



**MAGICAL REALISM IN LAURA RUBY'S *BONE GAP***

**THESIS**

**By:**

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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

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**THESIS**

Submitted to English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Sarjana Sastra in English Studies

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**WIDAD ABDUL HAMID**

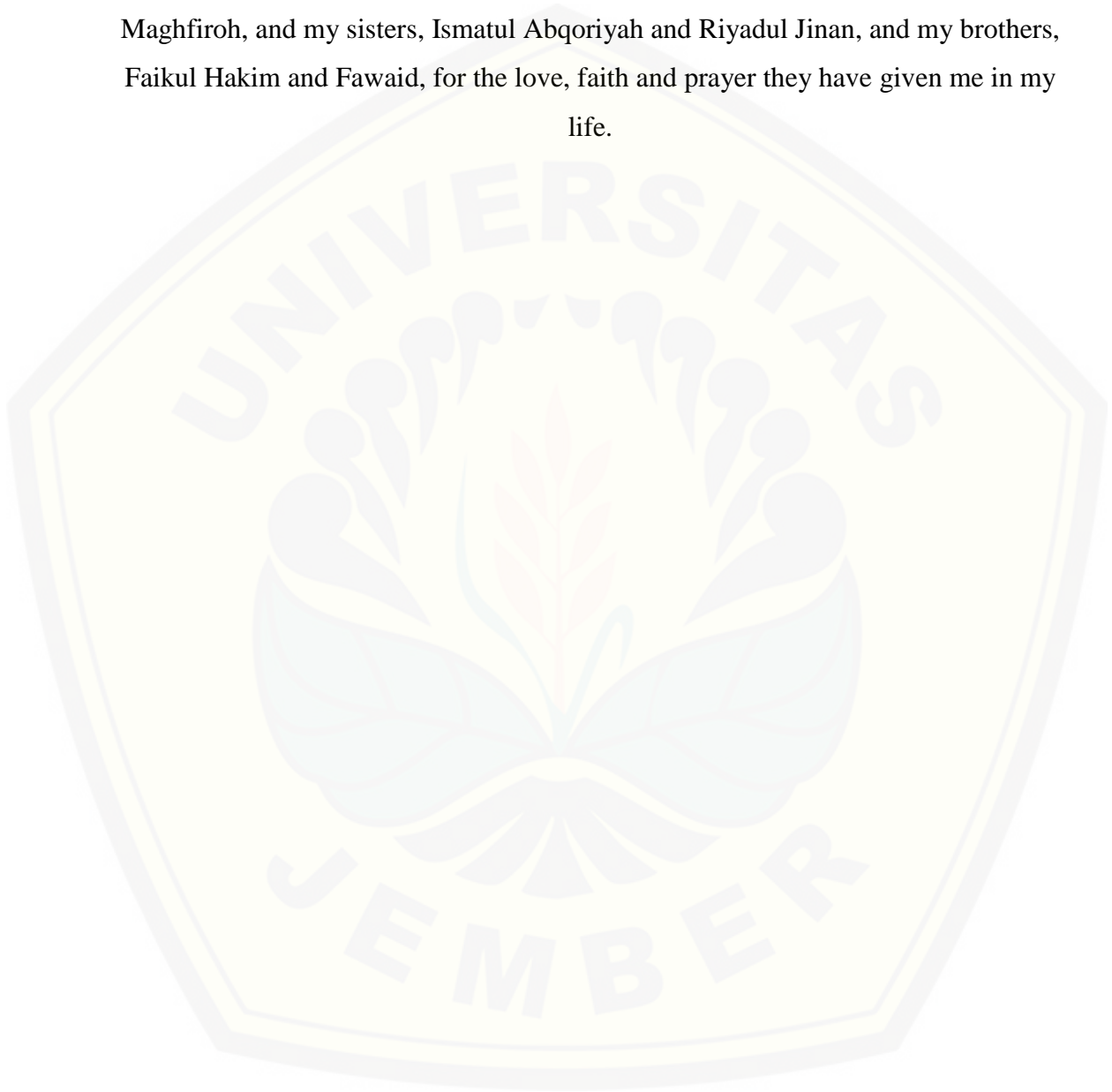
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my loveliest parents, Abdul Hamid Musthafa and Maghfiroh, and my sisters, Ismatul Abqoriyah and Riyadul Jinan, and my brothers, Faikul Hakim and Fawaid, for the love, faith and prayer they have given me in my life.





