

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Commonly, works of literature portray feeling, desire and task of the author. Sometimes, it also reflects period of the literary culture. In this occasions the writer wants to discuss a contemporary American young adult novel entitled *We Were Liars* from the postmodern perspective. *We Were Liars* is a novel which was released on May 2014 in the United States of America written by Emily Lockhart. Lockhart is an American writers of children's picture books, young adult novels and adult fiction. One of her novel *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Bank* was a finalist for both the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and the Michael L. Printz Award. *We Were Liars* also award as GoodReads Best Young Adult Novel of 2014. The novel *We Were Liars* mostly tells story of a girl named Cadence and her problems againts her own family called the Sinclairs. Throughout the story of the novel, the Sinclairs is told to be a respected family headed by a succesful businessman named Harris Sinclair.

Harris has set a list of rules in the Sinclair family and uses it as the guidance to keep the family's lineage. However, the rules are no longer appropriate and bring destruction to the family. The established values in the Sinclair family have failed to produce what he has desired for. The narration does not lead the family into prosperity but instead results in dispute among the family

members. However, the people outside always view the Sinclair family as a perfect family. The image of the Sinclairs never goes wrong for other people.

Besides the discussion of the ironical life in a modern aristocrat family as the main topic, the form of the novel is also unique. The novel offers different form. It is not a usual young adult novel which is in most cases are easy to understand. The unique forms found in this novel are, *firstly, the novel introduces the readers to a pair of map and family tree before entering the chapter. Secondly, the author uses different patterns in writing the story. Lockhart recurringly writes the story in the form of a poem in short sentences to describe the problem. Thirdly, Lockhart consistently jumps from one narration to the others. Lastly, there is vague ending that will produce different understanding and perspective from readers.*

Based on the reasons mentioned above, especially in the themes and forms of the novel, the writer is interested in analyzing this contemporary American novel from postmodern perspective. Postmodernism is chosen because of the philosophy of postmodernism as the critique to modernism and its failures related to the problems which exist in the novel We Were Liars in the aspects of forms and theme. In this research the writer focuses only to analyze one aspect (Pastiche) as one Postmodernist feature in the novel We Were Liars.

The author of the novel We Were Liars, Emily Lockhart, once said in an interview the Guardian that she was a part of long continuum of writers influenced by postmodernism and by high and low culture sources. Therefore, to achieve the

closest meaning of the novel We Were Liars, the writer must apply Postmodern approach to resolve the problem in this research.

Analyzing the novel We Were Liars from the perspective of postmodernism is aimed to find the Pastiche features in the novel We Were Liars and discover the ironical messages behind the use of Pastiche. Additionally, this research may give the depiction about how to understand a literary work that is packed with the influence of postmodernist style. Finally, the writer is interested to conduct a research under the title "The Irony of Modern Life as Seen in We Were Liars by Emily Lockhart: A Postmodernist Reading".

1.2 Identification of Problem

The novel *We Were Liars* in several occasion presents the form of a literary work which does not follow the general pattern of a common novel. The author uses experimental techniques in composing her writing. Some of the uncommon forms seen in the novel's forms are: 1) the use of pictures as an uncommon mode of narration, 2) the use of fairy tales elements in the story, 3) the jumping plot and unclear ending, 4) no coherence between one chapter to another. The unusual forms are also found in modern works but they have different function with postmodernism. While modernism still seeks a rational meaning in a work of art, postmodernism explores the creativity and irrationality of art (Endraswara 18).

The story of this novel mostly reflects the dispute among the family members who share different views in life. Harris as the leader in the Sinclair

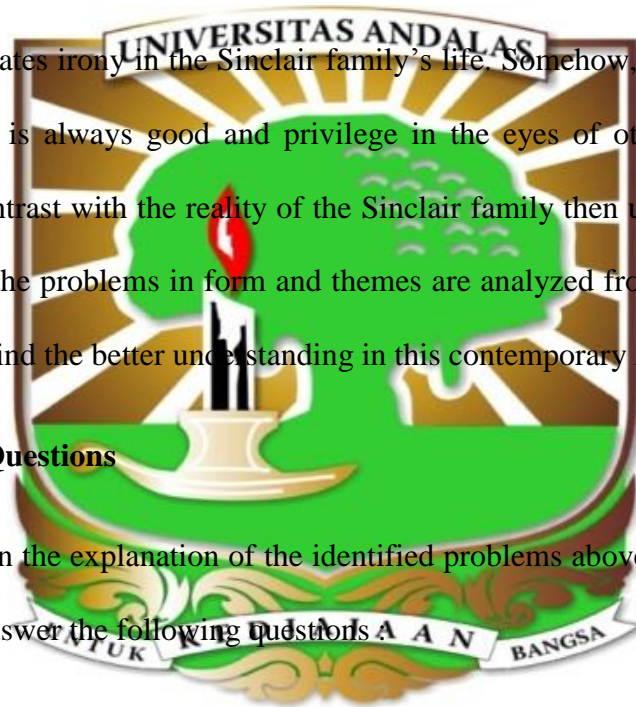
family has compiled some rules that must be obeyed by all members of the Sinclairs. The rules are such the grand narration among the Sinclairs, used as orientation to keep the family's lineage and image of the Sinclair family. This values are believed as universal truth.

