

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter is divided by some matters. Those are background of the problem, statement of the problem, research objective, research significance, and definition of key term.

1.1 Background of the Research

Everything in this world might have changes in it, including literary world. As it is argued by Adi that, “*Sejalan dengan perkembangan modernisasi, industri dan urbanisasi, terjadi juga perkembangan dalam bentuk sastra*” (24). It is known nowadays that there are generally two kinds of literature, those are high literature and popular literature. Adi then says that popular literature studies exist along with the development of popular culture studies which is begun since 1960s (24).

Gelder states that one of the ways to think about popular fiction is in terms of genre. This term simply means the type or species of fiction being written (40). Adi argues each type of genre has its own formula or archetype (68). Then Cawelti says that this formula created for the purpose of enjoyment and pleasure (2). This research is concerned with one of the genres, that is Western.

Koontz argues that Western has many kind of plot types (78), nevertheless all of the stories have the same setting, that is American West. It is same as what Gordon and Kuehner proposed that Western is a popular fiction which typically set in the American West of the 1800s (317). Cawelti says that Western formula

firstly appear when Cooper made a combination of fictional materials dealing with the settlement of the American wilderness and the archetypal pattern of the adventure story (192). American wilderness becomes an important formula in Western because in American wilderness, frontier myth is existed. Hausladen proposes that America is the most associated with the concept of myth than the other region (5). This concept of myth lives in America over many generation and believes by them as a set of stories which has social function.

The concept of myth, according to Slotkin, is the story which is drawn from history and got through usage over many generations. This is has function as a symbol to the cultural functioning of the society that makes them (16). Then, Mark Schorer in Kapell says that myth is the instrument to make our experience intelligible. A myth is a large, controlling image which gives philosophical meaning of ordinary life and has organizing value for experience (3). In line with that Northrop Fyre argues that a myth is a story, narrative, or plot which possesses a certain social function (Adi 2). It can be understood that a myth is a set of stories or facts and these facts give meanings and social functions to the people whom possess them.

Frontier, according to Turner, is the outer edge of the meeting point between savagery and civilization. Furthermore he says that edge of free land is the most significant thing about American frontier (28). Frontier cannot be separated from American history, because America is shaped by frontier. They who had driven out from their old world —Europe, tried to look for new opportunities and better life in the new world.

Nevertheless, making life in this new world is not easy because the condition of the free land itself. It is not civilization as their old world, so that they had to survive and make a new living. Turner says that the frontier is the rapid and effective place for Americanization. In this area, American try to fit themselves into the landscape. From the very modern life, they must learn a new life in America, such as they had to be usual with birth canoe rather than railroad car, and they had to strip off the garments of civilization and put on the hunting shirt and the moccasin. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the men. They must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so they fit themselves into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. This makes new products of human, that is American (29).

Turner conveys that American did something different from what they had done in old world. Frontier is the place where American born. Born to be the other nation. Frontier becomes the significant differentiation between American and European. Consequently, Turner previously proposes that the fluidity of American life such as the expansion to westward, its new opportunities, its continuous touch, primitive society along with its simplicity, furnish the forces dominating American character, that is why Turner says that this is an American perennial rebirth (28).

This new culture makes new character to American. American are trained by the situation of land in America. Hard-work, self reliance, and optimistic are the instruments which are needed by them. As Turner says that the advance of the

frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines (30).

The myth of frontier came into existence in long time ago. As Harrison argues in his thesis that the myth of the frontier may broadly be traced to the middle of the nineteenth century (10). Another opinion proposed by Slotkin that the myth of the frontier is arguably the longest-lived of American myths, with origins in the colonial period and a powerful continuing presence in contemporary culture (15).

It can be seen that the myth of the frontier has been lived for many years. Even nowadays, frontier myth still exist among American. Simonson in his introduction of *The Significance of The Frotier in American History* says that the frontier was significant in American development is a fact which still stands unrefuted (21), because this myth is spreading out through every single thing of American life, including literature as the product of culture. Slotkin argues that the myth of the frontier is expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual, historiography and polemics produced over a period of three centuries (Hausladen 6). In line with that, Adi argues that, *“Segala sesuatu, baik itu artefak yang ada di dalam fiksi populer seperti mobil, diskotik, rumah, atau baju maupun kejadian-kejadian di dalam cerita pastilah berasal dari segala sesuatu yang berkembang di dalam masyarakat dan apa yang berkembang dari masyarakat tentulah berasal dari kesepakatan-kesepakatan tidak sadar sehingga muncul kesamaan persepsi”* (213).

