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Romantic subjectivity and the endeavor to become a female travel writer in *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* by Hanum Salsabiela

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Abstract

This study examines how Hanum Salsabiela reveals herself while in Spain, based on her work entitled "Sangkala di Langit Andalusia-SLA" (2022), published by Republika. *SLA* can be categorized as a travel writing genre because it is based on the author's real experiences in a foreign land (Spain). The author reports the places she visited from her own perspective. In addition, *SLA* can be regarded as postcolonial travel writing because it is produced by writers from formerly colonized regions. While colonial travel writing positions the East as the object of study, Hanum's work presents a subject from the postcolonial world interpreting the West, Europe. This study employed a qualitative research design. The data were collected through textual observation and note-taking techniques and analyzed using the travel writing paradigms proposed by Thompson and Mills. The findings indicate that Hanum Salsabiela can be categorized as a Romantic Subject or Romantic Self in her travel narrative of Spain. The author not only presents what she observes but also interweaves her personal emotions into the narrative. Moreover, *SLA* demonstrates the author's significant endeavors as a female travel writer through the incorporation of dakwah, Islam, and the use of Spanish language elements.

Abstrak

Subjek romantik dan upaya-upaya menjadi penulis perjalanan perempuan dalam *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* karya Hanum Salsabiela

Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pengungkapan diri (*revealing the self*) Hanum Salsabiela saat berada di wilayah Spanyol berdasarkan karyanya yang berjudul *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* atau disingkat *SLA* (2022) yang diterbitkan oleh Republika. *SLA* dapat dikategorikan sebagai *genre* tulisan perjalanan karena berdasarkan pengalaman nyata penulisnya ke wilayah asing yaitu wilayah Eropa, khususnya di Spanyol. Penulis memberitakan wilayah yang dikunjungi berdasarkan pada sudut pandangnya. *SLA* dapat disebut sebagai tulisan perjalanan pascakolonial karena dihasilkan oleh penulis bekas wilayah jajahan. Jika dalam tulisan perjalanan kolonial memosisikan Timur sebagai objek kajian, karya Hanum justru menghadirkan subjek dari dunia pascakolonial yang menafsirkan Barat, Eropa. Jenis penelitian dalam artikel ini adalah kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi tekstual dan pencatatan serta dianalisis menggunakan paradigma tulisan perjalanan milik Carl Thomson dan Sara Mills. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Hanum Salsabiela dapat kategorikan sebagai Subjek Romantik atau Diri Romantik saat mengunjungi wilayah Spanyol. Penulis tidak hanya menyajikan apa yang dia lihat, tetapi juga menyelipkan perasaan-perasaan pribadinya saat memberitakan wilayah Spanyol. Di samping itu, *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* juga merepresentasikan upaya-upaya Hanum Salsabiela sebagai penulis perjalanan perempuan yang patut untuk diperhitungkan melalui istilah dakwah, Islam dan penggunaan bahasa Spanyol.

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1 Introduction

Travel writing, also referred to as *travel literature*, constitutes a literary genre having historically flourished among pilgrims, explorers, and backpackers (Lisle, 2006). In this context, travel writing is understood here as a collective term including a variety of media, such as literary travel books, guidebooks, commercial advertorials, and digitized travel blogs (Blair et al., 2020). Travel writing typically portrays a narrator's journey to an unfamiliar place (Prastowo & Wijaya, 2020: 33). Its content may relate to aspects such as natural and geographical conditions, astronomy, demographics, society, culture, and human interactions (Nasution, 2015; Nurhasanah & Sunahrowi, 2023). Travelling itself sets travellers apart: they become an exception in the context of their home, as they depart from it, while the vast majority of people remain. In the context of the land they travel too, they appear as the stranger, the odd one out. And yet, when writing about their journeys, travel writers often assume the role of representatives of their home countries and their norms (Quaireau & Ounoughi, 2020: 198). Although often considered a minor genre, travel writing is very useful for understanding international issues such as policy documents, government press releases, parliamentary debates, media stories, and so on (Lisle, 2006: 1). Therefore, the existence of travel writing is quite important in revealing global issues beneficial to readers.

During the colonial era, Westerners traveled to the East and represented it as backward and inferior. Within the context of Western colonialism, postcolonial perspectives emerged, directing attention to the non-West, perceived as exotic and uncivilized (Oktaviani, 2022: 197). The development of modern era and globalization has significantly influenced human mobility (Utami & Primadani, 2024: 349). Advances in transportation and technology were not only utilized by Westerners to explore the East but also facilitated the reverse flow: the travel of Easterners to the West or to their former colonizers' territories. The travel writings produced by these individuals can be classified as postcolonial travel writing, as they are created by people coming from formerly colonized regions or subaltern groups. During the colonial era, colonizers visited Eastern or colonized territories and depicted the East as the Other. In the postcolonial era, however, formerly colonized people have the opportunity to visit Western or colonizer territories and represent their experiences. For instance, A. Fuadi's travel writings narrate Canada (Fuadi, 2014), Feba Sukmana (Sukmana, 2013) and Yuhendra (Yuhendra, 2014) write about the Netherlands, and Hanum Salsabiela recounts her travels in Europe, including Vienna, France, Spain, and other locations. The distinctiveness of Hanum Salsabiela's travel writing, compared to others, is reflected in the author's approach not merely reporting the places she visits but actively engaging her thoughts and emotions based on her travel experiences. The author not only focuses on describing the foreign locations she explores but also also reveals her personal reflections and inner thoughts while visiting these places.

