

Women's Wounds in the Narrative Voice of Eka Kurniawan's Novel *Cantik Itu Luka*:

A Narratological Analysis

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji suara naratif dalam novel *Cantik Itu Luka* karya Eka Kurniawan melalui perspektif naratologi Gérard Genette, dengan fokus pada aspek *time of narrating*, *person*, dan *narrative level*. Metode kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, meliputi pengumpulan data melalui pembacaan dan pencatatan teks novel, serta analisis berdasarkan kategori *voice* dalam teori Genette. Hasil menunjukkan pemanfaatan keempat model waktu penceritaan (*subsequent*, *prior*, *simultaneous*, *interpolated*) dengan dominasi masa lampau dan kini, narator heterodiegetik yang serba tahu, serta tingkat ektradiegetik-heterodiegetik dengan cerita sisipan. Suara naratif berfungsi sebagai strategi estetik untuk merepresentasikan kompleksitas pengalaman perempuan dan realitas sosial dalam kerangka realisme magis untuk menghadapi luka yang dialami oleh tokoh perempuan.

Kata Kunci: suara naratif, naratologi, luka, *Cantik itu Luka*

Abstract

This study aims to examine the narrative voice in Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka* through Gérard Genette's narratological perspective, focusing on the aspects of time of narration, person, and narrative level. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, involving data collection through reading and annotating the novel's text, as well as analysis based on the categories of voice in Genette's theory. The results show the use of the four models of narrative time (*subsequent*, *prior*, *simultaneous*, *interpolated*) with a dominance of the past and present tenses, an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator, and an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic level with embedded stories. The narrative voice functions as an aesthetic strategy to represent the complexity of women's experiences and social reality within the framework of magical realism for confronting the wounds experienced by the female characters.

Keywords: narrative voice, narratology, wound, Beauty is a Wound

INTRODUCTION

Narration is a system of delivery that enables readers to understand the experiences, ideas, and emotions conveyed by the author. It serves as a bridge between the imaginary world of literary works and the reader's reality. Storytelling in a novel becomes a reflection of

the complexities of human life. Narration is a structure in literature that constructs the storyline to deliver messages, emotions, or reflections to the audience. According to Wardhani (2015), authors can experiment with various aesthetic possibilities through

narration or storytelling. Based on this statement, it is explained that narration is a sequence of events occurring over a certain period of time and includes options that are systematically and chronologically arranged.

Narrative exists in conveying human experiences about the world through a story structure that has a beginning, development, and conclusion. Narrative is related to literature and provides the widest and freest space for narrative to experiment with time, perspective, voice, and structure in ways that are not possible in other narrative mediums. Thus, literature is the most honest medium because it is not bound by the obligation to be literally accurate in conveying deeper truths about human experience.

Adult literature functions as a tool of reflection that not only mirrors social reality but also shapes the way that reality is narrated and understood. (Huck in Nurgiyanto 2005, cited in Fakhri 2016) explains that nostalgic stories in adult literature use abstract vocabulary and complex emotional processes, such as stories about politics, heartbreak, despair, or cynicism, which are uncommon in children's literature. This complexity is depicted in *Cantik Itu Luka* (Beauty is a Wound) through a story that combines myth, history, and social violence, particularly in the portrayal of women's experiences. The narrative about women in this novel develops amidst the tension between visibility and limitations of voice. Women's experiences in the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* are largely depicted through their bodies, which are objectified, wounded, traded, and become battlegrounds for patriarchal power. This novel does not merely view women as victims but shows that the female characters here demonstrate forms of symbolic resistance regarding radical life choices and rejection of prevailing moral norms, revealing their efforts to regain control amid social constraints.

In this case, the narrative of women in the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* highlights trauma and wounds from a significant experience, as seen in the narratives of Dewi Ayu, Alamanda, Adinda, Maya Dewi, and Si Cantik, which are understood as trauma narratives, and the readers are witnesses who acknowledge the truth of those experiences. The Novel *Cantik Itu Luka* narrates the story of a captivating Dutch prostitute named Dewi Ayu, as recounted in Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, she has four daughters by

different men. Three of her daughters were born very beautiful, while the youngest was born unattractive, due to Dewi Ayu's wish to have an unattractive child. Dewi Ayu explained that she did not want beautiful children because she was tired of giving birth to beautiful ones, so she gave birth to an unattractive child and then died twelve days later, giving birth to the child she named Si Cantik. Dewi Ayu's children received special attention from many neighbors. Whenever Dewi Ayu gave birth, many people would come to her house, eager to hold her adorable newborns. Si Cantik, however, experienced the opposite; she was ostracized and marginalized from the very beginning. Moreover, when Dewi Ayu rises from the dead and reunites with her old friends and neighbors, Si Cantik had no space if they saw her, and therefore she decided to quietly confine herself in her room.

