arab migration, primarily consisting of men. Traditional Arab norms restrict women to embark on extensive journeys that may implicate their educational opportunities. In patriarchal societies, women were typically limited to domestic skills, like cooking and household management. Furthermore, in many Arab communities, it was a common practice to restrict their daughters from enrolling in public schools, particularly Western-style education. Pursuing knowledge beyond Islamic teachings was often deemed forbidden, or Haram.

“أما الكتاب التي تجد ان فيها تاريخ الفلسفة و الفلاسفة من العرب فهي :

Boer - *The History of Philosophy in Islam* طبع في لندن عام 1903

Dietrici - *Die Philosophie der Araber im X. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* طبع في ليفزح عام 1897

Dugat - *Histoire de Philosophes et des Theologiens Muselmans.* طبع في باريس عام 1878

Leclere - *Histoire de la Médecine Arabe, 2 Volumes.* طبع في باريس عام 1876

هذه بعض الكتب الإفرنج التي يمكنكم ان تجدا فيها ما ذكرته و أكثر و اراني قدا طلت عليكمما و لعل فيما ذكرته كفاية لكما و حجة لي على صحة ما قلته فان ارادتما الزيادة زدت ولم اورد الا ما ذكره علما اوروبا انفسهم عن العرب (59-60) ”

These are some of the Western books where you both can find what I mentioned earlier, and many more. The books I mentioned can be readily acquired in Batavia if you wish to examine them. There's no need to wait until you go to America" (As-sagaf,1928, p. 59-60). The quoted passage above vividly portrays Neng as a woman of profound knowledge, stretching beyond the confines of Islamic teachings and domestic education.

The books Neng references serve as a mirror to her upbringing in a profoundly modern and open-minded educational milieu. Neng emerges as a resolute and fearless individual, unflinching in her commitment to addressing injustices whenever they arise. Her readiness to rectify historical inaccuracies, as presented by Van Ridjik and Van de Mould, is accompanied by well-substantiated arguments, as evident in the provided quote. Neng's intellect and eloquence stand as a testament to her upbringing within an Arab-descendant family culture that embraced modernity, including the women's emancipation movement in the Middle East, which commenced in the late 19th century (Huda et al., 2019; Muis & Matin, 2022)

Neng is also depicted as a woman who handles issues with wisdom. Her response to Van Ridjik's mistaken views about Arabs is remarkably elegant and well-educated. نبع

اطرقت ساعة ثم رفعت رأسها قائلة : إذا كانت تربية سيدى عالية و ضميره حر لا يؤلمه قول الحق ممن كان واذن لى في ابداء رأيي بشأن العرب فقط بكل حرية فأنا اتكلم و بالطبع سيكون كلا منا بالعربية و ليس في هذا المحل من يفهم ما يدور بيننا فلا هناك داعى الخجل. فان ريدك- لا بأس تكلمى بكل حرية قال ذلك و قد تغير وجهه من جوارها لكنه أحب ان

Neng يستكشف ما في ضميرها من جهة و يتلذذ بخطاياها من جهة اخرى فجلست بعد ان كانت قائمة وابتدأت قائلة momentarily bowed her head, then gracefully raised it and remarked, "If your education is genuinely broad, and your mind is open, you should not be offended by honest words from anyone. Please allow me to share my thoughts openly, focusing solely on matters related to Arabs. Of course, our conversation will be in Arabic. No one here will understand what we discuss, so there's nothing to be ashamed of." "Feel free to speak your mind," Van Ridjik responded, but Neng's response triggered a noticeable change in his expression (As-Sagaf, p. 54).