Therefore, based on the discussion above, this study aims to explore how the author discloses herself during her travels in Europe. Travel writing is essential for understanding significant international issues such as politics, religion, society, and culture. According to Thompson, travel writing concerns the distinction between home and away, between the Self and the Other (Thompson, 2011). Thompson proposes three key patterns to understand how authors depict the foreign places they visit: reporting the world, revealing the self, and representing the Other. Reporting the self refers to how the author depicts what she sees, experiences, and encounters during her travels. This focuses on describing places, cultures, events, and people. Revealing the self involves examining how the author portrays her personal identity and emotions while traveling. This pattern emphasizes the author's subjectivity, showing who she is and how the journey affects her. Representing the Other refers to how the author depicts those different from herself.

This article focuses on the second pattern, namely revealing the self, to examine whether the author actively engages her emotions while reporting on Spain. Travel writing is not only about

journeys involving physical movement but also represents the author's emotional and psychological experiences. Travel writing often employs the first-person perspective, centering on the self and concentrating on empirical details (Hulme *et al.*, 2016). For example, Thompson presents Mark Twain's work *A Tramp Aboard*. According to Thompson, Twain's work not only attempts to provide informational reports during his journey but also reveals his personal experiences throughout the travel (Thompson, 2011: 108-109). The subject "I" functions not only as an observer but also as someone responding to what they encounter during the journey. Furthermore, the "I" is portrayed as an open self, capable of establishing intimacy with the new subjects encountered. All travel writing seeks engagement with difference, with those different from ordinary everyday experiences at home, and structures this engagement through the categories of subjectivity, space, and time. Travel notes are written by subjects observing the objects of their observation; they are composed in the first person point of view based on the perspective of the individual undertaking the journey. This produces a situated subject or author (narrator) an active "I" employing all of her senses to absorb and assimilate the surrounding data and to make sense of it throughout the act of writing. In this way, we can see how "the eye" and the 'I' become interdependent in travel writing (Martels, 1994).

This article also examines the endeavors made by Hanum Salsabiela to assert herself as a female travel writer whose work is worthy of recognition. Historically, European travel writing was predominantly produced by male authors. During the ancient and medieval periods, European men traveled for various purposes, including trade, diplomacy, state service (military), and ecclesiastical matters. In this context, women's travel writing emerges as a distinct form, offering perspectives challenging the male-dominated tradition. In the book entitled "Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism", Mills states that since the 14th century, Western women have been writing about their travel experiences. It turns out that women's travel accounts were produced by the middle class more frequently than by the aristocracy (Mills, 2005: 27). However, the productivity of travel writing by women was considered problematic. Writings produced by women were often regarded as not qualifying them as authors and not recognizing them as legitimate travelers (Mills, 2005: 61). Works produced by women have often been overlooked, as they were considered not to possess the quality apparently as same as those produced by men. Furthermore, women's travel writing has been regarded as primarily concerned with the discourse of femininity. Based on this background, the research questions addressed in this article are: (1) How does the author reveal herself during her travels in Spain? (2) How does the author endeavor to establish herself as a female travel writer whose work is worthy of recognition, based on her experiences exploring Spain?

Prior to presenting the results of analysis based on the problem formulation aforementioned, the researcher begins by reviewing previous studies concerning the material and formal objects. Tools such as *Google Scholar* and *Publish or Perish* were employed to identify relevant prior study. Having described previous studies on material objects, the researcher will convey *Novelty* in this article. A study conducted by Anita *et al.*, using a structural approach, concluded that *SLA*'s structure is divided into three components: themes, story facts, and literary devices (Anita *et al.*, 2023). Anita *et al.* also identified character education values in Hanum's work, including religion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, and patriotism.

In 2023, Hasanah *et al.* conducted a sociological analysis of *SLA*. The researchers concluded that the social conflicts depicted in the work arose from religious differences in Andalusia, Spain (Hasanah *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, Nilawati's (2023) study, employing a semiotic approach, identified 15 types of Aqidah values, 13 types of worship values, and nine types of moral values (Nilawati, 2023). Using an educational approach, Amrullah and Nurullailiyah (2023) identified five core character education values in *SLA*: religious values, tolerance, perseverance, reading habits, and social concern (Nurullailiyah & Amrullah, 2023). In addition to the two researchers aforementioned,

Sulistiawati (2023) analyzed of *SLA* and demonstrated that Hanum Salsabiela's literary work can serve as an effective learning medium for high school students (Sulistiawati, 2023). The final study reviewed, conducted by Zakiyah (2023) using an Islamic cultural-historical approach, concluded that the values contained in the text include tolerance, democracy, equality, justice, mutual assistance, and brotherhood (Zakiah, 2023).