The aim of this study is to analyze the narrative voice in Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka*. This study further seeks to identify the employment of narrative voice within the novel. In this context, the issue of narrative voice constitutes a crucial element, as it determines who tells the story, from which perspective, and through what kind of narrative the experiences are conveyed to the reader. The examination of narrative voice is constructed within the text, along with the narrative techniques that play a significant role in shaping its structure. In accordance with this objective, the most appropriate theoretical framework for addressing this issue is Gerard Genette's narratology theory, which underscores the significance of narrative voice. Genette (1980) proposes three fundamental categories in narrative structure: tense, mood, and voice. In his subsequent works, he expanded this classification into five principal categories: narrative order, narrative duration, narrative frequency, narrative mood, and narrative voice. The present study focuses exclusively on narrative voice. Narrative voice refers to the identity of the narrator and the perspective from which they recount the story. The analysis of narrative voice emphasizes three primary elements: the time of narrating, point of view, and narrative level. The time of narrating refers to the narrator's standpoint at the moment of recounting events. The time of narrating, or *time of narrating*, pertains to the narrator's position in relation to the temporal dimension of the story.

Person, or perpetrator, concerns who assumes the role of the storyteller within the narrative. Meanwhile, narrative level pertains to the narrator's perspective in recounting the story, particularly the relationship or status between the narrator and the characters within the narrative (Didipu, 2020).

A study on a related topic was previously conducted by Zahro and Indrastuti (2024), which examined narrative voice in Reda Gaudiamo's novel *Na Willa* through the perspective of Gérard Genette's narratology. According to that study, *Na Willa* employs sequential, prior, simultaneous, and interpolated storytelling strategies, as well as homodiegetic and autodiegetic narrator approaches. Furthermore, the novel also utilizes an extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrative field. These findings suggest that the function of narrative voice in the novel extends beyond merely serving as a medium for storytelling, as it also operates as a means of establishing an emotional bond with the reader. Accordingly, the findings of that study serve as a guiding reference for analyzing narrative voice in the present research.

Another relevant study is entitled "Narrative Structure in Dita Safitri's Novel *Spoiler: A Narratological Study*," authored by Ridholia, Aulia Rizky. Purnamasari, Hetty. Amrullah (2023). The findings of the study also employ Gerard Genette's narrative perspective structure, encompassing five categories identified within the novel *Spoiler*, comprising words, sentences, and phrases, namely: narrative voice, narrative mode, narrative frequency, narrative duration, and narrative order. Narrative theory was selected as the field of study due to its capacity to highlight the author's storytelling techniques, which are of paramount importance in literary works, particularly in the novel *Spoiler*. In analyzing the narrative voice in *Cantik Itu Luka*, the findings of the study, with its focus on narrative voice, may serve as a point of reference. Rahayu, Supratno, and Raharjo (2020) conducted an analysis of narrative voice in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's novel *Merindu Baginda Nabi*, which employs a heterodiegetic narrator approach with an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrative level. Consequently, these findings may function as a guiding reference for further research centered on narrative voice.

This study aims to investigate the role of narrative voice in literary works, particularly in narratives that

incorporate magical realism and female voice advocating for social equality. First, no prior research has examined *Cantik Itu Luka* from the perspective of Genette's narrative voice. Second, the narrative structure of *Cantik Itu Luka* revolves around an adult point of view and encompasses a considerably more complex narrative focus. Third, narratives with an elusive focus that demand a profound understanding of the novel's plot may greatly benefit from the narrative writing style present in *Cantik Itu Luka*.

The benefits of this study include its potential to serve as a reference for future studies on narratology and to deepen our understanding of Gerard Genette's narratological concepts. Literary scholars may draw upon this study to examine narrative voice from Genette's perspective.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, which constitutes a strategy utilized to comprehend social phenomena within their natural context (Sugiyono, 2022). With an emphasis on close communication between the researcher and the research subject, qualitative research represents a scientific inquiry that seeks to understand phenomena within their natural social environment (Herdiansyah, 2010). This study encompasses two objects of investigation. The first, which is the material object, is Eka Kurniawan's novel *Cantik Itu Luka*. Meanwhile, the formal object of this study is the narrative voice in *Cantik Itu Luka*, examined through the lens of Gerard Genette's theoretical framework.

