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**THE ROMANTIC CONCEPT OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE LOVE IN
J. W. GOETHE’S NOVEL *THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER* AND ITS
DEVELOPMENT IN 21st CENTURY LITERATURE
(*THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* BY STEPHEN CHBOSKY)**

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PREFACE

Throughout the ages, the theme of love has always been one of the biggest fields of interest in literature and poetry, and has been expressed in various ways by different authors. However, such emotional feeling not only brings blessing but also human suffering which comes alongside.

The present study is focused precisely on the analysis of the romantic concept of human sufferings from unrequited love, the impact of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) on young generation of the 18th century and its correlation with the modern perception of sufferings in love through the novel by Stephen Chbosky *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999). The aims of the present research are the following: 1) to analyse the historical background of the creation of the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* to reveal factors that shaped Goethe's ideas of suffering in love that were realized in his novel; 2) to study the romantic concept of self-destructive love as seen by philosophers of that time; 3) to describe the concept of sufferings in love as depicted by Goethe in his novel (character and plot analysis); 4) to use the findings of the novel and historical context analysis to reveal historical roots of the modern concept of sufferings in love, using the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* written by Stephen Chbosky.

The structure of the paper is the following: the Introduction, Chapter I, Chapter II and the Conclusion. The introductory part presents a review of the historical background of the creation of J.W. von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), its perception and impact on the young generation and critics' opinions. Chapter I "The Romantic Concept of Self-Destructive Love in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*" introduces the concept of self-destructive love in Romanticism, and its realization in Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Chapter II "Stephen Chbosky's Coming-of-Age Novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*" analyses the characters and the settings of the two novels – *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by comparing common topics and themes in the two books. The summary of the obtained results is presented in the Conclusion, which also comments on the hypothesis of the thesis.

PREFACE	3
<i>Contents</i>	
INTRODUCTION	5
Historical Background of J. W. Goethe’s Work: <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i>	5
The Reception and Impact of J.W. Goethe’s Novel <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i> on Young Generation of the 18th Century	6
Literary Criticism on J. W. Goethe’s Novel: <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i>	7
CHAPTER I. THE ROMANTIC CONCEPT OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE LOVE IN GOETHE’S <i>THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER</i>	10
1.1. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in Romantic Literature	10
1.2. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in J. W. Goethe’s Novel <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i>	12
1.3. The Plot and the Characters of <i>The Sorrows of Young Werther</i>	13
1.3.1. Werther as the Central Character	15
CHAPTER II. STEPHEN CHBOSKY’S NOVEL <i>THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER</i> IN COMPARISON WITH GOETHE’S <i>THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER</i>	21
2.1. <i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> in Contemporary Literature	21
2.2. The Plot and the Characters of <i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i>	22
2.2.1. Charlie as the Central Character	23
2.3. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in its Development from Werther’s to Charlie’s Love Story	27
CONCLUSION	30
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	31
REFERENCES	32
<i>Primary sources</i>	32
<i>Secondary sources</i>	32

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background of J. W. Goethe's Work: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

In the year of 1774, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* that became a turning point in the history of German literature and later all over the world. At that time, Goethe was the most noticeable member of German literary movement called *Sturm und Drang* (ger. *Storm and Stress*) (Jack 2014: para. 1) alongside with Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, a German philosopher and poet. The movement praised the idea of human emotionalism and individualism in the literary form (EB 2015: para. 1), which was practically reflected in Goethe's novel, and was opposed to, and later overshadowed, the long-existed intellectual cult, the *German Enlightenment* (EB 2016: para. 1).

Goethe wrote his novel in four weeks. As Stafford and Gaskill (1998: 103) state, it is a known fact that the plot of the novel is based on "two major and closely related real-life sources". First of all, it was Goethe's meeting and relationship with the nineteen-year-old Charlotte Buff, who was, however, engaged to Johann Christian Kestner (Murdoch 2010: para. 37). The three of them were close friends, but Goethe had passionate feelings towards Charlotte which made him move away from Wetzlar, where they all lived, because he punished himself for being in love with a married woman (Jack 2014: para. 3). Being in Wetzlar, he met his acquaintance from the university, Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem, at the same year. It is known that Jerusalem was in love with the married woman, Elisabeth Herd, however, she did not reciprocate to his feelings (ibid.: para. 4), which was followed by Jerusalem's deep depression and him committing a suicide at the end. This combination of events had a huge impact on Goethe's view of life at that time, making him think that "he himself could all too easily have come to a similar end" (Stafford et al 1998: 103).

At the age of 24, Goethe created his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* after the publication of *Ossian*, the collection of epic poems he wrote being inspired by the support of Johann Gottfried Herder with whom he had been exchanging letters for a long time (ibid.: 104). It is known that Goethe was planning to write *Ossian* long before the occurring events, however, the frustration and depression that followed him after the events shattered his desire to continue this work (ibid.). Herder's literary criticism encouraged Goethe to create his own narrative strategy and new writing style (Murdoch 2010: para. 35), which he also embodied both in *Ossian* and in his, at that time, future novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. This drastic change helped Goethe to reconsider the phase of his life, and in that moment he felt the need to describe the events that

happened to him in *Werther* (ibid.: para. 38). According to Stafford and Gaskill (1998: 104), “Goethe creates in his protagonist a semi- or more than semi-autobiographical scapegoat figure, whom he allows to live out to their fatal conclusion what he now sees as the dangerous and even destructive tendencies of the phase of his life which is now at an end”. Goethe was himself in a condition of contemplating suicide, however, writing *The Sorrows of Young Werther* helped him get free from despair and depression and opened a new page of his life. Ironically, what was a cure for Goethe became the opposite for his readers (Jack 2014: para. 10).

The Reception and Impact of J.W. Goethe’s Novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* on Young Generation of the 18th Century

In the 18th century, European literature was strongly classicistic. “While the French were moving toward revolution, Germany, with no intervening *Age of Reason*, was moving directly to Romanticism with its emphasis on *Sturm und Drang* (Johnson et al 2002: 169) with its former originator, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Despite the fact that there were other significant works in the world of German literature created by such writers as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Joachim Winckelmann and the others (Lukács 1936: para. 1), the year of 1774 (when the novel about Werther was published) is considered to be the year of “literary hegemony of Germany” (ibid.), which became an “international sensation” (Maher n.d.: para. 1) afterwards. The reception of Goethe’s novel by people of the 18th century was so sensational due to the social issues of that time, which were associated with the turn of the century, following by the changes of artistic movements. Europe faced the new era of literature that later became a turning point in all artistic forms in the whole world – Romanticism.

As Gratzke (2012: 26) states, the publication of the novel received controversial reviews. On the one hand, the novel brought Goethe enormous popularity all over the world, later creating a wide range of different parodies and imitations by novel admirers. The success of the novel was remarkable to the people of that time. It is known that “publication of the novel initiated one of the earliest cases of intensive merchandising in Germany” (Jack 2014: para. 5) from copying the costume of Werther to creating a perfume with the name of Goethe’s character (ibid.).

However, the negative effect was achieved as well due to the novel’s very powerful emotional message and the overflow of human emotion that was so celebrated at that time – the so-called *Werther’s effect* (Murdoch 2010: para. 42). According to Siebers (1993: 15), “the *Werther effect* denotes within psychological literature the

tendency of people to commit suicide under the compulsion of imitation rather than for individual motivations”. The massive wave of imitative suicides swept across Europe at the end of the 18th century. Young men and women, suffering from unrequited love, voluntarily committed suicides, following the example of their hero from the novel, Werther, and were found with a copy of the book in their hands (ibid.: para. 2). Therefore, the book was banned by the governments of many countries, for instance, Italy and Denmark.