Meanwhile, based on material objects, researchers identified six previous studies exploring narrator subjectivity in various travel writings, utilizing the theoretical frameworks of Debbie Lisle and Carl Thompson. According to Fatimah, Hapsari, and Safitri, the authors have tried to break away from colonial discourse by developing a cosmopolitan attitude, although it still appears somewhat pseudo-liberated (*superficially free*). However, the authors often remains trapped, seemingly avoiding rather than confronting colonial discourse (Fatimah, 2024; Hapsari, 2018; Safitri, 2023). Furthermore, an analysis of how the authors' subjectivity relates to divinity reveals that it is shaped through his interactions with the world around them. Moreover, their encounters and negotiations with God throughout the journey contribute to a more profound understanding of their beliefs (Kayla, 2025). By analyzing Budiman's *Lumbini*, Purwaningsih concludes that the subject in the text is not portrayed as a free and romantic figure (Purwaningsih, 2015). Furthermore, Fadilah et al. saw that subjectivity can be used to understand how women express themselves in their travel writings (Fadilah et al., 2024).

Based on previous studies, earlier researchers have not positioned Hanum Salsabiela's work as a genre with her own logic. Travel writing presents facts depicted through fictional techniques and cannot simply be classified as a "fictional novel." In terms of formal object, prior researches have examined how the author's subjectivity is represented using travel writing paradigms. However, they have not paid attention to how the author strives to establish herself as a female travel writer whose work is worthy of recognition. The novelty of this study lies not only in showing how the author conveys facts intertwined with her personal emotions, but also in connecting these experiences to the legacy of Islam in Spain, particularly Andalusia.

2 Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative data consist of statements regarding the content, nature, characteristics, and conditions of a phenomenon, or statements about the relationships between different elements, such as patterns of behavior, ideas, values, norms, and events occurring in society (Ahimsa-Putra, 2009). The material object of this study is the travel writing by Hanum Salsabiela entitled *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* (2022), published by Republika. The data consist of words, sentences, and dialogues related to the author, particularly her Romantic subjectivity and her endeavors to establish herself as a female travel writer. The data collection methods employed in this study consist of close reading (observation) and note-taking. The observation method is used to identify significant units within the literary text functioning as sources of theoretical concepts (Faruk, 2014: 168). The data analysis in this study was conducted using the travel writing paradigm, primarily drawing on Carl Thompson's framework as presented in his book entitled *Travel Writing: The New Critical Idiom* (2011). First, the researcher collected the data based on the research problems, particularly those related to how the author reveals herself during her stay in Spain, by utilizing tables in Microsoft Word. The collected data were then classified into two subcategories: (1) the Romantic subject and (2) endeavors to establish herself as a female travel writer. The data compiled were then analyzed by relating them to the theoretical framework, specifically the second pattern, namely revealing the self. In his book, Thompson categorizes the author's self in foreign territories into two types: the tourist self and the enlightened self. Based on this theoretical framework, the researcher integrated the theory with the selected data. Words, sentences, and dialogues functioned as evidence in elaborating the analysis. After the results of

analysis were presented systematically, conclusions were drawn in accordance with the research problems.

3 Results

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher found that in Sangkala di Langit Andalusia, Hanum Salsabiela tends to present herself as a romantic subject. The author not only reports on the territory of Spain but also interweaves her personal feelings from her time in Spain. In addition, the researcher found Hanum Salsabiela’s endeavors to be recognized as a noteworthy female travel writer. Three such endeavors were identified: Islam, dakwah (religious propagation), and feminine use of the Spanish language.

Table 1: The Becoming of Romantic Subjectivity in Spain

Expert	Observation	Feeling
1	In Spain, many cathedrals and churches are astonishing, in terms of their structure, architecture, and grandeur for the hundreds years old buildings	It seems you are not fully appreciating the beauty of the cathedral’s interior

Table 2: Hanum Salsabiela’s Endeavors to Establish Herself as a Female Travel Writer

Excerpt	Endeavor	Sentence
2	Islam	Muslims could understand why these events had to occur
3, 4, 5	Dakwah	Because we are too busy embracing the word “jihad,” which is often misunderstood as the sword, rather than as a means through the pen (knowledge) (3) The museum was a prison used to detain Muslim and Jewish rebels who opposed the Catholic empire (4) Islam is not entirely dead in the land of Andalusia. For death is merely the beginning of eternity (5)
6	Language	<i>Vaya! Que casualidad! Pues, por que no hablemos Espanol?!”</i>

4 Discussion

To substantiate the findings of this study, this section combines observations with Hanum Salsabiela’s personal experiences in Spain, as well as how the author utilizes Islam, dakwah (religious propagation), and the Spanish language in her work.

4.1 The Becoming of Romantic Subjectivity in Spain

The subject examined in this article is Hanum Salsabiela. Although Rangga Almahendra is listed as a co-author of *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia*, the writing style, narrative perspective, and linguistic structure indicate that Hanum Salsabiela functions as the primary, if not sole, author. This position is reinforced by a statement within the text: “It was a heavy task that only Hanum, not Rangga, was capable of accomplishing. Hanum possesses a stronger storytelling talent. Rangga’s strength lies

merely in providing ideas and feedback” (Salsabiela, 2022: 67). Rangga functions as an inspiration, research companion, and idea supporter. His name is mentioned as a form of acknowledgment rather than because he co-authored the work directly. This understanding is also affirmed by Ramayda Akmal in her dissertation, which states that Hanum’s work is, in essence, solely narrated by Hanum. Even Rangga’s experiences, when directly cited in the text, are presented through Hanum’s perspective. Although the authors are stated to be Hanum and Rangga, the internal focus remains singular, centering entirely on Hanum as the primary author. The narrative consistently reflects her thoughts, feelings, and observations, demonstrating her romantic self as she explores the country. “*I must conclude that the self-image refers solely to Hanum: A Muslim woman, journalist, and wife*” (Akmal, 2021: 143). The self-image in the work refers entirely to Hanum as a Muslim woman, a journalist, and a wife. Therefore, in this article, the researcher refers to Hanum Salsabiela as the author of all four of her works.