The quote above demonstrates Neng's exceptional communication intelligence. In this quote, Neng is depicted as someone who can manage her emotions and frustration with Van Ridjik's misguided opinions about Arabs. Neng shatters the stereotype that women are more emotionally driven than men. Her ability to handle her emotions is evident in the statement, "Of course, our conversation will be in Arabic. No one here will understand what we discuss, so there's nothing to be ashamed of." This statement reveals Neng's strategy to assert dominance over Van Ridjik without belittling him. Neng's assertive communication not only makes Van Ridjik feel embarrassed but also admire her as an educated woman with a strong sense of self. فان ريدك- إني أعجب يا نبع من وفرة معلوماتك

وفصاحة لسانك و ما كنت اظن ان في بنات السنداويين من هن بهذه الدرجة من الشجاعة الأدبية و التعقل ففى اى مدرسة تعلمت؟ فان معلومتك تدل على ان المدرسة التى تعلمت فيها من ار فى المدارس فهل للمسلمين هنا مدارس راقية؟

" (49) *I'm truly impressed, Neng, with your extensive knowledge and eloquence. I never expected to find such courage and intellectual depth among Sundanese girls. Where did you study? Your knowledge indicates that the school you attended must have been quite prestigious. Do Muslims have high schools?*" Van Ridjik inquired (As-Sagaf, 1928. p.49).

The compelling depiction of Neng as an educated woman is intricately interwoven with the prevailing social context. If we trace it back to the 1920s, the era of the novel's publication, we will find that the women's emancipation movement in Indonesia had gathered substantial momentum as a form of resistance. Additionally, it's imperative to acknowledge Neng's Arab lineage. In the social hierarchy of the Dutch East Indies during that period, society was categorized into three distinct classes: the upper class, comprising Europeans; the middle class, encompassing Easterners (Chinese, Arabs, Indians); and the lower class, constituted primarily of indigenous Indonesians (Athoillah, 2019; De Jonge, 2009; Prayogi & Al-Asyari, 2021). Within this context, Neng's portrayal as an intelligent and assertive woman takes on heightened significance. Her depiction as a dominant character is inherently tied to her subjectivity as a woman with the capacity to make

judicious decisions for herself. و من حين سافرت من مكة الى الآن لم اتكلم لم بالسندة و لا بالملايو و ان كنت اعرف هاتين اللغتين ذلك لاني لم آت الى هنا الا مكرهه فاستحسننت ان أخفي معرفتي بلغة من حولي لا عرف ما " *From the moment I arrived here from Mecca until now, I have refrained from conversing in Sundanese or Malay, despite my comprehension of both languages. This was a deliberate choice, compelled by the circumstances of my arrival. I believed it prudent to mask my familiarity with the local languages, enabling me to discern the conversations concerning me and anticipate their intentions*" (As-Sagaf, 1928, p. 96).

The quoted passage portrays Neng as an individual of profound self-awareness, acknowledging her role as a self-determined subject with full control over her life. This authority becomes evident in Neng's deliberate choice not to use the local language as a self-preservation strategy. This character development aligns with the author's ideology, underlining the representation of women who enjoy greater liberation in their expression and the display of their subjectivity, in contrast to the often-subordinated reality faced by Arab-descendant women. Neng's conscious assertion of her existence as a self-reliant subject, nurtured through knowledge and her career, is prominently showcased. و كان وراء

بيت عبد الله قطعة ارض واسعة تابعة للبيت فرأت نيع ان لا تتركها غامره بل تستغلها فغرست فيها كثيرا من الياسمين و الورد و النرجس و البنفسج فلم تمض مده يسيره حتى صارت تشتغل منها كل يوم خمس او ست ربيات فتوصي سترون يأخذ تلك الزهور كل يوم و يبيع على صاحب معمل المطر في قاروت فيشترى من تلك الدراهم ما يلزم للبين و الباقي توفره حتى انها في مدة الاربعة الاشهر لم تأخذ من دراهم عبد الله التي صندوقه شتا بل كانت تنفق على نفسها و على سترون من غلة *Behind Abdullah's house lay a vast piece of land, and upon Neng's arrival, she resolved not to let it go to waste but to harness its potential. She adorned the land with a variety of flowers, including jasmine, roses, and more. In a brief period, she started to yield the fruits of her labour, earning five to six rupiahs daily. Neng directed Sitrun to gather these blooms and sell them to the proprietors of perfume factories in Garut. The proceeds went towards managing household expenses, with any surplus set aside. Consequently, within four months, Neng never had to request a single cent from Abdullah. It was the earnings from these flowers that sustained both herself and Sitrun*" (As-Sagaf, 1928, p. 215-216).

