

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter was conducted intentionally in serving the introduction of research which determined in the following content from research background, research question, research objective, research significances, and the definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Literature is not merely a form of artistic expression but also a medium through which social issues, cultural values, and power relations are represented and questioned (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). Literary works often reflect societal structures and reveal how certain groups are positioned, marginalized, or privileged within social systems (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). Through narrative representation, literature provides insight into human experiences and allows readers to examine various forms of discrimination, inequality, and social prejudice (Goldmann & Boelhower, 1981).

One social issue that has gained increasing scholarly attention is the representation of children and childhood (Wall, 2007). Traditionally, children have often been portrayed as dependent, immature, and lacking agency, while adults are positioned as the primary holders of authority and knowledge (Fahlander, 2011). Such representations frequently reflect broader social assumptions regarding children's status in society. Consequently, contemporary scholars have begun to investigate how literary texts depict children and how these depictions may reinforce or challenge dominant adult-centered perspectives (Adami, 2023).

This concern has contributed to the emergence of childism studies, an interdisciplinary field that examines prejudice, discrimination, and systemic injustice directed toward children (Huggins-Hoyt, 2014). Childism has become an important critical framework in literature, psychology, philosophy, education, and law because it highlights the ways in which children's experiences and perspectives are frequently overlooked or devalued. Rather than viewing children merely as

incomplete adults, childism advocates recognizing children as individuals possessing intrinsic value, agency, and rights.

The concept of childism was significantly developed by Young-Bruehl (2012), who defines childism as a form of prejudice against children comparable to racism or sexism. According to Young-Bruehl (2012), childism emerges when children are treated as objects designed to fulfill adult needs and expectations rather than as individuals with their own identities and developmental needs. Similarly, Wall (2022) expands the concept by arguing that childism should function not only as a framework for understanding children's experiences but also as a transformative approach that challenges adult-centered assumptions embedded within social institutions and cultural narratives.

Within childism studies, negative childism refers to practices and attitudes that marginalize, neglect, manipulate, or diminish children (Huggins-Hoyt, 2014). Such experiences may include emotional neglect, abandonment, excessive control, exploitation, and the denial of children's voices and needs. Research in psychology has demonstrated that childhood experiences characterized by neglect and manipulation can significantly affect emotional development, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships later in life (Cheney, 2018). Children who grow up without adequate emotional support often struggle with self-worth, attachment, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms in adulthood.

Literature frequently explores these psychological consequences by portraying characters whose adult behaviors are shaped by traumatic childhood experiences (Schreurs, 2023). Fantasy literature, in particular, offers unique opportunities to represent childhood trauma and power structures through imaginative settings and symbolic narratives (Güven, 2026). The genre often magnifies emotional and psychological conflicts, allowing readers to perceive the consequences of neglect, abuse, and manipulation in more visible and dramatic forms. Through fantasy narratives, internal struggles can be externalized into supernatural events, making complex psychological experiences more accessible to readers.

One literary work that presents such themes is *Ruination* (2022), a fantasy novel written by Anthony Reynolds. Reynolds is widely recognized for his contributions to fantasy and science fiction literature, particularly through his works within the Warhammer universe. *Ruination* marks his first official novel set in the League of Legends universe and expands the lore surrounding one of the franchise's most significant historical events.

The novel recounts the tragic downfall of Camavor and follows the transformation of King Viego from a young ruler into the destructive figure known as the Ruined King. The narrative centers on Viego's obsessive devotion to his wife, Isolde, whose fatal illness drives him to pursue increasingly desperate measures in an attempt to save her. As his obsession intensifies, Viego ultimately becomes responsible for a catastrophic event that destroys kingdoms and corrupts entire lands.

Although the novel primarily presents Viego's tragic downfall, closer examination reveals indications that his destructive behavior may be rooted in earlier childhood experiences. Throughout the narrative, Viego appears as an emotionally dependent, insecure, and immature character whose decisions are often driven by an intense need for validation and affection. These characteristics suggest the possibility of childhood experiences marked by emotional neglect, manipulation by adults and political elites, and a lack of emotional support and recognition. Such experiences can be interpreted as manifestations of negative childism that continue to shape Viego's psychological development into adulthood.

The relationship between Viego's childhood experiences and his eventual transformation into the Ruined King highlights the importance of examining how the novel constructs and communicates these experiences. Understanding this process requires attention not only to what is represented in the narrative but also to how the representation is delivered to readers. In literary studies, narratology provides useful tools for analyzing the ways narratives shape readers' understanding of characters, events, and psychological experiences.

One of the most influential narratological concepts is focalization, developed by Mieke Bal (2017). Focalization refers to the perspective through

which narrative events are perceived and presented (Bal, 2017). Rather than focusing solely on who tells the story, focalization examines who sees, experiences, and interprets events within the narrative. Through focalization, authors can direct readers' attention toward particular emotions, motivations, and interpretations while simultaneously concealing others (Jahn, 2021).

In the context of childism, focalization becomes particularly significant because it influences how readers perceive childhood experiences and power relations between children and adults. Narrative perspectives may either reveal the emotional consequences of neglect and manipulation or obscure them beneath dominant adult viewpoints. Therefore, analyzing focalization can provide deeper insight into how experiences of negative childism are represented and understood within a literary text.

Previous studies have extensively examined childism, childhood representation, and focalization as separate areas of inquiry. Previous studies have provided important foundations for understanding childism, childhood representation, and narrative perspective.

