

**CROSS-CULTURAL ROMANCE:
DIGITAL FICTION FORMULA IN LIBYA'S
LA'NAT AL-'ISHQ AND INDONESIA'S ABIGHEA**

Oleh

Reza Sukma Nugraha¹, Eva Farhah², Azka Nurzanah³

¹²³Program Studi Sastra Arab, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Sebelas
Maret, Jalan Ir. Sutami No. 36-A Surakarta,

¹Surel: reza.sn@staff.uns.ac.id

²Surel: evafarhah@staff.uns.ac.id

³Surel: azkanurzanah354@gmail.com

Abstract

The popularity of the digital literary platform Wattpad has been recognized globally, including in Indonesia and Libya. Among various studies on fiction published through Wattpad, this research focuses on a comparative analysis of romance formulas written by popular Wattpad authors from two countries: La'nat al-'Ishq by Hams Yosef in Libya and Abighea by Chelsea Karina Aelia in Indonesia. The main issue addressed in this study is whether romance stories in digital fiction from these countries share the same narrative formula despite the cultural differences between the authors and their readers. The comparison is conducted using John G. Cawelti's theory of formulaic literature and a descriptive-analytical method. The findings indicate that the dominant formulas in both fictions are the idealization of the main characters, love triangles, and happy endings. This suggests that, although these works are set in different cultural and linguistic contexts, their romance formulas reflect universal desires and expectations of young readers concerning the romance genre.

Keywords: *romance, comparative literature, formulaic literature, cyber literatur, Wattpad*

<https://doi.org/10.14421/ajbs.2023.07024>

<https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/adab/Adabiyat/article/view/2820>

All Publications by *Adabiyāt: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Abstrak

Popularitas platform sastra digital Wattpad telah diakui secara global, termasuk di Indonesia dan Libya. Di antara penelitian-penelitian lain tentang fiksi yang diterbitkan melalui Wattpad, penelitian ini berfokus pada perbandingan formula romansa yang ditulis oleh penulis Wattpad populer di dua negara, yaitu *La'nat al-'Isyq* karya Hams Yosef di Libya dan *Abighea* karya Chelsea Karina Aelia di Indonesia. Masalah yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini adalah mempertanyakan formula cerita romansa dalam fiksi digital di negara-negara tersebut sehubungan dengan adanya perbedaan budaya pengarang dan pembaca. Perbandingan tersebut dilakukan dengan kerangka teori sastra formula John G. Cawelti dan metode deskriptif analisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa formula khas yang muncul dalam kedua fiksi adalah idealisasi karakter utama, cerita cinta segitiga, dan akhir cerita bahagia. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun karya-karya tersebut berada dalam konteks budaya dan bahasa yang berbeda, formula romansa memiliki persamaan yang mencerminkan harapan dan keinginan universal pembaca muda terkait genre romansa.

Kata kunci: romansa, sastra bandingan, sastra formula, sastra siber, Wattpad

A. INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology development has significantly changed various aspects of life, including literature. In recent decades, digital literature has been increasingly rampant and gaining good acceptance from readers, especially the younger generation. One of the popular internet platforms accommodating digital literature is Wattpad, an online literacy platform founded in 2006 and spread globally, including in Indonesia and Libya.

Within this platform, the romance genre stands out as a genre that is very popular with readers. In Indonesia, for example, one Wattpad romance novel that gets readers' enthusiasm is *Abighea*. While in Libya, *La'nat al-'Isyq* became a hot topic among Wattpad fans. Although written in different languages and cultures, similar

formulas form the basis for writing the romance genre in the two countries.

As Cawelti (Cawelti 1976, 12) explained, a formula is a number of constant or standard elements that form the foundation of writing a genre. However, research on romance formulas in Wattpad, especially in comparisons between Indonesia and Libya, is rarely found. The limitations of research examining the romance formula in Wattpad from a comparative perspective between Indonesia and Libya may be due to the greater focus on traditional literature or other media, such as film and television, in formula literature (Fiske 2002, 110).

In addition, the fact that Wattpad has adapted and developed in various countries, including Indonesia and Libya, with their respective languages and cultures has not been studied much scientifically. One is a study of the literary formula produced in each country. The comparison of romance formulas in Indonesian and Libyan Wattpad is essential because it can explain how these universal formulas adapt and are applied in different language and cultural contexts.

