POSTMODERN STRATEGIES IN ALEX FLINN'S *A KISS IN TIME*

THESIS

Written by:

Mas'ula

090110101009

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

JEMBER UNIVERSITY

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THESIS

Submitted to the English Department, Faculty of Humanities in partial fulfillment of
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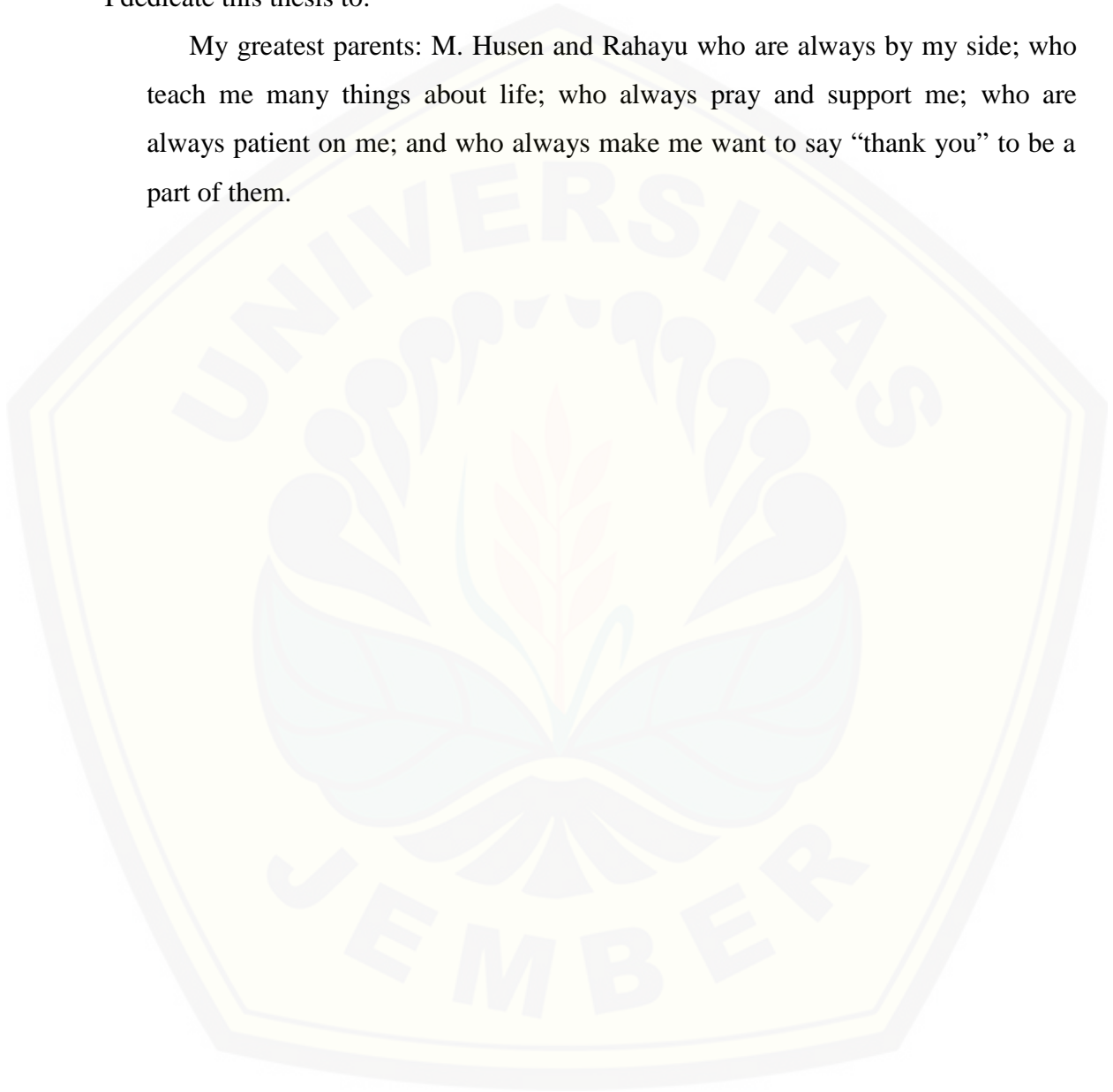
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

My greatest parents: M. Husen and Rahayu who are always by my side; who teach me many things about life; who always pray and support me; who are always patient on me; and who always make me want to say "thank you" to be a part of them.

