

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Little Women is a novel that was written by Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888). Louisa May Alcott was an American novelist. Louisa May Alcott was born on November 29, 1832, in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Her novel was originally published in two volumes in 1868 and 1869. In wikipedia.com it is mentioned that *Little Women* became an overnight success, selling 2,000 copies. The novel part 1 consists of 217 pages and the number of chapters is 23, and the part 2 consists of 24 chapters. This novel is loosely based on her childhood experiences with her three sisters, like the character "Jo March" in *Little Women* novel. Louisa's character is like a boy. After Louisa succeeded with her novel *Little Women* (1868), she also writes another novel such as *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1870), *Little Men* (1871), *Eight Cousins* (1875), *Rose in Bloom* (1876), *Jo's Boy* (1886), and others. The novel follows the lives of four sisters Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March detailing their passage from childhood to womanhood, and is loosely based on the author and her three sisters. Louisa May Alcott died on 1888 in Boston, Massachusetts.

Little Women tells about women's struggle. Struggle of Mrs March and her sister, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy without Mr March. They grow up in the polite poor family by Mrs March. Their life is simple, but their life is full of warmth. Although never slipped away from problems, sadness, not

satisfied, and despite, they never stop their love and being a happy family. Their mother gives more inspiration and support. They have a different character. Meg is a mature and mother-like, Jo is a frank and down to earth, but has a quick temper and acts impulsively, Beth is a shy, and the last is Amy, she is a little artist and immature. They make a newspaper for a week. Mrs March cares for her family with her companion, Hannah. The absence of Mr March in the war gives a bad impact to the March family especially in the finance. The situation makes the girls of March work in order to get money especially for themselves. Mrs March always cares for her daughter with love, gives motivation for them in every situation and teaches her daughters to help poor people. They are the friends of Theodore Lawrence, grandchild of a rich man, Mr Lawrence. They always help the March family. One day, a letter comes in March. The letter gives information that Mr March was sick and asked Mrs March to come. Jo helps her mother for her mother's trip. She makes a big sacrifice to cut her hair to get some money for her mother. By Jo March's sacrifice, finally their father, Mr March is back home (Alcott: 1868).

In the *Little Women* novel, Jo is a major character. She does a big sacrifice, she cuts her crown, her hair, to help her mother to finance her trip to look out Mr March. Civil war gives the family a bad condition of financial, and Jo, because she is a tomboy and temperamental but she can manage herself not to be arrogant. She acts in home as her father, because she is tomboy (Alcott: 1868).

Little Women as a literary work of course leaves some response, Negative or positive response from the readers. It can be seen in *goodreads* internet site. One of responses comes from G.K Chesterton that notes that in *Little Women*, Alcott "anticipated realism by twenty or thirty years," and that Fritz's proposal to Jo, and her acceptance, "is one of the really human things in human literature". Another responses from Gregory S. Jackson, He said that Alcott's use of realism belongs to the American Protestant pedagogical tradition, which includes a range of religious literary traditions with which Alcott was familiar.

Elizabeth Rose gave compliment to this novel by rating it 5 out of 5 stars. She said "One of the most wholesome and wonderful books for girls that I have ever read. It is engaging, entertaining, wonderful, and yet refuses to include a smidgen of language, violence, or inappropriate content. The romance is portrayed in a manner that is clean, but still very sweet. In addition, the girls are portrayed so realistically that you feel as if they are real — no stiff dialogue here! I'd recommend *Little Women* to anyone".

Besides positive responses, there are some negative responses. Since the late 20th century, some scholars have criticized the novel. Susan Elbert, for instance, wrote that *Little Womeen* was the beginning of "a decline in the radical power of women's fiction," partly because women's fiction was being idealized with a "hearth and home" children's story. Womens' literature historians and juvenile fiction historians have agreed that *Little Women* was the beginning of this "downward spiral". But Elbert says that *Little Women* did

not "belittle women's fiction" and that Alcott stayed true to her "Romantic birthright".

Though Christians, the girls' faith seems to be based more on good works than true faith in a Savior. They speak of God in more Deistic terms, as if He were a Being who set the earth in motion, but did not necessarily intervene in the lives of men afterwards. Meg refers to Heaven as "a [lovely] country . . . where we shall go by-and-by, when we are good enough." This makes no mention of accepting Jesus' saving grace, but of relying on one's own works to get into Heaven.

Elizabeth Rose gave a good response but she also gave criticism. She said "Though Christians, the girls' faith seems to be based more on good works than true faith in a Savior. They speak of God in more Deistic terms, as if He were a Being who set the earth in motion, but did not necessarily intervene in the lives of men afterwards. Meg refers to Heaven as "a [lovely] country . . . where we shall go by-and-by, when we are good enough." This makes no mention of accepting Jesus' saving grace, but of relying on one's own works to get into Heaven".

Little Women is a novel that is interesting to be read . There are four reasons why the researcher is interested in studying this novel. The first reason is because the novel tells about a womens' struggle. It was taught that women not only work in the home but also women can work like man.

The second reason is because the novel tells about family togetherness. The novel teaches that togetherness in a family is a quality time, although the family's condition is complete or not, poor or rich.

The third reason is because the novel tells about a family's life from rich family that becomes poor family. From the reason above, it can teach the readers that wealth is just temporary.

