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The comparison of romanticism elements in *Salah Asuhan* and *The Sorrow of Young Werther*

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Abstract: *This study compares elements of Romanticism in Salah Asuhan by Abdoel Moeis and The Sorrows of Young Werther by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The research focuses on four elements of romanticism. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, utilizing reading and note-taking techniques. Data were analyzed to identify similarities and differences in the aesthetic manifestation of romanticism across both works. The findings reveal that in Werther, romanticism is primarily manifested through the intensity of inner experience, the idealization of love, a subjective connection to nature, emotional impulses, and Werther's spiritual struggle against the limitations of individual will; while Salah Asuhan portrays romanticism through Hanafi's inner experience within a colonial context, specifically through identity crisis, the clash between Western and Eastern cultures, interracial and intercultural relationships, conflicts with social norms and customs, and the inability to realize personal desires. Both works exhibit romantic aesthetic characteristics through the protagonists' subjective experiences and inner conflicts, but their manifestations are shaped by the historical, social, and cultural contexts of each literary work.*

Keywords: *romanticism, comparative literature, Salah Asuhan, The Sorrows of Young Werther, affinity*

INTRODUCTION

Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), examined through R. D. Boylan's 1902 translation, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and Abdoel Moeis's *Salah Asuhan* (1928) are literary works from different historical, geographical, and socio-cultural contexts. Despite these differences, both portray educated young protagonists struggling to reconcile personal desires with social expectations, resulting in destructive consequences. Werther experiences unfulfilled love because Lotte is already betrothed to Albert (Mestas, 2024), while Hanafi faces an identity crisis, complications in his relationship with Corrie, and conflict between his Westernized orientation and surrounding social and cultural norms (Suraya, 2022).

These parallels provide a basis for comparison. Bassnett (Sabban, 2023) defines comparative literature as an interdisciplinary field examining relationships between literary works from different spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts. In this study, the shared affinity lies in the protagonists' internal conflicts, failed romantic relationships, and struggles to reconcile personal desires with social expectations. This provides a basis for examining how elements of Romanticism manifest in both works.

Although rooted in different literary traditions, both novels portray tensions between individual aspirations and social expectations. Werther's conflict stems from his intense attachment to Charlotte and his inability to accept the limits of their

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relationship, while Hanafi's reflects his ambivalent cultural identity, Western aspirations, and desire for personal freedom. Their experiences reveal how similar inner conflicts take distinct forms across cultural and historical contexts.

The comparison does not assume that the two novels belong to the same literary movement or that Romanticism developed identically in their respective contexts. Rather, it employs selected Romantic elements to examine how individual emotions, perceptions, and spiritual concerns are represented and shaped by each novel's distinct cultural and historical context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In European literary history, Romanticism emerged in contrast to classical and neoclassical traditions, emphasizing subjectivity, emotion, imagination, and individual freedom over order and rationality. While Neoclassicism drew on classical principles, including Aristotle's ideas on literary representation (Sudjiman, as cited in Sitanggang, 2002), Romantic authors viewed literature as a creation of reality through imagination and feeling rather than merely its representation (Sharma, 2022). Imagination thus enabled literature to transcend immediate reality.

Noyes (in Sitanggang, 2002) and Endraswara (2011) identify Romantic characteristics including a return to nature, melancholy, individualism, sentimentalism, alienation, imagination, transcendence, and humanism. Together, these characteristics establish Romanticism as an aesthetic orientation centered on emotional experience, individual expression, and the human relationship with nature. Its relevance beyond European literature is evident in Nisa' and Faturrahman's (2024) study of Romanticism in Arabic literature.

Drawing on these characteristics, Hardjapamekas (as cited in Suryadana & Ridwan, 2026) identifies four elements of Romanticism: the human relationship with nature, individual subjectivity, irrationality, and spiritual life. These elements form the analytical framework for comparing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Abdoel Moeis's *Salah Asuhan*.