MOTTO

"I wonder how many times in my life I would have been able to prevent something, change something, do something different, if only I'd listened to someone" (Jack)[1]

---

[1] *A Kiss in Time* by Alex Flinn

DECLARATION

I hereby state that this thesis entitled "Postmodern Strategies in Alex Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*" is an original piece of writing. I declare that the analysis and the research described in this thesis have never been submitted for any other degree or any publications.

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, 23rd June 2016

The writer,

Mas'ula

NIM 090110101009

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APPROVAL SHEET

Approved and received by the Examination Committee of English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University.

Name   : Mas'ula
Student Number : 090110101009
Title   : Postmodern Strategies in Alex Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*
Day/Date   : Thursday, 23rd June 2016
Place   : Faculty of Humanities, Jember University

Jember, 23rd June 2016

Chairman,   Secretary,

Hat Pujiati, S.S., M.A.   Irana Astutiningsih, S.S., M.A.
NIP. 198009082005012001   NIP. 197407052005012001

The Members:

1. Dr. Ikwan Setiawan, S.S., M.A.   (………………………)
   NIP. 197806262002121002

2. Dra. Supiastutik, M.Pd   (………………………)
   NIP. 196605141998032001

Approved by the Dean,

Dr. Hairus Salikin, M.Ed
NIP. 196310151989021001

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Mas'ula

SUMMARY

Postmodern Strategies in Alex Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*; Mas'ula, 090110101009; 2016: 45 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University.

A Kiss in Time is a novel written by Alex Flinn. *A Kiss in Time* is a story of Talia who was cursed to prick her finger with a spindle and saved by Jack. In general, this research discusses the postmodern strategies that are used in presenting the postmodern aspect of *A Kiss in Time*. Brian McHale's postmodern perspective is used as the theoretical framework to present the ontological dominant by analyzing the construction and confrontation of worlds in *A Kiss in Time*.

This research is a qualitative research and a documentary technique is used to collect the data for this research. The primary data of this research are any kind of information and facts about the construction of worlds, while the secondary data are any kind of facts and information about the postmodern phenomenon that support the analysis of the primary data. This research uses inductive method in analyzing the data; that the discussion goes from the specific to the general, from particular to a whole group of ideas, phenomena, or situations.

The result of this research shows that *A Kiss in Time* is governed by the ontological dominant of postmodernist fiction through the postmodern strategies found in *A Kiss in Time*. Postmodern strategies involve transwords identity, the construction and confrontation of worlds. Transworld identity represents the plurality of worlds and constructs an intertextual zone. The construction of worlds involves the complication of the ontological boundary and dimension of worlds. Furthermore, *A Kiss in Time* also reflects the condition of postmodern society by presenting the supernatural events and objects, and serves the practice of pastiche of the past and fantasy. *A Kiss in Time* also presents the condition of hyperreality by projecting the *Royal Euphrasia*, a thematic park, as an imaginary to make people believe that this is

the real, whereas all of the *Royal Euphrasia* is no longer real but belongs to the hyperreal order.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves the basic idea of doing this research. It consists of four subchapters; the background of the study, the problems to discuss and goals of the study. The background of study explains the idea of taking postmodern topic of this analysis. The problems of study are formulated into three questions related to postmodernism. The goals consist of the aim of doing the analysis.