Her observations were based on both personal opinions (subjective) and eyewitness accounts (objective). Whether approached subjectively or objectively, both have implications for how the self manifests. Even in objective observations, the author’s subjectivity remains. Thompson distinguishes between two types of subjectivity in travel writing: the Romantic Subject and the Enlightenment Subject. The Romantic Subjectivity, or Romantic Self, is considered different from Enlightenment Subjectivity, or Enlightenment Self (Thompson, 2011: 177). The Enlightenment subject prioritizes facts and empirical investigation of the world, positioning the self as an observer or a ‘Cartesian’ subject (*as Cartesian Selves or Subjectivities*). In contrast, the Romantic subject not only observes but also reacts to the scenes around her, records these reactions, and incorporates her thoughts into her writing. In many cases, the author or traveler seeks situations that evoke strong emotions and spiritual sensations. The Romantic subject appears to be more receptive to changes brought about by travel experiences (Thompson, 2011: 11). This means that, in the case of the Enlightenment subject, the author or traveler does not include her feelings when visiting foreign territories, whereas the Romantic subject allows the author to express her opinions about the foreign places she visits, which are subsequently articulated in her writing.

In *Sangkalan di Langit Andalusia*, Hanum Salsabiela prioritizes not only the factual aspects of the places she visits but also provides commentary reflecting her identity as a Romantic Self. In relation to her travels in Spain, Hanum describes the typography, weather, and buildings she encounters. For instance, regarding her visit to the Alhambra, the author does not simply state that the building once served as an Islamic defensive fortress before being conquered by Ferdinand and Isabella, but she also reveals that Islam in the Alhambra has not truly declined, as Hanum continues to discover the “glory of Islam” through nostalgic reflections on its past greatness there.

Historically, mosques and madrasahs have been inseparable. This is similar to how schools or universities are often associated with cathedrals. Such was the thinking of the sultanates: wherever there is a mosque, there is also a madrasa. In their view, the devout must be educated. “Although times have changed, that spirit endures to this day,” she remarks philosophically. The Alhambra, which used to stand as a silent witness to the decline of Islam in Andalusia, now stands as evidence of the enduring beauty of Islamic civilization, attracting global attention. Without darkness, there would be no light. Without it, we would not recognize the Light. Having completed this journey, the author understands that Islam has not entirely perished in the land of Andalusia, for death is merely the beginning of eternity. Likewise, the blowing of the sangkala signifies the end times, and simultaneously, the beginning of eternal life (Salsabiela, 2022: 454).

The Romantic subject, or Romantic Self, is also represented when Hanum visits the Mezquita. Hanum not merely reports that the Mezquita has been repurposed as a church but also adds her personal opinion, asserting that the place is still regarded as a mosque based on her religious beliefs.

“My hope was also lost; Rangga could only pat my shoulder, comforting me as I mourned failing to perform *two rak'ahs* of prayer in the Mezquita” (Salsabiela, 2022: 256). She not merely reports facts but also filters her experiences through a reflective lens, though sometimes expressive. It can be said that the author’s level of self disclosure in her work is highly prominent. For instance, Hanum did not prefer describing in detail the new places she visits. Instead, she prefers dramatizing the issues she observed and felt while in Europe, specifically Spain. Landscapes, customs, and weather there are not explored in depth, also reflected in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 1

In Spain, many cathedrals and churches are astonishing, in terms of their structure, architecture, and grandeur for the hundreds years old buildings. As aforementioned, the Valencia Cathedral does not elicit any “wow” effect. It is too ordinary compared to Gaudi’s buildings, the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, or Notre Dame in Paris. It is too young compared to St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna. It is too short compared to the legendary Il Duomo in Florence. The relics enveloping the interior of Valencia Cathedral are hardly remarkable. On paper, even Rangga’s notes the fragment of the story that the cathedral was once a mosque forcibly converted into a church by the Reconquista regime become information not emphasized. “Isabella and Ferdinand,” Jiminez suddenly interjects. The two names immediately make my brow furrow, and my expression stiffening. Jiminez examines my face. “It seems you are not fully appreciating the beauty of the cathedral’s interior. Visitors here enjoy the glory of Isabella and Ferdinand from several hundred years ago. Understandably, this cathedral was formerly a mosque,” Jiminez explains, confirming my assumptions about the cathedral’s origins (Salsabiela, 2022: 91-92).