In German literary history, Goethe's Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (The Sorrows of Young Werther, 1774) is associated with Sturm und Drang, an eighteenth-century movement that challenged Enlightenment rationalism by emphasizing emotion, individual freedom, and inner impulses. Çelebi and Tezcan (2024) relate these ideals to the Kraftmensch, an individual guided by personal will rather than external authority. These concerns appear in Goethe's novel through emotional intensity, subjectivity, the human–nature relationship, and resistance to social conventions. Although distinct from German Romanticism, Sturm und Drang anticipated some of its concerns (Saul, 2009). This study therefore examines selected Romantic elements in the novel without classifying it as German Romanticism.

Distinguishing between a literary movement and an analytical framework is also important when examining Indonesian literature. Unlike European literary history, which associates Romanticism with a specific historical and intellectual context, Indonesian literary history is commonly organized through periodizations such as *Balai Pustaka*. Thus, this study approaches Romanticism not as a distinct Indonesian literary generation or historical period, but as an aesthetic framework for identifying

characteristics across works from different periods. Endraswara (2011) notes that Romantic characteristics also appear in regional literature. Similarly, Susanto and Wati (2019) demonstrate the significance of Romanticism in Indonesian literary development, particularly in the *Balai Pustaka* tradition, where it functions as both a stylistic element and an ideological orientation (Faruk, as cited in Susanto & Wati, 2019).

Previous studies of *Salah Asuhan* have predominantly adopted sociological, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic perspectives. Suraya (2022) applies Ian Watt's sociology of literature to interpret the novel as a reflection of Minangkabau social life in the 1920s, while Farhimni et al. (2021) examine the conflict between modernity and tradition through Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Clara et al. (2020) explore Western–Eastern relations, mimicry, and colonial hegemony in Hanafi's behavior, particularly his clothing and language. From a Lacanian perspective, Lantowa (2022) examines Hanafi's desire to embody and possess a European identity, which alienates him from his original identity and positions him as an "Other" in the society he seeks to enter.

Sugiarti (2005) examines Hanafi's ambivalent identity, highlighting his aspiration to adopt European culture despite remaining caught between colonial and Minangkabau identities. Foulcher (2005) similarly emphasizes the novel's psychological complexity beyond a simple critique of Westernization. Building on these perspectives, this study explores Hanafi's conflict through individual subjectivity as a Romantic element and compares its representation with Goethe's novel.

This study compares the four elements of Romanticism identified by Hardjapamekas (as cited in Suryadana, et. al., 2026) relationship with nature, individual subjectivity, irrationality, and spiritual life. It examines their similarities and differences, particularly in relation to the protagonists' subjective experiences and social environments, to demonstrate how Romantic elements take distinct forms across different historical and geographical contexts.

The four elements provide interconnected perspectives for examining the protagonists' experiences. The relationship between humans and nature concerns how the natural environment participates in or reflects an individual's inner life. Individual subjectivity emphasizes personal perception, emotional experience, and the ways individuals understand themselves in relation to others and society. Irrationality concerns the influence of emotional impulses when they conflict with rational judgment or external circumstances. Spiritual life, meanwhile, relates to religious awareness, moral reflection, and an individual's understanding of matters that extend beyond personal desires.

These elements are not treated as mutually exclusive categories. A single experience may reveal more than one dimension of Romantic expression. For example, an individual's relationship with nature may also communicate emotional subjectivity, while an internal conflict may involve both irrational impulses and spiritual questioning. Nevertheless, distinguishing the four elements provides an analytical structure for identifying their principal manifestations in each novel. The framework also enables the comparison to consider not only whether similar elements occur, but how their functions and meanings differ according to each protagonist's circumstances.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method and a comparative literature approach to examine Romantic elements in Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther and Moeis's Salah Asuhan. It interprets relevant textual evidence and compares the similarities and differences in their representation. Following Nemesio (1999), the analysis moves beyond data collection to explore broader literary phenomena, focusing on the protagonists' experiences, conflicts, and social environments.