1.1 The Background

The term *Postmodern* existed after the World War II. It is a cultural movement which has got many thinkers attention and caused much debate since then. Postmodernism is presented in many fields of studies which lead to many different definitions of them. Postmodernism is then defined based on the basic idea of the field of studies. In this research, postmodernism is explained based on art in term of literature. In art, postmodernism began to be used in New York in 1960s and emerged to European theories in 1970s. Postmodernism is the name for movement in advanced capitalist culture (Sarup, 1993: 129-131).

Postmodernism can also be defined in its relation to modernism. Brian McHale defines modernism and postmodernism in term of its dominant. According to McHale, every fiction has its own dominant which is the focusing part of fiction (McHale, 2004: 6). Either modernism and postmodernism has its own dominant; epistimological dominant for modernism and ontological dominant for postmodernism. Epistemological dominant problematizes mode of *knowing*. Epistemological dominant related to science and rationality. Therefore, modern work of art should be realistic and scientific. Different from epistemological dominant,

ontology defines as a description of world. Ontological dominant problematizes the emergence of worlds in fiction, questioning the projected, constructed and structured world. Lately in fiction, there is a shifting dominant, from epistemological to ontological dominant.

The fiction I want to analyze was written by American writer Alexandra (Alex) Flinn. It was written in 2009 entitled *A Kiss in Time*. *A Kiss in Time* was narrated by two main characters in the novel, Talia and Jack. *A Kiss in Time* is a story about a princess, Talia, who was cursed to prick her finger on a spindle and sleep until one day the princess would be awakened by her true love first kiss. Talia was cursed to sleep in 17th century and awaken in 21st century. Talia has experienced a supernatural event like a kind of apparent death and a kiss to awake her. After the kiss, Talia followed Jack, a boy who kissed her, to Miami, Florida. It was a new experience for her to live far from palace. In Miami, Talia was still haunted by the witch, Malvolia who finally kidnaped her for not believing that Talia awoke and it was Jack who awakened her. She brought Talia back to Euphrasia, to the highest cottage where she used to have picnic. In this section the story revised the first true love kiss by repeating the curse. It was to test Jack whether he was the real true love or not by giving him three games with questioned about Talia. At the end of the story, to survive in 21st century, an idea came to make Euphasia a lively history or thematic park which was called *Royal Euphrasia*. *Royal Euphrasia* represented the civilization of 17th century and also, to be always remembered, a show telling about Talia's and Jack's story.

A Kiss in Time represents a story of *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* – a story of a girl who was cursed to prick her finger on a spindle and had fallen asleep for a hundred years until a prince awakened her, and then they live happily ever after. However, *A Kiss in Time* also represents some fictions and movies such as *Snow White, Shrek 2, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star War, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Those fictions and movies only emerge in the form of fragments into *A Kiss in Time*. The

emergence of those fictions and movies shows that the world in *A Kiss in Time* is plural. Postmodern analysis problematizes the emergences of worlds or plurality of worlds in fiction.

Considering the fact above which is *A Kiss in Time* presents the plurality of the worlds, postmodern analysis is chosen for this research. This research is done to analyze the emergence of worlds in *A Kiss in Time*, using the postmodern strategies. Therefore, this thesis is entitled "Postmodern Strategies in Alex Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*".

2.1 The Research Questions

As I explain in the subchapter above, I formulate three research questions as follow:

a. What kinds of worlds are presented in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*?
b. What are the postmodern strategies used to construct the worlds in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*?
c. What is beyond the postmodern strategies constructed in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*?

3.1 The Research Goals

This research has some goals to reach. Those goals are specific and general goals. Firstly, this research aims to discuss the presentation of fictional and real world in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. Secondly, this research aims to discuss the postmodern strategies used to construct worlds in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. Thirdly, this research is to discuss the construction of worlds as the postmodern strategies in the relation to postmodern culture.

