

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concerns with the reasons why I decide to analyze one of Louisa May Alcott's novels rather than the other literary works like play, poetry, or short story. Then, why I choose to analyze *Little women* rather than Alcott's other novels. Besides, it also consists with the reason why I choose the topic, the purpose of the study, the significant of the study, scope and limitation, methodology, and the organization of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

There are several kinds of literary works, such as novel, play, poetry, and short story. Actually all of them are very interesting to read and analyze, but I choose to analyze a novel because even though it is a long work, but it has a great amount of details in each page. The details of the novel make me recognize the complex reality of a character or event in the story. That is why; it is easier for me to understand the story of the novel rather than other literary works like drama, poetry, or short story.

Novel is read and enjoyed for its sense of entertaining and developing imagination; as Edgar V. Roberts says in his book *Writing themes about literature* that: "novel is a prose story based on the imagination of the author, which can entertain people as well as develop their imagination" (1969, p.51). Therefore, I can enjoy and imagine the situation and the characters in the novel better than when I read the other literary works. Based on these reasons, I choose to analyze novel as my final project.

I am interested in Louisa May Alcott because she is a famous feminist writer in the nineteenth century who is still well known until now. During her life, Alcott has already produced a lot of literary works, such as novels, poems, short stories, and essays. Nevertheless, she is better known as a novelist, especially children books. Alcott mostly got inspiration for her works from Plutarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Goethe, Schiller, Bettine Brentano, Mme. de Stael, Emerson, Charlotte Bronte, Carlyle, Margaret Fuller, and George Sand's works (Goodwin, 2003).

In addition, Louisa May Alcott is not like most of the other writers who write their work on their own imagination. She likes to write about women and family life which are mostly based on her own experiences and her family life. Some of her works have already been translated into several languages and sold out all over the world. Besides, some of them also are made into films and comics (Louisa May Alcott, 1994).

Alcott's first poem *Sunlight* was published in 1852. Her stories, which were gathered together and called *Flower Fables*, was published as her first book in 1855. It was originally written for Emerson's daughter, Ellen. Her first story, *The rival painters, A tale of Rome* was written at the Hillside house in 1848 and published four years later in *Olive Branch*.

Alcott's short stories, such as *The brothers* (1863), *Love and self-love*, *Debby's debut* (1863), *A modern Cinderella: or, The little old shoe* (1860), et cetera appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* (now *The Atlantic*). *The brothers* tells about a Civil War nurse and her mysteriously secretive half-black attendant. *Love and self-love* tells about a heartache that is caused by tragic miscommunication in an unhappy pairing between an orphaned sixteen-year-old and the older man who marries her out of charity. *Debby's debut* tells about an ambitious woman with the intention of marrying her attractive young niece with a man from an impressive family who brings the girl to an elegant seaside resort (*The Atlantic Monthly* , 1995).

Alcott's first successful book, *Hospital sketches* (1863) was written based on the letters that she wrote to her family while she became a nurse in Washington D.C during the civil war. The work was well received although some of her readers objected "the tone of levity" (Schafer, 1997).

Besides children books, Alcott also published some adult novels, such as *Moods* (1865), *Work: A story of experience* (1873), *A modern Mephistopheles* (1877), et cetera. *Moods* was published in the same year when she became editor of a children's magazine, *Merry Museum*. *Work: A story of experience* is written by Alcott not only based on her unhappy experiences as a domestic servant, but also demonstrated through her character alternative values, such as equality and self-fulfilment for women (*The Atlantic Monthly* , 1995).

One of Alcott's novels, *A long fatal love chase*, a tale about obsession, which she wrote in 1866 for magazine serialization was not published in book until 1995 because the story was considered too sensational by her publisher. Alcott's last work, a short story which is called *Lu Sing*, was published in the St. Nicholas magazine in 1902 (Hanneman, 1992 ).

In 1868, Alcott published *Little women*. The book brought her fame, money, and inspiration to continue her writing. She went on to publish; *An old-fashioned girl* (1870), *Little men* (1871), *Eight cousins* (1875), *Rose in bloom* (1876), *Jo's boys* (1886), and various children books. *Rose in bloom* shows heroines who have obtained inner strength through personal suffering and achieved personal satisfaction through careers and without marriage (Louisa May Alcott, 1994).

I am attracted to analyze Louisa May Alcott's *Little women* because it is an interesting novel which tells about a family life and the problems that happen in it. Besides, it is also known as Alcott's masterpiece. It is already translated into several languages and spread all over the world. Besides, it is also made into a film and a comic book. *Little women* is known as a children book. Actually, *Little women* itself consisted of two books. The first book was called *Little women* which was published in 1868, and the second book was called *Good wives* which was published in 1869. Then, they were combined into one novel known finally as *Little women* (Living Little women, 1997).

*Little women* itself actually has four sequels. They are *Good wives* (volume two of *Little women*), *Little men life at Plumfield with Jo's boys* (1871), *Aunt Jo's scrap bag* (1872-1882), and *Jo's boys and how they turned out* (1886) which tell about the other story of the March family's life. However, none of them becomes as booming as *Little women*. Thus, it makes me curious to analyze *Little women* as my final project.