Not only is it important from an academic point of view, but understanding the romance formula in Wattpad is also relevant from an industry perspective. Understanding genre formulas in literature can help content creators understand readers' preferences and, consequently, increase the commercial appeal of their work. Understanding the romance formula in Wattpad can help writers and publishers in Indonesia and Libya formulate more effective content strategies.

Against this background, a fundamental research question arises: do the romance genres in Indonesian and Libyan Wattpad have the same formula? This question is essential given that romance is a trendy genre in both countries, and Wattpad has become an essential platform for digital literature. Answering this question will broaden the reader's understanding of how romance formulas appear in Wattpad and how the genre adapts and is applied in different language and cultural contexts.

In addition, although many previous studies have explored romance formulas in various media, studies that specifically discuss formulas in Wattpad are still relatively rare. This study attempts to fill

a gap in the existing literature by comparing romance formulas in Wattpad between Indonesia and Libya. Thus, this study addresses the issue by focusing on comparing Indonesia's Wattpad *Abighea* and Libya's Wattpad *La'nat al-'Isyq*.

This research question is challenging because it requires researchers to transcend language and cultural boundaries and understand formulas that might adapt and change in the context of each culture. This research question also demands an in-depth knowledge of John G. Cawelti's formulaic literary theory, which emphasizes standard repetition and variation in popular literature (Cawelti 1976, 32). Although this theory has been widely used in formulaic literary studies, its application to Wattpad still needs further exploration, especially in comparative literature.

This study used descriptive analysis methods and literature techniques to evaluate and compare the romance formula in the two Wattpads. This approach will provide a comprehensive overview of how the romance formula operates within Wattpad and how it adapts and changes in different cultural and linguistic contexts, namely Indonesian and Arabic.

This study analyzed the elements of the romance formula used in Wattpad *Abighea* and *La'nat al-'Isyq*. This process will involve a detailed review of the main character's characteristics, story motives, and story completion in both works. The analysis is expected to clarify how Wattpad authors from Indonesia and Libya each apply the romance formula in their work.

Although studies of the romance formula have been widely conducted, its application to Wattpad—especially in comparative contexts—is still rare. Research conducted by Falaq et al. (2021) discusses how the Wattpad platform is an effective medium for learning literature because it helps provide a better understanding of learning literature. However, the study did not expressly provide case studies or literary criticism related to specific fictional titles on Wattpad. In another study, Pramatanti (2018) discussed the writing style of a Wattpad author. In his research, Pramatanti said that the structure of stories in Wattpad fiction can change along with the involvement of readers and commentators. It shows that Wattpad

narratives often do not have a fixed formula, although some authors still have idealism and distinctive style. Although Pratamanti mentions romance as one of the most produced genres, the study does not explicitly discuss how the genre has a specific distinctive story formula.

Other research on Wattpad is focused on producing Wattpad stories for the benefit of the industry. Mawardi mentioned that Wattpad authors needed to expand their readership by printing their work through publishers. Authors usually have independent publishers (*indie*) because there is no selection process. It is a form of commodification of literary works that cannot be ignored in the current era of postmodernism. However, the study did not specifically conduct literary criticism of specific Wattpad novels.

As such, the study is uniquely positioned to fill that research gap. This study seeks to elaborate and compare the romance formula in Wattpad Indonesia and Libya, which has never been done before. Therefore, this research has the potential to make an essential contribution to the study of formula literature and broaden our understanding of how romance formulas work in digital mediums such as Wattpad.

Research that specifically highlights the use of media can be found in Pinasthika's research (2020). Pinasthika mentioned that the Wattpad platform, in terms of design, accommodates its users' emotional attachment and usability. It has implications for user comfort when reading and using the application. However, the study did not discuss the implications of platform display on readers' reception regarding the reading they consume. Thus, it is necessary to conduct further research focusing on the substance of reading in this study.

In addition, other studies that discuss formulas in literary and media works also discuss the romance genre several times. Sharot's research (2015) discusses how romance in the Depression era in America has a standard formula: to display female roles across classes to support the story and affect the real life of the actresses who play these roles. It shows that romances of different periods have a unique formula aimed at gaining a large audience.

