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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Research

Literature is the imaginative formation of experiences and thoughts into the form and structure of language. People read literature to immerse themselves in life and their experiences in a story world that challenges them to think in new ways about life and the world. Literature is written not only to teach something but to illuminate what it means to be human and to create the essential experiences of life: love, hope, despair, fear, and so on (Hudson, 1913). Humans care about literature primarily because of its deep and eternal meaning for humanity. Literature is an essential record of what people have seen in life, what they have experienced, and what they think and feel about the aspects of life that most interest people. Thus, literature is basically an expression of life through language, a literary work.

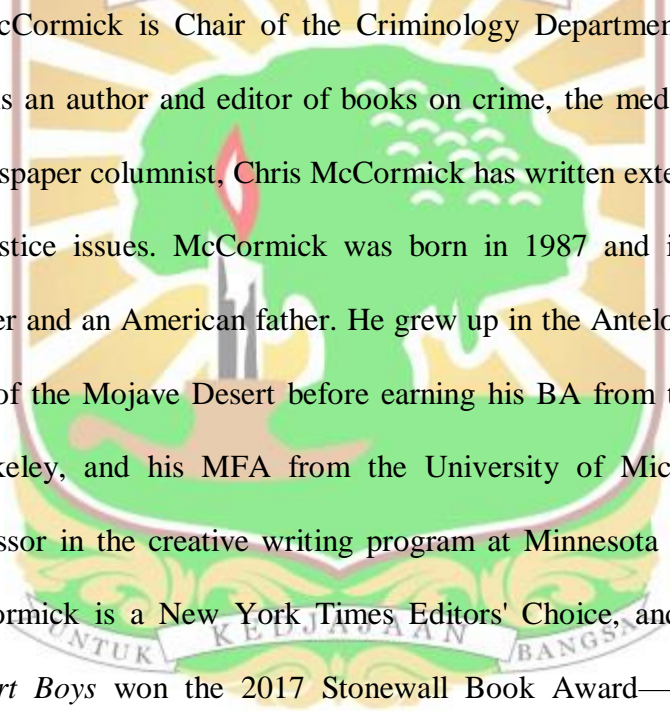
Narrative is essential in analyzing literary work, one of the themes in studying structuralist literature is the study of the narrative aspects of literary texts, also known as narratology. It is inseparable that all cultural and humanitarian activities are always conveyed, studied, carried out, and displayed through a particular pattern or structure. Roland Barthes (1977) in *Image-Music-Text* sums up that narrative is inherent in all human civilizations. However, the meaning of the narrative may be understood differently, sometimes even contradicting each other, due to different cultural backgrounds. Analysis of narrative pattern makes a significant contribution to literary studies. It must also be said that the scope of narrative analysis is the identification of meaning. Narrative entirely refers to the order of events or how an event is narrated;

it is an essential component in literary works that controls the direction and flow of information, significantly determining how the reader will respond and perceive the text. Thus, narrative can be understood as something that carries out an ideological function, which is to help anchor the meaning of a text by directing or guiding the reader to the meaning contained in the text.

Pattern is a method or technique the author chooses when developing a story. Pattern is an aesthetic aspect of the novel that arises primarily from the plot. Although patterns can be nourished by anything in the book, such as characters, scenes, etc., patterns derive most of their nourishment from the plot. Forster (1927) in *Aspects of the Novel* used the term pattern only in the specific sense of the geometric design or shape of the novel's plot. While the story appeals to the reader's curiosity and the plot appeals to the reader's intelligence, the pattern appeals to the reader's aesthetic sense, which causes the reader to see the book as a whole. It can be concluded that pattern is essential in a literary work.

The writer uses a novel entitled *The Gimmicks* as the main object of this study. *The Gimmicks* is a novel by Chris McCormick, published by HarperCollins in 2020. It was the debut novel by Chris McCormick, which the length of the novel is 368 pages. The novel's subjects are fiction, historical, general fiction, and literary fiction. *The Gimmicks* is a novel in the historical fiction genre in which the story takes place in the past. *The Gimmicks* has a focus on the impact of the Armenian Genocide. It transports the readers to Soviet Armenia across Europe to Southern California during the 1970s and 1980s. The novel tells a fictional story involving historical events. It has a combination of actual events and fictional events. It includes

social norms, traditions, and manners at that time. As explained above, McCormick shows the continued impact of the 1915 Armenian Genocide into the 1970s and 1980s. The traumatic Armenian Genocide affects the lives of a trio of Armenian youths. Even though, as a whole, the novel shows more about wrestling than guerrilla warfare, it is more about scripted brutality than the real thing. Chris McCormick unravels the bonds between brotherhood and betrayal, love and abandonment, and fiction created to live with the pain of the past.