*Little women* is autobiographically because it was written based on Louisa May Alcott's own life with her sisters. Her older sister, Anna Bronson Alcott Pratt who is pretty, domestic and sometimes envious of riches is the model of Meg. Josephine, or Jo, is based on Louisa May Alcott herself, who is independent, sometimes hasty and often tempestuous. Elizabeth Sewell Alcott,

who is the “angel of the house”, is the model of Beth. The last one is May Alcott Nieriker, who has a talent for drawing and painting, is the model of Amy (Louisa May Alcott, 1994).

Although *Little women* is autobiographical, but there are some differences between the characters in the novel and in Alcott’s real life. Laurie is actually two boys, Ladislav Wisniewski, a Polish boy she met in Europe, and Alf Whitman, a dependable friend. She had called Ladislav Laurie, and Alf was from Lawrence, Kansas; ergo Theodore "Laurie" Lawrence. His character is essentially fiction. Laurie's grandfather is based on Louisa's own grandfather, Colonel Joseph May, and her uncle, the Reverend Sam May. His character is essentially fiction. Aunt March, with her dour disposition, is essentially fiction but also loosely drawn from stories of her generous but haughty Great-Aunt Hancock. There is no Prof. Bhaer, but he has some similarities with Louisa's friend and encourager, Ralph Waldo Emerson (Louisa May Alcott, 1994).

Each chapter of *Little women* does not only contain about the lives and adventures of the four sisters, but also the lessons on how to be a good person and how to achieve happiness in life. These values are centred upon God, family, and love (Living Little women, 1997).

The story of *Little women* starts from the years of the American Civil War and is set in a quiet Massachusetts town. It tells about the struggle of the March family to survive in their life without their father who is sent to join the war. The four girls, Meg, Josephine, Beth, and Amy promise to be good girls while their father is not present. Josephine who is known as a tomboy girl tries to replace her father’s position in the family. She considers herself as the man of the family. As time goes by, the March girls grow up and become adults. Their characters change differently one from another. I find out that Josephine’s changing is the most interesting one compared to her sisters’. At the beginning of the story, Josephine March is shown as an independent girl. She loves her family very much and wants to devote her life for her family. Besides, she is also obsessed with her writing career. This condition makes her give her priority to her family and her writing career rather than marriage. Therefore, Josephine cannot accept the reality when her sister, Beth dies and when her sister, Meg wants to get

married. She cannot accept the reality that her sisters leave her because she always wishes that the four of them would always be together forever. Besides, she is also known as a girl who cannot control her emotion well so that she will not forgive Amy's fault and will take a decision in a rush when she faces love problem with Laurie. As time goes by, she slowly develops after she faces many problems and conflicts in her life, especially after she falls in love with Prof. Bhaer. She can control her emotion well which finally makes her able to forgive Amy's fault and think wisely which helps her find a better solution to handle her love problem with Laurie. In addition, she is not obsessed with her writing career anymore and she becomes wiser so that she can accept marriage bonds, in this case Meg's marriage and also Beth's death.

As a result, I decide to analyze Josephine March's process of development because it seems that the process of Josephine March's character development dominates the story of the novel from the beginning until the end. Besides, it is very interesting to know how Josephine faces all of her problems in her life until she finally develops into a better person.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

At the beginning of the story, Josephine March uses wrong ways in handling her problems. As time goes by, she develops and faces her problems correctly. Giving a thorough observation on Jo's character traits and her ways in handling her problems, I am curious to find out the process of Josephine March's development into a better person.

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Through the study of the main character's development, I want to find out the process that shows Josephine March finally develops.

## **1.4 Importance of the Study**

I find out that nowadays not everyone develops in the right way. Some of them develop into better persons, but some of them do not. Therefore, through my thesis, I hope that the readers can know the process that contributes them to

develop in the right way or not. Besides, I also hope that the readers will know more about Louisa May Alcott. Finally, I wish my thesis would encourage other students, especially the students of the Faculty of Literature of Petra Christian University to analyze Louisa May Alcott's other works.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The scope of this study is the process of development of the main character, Josephine March. Therefore, I will limit my study only on the character of Josephine March. The other minor characters such as Meg, Beth, Amy, Laurie, Professor Bhaer, and Marmee are discussed only in their relation with Josephine March.

### **1.6 Methodology**

In researching the data and analyzing the novel, I use library research, and include *Little women* by Louisa May Alcott as the primary data. Besides collecting data, taking notes and quoting, I also use the Internet facility to gain the data. As I use literary approach, in analyzing the main character's development in Louisa May Alcott's *Little women*, I employ two theories, characterization and conflict, since they are very important as the tools to analyze Josephine March's character development.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

I divide my thesis into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, the scope and limitation, the methodology, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is the review of related literature which consists of the literary theories of characterization and conflict. Then, in the third chapter I discuss the main character's development which is divided into two sub – chapters. The first sub chapter discusses the main character's development as seen through her relationship with her family and the second sub – chapter discusses the main character's development as seen through

her relationship with others. Finally, the conclusion of the thesis is accommodated in the fourth chapter.