

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Little Women is a novel that was written by Louisa May Alcott. It was first published in 30th September 1868 and in wikipedia.com it is mentioned that *Little Women* became an overnight success, selling over 2,000 copies immediately. *Little Women* was written in two parts. Both parts were called *Little Women, or Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy*. In the UK, the second part was published under the title *Good Wives* that takes three years after the last chapter of the first part. The second part was published in 1869. This novel (part I) consists of 414 pages and the number of chapter is 23, and the part II consist of 447 pages and the number of chapter is 24.

Louisa May Alcott was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania on November 29, 1832. She and her three sisters, Anna, Elizabeth, and May, were educated by their father, philosopher/ teacher Bronson Alcott, and raised on the practical Christianity of their mother, Abigail May. Like her character, "Jo March" in *Little Women*, young Louisa was a tomboy. Louisa's career as an author began with poetry and short stories that appeared in popular magazines. In 1854, when she was 22, her first book *Flower Fables* was published. A milestone along her literary path was *Hospital Sketches* (1863), based on the letters she had written home from her post as a nurse in Washington, DC during the Civil War. When Louisa was 35 years old, her publisher in

Boston, Thomas Niles, asked her to write "a book for girls." *Little Women* was written at Orchard House from May to July 1868. The novel is based on Louisa and her sisters' coming of age and is set in Civil War New England. "Jo March" was the first American juvenile heroine to act from her own individuality --a living, breathing person rather than the idealized stereotype then prevalent in children's fiction.

Little Women is a novel about the struggle of the four March sisters named Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy in facing their life in a family by the absence of father figure. Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy March are four sisters living with their mother in New England. Their father is away serving as a chaplain in the Civil War, and the sisters struggle to support themselves and keep their household running despite the fact that the family recently lost its fortune. In the process, they become close friends with their wealthy neighbor, Theodore Laurence, known as "Laurie." As the girls grow older, each faces her own personal demons and moral challenges. Jo, our beloved protagonist, must tame her tomboyish ways and learn to be more ladylike while pursuing her ambition to be a great writer. Meg, the oldest, must put aside her love of wealth and finery in order to follow her heart. Beth, the shy one, must conquer her bashfulness, while Amy, the youngest, has to sacrifice her aristocratic pride. The girls are guided in their personal growth by their mother, "Marmee," and by their religious faith.

The main character of *Little Women* is Josephine, Jo is an outspoken tomboy with a passion for writing. Her character is based in large part on Louisa May Alcott herself. Jo refuses Laurie's offer of marriage, despite the fact that everyone assumes they will end up together. In the end, Jo gives up her writing and marries Professor Bhaer, which can be seen either as a domestic triumph or as a professional loss, since Jo loses her headstrong independence. Because she displays good and bad traits in equal measure, Jo is a very unusual character for nineteenth-century didactic fiction. Jo's bad traits—her rebelliousness, anger, and outspoken ways—do not make her unappealing; rather, they suggest her humanity. Jo is a likely precursor to a whole slew of lovably flawed heroes and heroines of children's books, among them Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer.

Little Women is one of the best loved books of all time. Lovely Meg, talented Jo, frail Beth, spoiled Amy: these are hard lessons of poverty and of growing up in New England during the Civil War. Through their dreams, plays, pranks, letters, illnesses, and courtships, women of all ages have become a part of this remarkable family and have felt the deep sadness when Meg leaves the circle of sisters to be married at the end of Part I. Part II, chronicles Meg's joys and mishaps as a young wife and mother, Jo's struggle to become a writer, Beth's tragedy, and Amy's artistic pursuits and unexpected romance. Based on Louise May Alcott's

childhood, this lively portrait of nineteenth-century family life possesses a lasting vitality that has endeared it to generations of readers.

This splendid book is overflowing with heartwarming tales of family life, making do in the midst of poverty, and working through life's hardships together. We hear of the classic incident in which Jo burns Meg's hair, Beth's special gift from old Mr. Laurence, Amy's twenty-four delicious pickled limes (she ate one on the way to school), various plays put on by the four girls, meetings of *The Pickwick Society*, and Jo's disastrous luncheon. At the end of each chapter, Marmee is there to help the girls rejoice in their triumphs and learn from their mistakes. When Marmee leaves to tend to an ill Father in Washington, the girls take up their additional responsibilities with good will, desiring to do all they can to help.

Little Women as a literary work of course leaves responses from the readers whether they are pro or contra about the novel. One of the discussant, Elizabeth, gives compliment to this novel by rating it 5 of 5 stars in July 24, 2012. She said “*Little Women* is one of the most wholesome and wonderful books. 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”.

Little women is one of the best loves novel all of time. The history of the novel tells about how the importance of simplicity of life. *Little*

women is an interesting novel to be read. This novel gives a big motivation in facing every kind of problems in life. The story tells about different in unity. The four March family have different characteristic but they can make it beautiful simplicity of life. Simplicity is indeed to make life easier. The most appealing aspect of this novel is it about the simplicity of life.