Based on this previous research, this study bridges the gap by taking a comparative approach to analyzing the romance formula in Wattpad. By applying Cawelti's literary theory of formulas in the context of Wattpad and combining them with comparative approaches, this research can broaden readers' understanding of how romance formulas work in digital mediums and how they adapt and change in different languages and cultural contexts.

The benefits of this study are diverse. First, academically, the research helps broaden the horizons of knowledge about how romance formulas operate in a digital context. Secondly, this research is also helpful for Wattpad practitioners and writers, especially those who create romance genre stories. This study's results can help them understand the romance formula in Wattpad and how it adapts in different cultural and linguistic contexts. Third, this research can help readers understand and appreciate more deeply the works in the romance genre that they read on Wattpad. They can understand how these works reflect and dialogue with the formulas and conventions of the romance genre and how these works adapt and change in different cultural and linguistic contexts.

In addition, the research is also relevant in the broader context of cultural readings. By analyzing the romance formula in Wattpad, the study also has the potential to provide new insights into how popular culture and influence are by social norms, values, and expectations related to the romance genre. In particular, this research can help us understand how love, relationships, and romance are played out and told in different cultures and languages and how these reflect and influence society's views on these issues. As such, the research makes a meaningful contribution to the broader discussion of how media and popular culture play a role in shaping and reflecting on our identity and experience as individuals and as members of society.

Finally, this study aims to find and understand the similarities of formulas in the romance genre in Indonesian and Libyan Wattpad. The study analyzes two popular Wattpad novels: *Abighea* from Indonesia and *La'nat al-'Isyq* from Libya. Through this research, we can better understand how romance formulas operate in digital and multicultural

contexts and how these formulas adapt and change in different cultural and linguistic contexts.

This research was designed with a qualitative approach emphasizing argumentation and textual data interpretation (Bogdan dan Biklen 1998, 48). The qualitative paradigm was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze the phenomena found in-depth and understand more complex contexts and details. In the context of this study, a qualitative approach will enable researchers to understand and explain the romance formula in Wattpad and how this formula operates across cultures and languages.

The research method used was descriptive analysis. The descriptive method of analysis was applied in this study because of the method's tendency to describe phenomena or facts in the object of research (Sugiyono 2021, 112). This study focused on describing and analyzing the story structure of two Wattpad novels, *Abighea* and *La'nat al-Isyq*, which show the formula of romance. The aim is to identify and understand the existing romance formula and how this formula is applied and adapted in both novels.

The research data were collected through a reading and note-taking technique involving thorough reading of both Wattpad's novels, *Abighea* and *La'nat al-Isyq*, and recording structures related to the romance formula. This technique is based on the principle that deep and critical reading of a text is one of the best ways to understand and analyze content and structure.

The data analysis technique used in this study was the analysis of literary formulas based on the theory of John G. Cawelti (1976). This approach identified and analyzed formulas in the text to understand how they are used and interpreted. This study identified and analyzed romance formulas in Wattpad to understand how they were used and adapted in *Abighea* (Aolia 2021) and *La'nat al-Isyq* (Yosef 2015). Furthermore, the results of this analysis are used to compare the romance formula in the two novels and interpret the comparison results.

B. ROMANCE FORMULA IN ABIGHEA AND LA'NAT AL-'ISYQ

The digital novels *Abighea* and *La'nat al-'Isyq* were the object of the study, coming to the fore for their uniqueness in utilizing digital technology and their popularity among young readers. *La'nat al-'Isyq* by Libyan writer Hams Yosef has attracted widespread attention, with more than 2.42K followers and 42.8K readers in 2022. On the other hand, Chelsea Karina Aelia's *Abighea* from Indonesia has achieved equal or more incredible popularity, even inspiring a series on the popular streaming platform, Genflix.

The use of digital platforms like Wattpad by these two authors has allowed them to reach a broad and diverse audience beyond what is possible through conventional publishing. These two novels, although coming from different cultural contexts, Libya and Indonesia, show similar romance formulas in their stories, confirming the relevance and sustainability of this genre in global popular culture.

1. Perfect Character

The formula of romance based on the theory of John G. Cawelti demands the existence of a “perfect” protagonist or main character. The use of perfect characters in romance is not arbitrary. As Cawelti (Cawelti 1976, 88) explains, the perfect character becomes the central point that allows the viewer or reader to feel admiration and hope and build an emotional attachment to the main character. On the other hand, perfect characters facilitate the story's movement, providing opportunities for dramatic events by centering on the character.