Living as the wife of a wealthy merchant did not automatically bestow upon Neng the privileges that might be expected. Instead, she made the deliberate choice to support herself and Sitrun through the sale of flowers. The quoted passage vividly portrays Neng's independence, not only in her ability to manage domestic responsibilities but also in her self-sufficiency, which she maintained from the comfort of her home. This depiction challenges the prevalent myth that confines women to domestic roles, showcasing Neng as a valuable, empowered, and non-opportunistic individual. Such a portrayal underscores Neng's unique subjectivity as a woman. Beauvoir (2011, p.694) dan Sinanda, 2021 assert that women regain their sense of agency when they become proactive and responsible subjects, actively pursuing their aspirations. Neng's decision to leverage available resources for income further emphasizes her role as a productive and proactive subject striving to achieve her goals. Neng's awareness of the oppressive tradition of forced marriages, as seen in her adoptive father Rusna, has motivated her to aspire to independence and marriages founded on reciprocity rather than objectification. To safeguard her agency, Neng takes steps to assert her identity by acknowledging the uncertainty surrounding her lineage. ان عبد الله سيأتي هذه الليلة ويأتي معه عمه و اخوه فماذا يكون جوابي لهم اذا سألوني عن أبي و كلت النائب ان يزوجني من عبد الله فقبل عبد الله عقد النكاح و صرت زوجته بحكم الشرع و لكن هل علم عبد الله انه تزوج بنت مجهولة النسب احبني حبا جما و احببته الى حد الاستشهار و كان حبي له في محله لانه يستحق تلك المحبة. و لكن *Today, هل كنت استحق محبته لي و هل يجوز لي ان اخدعه فاطهر كفاءتي و انا غير مكافئة له* (218-217)

Abdullah will arrive with his uncle and brother. What should be my response if they inquire about my father? I have entrusted the deputy (naib) with the authority to marry me to Abdullah, and he accepted the marriage contract. According to Islamic law, I am now his legitimate wife. However, does Abdullah know that he has married a girl whose lineage is uncertain? He loves me deeply, and my affection for him is equally profound. This love is rightly directed, as he is deserving of it. But am I worthy of his love? Is it acceptable for me to withhold this truth?" (As-Sagaf, 1928, p. 217-218)"

In the quoted passage, Neng's character embodies a woman acutely aware of the oppressive dominance of patriarchal traditions. Her assertion of her uncertain lineage isn't a sign of weakness; instead, it underscores her self-awareness regarding male authority. Neng's character challenges the perception of women as 'the other' or mere possessions, particularly in the context of arranged marriages and Arab ethnic unions in Indonesia, characterized by the concept of kafa'ah. Her contemplative statement, "*my affection for him is equally profound. This love is rightly directed, as he is deserving of it. But am I worthy of his love? Is it acceptable for me to withhold this truth?*" reflects Neng's determination to clarify her lineage and assert her identity as an equal within the realms of social norms, tradition, and religion. Neng's portrayal highlights women's intellectual independence (Beauvoir, 2011, p.698), often referred to as self-awareness, empowering them to break free from external judgments and define their own identities. Women possess the agency to fortify their self-subjectivity through intellectual pursuits.

The character of Neng in *'Fatat Qarut'* epitomizes the ideal of a woman envisaged by the women's emancipation movement, as she strives to cultivate her subjectivity and achieve self-reliance. By asserting her identity as an educated and intelligent Arab-descendant woman, Neng effectively reshapes the dynamics of the subject-object relationship between men and women. Through her dialogues with European characters in the text, Neng also succeeds in challenging the Western-conceived subject-object narrative, dismantling the notions of superiority and social stratification imposed by the West. Neng's character materializes the concepts of Qasim Amin and Al Thahthawi, as cited by Sukri in Maisarah (2020, p.13), which emphasize that the subjugation of women in Islam is a misconception. Women should be granted the freedom to think, exercise their will, and take action."