The fourth reason is the writer is interested in studying novel. Novel is one of literary works that tells story, characteristics, sequence of events of human life.

The meaning of family and happiness which are reflected in *Little Women* are one of interesting aspects to be studied. Alcott, the author of the novel wants the readers to know about March family. Although, the civil war gives the family a bad condition especially in financial condition and because Mr March works as a preacher in the war, but the family is still happy life with a mother who always fights for her daughters and her family. And Jo, she does a big sacrifice, cuts hairs and sells her hairs to help her mother. Those effect can be studied in feminist term which studies in women's life without a man around them.

Literary work is a imaginative or creative writing. One of literary works is novel. Feminist studies women who live without a husband and father in the middle of them. The literary work can be studied through feminist approach.

From the explanation above, the researcher was interested in analyzing the meaning of family and happiness in *Little Woman* novel. The study analyzed by using feminist theory. So, the researcher entitles this research **THE MEANING OF FAMILY AND HAPPINESS IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMAN* (1868): A FEMINIST APPROACH**

B. Literature Review

As long as the researcher know *LITTLE WOMAN* novel by Louisa May Alcott has been analyzed by Agustin Dwi Ratnaningrum in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta student (2005) entitled "THE EFFECTS OF CIVIL WAR ON FAMILIES IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN*: SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH". She used sociological approach to analyze the data. The aim of the study is to find the effects of civil war on families. The result of the data shows following conclusions and suggestion. Firstly, *Little Women* novel is very interesting to be read. Louisa May Alcott through this novel gives a big motivation in facing every kind of problems in life especially in financial problems. It reflects the issue about women role in family and society. Secondly, the sociological analysis shows that sociological discussed the social condition of the author. It makes a literary work interesting to be study through sociological approach.

The second is study which was conducted by Liza Novita Ningrum in University of Muria Kudus student (2007) entitled "FLOUTING MAXIM OF RELATION IN *LITTLE WOMEN* NOVEL BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT".

She used qualitative research. This aim of the study is to find out flouting maxim of relation which is employed by the characters and to find out the speaker's meaning of flouting maxim of relation in "Little Women" novel by Louisa My Alcott.

The third is study which was conducted by Liana Yunike Manurung in University of North Sumatera student (2006) entitled "AN ANALYSIS OF FEMINISM AS REFLECTED IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN*". She used descriptive analyze method to write the research. The aim of the study is to analyze women's life on 19 century that becomes a pole starting the feminism that is reflected by Little Women by Louisa May Alcott. The conclusion of the research is a woman has a feminist characteristic to show sefl-trust and to face the problem that previously a woman is not proper for that. Woman can give an exact decision for her life without influence from another person.

The researcher has a different perspective to analyze the data. The researcher uses feminist approach to analyze the data. The researcher analyse the meaning of family and happiness in Louisa May Alcott *Little Women* by using feminist approach.

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the research, the writer purposes a single problem statement. The problem of the research is "What is the meaning of family and happiness?"

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the researcher focuses on analyzing the meaning of family and happiness by using a feminist approach.

E. Objective of the Study

There are two objectives of the study in the research, they are:

1. To describe *Little Woman* novel based on structural elements of the novel.
2. To analyze the meaning of family and happiness in Louisa May Alcott *Little Woman* novel based on the feminist approach.

F. The Benefits of the Study

The result of this research was expected to give some benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study will increase the knowledge of the writer and another student of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta or another student from another University, particularly literary study on *Little Woman* novel by Louisa May Alcott.

2. Practical Benefit

To give more information and understanding for writer and another researcher to analyze novel especially based on Feminist Approach.

G. Research Method

Methods of the research are as follows:

1. Type of the Research

In this research, the writer uses a descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative is a type of research that results the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the observed object.

2. Object of the Research

The object of the research is *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

There are two data sources that are needed to do this research, namely: primary data sources and secondary data sources.

a. Primary Data Sources

The primary data sources of this study is *Little Woman* (1868) novel by Louisa May Alcott.

b. Secondary Data Sources

The secondary data sources are from other sources related the study, such as: website, dictionary, biography of Louisa May Alcott and some books that support the analysis.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The method used for collecting data is library and browsing research. The steps are follows:

- Reading the novel, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

- Identifying the topic of novel
- Determining the major character
- Reading some books to find out the theory

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

In this research the technique that is used to analyze the data is based on feminist approach that analyze the meaning of family and happiness in *Little Women* novel by Louisa May Alcott. The writer analyse the structural element of the novel and then analyzing the meaning of family and hapiness in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* based on feminist approach.

H. Paper Organization

The research paper organization of “the meaning of family and happiness reflected in *Little Woman* by Louisa May Alcott”, is as follows:

Chapter I is introduction consisting of background of the study, literature review, problem statements, limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefit of the study, reseach method, and paper organization

Chapter II is the underlying theory that contains the notion feminism theory, the notion of family, the notion of happiness.

Chapter III is social background of America during the civil war which covers social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology, cultural aspect, and religious aspect.

Chapter IV is structural analysis. This chapter is dealt with structural analysis of *Little Women* novel.

Chapter V is feminist analysis. This chapter explains femiininist analysis of *Little Women* Novel.

Chapter VI is conclusion and suggestion.