**MOTTO**

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

( Søren Kierkegaard )



## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “**Magical Realism in Laura Ruby’s *Bone Gap***” is an original writing. The analysis and research contained in this thesis have never been done for any degree or publication. I also validate that sources utilized and supports received in the process of writing this thesis have all been acknowledged.

Jember, 5th October 2018

The Writer,

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## SUMMARY

**Magical Realism in *Bone Gap* by Laura Ruby;** Widad Abdul Hamid, 140110101071; 48 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

This study analyzes the phenomena of magical things and real things in the novel entitled *Bone Gap* by Laura Ruby. Magical phenomena in this story are presented through the depiction of Greek mythology whereas the reality is the realistic detail of the magical things. The story highlights both phenomena which are emerged as supernatural realm and ordinary realm as the representation of the realms that has purpose to show the acceptance of the supernatural realm in the ordinary life. In this case, I use magical realism because the merging of those realms as the important phenomena in the novel that becomes the main concept in magical realism analysis. Thus, I analyze it using magical realism theory by Wendy B Faris who serves 5 elements to categorize the text is magical realism or not. These 5 elements include the irreducible element (magical events), the phenomenal world (realistic events), unsettling doubt (hesitation circumstances), merging realm (intersection of the world), and the disrupted time, space and identity (the strange phenomena that disrupt the normal time, space and identity). The elaboration of these elements then will be analyzed using defocalization as a narrative technique. The defocalization hereby is used to determine the mode of writing to find out the discourse of indeterminacy.

Qualitative research is used in this research since the data are in the form of words and sentences. The data are divided into primary and secondary data. The primary data are taken from the narrative structures in *Bone Gap* that presents about magic and realistic phenomena. The secondary data are taken from some books and literary reviews which related to the topic discussed, such as books, thesis, internet sources and literature journal to obtain facts and ideologies of magical realism.

As the result of this thesis, it can be concluded that the five elements of magical realism are definable proportionally in *Bone Gap*. *Bone Gap* belongs to all of the elements though the emphasizing is on the supernatural realm and ordinary realm that are presented together. The story also serves the closeness of two realms which seen as other reality by presenting the conversation of Finn with the supernatural kidnapper. Besides, the uncanny and hesitation are presented in the story to leave a doubt which can be seen from the confusion between dream and not a dream that happens to Roza. The doubt also gives a fact that the time, space and identity are disrupted. In addition, double focalization also appears in the story since the supernatural and ordinary realms meet. This condition interprets defocalization that creates the indeterminacy of the text and the space of ineffable in between.

The indeterminacy of the narrative in line with the social condition in the 21st century in America especially in Chicago that happens in the novel. The author presents the establishment of postmodernity in the 21st century since the author as a modern American recalls Greek mythology and traditionality in *Bone Gap* through her masterpiece. The author hereby celebrates the uncertainties and the relativities through the narrative. Besides, the author does not out of modernity patent as her trace being modern American. Accordingly, the author had succeeded in negotiating Greek mythology and traditionality as other realities in modern America that remove the boundary between traditional and modern writing through *Bone Gap* which saw as magical realism. In addition, *Bone Gap* as magical realism also can be seen as hybridization in its structure since the story presents the two contrasting terms “Greek mythology” and “realistic detail” that are juxtaposed. From the facts above, magical realism can be seen from postmodern perspective and hybrid mode as postcolonial perspective.