Another goal of this research is to contribute to postmodern criticism particularly in applying postmodern theory through literary works. Furthermore, this research aims to relate the literary work to postmodern culture. I also hope this research gives readers new perspective or brief understanding related to postmodern criticism or postmodern culture.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the previous researches, the theoretical framework and the concepts related to the topic and object that is analyzed in this research. This chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first subchapter talks about the previous researches related to postmodernism and ontological dominant, while the second subchapter is the explanation of Brian McHale's postmodern perspective, in which the theoretical framework I used in this research.

2.1 The Previous Researches

The first article was written in 1999 by Maria Jesus Martinez: *Postmodernism and the Ontological Dominant: The Poetic of Integration in Peter Ackroyd's The House of Doctor Dee*. This article combines two theories: one is Brian McHale's theory, how ontological dominant takes over epistemological dominant, and another is john Vernon' garden/ map dynamic. Epistemological dominant takes around the problems related to the circulation of knowledge. It is shown by the characters, Matthew and his friend in which they work as researchers. They validate their research by science. However, the research brought Matthew to the past. The house he has just moved, once belong to one of the most famous magician in the time of Elizabeth I, the sixteenth century, Dr. Dee. Matthew has special interest to the house. Here, the epistemological dominant fade out, taken over by the ontological dominant. Ontological dominant includes the confrontation of two or more worlds and the destabilization of the projected worlds. The emergence of world, according to Martinez is showed by the world of Dr. Dee and Matthew, the present and the past, the history and story, the world of the novel. Those worlds emerge by the transworld

identity. Through the transworld identity Dr. Dee and also Peter Ackroyd are brought to the novel. Therefore, the existence of fictional world and real world of historical fact becomes blurring. BesidesMatthew, Dr. Dee is also the narrated person in the novel. Some chapters are told by Matthew and some by Dr. Dee. Matthew also enters through the era of Dr. Dee, looking for him. Besides the blurring of fictional and real world, the worlds in Dr. Dee are multileveled. Those levels are the book -- the house -- the building -- the vision -- the book. Epistemological dominant that is taken over by the ontological dominant are also explained by the structure of splitting and wholeness that is associated with the map and the garden. Vernon garden is the Garden of Eden which represents the principle of unity and integration, while the map represents the separation. The symbol of the Garden is the Tree Of Life, the Tree reenacts the whole cosmos and the very rhythm of life; the fluid unity of part and whole. The symbol of map is the Tree of Knowledge. Formal knowledge relies on formal logic. According to Martinez, postmodernism belong to the garden not the map. McHale's ontological questions reveal the similarity of diversity in unity – several worlds in my world, several selves in my self. Therefore, the work of Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* reveals the postmodernist themes and strategies; self-consciousness, structural games, transworld identity, and blurring of boundaries.

The second analysis is written by Jesper Holmbach in 2009 entitled *A Metaphysical Can of Worms: A Poetics of Postmodernism in the Works of Charlie Kaufman*. This analysis aims to spell out a poetic of postmodernism in Charlie Kauman's screenplay; *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Adaptation* (2002). Holmbach combines two postmodern theories by Brian McHale and Linda Hutcheon. McHale relates his theory to the ontological dominant of postmodernist fiction and Hutcheon relates to metafiction and parody. The ontological thematic in Kaufman's movies serve to question the nature of the self through metafiction, whereas these ontologies are critically commented upon the use of parody. The three Kaufman's screenplays address an

identity crisis. Metafiction and parody describe identity as representation and provide critical perspective to the representation of the self. *Being John Malkovich* presents an opposition in the representation of identity, being inside and outside the self. Some characters are being inside and outside John Malkovich through a portal. In other words, several selves (Malkovich, Craig, Lotte, Maxine, Dr. Laster ect) in John Malkovich self. Metafiction exposes identity as representation and underlines a plurality of self. The representation of identity or the plurality of self is parodied through irony. *Adaptation* presents identity and subjectivity through representing character in different media. Chinese-box structure reveals that every character is a representation of either the perception of their 'real' world self or a representation of this representation in a different media. Metafiction in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* illustrates the notion of a subjective construction of memory. When the audience enters Joel's mind, it becomes evident that this zone is made entirely from Joel's recollection, which underlines its fictionality. This creates an opposition between reality and its representations, which accentuates the fact that reality only makes sense through the individual's entire 'collection' of reality representations. Parody in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* illustrates the representational challenge that occurs when manipulating the memory. Therefore, all of Kaufman's plays address the fragmentation of identity and underline the multiplicity of selves through his characters.