The first previous study was conducted by Moore (Moore, 2018)) entitled *"I Knew You Were Trouble": Considering Childism(s), Shame Resilience, and Adult Caretaker Characters Surrounding YA Rape Survivor Protagonists*. Moore examines how various forms of childism operate within young adult literature, particularly in narratives featuring adolescent rape survivors. The study argues that childism serves as an important framework for exploring issues of oppression, empowerment, and the social positioning of children and adolescents. Moore demonstrates that literary texts can reveal how adult authority influences young people's experiences and identities. This study is relevant to the present research because it employs childism as a critical lens for analyzing literary representation. However, while Moore focuses on young adult fiction and the relationship between childism and shame resilience, the present study focuses on the portrayal of negative childism in Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination* and examines how focalization contributes to that portrayal.

The second study was conducted by Joosen (Joosen, 2013) entitled *Adulthood in Children's Literature: The Disdainful Adult and Childism in Children's Literature*. Joosen discusses the concept of childism within children's literature and argues that childism should not be applied in isolation but rather in combination with age studies, childhood studies, children's literature studies, and narratological theories of perspective. The study highlights the importance of examining how narrative viewpoints influence the representation of children and adult-child relationships in literary texts. This research is particularly significant for the present study because it establishes a connection between childism and narratology. Nevertheless, Joosen's study focuses broadly on children's literature and adult-child dynamics, whereas the present research specifically investigates the role of focalization in portraying negative childism in a fantasy novel.

The third study is *Childism through the Feminist-Fantastic Lens in Kita Pergi Hari Ini by Ziggy Zezsyazeoviennazabrizkie* ((Syifaurrahman dkk., 2026)). This study examines how the novel constructs childism through feminist-fantastic narrative strategies. Using narratological and feminist literary approaches, the researchers analyze narrative structure, focalization, and the fantastic elements within the text. The findings reveal that negative childism is represented through the normalization of obedience, surveillance, and restrictions on children's expression, while positive childism is reflected in children's agency, imagination, and solidarity. Furthermore, the study argues that the fantastic functions as a critical device that challenges adult-centered ideologies and creates space for alternative representations of children. This study is closely related to the present research because both investigate childism in literary texts and employ focalization as part of the analytical framework. However, whereas the previous study focuses on feminist-fantastic strategies and both positive and negative childism, the present study concentrates specifically on the role of focalization in portraying negative childism through the character of Viego in Anthony Reynolds' *Ruinaton*.

The fourth study is an undergraduate thesis that analyzes Anthony Reynolds' *Ruinaton* from the perspective of gender representation in fantasy literature. The study examines the characterization of male and female characters, gender roles,

stereotypes, and female representation within the novel. The researcher argues that *Ruination* presents significant disparities between male and female characters. While male characters such as Grae and Ryze are portrayed as dynamic, complex, and psychologically developed, female characters are often represented as idealized, static, and constrained by traditional stereotypes. The study also highlights that the narrative is predominantly presented through the perspectives of Kalista, Grae, and Ryze, making their focalization central to readers' understanding of events.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates that the novel largely unfolds through the perspectives of Kalista, Grae, and Ryze, providing readers with deeper access to their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. This use of perspective significantly shapes how characters and events are perceived throughout the narrative.

This study is relevant to the present research because it examines *Ruination* and acknowledges the importance of character perspectives in shaping readers' interpretations. However, its primary focus is gender representation and characterization rather than narratology. The discussion of perspective is employed only to support the analysis of gender roles and stereotypes. In contrast, the present study focuses specifically on Mieke Bal's theory of focalization and investigates how focalization functions in portraying negative childism, particularly through the representation of Viego's experiences of neglect, manipulation, and emotional deprivation. Therefore, this research offers a different perspective by linking narratology and childism studies in the analysis of *Ruination*.

Based on the previous studies, it can be observed that childism has been examined in relation to oppression, empowerment, and adult-child power relations (Moore, 2018), while Joosen (2018) emphasizes the importance of combining childism with narratological approaches. Recent research on *Kita Pergi Hari Ini* (2026) has further demonstrated how focalization can be employed to analyze both positive and negative childism within literary narratives. In addition, previous research on *Ruination* has focused on gender representation, characterization, and

narrative perspectives, particularly through the viewpoints of Kalista, Grael, and Ryze.

However, none of these studies specifically investigate how focalization functions as a narrative strategy for portraying negative childism. Moreover, no previous research has analyzed Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination* through the combined framework of Mieke Bal's focalization theory and childism studies. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how focalization shapes readers' understanding of Viego's experiences of emotional neglect, manipulation, and lack of recognition, and how these experiences contribute to the portrayal of negative childism within the novel.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Building on the research background previously outlined, narrative perspective plays an important role in shaping readers' understanding of characters, events, and social issues represented in literary texts. In Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination* (2022), indications of negative childism can be observed through Viego's experiences of emotional neglect, manipulation, and lack of emotional support during his childhood. These experiences are not presented directly but are mediated through the narrative perspective employed in the novel. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the role of focalization in portraying negative childism in *Ruination*.

Based on this issue, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How is focalization employed in Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*?
2. How does focalization contribute to the portrayal of negative childism in *Ruination*?

1.3 Research Objective

In analyzing the impact of negative childism represented by the character in *Ruination* novel through narratological approaches, this study primarily aims to:

1. To identify and analyze the forms of focalization employed in Anthony Reynolds' *Ruination*.
2. To examine how focalization contributes to the portrayal of negative childism in *Ruination*

1.4 Research Purpose

1. Theoretically

This research is expected to increase the reader's wealth of knowledge about literature research, especially on inner conflict analysis. In addition, it can be used as material for further research to increase the ability to appreciate literary works.

2. Practically

The results of this study can add benefits for readers to appreciate a literary work as well as provide new experiences about various things around and how to react to them.