[Di Spanyol, banyak katedral dan gereja yang mencengangkan. Dari struktur, arsitektur, dan kemegahannya untuk bangunan yang berusia ratusan tahun. Seperti yang aku sebutkan, katedral Valensia ini sama sekali tidak menimbulkan efek wow. Terlalu biasa dibanding bagunan Gaudi, Sagrada, Familia di Barcelona, atau Notre Dame di Paris. Terlalu muda dibanding katedral Stephandoms di Wina. Terlalu pendek dibanding katedral legendaris Il Duomo di Florence. Relik yang menyelubungi interior katedral Valensia tidak terhitung istimewa. Di kertas, risetan Rangga pun, fragmen cerita bahwa katedral ini dahulu adalah masjid yang dibetot menjadi gereja oleh rezim reconquista, menjadi informasi yang tidak ditonjolkan. Isabella dan Ferdinand,” celetuk Jiminez tiba-tiba. Dua nama yang langsung membuat dahiku mengerut, mimikku membatu. Jiminez menelaah air mukaku.

“Sepertinya anda kurang menikmati keindahan interior katedral. Orang-orang berkunjung di sini menikmati kejayaan Isabella dan Ferdinand sekian ratus tahun lalu. Maklum, katedral ini bekas masjid,” terang Jiminez sesuai dugaanku tentang asal-usul katedral ini (Salsabiela, 2022: 91-92).]

At the beginning of the excerpt, Hanum Salsabiela does acknowledge the grandeur of the cathedrals and churches in Spain. However, she does not provide detailed descriptions of their magnificence, designs, colors, or interior ornaments. Instead, Hanum emphasizes her own feelings through Jiminez: *she is not fully enjoying the visit*. Employing an indirect narrative strategy, Hanum expresses her views explicitly. She intends to convey that her experience at the site was not entirely enjoyable. Travel writing is not merely a report on the wider world but also a revelation of the narrator’s identity, reflecting her values, concerns, and assumptions. “Travel writing is not only a report on the wider world, but it also reveals, to a greater or lesser degree, the traveller who produced that report, and his or her values, preoccupations and assumptions” (Thompson, 2011: 10). However, it is noteworthy that the Romantic Self is often accompanied by a tendency to dramatize the realities observed, producing narratives that are exaggerated and less critical of the socio-cultural complexities encountered. This tendency limits her observations of foreign cultures, societies, and places, preventing them from being explored in depth. The dramatization revealing her emotions also creates

a certain distance between her and the foreign space, as well as the Other. In a travel narrative, readers naturally expect comprehensive information about the places visited both physical and cultural in order to understand the narrator's journey objectively and contextually. In his book *Soft City*, Raban emphasizes that readers of a travel narrative seek a world they can recognize, experience, and imagine, not merely the author's inner world (Raban, 1998).

4.2 Hanum Salsabiela's Endeavors to Establish Herself as a Female Travel Writer

In the nineteenth century, women who traveled and produced travel writing were considered unusual and exceptional, as this genre was largely dominated by men. At that time, women were also associated with the domestic sphere, managing households, families, and private life. Women's voices were often marginalized by male dominance, which was considered more authoritative in exploring the world. Thompson argues that, based on patriarchal ideology, women preferred home-based locations, often associated with immobility referred to as sessility and domesticity. Masculine notions also suggest that women encountered outside the home were unlikely to be fellow travelers, but rather local inhabitants attempting to seduce or dangerous temptresses/erotic figures diverting male travelers from their travel objectives (Thompson, 2011: 169). However, in gender studies, many scholars have explored the works of female travelers (See: Foster, 1990; Mills, 2005; Quaireau & Ounoughi, 2020). Mills further argues that a recurring issue in women's travel writing is the assumption that their texts are merely biographical or descriptive accounts of the author's life. Women's travel writing has often been considered exaggerated and full of falsehoods. Female travel writers are frequently perceived as lacking creativity, merely venting emotions (Mills et al., 2003: 108-109). In other words, women's travel writing has often been disregarded and considered lacking credibility. A stereotype emerges that female travel writing is less objective or courageous than male travel writing because it frequently focuses on emotional and domestic matters. This stereotype reflects a gender bias in evaluating or validating the experiences and travel narratives produced by women.

However, in the last decade, an increasing number of women have emerged with unique perspectives in the field of travel. In Indonesia, female travel writers have begun to gain attention and have been explored by scholars, notably the works of Trinity, Windy Ariestanty, Hanum Salsabiela, and others. In her book *Naked Traveler* (2010), Trinity recounts her travel experiences across Europe (France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, England, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia), the Americas (United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina), Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania), and Australia (Australia and New Zealand). Trinity is characterized by her focus on backpacking and budget travel, emphasizing cultural experiences and unexpected events encountered while visiting foreign regions. Meanwhile, in her book *Life Traveler*, Ariestanty (2011) traveled across India, Nepal, Amsterdam, Paris, Barcelona, Hanoi, and Laos (Ariestanty, 2011). Her journeys were not merely explorations of foreign territories, but also processes of emotional healing for the author. In 2013, another writer, Feba Sukmana, emerged with her work *Holland: One Fine Day in Leiden*. Based on her experience living in the Netherlands as a student, Sukmana narrated the lives of Dutch people, interwoven with highly subjective accounts of romance.