The primary sources are *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (R. D. Boylan's 1902 translation of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, published by Colonial Press) and the 39th printing of Abdoel Moeis's *Salah Asuhan* (Balai Pustaka, 2009). The data comprise textual segments illustrating four elements of Romanticism identified by Hardjapamekas (as cited in Suryadana & Ridwan, 2026): the human relationship with nature, individual subjectivity, irrationality, and spiritual life.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, each novel was examined to identify the four Romantic elements in the protagonists' experiences, relationships, and responses to their social environments, with textual evidence interpreted in its narrative context. Second, the findings were compared by analytical category to identify shared patterns and differences rooted in Hanafi's and Werther's respective conflicts and characterization.

Data were collected through a literature review using the *read-and-note* technique. Both novels were read to identify relevant textual segments, which were recorded and categorized according to the four elements. The data were then interpreted within each novel by examining their significance to the protagonists' experiences and conflicts, followed by a comparison to establish similarities and differences. Conclusions were drawn from these findings. Data validity was maintained by revisiting the primary texts and cross-referencing the interpretations with the theoretical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Romanticism elements in *Salah Asuhan* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

Romanticism elements	*Salah Asuhan*	*The Sorrows of Young Werther*
Nature	Serves as a space for solitude and reflection for Hanafi	Reflects Werther's changing emotions.
Subjectivity	Appears in Hanafi's identity conflict, rejection of Minangkabau customs, and his perceptions of Corrie.	Expresses through intense love, jealousy, and Werther's interpretation of relationships
Irrationality	Shows in Hanafi's detachment from his surroundings and a suicide attempt.	Causes struggles to control Werther's desires and perceives death as an escape
Spiritual life	Recognizes the limits of personal desire and the role of God.	Emerges through religious reverence and moral questioning about the nature of his love.

Romanticism elements in Salah Asuhan
Relationship with nature

> *"Setelah tak ada lagi orang yang akan datang, barulah ia mulai turun tanah. Kebiasaannya ialah duduk bermenung di pematang-pematang sawah di belakang rumahnya, sambil memandang ke pegunungan sekitar-kitar kampungnya, yang amat indah dan permai bagai pemandangan."*
> ["After there was no one left to visit, he would finally go outside. His habit was to sit in contemplation on the rice field embankments behind his house, gazing at the surrounding mountains, whose scenery was exceedingly beautiful and picturesque"] (Moeis, 2009, pp. 261–262).

This excerpt presents nature as more than a physical setting; it provides Hanafi with a space for solitude and reflection. His habit of sitting alone on the rice field ridges and gazing at the mountains suggests that nature is closely connected to his inner experience. The description of the mountains as beautiful and serene contrasts with the restlessness underlying his contemplation, making the natural landscape a setting for his personal reflection.

The circumstances surrounding this moment also contribute to the meaning of the natural setting. Hanafi waits until no one is expected to come before going outside and sitting on the rice field ridges. This detail suggests that his encounter with nature is associated with a temporary withdrawal from social interaction. Rather than seeking companionship, he turns toward the landscape as a space in which he can remain alone with his thoughts. The mountains, described as beautiful and serene, provide a contrast to the emotional uncertainty that characterizes his personal life. Nature functions as a setting that allows his inward experience to become visible.

Individual subjectivity

Corrie observes that Hanafi often appears ashamed of his indigenous background. He responds,

> *"Aku tahu betul, bahwa aku hanyalah Bumiputra saja, Corrie. Janganlah kau ulang-ulang juga"*
> ["I know very well that I am merely a native, Corrie. You need not keep reminding me of it"](Moeis, 2009, pp. 2–3).

His response reveals his discomfort with his identity and his struggle to reconcile his indigenous origins with his perception of European identity.

Yusriana (2023) examines the social rejection experienced by characters in interracial relationships during the colonial period, relating it to racial hierarchies and the perceived superiority of Europeans. This perspective provides a broader context for Hanafi's identity conflict. However, this study focuses on his individual subjectivity, particularly how he perceives and responds to his identity. His discomfort also emerges in his rejection of Minangkabau customs, which he considers restrictive of personal freedom and autonomy.

Hanafi expresses this dissatisfaction by criticizing the social obligations and extended-family involvement in personal affairs in Minangkabau, which he contrasts with the more immediate-family-oriented Dutch household (Moeis, 2009, p. 31). He regards Dutch culture as offering greater individual freedom, particularly in personal decisions such as marriage. His preference therefore reflects not merely a cultural difference but also his subjective understanding of freedom, belonging, and personal choice.