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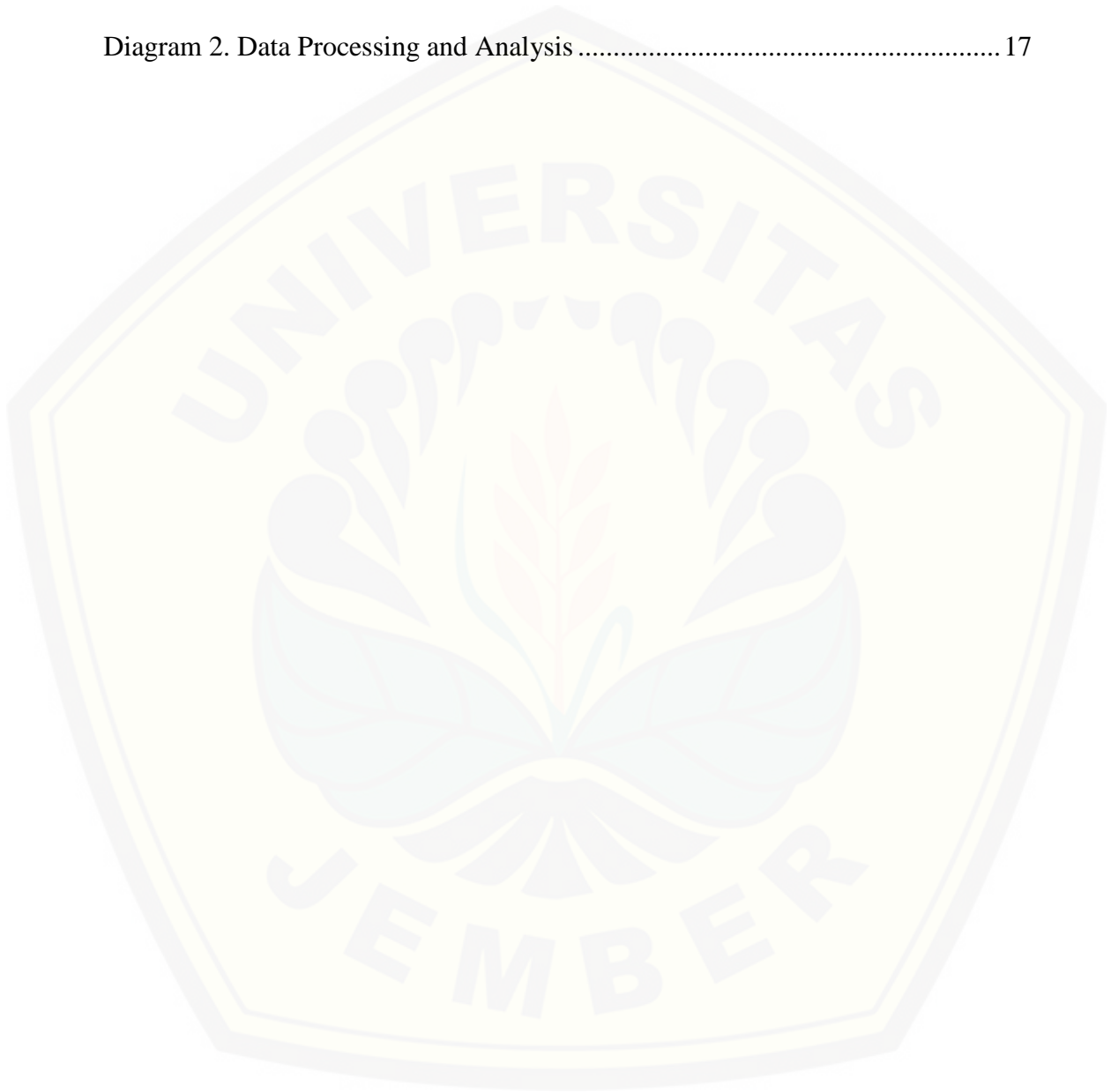
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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of several sub-chapters which are the background of study, the research questions, the scope of study and the purposes of the study. Each of them will be presented as follows:

### 1.1 The Background of Study

The emergence of magical realism in modern life have contributed to the development of literary works which accentuate another point of view 'traditional value' that has been alienated by the thoughts of realists dominance. Therefore, magical realism emerges as a part of the resistance to modern thought by presenting the contrasting term between 'realism' and 'magic'. Realism aims to create a depiction of actual life because magical realism relies upon the presentation of real by using magical element as if it was real. In other word, magical element is explained like normal occurrences which is presented in a straight forward manner then allows 'real' and 'fantastic' to be accepted in the same stream of thought.