Sullivan (2007: 1) said that Goethe’s novel “swept the world with Werther-mania driven by its sad love story, intense script of modern subjectivity” which was followed by the wave of the arising literary movement, Romanticism, and “the potential that the Romantic era holds for futile, contentious debate” (Emanuel 2008: 9).

The whole essence of Werther is a deep desire for something that goes beyond the materialistic world and away from realism, which reflected the philosophy of the *Age of Enlightenment* during the 18th century (Lukács 1936: para. 11). On the contrary, the Romantic Movement and the literary works based on the tendencies of Romanticism concentrate deeply on the knowledge and perception of oneself and one's own feelings and sentimentalism, and struggles for freedom. Lukács (ibid.: para. 25) writes that “Werther’s tragedy is the tragedy of bourgeois humanism and shows the insoluble conflict between the free and full development of personality and bourgeois society itself”.

Literary Criticism on J. W. Goethe’s Novel: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

The Sorrows of Young Werther was Goethe’s first novel and caused immediate sensation after it was published. While being enthusiastically received by the audience of young readers of the 18th century, Goethe’s *Werther* produced a huge discussion (most of it was controversial) among the critics of that time, the echoes of which continue to this day.

Bruce Duncan (2005: 1), the Professor of German Studies at Dartmouth College, writes in his book, *Goethe’s Werther and the Critics*, that Goethe’s novel set the beginning of a new wave of German literary criticism and “has invited a broad range of interpretations by critics of all stripes” (ibid.). Duncan states that “what disturbed these critics most was Goethe’s effective depiction of suicide from within, a portrayal that could arouse similar feelings in his readers” (ibid.: 12). It is safe to say that *Werther*’s enormous success was a catalyst for the division among critics into two separate camps: the “rationalists”, who accused Goethe for justification of suicide, and the “enthusiasts”, who praised him for depiction of emotional power (ibid.: 10-12).

One of Goethe's critics, Johann Heinrich Merck, speaks in his essay about "those who call the book immoral" (ibid.: 14). He states that "[critics] /.../ confused a sympathetic portrayal of suicidal impulse with an apology for suicide" (ibid.). Johann Jakob Wilhelm Heinse had a different opinion on *Werther*; he claimed that Goethe did not simply write a book to share a story but rather express his genuine feelings and emotions through his character's pain and misery, which are coming from his own heart (ibid.: 8). In other words, the true intention of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* was overshadowed by "older defenders of the social order who protested against the book's /.../ encouragement of suicide" (ibid.:10).

Another one of Goethe's critics, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, was greatly astounded by Goethe's depiction of such subtle and at the same time "profound emotions" (ibid.: 9) that he started promoting and encouraging the idea of emotional sentimentalism expressed through literature, saying that it "would help to build a German national character" (ibid.). Whereas one of the most ardent critics of Goethe's *Werther*, Matthias Claudius, was "mocking [Goethe's] style and labelling him weak" (ibid.: 10). Some of such critics were also the reason for *The Sorrows of Young Werther* getting banned in different cities and even countries, for instance, Leipzig and Denmark (ibid.).

According to Duncan, there were also critics who preferred staying in the middle ground instead of choosing one of two different sides. For instance, Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz wrote in his essay that "literary works /.../ are not the place to look for philosophical or sociological truths" (ibid.: 15). He also states that projecting such feelings and emotions into works of art, especially literature, saves their readers from loneliness and helps to voice their own inner experiences (ibid.).

To quote Duncan: "Goethe's *Werther* /.../ has inspired well over two centuries' worth of criticism" (ibid.: 1). Thus, from the modern perspective, Klaus Scherpe describes the 18th century critics' attacks as "central aesthetic issues of the time: the relationship between feeling and reason and the consequences of that relationship for the social order" (ibid.: 11). It is important to mention that after its publication, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* sparked a wave of parodies and even writings of different endings opposed to the original novel (Murray 2004: 805). For instance, one of the "supporters of new literature" (Duncan 2005: 12), Friedrich Nicolai, wrote an alternative version of *Werther* that was "directed against the [critical] reception of the novel" (Murray 2004: 805), where Werther did not kill himself because Albert showed in time and stopped his [Werther's] suicide attempt.

Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* determined the whole new direction in literature, as well as in other forms of art, for future generations of writers – Romanticism. Many writers were inspired by the success of Goethe's *Werther* and, following his example, they began to move away from years of established rationalism of the Enlightenment. The theme of human sentimentality, as well as the theme of unrequited and self-destructive love, grew and developed after *Werther* for many years, to this day, changing its shape and form but still remaining the same in its nature and the main purpose.

The present study is intended to make a comparative analysis of two novels written in two different centuries: *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by Stephen Chbosky, in order to reveal similar features in the thoughts, actions and fate of the two main characters, Werther and Charlie, in both books, as well as to identify the development of the romantic concept of self-destructive love and its realization in contemporary literature by the example of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

Therefore, the hypothesis of the current research states that the romantic concept of love as a source of sufferings in case of unrequited love remains in the focus of modern writers and retains the same features as the comparative analysis of the novels *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky might suggest.

CHAPTER I. THE ROMANTIC CONCEPT OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE LOVE IN GOETHE'S *THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER*

1.1. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in Romantic Literature

Goethe was one of the most prominent representatives of the Romantic Movement in literature. Before defining the concept of self-destructive love as such, it is necessary to address the importance of the “Romantic hero” as a literary archetype. Anamika (2013: para. 1) defines the Romantic Movement as “individuality of the artist's expression, a personal relationship with nature, and a trust in emotion and subjective experience”, as well as the triumph of the individuality (ibid.). Thus, this gives a Romantic hero a specific scope of traits, such as: rejection of social norms, instead Romantic heroes develop their “own rules for morality and personal behaviour” (Magher n.d.: para. 2); social alienation and isolation, whereby the focus is on the inner-self and the inner-world; a deep connection with the nature and “the view [of it] as the source of real truth” (ibid.: para. 4); the expression of feelings and emotions is the main focus in writing a Romantic hero. It is also worth mentioning that after being rejected or neglected, Romantic heroes tend to seek revenge, whether upon themselves, others around them, or both.

The concept of self-destructive love has been in sight of many writers even before Goethe wrote *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The brightest examples of portraying the concept of destructive love could be found in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë, *Anna Karenina* (1877) by Leo Tolstoy and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is probably one of the best representations of the concept of selfish and self-destructive love after Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. According to Anderson (2018: para. 1), Heathcliff is a man who struggles on his path to “manhood” (ibid.), trying to find the one and only love of his life who will “soothe his soul” (ibid.). Anderson writes: “He's [Heathcliff] misunderstood – deep and complicated and badly in need of someone who'll truly get him.” (ibid.). First published in 1847, the novel had a “profound impact on romantic literature across the spectrum” (ibid.: para.3). Heathcliff is a Romantic hero who also owns traits of a Byronic hero [which is a type of character who usually has “dark characteristics” (Fonseca n.d.: para. 3, such as being cunning, self-aware and often violent (ibid.))]. When Heathcliff meets Catherine for the first time, he is not interested in her, though as the time goes by, he “begins to grow close on Catherine” (DeRosa 1998: 29). Their love blossoms in a strange

way, following sadomasochistic tendencies in their relationship. Being sadistic towards Catherine, Heathcliff “is pushing Catherine away” (ibid.: 31) in order to “separate himself from the terror of dissolving into her” (ibid.). After Catherine’s death, Heathcliff suffers immensely by the absence of attachment to her and “sets himself up for the death which he so longs for” (ibid.: 34).