Unlike Trinity, Ariestanty, and Sukmana, Hanum Salsabiela connects her travels to traces of Islam in Europe. Although she can be categorized as a Romantic Subject, her travel writing represents a deliberate narrative strategy that situates personal experiences within the broader framework of history and the identity of Muslims in the West. She challenges the stereotypes of female travelers, in which women are often labeled as confined to domestic roles, reflecting patriarchal assumptions. Her courage in exploring Europe while carrying her Islamic identity as a minority is highly commendable. In Spain, Hanum Salsabiela addresses global issues such as identity, Islamic civilization, and the erasure of Islamic history by the West. Her travels are not merely physical

movements or reflections of the author's assumptions, but serve as a framework for understanding "space," as she expands the meaning of travel from external exploration to inner exploration by connecting two dimensions: geography and identity. Through her distinctly non-neutral Muslim travel experience, Hanum Salsabiela writes from the position of a subject who is not merely moving physically from the East to the West. However, the author also engages in a process of self-reflection during her time in Europe. Self-reflection can be understood as the act of contemplating and evaluating oneself in order to improve. It is not limited to revisiting the past but also involves efforts to plan for the future. Self-reflection constitutes one of Hanum Salsabiela's strengths in *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia*, as it invites readers to learn from the past achievements of Islamic civilization. This reflective process further allows Hanum Salsabiela to assert her narrative authority. She reflects on the past, present, and future of Islam as a medium for education and guidance for Muslims themselves.

Excerpt 2

The tangible legacies of Islam in Andalusia were no longer present to be celebrated. The beautiful memories had been erased by the course of history not for any particular reason, but by Allah's will, so that Muslims could understand why these events had to occur. I did not regret the long journey I had undertaken with a guide named Jimenez. I had undertaken this two-hour journey to witness that Islam had once extended its delicate influence here (Salsabiela, 2022: 158).

[Sudah tidak adalah peninggalan Islam yang patut dirayakan di Andalusia? Kenangan indah telah disirnakan pelaku sejarah. Bukan karena apa-apa. Tapi semua karena takdir Allah agar Muslim belajar mengapa semua harus terjadi. Aku urungkan menyesali telah menempuh perjalanan sejauh ini bersama seorang guide bernama Jimenez. Aku melewati perjalanan 2 jam ini untuk menyaksikan bahwa Islam pernah melentikkan jari-jari manisnya di sini (Salsabiela, 2022: 158).]

The quotation above demonstrates Hanum's effort to inform readers that the decline of Islam today is part of God's destiny. She invites readers not to regret, but to reflect on why Islam once flourished and is now dominated by the West (such as in America, Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, and so on).

Excerpt 3

There is no denying that Islamic civilization has experienced decline over the past several centuries. Amid the rhetoric of calls for jihad against Western countries, we are confronted with a reality: not a single Islamic country currently possesses the technological capability to defend itself. Today, the Islamic world is beginning to turn away from the development of science and technology, straying further from the roots that once made it shine over a thousand years ago. And when a country bans the wearing of the hijab, the construction of minarets, or when someone mocks Islam by creating a Fitna video, all we can do is shout in front of their embassies while burning their flags. This is what I try to reflect on in this travelogue. I attempt to gather the remnants of the greatness of Islamic civilization, which are now scattered. And I actually discover traces of that legacy throughout my journey across Europe. A thousand years of Islamic brilliance, gradually fading away. I ask myself, why? Because many Muslims have begun to forget what Jibriel first conveyed to Muhammad (peace be upon him). Because we are too busy embracing the word "jihad," which is often misunderstood as the sword, rather than as a means through the pen (knowledge) (Salsabiela, 2013: 391).

[Tidak bisa kita pungkiri, peradaban Islam mengalami kemunduran selama beberapa abad terakhir. Di tengah retorika teriakan jihad untuk memerangi negara-negara Barat, kita dihadapkan pada suatu realitas: tidak ada satu pun negara Islam yang memiliki kemampuan teknologi untuk melindungi dirinya sendiri saat ini. Dunia Islam saat ini sudah mulai memalingkan muka dari pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi. Semakin jauh dari akar yang

membuatnya bersinar lebih dari 1.000 tahun yang lalu. Kemudian ketika ada negara yang melarang pemakaian jilbab, pembangunan minaret, atau seorang yang mengolok-olok Islam dengan membuat video Fitna, kita hanya bisa berteriak-teriak di depan kedutaan negara mereka sambil membakar bendera. Ini yang coba saya refleksikan dalam catatan perjalanan ini. Saya mencoba mengumpulkan kembali sisa kebesaran peradaban Islam yang kini terserak. Dan saya justru menemukan jejak-jejak peninggalan tersebut selama penempuh perjalanan menjelajahi Eropa. Seribu tahun Islam bersinar, lalu pelan-pelan memudar. Aku bertanya, mengapa? Karena sebagian umat Islam sudah mulai melupakan apa yang telah diperdengarkan Jibril kepada Muhammad Saw. pertama kali. Karena kita terlalu sibuk bercumbu dengan kata jihad yang salah dimaknai dengan pedang, bukan dengan perantara kalam (pengetahuan) (Salsabiela, 2022: 391).]