I use this article and thesis as my previous researches because I find that those writing have the same topic to discuss. It is about postmodernism and also the use of Brian McHale's theory to analyze the data. This research helps me to study about postmodernism and how to use McHale's theory to analyze the data from different novel, *A Kiss in Time*.

2.2 Brian McHale's Postmodern Perspective

Brian McHale in his book, *Postmodernist fiction* explains postmodernism in relation to modernism. According to McHale, there is a shifting dominant in postmodern fiction. It is from *epistemological* dominant to *ontological*. Modernist fiction, McHale says, is governed by epistemological dominant, whereas postmodernist fiction is governed by ontological dominant (McHale, 2004:5-10). The concept of dominant originally defined by Jurij Tynjanov but popularized by Roman Jakobson. According to Jakobson (in McHale), "the dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components." (McHale, 2004:6). Jakobson's concept of dominant, McHale says, is plural. Jakobson applied his concept of dominant to the analysis of verse medium in general, of verbal art in general, and of cultural history. Therefore, there are *many* dominants appeared in literary works. They depend on what we analyzed which can be distinguished from level, scope, and focus of the analysis.

McHale says that the dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*. He proposes three strategies to foreground the ontological dominant; they are *Worlds*, *Constructions*, and *words*. Those strategies bear some question mostly on the problem of mode of being either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which the literary text projects such as:

> What is world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (McHale, 2004:10)

As stated before, McHale proposes three strategy to foreground the ontological dominant; such as Worlds, Construction, and Words. These three parts are connected to each other. Worlds, in postmodernist fiction, are constituted in a certain way to build a certain construction. This strategy of constituting worlds uses language (words) as the medium as in any form of literary work. Worlds, in postmodernist

fiction, are constituted in a certain way to build a certain construction. This strategy of constituting worlds uses language (words) as the medium as in any form of literary work, for "language constructs edifices of symbolic representations that appears to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world" (Berger and Luckmann in McHale, 2004:131). These three strategies used in postmodernist fiction answer the questions that emerge in postmodernist fiction as mentioned before.

McHale start his discussion by explaining Worlds. According to classical logic of world, there are three categories of worlds; they are real world, possible world, and impossible world (McHale, 2004:33). Real world is constructed under the modality of necessity. This kind of world is a world where we live in, a world of normal and everyday life. Possible world or fictional world is constructed under the modality of possibility. This kind of world must be believed in, imagine and wishes by human agents or writers. The last is the impossible world or the other world. This category of this world is a world of both true and false.

In order to construct/deconstruct those worlds, McHale proposes four strategies; they are *juxtaposition, interpolation, superimposition and misattribution* (McHale, 2004:45). *Juxtaposition* is a strategy to place some non-contiguous and unrelated worlds in a parallel way. For example, a character in a literary work takes a voyage by car from from Spain, up to and accross the continent down to. In a real encyclopedia-world, these places are very far apart. However, here, Spain (in Europe), Canada and Australia are placed parallel. *Interpolation* is a strategy in introducing an unfamiliar world within familiar world. *Superimposition* is a strategy that placing one familiar world on top of another world. *Misattribution* is a strategy in recognizing places or something else and their attributes wrongly. Some place has its own attributes. Some attribute remain to a certain place or thing. I find all four strategies in constructing/deconstructing worlds in *A Kiss in Time*.