In qualitative research, data often consist of statements, narrativism, or descriptions collected either directly or indirectly from research participants (Herdiansyah, as cited in Zahro et al., 2024). The narrative text of *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan serves as the source of data for this study. The novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, written by Eka Kurniawan and published in December 2002 by AKYPress and Penerbit Jendela, functions as the primary data source for this research.

Data were collected using reading and note-taking techniques. The literary work serving as the primary source of research data was read repeatedly as part of the reading process. Subsequently, the reading activity was followed by note-taking. This note-taking technique was employed to document data relevant to

the research problem. Data analysis refers to the process of describing and interpreting the collected data in order to generate findings that align with the objectives of the study. The analytical framework adopted in this research is based on Gerard Genette's theory of narrative structure, with particular emphasis on narrative voice. The data analysis procedures consisted of data selection, data description based on the research findings, and the drawing of conclusions from those findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Voice in *Cantik Itu Luka*

Time of Narrating

The idea of the time of narrating is about the time and place from which a story is told. This is about how the narrator describes and uses time in the story. The timing relationship between telling a story and the events in the story can be divided into four types: (1) subsequent narration, where events are told after they happen; (2) prior or predictive narration, where events are described before they occur; (3) simultaneous narration, where the storytelling happens at the same time as the events; and (4) interpolated narration, which is a more complicated type where the narrator talks about ongoing events while also mentioning future ones (Didipu, 2019).

All four types of storytelling can be found in *Cantik Itu Luka*. The data mainly shows that both follow-up narration and simultaneous narration are being used. The novel contains just one example of interpolated narration and one example of predictive narration. The different ways of telling a story are explained in detail below.

Subsequent Narration

The protagonist of *Cantik Itu Luka* is a prostitute who lives during the periods of Dutch and Japanese colonial rule. In this novel, the narrator is not a character within the story. Literary works intended for adult readers generally employ a sophisticated narrative style characterized by more complex vocabulary choices and grammatical structures. The narrative also addresses themes that are considered inappropriate for children, including violence and sexuality. These elements are closely related to the novel's narrative style and contribute to the portrayal of adult female characters throughout the story. One

narrative technique that may appeal to adult readers is the use of past-tense narration. The use of subsequent narration becomes evident when the narrator describes Dewi Ayu, the daughter born from a relationship between half-siblings.

"Ia telah mendengar kisah tentang kedua orang itu, Henri dan Aneu Stammmler. Beberapa jongos dapur menceritakannya sambil berbisik, sebab jika Ted atau Marietje tahu bahwa mereka membocorkan cerita tersebut pada gadis, kemungkinan besar mereka akan dicambuk. Tapi lama-kelamaan Ted dan Marietje tampaknya tahu bahwa Dewi Ayu telah mendengar ceritanya, termasuk pada suatu pagi mereka menemukannya tergeletak di dalam keranjang di depan pintu. Ia tidur nyenyak dalam balutan selimut, ditemani secarik kertas bertuliskan namanya, serta tulisan pendek yang menyatakan kedua orang tuanya telah berlayar dengan kapal *Aurora* menuju Eropa." (Kurniawan, 2002).

"She had heard stories about those two people, Henri and Aneu Stammmler. Several kitchen servants told her the stories in whispers, for if Ted or Marietje discovered that they had revealed such stories to the girl, they would most likely be whipped. Over time, however, Ted and Marietje seemed to realize that Dewi Ayu had heard the story, including how, one morning, they had found her lying in a basket in front of the door. She was sleeping soundly, wrapped in a blanket and accompanied by a piece of paper bearing her name, along with a brief note stating that her parents had sailed to Europe aboard the *Aurora*." (Kurniawan, 2002)

Through this passage, Dewi Ayu's life story and family background are gradually revealed, including the fact that she was born from an incestuous relationship between her parents. At the beginning of the narrative, the narrator introduces Dewi Ayu and explains the circumstances under which her parents left her before departing for Europe. Since the passage recounts events that occurred prior to the act of narration, the narrative is situated in the past. The chronological sequence of events and the narrator's retrospective account indicate the use of subsequent

narration, in which past experiences and memories are related from a temporal position after the events have taken place.

“Itu benar-benar skandal melakukan, sebab bagaimapun, baik Henri maupun Aneu keduanya anak Ted Stammler. Keduanya telah hidup serumah sejak mereka masih orok, dan tak seorang pun menyadari kalau keduanya jatuh cinta satu sama lain.” (Kurniawan, 2002).

