CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the background of research, statement of problem, research question, purpose and significance of research, definition of key term, previous study, and organization of writing.

A. Background of Research

Sign has an important role in human’s life. Human intellectual and social life is based on the production, use, and exchange of signs. As well as language provides so many signs as something that stands for something else, signs are taken as the representations of reality. Words and images are the decorative displays of signs in our contemporary circumstances, so it will be advanced by providing meaningful understandings through exploring the signifying process of those signs. Human can find it by giving attention to the sign and searching it to see its wider relation to the world. The sign is therefore a becoming, not only of its own meaning, but also of the entire world in which human lives.¹

Barthes postulates a theory of signs in his semiology called myth. The analysis of myth is in articulating the relationship between all aspects of a sign system that constructs meaning around cultural assumptions embedded in the form. It is according to Barthes that “any semiology postulates a relation between

¹ Arthur Asa Berger, *Pengantar Semiotika*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2010), pg. 185
two terms, a signifier and a signified.”\textsuperscript{2} The relation itself then becomes the important aspect because meanings must have a form or pattern of existence in order to be shared with others. Therefore there are three terms in the formula of signifying process in which the third term is something that relates the two other terms, as Barthes states “For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms.”\textsuperscript{3}

Myth is the second-order semiological system which is based on the linguistic system as the first-order semiological system.\textsuperscript{4} This linguistic system is constructed by a signifier, a signified, and a sign as the associative total of them called language object, while the mythical system is constructed by a form, a concept, and a signification or myth itself\textsuperscript{5} in which those aspects are what Hjelmslev formulates as expression (signifier in linguistic system or form in mythical system), relation (sign in linguistic system or signification in mythical system), and content (signified in linguistic system or concept in mythical system).\textsuperscript{6}

According to Barthes in \textit{Image Music Text}, narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances, as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation; it

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pg. 111
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., pg. 113
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pg. 115
\textsuperscript{6} Roland Barthes, \textit{Elements of Semiology}, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pg. 31
begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. It means that narrative offers a medium in which what Barthes argues as structure or the sign form. Signifying process is the way to generate meaning or message, it means there is a process of communication.

Using signs to generate meaning in the process of communication is not only through talking but also writing such as a narrative in the novel. Barthes states that “narrative as object is the point of a communication. There is a donor of the narrative and a receiver of the narrative. There can be no narrative without a narrator and a listener (or reader).” So narrative constitutes signs that contain their message or meaning.

There is also a process of communication through reading that, in this case, to generate the message through language as a sign form. Barthes states that “as far as perception is concerned, writing and pictures, for instance, do not call upon the same type of consciousness; and even with pictures, one can use many kinds of reading.” Then, the message or Barthes calls it in *Mythologies* as a speech can be found from its mythical speech. “Mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness.” It means that myth can also work in narrative, because a narrative as a process of communication through reading involves a narrator, a reader, and messages formed by language as signs,
is generating to be understood. The narrative as the object in this research in which becomes the material of myth is a novel by Jeff Kinney titled *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney is a story of Greg Heffley, a boy who calls his diary as a journal, and his experiences in his middle school. It is a sample of novel that contains narrative as the material of mythical speech, because narrative, which simply can be defined as a story or an account of a sequence of events in the order in which they happened in a number of different situations\(^\text{11}\), depends on the context of the text constructed by words and its underlying meaning, that is, what happens and what these events mean. So, as a literary work, novel in which the narrative constructed by words, contains the sign form that presents at least three meaning; literal, textual, and contextual\(^\text{12}\), to comprehend it more than what appears. Let take an example of myth as type of speech in a narrative of this novel,

“First of all, let me get something straight: This is a journal, not a diary. I know what it says on the cover, but when mom went out to buy this thing I specifically told her to get one that didn’t say “diary” on it. Great. All I need is for some jerk to catch me carrying this book around and get the wrong idea. The other thing I want to clear up right away is that this was Mom’s idea, not mine.”\(^\text{13}\)

Greg Heffley is a boy who receives a diary, which he refers to a journal, from his mother. The word diary denotes a book which spaces for each day of the

\(^{13}\) Jeff Kinney, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, (New York: Amulet Books, 2007), pg. 1
year in which you can write down things you have to do in the future or the experiences you have each day, your private thoughts, etc. From the denoted meaning, there is no specification both of boys or girls. But then Greg’s rejection to the word diary makes another interpretation beyond his perception about it.

In the context of Greg’s rejection of the word diary to his book and mistreatment he is afraid to get, the sign system reveals a cultural stereotype about gender beyond a boy’s simple perception about having a book called diary, he considers that ‘diary’ leads to something identically to the girls, in the relation to the form of communication implying the meaning of myth that men or boys through Greg’s character are defined as active agents by what they do logically, a man is expected as a figure which is strong, not sentimental, brave, full of self confidence, etc. labeled to masculine characteristics. On the contrary, women or girls are defined passively by having a certain attitude through their feelings expression, a woman is expected as a figure which is weak, gentle, obedient, fainthearted, careful, etc. labeled to feminine characteristics. Beyond Greg’s perception, diary is not a daily note book that records the course of his experiences or his private thoughts, diary is something related to the girls for expressing their feelings in it each day, so that he refers to say it as journal. The acceptable genders in this society are man or boy and woman or girl, so the narrative of a child’s imagination provides the form to construct this cultural stereotype about gender culturally defined male and female characteristics in the human circumstance. Gender is one of the universal dimensions on which status differences are based. Unlike sex, which is a biological concept, gender is a social
construction specifying the socially and culturally prescribed roles that men and women are to follow.