Chris McCormick is Chair of the Criminology Department at St. Thomas University. He is an author and editor of books on crime, the media, and corporate crime. As a newspaper columnist, Chris McCormick has written extensively on crime and criminal justice issues. McCormick was born in 1987 and is the son of an Armenian mother and an American father. He grew up in the Antelope Valley on the California side of the Mojave Desert before earning his BA from the University of California, Berkeley, and his MFA from the University of Michigan. He is an Associate Professor in the creative writing program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. McCormick is a New York Times Editors' Choice, and his short story collection *Desert Boys* won the 2017 Stonewall Book Award—Barbara Gittings Literature Award. His essays and stories have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Tin House*, and *Ploughshares*.

The writer chose this topic because it is rarely discussed, and as far as the writer's search goes, the writer has not found any research that discusses narrative pattern from *The Gimmicks*. *The Gimmicks* is a newer novel and a debut novel for McCormick himself. Those become the reason for the writer to analyze it, along with

the book with a wrestling theme. Furthermore, the novel covers many things, geographically and historically, but does not fully bring together the different elements of its story. *The Gimmicks* shows two Armenian cousins involved with the liberation of Armenian militants. The novel covers the story of professional wrestling, in which there are enough secrets, lies, and betrayals to make readers turn the page. Wrestling is a sport performed in various styles by two competitors that involves forcing the opponent to touch the ground with some part of the body other than feet for a minimum time. Professional wrestling is a contest in sports entertainment; even though the name is professional, it is theatrical. It is not competitive because the winner is determined. Professional wrestling is full of concepts from a wide variety of shows. Some moves are orchestrated, and athletes must follow scripts to keep the show on track, but most of what the audience sees is the real action.

To discuss the narrative pattern in this book, the writer will focus on the object, the novel itself. By observing the narrative pattern in this book, the professional wrestling issue can be investigated. Finally, the writer would like to present how Chris McCormick indicates narrative pattern from *The Gimmicks*. The writer will analyze it by using structuralism narratology. Based on this research background, the writer entitles this research to **Narrative Pattern of *The Gimmicks* by Chris McCormick: Structural Reading**.

## 1.2. Identification of the Problem

*The Gimmicks* features professional wrestling through Avo Gregoryan's story, managed by Terry Krill. The novel's author uses the narrative pattern to deliver a



professional wrestling story to the readers. *The Gimmicks* was written with flashbacks and lots of background stories. Since *The Gimmicks* is not presented in chronological order, it is paramount for the writer to understand its complex narrative pattern. The convoluted story combined with professional wrestling theatrics requires narrative pattern analysis. Thus, the narrative pattern helps to understand how professional wrestling theatrics work compared to real life.

### 1.3. Review of Related Studies

Because the object of this research is a novel just released in 2020, the author cannot find a review of studies directly related to the book entitled *The Gimmicks*. Nevertheless, the writer takes the review of related studies on topics, problems, and theories.

The first related study is a journal article entitled "Narrative Structure and Theme in 'Young Goodman Brown'" by Norman H. Hostetler in 1982 published by The Journal of Narrative Technique. In this article, the author uses structuralism as the approach. His analysis explains how narrative patterns and perceptions shape the reader's understanding of the character's moral journey. The article helps the writer's research on *The Gimmicks* by analyzing narrative patterns. The difference is the article does not only analyze narrative patterns but also includes themes. In addition, *The Gimmicks* and *Young Goodman Brown* use narrative patterns to influence how readers view the protagonist's internal struggles. Hawthorne uses the differences between the narrator's and Brown's perceptions to explore universal human issues. Chris McCormick uses its pattern to emphasize the complexity of the character's

inner worlds, particularly how professional wrestling theatrics work compared to real life.

The second is from a journal article entitled "Names and Narrative Pattern in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*" by Gene H. Bell-Villada in 1981 published by Latin American Literary Review. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the author uses recurring names and family traits to create patterns that reflect certain things. In *The Gimmicks*, McCormick uses narrative devices such as recurring events or themes to construct characters' lives about professional wrestling. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* constructs meaning through repetition and naming. It can help the writer analyze how *The Gimmicks* uses its patterns to reveal character development and the depth of its themes. The complex structure of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* mirrors the convoluted storytelling of *The Gimmicks*. Both novels require readers to create different timelines and stories to understand the narrative. This article provides material for understanding narrative patterns and character structuring that the writer can apply to a structural reading of *The Gimmicks*.

The third is from a journal article entitled "Narrative Patterns in *The Decameron*" by Joan M. Ferrante in 1978 published by Romance Philology. The article shows how to apply structuralist theory to the collection of short stories in the book. The article explores the complex narrative patterns of *The Decameron*, such as its structural division into thematic days and the use of frames. The structure of *The Decameron* highlights how the various stories in the frame narrative influence each other. The method inspires the writer's way of analyzing the narrative patterns of *The*

*Gimmicks*. The focus on narrative patterns guides the writer's discussion of *The Gimmicks*.