The problem of each character in this novel can be indicated as the difference between the older generation and the younger one. The ideology of the older generation can be viewed as a well structured modern way of thinking. However, it creates irony in the Sinclair family's life. Somehow, the image of the Sinclair family is always good and privilege in the eyes of other people. This condition is contrast with the reality of the Sinclair family then ultimately creates irony. Both of the problems in form and themes are analyzed from postmodernist perspective to find the better understanding in this contemporary American novel.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the explanation of the identified problems above, this research is conducted to answer the following questions

- a. What are the types of pastiche found in the novel *We Were Liars* by Emily Lockhart?
- b. What are ironical messages behind the features of Pastiche in the novel?



1.4 Scope of the Research

In order to focus the analysis, the writer limits the analysis of this research on several points:

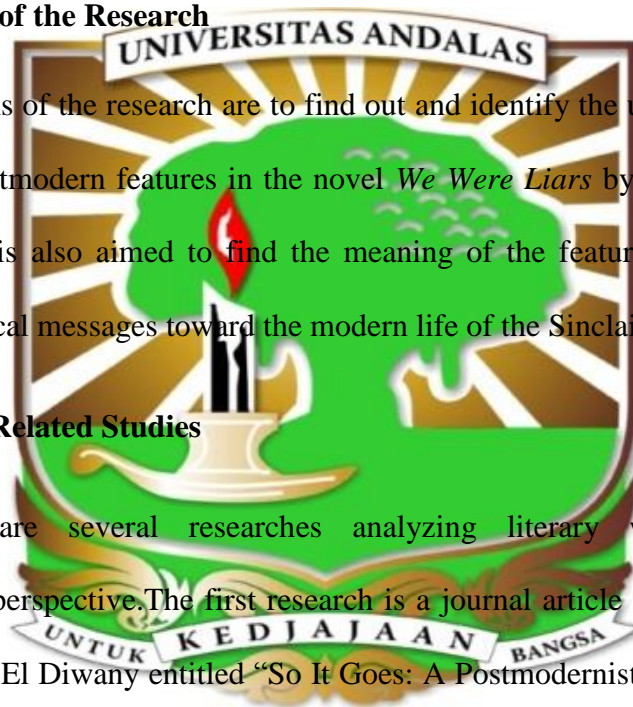
- a. The types of pastiche used in the novel *We Were Liars* by Emily Lockhart.
- b. The ironical messages behind the features of pastiche used in the novel.

1.5 Objectives of the Research

The aims of the research are to find out and identify the use of Pastiche as a dominant postmodern features in the novel *We Were Liars* by Emily Lockhart. Additionally it is also aimed to find the meaning of the features and how they reveal the ironical messages toward the modern life of the Sinclair family.

1.6 Review of Related Studies

There are several researches analyzing literary work by using postmodernist perspective. The first research is a journal article written by Fatma Khalil Mostafa El Diwany entitled "So It Goes: A Postmodernist Reading of Kurt Vonegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*" (2014). This article focuses on various postmodern techniques and the philosophy of postmodernism about skepticism of truth. She examines Vonnegut's concretization of the postmodernist theory in writing an anti war book based on his personal experience as a prisoner of war in World War II. She found that Vonnegut attempted to blend serious theme with science fiction and humor by using various postmodernist techniques such as historiographic metafiction. She argues that Vonegut potrays a world that is



falling into pieces by representing the problem in form of the novel. By reading the novel from the postmodernist philosophy, the content of this novel challenges the rationalist ideals. It indicates a world lacking any sense of meaning and moral decay.