It is essential because readers tend to look for stories that allow them to empathize with the main character. According to Zunshine (2006, 118) readers often look for stories where they can identify with the main character. This process allows readers to explore the main character's feelings and thoughts, understand the main character's challenges, and feel emotional satisfaction when the main character finally achieves a goal or overcomes an obstacle.

Specifically in the romance genre, the presence of impeccable characters creates a dramatic increase in emotions and tension in the

story, providing entertainment and appeal peculiar to this genre. This formula helps the reader build a strong relationship with the character, facilitates empathy, and strengthens the reader's involvement in the story (Fiske 2002, 62). Thus, the perfect character plays a significant role in the structure and appeal of the romance story.

In the context of perfect physical character, *La'nat al-'Isyq* presents the female lead, Nazik, with a very charming physical description. In the Arabic quote, Nazik is described as a beautiful figure with a charming smile that can be likened to an angel.

The quote reads:

أَصْبَحْتُ كَالْمَلَائِكِ مَا أَنْ ابْتَسَمْتِ
أَنْتِ فَتَاةٌ جَمِيلَةٌ يَا نَازِكُ! (Yosef 2015, Chapter 2)

You become like an angel when you smile.

You are a beautiful woman, Nazik! (The researcher translation)

In the quote, Nazik's physical description depicts extraordinary beauty, coupled with the charm of her charming smile. Physical beauty is an essential part of the perfect character formula in romance. This physical beauty is often used as an early marker in forming the perfect character in the story, and Nazik meets that requirement. This physical beauty affects the reader's perception and the dynamics of the relationship between the characters in the story.

Nazik's impeccable physical characteristics give a solid initial impression of her character and help build a positive image in the reader's mind. It suggests that the author has utilized the romance formula in building Nazik's characters, emphasizing physical beauty as part of the character's perfect identity.

It continues to the main male character in *La'nat al-'Isyq*, namely Nauras. In his physical explanation, Nauras is described as a handsome male with blond hair, blue eyes, and a tall body. In Arabic, the quote reads:

إِنَّهُ يَجْمَلُ أَوْصَافَ نَوْرَسِ الْحَقِيقِيِّ، شَعْرٌ أَشْفَرُ وَعَيْنَايَ زَرْقَاوَيْنِ وَطُولُ فَارِعٍ. يَا نَازِكُ
(Yosef 2015, Chapter 4)

He had the characteristics of a true Nauras, blond hair, blue eyes, and a prominent height. (The researcher translation)

Like Nazik, Nauras is also presented as a character with a perfect physique. These physical characteristics build the ideal image set out in the romance formula: a handsome, strong, and charming male figure. Blond hair and blue eyes show unique and attractive physical traits, which adds appeal to this character. The prominent height also makes a solid and authoritative impression of Nauras' character. Nauras' physical characteristics are essential in shaping the reader's perception of his character, playing an important role in the relationship between the characters in the story. They are essential in establishing the romance formula.

Based on this description, the author has applied the romance formula in building the characters of Nazik and Nauras. Their perfect physical portrayal shows how this formula forms an ideal and engaging character for the reader.

In addition to the physical characteristics already discussed, it is necessary to understand that the concepts of beauty and good looks are not universal and are strongly influenced by particular cultural contexts. According to Moughrabi (1978, 34) in the context of Arab culture and especially Libya, the physical traits depicted in the characters Nazik and Nauras are highly valued and considered ideal.

In Nazi characters, the beauty of Arab women is generally viewed through physical characteristics such as beautiful eyes and a charming smile (El Guindi 1999, 2). In this context, Nazik meets these standards of beauty. On the other hand, the Nauras, with blond hair and blue eyes, can represent physical characteristics highly valued in Libyan culture. Research by Cunningham et al. (1995, 203) shows that men with blond hair and blue eyes are often seen as more attractive in some cultures, including Arab culture.

In this respect, Yosef's physical portrayal of the characters Nazik and Nauras satisfies the formula of romance and meets the standards of beauty and good looks in their culture. Thus, through this research, we can see how Joseph, as a writer, incorporates elements of

local culture into a more general and universal formula of romance. It reflects how the author adapts his story to readers with a different sense of beauty and good looks.