The other representation of the concept of self-destructive can be found of Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, which tells a story about a “doomed love affair” (McDowall 2013: para. 4) between a young married woman, Anna, and an army officer, Count Vronsky. Anna falls deeply in love with Vronsky, however, this connection leads to her demise. Anna “detachment from reality” (Morson 2010: 363) leads to her facing her “downfall in society” (McDowall 2013: 15), loses ties with her friends and loved ones (Pinto n.d.: para. 13). Anna’s love turns destructive when in order to prove her infatuating love for Vronsky, she has to reject everything she values in life, including her marriage and her child, which, as she later finds out, she is not “prepared to endure” (McDowall 2013: para. 17), which results in her committing suicide.

Another literal work dedicated to the idea of self-destruction caused by love is Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, in which Gatsby’s strong feelings of love towards Daisy are seen as “extremely unhealthy” (BBC n.d.: para. 1). Throughout the novel, Gatsby’s feelings are unrequited due to “his ideal, if not quixotic and impractical, love of Daisy that never wanes in time” (Youssef 2015: 74). Being so obsessive with his thoughts of winning Daisy over, Gatsby uses his countless amount of money to impress Daisy in every way possible. He sees Daisy as an ideal woman, or even creature, that he wants for himself only. Despite being amicable and incredibly hospitable at his extravagant open parties, his hospitality is faced with ungratefulness from his guests, who spread rumours about him, making him feel alienated from society (ibid.: 75). The conflict of the story happens when Daisy rejects him; Gatsby realises and accepts the truth about “his past and /.../ identity” (Mitchell 1991: para. 16), which, in return, leads to him losing all interest in Daisy due to his realisation that she is “irremediably imperfect” (ibid.: para. 17).

In all times, self-destructive love was depicted as obsessive love, which goes beyond anything material; most of the times characters are able to sacrifice everything for their loved one, which leads to their own demise and destruction.

1.2. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in J. W. Goethe's Novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

Germany of the 18th century struggled with significant modifications in the literary world that were brought by the change of eras. During the *Age of Enlightenment*, the notion of love in literary works is depicted in a rational authentic form, avoiding excessive emotions and the “multitude of emotional, sensual, sexual, and even intellectual practices” (Landgraf 2004: 29) that may challenge traditional society standards of that time (ibid.).

The term of “Romantic love” appeared after Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, where the love as a human feeling was illustrated in a completely contrasting way to the established standards of that time. According to Anikst (1986: 113), the epistolary novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is considered as one of Goethe's most intimal creations and was taken by storm in Europe and worldwide. Goethe used a very “elegiac, sentimental language” (Gratzke 2012: 27), writing the letters from Werther's perspective. It almost feels like the main character is talking to the reader through these letters, sharing his worries and experiences, which imbue the readers with sympathy towards him (Anikst 1986: 113). Through the main character's thoughts, the reader can see the author's own feelings. As Denton (1996: 212) states, Goethe's original idea was to make *Werther* a drama, however, it took him only four weeks to write it and then publish as a novel, which produced instant fame around the world. This marked the beginning of the Romantic Era and the following Romantic Movement at the end of the 18th century that “sets the stage for the transition from classical artistic values to modern values” (Emanuel 2008: 2). Landgraf (2004: 31) says that the way Goethe decided to write the novel, which is in the form of letters, later became “the primary medium for the communication of love” in Europe.

“In the second half of the eighteenth century, Romantic love /.../ discovers and explores in new depths notions of subjectivity and individuality” (ibid.: 30), finding its purpose, first of all, in the literature that later became “the favourite site for the expression and the experience of love” (ibid.). Werther's experience of love with all its power and consequences shocked the young generation of the 18th century who were eager for that kind of sentimentalism and needed a source that would reflect their excess of emotion and aspiration for the sublime in a literary or any other form of artistic expression. The followers of the Romantic Movement sought to move away from the rationalistic values, ideals and the perception of the concept of love that were promoted by the supporters of

the *Enlightenment* (Emanuel 2008: 2-3). On the contrary, their focus is on the emotional and sentimental side of the notions of love as a form of a sublime feeling.

1.3. The Plot and the Characters of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

The Sorrows of Young Werther is an epistolary and sentimental novel written mostly in a series of letters, whose author is the protagonist of the novel, Werther; he addresses these letters to his friend, Wilhelm, whose replies are never to be seen, therefore, this literary reception makes the reader the substitute for Wilhelm. Goethe used this approach in order not to let the reader feel like an outsider but as a real participant of the conversation (Murdoch 2010: para. 7). “Only in the third part of the book does an unnamed ‘Editor’ come in and interject comments” (ibid.: para. 7). This novel is considered as one of the first works written in the time of blossoming of Romanticism; the movement praised the idea of sentimentalism and is related to love themes (Emanuel 2008: 27) and close connection to the nature and its beauty.

Since the novel carries a semi-autobiographical character, it is assumed that the main character’s age is around the same age as Goethe was himself – his early twenties (ibid.: para. 11). Werther is a very artistic person; his vision of life has philosophical and emotional aspirations, for instance, he “believes that feeling deep emotions is the best way to experience life” (Hudspeth n.d.: para. 2). His artistic endeavour arose a desire to move from an urban area to the small town in the countryside (Wahlheim) in order to get away from the “industrial job that he doesn't want” (ibid.):

Solitude in this paradise is a precious balm to my heart, and this youthful time of year warms with all its fullness my oft-shivering heart. Every tree, every hedge is a bouquet of flowers, and one would like to turn into a cockchafer [a may bug] to be able to float about in this sea of scents and find one’s nourishment in it. (Goethe 2002: 8)

In the city, Werther meets “the object of his adoration, the gracious, beautiful and kind Lotte” (BookRags 2017: para. 4) and falls in love with the young woman at the first sight. Due to certain circumstances, Werther finds out that Charlotte is engaged with Albert, however, it does not stop his feelings towards her, on the contrary, it only strengthens them. “This fateful encounter is the heart of the story” (ibid.: para. 4). His devotion to Charlotte not only is depicted as an extreme passion but almost insanity that is “driven by ‘alien powers’” (Sullivan 2007: 9) and “pursues sentimental fantasies” (Gratzke 2012: 28) that later “leads him down a dark path with tragic results” (BookRags 2017: para. 4).

Charlotte is pleased to be accompanied by Werther; both of them discover much in common with each other. She even “offers him a place in her family as a cousin”

(Gratzke 2012: 31), however, Werther has to decline her offer. As a result, this connection becomes obvious to those around them, especially Charlotte's husband, Albert (Murdoch 2010: para. 24), who "is extraordinarily patient and kind to Werther even though he must realize that Werther's intention is quite literally to steal his wife" (Maher n.d.: para. 8).