“It was truly a scandalous affair because, after all, both Henri and Aneu were Ted Stammler’s children. They had lived under the same roof since infancy, and no one had realized that they had fallen in love with each other.” (Kurniawan, 2002).

The text tells of Henri and Aneu, the parents of Dewi Ayu, focusing on their experiences during their time with Ted Stammler. The narration features a reflective depiction of earlier occurrences, as the narrative framework centers on recollections and experiences from the lives of Dewi Ayu’s parents. The narrator’s use of past-tense narration in recounting the experiences of these characters indicates a familiarity with their history and personal circumstances. As an extradiegetic narrator, the narrator functions as an observer or witness who recounts the entirety of the story without participating directly in it. Such a narrative position is often marked by linguistic choices that refer to events that have already occurred and are being recalled from a temporal distance. Through this technique, the narrator is able to present past events with an apparent level of knowledge and authority, reinforcing the characteristics of subsequent narration.

Prior Narration

Predictive narration denotes a narrative style presented in the future tense, though it can sometimes incorporate present-tense forms (Faruk and Akmal, 2025:84). In this type of narration, events are described prior to their actual occurrence in the narrative. In *Cantik Itu Luka*, numerous examples of foreshadowing can be observed. An example of this can be seen in the passage below.

“Tak ada kutukan yang lebih mengerikan daripada mengeluarkan bayi-bayi perempuan cantik di dunia laki-laki yang mesum seperti anjing di musim kawin.” (Kurniawan, 2002)

“There is no curse more terrible than bringing beautiful baby girls into a world of men as lecherous as dogs in mating season.” (Kurniawan, 2002)

Based on the information, the narration is delivered by Dewi Ayu, the main character of the novel. With this statement, she foresees and acknowledges that having a lovely daughter would turn into a burden in a society where men struggle to manage their sexual appetites. In this context, the storytelling user earlier narration to foreshadow events that will take place later in the tale. The statement serves as a foreshadowing tool, anticipating the pain that the female characters will ultimately endure because of their beauty. A comparable pattern can be seen in the same environment. Dewi Ayu previously went to a Catholic school in her early years. Nevertheless, her granddaughter ultimately finds out that the establishment was truly characterized by ethical decay and wickedness. This expectation of future insights additionally highlights the application of earlier storytelling in the novel, as demonstrated in the subsequent excerpt.

Waktu itu Dewi Ayu sudah masuk ke Sekolah Guru Fransiscan, sekolah yang bertahun-tahun kemudian menjadi sekolah menengah dan Rengganis si Cantik cucunya diperkosa seekor anjing di toiletnya. (Kurniawan, 2002).

At that time, Dewi Ayu had already enrolled in the Franciscan Teachers’ School, a school that years later would become a secondary school where her granddaughter, Rengganis the Beautiful, was raped by a dog in its restroom.
(Kurniawan, 2002)

The text suggests that the narrator depicts a backdrop that also helps place an event that has not yet taken place in the narrative. This is clear in the narrator's function of presenting an event that will occur in the future. The narrator also presents himself as a spectator who describes the characters' experiences from a perspective removed from the narrative. In this section, the storyteller discloses that the school will endure and eventually transform into an educational space for Dewi Ayu's grandchildren. The excerpt illustrates the technique of prior narration by mentioning a forthcoming event before it transpires in the narrative timeline.

Simultaneous Narrative

Present-tense narration depicts action and events happening at the time of the narration. This kind of storytelling occurs at the same time as the events or action being shown (Faruk and Akmal, 2025). As a result, the narrative illustrates the narrator's depiction of characters' behaviors via words, phrases, and sentences that signify the current moment. The process of narrating and the events being narrated happen simultaneously, resulting in a feeling of immediacy and drawing readers nearer to the developing events.

In *Cantik Itu Luka*, the tale of Dewi Ayu, who emerges from her grave 21 years post her death, is told through a present-tense narrative structure. Consequently, the narrator concentrates on Dewi Ayu's existence after her revival. Thus, it can be deduced that the occurrences related to Dewi Ayu's revival are positioned in the narrative present. Using this method, the storytelling occurs concurrently with the events shown, illustrating the traits of simultaneous narration.