The Representation of Fatimah in *'Fatimah'*

'Fatimah' (1938) stands as the second drama text written in Malay by Hoesin Bafagih. Bahanan, as noted in Hayaze (2017), hails it as Bafagih's magnum opus and a manifestation of his intellectual prowess as a journalist with Hadrami lineage. What elevates the importance of *'Fatimah'* (1938) further is its genesis at the request of the Semarang branch chairman of the Indonesian Arab Association (PAI) for performance during the third congress on April 16, 1938, in Semarang. The drama turned out to be the most contentious presentation at any PAI congress, inciting a medley of reactions and responses. Swiftly, the authorities took action through the Political Intelligence Service (PID) to suppress the drama, preventing its future performances. The mere presence of *'Fatimah'* (1938) seems to have sown discord within the Hadrami community (Ummah & Suprihatin, 2020).

The drama script's narrative centres on the life of the character Fatimah and the myriad challenges she confronts as a woman of Arab descent. Fatimah resides alongside her father and elder brother. Despite her upbringing in a financially prosperous family, she grapples with a range of constraints affecting her education, social interactions, and employment opportunities. These constraints stem from Fatimah's status as a sharifah, an Arab-descendant woman with lineage connected to Prophet Muhammad, compounded by her gender. In contrast to her brother, Joesoef, who relishes in freedom, Fatimah has been denied such liberties since a young age.

NASIR : Thank God! [...] Although Fatimah is quite young, I would like to arrange your marriage with her this week. Regarding you living together with her, that would be another matter to discuss later [...]

MOCHTAR : it is up to uncle to decide, I will follow suit.

NASIR : it is good then! This coming Thursday night I will marry you to her with a simple marriage ceremony. I could not do that tonight because I am unwell [...] (Bafagih, 2018, p. 96)

In the dialogue, Fatimah is portrayed as a woman of Arab descent who is trapped in a web of control, in which her personal autonomy is taken away. Since her childhood, she has had to bear multiple burdens such as being a woman, a sharifah, and also a child. As an Arab woman, from a young age, Fatimah has had to undergo the tradition of 'seclusion,' which prohibits women from entering public life until a man proposes to her or she is betrothed to a man chosen by her family. This tradition, handed down from their ancestors, continues to be upheld because it is believed to be a means of safeguarding women from temptation. In other words, women are considered a source of temptation or temptation for men.

Meanwhile, as a sharifah, Fatimah is burdened by the tradition of Kafa'ah in marriage. This tradition requires Fatimah to marry a man from the sayid lineage to preserve the purportedly exclusive male-lineage heritage. This patriarchal tradition emphasizes the rule that a sayid man may marry a non-sayid or even an ahwal woman, while a sayid or sharifah woman may only marry a sayid man to safeguard their noble titles, which remain out of reach for individuals of lower social status. This tradition is closely tied to the practices of arranged marriages and early marriages that persist strongly within Arab communities and are often carried out without seeking the consent of the women (Subchi, 2020; Subchi & Nurhayati, 2020).

Apart from being an Arab woman hailing from the sharifah lineage, the entrenched male dominance that diminishes Fatimah's agency is starkly exemplified in her father's hasty decision to orchestrate her marriage due to his diabetes. This decision underscores the overarching control parents wield over their "daughters," regarding them as subjects within their sphere of authority. This control materializes in diverse forms, encompassing restrictions, prohibitions, and moral codes enforced to discipline women, all stemming from a foundation of male supremacy. In a patriarchal society, as Kate (2000) illuminates, men of this disposition reap benefits from their perceived ownership of their daughters. This ownership ultimately breeds a sense of entitlement, granting them the liberty to assert their will over women as they see fit.

The notion of male dominion over women is further fortified within the economic realm. The constrained opportunities available to Arab women in domestic matters increasingly obstruct their pursuit of careers or employment. Consequently, this dynamic amplifies male dominance while undermining the role of women.