Furthermore, there is a kind of world construction McHale refered as *Chinese-Box Worlds Construction*. This construction involves the structure of nesting or embedding as in a set of Chinese-boxes. According to McHale, *Chinese-box world* construction happen "when you perform the same operation over and over again, each time operating on the product of the previous operation" (McHale, 2004:112). For example in *Little Harmonic Labyrinth:* where Achille and the Tortoise distract themselves from a tense predicament by reading a story in which two characters called Achille and the Tortoise enter Escher print, in which they read a story in which two characters called Achille and the Tortoise lost in labyrinth. To say it in other words, it is a story within a story within a story within a story. Therefore, the *Chinese-box structure* consists of some narrative levels. In order to distinguish between these levels, McHale terms the *diegetic* world that projects the primary world. Within this narrative level is another embedded narrative level, which project the *hypodiegetic* world, one level down from the diegetic world. The *hypo* prefix is added every time the story goes a level deeper into itself.

In addition, the simplest strategy in *Chinese-box world* construction is *frequency*. *Frequency* is when the interruption of the primary world happen not only once or twice but *often* by secondary – *hypodiegetic* –world. Unlike the example above where the operations recur and make the levels goes down and down, this strategy emphasizes on the frequency of the interruption. Other strategies of *Chinese-Box Worlds* construction are *strange loop phenomenon*, *trompe I'oeil,* and *Mise-en-abyme*. The '*Strange Loop' phenomenon* occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started. The strategy of *Trompe-l'oeil* deliberately misleads the readers into regarding an embedded, secondary world as the primary – diegetic – world, while the strategy of *Mise-en-abyme* is a phenomenon of an object's parts being copies of the object itself (McHale, 2004:113-124).

Furthermore, Between fictional real worlds and the other worlds, postmodernist fiction confronts them. What happen when they are confronted?, in this matter postmodernist fiction treat those worlds similar to fantastic genre, as McHale states that postmodernist fiction has a close affinities with the genre of fantastic. They represent the ontological dominants (McHale, 2004:74). Both Postmodernist fiction and fantastic genre represent the felling of hesitation. The difference is the fantastic genre hesitates between the normal and supernatural happening, while postmodernist fiction present the feeling of hesitation when it hesitates between this world and the other world or between the fictional real worlds and the other worlds. However, paranormal and supernatural happenings still exist in postmodernist text, nevertheless postmodernist fiction treats it differently. The paranormal and supernatural happenings in postmodern text become banal. It happens because the paranormal and supernatural happenings no longer amazed. The characters fail to be amazed by the supernatural happenings. However, the "banalization" of fantastic serve to heighten the amazement as Todorov (in McHale, 2004:76) believe that the "banalization" sharpen and intensifies the confrontation between the normal and the paranormal. Other than the fantastic that become banal, the confrontation of different worlds also makes the banality become fantastic. The fantastic or the supernatural happenings do not only become banal, but they also raise a *resistance* against them. This *resistance* of normality against the paranormal if not to be realized by the characters then by the readers (McHale, 2004:73-77).

In postmodernist fiction, there is also what is called *intertextuality*. Intertextuality is the recognition of a relationship between texts. A common use of intertextuality in postmodern literature is through what McHale called as *Transworld Identity*. According to Eco (cited in McHale, 2004:57) transworld identity is defined as the transmigration of characters from one fictional world to another. Characters from one text are borrowed to put into another text. These explanations of McHale's

perspective on postmodernist fiction are used in this research as the framework to analyze Alex Flinn's *A Kiss in Time.*

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter consists of three subchapters. The first subchapter talks about the type of the research, while the second subchapter explains how the data are collected. The data processing and the data analysis in the third subchapter are used as the explanation on how the data are processed, categorized and analyzed.