Essentially, magical realism can be related into two fields of study such as postcolonial and postmodern. In postcolonial study, magical realism has important position in reflecting the cultural moment of postcolonialism and achieving substansial work within it (Faris, 2004: 1). It also represents innovation and re-emergence of subordinate narratives in metropolitan centers (Faris, 2004: 1-2). Thus, the real narrative technique of magical realism grows within cultural conditions and the response of this cultural condition is what frames the postcolonial perspectives (Pujiati, 2017:matatimoer.or.id). On the other hand, magical realism also contributes to the growth of a 'postmodern literary sensibility' (Faris, 2004: 1). Magical realism as a narrative mode that is presenting 'indeterminacy' which is one of the features of postmodernism (Septiana, 2015: 2). This kind of narrative called as 'defocalization' because two radically different perspectives 'realism and magic' are presented at once

(Faris, 2004: 43). It contributes to postmodernism literature because of its heterogeneity.

The object of this analysis is a novel entitled *Bone Gap*. The novel written by Laura Ruby is published in Chicago, 2015. It indicates the presence of realism and magic because "*Bone Gap* marks Laura Ruby as one of fiction's most original voices. This novel is magic realism at its most magical." — E. Lockhart, author of *We Were Liars*. Further, it tells about secluded rural town named Bone Gap which has wide enough gap for people to slip through, or slip away, leaving only their stories behind known as the underworld. The conflict occurred when Finn and Sean found Roza, a beautiful girl who one day appeared mysteriously in their barn disappeared mysteriously. Presumably, Roza was carried away by a mysterious kidnapper to the gap of Bone Gap. Finn tried to find a gap to where Roza lived. In his journey, he found a river among worlds which brought him into the gap of Bone Gap and met with a powerful kidnapper who had magical power. Finn experiences something natural for an extraordinary realm, but contradicts to the laws of nature. At the end of the story, Finn and Roza can defeat the kidnapper and get out of the gap safely.

The main setting in *Bone Gap* is in Bone Gap, Illinois, US that is located in Midwestern state. In the story, Ruby played the distinction of the settings which were found the opposition toward them. Bone Gap is described as a village with the rural life while Chicago, Illinois, US is pictured as the metropolitan city—the place for people to reach their dream. In the real life, Chicago is the largest state and the third most populous city in the country. In addition, the greater Chicagoland area is the country's third largest metropolitan area and the dominant metropolis of the Midwest ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)). In 2013, *Bone Gap* was written by Ruby in her home, Chicago after she came from Bone Gap. She realistically depicted that there is other rural life in the middle of metropolitan area. People of Bone Gap still hold their traditionality and believed in quasi mythical creatures and mysterious gaps that one

can slip through to get to the other worlds (Ruby, 2015: 349). She hereby played with the idea of the myth of the gap as the traditional culture and the modern rationality through realistic detail. Moreover, she also recalled the traditionality as the exotic thing in modern world. The fact that in the middle of metropolitan area in the 21st century still there other narrative tradition “myth” and “traditionality” that its existence should be appreciated.

Ruby apparently tried to emerge the magical elements by using the recognizable supernatural realm like the gap as the underworld and a mythical past. Then, she narrates them by using the realistic detail. It conjures a narrative space that is called as ‘ineffable in-between’, a space in which the realistic and the magical coexist (Faris, 2004: 46). The ineffable of magical realism is not the final assumption since the narratives are often described in detail. However, the fact denotes that the magical elements are presented within an otherwise realistic narrative. It also leads to defocalization which creates a narrative space of the ineffable in-between because its perspective cannot be explained, yet only experienced (Faris, 2004: 46). Therefore, this space figures a sense of the mysterious within the ordinary.