NASIR : [...] Neither your mother nor your sister Fatimah. You (Joesoef) are supposed to be the backbone of your mother and siblings when I die [...] (Bafagih, 2018, p.90)

The above quote illustrates the preservation of a patriarchal culture that weakens Fatimah's position as a woman. The term "backbone" symbolizes both the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. In the quote above, the "backbone" is Joesoef, Nasir's son and Fatimah's brother. In human anatomy, a backbone is a part of the body that becomes the main chain of polymeric molecule. In other words, without backbone, bones would merely float within the muscles without any connection. Without backbone, bones would remain close but will not unite. Therefore, backbone is a vital component in the human body. The primary function of backbone is to provide flexibility and movement in their respective places, serving as the axis for limb mobility. The quote also demonstrates that a man, even with bad behavior and character, still holds a superior position. This indicates that male superiority is not based on moral goodness or badness but rather on gender. The analogy of men being like backbone underscores the inferiority of the character Fatimah. Joesoef, despite all his negative traits, remains superior to Fatimah.

After learning that his sister was going to be betrothed to a poor man, Joesoef promptly sought ways to thwart this plan. He approached Uncle Mansoer and offered him money as a reward if he would collaborate with him to prevent Fatimah's arranged marriage.

JOESOEF : Uncle must help me in this matter. Yet, Fatimah is not just any niece for you, right! Your support will never be forgotten, in fact, I will give you 5000 [...]

The quoted passage vividly exemplifies the subjugation of the female character through the lens of women's commodification. Fatimah, with her exceptional beauty, high social standing, and substantial inheritance, is reduced to an object in Joesoef's eyes. This objectification is clearly reflected in the use of the term "*star*" as a metaphor for the female character, highlighting how men often perceive women as objects of beauty and pleasure. Notably, the term "*star*" typically conveys positive connotations and is employed as a form of admiration. Within this context, associating the term "*star*" with the phrase "*She is the hope of every second generation of all the wealthy families here*" casts women as commodities, assets poised to yield advantages and elevate Joesoef's socioeconomic status. This viewpoint is further underscored by the monetary offer to Mansoer to disrupt Fatimah's arranged marriage.

In the narrative of "Fatimah," Fatimah takes center stage as the principal character and the sole female presence. However, across the eight chapters that comprise the story, Fatimah is never portrayed as a narrator. She makes appearances in just three distinct sequences. In one, she is the subject of description; in another, she emerges through a written letter, and in the third, Fatimah is portrayed as having already departed from this world.

MOCHTAR : Your visit this morning is perfect. I had trouble sleeping last night due to the arrival of a new letter from Fatimah." (Bafagih, 2018, p.120)

Representation of Women of Arab Descent in '*Fatat Qarut*' (1928) and '*Fatimah*' (1938)

'*Fatat Qarut*' and '*Fatimah*' are two works that depict the dynamics of the dynamics of the Arab minority ethnicity in Indonesia by presenting women as the main characters. '*Fatat Qarut*', launched in the year of the Youth Pledge in 1928, marks the beginning of the journey of the Arab ethnic identity in Indonesia. Written in Arabic, '*Fatat Qarut*' is the product of the first generation of Arabs who came to Indonesia. A decade later, '*Fatimah*' (1938) emerged amidst the tumultuous backdrop of the Indonesian national movement, a response to the colonial Dutch policy of segregation that was further dividing the nation. Written in Malay, Fatimah is the product of the third generation of Arabs in Indonesia.

A comparative study of the two works reveals a strong connection in their representation of women of Arab descent within the dynamics of Arab ethnic identity in Indonesia. This connection is manifested in both the similarities and differences between the texts. The first similarity lies in the titles that emphasize gender issues using terms related to femininity. Assegaf opts for a general title that doesn't mention the character's name. The title '*Fatat Qarut*' alludes to a local woman to create a sense of closeness to the diaspora land. Meanwhile, Bafagih unequivocally chooses the title "Fatimah", focusing on identity issues. Fatimah, the only daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, had offspring through her marriage to Ali bin Abi Talib. This lineage continued through Ahmad bin Isa al-Muhajir, the ancestor of the Alawiyyin group, who later gave birth to the Sayid group, occupying the highest caste in the Arab Hadrami community's social structure. The women's narratives in both works demonstrate the important role of women in social life, as the discourse surrounding women can capture a community's social, cultural, religious, and eco-

nomic conditions (Siscawati et al., 2020; Zahid et al., 2023).