Werther's maniacal obsession and inability to control himself rationally goes beyond and reaches its limits that leads to the first and last attempt to win Charlotte's heart over Albert that is driven by the belief that he (Werther) and Charlotte are meant to be with each other:

The whole force of these words fell upon the unfortunate Werther. /...Charlotte's/ thoughts were confused: she held his hands, pressed them to her bosom; and, turning toward him with the tenderest expression, her burning cheek touched his. The world vanished about them. He clasped her in his arms tightly, and covered her trembling, stammering lips with furious kisses. 'Werther!' she cried with choking voice, turning away. 'Werther!' and, with a feeble hand, pushed him from her. /.../ Charlotte rose, and with confusion and grief, trembling between love and anger, she exclaimed, 'This is the last time, Werther! You shall never see me again!' (Goethe 2010: 81).

Charlotte does not reciprocate to Werther's feelings, however, her true feelings have never been revealed by Goethe or appear in any way in the novel. Although in the beginning of their friendly, sometimes even family-like relationship, Charlotte "had grown so fond of Werther" (Sullivan 2007: 5), however, in the end, as Werther's passion grew beyond the boundaries of sanity, out of all her feelings towards him only pity remained.

After the rejection, "Werther is so overcome with sadness and frustration that he leaves town for a job in the royal court at Weimar" (Hudspeth n.d.: para. 3) but remains unsatisfied with it, so he comes back to Wahlheim only to find that Charlotte and Albert are now married. Werther still cannot keep his distance from Charlotte despite the fact that she begs him to stay away from her family (Murdoch 2010: para. 33). The next day, after Werther sends a note to Albert, asking him to borrow a pistol and "saying that he's going on a journey and will need it" (Hudspeth n.d.: para. 6), Charlotte and Albert find out about Werther's suicide.

The choice of the method of suicide by Goethe was not accidental. Being shot in the head "presents a Goethean moment of insight where the protagonist's deluded visions of immersion meet their demise" (Sullivan 2007: 1). It was mentioned in Werther's letter dated the 12th of August that he has had thoughts about shooting himself in the head, specifically under the right eye:

With a sudden motion, I pointed the mouth of the pistol to my forehead, over the right eye. "What do you mean?" cried Albert, turning back the pistol. "It is not loaded," said I. "And even if not," he answered with impatience, "what can you mean? I cannot comprehend how a man can be so mad as to shoot himself, and the bare idea of it shocks me." (Goethe 2010: 20)

After getting himself shot, Werther remains alive for twelve hours, being alone in his room, before Albert rushes in his house only to see Werther's last hours alive but extremely injured before announcing him dead.

1.3.1. Werther as the Central Character

Werther's Character and Behavioural Traits

In the short introduction to *The Sorrows of Young Werther* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe states that "to [Werther's] spirit and character you cannot refuse your admiration and love: to his fate you will not deny your tears" (Goethe 2010: 3). By that Goethe prepares his readers to take this novel as a journey into the life of a person whose tragic story they are about to witness.

From the very beginning Werther's character is defined by his love for the sublime: through the short letters to his friend, Wilhelm, he pours out his inner thoughts which are most of the time about his connection to freedom and nature. From the very beginning of the novel Goethe puts an emphasis of Werther's love for nature and how it evokes the "greater artist" (ibid.: 4) within him:

.../ valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few stray gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, I throw myself down among the tall grass by the trickling stream; and, as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants are noticed by me: when I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the countless indescribable forms of the insects and flies, then I feel the presence of the Almighty, who formed us in his own image, and the breath of that universal love which bears and sustains us, as it floats around us in an eternity of bliss /.../ . (ibid.: 4).

He is an artist by heart, and as an artist, he wishes to convey the subtleties of the "inexpressible beauty of nature" (ibid.: 3) through his paintings, however, Werther realises in his head that no matter how accurately he wishes or even tries to depict nature in every form of his artistic endeavours (whether it is poetry or through paintings), he cannot truly convey what is, in his opinion, perfection (ibid.: 4). It is necessary to point out that Werther has never finished any of his artistic works.

The same logic can be applied to Werther's character – he fancies himself as the "greatest master" (ibid.: 7) who sees above materialistic (ibid.: 4), while in reality, as hinted later by Goethe throughout the whole novel, Werther does not know much about life and how it works; his idealization of life and certain aspects of life, such as work, friendship, love, proves how immature and inexperienced he is in that matter.

In the very first letter written by Werther to Wilhelm, Goethe immediately creates a rich visual image of Werther's personality through his [Werther's] own style of writing. Not only strives he to describe the events happening in his life but to convey the feelings the world around causes inside of him; the strong, sometimes excessive, emotion that he

puts in his letters. For instance, at the very beginning of the novel he writes about “how happy [he is] that [he is] gone” (ibid.: 3) from his mother’s home and the town where he was born, and has moved to the countryside:

In other respects I am very well off here. Solitude in this terrestrial paradise is a genial balm to my mind, and the young spring cheers with its bounteous promises my oftentimes misgiving heart. Every tree, every bush, is full of flowers; and one might wish himself transformed into a butterfly, to float about in this ocean of perfume, and find his whole existence in it. (ibid.: 3).

Werther is a young privileged man from a successful family who despises and condemns the bourgeois society for its “paltry employments /.../ passions, with pompous titles, representing /.../ mankind as gigantic achievements performed for /.../ welfare and glory” (ibid.: 6). Instead, Werther glorifies the life and actions of a simple man who can build his own “paradise” (ibid.) without anyone’s help and who can find happiness by simply being alive and in harmony with his own soul and nature. However, Werther is a hypocrite, because he does not contribute to society as people he talks about do (ibid.: 7-9). Even when Werther praises someone, he does this with a slightly selfish thought in the back of his mind – do these people praise me? With this type of thinking, Werther quickly decides whether a person is worth his time.

Throughout the whole novel, Goethe gives the readers hints about Werther’s odd obsession of death and suicide. For instance, right from the start, it is very apparent that behind the prism of joy and happiness, Werther has a place for his dark thoughts as well. He believes that ignorance is a key to happiness (ibid.: 6), that every man deserves happiness in the little world of theirs which is constantly being built throughout the whole life (ibid.), and that there is always an exit from this “prison” (ibid.) that one “can quit /.../ whenever [they] like” (ibid.). Werther even admits himself in the letter of May 13 that the changes of his emotional state are quite frequent:

But need I confess this to you, my dear friend, who have so often endured the anguish of witnessing my sudden transitions from sorrow to immoderate joy, and from sweet melancholy to violent passions? (ibid.: 4)

Werther also states that his heart “is the sole source of everything of our strength, happiness, and misery” (ibid.: 33) as well as “all the knowledge I possess every one else can acquire, but my heart is exclusively my own” (ibid.).

Werther’s Role and Place in Society

Werther finds it difficult to connect with people because they do not seem to share the same views as him: they focus so much on working in order to survive that they forget to live and find pleasure and satisfactions of being alive (ibid.: 6), therefore Werther says that “the scanty portion of freedom which remains to them so troubles them that they use

every exertion to get rid of it” (ibid.: 5). There is no doubt that Werther thinks to himself that he is putting himself above materialistic needs and natural human desires to own as many things as possible in order to make it look like their life is full. Ironically, Werther strongly believes that he is different from them, acknowledging that he “knows very well that we are not all equal, nor can be so” (ibid.). He also explains to Wilhelm (possibly answers his question, since Werther’s letters are the only ones that can be seen by the reader) that he “[has] as yet found no society” (ibid.).