The above quotation demonstrates the author's awareness of the contemporary challenges facing Islam. Hanum also seeks to show that Western stereotypes of Islam are often reproduced by Muslims themselves. The concept of jihad, when misunderstood, has contributed to a negative perception of Islam, particularly in the eyes of Western observers. While exploring Spanish cities such as Granada, Cordoba, Seville, and Valencia, the author did not simply visit unfamiliar locations. She intentionally connected the buildings she encountered with the past glory of Islam. This illustrates that travel writing produced by women is not merely a pursuit of personal enjoyment. However, she took a position as a preacher who provided lessons for the readers of her work, particularly Muslims. At the end of her book, Hanum Salsabiela included non-fiction references to legitimize that her writing blended travel experiences with facts related to the historical Islamic presence in Spain. Through the perspective of her husband, Rangga, she narrated her visit to the San Jorge Museum. In the past, San Jorge was a prison used to detain Muslims and Jews who rebelled against the forces of the Reconquista or Isabella and Ferdinand. She did not merely describe the surroundings of the museum, but also highlighted the historical social class aspects of the site. Although she used non-fiction references, Hasanah *et al.* (2023) argue that the limited depth of literacy meant that Hanum's work should be cross-checked against empirical facts (Hasanah *et al.*, 2023), given that travel writers are not only reporters but also storytellers who must engage their readers.

Excerpt 4

Rangga

Now I understand why this museum is not heavily promoted. Despite its secrecy and concealment, the dark history of this country in the past is still revealed. The museum was a prison used to detain Muslim and Jewish rebels who opposed the Catholic empire. In the middle of the museum, there is a catwalk bridge with an alloy steel railing. At regular intervals, we were shown animated videos. One animation depicted a young man judged by the monarchy for heresy and blasphemy, and subsequently burned alive. In another video layer, a narration illustrated the prison's activities in the past, complete with depictions of the strict security. No one could possibly escape from this prison except one man, who fled by jumping into the Guadalquivir River (Salsabiela, 2022: 208-209).

[Rangga

Kini aku paham mengapa Museum ini tidak terlalu dipromosikan. Karena serapat dan serapinya museum ini menutup, belang negeri ini di masa lalu tetap tersingkap. Museum ini adalah penjara yang digunakan untuk menangkap para pemberontak Muslim dan Yahudi menentang imperium Katolik. Di tengah-tengah museum terdapat jembatan catwalk dengan railing baja alloy. Setiap beberapa langkah, kami disuguhi sebuah video animasi. Salah satunya animasi anak muda yang dihakimi oleh monarki karena dianggap bidah, sesat, kemudian dibakar hidup-hidup. Di layer video lain, seuntai narasi mengilustrasikan aktivitas penjara di masa lalu, lengkap dengan gambaran betapa ketatnya penjagaan. Siapa pun tidak akan mungkin lolos dari penjara ini.

Kecuali satu, seorang pria yang meloloskan diri dengan menceburkan diri ke sungai Gauldalquivir (Salsabiela, 2022: 208-209).]

Indirectly, Hanum aimed to convey to readers that her travel work served as a medium for Islamic da'wah. Her writing was not only a form of self-reflection but also a vehicle for her own preaching. The messages of da'wah were communicated not only directly but also through the use of other people (fellow Muslims) as intermediaries for her ideas. Others were employed by the narrator to reinforce her authority as a trustworthy voice. This issue is also highlighted by Ramayda Akmal, as illustrated in the excerpt below. However, this strategy leaves one question: if the information seems controversial to Hanum, why does she keep recording in her travel literature? The answer lies in Hanum's efforts to not only undertake pilgrimages but also to become an agent who promotes Islam, its glory, and its greatness. For such a purpose, information that inspires awe is necessary. At the same time, she is aware that such information could be a 'traveler's tale' and she does not want to risk injuring her public image and trust. She thus uses a range of other characters to maintain her own objectivity and authority. Hanum's presentation of herself as an agent of Islamic awakening is thereby retained (Akmal, 2021: 200).

As an author who did not wish to compromise the beliefs of her readers, Hanum Salsabiela utilized "other people" to maintain her objectivity and authority. In doing so, she preserved her role as a preacher in conveying the revival of Islam. The past glories of Islam were presented as a form of cultural resistance by giving voice to marginalized histories and by reviving Muslim identity through a sense of nostalgia.

Excerpt 5

The Alhambra, which has witnessed the dark chapters of Islamic history in Andalusia, now stands as a testament to the captivating beauty of Islam that draws the world's attention. After journeying through it all, I finally understood: Islam is not entirely dead in the land of Andalusia. For death is merely the beginning of eternity. Likewise, the sounding of the trumpet marks the end of time, yet ushers in eternal life. Now I comprehend—Yaseen did not ask us to write a tale of the apocalypse, but of resurrection. Rangga and I exchanged glances; this throne room was the perfect place to conclude the journey, and at the same time, to open a new chapter (Salsabiela, 2022: 454).

