# Chapter I
# Introduction

In this chapter presents the background of the study, identification and limitation of the problems, research problems, objectives of the study, and significance of the study. Each subchapter is arranged to provide a clear and systematic overview of the research focus and direction.

## 1.1 Research Background

Literary works are generally created events that reflect the realities of life from the author's perspective. The truth presented in a literary work is often subjective, as it has been shaped and reconstructed through the author's language and stylistic choices to make it more engaging and meaningful for readers (Noor, 2007). In this sense, literature does not merely imitate reality but transforms it into an artistic representation that carries both aesthetic and interpretative values.

One of the most prominent forms of literary work is the novel. According to M. H. Abrams (2015:252), the term novel encompasses a wide range of writings; however, a defining characteristic shared among them is that they are extended works of prose fiction. Abrams further distinguishes the novel from other fictional forms, such as the short story and the novelette, which are shorter in length. Due to its extended form, the novel allows authors to present more complex and detailed developments in terms of characters, plot, setting, and thematic concerns. As a result, the novel provides a broader narrative space in which various elements of

storytelling can be explored in depth, including the organization of events and the techniques used to convey them.

One of the most interesting aspects of literary works lies in their narrative structure, which determines how a story is organized and presented to the reader. Narrative structure is not merely a sequence of events but a deliberate arrangement that shapes the way meaning is constructed and interpreted. Through the manipulation of time, sequence, and emphasis, authors are able to guide readers' understanding, create suspense, and reveal information gradually. A non-linear structure, for instance, can challenge readers to actively reconstruct the chronology of events, while also adding complexity and depth to the narrative. Therefore, the study of narrative structure becomes essential in literary analysis, as it allows researchers to examine how a story is constructed and how its form contributes to the overall meaning of the text.

In this regard, the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan presents a compelling example of a complex narrative structure. The novel does not follow a linear progression; instead, it employs shifts in time that move between past and present events, creating a layered narrative that requires active reader engagement. This complexity not only enhances the aesthetic quality of the story but also reinforces its thematic exploration of trauma, memory, and the consequences of human actions. Therefore, analyzing the narrative structure of this novel becomes significant in understanding how its form shapes its meaning. One passage from the novel:

> *Hal pertama yang ia ingat adalah bayinya, yang tentu saja bukan lagi seorang bayi. Dua puluh satu tahun lalu, ia mati dua belas hari setelah melahirkan seorang bayi perempuan buruk rupa, begitu buruk rupa nya sehingga dukun bayi yang membantunya merasa tak yakin itu seorang bayi. (Kurniawan, 2015: 2)*

The passage above demonstrates a disruption of chronological order, as it refers to an event that occurred twenty-one years earlier than the narrative present. This indicates the use of flashback, or what Gérard Genette (1980) terms analepsis in narratology. Such temporal shifts create a non-linear structure that requires readers to actively reconstruct the sequence of events in the story. Moreover, this technique is not merely stylistic, but also functional, as it gradually reveals important information and deepens the reader's understanding of the narrative. Therefore, this unusual structure can be effectively analyzed through a narratological approach, particularly in examining how temporal manipulation shapes the overall narrative meaning.

Many previous studies on *Cantik Itu Luka* have primarily focused on aspects outside the narrative structure, particularly thematic and socio-cultural issues. For instance, the study entitled *"Kajian feminisme dalam novel Cantik Itu Luka karya Eka Kurniawan"* by Wirandina (2020) focused on identifying and describing the psychological and social aspects of feminism as depicted in the novel. While such studies provide valuable insights into the ideological and thematic dimensions of

the text, they tend to overlook how the story is structurally organized and narratively presented.

Another study entitled *"Analisis Sosiologi Sastra Novel Cantik Itu Luka Karya Eka Kurniawan"* by Ritonga (2018) focused on describing and analyzing the social aspects presented in the novel by employing a sociology of literature approach. This study specifically examined social facts, social history, and social events depicted in the story. While this approach offers important insights into the social dimensions of the novel, it primarily emphasizes external aspects of the text and pays limited attention to how the narrative is structurally organized and conveyed.

Existing studies on Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka* have mostly focused on external themes, such as feminist issues, social contexts, and broad structuralist readings. While these studies offer valuable insights into the novel's themes, they often overlook how the story itself is structurally built. Specifically, previous researchers have not yet examined the novel's internal narrative techniques—such as order, duration, frequency, focalization, and voice—using a strict Genettean approach.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by shifting the focus away from the novel's external themes toward its internal narrative structure and techniques. Instead of analyzing cultural or political contexts, the researcher focuses on the internal mechanics of the text. This study aims to reveal how the story is structurally

organized and how narrative strategies are used to construct meaning within the novel. To address this gap, the researcher formulates the title "Narrative Structure of Kurniawan's Cantik Itu Luka**"**

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, several problems can be identified regarding *Cantik Itu Luka*. Previous studies tend to focus on external aspects of the novel, such as feminism, sociology, and historical issues, while giving limited attention to how the story is internally constructed. In addition, the novel presents a complex and non-linear narrative that may be difficult for readers to understand clearly. This complexity can lead to confusion in identifying the sequence of events and understanding how the story develops. Furthermore, there is still a lack of studies that examine how the narrative is organized and presented within the novel. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study that focuses on revealing how the story is structured and delivered.

## 1.3 Research Questions

1. How is the narrative structure of Cantik Itu Luka constructed through order, duration, and frequency?
2. How do focalization and narrative voice function as narrative techniques in the novel?

## 1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to analyzing the narrative structure of Eka Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*. To keep the research focused, the data is strictly limited to textual citations and sequences of events that show the novel's tense, mood, and voice. Specifically, the researcher only looks at how time is arranged (tense), how the perspective is managed (mood), and who is telling the story (voice) based on Genette's theory. Other aspects outside the text, such as the novel's social context, history, or feminist issues, will not be discussed in this study.

## 1.5 Objective of the Study

1. To analized the narrative structure of Cantik Itu Luka constructed through order, duration, and frequency.
2. To analyzed focalization and narrative voice function as narrative techniques in the novel.

## 1.6 Significances of the study

The benefit of this analysis is to provide a better understanding of the narrative structure of the novel. Through this research, it is expected that readers and researchers will gain a clearer understanding of how the narrative structure is constructed and how it functions within the novel.

1. Theoretical

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of literary studies, particularly in the field of narratology. By analyzing the narrative structure of Kurniawan's *Cantik Itu Luka*, this research provides a deeper understanding of how narrative elements are organized and how they function in constructing meaning within a literary work. Furthermore, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in analyzing narrative structure and narrative technique in literary texts.

2. Practical

This study is expected to help readers and students gain a clearer understanding of how a novel is structured and how its narrative is presented. It may also assist students in applying narratological analysis in their own research, particularly in examining narrative structure. In addition, this study can enhance readers' appreciation of literary works by providing insight into how narrative elements contribute to the overall meaning and complexity of a novel.