Werther’s attitude towards people from the lower classes is somewhat ambiguous. He considers himself superior to them, while being genuinely astonished by them and their work, at the same time (ibid.: 4). Never worked a day in his life, Werther makes it look like he respects them, sometimes even idolize, and uses their likings of him as an opportunity to look better in their light:

Persons who can claim a certain rank keep themselves coldly aloof from the common people, as though they feared to lose their importance by the contact; whilst wanton idlers, and such as are prone to bad joking, affect to descend to their level, only to make the poor people feel their impertinence all the more keenly. (ibid.: 4-5)

Again, Werther does not seem to realize that these “hard-working people” personify the idea of being successful, whereas Werther himself relies on his family’s wealth to move in life without acknowledging all the hard work that has been put behind it. Throughout the whole novel, he spends most of his time idling in his house in the countryside, walking around neighbourhoods and meeting people (ibid.: 5), who he thinks of as “out of his league” because of how incredibly self-centred and self-important he is.

Werther’s radically changing attitude is seen in the beginning of the Second book, when he leaves Wahlheim to apply for official court position in a town nearby through Wilhelm’s recommendation. At first, Werther seems to enjoy his new position because it gives him the opportunity to “associate continually with other people, and observe what they do, and how they employ themselves” (ibid.: 27), thanks to which he also “[has] become far better satisfied with [him]self” (ibid.). However, it quickly turns into disappointment after the disagreement with his employer, the envoy, whom Werther calls “the most punctilious blockhead under heaven” (ibid.) due to their radical personality differences, claiming that “he has a deadly antipathy to all those transpositions of which I am so fond” (ibid.). In addition, Werther calls out his co-workers’ “ambition of rank” (ibid.: 28), obsession with “gain[ing] precedence” (ibid.) and “form and ceremony (ibid.) that he has to tolerate working in this position:

What provokes me most is the unhappy extent to which distinctions of rank are carried. I know perfectly well how necessary are inequalities of condition, and I am sensible of the advantages I myself derive therefrom; but I would not have these institutions prove

a barrier to the small chance of happiness which I may enjoy on this earth. (ibid.)

Werther feels as though his inspiration is fading away. He grows distant from aristocratic privilege, even though he himself belongs to upper class, and starts to see it as even more futile and “wretched” (ibid.).

Werther's Relationship with Albert

Werther learns about Albert for the first time in a dance with Charlotte, where she states that Albert “is a worthy man, to whom [she is] engaged” (ibid.: 11). In the letter of July 30, Werther writes about meeting Albert for the first time, and he immediately builds his opinion of Albert as him being a “fine, worthy fellow, whom one cannot help liking” (ibid.:19).

The friendship between Werther and Albert grow very fast; both of them are tremendously fond of each other, for the most part due to their equal love towards Charlotte (ibid.). Werther enjoys the “coolness of [Albert's] temper [that] contrasts strongly with the impetuosity” of Werther's character. According to Werther's letter of August 10, Albert's attitude towards Werther is very friendly:

/.../ the noble Albert, who never disturbs my happiness by any appearance of ill-humour, receiving me with the heartiest affection, and loving me, next to Charlotte, better than all the world! (ibid.: 20).

One of the turning points of Werther's relationship with Albert happened with their conversation about perception of committing suicide. As Werther describes in his letter of August 12, for Albert the idea of a “man /.../ [being] so mad as to shoot himself, /.../ shocks [him]” (ibid.: 21); as to Werther, he does not see suicide as a sensitive topic and voices his thoughts very comfortably, comparing suicide “with great actions” (ibid.). Albert says that “it is much easier to die than to bear a life of misery with fortitude” (ibid.), which hits on Werther's feelings and makes him realise how lonely he is in his views, since even Albert, whom he respects deeply, does not understand his sufferings.

Werther selfishly leaves Albert and Charlotte due to him being unable to cope with his pain because of his strong love towards Charlotte; seeing Albert “possessing” (ibid.: 19) her becomes more and more unbearable for Werther.

Werther's Relationship with Charlotte

Werther's first encounter with Charlotte happened at her home, when he arrived to “engage a carriage /.../ to convey [Werther's partner, Charlotte and her aunt] to the ball” (ibid.: 9). When he saw Charlotte for the first time, he fell deeply in love at the

first sight, describing her in the letter to Wilhelm as “an angel” (ibid.) and how “she has captivated all [his] senses” (ibid.).

Goethe puts a strong emphasis on depicting Werther’s emotions right after his meeting with Charlotte. Being an artist in soul, Werther isolates himself from society, from gatherings of people, to focus on nature and spend his time being “entirely engrossed in his own pleasures, his own happiness” (Burgess 2018: para. 6). However, Charlotte’s appearance in his life turned all his attention to her only, proving that with her he “enjoy[s] [him]self, and taste all the pleasure which can fall to the lot of man” (ibid.: 12). It is safe to say that Charlotte became a haven for Werther’s deep, extreme feelings.

Spending more time with Charlotte, Werther’s life is filled with beauty and meaning. If before he struggled to find interest in connecting with people, Charlotte’s appearance changed his life:

I found penetration and character in everything she said: every expression seemed to brighten her features with new charms, — with new rays of genius, — which unfolded by degrees, as she felt herself understood. (ibid.: 10).

Werther’s confidence shattered with the appearance of Charlotte’s fiancé, Albert, who Werther became good friends with and genuinely liked the company of, however, it is safe to say that their friendship was based solely on the love of both towards Charlotte (ibid.: 19).

Charlotte’s feelings for Werther cannot be defined by one word and are never clarified by Goethe in the novel, however, they are definitely complicated. While Werther praises and idolizes Charlotte, and sees her as “such a perfect being” (ibid.), she is also very fond of him and considers him as a very close friend of a family. It is very apparent how both Werther’s and Charlotte’s feelings towards each other differ – while Werther lives in his insecure dreamy obsessions, Charlotte represents somewhat of a realistic maturity formed after her mother’s death:

/.../ since that time, a new spirit had taken possession of her; how, in care and anxiety for their welfare, she became a real mother to them; how every moment of her time was devoted to some labour of love in their behalf,—and yet her mirth and cheerfulness had never forsaken her. (ibid.: 20)

As time goes by, Werther becomes more and more demanding in terms of being as close as possible to Charlotte due to the mix of happiness and despair that he is going through since Albert’s arrival. The only moments when he feels complete happiness is when he visits Charlotte at her home (ibid.: 24). As much as he wants to become a part of their family, it is impossible, as well as them being a part of his family as well.

Being apart from Charlotte, hoping that it will help him forget her and move on, only fuels Werther’s obsessive love for the young woman, which rapidly starts to destroy

him inside (ibid.: 38). Charlotte kindness towards Werther and the uncertainty of her true feelings for him, play dangerously with Werther's already uncontrolled emotions, which eventually lead to the climax of their relationship and to its destruction.

Werther's View on Love

Werther sees love as a sublime feeling that cannot be compared to any form of human affection. As a person who lives through the prism of emotions, Werther sees love as an art which can be "created within the self" (McDonald 2018: para. 5). Werther's love borders very closely to obsessiveness, however, he embraces it fully "no matter how painful it can be" (ibid.: para. 9).

Since his perception of love is conjugated with his perception of nature, Werther believes in his heart that such kind of feeling should be praised and "nurtured" (ibid.: para. 3). Such praise of emotion leaves Werther both happy and extremely desperate because of how emotionally draining it is.