Sore hari di akhir pekan bulan Maret, Dewi Ayu bangkit dari kuburan setelah dua puluh satu tahun kematian. Seorang bocah gembala dibuat terbangun dari tidur siang di bawah pohon kamboja, kencing di celana pendeknya sebelum melolong, dan keempat dombanya lari di antara batu dan kayu nisan tanpa arah bagaikan seekor macan dilemparkan ke tengah mereka. (Kurniawan, 2002)

One weekend afternoon at the end of March, Dewi Ayu rose from her grave after twenty-one years of death. A young shepherd boy was startled awake from his nap beneath a frangipani tree, wetting his shorts before screaming, while his four sheep ran aimlessly among the gravestones and wooden markers as if a tiger had been thrown into their midst. (Kurniawan, 2002)

The excerpt represents the initial emergence of the story, illustrating Dewi Ayu's revival from her tomb. This occurrence instills fear and panic within the local community, as the isolated ancient grave is that of a renowned prostitute from the Japanese colonial era. The narrator describes the occurrence as it happens, highlighting the spontaneous responses of the observers. This illustration enhances the feeling of simultaneity in the narrative, as readers are directly presented with the remarkable incident that starts the story. This can be seen in the subsequent excerpt.

Semuanya berawal dari kegaduhan di kuburan tua, dengan nisan tanpa nama dan rumput setinggi lutut, tapi semua orang mengenalnya sebagai kuburan Dewi Ayu.
(Kurniawan, 2002)

Tak seorang pun berani mendekat, hanya mendengarkan kegaduhan dari kuburan tua bagaikan mengelilingi tukang obat sebagaimana sering mereka lakukan di depan pasar setiap hari Senin.
(Kurniawan, 2002)

It all began with a commotion in an old cemetery, marked by nameless gravestones and knee-high grass, yet everyone knew it as Dewi Ayu's grave.
(Kurniawan, 2002)

No one dared to approach; they merely listened to the disturbance coming from the old cemetery, gathering around it much as they would surround a medicine vendor in front of the market every Monday. (Kurniawan, 2002)

The information indicates that, on the initial day of Dewi Ayu's return, the populace regarded her arrival with surprise instead of fear or dread. The narration emphasizes the reactions and responses of the lesser characters, who display both astonishment and appreciation for the remarkable occurrence. Additionally, upon Dewi Ayu's return home, numerous neighbors visit her and inquire about the rationale behind her return to the realm of the living. The following developments in the story center around Dewi Ayu's return home and her meeting with her youngest daughter, with whom she seems to have a distant and unfamiliar bond. By narrating these ongoing events and the character's instant responses, the passage illustrates the features of simultaneous narration.

Selama beberapa hari, Dewi Ayu bisa mengabaikan kehadiran monster menjengkelkan di rumahnya itu, disibukkan oleh kunjungan-kunjungan sahabat lama yang berharap memperoleh cerita tentang dunia orang mati. (Kurniawan, 2002).

For several days, Dewi Ayu was able to ignore the presence of the annoying monster in her house, occupied instead by visits from old friends who hoped to hear stories about the world of the dead. (Kurniawan, 2002)

In this excerpt, Dewi Ayu is depicted as able to overlook Si Cantik, her daughter, as she stays engaged with entertaining her old friends, who are keen to listen to tales about life in the realm of the deceased. Yet, following the conclusion of these visits, Dewi Ayu faces Si Cantik's actions once more upon realizing that her daughter has secretly engaged in a romantic relationship and is now pregnant. This progression redirects the narrative emphasis from Dewi Ayu's encounters with her guests to the emerging events concerning Si Cantik. The passage below depicts the event.

Dengan tak percaya, Dewi Ayu memandang Si Cantik dengan tatapan yang bukan lagi menampilkan kebingungan namun kemarahan

yang tak terkendali oleh ketidaktahuannya. (Kurniawan, 2002).

With disbelief, Dewi Ayu looked at Si Cantik, her gaze no longer expressing confusion but rather an anger that could not be restrained by her ignorance. (Kurniawan, 2002)

In this section, the storytelling method illustrates Dewi Ayu's fury at discovering that Si Cantik has hidden her pregnancy from her mother. Additionally, Dewi Ayu herself is unaware of who caused Si Cantik to become pregnant. By utilizing this narrative approach, the narrator reveals Dewi Ayu's resentment and intrigue regarding her daughter's actions.

Interpolated Narration

Interpolated narration is a narrative technique positioned between events or scenes. This type of narration is considered the most complex because the narrator simultaneously functions as both a character and a non-character (Faruk & Akmal, 2025:84). The narrator employs this mode of narration when recounting events that are currently taking place as well as those that will occur in the future. The following passage illustrates this narrative technique.