Hanafi's preference for Dutch family practices also reveals the extent to which his identity is shaped by comparison. He does not evaluate his cultural background independently of another way of life; instead, he measures Minangkabau customs against his perception of Dutch society. This comparison allows him to imagine a form of personal freedom that he believes is unavailable within his own community. However, his aspiration to identify with European culture creates a contradiction: he seeks recognition through a cultural identity that does not fully accept him. His subjectivity is marked by a tension between the identity he wishes to claim and the social position from which he attempts to claim it.

Foulcher (2005) challenges readings of *Salah Asuhan* that reduce the novel to a warning against excessive Westernization, emphasizing its psychological complexity and the individual personalities of its characters. Similarly, Sugiarti (2005) highlights Hanafi's ambivalent identity: he aspires to identify with European culture but remains excluded from it. These perspectives reveal that his conflict extends beyond the opposition between Western and indigenous cultures to involve personal aspirations, subjective perceptions, and an unstable sense of belonging.

Hanafi's subjectivity is also evident in his relationship with Corrie. When their relationship doesn't meet his expectations, his feelings toward her turn into resentment and hatred (Moeis, 2009, p. 31). He assumes that Corrie has been playing with his feelings and using him to pass the time during her vacation. Rather than establishing

Corrie's intentions as objective facts, the novel foregrounds Hanafi's emotionally charged interpretation, demonstrating how frustrated desires shape his perception of interpersonal relationships.

This interpretation is significant because it shows that Hanafi's emotional response is shaped not only by what happens in his relationship with Corrie but also by the meaning he assigns to those events. His disappointment becomes a basis for judging her intentions, even though his assumptions are presented through his own perspective. The distinction between Corrie's actual intentions and Hanafi's interpretation is important: the conflict reveals the limitations of his subjective understanding of another person. In this respect, individual subjectivity does not simply refer to the freedom to experience personal feelings; it also concerns the possibility that personal expectations may distort one's perception of others.

Irrationality

Hanafi's inner conflict increasingly affects his awareness of his surroundings, as his thoughts consume his attention:

> *"Entah berapa pula lamanya ia tinggal berdiri di tempat keramaian itu, bermata tidak melihat, bertelinga tidak mendengar [...] Dengan hati yang amat bimbang, berbaringlah ia ke tempat tidurnya, menanti-nanti siang."*
> ["Who knows how long he remained standing in that crowded place, his eyes seeing nothing and his ears hearing nothing [...] With a deeply troubled heart, he lay down on his bed, waiting for daylight"] (Moeis, 2009, p. 253).

The phrases *"bermata tidak melihat, bertelinga tidak mendengar"* ["eyes seeing nothing, ears hearing nothing"] convey Hanafi's emotional distress and detachment from his surroundings. His troubled perception of time further reflects the inner turmoil that leaves him unable to find peace. His unresolved conflicts eventually lead him to attempt suicide:

> *"Bukan terminum dengan... kesalahan... tapi sengaja [...] aku sengaja... mau pergi!" [...] "aku pengecut tapi hidupku kosong... habis cita-cita baik... enyah!"*
> ["Not accidentally swallowed... by mistake... but deliberately [...] I deliberately... wanted to leave!" [...] "I am a coward, but my life is empty... all my noble aspirations are gone... gone!"] (Moeis, 2009, p. 268).

The excerpt reveals the tension between rational awareness and emotional impulse underlying Hanafi's destructive act. Although he acknowledges that his decision was deliberate and aware of its consequences, his despair leads him to perceive death as an escape. His irrationality lies in the way emotional suffering overrides his remaining awareness and drives him toward self-destruction.

The two passages above illustrate the progression of Hanafi's emotional disorientation. In the first, his detachment is expressed through an inability to see or hear what is happening around him. In the second, this inward turmoil is associated with a deliberate attempt to end his life. His description of himself as a coward and his

acknowledgment that his life has become empty suggest that he retains some awareness of his condition. Nevertheless, this awareness does not enable him to overcome his despair. The novel presents irrationality not simply as the absence of thought, but as a conflict in which self-awareness coexists with an inability to respond constructively to emotional suffering.