On the basis of the information gained through the analysis of Werther's character, his place in society, relationships and view on love, it appears reasonable to conclude that the cause of Werther's own sufferings was he himself.

Being exhausted living in his home town, he leaves family to move to the countryside, hoping to find peace and appreciation from local people. At first, he somehow manages to enjoy living there, but as the story progresses, Werther find himself more and more lonely, and his believes misjudged. Even when he finds the love of his life that inspires and elevates him, he cannot have it. By the end, this love that revived him and gave a meaning to his existence literally led to his demise.

CHAPTER II. STEPHEN CHBOSKY'S NOVEL *THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* IN COMPARISON WITH GOETHE'S *THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER*

2.1. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* in Contemporary Literature

Since this is a coming-of-age novel, it is obviously written specifically for the teens of the end of the 20th century, however, after 20 years after its initial release (1999), *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* hits the current adults' feelings of nostalgia as hard as it was when the novel came out.

The novel received its well-deserved praise as well as criticism; the latter is due to novel's controversial topics on "drugs, alcohol, sex and abuse" (Hare 2012: para. 9), which were considered sensitive at that time. In the end of 90s, "there was this wave, of what it felt like to a lot of people who worked with kids and books, of really depressing books" (as cited by Hare 2012: para. 10) as well as the so-called "teen-problem novel" (ibid.) which raised such topics as "teenage pregnancy, /.../ and anorexia" (ibid.). However, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, although brought attention to serious topics, it was still somewhat of a breath of fresh air. According to Louise Burke (as cited by ibid.: para. 15), "the teens that I speak to really love that these issues are being dealt with but it's not overdramatized".

Despite the fact the Chbosky's novel became extremely popular among teenagers of the 20th century and "sold more than one million copies" (Walsh 2012: para. 12), it got banned for a long time "by various libraries" (ibid.) as well as listed by American Library Association "as one of the books most under attack by the self-appointed guardians of morals in the US" (ibid.).

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (1999) is a novel by Stephen Chbosky, written in the form of series of letters by the hand of the main protagonist, Charlie. Charlie tells his story to an unknown person, who's answers are absent from the book intentionally; only in the end it is stated that Charlie was writing letters to an imaginary friend. As Harvey (2016: para. 3) states, "this anonymity creates the effect that each reader is directly connected to Charlie's life, almost as though the letters are meant specifically to each reader". The fact that Charlie is the only narrator of the novel makes the story being told "entirely /.../ through Charlie's perspective" (SparkNotes n.d.: para. 1)

As a novel about adolescence and adolescent crisis, it raises the questions and hardships of "change, experimentation, and growth" (Harvey 2016: para. 10) that

everyone will go through in their teenage years. Talking about Charlie, he is a high school student, a young introverted man who “does not try to connect with people” (SparkNotes n.d.: para. 2); he feels lonely and isolated from the outside world, and finds solace in writing letters to a “friend” who does not exist. As noted by Carrillo-Vincent (2013: 161), Charlie “is characterized, and at times praised, for simply being a ‘wallflower,’ a figure that echoes the first-sentence invocation almost word for word: ‘You see things /.../ you keep quiet about them. And you understand.’” (as cited by Carrillo-Vincent, *ibid.*). Charlie is an artist by soul, but his awkwardness and self-doubt prevent him from achieving his dreams and desires to become an artist or a writer.

Once Charlie meets his very first high school friend, Patrick, and a young girl named Sam “who becomes his greatest love although she rejects him softly”, he starts to unwind slowly.

What makes *the Perks of Being a Wallflower* comparable to *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a common theme of adolescent crisis, where both characters, Charlie and Werther, are struggling with their feelings and emotions, alienation from the society, as well as unrequited love, which causes tendencies of self-destruction that can be seen through their thoughts and actions.

2.2. The Plot and the Characters of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

The story of the novel begins with Charlie’s letter of August 25, 1991, where he describes his current emotional state and the loneliness he feels after the suicide of his only friend from middle school, Michael:

So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I’m still trying to figure out how that could be. (Chbosky 1999: 4)

This is the task that Charlie sets to himself before his first day in high school. At that point in time, it might have been Charlie’s reasoning to start writing letters (*ibid.*), however, it serves as a foreshadowing for all Charlie’s future interactions with other characters as well. Chbosky emphasises that the reader must keep in mind that Charlie at this point starts to write down a memoir of his own life, therefore, the reader will have to question Charlie’s ability to be honest with the facts that he is describing.

The plot begins its development after Charlie’s meeting with the two, as they later became, most important friends in his life, Patrick and his step-sister, Sam (*ibid.*: 13). Charlie also develops a relationship with his English teacher, Bill Anderson, who is well-aware of Charlie’s creative writing potential and interest in literature, therefore, encourages him to develop his skills in that direction, giving him additional assignments

in the form of reading selected books and writing essays to further his growth as a writer (ibid.: 8). Being friends with Sam and Patrick promotes Charlie's implementation in school events and him slowly opening up as well. During certain events, Charlie falls deeply in love with Sam, however, she does not reciprocate his feelings (because she has a boyfriend, Craig), but treats Charlie with kindness and respect.

As the school year goes on, Charlie faces series of difficulties in regards of his mental health due to the issues with his family, friends and constant memory of the loss of his beloved Aunt Helen (ibid.: 43).

From time to time, when Charlie's friends bring him out of his "wallflower" state, he accepts to enjoy the moments in order to "remember those details" (ibid.: 58), yet deep inside he still does not know how to make these details happen on his own. This leads him to start a relationship with a girl, Mary Elizabeth, who he does not have feelings for, but he "wanted Sam to be jealous" (ibid.: 63). This decision constantly keeps him distracted and makes his life more enjoyable, as he tries to convince himself of. This later results in him feeling extremely unhappy, which, at that point, makes Charlie face the consequences of his own choices. When he decided to go where the "flow" (ibid.: 61) gets him, he was destined to face a situation where he cannot keep calm and has to make a move on his own. By letting everyone else decide what is best for him, he was unable to be honest with himself nor with the others.

During Charlie's intimate interaction with Sam, he goes thorough mental breakdown due to his sudden realization about him being molested by his aunt Helen. As the school year comes to an end, his friends move to different places, which makes Charlie even more lost and depressed. As described in the Epilogue, Charlie ends up being hospitalized, where, after two months, he comes back to writing a letters just to inform the reader that he is "not sure if [he] will have the time to write any more letters".

2.2.1. Charlie as the Central Character

Charlie's Character and Behavioural Traits

Undoubtedly, Charlie's character is depicted as introverted, which is a trait that is commonly applied to a person, who prefers spending time in solace rather than participating in social gatherings or any type of activities, as such sort of thing is emotionally draining. Charlie is also a "wallflower" [which means they are shy and do not get involved in dancing or talking to people at social events (Collins, 2019)] and a person, who is deeply traumatized by his past. Charlie's sentimentality almost always

takes over him, ending up with him easily crying over generic things, for instance, after telling Sam about his intimate dream about her.