In the novel *Abighea* by Chelsea Karina Aolia, Ghea's character is depicted with charming physical features. An excerpt from the novel explains, "From Rio's vision this morning and the inconsequential rumors he heard, Rio was sure everything was related to one person, Ghea. A girl with beautiful twinkles and hair hanging below the shoulders" (Aolia 2021, 40).

In this quote, the author describes Ghea with beautiful eyes and long hair hanging over the shoulders, two physical traits generally considered part of the standard of beauty. So, in the context of Indonesian culture, Ghea embodies a beautiful and ideal female character, as portrayed by the author in this novel.

In the novel *Abighea*, the main male character, Abi, is described as having a charming physical attraction. Abi is referred to as the "target man" of the Milky Way students, a school where they study, indicating that Abi has an attractive physical appearance which makes her famous (Aolia 2021, 69).

In addition, Abi's position as a basketball player at her school adds to her appeal. As quoted from the novel, "Finally, the day when they have to compete comes. This competition is not only about self-esteem; this time, the competition is also about the school's good name. Therefore, neither Abi nor the other *Enfant* members want to disappoint the school" (Aolia 2021, 107). This image strengthens Abi's image as a physically ideal figure and achieves in sports.

The characters Ghea and Abi depicted in the novel *Abighea* reflect the idealization of physical appearance in Indonesian society, especially among young readers. In this context, beautiful women and handsome men who excel are a form of social stereotypes about perfect physical appearance.

Meanwhile, Abi's character shows social stereotypes about the ideal male physical appearance in the Indonesian context. As a popular student and basketball player at her school, Abi represents the coveted physical image of a handsome and accomplished man.

In addition to physical images, perfect character traits are seen in nonphysical depictions. In the novel *La'nat al-'Isyq*, the character Nazik, in addition to being described as beautiful, is also described as having a good attitude. The above quote refers to how the surrounding community saw Nazik as a good woman everyone wanted to befriend and spend time with. In addition, she is also depicted as a woman who gets everything she wants, a symbol of her father's generosity and affection.

This image is significant in romance because an excellent main character will encourage sympathy and emotional attachment from the reader. This sympathy will later influence the reader's response to the conflicts and challenges the characters face, which is a crucial aspect of the romance formula. Thus, in this case, Nazik's kind and beloved character encourages the reader to feel empathy and support him in various situations.

In this regard, the relevant quotations from the novel *La'nat al-'Isyq* are as follows:

كُنْتُ فِي شَبَابِ تِلْكَ الْفَتَاةِ الَّتِي يَزْعَبُ الْجَمِيعُ فِي مُصَادَقَتِهَا وَقَضَاءِ الْوَقْتِ
مَعَهَا، كُنْتُ الْفَتَاةَ الرَّيَّةَ الْمُدَلَّلَةَ صَاحِبَةَ كُلِّ الْأَمَانِ الْمُسْتَجَابَةِ. لَقَدْ عَشْتُ
طُفُولَتِي دُونَ أُمِّ فَكَانَ وَالِدِي يَمْنَحُنِي كُلَّ الْإِهْتِمَامِ وَالْحُبِّ حَتَّى لَا أَشْعُرُ
بِعَيَابِهَا وَبِالْفِعْلِ لَمْ أَفْعَلْ. (Yosef 2015, Chapter 4)

I was in the prime of that girl everyone wanted to befriend and spend time with. I was the rich, spoiled girl who had all her wishes fulfilled. I lived my childhood without a mother, so my father gave me all the care and love so that I would not feel her absence, and indeed I did not. (The researcher translation)

The quote refers to how Nazik is portrayed as a kind woman and liked by many and how she was raised affectionately by her father even though she had no mother. It shows Nazik's nonphysical character as a kind and lovable woman, essential in the romance formula.

In the novel *La'nat al-'Isyq*, Nauras is described as a man who has a caring attitude and likes to entertain others. The above quote shows how he always showed his care and shared many things with the Naziks.

It portrays the nonphysical character of Nauras as warm and caring, which is also an essential aspect of the romance formula. Through this, readers can feel empathy and sympathy for Nauras' character, potentially influencing their emotional response to the events that occur in the story.