The fourth comes from Charles Segal's journal article entitled "Death by Water: A Narrative Pattern in Theocritus (Idylls 1, 13, 22, 23)" published by Franz Steiner Verlag in 1974. This article shows how water and the elements of nature are intertwined with narrative patterns of life, death, and transformation. Just as water in Theocritus's works symbolizes life, death, and change, the writer can examine the presence of recurring symbols or elements in *The Gimmicks*, such as wrestling itself or specific events that play the narrative role. Theocritus' Idylls often blur the lines between the beautiful and the dangerous, real and the mythological. Similarly, *The Gimmicks* uses professional wrestling, blurring the lines between theatrics and reality. This comparison can deepen the writer's understanding of how narrative pattern helps reveal the complexities of life that reflect performance in McCormick's work. By applying these insights to *The Gimmicks*, the writer can explore how narrative devices evoke the theme of reality, such as life versus theatric.

The fifth is a journal article by B. R. McElderry Jr. entitled "The Narrative Structure of *Light in August*" published by The College English in 1958. In this article, the author uses structuralism as the approach. Faulkner's non-linear storytelling, particularly in Joe Christmas' narrative, mirrors the flashbacks and time travel in *The Gimmicks*. This structure provides depth to the characters by slowly revealing their pasts. It allows the writer to use this as a framework to analyze how McCormick's use of non-linear storytelling enhances the complexity of Avo Gregory's character and the theatricality of professional wrestling. The article can

guide the writer in analyzing how McCormick's structure juxtaposes these storylines and highlights deeper themes. Collins discusses how Faulkner uses three-time travels, present, immediate past, and remote past, to build suspense and deepen understanding of the characters. It informs the writer how McCormick uses different time travels to explore the development of the characters and the impact of their past decisions on their present. The article provides insight into how non-linear narrative structure can be analyzed and understood in terms of character development and thematic exploration.

The sixth comes from Grace E. Collins's journal article entitled "Narrative Structure in *Linden Hills*" published by CLA Journal in 1991. In this article, the author uses structuralism as the approach. The article mentions Naylor's use of simultaneous narratives to explore identity. In *The Gimmicks*, Chris McCormick also uses complex timelines and layered storytelling to explore themes such as identity and loyalty. The concept of multiple narratives can help the writer examine how McCormick uses flashbacks and non-sequential timelines to reveal different aspects of the characters and their journeys, similar to Naylor's approach. In addition, *Linden Hills* explores characters who achieve the American Dream at the expense of their racial identity. *The Gimmicks* also explores characters grappling with their identities, such as through professional wrestling. The article can help analyze how the split narrative structure allows the characters to confront their pasts and identities just as the characters in *Linden Hills* rediscover themselves through historical connections. These thematic and structural connections can strengthen the writer's analysis of how



the narrative pattern in *The Gimmicks* serves to explore the characters' internal and external conflicts.

The last is from a journal article entitled "The Narrative Structure of T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*" by Evans Lansing Smith in 1991 published by *Quondam et Futurus*. The article discusses T.H. White's use of narrative structure in his novel, focusing on setting, theme, and character. This approach serves as an example for analyzing the structural complexity of *The Gimmicks*. The article guides the author in constructing *The Gimmicks* as a narrative in which each timeline and character contributes to exploring the themes. The article provides an example of how to apply narrative theory to literary analysis. It shows how structural elements can be analyzed systematically.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

The main focus of this research is the narrative pattern used in *The Gimmicks*. The writer's analysis is based on several questions:

1. What narrative pattern is used in the story of *The Gimmicks*?
2. How important is the narrative pattern to *The Gimmicks*?

#### 1.5. Scope of Research

Based on the research questions above, this study focuses on the novel. The writer pays attention to this novel's intrinsic elements, especially the narrative pattern represented in *The Gimmicks*. Therefore, this study is limited to two discussions related to the topic. Firstly, the writer investigates the kind of narrative pattern used in the novel. Lastly, the writer discusses the importance of narrative pattern to the novel.

#### 1.6. Objectives of Research

This research has two objectives. The first objective is to reveal the narrative pattern used by Chris McCormick in *The Gimmicks*. In fact, the story is not presented in chronological order; by knowing the narrative pattern used in the novel, the readers will get help understanding *The Gimmicks*. The second objective is to emphasize the importance of narrative pattern in the story. Hopefully, this research will also help people who want to analyze *The Gimmicks* because it is a newer novel, and not many people talk about it. Therefore, this research could also be a source of help for future research.