The importance of simplicity of life are reflected in Louisa May Alcott's and *Little Women* novel (1868) by using sociological approach are one of the appealing aspects that interesting to be studied. Alcott, the author, was often inspired by familiar elements. The characters in *Little Women* are recognizably drawn from family members and friends. The March family is portrayed living in genteel penury, but the Alcott family, dependent on an improvident, impractical father, suffered real poverty and occasional hunger. In addition to her own childhood and that of her sisters, scholars who have come across the diaries of Louisa Alcott's mother, have surmised that *Little Women* was also heavily inspired by Abigail Alcott's own early life.

There are four reasons why the researcher is interested in studying this novel: *the first* is because it is the realistic story in real world. *Little Women* has an interesting story. The story tells about the struggle of the four March sisters. Their live is a facing by the absence of father figure.

The second reason is the researcher is interesred in studying novel. Novel is one of literary review that tells story, characteristics, sequence of

events of human life. Novel is realistic story in real word based on Louisa May Alcott's life. *The third* reason is because this novel is the top ten bestsellers of the decade. This novel has a point of interest in terms of structural elements, point of view, theme, plot.

The last reason is about moral conflicts in this novel. Not a few moral messages conveyed in this story. The message is that a simple life is a good life. The story also gives motivation to the reader about the life of March family despite facing the absence of father figure.

Related to literature, sociology plays a big role. A literary work is created by people who are the member of a society. Sociology studies the relation between people and society. Sociology discusses the social condition of the author. What makes a literary work interesting can be studied through sociological approach.

By the information above, the researcher decided to conduct a paper about Louisa May Alcott's and *Little Women* novel by using sociological approach. The title of the work is **“THE IMPORTANCE OF SIMPLICITY OF LIFE IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT’S AND *LITTLE WOMEN* NOVEL (1868) : A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH”**

B. Literature Review

The study of *Little women* novel (1868) by Louisa May Alcott is an interesting novel. As far as the writer concerns, the research on the novel *Little Women* has been conducted by Anita Widiastuti, a Muhammadiyah

University student (2003), entitled “Jo’s Struggle For Better Standard Of Living In Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*: An Individual Psychology Analysis”. She uses individual psychology analysis to analyze the data. The aim of the study is to find the influences of Jo’s struggle for better standard of living on her personality development.

The second researcher who is interested in this novel is Agustin Dwi Ratnaningrum, a Muhammadiyah University student (2009), in her study entitles ”The Effects Of Civil War On Families In Louisa May Allcot’s *Little Women*: Sociological Approach”. She uses sociology analysis to analyze the data. The aim of the study is to find the effect of Civil War on families are reflected in Louisa May Allcot’s *Little Women* novel.

Different from the previous researcher, the researcher has different perspective in analyzing the data. The researcher uses sociological approach to analyze the data. The researcher analyzes the importance simplicity of life in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* by using sociological approach.

C. Problem Statement

Knowing that the problem is the most important part of research, the writer purposes the problem “How is a simple life reflected in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*” using sociological approach.

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the researcher focuses on analyzing a simple is a good life of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel based on sociological approach.

E. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are :

1. To Analyze Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) novel based on the structural elements of the novel.
2. To describe is a simple is a good life in *Little Women* (1868) novel based on sociological approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

The benefits of studying *Little Women* (1868) novel are:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to give a new contribution and information to the large body of knowledge and to give additional information to literary works dealing with Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel.

2. Practical Benefit

This study is expected to give deeper understanding and enrich both knowledge and experience especially for the researcher, generally for other students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and can also be used as reference by other

universities students that are interested in literary study on the novel based on sociological approach.

G. Research Methodology

1. Object of the Study

The object of this study is *Little Women* novel written by Louisa May Alcott's. It is analyzed by using sociological approach.

2. Types of the Data and the Data Source

a. Type of the Data

The type of the data is from of the text that is taken from the words, phrases, sentences, narration and dialogues in the novel.

b. Data Sources

The data source used in the research can be categorized into two sources of data:

1) Primary Data

The primary data sources of this study is taken from *Little Women* (1868) novel written by Louisa May Alcott's.

2) Secondary Data

Secondary data is the supporting data taken from other sources such as essay, articles, biography of Louisa May Alcott's, books and virtual references.

3. Technique of the Data Collection

In conducting the study, the researcher uses the techniques of documentation in collecting the data:

- a. Reading the Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel.
- b. Identifying the topic of the novel.
- c. Determining the major characters.
- d. Taking a note of the important information.
- e. Reading some related books to find out the theory.
- f. Determining Issues of the novel.

4. Technique of the Data Analysis

In analyzing data, the writer employs descriptive qualitative analysis of content. The analysis is begun from the structural analysis of the work and finally the sociological analysis of the literary of literary works.

H. Research Organization

The organization of the research report is as follows: Chapter 1 is Introduction; it consists of Background of the Study, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Research Organization. Chapter 2 is Underlying Theory; it consists of Sociology of Literature, Major Principles of Sociology of Literature, Structural Elements of the Novel, and Theoretical Application. Chapter 3 is Social Background of Indonesian Society in the Twentieth Century which covers social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology, cultural aspect,

and religious aspect. Chapter IV is Structural Analysis of *Little Women* novel; it covers structural elements of *Little Women* novel which consist, of characters and Characterization, Setting, Plot, Point of View, Style and Theme. Chapter V is Sociological Analysis of *Little Women* novel that consists of social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter VI is Conclusion and Suggestion of the research.