"وَلَكِنْ فَرِيدَةٌ"
 فَقَطَّعْتَنِي بِحَمَاسِهَا الَّذِي أَرَاخُنِي كُلُّ مَا زَادَتْ فِيهِ:
 "أَلَا بِمَكْنُهَا التَّغْلِيْبُ عَلَيَّكَ، أَحْبَبْتَنِي أَلَا هَلْ اعْتَرَفَ لَكَ بِحُبِّهِ؟"
 "أَلَا، لَكِنَّهُ يَهْتَمُّ بِي كَثِيرًا، وَنَشَارِكُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ."
 (Yosef 2015, Chapter 5)

"But Farida ..."

She interrupted me with her enthusiasm, which relieved me the more it increased:

"She cannot outdo you; tell me now, has he confessed his love for you?"

"No, but he cares a lot about me, and we share everything."

(The researcher translation)

In the quote above, Nauras is described as a figure who always shows concern for Nazik and shares many things. It reflects the nonphysical character of Nauras as a caring and warm person, an essential aspect of the formula of romance.

Nonphysical characters are also essential to the perfect portrayal of characters in *Avighea's* novels. As mentioned, Ghea and Abi have nonphysical characteristics that impress and appeal to readers. Ghea is described as a steadfast and wise woman. As the female lead, these traits are fundamental in the context of romance. Stoic indicates strength and resilience, characteristics that readers value and respect. Meanwhile, wisdom is essential in making important decisions in the story, which also impacts the events in the plot.

Meanwhile, Abi is described as a clever, caring, and humorous man. These characteristics stand out and influence how she interacts with other characters in the story, including Ghea. His ability to display

humor also adds appeal to his characters, making them even more exciting and entertaining for readers.

Cawelti (Cawelti 1976, 84) argues that characters with unusually good or perfect traits are essential to the romance formula. In this respect, both *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea* fit this formula by portraying the nonphysical characters Nazik, Nauras, Ghea, and Abi. In Libyan culture, the characters Nazik and Nauras are positioned as ideal figures in their physical appearance, attitudes, and behavior. Nazik is described as a woman endowed with beauty and kindness who exudes Libyan cultural values, such as respect for family and friendship. Meanwhile, Nauras is seen as an ideal man in his physical appearance and caring and comforting behavior, which conforms to Libyan cultural norms and values.

For the Indonesian context, Abi and Ghea also meet these criteria. Ghea, with her stoic and thoughtful nature, reflects the stereotype of the ideal woman in Indonesian culture, who is valued for her intelligence and wisdom and her ability to survive difficult situations. On the other hand, Abi is a man who is not only handsome but also clever, caring, and humorous, all of which fit the image of the ideal man in Indonesian culture.

Thus, by portraying these characters, both *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea* follow the formula of romance mentioned by Cawelti and are in line with the values and culture of their respective societies, Libya and Indonesia.

2. Love Triangle Motif

According to the theory described by Cawelti (Cawelti 1976, 76), the motif of a love triangle story is an essential part of the romance formula. In this structure, the central conflict often involves three main characters, where two characters compete for the attention and affection of the third character.

In the context of this study, both *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea* follow this pattern, with additional characters triggering conflict between the main pairs. In *La'nat al-'Isyq*, Farida's character appears as a point of conflict in the relationship between Nazik and Nauras, creating a love triangle situation. Meanwhile, in *Abighea*, Vanya

appears as a character who raises a conflict between Abi and Ghea, resulting in the same love triangle dynamic.

The love triangle motif has long been a common element in literary works and has a long history in narrative writing. Love triangle stories often serve as a way to explore the power dynamics between the characters and how they interact in the context of romantic relationships. This motif can be used to evoke tension and conflict, as well as explore ideas about love, competition, and sacrifice.

In the novel *La'nat al-'Isyq*, the love triangle motif becomes the central element that drives the storyline. This love dynamic involves three main characters: Nazik, Nauras, and Farida. At one point in the novel, the following quote marks the beginning of the conflict:

"هَلَّا عَرَفْتَنِي عَلَيْهَا؟"

"لِمَاذَا؟"

"لَقَدْ أُعْجِبْتَنِي كَثِيرًا"

(Yosef 2015, Chapter 6)

"Will you introduce me to him?"

"Why?"