Despite sharing similarities, the ideologies of the two texts are influenced by social and political conditions, resulting in distinct representations of women of Arab descent. In *'Fatat Qarut'*, women of Arab descent are depicted as powerful individuals in both domestic and public spheres. The superiority of female characters in *'Fatat Qarut'* is evident in the positioning of Neng, who has the agency to reinforce self-subjectivity through intellectuality. Intellectual capacity is presented as a key element in women's independence, enabling them to make their own choices and life decisions. The author portrays women of Arab descent positively, illustrating their ability to transition from conservative and uneducated individuals to progressive women who have received education, allowing them to have roles and opportunities equal to men. The framing of intellect and superiority used to represent women in the *'Fatat Qarut'* text emphasizes the text's resistance to the patriarchal traditions and culture prevalent in Arab society. Additionally, the social context of Indonesia in 1928, the setting for the story, underscores the text's support for the women's emancipation movement initiated by Muslim scholars in Indonesia at the end of the 19th century. In other words, the spirit of emancipation, led by influential figures such as Rohana Kudus, Rahma El Yunusiyah, R.A. Kartini, and Dewi Sartika, significantly influenced the lives and literary works of Arabs in Indonesia. Within the context of Indonesian literature, according to (Restiyani & Rusdiarti, 2023; Hasanuddin et al., 2023) the spirit of women's emancipation is also evident in works such as the novel *'Siti Nurbaya'* by Marah Rusli, *'Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck'* by Hamka, *'Belenggu'* by Armijn Pane, and *'Kehilangan Mestika'* by Hamidah.

Conversely, written by the third generation or muwallad, *'Fatimah'* presents an image of inferior women, both in the domestic and public sectors. The inferiority of the female character in *'Fatimah'* is evident in the positioning of Fatimah, who lacks the agency to reinforce her subjectivity as a woman. The narrative of matchmaking and marriage in *'Fatimah'* aligns with Arab patriarchal traditions and culture, placing women second to men. Within the framework of male power, Fatimah does not possess independent consciousness to overcome this subordination. The traditional power structure, centred on male authority, lowers women's status, limiting their choices. Passivity and femininity are used as a pretext to control women within a certain framework for specific. Beauvoir (Pranowo, 2016, p.79) states that social roles greatly influence the control of women and their portrayal as 'the other.' The domestication of female characters in the text mirrors their experience of disempowerment in both private and public spheres, as well as in personal, family, and social relationships. The portrayal of the Arab woman in *'Fatimah'* underscores the enduring influence and control of men, even when she is in a foreign land.

In the realm of comparative literary studies, the differing depictions of Arab women of Arab descent in *'Fatat Qarut'* and *'Fatimah'* suggest two possible interpretations. Firstly, given the limited availability of literary works by ethnic Arabs in Indonesia, narratives about women are frequently featured. This choice may either advocate for women's rights or perpetuate gender-neutral perspectives, sometimes portraying women as nothing more than literary adornments. The prevalence of women's narratives reflects the distinct context of Arab women compared to Indonesian women, shaped by cultural norms, power dynamics, and Islamic principles. Secondly, given the gap generation between the two authors, they would make literary work part of an identity political strategy. In this scenario, the writing is ideological, employed to preserve their identity as ethnic immigrants. Guillen (in Purnomosasi, 2013, p.123) suggests that the differences in literary ideologies in comparative literary studies can be understood as a meta-effort to link, discover, or confront works created in regions and moments that are very distant and separated so that literature does not merely exist as a space for a writer's imagination but also as a space to carve history.