Myth, therefore, works in the relation of the elements of its material because the signification of signs is interpreting the relation between the sign system; those are the signifier and the signified. It is a unity of form and concept. Based on the background description above, the writer is interested to analyze myth and the mythical characteristics in narrative structure of Jeff Kinney’s *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and entitled the paper as “Myth in Narrative Structure of Jeff Kinney’s *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*”.

B. Statement of Problem

In *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, myth works in its narrative structure constructed by words as the form of sign system. On the plane of language, the sign system is constructed by the signifier, sign, and signified. While on the plane of myth, the sign system is constructed by the form, signification, and concept. Using Hjelmslev’s theoretical model of interpreting sign, Barthes argues that E-R-C—expression (signifier/form), relation (sign/signification), and content (signified/concept)—is the basic and general sign system. Because of myth is the second-order semiological system based on the linguistic system, the formula of mythical system is E2 (E1 R1 C1) R2 C2. The narrative structures of this novel become the materials of myth in which the signification lends to the mythical speech of the story.
Therefore, the problem in this research concerns the searching of the relation (sign/signification) of myth and the mythical characteristics in narrative structure of Kinney’s *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* through a process that is constructed by the relevant theory of myth by Roland Barthes.

**C. Research Questions**

1. What is the relation of myth in narrative structure of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*?

2. What are the mythical characteristics in the narrative structure of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* based on the system of myth?

**D. Purpose and Significance of Research**

The Purposes of this research are:

a. To find out the relation of myth in narrative structure of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

b. To find out the mythical characteristics in the narrative structure of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* based on the system of myth.

The Significance of this research is academically directed to the reader generally, and be used as one of the sources of information for the next research.
E. Definition of Key Terms

1. Myth: a second-order semiological system. It is a mode of signification in which the meaning conveyed by a text or discourse is constructed by the two semiological systems; linguistic system and mythical system.

2. Relation: a meaningful connection or association between two or more things based on the similarity or relevance of one thing to another that, in this case, between the signifier and signified that construct the sign. As myth is constructed by two semiological systems, there are two relations in myth; the literal relation that constructs the denotative meaning and the symbolical or indexical relation that constructs the connotative meaning.

3. Mythical characteristics: the sets of qualities which describe myth as the distinctive signifying process. Mythical characteristics are divided into: a) myth as type of speech, b) myth as semiological system, c) myth as stolen language, and d) myth as depolitized language.

F. Previous Study

The study about myth had been researched by Erfan M. Fauzi and Devi Astriyanti NA as their graduating papers. Erfan researched about *Myth of Modern Capitalism on Narrative Structure of E. M. Forster’s Howards End*, while Devi researched about *The Mythical System of English Kings’ and Queens’ Sobriquets*. Erfan focused his research on the analysis of myth based on the history of modern capitalism in twentieth century, while Devi focused her research on the analysis of mythical system and ideological fragment of English Kings’ and Queens’
sobriquet based on the history of the English Kings and Queens in ninth century until twentieth century.

Myth also had been researched by Elliot Gaines. He analyzed myth of the TV animation, *The Simpsons*. He focused his analysis on the social issues and cultural values through the characters and characterizations built in the TV animation of *The Simpsons*.\(^\text{14}\) So, although Devi, Erfan, Elliot, and the researcher research about myth, the difference of the previous studies with this research is the objects because the researcher focused the research on the analysis of the relation of myth and the mythical characteristics in narrative of Jeff Kinney’s *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

The study of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* had been analyzed by Ashley Park and she focused her study on the analysis of the intrinsic structure of the novel such as theme, characters, setting and point of view.\(^\text{15}\) The difference with this study is what the analysis focused on. Ashley analyzed this novel to find out and describe the intrinsic elements of the novel while the researcher analyzed the novel to find out the relation of myth and the mythical characteristics with using a theory of myth by Roland Barthes.

G. Organization of Writing

This research is written in five chapters. Chapter I: Introduction, this chapter deals with the background of research, statement of problem, research question, purpose and significance of research, definition of key term, previous


\(^{15}\) Ashley Park, *Concept Analysis*, (http://prkcs.wordpress.com, 2009) at August 25\(^{th}\) 2011
study, and organization of writing. Chapter II: Theory of Sign and Description of Diary of a Wimpy Kid, this chapter reviews theories underlying and supporting the research including: a) general theories of sign, b) Barthes’s theory of sign and myth as mode of signification, and c) the description of Diary of A Wimpy Kid include; about Diary of A Wimpy Kid, synopsis of Diary of A Wimpy Kid, and Diary of A Wimpy Kid as semiological writing. Chapter III: Methodology of Research, this chapter elaborates methodology of this research. It begins with the method of research, the data, and sources of data, the technique of collecting data, and ends with the technique of analyzing data.

Chapter IV: Myth in Narrative Structure of Jeff Kinney’s Diary of a Wimpy Kid, this chapter contains the process of analyzing the data, and then combined with the theories to get the analysis result for answering the research problems or research questions. The data representation and understanding based on Barthes’s theory are divided into two parts. The first part provides the data representation and understanding about The Relation of Myth in Narrative Structure of Diary of a Wimpy Kid which is divided into: a) Symbolical Relation and b) Indexical Relation. While the second part provides the data representation and understanding about The Mythical Characteristics in Narrative Structure of Diary of a Wimpy Kid which are divided into: a) Myth as a Type of Speech, b) Myth as Semiological System, c) Myth as Stolen Language, and d) Myth as Depolitized Language. Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestion, this last chapter contains the conclusions or the result of analysis and the suggestions for further research.