Being an artistic person, who loves literature and creative writing, Charlie's insecurities and deep self-doubt do not let him fully immerse himself in the creative process. This is one of the first major showcases of Charlie's hypocrisy towards himself. It is necessary to mention that Charlie's insecurities about his writing abilities as well as communicative abilities are yet unknown, however, an unconscious struggle inside of him that does not allow his full potential to bloom is yet to be discovered. His writing becomes more concrete and to the point when he describes Sam, the girl that he has feelings for:

To tell you the truth, I love Sam. It's not a movie kind of love either. I just look at her sometimes, and I think she is the prettiest and nicest person in the whole world. She is also very smart and fun. I wrote her a poem after I saw her in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, but I didn't show it to her because I was embarrassed. (Chbosky 1999: 29)

Charlie is the one who observes, and he is also the one who describes events and people through his own prism of reality. He struggles to understand people and the reasoning behind their actions, but at the same time, is extremely interested in that. Charlie's ultimate ability of observing surroundings and trying to find a perfect moment to say or do something lead him to a significant interaction in his life. He is still insecure about his thoughts; however, he is no longer embarrassed of making actions based on his observations, or maybe it is only a feeling that he has at a particular moment, so when it goes away, he will not be able to deal with a new situation that arises. Later on, when he feels great again, he reminds himself:

I try to remind myself when I feel great like this that there will be another terrible week coming someday, so I should store up as many great details as I can, so during the next terrible week, I can remember those details and believe that I'll feel great again. (ibid.: 58)

Through analysing other people behaviours, Charlie somewhat hopes to find happiness as well as what leads to happiness and how it can be vocalised. It is necessary to mention that Charlie is very vocal about his love towards his family, his friends, but most importantly, his aunt Helen and Sam.

Charlie's Role and Place in Society

As was mentioned before, Charlie is an introvert and a loner, which leads to a logical conclusion that he does not seek relationships with people. However, Charlie feels so painfully lonely that friendships is exactly what he needs in his life, and soon after he realises it himself.

After losing his aunt to a car accident, which deeply traumatized him, because his aunt Helen was his “favorite person in the whole world” (ibid.: 5), Charlie locked himself from the world for a long time. Before meeting Patrick and Sam, Charlie preferred staying out of light (ibid.: 16-17), however, as he later opens more to his new friends and people around him at school, he tries to “participate” (ibid.) in life instead of staying away.

It is necessary to establish that Charlie’s personality evolves within two “contexts” (Haryawan 2013: 129): his family and his friends (ibid.). Through both of these contexts, Charlie experiences different types of changes. Haryawan (ibid.) states: “Charlie who at first was still a shy person gradually attempts to break the wall within and comes out of his own shell to be more open-minded with his society”. At home, Charlie faces the personal issues in relationships with his family members, whereas at school Charlie is required “to have a social interaction with new people” (ibid.), which puts him in an uncomfortable position at first, due to how inexperienced and anxious he is, however, Charlie successfully goes through all hardships.

Charlie’s Relationship with Patrick

Patrick was the person who initiated his acquaintance with Charlie, which later turned into a close friendship. Charlie thinks of Patrick as a “good guy” (ibid.: 14), while Patrick, interestingly, is the one who turns to Charlie for any sort of advice, not the other way around. Patrick helps Charlie to open up and try taking part in social interactions, which Charlie struggles so much with. Due to the fact that Patrick’s personality is a complete opposite of Charlie’s, Charlie is genuinely fascinated by his best friend and wants to know

The turning point in a relationship between these two was Patrick calling Charlie a “wallflower” for the first time in the novel:

He's a wallflower. /.../ You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand. (ibid.: 25)

This gesture made Charlie cry in front of a room full of people, and when no one said anything about him crying, he cried even more but now out of happiness (ibid.). From this moment in the novel, Charlie understands, or at least makes attempts to understand his own value as a human being, and accepts himself for who he is, while at the same time, wishes to become a better version of himself as well. Patrick became some sort of a “trigger” for Charlie to accept his place in society and make him understand that people around can value him for who he is, therefore, he does not have to overthink how he needs to behave in society and what will people think about him (ibid.: 4). Patrick creates a

place for Charlie to feel confident in, which is being with him [Patrick], Sam and their common friends that Charlie gratefully accepts.

Charlie's Relationship with Sam

Charlie first meets Sam at the football game and immediately thinks of her as a “very pretty girl” (Chbosky 1999: 13) and almost immediately develops romantic feelings towards her. Sam, on the other hand, does not reciprocate Charlie's feelings due to her being in a relationship with a guy called Craig. Charlie does not force his love on Sam, however, he never stops loving her as well. More than that, the more time he spends with her and gets to know her, the stronger his realisation hits him that “[he is] really in love with Sam and it hurts very much” (ibid.: 30). Moreover, Charlie has an odd tendency to think to himself that experiencing pain comes along with being in love (ibid.). He is hurt by knowing that Sam is in a relationship with another guy, but Charlie entertains the thought that going through this pain will make him only closer to her, and maybe one day it would pay off.

Sam is very fond of Charlie and has very tender feelings for him and even told him that she “loves him” (ibid.: 40), however, her feelings are not even close to love that Charlie has for her.

When Charlie started dating Mary Elizabeth, he childishly wants Sam to be “jealous” (ibid.: 63) over his new relationship, whereas Sam does not feel anything about it and instead proceeds to give Charlie advice on dating girls. Although Charlie's expectations are ruined by that, he still grabs onto positive thinking that just being with Sam is enough for him. However, it quickly turns against him when he realises how much he actually loves Sam and even wishes that he “could stop being in love with Sam” (ibid.: 64) at all.

Charlie's View on Love

Charlie's perception of love is built primarily on the fact that every type of love, parental or romantic (ibid.: 13), must have the same ground. For Charlie this ground is harmony because he thinks that the most important thing people who love each other can do is to care for each other without asking anything in return, because relationship built on harmony already suggest that the other side is seeking to reciprocate.

On the other hand, Charlie struggles with his feeling of love towards Sam as much as he struggles with any kind of social interaction. As an observer, Charlie is interested in the world of love, dating and romantic relationships that he knows nothing about (ibid.: 13, 20). For instance, Charlie feels excitement when Sam gives his relationship advice,

while he was going out with Mary Elizabeth (ibid.: 63). Due to the fact that Sam is older than Charlie, it builds an invisible wall between them, the reason for which Charlie also struggles to understand. To Charlie, love means being able to see smaller details about the other person; he calls Sam “the prettiest and nicest person in the whole world. She is also very smart and fun” (ibid.: 29) and is upset with Craig because he “doesn’t really listen to her when she talks” (ibid.). Sometimes he also finds it difficult to put his feelings into words as he writes to his anonymous friend that “[he] hope[s] you know what that means because [he] really can’t think about Sam and describe it to you” (ibid. 30).

Charlie’s avoidance of at least attempting to show intimacy in his relationship with Sam shows his diffidence and even fear of moving things forward. Sam is not romantically interested in Charlie, but maybe if Charlie made the first steps to turn their friendship into something bigger, Sam would gladly reciprocate.

2.3. The Concept of Self-Destructive Love in its Development from Werther’s to Charlie’s Love Story

The main purpose of this sub-chapter is to compare both characters against the criteria defined in the paper, such as personality traits, place in a society, relationships and impact on other characters, view on love and the ultimate fate of the two main characters, Werther and Charlie, in both novels. Hereafter, the information is given in Table 1, which presents the comparative analysis of Werther and Charlie.