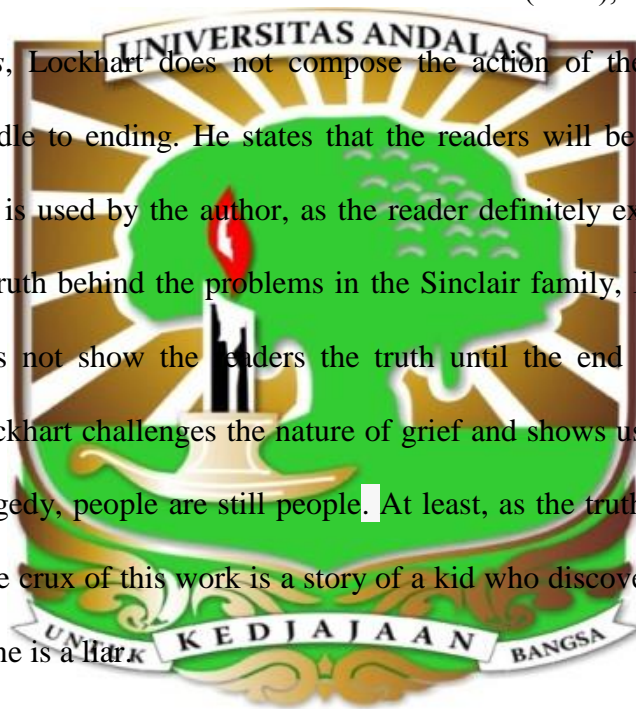
The second research is from a journal article written by Zhenli Wang entitled “Postmodern Strategies in Ian McEwan’s Major Novel” (2014). He analyzes McEwan’s novel entitled *Atonement*. He states that McEwan makes a tentative writing of the postmodern novel with his unique thematic concern and postmodern techniques. Zhenli argues that McEwan’s major novel does not only focus on the dark issues like violence, sex and immortality but also probes into the problematic relationship between fiction and reality. McEwan’s major novel looks like using the traditional narrative mode of realistic novel, but deep down there are considerable postmodern elements and techniques. In this research Zhenli analyzes the tendency of intertextuality and metafiction in McEwan’s novel. This research helps the writer to understand the use of postmodern techniques in a literary work.



The third is Derek Miller’s article entitled “Postmodernism in Vonnegut’s *Cat Cradle*” (2011). In this article he uses the philosophy of postmodernism that is skepticism about the Grand Narrative. He states that *Cat Cradle* is a highly postmodern text because it parodies the Grand Narrative of absolute truth and idea of progress. He argues that in the *Cat Cradle* Vonnegut shows how society seems to believe that the ideas of progress will lead human to better life by obtaining empirical, scientific data about the world around us. This is a belief of modernism.

This is a modern idea which comes from the enlightenment era known as the age of reason. Vonnegut uses the plot of *Cat's Cradle* to make a postmodern parody of how science does not really lead to a utopia. It gives contribution to the writer to find out how the postmodernist author focuses on the critiques on the modern concept of Grand Narrative in a literary work.

The last is an article about the novel itself written by Alex Bernard. In his article entitled “*We Were Liars* Delivers Hard Truth” (2014), He argues that in *We Were Liars*, Lockhart does not compose the action of the story from the beginning, middle to ending. He states that the readers will be deceived by the techniques that is used by the author, as the reader definitely expects to find the answer or the truth behind the problems in the Sinclair family, Bernard said that the author does not show the readers the truth until the end of the book. He claims that Lockhart challenges the nature of grief and shows us that, in the face of pointless tragedy, people are still people. At least, as the truth is hard Bernard sums up that the crux of this work is a story of a kid who discovers that life is not fair and everyone is a liar.



The writer agree with Alex’s idea, alex has found there are a tecnique used by Lockhart in created her novel but in this article Alex does not explain more about the content of the novel. This article shows the understanding from another reader toward the novel *We Were Liars*. It enrich the writers understanding toward the novel *We Were Liars*.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Postmodernism

In conducting this research the writer applies postmodern framework as the theory. In terminology, according to one of postmodern expert, Pauline Rosenau (1992), postmodernism is the critique to modernism and its failure. Also, postmodernism tends to criticize anything which is associated with modernity, in the accumulation of western culture

In his article entitled “The Concept of Reality From Postmodern Perspectives” (2014) Shajendu Nath argues that the realistic attitude toward knowledge and truth is rejected by the postmodernism. From the point of view of philosophy it can be said that the primary task of postmodernism is to reinterpret the question ‘what knowledge is’ and ‘what can be treated as knowledge’. Postmodernist do not believe in any objective existence of reality, truth, values, reason and so forth.

Postmodernism, like poststructuralism and deconstruction, is a critique of the aesthetic of the preceding age. Postmodernism questions everything rationalist European Philosophy hold be true, arguing that it is all contingent and the most cultural construction have served the function of empowering members of a dominant social group at the expense of “others” (Guerin 301). Fredic Jameson links two tendencies in postmodernism. Firstly, the denial of various boundaries, e.g high culture vs mass culture. Secondly, the reaction againts high modernism,



the effacement of older frontier between high culture and the so called mass or commercial culture.

In the development of literature, modernist literature rejects the Victorian aesthetic of prescriptive morality and uses new techniques drawn from psychology, experimented with point of view, time, space and stream of consciousness writing. Postmodernism borrows from modernism disillusionment with the given of society, a penchant for irony, the self conscious “play” within the work of art; fragmentation and ambiguity and a deconstructed, decentered, dehumanized subject.