"I am very interested in it." (The researcher translation)

Through this conversation, it is clear that there is a beginning of a love triangle motif involving the three characters. This motif creates tension and conflict in the story, which corresponds to the formula of romance described by Cawelti. The existence of this motif also gives complexity and depth to the characters and their relationships so that readers can see and understand how they adapt and react to the situation.

Like *La'nat al-'Isyq*, the love triangle motif is also essential to *Abighea*. A love triangle conflict exists between Abi, Ghea, and Vanya. There is a point in this novel that marks the beginning of this conflict, as illustrated in the following quote:

"It is not always that the things you like have to belong to you. Your feeling for Abi is just Vanya's ambition." (Aolia 2021, 88)

Ghea's expression challenges Vanya to confess her feelings for Abi. The dynamic between the three suggests that they are all involved in a complex and tense relationship pattern: the love triangle. Thus, the novel conforms to the formula of romance described by Cawelti. This motif also enriches the characters and the relationships between the characters, allowing the reader to understand how each character reacts and adapts to the situation. Despite coming from different cultures, Libya and Indonesia, these two novels show how the love triangle motif is used in fiction to create conflict and explore the characters' emotions.

The existence of love triangle motifs in both the digital novels *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea* underscores the general interest shown by young readers in the romance formula, as Cawelti explains. Although the two novels are from different cultures and geographies, Libya and Indonesia, this motif is prominent in both, showing that the love triangle motif is universal to young readers.

Studies conducted by (Ghaziani dan Baldassarri 2011) in the journal "American Sociological Review" support this argument by stating that story devices such as love triangles can create deep emotional engagement with readers, encouraging reading satisfaction and loyalty to work. In this case, the conflict arising from the love triangle relationship allows the young reader to enter the story's world, understand the characters' perspectives and emotions, and ultimately establish a more profound attachment to the work.

In addition, the role of love motives is often used in youth fiction to explore essential questions of identity, desire, and social relationships in the context of young readers. Therefore, this suggests that these two novels, despite different cultural backgrounds, utilize the same motive to attract the interest and engagement of young readers, validating the romance formula as an effective strategy for reaching this audience.

3. Happy Ending Story

In line with the formula of romance proposed by Cawelti, *La'nat al-'Isyq*, and *Abighea* end with resolutions that bring happiness to the main character. This resolution usually occurs after a series of conflicts and

challenges experienced by the characters, often related to love triangle motives. Ultimately, these problems are solved, and the main character finds happiness through romantic love, fulfillment of personal ambitions, or recognition from society. This concept of a happy ending is a critical element of the romance genre, aiming to provide emotional satisfaction for readers after experiencing varying degrees of tension and conflict in the plot.

In the context of *La'nat al-'Isyq's* novel, the happy completion of the story is reflected through the marriage between Nazik and Bakr. After a tumultuous emotional journey involving a love triangle with Nauras and Farida, Nazik finally finds happiness in Bakr's arms. In the quote, Nazik describes her life with Bakr as "the most beautiful life any woman could wish for" (Yosef 2015, chapter 5). It confirms that the novel ends happily for its protagonist, in line with the romance formula.

Thus, the author successfully meets the reader's expectations for a happy settlement after a series of conflicts and challenges experienced by the main character. Ending the story with happiness also aligns with cultural norms and values that favor an optimistic ending, reaffirming the success of romance in combining this story's intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

In the context of *Abighea's* novel, the happy completion of the story takes place between the two main characters, Abi and Ghea. At the end of the story, they end a long journey full of obstacles and challenges by finding each other again. An excerpt of the dialogue between Abi and Ghea, "Finally, I got you back." (Aolia 2021, 92), illustrates the positive resolution encountered by these two characters.

Along with the dialogue, Ghea makes a second request to Abi, signaling both characters hope and a happy future. It confirms the novel's commitment to the formula of romance by presenting a happy ending after a series of conflicts. In the end, these two novels, although from different cultures and contexts, show similar narrative patterns, fulfilling the formula of romance and the reader's expectations of a happy settlement. It shows that the romance formula has a universal appeal that can reach a wide audience of readers.

As already revealed, both *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea* novels show a happy ending. Happy endings or "happily ever after" are often

formulas in romance that gain wide acceptance from many readers. According to Brooks (1995), romance often promises a satisfying and happy ending for readers, and these two novels prove this.