Spiritual life

Despite his intense inner conflict and emotional impulses, Hanafi also demonstrates an awareness of moral values and the limits of human will. Corrie reminds him that

> *"perjodohan dua orang manusia itu bukanlah dalam genggaman kita, melainkan dalam kekuasaan Tuhan juga"*
> ["The union of two people is not in our hands, but rather in the hands of God"]. The narrator describes his response: "Maka menerimalah ia akan kadarnya" ["Thus, he accepted his fate"] (Moeis, 2009, p. 105).

This passage illustrates Hanafi's recognition that marriage is subject to God's authority rather than individual desire. His acceptance reflects not only an awareness of divine power but also the realization that he cannot impose his wishes on another person. His spiritual life is manifested through the acceptance of human limitations and respect for another person's autonomy.

The four elements of Romanticism in *Salah Asuhan* emerge through Hanafi's inner conflict over identity, social life, love, and personal will. Nature provides space for reflection, while subjectivity shapes his perceptions of identity and relationships. His emotional turmoil develops into irrationality and destructive action, whereas his spiritual awareness reveals the limits of personal desire and the importance of moral responsibility.

This moment is particularly relevant when considered alongside Hanafi's earlier emphasis on personal freedom and individual choice. His acceptance of Corrie's statement introduces a limit to the autonomy he previously sought: another person's future and the outcome of a marriage cannot be determined by his own wishes. Spiritual awareness therefore provides a different perspective on personal agency. Rather than suggesting that individual desire is entirely irrelevant, the passage indicates that it must be understood in relation to forces and decisions beyond one's control. Nevertheless, the excerpt presents an instance of acceptance rather than sufficient evidence of a complete or permanent transformation in Hanafi's character.

Romanticism elements in The Sorrows of Young Werther

Relationship with nature

Werther describes nature as a source of comfort and emotional fulfillment:

> "Solitude in this terrestrial paradise is a genial balm to my mind" and "one might wish himself transformed into a butterfly" (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 4).

The beauty of spring provides Werther with tranquility and joy, while his desire to become a butterfly expresses his longing to merge with the natural world. Nature becomes an integral part of his emotional experience. This connection is also evident in his description of a secluded landscape:

> "The avenues grow darker" as they lead into "a gloomy recess" that evokes "a strange feeling of melancholy" (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 58).

The darkening path and secluded surroundings reflect Werther's melancholy, demonstrating how the natural landscape resonates with and shapes his emotional state. Nature in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is therefore connected to Werther's shifting feelings.

The contrast between these descriptions suggests that Werther does not experience nature independently of his emotional condition. The landscape becomes meaningful through his personal response to it. The spring environment is associated with vitality and a sense of harmony, while the dark and secluded setting accompanies melancholy. This relationship illustrates a characteristic Romantic emphasis on the connection between the individual and the natural world. Nature is not merely observed from a distance; it becomes part of the way Werther experiences and interprets his surroundings. Compared with Hanafi's solitary contemplation of the mountains, Werther's descriptions place greater emphasis on the emotional correspondence between landscape and individual feeling.

Individual subjectivity

Through his letters to Wilhelm, Werther recounts his experiences and his love for Charlotte. When asked how he likes her, he responds:

> "What sort of creature must he be who merely like Charlotte, whose whole heart and sense were not entirely absorbed by her" (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 36).

This statement reveals the intensity of Werther's subjectivity. His love for Charlotte is not a simple feeling but an overwhelming experience that consumes his heart and mind.

The epistolary form is particularly relevant to the representation of subjectivity because readers encounter many of Werther's experiences through his own accounts. His letters allow his emotional responses to occupy a central position in the narrative, including his interpretations of Charlotte, Albert, and the situations in which he finds himself. At the same time, the editor's framing perspective provides a distinction between Werther's personal account and the presentation of his story as a whole. This narrative arrangement makes his subjectivity prominent without requiring every perception he expresses to be accepted as an objective description of events. His account of love can therefore be examined both as an expression of intense feeling and as an interpretation shaped by his own desires.