CONCLUSION

Based on the narrative strategy used in both texts, the portrayal of women of Arab descent in both texts is heavily influenced by the social and cultural hierarchy within Arab society, and this theme is prominent in literary works. This analysis also highlights that women's experiences are often limited to topics such as education, matchmaking, and marriage within the narratives. The theme of matchmaking and marriage is a common thread in the two texts, explaining the constrained roles of Arab women of Arab descent within traditional customs and societal norms.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing research on the status of women in Arab society. This research demonstrates that gender dynamics, particularly concerning women, significantly influence the fabric of Arab cultural life, as social circumstances shape their status. The prevailing focus on women's experiences primarily centred around matchmaking and marriage, continues to present obstacles to the advancement of women in Arab society. Despite efforts to promote gender equality through education, in certain segments of Arab culture, women still contend with male dominance.

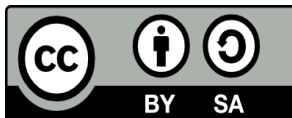
In the context of Indonesian literature and comparative studies, this study uncovers new insights into how the writing strategies of ethnic Arab literature in Indonesia, written in Arabic, are mutually influenced by Indonesian literature, particularly during the Balai Pustaka era. The presence of two iconic romantic novels, *'Azab dan Sengsara'* (1920) and *'Siti Nurbaya'* (1933), which address women's issues, forced marriage, and conflicts between different generations, provides clear evidence of the impact of Arabic literature on Indonesian literature.

REFERENCES

- Alatas, I. F. (2019). Gold and Silver, Branded Horses, and Well-Tilled Land: Gender and Hadrami Migration. *Journal Indonesian Feminist*, 3(1), 2015.
- Assagaf, A. bin A. (1997). *Gadis Garut*. Lentera.
- Athoillah, A. (2019). Pembentukan Identitas Sosial Komunitas Hadhrami di Batavia Abad XVIII-XX. *Lembaran Sejarah*, 14(2), 150. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lembaran-sejarah.45437>
- Bafagih, H. (2018). Fatimah. Lontar Foundation.
- Beauvoir, S. de. (2011). *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books. <https://books.google.co.id/%0Abooks?id=JKA8xR4noHUC>
- Damono, S. D. (2005). *Pegangan Penelitian Sastra Bandingan*. Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.
- De Jonge, H. (2009). In the Name of Fatimah: Staging the Emancipation of The Arab Hadramis in the Netherlands East Indies. In A. & A. H. I. A.I (Ed.), *The Arab Hadrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (pp. 245–263). Brill.
- Endraswara, S. (2011). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra Bandingan*. Perpustakaan Nasional.
- Fatimah, F., & Thalib, A. A. (2017). Kontestasi Perempuan Arab Masaikh Bangil Dalam Pernikahan Antar Etnis. *Lakon : Jurnal Kajian Sastra Dan Budaya*, 6(1), 46. <https://doi.org/10.20473/lakon.v6i1.6792>
- Hanapi, A. (2015). Peran Perempuan dalam Islam. *Gender Equality: Internasional Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 1(1), 15–26.
- Hasanuddin, W. S., Emidar, & Zulfadhli. (2023). *Literature as a Learning Medium for Gender Equality Values* (Issue Icla). Atlantis Press SARL. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-124-1_14
- Hayaze, N. K. (2017). *Kumpulan Tulisan dan Pemikiran Hoesin Bafagig Tokoh PAI dan*