Dewi Ayu pergi meninggalkan mereka, masuk ke kamarnya. Disebabkan ia satu-satunya yang paling tenang di antara mereka, meskipun ia bukan paling tua, mereka mulai menganggapnya sebagai pemimpin. (Kurniawan, 2002)

Dewi Ayu left them and went into her room. Because she was the only one who remained calm among them, even though she was not the oldest, they began to regard her as their leader. (Kurniawan, 2002)

The narrator describes Dewi Ayu as a protector for her friends, who are bewildered by the fact that they have been placed in a large house with many facilities and are told that they must serve as nurses for sick Japanese soldiers. This narrative serves as the beginning of Dewi Ayu's journey toward becoming a prostitute, a role through which her life story is recounted until the end of her life. The narrator presents interpolated narration by beginning with Dewi Ayu's experience as a prostitute and concluding

with the present-time narrative in which Dewi Ayu rises from the dead.

Person

Eka Kurniawan develops the character of Dewi Ayu in *Cantik Itu Luka*, who acts as the main character of the narrative. The narrator primarily centers on telling the story of Dewi Ayu and her offspring. *Cantik Itu Luka* uses an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator, specifically one who recounts a narrative in which they are not involved (Genette, as referenced in Faruk & Akmal, 2025: 87). Every narrative has the capacity to define the narrator's position based on their relationship to the tale being shared. *Cantik Itu Luka* contains no homodiegetic data as the whole story is told from the viewpoint of a heterodiegetic narrator. This topic is explored more thoroughly in the subsequent analysis.

Sesuatu yang aneh pasti telah terjadi, sebab suatu malam ia dipaksa mengawini Dewi Ayu. Ia tengah tidur mendengkur ketika sebuah mobil Colibri berhenti di depan rumahnya, dan suara mesinnya yang mendengus-dengus di tengah malam buta cukup untuk membuatnya terbangun. (Kurniawan, 2002)

Something strange must have happened, for one night he was forced to marry Dewi Ayu. He was sleeping and snoring when a Colibri automobile stopped in front of his house, and the sound of its engine sputtering in the middle of the night was enough to wake him. (Kurniawan, 2002)

In this excerpt, the narrator is distinctly heterodiegetic, acting as an observer who perceives the happenings from an external perspective. The information shows that the narrator is aware of the characters' situations, especially when Ma Gedik is removed and made to marry Dewi Ayu, who is just sixteen years old then. The narrator simply tells the story without engaging in it but shows an understanding of the characters' feelings and mental states. This is evident in the subsequent excerpt.

Itulah awal dari perkawinan antara Dewi Ayu dengan Ma Gedik. Seorang lelaki tua yang menyedihkan mengawini seorang gadis cantik, berita itu dengan cepat menyebar ke seluruh pelosok kota, dan orang-orang Jepang yang mulai berdatangan bahkan mempergunjingkannya. Sementara orang-orang Belanda yang tak sempat melarikan diri, mengirimkan surat melalui pembantu-pembantu mereka, menanyakan kebenaran berita itu. Beberapa di antaranya mulai mengungkit kembali skandal memalukan ayah dan ibunya. (Kurniawan, 2002).

That was the beginning of the marriage between Dewi Ayu and Ma Gedik. A pitiable old man married a beautiful young girl, and the news quickly spread throughout the town. Even the Japanese, who had begun arriving in the area, gossiped about it. Meanwhile, the Dutch who had failed to escape sent letters through their servants, asking whether the news was true. Some of them began to bring up once again the disgraceful scandal involving her father and mother. (Kurniawan, 2002)

The excerpt additionally elucidates the role of the heterodiegetic narrator, who acts as an observer and spectator of the narrative's events. In this scenario, the narrator illustrates how the couple ultimately turns into the focus of extensive gossip and conversation among others. Thus, the narrator simply recounts the happenings from an outside viewpoint without getting personally engaged in the narrative. This trait can also be seen in the next excerpt.

Ketika Ma Gedik tersadar menjelang sore, ia tak mau menyentuh Dewi Ayu dan memandangnya dengan tatapan seolah ia melihat iblis betina. Ia menjerit-jerit ketika Dewi Ayu memaksanya untuk mendekatinya, dan melemparkan benda apa pun yang teraih tangannya. (Kurniawan, 2002:53).