In his book *Metodologi Penelitian Postmodernisme Sastra*, Suwardi Endraswara states that the difference between the Postmodernist literature and the modernist literature is characterized by two things:

1. The literary style that is separated from the tradition and the modern convention, so that the forms of dialogues and typography of a literary work can be different.
2. Literary style which is filled with speculation and creativity, literature is no longer just a narrative and dialogue, but can contain a variety of other arts. (Endraswara 85)

Pastiche Features

In the practice of postmodernism in art and also in literature, there are many kind of postmodern stylistic techniques. One of the dominant features used in Postmodern art is Pastiche. Pastiche is the taking of various ideas from previous writings and literary styles and pasting them together to make new styles.

Hutcheon (in Piliang) states that pastiche is an imitation, not only from one text but from the possibility of various texts. This combination by Hutcheon is called the interstyle (qtd in Piliang 190).

According to Fredric Jameson in his book *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, the pastiche is “...the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of linguistic mask, speech in a dead language” (17). Even though pastiche takes ideas and style from the past or often seems like imitation, pastiche underlines similarity more than the difference to the allusion from the past. The example of pastiche in architecture is Las Vegas City.

Postmodern and Critique to Modernism

A major moment in the history of postmodernism is the ‘modernity’, an incomplete project delivered by the contemporary German theorist Jiirgen Habermas in 1980. According to Habermas, the modern period begins with the enlightenment, the period of about one hundred years, from the middle of seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, when a new faith arose in the power of reason to improve human society (Barry 62).

Modern philosophy assumes that there is an objective world around us and this world is not chaos but running in an orderly manner. There are laws of nature that are manifested in different ways, and humans, the rational beings, are able to understand and discern these natural laws. The modernist has a realistic outlook about the world, thus understanding of knowledge of the world is the foundation of modernity.

Endraswara (2016) in his book *Metodologi Penelitian Postmodernisme Sastra* states that the ethos of postmodernism is a rejection to the ideas of enlightenment era which rose modernism. The ideas of modernism such as optimism for progress and science did not lead humans to better life. The belief of enlightenment era has brought about the effect of technology, capitalism, consumerism and ecological crisis as well as oriental vision of the world that resulted in world war. The ethos of postmodernism is also a rejection of the modern mindset that always follows a mechanism. The postmodernists seek something higher than rationality by using non-racial way to seek knowledge through emotions and intuition.

Postmodernism is defined by a theorist Jean Francois Lyotard as cited in Peter Barry's (2002) *Beginning theory: An Introduction to Literary Studies and Cultural Theory* as:

Incredulity towards metanarratives. Grand Narrative of progress and human perfectability, then are no longer tenable, and the best we can hope for is a series of mini-narratives, which are provisional, contingent, temporary and relative which provide a basis for the action of specific groups in particular local circumstances. Postmodernity thus 'deconstructs' the basic aim of enlightenment, that is the idea of a unitary end of history and of a subject (2002:87).

According to Lyotard, in the postmodern period, people *no longer believe* in grand narrative. The concept of grand narrative that represents



universality and totality is no longer suitable to creating a peace and success in human life. Lyotard argues that by offering mini-narration to solve problem in a society which is more suitable with situation and context of local circumstances will possible to create a good life.

1.8 Methods of Research

In conducting this research, there are three steps to follow :

a. Collecting the data

In gathering the data, the writer applies the library research. There are two types of data in this research, the primary and secondary data. The primary data are the novel *We Were Liars*. Meanwhile, the secondary data consist of books, articles, and journals related to the study. These secondary data are used to enrich the writer's knowledge in order to have better understanding in analyzing the novel.

b. Analyzing Data

The second step is analyzing the data. Firstly, the writer reads the story intensively in order for the writer to understand the whole story. Next, the writer starts noting the important descriptions and dialogues which indicates the building of the analysis. After that the writer analyzes the the primary data using postmodern approach and philosophy to find the use of Pastiche features and what types of Pastiche used in the novel. Then after identify the stylistic techniques in the form of the novel, the writer relates the features with the content of the novel



to reveal the ironical messages behind the life of the Sinclair family. This is in order to find the better understanding of a contemporary novel which uses Postmodern style. Then, the writer summarizes the finding and presenting the result.

c. Presenting the Result of the Analysis

In presenting the result of analysis, the writer applies qualitative research. According to Bodgan and Knopbiken “qualitative research is descriptive, the data are collected in the form of word or picture rather than numbers. The result of the research contains some quotation from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation”(1982:28). By using the descriptive analysis the writer will report her analysis.