Considering the facts above, I use magical realism theory from Wendy B. Faris to analyze the narrative strategy of magical phenomena in the novel. Magical realism provides the tool to analyze Ruby’s *Bone Gap* telling about the gap as the supernatural realm which closely relates to its magical things (Greek mythology), and the realistic detail (Modern culture) which is shown through the merge of the worlds by presenting the magical phenomena from traditional culture in *Bone Gap* and the modern life represented by Chicago. Thus, the focus of this research is to map out the presence of magical realism in the novel and to explore ‘defocalization’ as a narrative technique by Wendy B. Faris. Furthermore, it needs to clarify the ideology constructed through the narratives which relate to the author’s perspective and the contextual background adhered on it.



## 1.2 Research Questions

The problems that are discussed in this research are formulated into three questions. They are:

1. How is the magical realism appeared in the novel?
2. How is the defocalization in the novel?
3. What are the ideologies beyond the narrative strategy in the novel ?

## 1.3 The Scope of Study

This research uses theory from Wendy B. Faris to analyze five elements such as *Irreducible elements, Phenomenal world, Unsettling doubt, Merging realms, The disruption of time, space and identity* as the narrative strategy to categorize it as magical realism in *Bone Gap*. However, in avoiding any complicated discussions, this research focused on analyzing how defocalization as narrative technique in *Bone Gap*.

## 1.4 The purposes of study

There are some goals of this research that should be achieved :