It means that in a novel for instance, the myth will be laid on and could be seen through the story.

Zane Grey is one of the most influential western writers in his age. Blake argues in his essay that Grey's novels crystallized a set of symbols for the American West in the minds of his millions of readers. Grey infused the frontier myth with vivid imagery of a sublime and beautiful landscape inhabited by heroic cowboys deadly gunmen, polygamous Mormons, and noble Indians. (vol.85 no.2) *Riders of the Purple Sage* is one of his novels which portrayed American West vividly. Besides Coombs states *Riders of the Purple Sage* is said as one of the best seller and influential novel ever which had been written by Zane Grey (www.zgws.org/sf3.php).

The reason why the researcher took this novel is because the researcher only found a few research in this faculty which examines western novel. There are many researches about popular literature but the researchers just took romance, adventure or detective genre. In popular fiction, western is one of the longest in evolution for developing the formula. Cawelti argues that the western is particularly interesting subject since its story covers nearly one hundred and fifty years and several different media (192).

Furthermore, the reason why the researcher took a discussion about frontier myth is because this matter is an interesting thing. Frontier becomes something which had to be existed in Western fiction. Frontier is America's source where it can be a big State in the world now. It is because frontier contains some myths which are used and believed by American, so that they made American into nowadays people.

There have been several researches related to Frontier Myth and Western Fiction which becomes the object such as *“Trauma and Mythologies of the Old West in the Western Novels of Cormac McCarthy”* by Harrison in 2012 which concluded that McCarthy’s novels reveals the myth of the Old West and its destructive influence through his fiction and the individual stories which encapsulate the pervasive loss which shows that from the five novel which become the object of Harrison research, they are have the same plot of story, there always exists “something lost” and then the hero will pursue that lost till he win. Next *“Changing Landscapes: American Frontier Mythology and “Place-Making” in Popular Western Narratives”* by Duran-Cox in 2010 which concluded that Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail*, Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, and Joan Didion’s *Where I was From* offer examples of how the frontier and its mythology have been a symbol of change in American literature. The settings of these novels are important because they all demonstrate a break from the past. This thesis explains that the meaning of frontier becomes different from time to time. This does not mean that frontier disappear, nevertheless frontier still exist in American paradigm through different way. Although their researches are about frontier myth, nevertheless this research has some differences. Firstly, the object of this research just one novel, secondly this research would examines frontier myths in relation to habitual action of American people in the novel and the significances behind them.

1.2 Statement of Problem

From the background above, the researcher finds that novel *Riders of the Purple Sage* represents frontier myth which portrayed along the novel. Hence the problem, can be formulated into following question :

1. How are frontier myths portrayed in *Riders of the Purple Sage*?
2. What are the significances of those frontier myths to the life of American people portrayed in *Riders of the Purple Sage*?

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives of the research are mentioned as followings :

1. To portray frontier myths portrayed in *Riders of The Purple Sage*.
2. To analyze the significances of those frontier myths to the life of American people portrayed in *Riders of the Purple Sage*.

1.4 Research Significance

Practically, the significance of this research, for the researcher, is a study for improving the understanding related to the popular study and also this research adds a new understanding about frontier myth in western fiction. For the other researchers, this research could be a guidance or reading source for their researches related to frontier myth in western fiction. For the reader, this research is significant especially for the student of literary faculty for becoming the reference in popular literature.

Theoretically, this research directed to develop research about western fiction in popular literature. Besides for knowing that it is true that in western novel, there is frontier which makes some constructed myths in western fiction that becomes the important one.

1.5 Definitions of Key Term

To avoid any misunderstanding, especially for the readers, in this section will be presented some key terms which contained in this research. This is a brief explanation in order to emphasize the meaning of the terms in literature. The definitions in this research are :

1. Popular Fiction: Literature which is made not for its art nor its quality sake which could become an everlasting thing but made for its pleasure and enjoyment for the reader.

2. Frontier: It is a boundary. In American culture, frontier divides between savagery/wilderness and civilization. Frontier gives the hard life for its people because of its environment.

3. Myth: A set of stories or characteristics which is laid and clung to a group of people. This a set of stories or characteristics is believed by the people over many generations for its social function.

4. Western: One of genre in popular fiction which the base of the story is about adventure and set in American West. The story could be the lawman story, the

outlaw story, the cattle range story, the revenge story, the opening-the-wild-west story, the battle of titans story, and the cavalry and Indian story.