Reiss (1959) observes that the novel combines Werther's letters with an editor's framing narrative. While the letters convey Werther's feelings and perceptions directly,

the editor presents his story from an external perspective. This narrative structure foregrounds Werther's subjective experiences while distinguishing them from the broader narrative perspective.

Werther's subjectivity becomes more complicated when he learns that Charlotte is engaged to Albert. Although he acknowledges Albert's good qualities, he expresses his jealousy:

> "Were he the best and noblest of men [...] I could not endure to see him in possession of such a perfect being. Possession!" (Goethe, 1774/1902, pp. 41–42).

His reaction reveals his desire to possess Charlotte despite recognizing her existing relationship with Albert. His simultaneous acknowledgment of Albert's worthiness highlights the tension between personal longing and awareness of reality. Therefore, Werther's subjectivity emerges through his emotionally intense interpretation of love and his inability to reconcile his desires with his circumstances.

Irrationality

Werther struggles to control his desire to express his affection physically toward Charlotte. He attempts to justify this impulse as a natural human instinct:

> "One hundred times have I been on the point of embracing her [...] And laying hold is the most natural human instincts. Do not children touch everything they see? And I!" (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 89).

Although Werther recognizes that he cannot freely act on his desires, he rationalizes his impulse by comparing it to children's instinctive behavior. His irrationality thus emerges from his attempt to justify an emotional impulse that conflicts with the social reality of Charlotte's engagement.

Werther uses children's instinctive behavior to rationalize his desire for physical affection, presenting it as natural and spontaneous. However, Charlotte's engagement to Albert makes this desire socially problematic. His reasoning thus reveals a contradiction between emotional spontaneity and social restraint, highlighting his irrational attempt to justify crossing established boundaries.

His unrequited love and social alienation eventually lead him to regard death as an escape from suffering, as expressed in his final letter to Wilhelm:

> "I have for the last time beheld the mountains, the forest, and the sky. [...] I have settled all my affairs! Farewell! We shall meet again, and be happier than ever" (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 131).

Werther's farewell and statement that he has settled his affairs demonstrate his awareness of the finality of his decision. However, his expectation of meeting again and becoming happier suggests that he imagines death as a means of attaining the happiness unavailable to him in life. His irrationality is therefore manifested in the way emotional suffering shapes his perception of death as an escape from inner turmoil.

Spiritual life

Despite his suffering, Werther continues to demonstrate respect for religion, as expressed in his letter to Wilhelm:

> I thank you Wilhelm, for your cordial sympathy, for your excellent advice; and I implore you to be quiet. leave me to my sufferings. In spite of my wretchedness, I have still strength enough for endurance. I revere religion - you know I do (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 91).

His assertion that he still has the strength to endure indicates that his emotional suffering has not diminished his respect for religion. His spirituality thus persists even amid intense personal turmoil.

Werther's spiritual life is also evident in his questioning of the purity of his feelings for Charlotte. He writes:

> What is the matter with me, dear Wilhelm? I am afraid of myself! Is not my love for her the purest, most holy, and most brotherly nature? Has my soul never been sullied by a single sensual desire? But I will make no protestations (Goethe, 1774/1902, p. 107).

His references to love as "purest," "holy," and "brotherly" reveal his attempt to understand his affection as sacred, while his concern about sensual desire indicates moral self-questioning. The reference to his soul further suggests that he regards the nature of his feelings as a spiritual matter. Unlike an expression of religious guidance or resolution, Werther's spirituality emerges through his continued respect for religion and his unresolved moral introspection concerning his love for Charlotte.

These two passages reveal different dimensions of Werther's spiritual concerns. His statement that he reveres religion establishes that his suffering does not simply result in a rejection of religious values. However, his later questions about the purity of his love show that religious awareness does not provide him with an uncomplicated resolution to his emotional conflict. He attempts to distinguish between affection that he considers pure and desire that might be sensual, but his decision not to make further protestations leaves the question open. His spirituality is therefore presented through an unresolved relationship between religious reverence, emotional attachment, and moral self-examination.