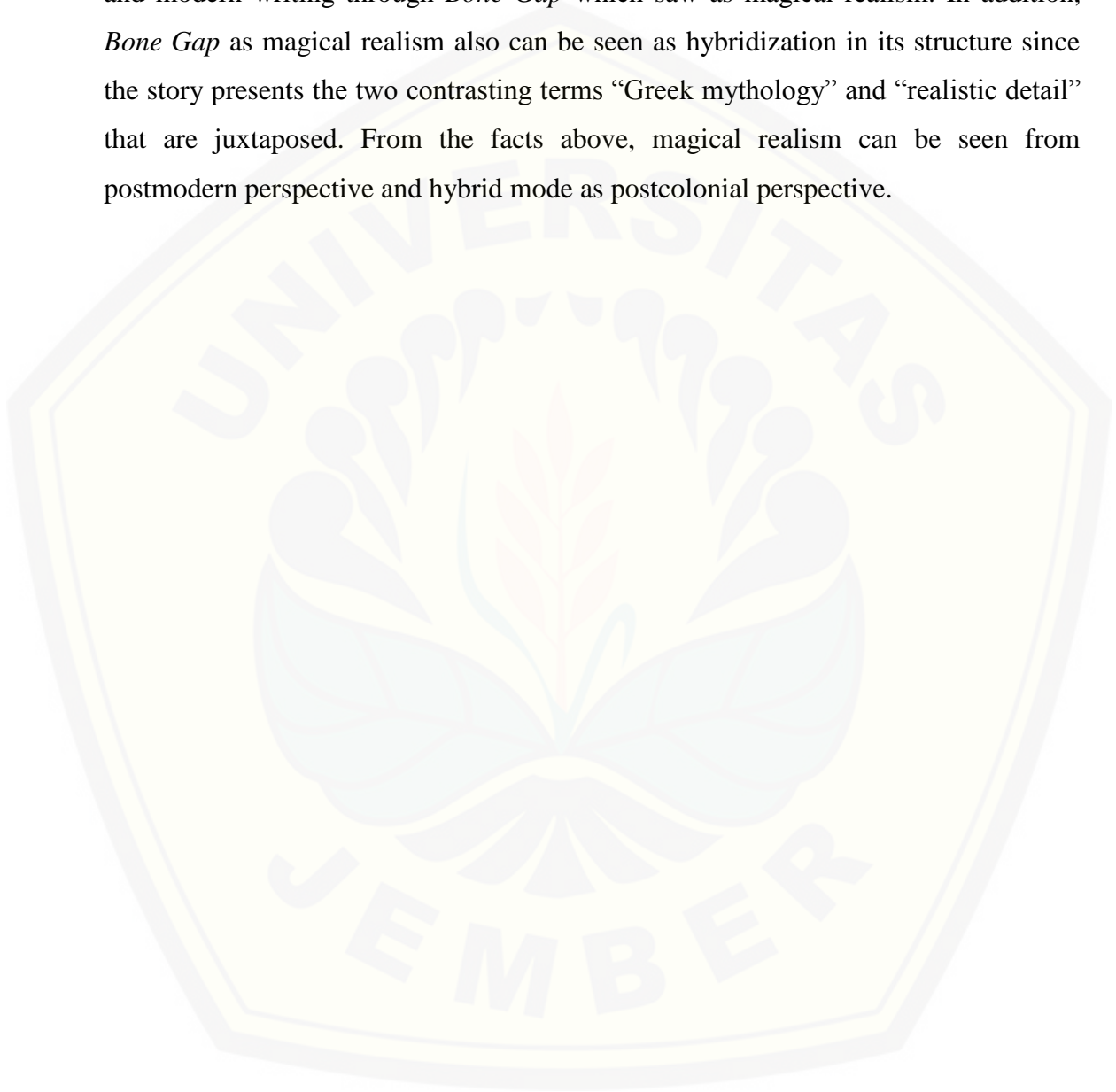
1. To describe the appereance of magical realism in the novel.
2. To map the defocalization in the novel.
3. To describe the ideologies beyond the narrative strategy in the novel.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The disparity of events in *Bone Gap* appears when myth and realistic detail is juxtaposed. Evidently, both come from two different cultures; traditional culture and modern culture. The myth is represented in the supernatural realm that presents the gap of Bone Gap and the mystical creatures while realistic detail is represented in the ordinary realm and give the clear description of the magical phenomena. The presence of myth and realistic detail in the narrative points out that the texts belong to all magical realism elements which is offered by Faris. The element of magical realism then create the indeterminacy of the text since Greek mythology is presented real. In this case, the actualization of Greek mythology and the merging of two realms blurred the supernatural and ordinary realms. Then, the text creates hesitation to offer a sense of paradox in determining which one is magic and which one is real. As the text is paradox then defocalization is used to bridge the contradict events by creating the space of ineffable in between. This shows that the meeting point of these phenomena is neither magical nor realist but in between them. Accordingly, the text is in the form of postmodern and hybrid mode that can be seen through the multi-perspective.

In line with magical realism, Ruby presents the establishment of postmodernity in the 21st century since Ruby as a modern American recalls Greek mythology and traditionality in Bone Gap through her masterpiece. Ruby hereby celebrates the uncertainties and the relativities through the narrative. The uncertainties as the proven of postmodern strategy through defocalization in the novel that breaks the single view in modern narration. It can be proven in the real description of the gap of Bone Gap as the supernatural realm which is accepted by the characters without question. Then the relativity can be proven by recalling Greek mythology and traditionality as the exotic things in the middle of modernity. Besides, Ruby does not out of modernity patent as her trace being modern American. It proves that Ruby uses the realistic detail to narrate the magical phenomena in the story.

Accordingly, Ruby had succeeded in negotiating Greek mythology and traditionality as other realities in modern America that remove the boundary between traditional and modern writing through *Bone Gap* which saw as magical realism. In addition, *Bone Gap* as magical realism also can be seen as hybridization in its structure since the story presents the two contrasting terms “Greek mythology” and “realistic detail” that are juxtaposed. From the facts above, magical realism can be seen from postmodern perspective and hybrid mode as postcolonial perspective.



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