When Ma Gedik regained consciousness toward the evening, he refused to touch Dewi Ayu and looked at her as though he were seeing a female demon. He screamed when Dewi Ayu tried to force

him to come closer to her and threw whatever objects he could reach with his hands.” (Kurniawan, 2002: 53)

In this passage, the narrator shows how Ma Gedik is afraid of Dewi Ayu, causing him to strongly refuse any attempt by her to approach him. The narrator merely provides a clear description of Ma Gedik's emotions, particularly his reluctance to touch Dewi Ayu. The use of an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrative level occurs at the primary level of narration, in which the narrator recounts the story as a whole without participating in it. In other words, the narrative is presented from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who acts as an observer and storyteller within the narrative. This mode of narration employs a heterodiegetic narrator who presents the story while remaining outside the story world.

Narrative Level

Narrative level is an analytical idea aimed at elucidating the connection between a tale and the process of storytelling. Essentially, the phrase “narrative level” denotes the phase in the storytelling process and the perspective from which the tale is told. Three types are typically employed to characterize differences in narrative level: extradiegetic, intradiegetic, and metadiegetic. The connection between these three levels can be demonstrated in a novel where the writer acts as the narrator (extradiegetic), who narrates the tale of a character acting as the protagonist (intradiegetic), while the narrative also includes an additional embedded story that exists within the primary story (metadiegetic).

The narrative level in *Cantik Itu Luka* is extradiegetic-heterodiegetic. At this level, the narrator serves as a second-level narrator concentrating on the main character while telling the tales of other individuals. In *Cantik Itu Luka*, the narrator is a heterodiegetic voice who always functions as an observer of witness, telling a story in which they do not engage as a character. Consequently, the extradiegetic narrative level can be recognized in the subsequent excerpt.

Pada hari selasa, masih di tahun yang sama ketika ia pergi dari Bloedenkamp dan masuk rumah

pelacuran di awal tahun, ia melahirkan seorang bayi perempuan yang segera ia beri nama Alamanda, sebagaimana janjinya. (Kurniawan, 2002)

On a Tuesday, in the same year that she left Bloedenkamp and entered the brothel at the beginning of the year, she gave birth to a baby girl, whom she immediately named Alamanda, as she had promised. (Kurniawan, 2002)

From the data, the narrator acts as a storyteller who observes the happenings encountered by the characters. In other terms, the narrator exists at the primary narrative level and can showcase different viewpoints of the characters. Accordingly, this narrative-level technique also suggests that the novel is constructed as a record of the everyday experiences of adults. Since the events involve only the characters within the story and the narrator remains uninvolved, the narrative creates a sense of tension that reflects the maturity of the characters' thoughts and perspectives.

Patterns of Relationships among Female Characters

In the novel *Cantik Itu Luka*, a consistent theme is evident among the female characters, specifically the experience of love-related scars and sorrow in different manifestations, but grounded in a similar foundational framework. This is clear in Dewi Ayu's character, who acts as the origin of the curse cycle. She loves Ma Gedik, but he does not return her love and eventually dies after jumping from a hill. Dewi Ayu is then forced to become a prostitute and comes to believe that by doing so, no one will suffer the loss of love as experienced by Ma Iyung and Ma Gedik.

The character Alamanda, who is extremely beautiful, initially possesses beauty as her strength to attract and conquer men. However, her beauty instead leads men to become obsessed with possessing her and ultimately destroying themselves because she chooses a man she does not love. In addition, when her husband leaves, Alamanda does not feel sadness. This is different from Kliwon's departure, which makes her cry.

The character Adinda loves sincerely a man who was formerly her sister's lover. Adinda accompanies Kliwon during his difficult period when he is accused of being a communist and is exiled to Bloedenkamp.

She continues to wait for Kliwon's return, and when he eventually comes back, Kliwon has an affair with Alamanda, yet Adinda remains willing to accept it as long as her husband is happy. This situation leads Kliwon to feel ashamed and ultimately choose to end his own life.

The character Maya Dewi is married off by her mother to Maman Gendeng, a man with a significant age difference, due to Dewi Ayu's fear that her daughter would follow in the misbehavior of her older siblings. At the beginning of the marriage, Maya Dewi is a loyal and obedient wife who devotes herself to her husband, even though he frequently visits Dewi Ayu at the brothel. However, gradually Maman Gendeng comes to love Maya Dewi and no longer wishes to betray her. In the end, Maman Gendeng departs through moksha, and Maya Dewi accepts her husband's passing in peace.