- Nasionalis Keturunan Arab*. Menara Center.
- Huda, M. S., Rubaidi, & Hajar, I. I. (2019). Feminisme dalam Peradaban Islam. In *Pena Cendikia* (Vol. 1, Issue 3).
- Kate, M. (2000). *Sexual Politics*. University of Illinois Press.
- Maisarah. (2020). *Mendobrak Kultur Patriarki: Emansipasi Perempuan Keturunan Arab dalam Persatuan Arab Indonesia (1934-1942)*. Mizan.
- Moleong, L. J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Muhammad Bahar Akkase Teng, Hilda Anjarsari, H., & Badollahi, M. Z. (2021). Jaringan Orang Arab Hadhramaut dan Keturunannya di Makassar 1930-1952. *Attoriolog Jurnal Pemikiran Kesenjaraan Dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, 19(1), 151–159.
- Muis, A. R. C., & Matin, U. A. (2022). The Saudi Arabian Women Military Existence in the Islamic Perspective. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 28(2), 171–184. <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v28i2.25488>
- Pranowo, Y. (2016). Transendensi dalam Pemikiran Simone de Beauvoir dan Emmanuel Levinas. *Melintas*, 32(1), 73. <https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v32i1.1926.73-93>
- Prayogi, B., & Al-Asyari, M. K. H. (2021). Identity Politics: a Study of the Historicity Politics Identity of the Hadrami Community in Indonesia. *Islah: Journal of Islamic Literature and History*, 2(2), 81–101. <https://doi.org/10.18326/islah.v2i2.81-101>
- Purnomosasi, L. K. D. (2013). Tematologi: Pembacaan Teoritis Terhadap Salah Satu Metode Penelitian Sastra Banding Claudio Guillen. *Poetika*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.22146/poetika.v1i2.10399>
- Rachmathya, Z. (2018). *Reproduksi Patriarki pada Perempuan Peranakan Arab Alawiyin*.
- Restiyani, A., & Rusdiarti, S. R. (2023). Transformasi Resistensi Perempuan dalam Novel Sitti Nurbaya Karya Marah Rusli ke Serial Musikal Nurbaya. *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya*, 6(2), 607–624. <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v6i2.685>
- Shahab, Y. Z. (2018). Exploring Uniting Factor for Multiculturalism Policy: Portrait of Hadrami, Arab Community in Indonesia. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(10), 650. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i10.2940>
- Sinanda, J. (2021). Subjektivitas Perempuan Dalam Film Arini (2018) Sebagai Karya Alih Wahana. *Metahumaniora*, 11(3), 314. <https://doi.org/10.24198/metahumaniora.v11i3.36722>
- Siscawati, M., Adelina, S., Eveline, R., Siscawati, M., Adelina, S., Eveline, R., & Anggriani, S. (2020). Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in The National Development of Indonesia. *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.7454/jsjgs.v2i2.1021>
- Subchi, I. (2020). Kafa'ah among the Hadrami Arabs in the Malay World (Anthropology of Law Approach). *Jurnal Cita Hukum*, 8(2), 415–434. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jch.v8i2.16574>
- Subchi, I., & Nurhayati, . (2020). *Study of the Syarifah's Cultural Revolt in Modern Indonesia: Personal Blog Social Media in Perspective Marriage between Noble Female Arab and Ordinary Male Non Arab*. *Icri 2018*, 2014–2022. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0009938720142022>
- Suratmin; Kwartanada, D. (2014). *Biografi A.R. Baswedan: Membangun Bangsa Merajut Keindonesiaan*. Kompas Media Nusantara.

- Syafa'at, Ahmad; Rusdiarti, S. R. (2023). Marriage and Women ' s Subalternity in the Ecranisation of Layla Majnun ' s Story. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 29(2), 171–184.
- Syukri, A. (2022). The Religious Political Identity of Kaum Sayid in the Ziarah Kubra Tradition in Palembang. *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya*, 6 (3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v6i3.19354>
- Ummah, S. (2019). Representasi Keindonesiaan dalam Fatimah (1938) Karya Hoesin Bafagih. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 25(2), 305–322. <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v25i2.11745>
- Ummah, S., & Suprihatin, C. (2020). *Hadhrami Cultural Identity in Bafagih's Fatimah. 453*(Inusharts 2019), 183–186. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200729.036>
- Wellek, Rena; Warren, A. (2016). *Teori Kesusastraan*. Gramedia Pustaka.
- Zahid, A., Ayu, N. A. K., & Ikayanti, R. L. (2023). Kapitalisme Tubuh Perempuan: Sebuah Pendisiplinan Atau Industrialisasi. *RESIPROKAL: Jurnal Riset Sosiologi Progresif Aktual*, 5(1), 115–131. <https://doi.org/10.29303/resiprokal.v5i1.286>.



© 2024 by Siti Amsariah, Ali Hasan Al-Bahar, Sayidatul Ummah
This work is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY SA)

Received (25-04-2024)

Accepted (16-09-2024)

Published (30-09-2024)