Table 1. *The Comparison of Two Characters*

	Werther	Charlie	Both
Personality traits:	Egoist, self-centred, intelligent, expressive.	Introvert, shy, open-minded, caring.	Both are loners and sentimentalists.
Social Status:	Unemployed 24-year old man.	16-year old teenager in high school.	Both are young men by the standards of corresponding centuries (18 th and 21 st).
Place in Society:	Finds difficult to connect with people because he thinks that they “are not all	Is a loner in the beginning but gains confidence and finds friendship.	Both are outsiders; misunderstood by society.

	equal [to him], nor can be so” (Chbosky 1999: 5).		
Relationships:	Charlotte, who he never sees as a friend because of his strong feelings of love for her. Werther does not consider Charlotte’s feelings and focuses only on how he feels, Has a friend, Albert, whom respects deeply but betrays in the end.	Sam, who is his friend but also a person he deeply loves. Charlie considers her feelings and remains in a friendship with her without crossing boundaries. Friend, Patrick, who helps Charlie feel confident about himself, which he is eternally grateful for.	Difficult relationship with family.
The Impact on Other People Lives:	Becomes very close to Albert and Charlotte, but betrays both of them, first, because kisses Charlotte without her consent, leaving no room for friendship, and second, because commits suicide, leaving both Albert and Charlotte mentally scarred.	Becomes best friends with Patrick and Sam, values them as very important people in his life.	

The Object of Love:	Young married woman Charlotte.	Sam, who is a friend but also a strong love interest.	Love is unrequited; fear of intimacy; fear of deep relationship.
View on Love:	Sublime feeling; should be praised and nurtured.	Love is based on harmony and caring for each other.	They both embrace their love no matter how painful it is for them.
Fate:	Death by suicide.	Hospitalisation due to severe mental breakdown.	

Data: The comparative analysis is based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of young Werther* (1774), Stephen Chbosky's novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999). Compiled by the author.

Werther and Charlie's analysis shows that, while being drastically different in some aspects, most of their traits are very similar to each other: they both are loners and sentimentalists, they feel like outsiders in social interactions, have problematic relationship with their families, unrequited in love and both embrace love with all the difficulties and pain that it brings them in return. However, Charlie is more mature in his thoughts and actions compared to Werther. While Werther allows his emotions control him completely because of his love for Charlotte, Charlie, also feeling hurt by his unrequited love for Sam, does not torture himself with his pain, but manages to appreciate his friendship with Sam without crossings the boundaries. Werther, on the other hand, does not respect Charlotte and only considers his own feelings. To the end, both characters suffer from their love, however, Werther chooses to end his pain by committing suicide, while Charlie ends up being hospitalized due to mental breakdown.

It is apparent that the romantic concept of self-destructive love has developed through time, and undoubtedly changed in some aspects, which is seen in the comparative analysis. In the 18th century, the notion of love was deeply tied with an emphasis on expression and emotions, while in the 21st century, it matured into something more realistic and rational. Both characters feel the same deep and strong emotions, but they deal with them differently – Werther chooses to let his feelings drown him, while Charlie embraces his feelings and controls them, instead of letting them control him.

CONCLUSION

The current Bachelor's thesis provides a comparative analysis of the two main characters from two different novels via their personality traits, role in a society, relationships and view on love, as well as the development of the romantic concept of self-destructive love and its realization in J. W. Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and Stephen Chbosky's novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999).

Chapter I gives a description and analysis of Goethe's character, Werther, where he is presented as a sentimental young man, who focuses on his own emotions and feelings, shares them with the world and people around him, but ends up being the one who's most hurt. Werther's own actions, values and perception of love led to his tragic fate. Being madly in love with a woman who is married and could never reciprocate his feelings, was a catalyst for his self-destruction which led to his demise.

Chapter II presents a description and analysis of Chbosky's main character, Charlie, who is a teenager going through adolescent crisis and facing hardships along the way. Having similar features with Werther, Charlie is also quite different from him. He is in unrequited love with a girl, but unlike Werther, Charlie does not let his emotions and feelings control him, and sees love as a feeling based on harmony and respect.

According to the stated hypothesis, it is proven that the romantic concept of love as a source of sufferings in case of unrequited love remains in the focus of modern writers, however the perception of it has slightly changed. The modern view on love, based on the novel *The Perks of being a Wallflower*, is depicted as more mature, realistic and rational, comparing to the 18th century focus on expression of emotion and elevation of love. Werther's obsession with love and his view on it as a sublime feeling blinded him to the point when he was no longer able to deal with it, while Charlie's view on love helped him mature and become confident with himself. In both cases, love is painful, but the main difference is how both characters deal with their feelings and are able to either use them to move forward or let them destroy their life.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Bakalaureusetöö teema on “ENESEHÄVITAVA ARMASTUSE ROMANTILINE KONTSEPTSIOON J. W. GOETHE NOVELLIS *NOORE WERTHERI KANNATUSED* NING SELLE ARENG 21. SAJANDI KIRJANDUSES (STEPHEN CHBOSKY *MÜÜRILILLEKS OLEMISE ISEÄRASUSED*)”. Uurimistöo esitab komparatiivse analüüsi kahe erinevate novellite peategelasi läbi nende isikuomadusi, rolli ühiskonnas, suhteid teistega ja arusaama armastusest ning enesehävitava armastuse romantilise kontseptsiooni arengut ja selle realiseerimist J. W. Goethe novellis *Noore Wertheri Kannatused* (1774) ja Stephen Chbosky novellis *Müürililleks Olemise Iseärasused* (1999). Bakalaureusetöö koosneb kahest peatükist.

Esimene peatükk esitab kirjeldus ja analüüs Goethe novelli põhitegelasest, Werther, kes on sentimentaalne noormees, kes keskendub oma emotsioonidele ja tunnetele, jagab neid maailmaga ja tema ümber asuvate inimestega, kuid ta on ainukene, kes kannatab kõige rohkem. Wertheri tajumine oma tegevuste, väärtuste ja armastuse pool viis tema traagilisele saatusele. Tema vastamata armus abiellunud neiule oli katalüsaator Wertheri enesehävituseks, mis lõppes enesetapuga.

Teine peatükk esitleb kirjeldus ja analüüs Chbosky põhitegelasest, Charlie, kes on nooruk, kes läbib noorukite kriisi ja silmitsi raskustega. Charlie'l on sarnased omadused Werther'iga, aga on ka Charlie temast täiesti erinev. Temal on vastamatu armastus neiule, kellel ei ole samasuguseid tundeid Charlie poole, kuid erinevalt Wertherist, Charlie ei lase oma emotsioone ja tundeid teda kontrollida ning näeb armastust kui harmoonial ja austusel põhinevat tunnet.

Vastavalt nimetatud hüpoteesile, on tõestatud, et armastuse romantiline kontseptsioon kui kannatuste allikas, mis on tingitud rahuldamata armastusest, jääb tänapäeva kirjanike tähelepanus, kuid selle taju on veidi muutunud. Kaasaegne vaade armastusele, mis põhineb romaanil *Müürililleks Olemise Iseärasused*, on kujutatud realistlikum ja mõistuspärasem, võrreldes 18. sajandiga keskendumisega emotsioonide väljendamisele ja armastuse tõusule. Wertheri kinnisidee armastusega pimestas teda selleni, et ta ei suutnud sellega enam toime tulla, samas kui Charlie'i armastus aitas talle küpseks saada ja olla enesekindel. Mõlemal juhul armastus on valulik, kuid peamine erinevus on see, kuidas mõlemad peategelased tegelevad oma tundedega ja suudavad kas neid edasi liikuda või lasta neil oma elu hävitada.

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