Furthermore, the character Si Cantik, the youngest daughter of Dewi Ayu, is born with a grotesque appearance. Her existence is anticipated to break the chain of the beauty curse. However, her ugliness ultimately fails to shield her from suffering. She endures profound social isolation from the surrounding community and is subjected to sexual violence at the hands of her own nephew. Having never experienced love in any form, she comes to perceive the sexual encounters imposed upon her as acts of love. Si Cantik's anguish is further deepened by the loss of Krisan, who dies from a gunshot wound, as well as the death of her infant, who does not survive due to premature birth.

Thus, the female characters in *Cantik Itu Luka* demonstrate that women's suffering can be inherited across generations. The core issue is not beauty itself, but in the societal perception and treatment of women, where both attractive and unattractive women endure equally intense forms of suffering. This highlights a critique of women's exploitation in the patriarchal system, implying that as long as the system goes unaltered, it will perpetually create new victims in various ways. Nonetheless, as long as there is any hint of movement toward life and transformation, there exists the chance that something new might arise.

Narrative Style of Eka Kurniawan

The storytelling technique employed by Eka Kurniawan in the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* is uniquely

characterized and intricately complex. The writer develops the narrative viewpoint through an all-knowing narrator, simultaneously offering insights from each character's perspective as they personally share their life stories. This fosters emotional richness and a profound sense of connection with the audience. The storytelling enables readers to feel the challenges, pain, and familial misfortunes faced by Dewi Ayu and her descendants. This is directly connected to narrative voice, which uses a heterodiegetic approach where the narrator recounts a tale in which they are not involved.

Eka Kurniawan's writing in this novel is descriptive and demonstrates a clear affinity for magical realism, emphasizing the story's themes. The portrayal of every character contributes to a robust sense of narrative growth, allowing each character to appear lively and genuine. Kurniawan's ability to enrich characterization in the novel is also supported by the use of narrative frequency techniques. The repeated narration of certain events, which function as a collective family trauma, strengthens both the thematic structure and the characterization of each figure.

In *Cantik Itu Luka*, Eka Kurniawan explores societal themes surrounding the definition of beauty, patriarchy, and history, which are key elements of his writing. He uses subtle but sharp irony, which enhances the narrative and enriches its significance. His narrative technique emphasizes not just the central themes of revenge and trauma, but also intricately incorporates the backgrounds of each character in the novel through surprising dark humor. Through the integration of these components, his writing style captivates readers, ensuring they feel both entertained and curious about the tragedies that occur in the narrative.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it is found that three types of narrative voice narrative time point of view and narrative level are identified in the analysis of the novel *Cantik Itu Luka*. Present or simultaneous narration, predictive narration, and past or subsequent narration dominate in *Cantik Itu Luka*. The dominance of past and present narration indicates a storytelling tendency that connects the characters' experiences with historical memory and actual events

simultaneously, thereby creating a nonlinear narrative structure.

From the perspective of the person, the whole narrative is guided by a heterodiegetic narrator who does not take on a direct role in the tale. The narrator holds an all-knowing perspective in portraying occurrences, feelings, and the context of the characters. The existence of the heterodiegetic narrator enables the author to preserve narrative distance while concurrently offering social critique, especially concerning the female body, violence, and patriarchal power dynamics. Simultaneously, regarding narrative level, the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* functions at an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic level, where the narrator acts as a first-level storyteller telling the stories of characters in the fictional universe. The incorporation of embedded stories (metadiegetic narration) enhances the narrative framework and acts as an interpolation that intensifies meaning, particularly in depicting history, myth, and shared trauma.

Thus, the narrative voice in *Cantik Itu Luka* does not merely function as a story-telling instrument, but also as an aesthetic and ideological mechanism that enables the expression of the complexities of adult literature, magical realism, and the representation of women's voices in confronting social constraints and patriarchal dominance. It also emphasizes that women suffer from numerous expectations placed on them. This is additionally reinforced by Eka Kurniawan's storytelling approach, which merges satirical critique and irony in exploring beauty themes, while simultaneously overturning and altering facts within the story.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the research conducted, the researcher acknowledges that this study still has limitations in the scope of narratological analysis. Therefore, it is suggested that future research develop further studies on other narrative aspects, such as narrative frequency, duration, focalization, and the relationship between narrative structure and ideological representation in the novel. Subsequent studies are also expected to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in order to obtain a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of narrative construction in literary works. It is hoped that this research can contribute to narratological studies and open new

directions in examining narrative voice in Indonesian literature.

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