In *La'nat al-'Isyq*, Nazik finds happiness with Bakr after experiencing conflicts with Nauras. The same thing happened to *Abighea*, where after various conflicts and challenges, Abi and Ghea finally found each other and had hope for a happy future.

McMurran's (2010) research also shows that happy endings in literature are often used to meet readers' expectations, who generally seek stories with joyous and satisfying resolutions. These two novels, despite being in two different cultures, Indonesia and Libya, follow the same pattern and produce literary works that appeal to their young readers. As such, both novels affirm the powerful influence of the romance formula in popular literature and how it can effectively attract readers from different cultures and backgrounds.

C. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion results, it can be seen that despite the different contexts of countries and cultures, the two digital novels published on the Wattpad platform, namely *La'nat al-'Isyq* and *Abighea*, still maintain the romance formula. The presence of a main character with a perfect nonphysical nature, a love triangle story motif, and a happy ending in these two novels shows that the romance formula proposed by John G. Cawelti remains relevant and effective in attracting young readers, both in Libya and in Indonesia.

The similarity of this formula suggests that, although limited by cultural and country differences, young readers' tastes tend to be similar in favoring the romance genre. It provides a deeper understanding of how romance formulas have survived and are prevalent in modern popular literature, particularly in the digital novel genre. These findings confirm Cawelti's view that romance formulas can cross cultural boundaries and remain relevant in various contexts. In addition, these findings also show how important it is to look at global dynamics in our understanding of popular literature.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS) for the support and funding that has been provided for this research, in accordance with the research contract letter number 254/UN27.22/PT.01.03/2022.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aolia, Chelsea Karina. 2021. "Abighea." Wattpad. 2021.
- Bogdan, Robert C., dan Sari Knopp Biklen. 1998. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Ed. 3. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brooks, Peter. 1995. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. Ed. Reprint. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cawelti, John G. 1976. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cunningham, Michael R., Alan R. Roberts, Anita P. Barbee, Perri B. Druen, dan Cheng-Huan Wu. 1995. "'Their Ideas of Beauty Are, on the Whole, the Same as Ours': Consistency and Variability in the Cross-Cultural Perception of Female Physical Attractiveness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 68 (2): 261–79. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.2.261>.
- El Guindi, Fadwa. 1999. *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance (Dress, Body, Culture)*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Falaq, Janata Shoji Al, Suprayogi Suprayogi, Felissia Nofita Susanto, dan Annisa Ul Husna. 2021. "Exploring The Potentials of Wattpad For Literature Class." *Indonesian Journal of Learning Studies (IJLS)* 1 (2): 98–105.
- Fiske, John. 2002. *Television Culture*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203133446>.
- Ghaziani, Amin, dan Delia Baldassarri. 2011. "Cultural Anchors and the Organization of Differences: A Multi-Method Analysis of LGBT Marches on Washington." *American Sociological Review* 76 (2): 179–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122411401252>.
- Mcmurran, Mary Helen. 2010. *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7shvg>.

- Moughrabi, Fouad M. 1978. "The Arab Basic Personality: A Critical Survey of The Literature." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1): 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800051722>.
- Pinasthika, Lalitya Talitha. 2020. "Why They Use Wattpad: An Emotional Design Analysis on the Free Online Reading Platform." Dalam *Proceedings of the International Conference of Innovation in Media and Visual Design (IMDES 2020)*, 136–43. Amsterdam: Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201202.067>.
- Pramatanti, Enggar Dhian. 2018. "Peran Reader dan Follower terhadap Struktur Novel: Kajian Sastra Cyber Wattpad." Dalam *Seminar Nasional Struktural 2018*, 298–310. Semarang: Universitas Dian Nuswantoro. <https://doi.org/10.33810/274185>.
- Sharot, Stephen. 2015. "Social Class in Female Star Personas and the Cross-Class Romance Formula in Depression-Era America." *Screen* 56 (2): 172–94. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjv018>.
- Sugiyono, Sugiyono. 2021. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif dan R&D*. Ed. 2. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Yosef, Hams. 2015. "La'nat al-'Isyq." Wattpad. 2015.
- Zunshine, Lisa. 2006. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of the Mind and the Novel*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kgqw8>.