3.1 Type of Research

The type of research used in this thesis is qualitative research. Blaxter et al. (2006:64) define qualitative research as a research conducted for the purpose to discover the underlying motives and desires of human behavior. This research analyzes postmodern strategies that are used to reveal the postmodernism in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. Therefore, the data that are used in this research are non-numerical data. In other words, the data are in the form of written material taken from the novel. Other data are taken from books, research journals and internet website.

3.2 Data Collection

Blaxter et al. (2006:154) state that documentary method is a method in collecting data by using written materials as a basis for the research by reading. The first step of this analysis is reading the novel, *A Kiss in Time*. *A Kiss in Time* represents the similarities of some fictions and movies such as *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Snow White, Shrek 2, Cinderella, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's*

Stone. Postmodern criticism is used to analyze the plurality of worlds in *A Kiss in Time*.

After studying Flinn's *A Kiss in Time* and postmodernism, the classification of data is done in this research. There are two kinds of data in this research, primary and secondary data. The primary data of this research are any kind of information and facts related to the construction and confrontation of worlds constructed in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. The secondary data are any kind of facts and information related to postmodernism that supports the primary data. The secondary data are collected from *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Snow White, Shrek 2, Cinderella, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis

After collecting the data, those data are categorized and classified to answer the questions of this research. The data are included in the form of statements and quotations used as proofs to strengthen the analysis. In order to answer the first question, the data which are classified, are related to any kinds of worlds presented in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. The following data which are related to postmodern strategies that are used to construct the worlds in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time* are classified to answer the second question. The last data are to reveal what is beyond the postmodernist strategies used in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*.

This research uses inductive method as the method of doing the analysis. Inductive method is the process of reasoning that is applied to conclude the subject matter. It means that the discussion goes from particular to a whole group of ideas, phenomena, or situations (Young, 1982:10). Shaw (1972:107) also states that by doing an inductive method means that a movement of thought is expressed or implied for the specific to the general. It is a process of general thinking that sets out from particular data relating to the novel to the general data.

This thesis uses Brian McHale's postmodern perspective to find the ontological dominant in Flinn's *A Kiss in Time*. Since *A Kiss in Time* represent the fragments of *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Snow White, Shrek 2, Cinderella, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, this thesis starts from the discussion about the relation of *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Snow White, Shrek 2, Cinderella, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *A Kiss in Time*. After analyzing the worlds that emerge in *A Kiss in Time*, this analysis continues to the next discussion, i. e. postmodern strategies that are used to construct the worlds in the novel. Furthermore, this analysis continues to what lies beyond the construction of postmodern strategies in *A Kiss in Time*. Therefore, it is required some data relating to postmodern culture.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

A Kiss in Time is governed by the ontological dominant of postmodernist fiction. *A Kiss in Time* constructs plural worlds, they are fictional real worlds – Kingdom of Euphrasia, Belgium, Miami– and fictional other world is Kingdom of Euphrasia. Besides Euphrasia, fictional other worlds are also presented by the strategy of transworld identity, they are *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Snow White, Shrek 2, Cinderella, King Arthur and the Sword in the Stone, Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz,* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. The transworld identity constructs an intertextual zone in *A Kiss in Time.* The emergence of the other worlds is to represent the feeling of hesitation, banality and resistance. Those plural worlds are constructed using the strategy of juxtaposition, interpolation, superimposition and misattribution.

The construction of those strategies reveals the Chinese-box world construction in which complicating the ontological structure of the novel where the primary world of *A Kiss in Time* is interrupted many times by the secondary world; where going back to the beginning in the same narrative level and in the wrong narrative level; where the primary world is copied into representation and misleading the reader of the ontological levels of the worlds.

A Kiss in Time also reflects the condition of postmodern society by presenting the supernatural events and objects, and serves the practice of pastiche of the past and fantasy. *A Kiss in Time* also presents the condition of hyperreality by projecting the *Royal Euphrasia*, a thematic park, as an imaginary to make people believe that this is the real, whereas all of the *Royal Euphrasia* is no longer real but belong to the hyperreal order.

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