[Alhambra yang telah menjadi saksi kelamnya sejarah Islam di Andalusia, kini justru mewujudkan menjadi bukti keindahan Islam yang memikat perhatian dunia. Setelah melewati seluruh perjalanan ini, akhirnya aku paham. Islam tidak sepenuhnya mati di bumi Andalusia. Karena kematian hanyalah awal menuju keabadian. Demikian halnya tiupan sangkakala, penanda akhir zaman sekaligus kehidupan abadi yang menyertainya. Kini aku mengerti, Yaseen bukan meminta kami menulis kisah tentang kiamat, tapi tentang kebangkitan. Aku dan Rangga saling berpandangan, ruang singasana ini adalah tempat yang sempurna untuk mengkahiri perjalanan. Sekaligus awal untuk membuka lembaran baru (Salsabiela, 2022: 454).]

Hanum's journey to the Alhambra demonstrates that, although history records the defeats of Islam, these defeats are not permanent. Eternity, in essence, begins when the Sangkakala is blown. In Islamic tradition, the Sangkakala is a horn that signals both the end of the universe and the commencement of eternal life in the hereafter. According to religious teachings, Allah commanded the angel Israfil to sound the *Sangkakala* twice (bin Ibrahim, 2016: 163). Through nostalgia for the past, the author seeks to remind readers that eternal life is ultimately in the hereafter. This nostalgia is not merely an escapist response to the contemporary decline of Islam, but rather represents an effort to re-articulate the identity of a marginalized global Muslim community while offering a vision for the future inspired by the achievements of past Islamic civilization. Nostalgia also functions as a means of presenting alternative narratives often neglected by mainstream historiography, particularly the contributions of Islamic civilization to the development of the Western world. Lisle assumes that

nostalgia in contemporary travel writing serves to avoid global anxieties linked to colonialism (Lisle, 2006: 204). In contrast, Hanum's approach demonstrates the opposite. Through her nostalgic perspective, Islam is positioned as superior to the West, allowing Hanum not to feel inferior but rather confident in expressing her Muslim identity (Akmal, 2021: 202).

Based on the discussion above, the researcher aims to show that travel writings produced by women are not merely limited to biographies, as assumed by patriarchal perspectives. Although they take the form of self-reflection, the narrator attempts to reveal global issues involving Islam in Western regions. In addition, Hanum's works not only reflect personal and religious experiences, but also demonstrate an effort to construct intellectual authority through the use of scientific terms, particularly in the medical field. This strategy demonstrates how female writers, or female narrators, are not passive in shaping their self-representation amid discourse heavily imbued with gender bias. Mills (2003) explains that female writers employ certain discursive strategies as an effort to be "heard" in the same way as men. In other words, women use specific methods in constructing words, ideas, and concepts related to the discourse (Mills, 2003). For instance, language strategies, writing style, word choice, or the narrative perspective they employ. Hanum similarly used these methods by incorporating scientific terminology to establish her credibility and authority. Examples include medical or scientific terms such as saliva, taxidermy, contemplation, nerve muscles, and polyglot, represented in the sentence: "I almost choked on my own saliva. Then I was made to laugh by Jiminez's innocent face. Then I slowly extended my thumb for him. *Gracias, Jim*" (Salsabiela, 2022: 162). (Medeiros refers to this as *alternate visibility*, meaning that women employ strategies to be 'seen' within fields considered highly masculine, such as science. Hanum similarly used this strategy to demonstrate that travel writing produced by women deserves recognition. Without a systematic explanation, one might assume that the narrator merely obtained these terms from the internet or general public knowledge. In reality, she explained the terms along with their meanings to the readers, demonstrating that women possess abilities comparable to men (Medeiros, 2019).

In addition to the efforts mentioned above, Hanum also incorporated foreign language terms as part of her endeavor to establish herself as a credible and recognized female travel writer. She used both English and Spanish terms while traveling in Europe. For example: *No me digas, No Señorita, Todos Retírense, Tres Estrellas de Andalusia, Disculpe Maria Convibentia*, among others. The author also described how she observed the Spanish people communicating with one another.

Excerpt 7

"You are from?"

"Ecuador," the tourist replied promptly.

"Vaya! Que casualidad! Pues, por que no hablemos Espanol?"

At that moment, I didn't eavesdrop. The guide seemed to have met a long-lost relative, letting Spanish flow naturally to accompany their reunion (Salsabiela, 2022: 375)

The author uses Spanish to legitimize that she actually visited the place. Her writing is not merely biographical or imaginary, she truly was in Spain, interacting with the local people and observing their daily activities.

5 Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, the researcher concludes that the subject of the author's work is a romantic subject rather than an enlightenment subject. When depicting Spain, Hanum Salsabiela did not merely act as an observer reporting the conditions there: she also included her personal feelings and reactions, which classifies her as a romantic subject. Although written by a female

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author, *Sangkala di Langit Andalusia* is a travel writing worthy of recognition, as it goes beyond recounting travel experiences and connects them to the history of Islam's past glory. Nostalgia is not merely a weakness of the author, rather, it serves as a means to reflect on the future by learning from the past. Additionally, Hanum Salsabiela employs scientific terminology and incorporates foreign-language terms to enhance the credibility and authority of her writing.

For future researchers, it is recommended to explore travel writings produced by Indonesians traveling in Europe, particularly in Spain, in order to map the tendencies of the writers' subjectivities while they are in foreign territories. In addition, future researchers could also compare Hanum Salsabiela's works with those of other female travel writers to examine alternative strategies employed to be recognized as accomplished female travel writers.

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The researcher claims there is no conflict of interest.

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