Discussion

Comparison of romantic elements in Salah Asuhan and The Sorrows of Young Werther

Relationship between humans and nature

Both novels portray nature as closely connected to the protagonists' inner experiences. In *Salah Asuhan*, nature provides Hanafi with a space for solitude and contemplation, particularly when he gazes at the mountains surrounding his village. In *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, nature is more directly associated with Werther's

changing emotions: the beauty of spring brings him joy, while dark and secluded landscapes evoke melancholy.

Although both protagonists experience nature as more than a physical setting, their relationships with it differ. Hanafi uses nature as a space for reflection, whereas Werther experiences it as an emotional presence that reflects and influences his state of mind.

Individual subjectivity

In both novels, individual subjectivity emerges through the protagonists' interpretations of themselves, their social environments, and their personal relationships. However, its manifestation differs. Hanafi's subjectivity centers on identity and his desire to adopt a lifestyle he considers compatible with his aspirations. His discomfort with his *Bumiputra* identity and rejection of Minangkabau customs reflect his personal understanding of freedom and social belonging. His disappointment in Corrie also shapes his perception of her, transforming his feelings of love into resentment.

Werther's subjectivity is expressed through his intense experience of love. His feelings for Charlotte consume his thoughts and shape his understanding of their relationship. Although he feels jealous of Albert and desires Charlotte, he acknowledges Albert's good qualities and recognizes the reality of their engagement. The similarity between the protagonists lies in how personal desires shape their perceptions and relationships, while the difference lies in their primary concerns: Hanafi struggles with identity and social belonging, whereas Werther is consumed by unfulfilled love.

Irrationality

In both novels, irrationality emerges when emotional suffering overwhelms the protagonists' ability to cope with their circumstances. Hanafi's irrationality is manifested through his prolonged identity conflict and emotional disorientation, which culminate in a suicide attempt. Although he remains aware of the consequences of his actions, particularly for his mother, his suffering leads him to perceive death as an escape.

Werther remains aware of social boundaries, particularly Charlotte's engagement to Albert, but attempts to justify his desire to embrace her as a natural human instinct. His emotional suffering eventually leads him to regard suicide as a means of escaping unfulfilled love and social alienation. Thus, both protagonists experience a tension between emotional impulses and rational awareness, although Hanafi's irrationality culminates in a suicide attempt, while Werther's culminates in suicide.

Spiritual Life

The protagonists' spiritual lives emerge through different forms of awareness beyond personal desire. For Hanafi, spirituality develops through his recognition of God's sovereignty and the limitations of human will. Corrie's reminder that marriage lies within God's providence leads him to accept that he cannot interfere with other's

choices. This marks a shift from his earlier tendency to place personal desires at the center of his decisions.

Werther's spirituality is expressed through his continued respect for religion and moral introspection. Despite his suffering, he maintains his religious awareness and questions whether his love for Charlotte is pure or influenced by sensual desire. Unlike Hanafi, whose spiritual awareness leads toward acceptance, Werther's reflection remains unresolved. His spirituality is therefore characterized by religious consciousness and continued questioning of his own feelings.

CONCLUSION

Both novels exhibit four elements of Romanticism and manifest differently according to the protagonists' experiences and social contexts. They portray intense inner conflict caused by the tension between personal desires and external realities. Hanafi's struggles concern his indigenous identity, desire to embrace Dutch culture, and relationship with Corrie, whereas Werther's center on social alienation and unfulfilled love for Charlotte. These differences shape the manifestation of the four Romantic elements. Nature provides Hanafi with a space for contemplation but more directly influences Werther's emotional state. Subjectivity centers on Hanafi's identity and social aspirations, while Werther's is rooted in his experience of love. Irrationality leads Hanafi to attempt suicide and Werther to take their own lives. Their spiritual lives also differ: Hanafi develops an awareness of divine sovereignty and the limits of personal will, whereas Werther expresses religious respect and unresolved moral introspection.

The comparison demonstrates that Romantic elements can be identified across different literary and cultural contexts without assuming that the works belong to the same historical movement. Rather, these elements acquire distinct forms through the protagonists' subjective experiences, inner conflicts, and relationships with their social environments.

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