

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is one way in which humans express themselves in various forms such as poetry, prose, drama, fiction and nonfiction. Literature is growing rapidly so that not only literature is used as a means of learning but also can reflect real life and even literature can become witness and commentators on life (Saryono, 2009, p. 18). A lot of literary works are related to social life and containing the value of the literature itself. The authors or creator of the literary work have a specific purpose for the sensitivity of an art. The literary work itself is a well-scored essay in beautifully aesthetic language.

In its development, literary works do not stick in traditional forms such as poetry, drama, and prose. The types of literary work get wider, they do not only stick to the written forms. Movie or film, animation, manga, web series, and some other new kinds of literary work are the examples. A movie is a piece of literature that uses acting to create the appearance of moving pictures and is created to be enjoyed.

“Little Women,” a Columbia Pictures film directed by Greta Gerwig, is a film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s 1869 novel under the same name. Little Women tells a story about Jo March and her three sisters, Meg, Amy, and Beth March, as they grow up. Four of them are extraordinarily gifted girls. Meg, the older sister, is an actress who excels in her craft and married at an early age. Jo is a writer who earns money by selling her own novel, and she is a typical independent young

lady who is feisty, bright, and determined. Amy is a painter who travels to Paris with her aunt to hone her skills and lives there with the hopes of marrying a wealthy man. The younger sister, Beth, is a pianist.

These four girls are trying to achieve their dreams in the midst of a poor family condition after the Civil War in America in 1861-1865 until they are adults and live their own lives. The concept and social system at that time were questioned by the four sisters, especially Jo March. While going to Aunt March's house, Jo gets a warning to behave properly so that she can marry a rich person for a better life. However, Jo refuses he believes in life and decides for herself. This certainly offended to the aunt who believed that a woman could not decide for herself/

In addition, the same situation was experienced by Amy March in her conversation with Theodore Laurence (Laurie) in Europe. Amy almost gave up on her dream of becoming an artist and took advantage of the existing role of society, namely being a someone's wife. Amy explains that marriage is simply an offer of position in the economy. When a person chooses to get married, then they must dedicate their entire life to their family. Moreover, the moment when Meg and John Brooke's wedding preparation, Jo said that Meg could be an actress instead of being married to Brooke. Jo even asked Meg to run away, which her first sister, of course, refused. The same thing can be seen when Jo refuses a declaration of love from his childhood friend, Laurie.

After Beth March's death, Jo began to realize how lonely she was. She always refuses other people (especially men) to help her. She is just like her mother

who said that a man is not the only thing needed by a woman. This is because everyone has a soul, body, and mind that can help them do anything. Everyone can be whatever they want. Everyone can start a family like Meg or be independent like Jo, or be an artist and have friends like Amy and Laurie. Finally, Jo realized her dream of equal opportunity by establishing a school for girls and boys.

When the war was still going on, the family who had sons and was sent to fight was more respected in society, while women were not allowed to go to war. Social class also has its own polemics. For example, when a woman from an upper social class can get more education than a woman from a lower social class, so if a woman from an upper social class has a relationship with a man from a lower social class, she gets a negative response from her social environment.

The setting of the film *Little Women* is set more than 150 years ago, but class and gender issues are still a stigma in society. Gender stereotypes can still be found in various spheres of social class, ethnicity, race and religion. The stigma of social class in society is still inherent in the environment, including the world of education. Someone who comes from a higher social class society will get a lot of convenience without having to try too hard like people in general who are in a lower social class.

The development of the film industry provides opportunities for cinematography actors to take part, even movies are not limited to mere entertainment. Films are very effective and useful to infiltrate a critique and picture of social issues that develop in a society. The movie “*Little Women*” which was

released in 2019 and directed by Greta Gerwig is an example of a movie that has a social critique within it. The social critique is revealed through the dialogues between the characters in the film. Therefore, dialogues in the film are closely related to the characters as well as their characterization. Character can be learned through dialogue, both in terms of what is said and how it is said. The conversation will make clear the parties' current wants and needs, but it also shows their backgrounds, levels of education, social status, and a variety of other characteristics. The characters' conversations will show how they relate to one another and how the balance of power is distributed. In films, characterization means giving each character on screen a distinct personality through language, action, and other interactions with one another.

Since this premise of the film *Little Women* centers around the story of sisters who are likely to be similar in many ways, characterization becomes important because it can be used to distinguish them. Moreover, this film *Little Women* opens up many possible perspectives to be used as a study or research. In this study, the researcher uses a theory of Karl Marx regarding class struggle and class conflict which are very relevant to be used as a scalpel in this film directed by Greta Gerwig, in which it describes how social class is so real. Marx's class theory is based on the idea that all forms of society from the past until now are conflicts between groups.

In Marx's view, society has fundamental differences between warring groups in pursuing their respective interests. For Marx, the basis of the stratification system is dependent on the relationship of human groups to the means of

production. Adherents of Marxism are called Marxists. Marxism includes an ideology of the struggle of the workers, and also the basis of thought for Marxists to fight for social equality, as well as the abolition of social classes that have been detrimental to certain people, especially the proletariat or lower caste (Suseno, 2001:3).

Furthermore, there is a philosophy that underlies all forms of films (Wartenberg, 2006). It is one of those innovative and creative disciplines that aid in idea formulation. Philosophy assists humans in the creation process whether it is a work of art or a scientific discovery. Marxism is one example of a philosophy that has been utilized in creating works of art, i.e., movies by numerous filmmakers. Many films have portrayed Marxist theory and philosophy. The idea aids one in recognizing society and its structure from a critical vantage point when seen from a large-scale perspective which divides the society into two classes: the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Marx claimed in “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” that the proletariat must transcend philosophy so that it can actualize itself, and vice versa (Marx, 1750). Marx’s intention was to imply that the relationship between the proletariat and philosophy is intertwined. The bourgeoisie, or those with money, rule society. On the other hand, the proletariats lack access to even the most basic necessities and live at the bottom of the social scale. Society cannot work on a particular philosophy before the proletariats are involved. On one side, their transcendence will only support philosophy in society. On the other side, the ideology of their class

should be transcended if they are to understand their significance in society and make it visible.

This implies that when they raise themselves in opposition to capitalists, their struggle can be put to an end. Therefore, Marx added a new interpretation to the traditional notion of the master-slave relationship. It involves comprehending how the proletariat and bourgeoisie—which includes capital and labor—are related.

To put it another way, films are literary works that reflect the philosophy of society. It indicates that movies frequently reflect everyday life by bringing up issues that are prevalent in society. It serves as the film director's primary means of communicating with the audience; in other words, the director uses the medium of the movie to educate the audience about the surroundings.

According to the explanation above, there exist social class issues between the lower class (proletariat) and upper classes (bourgeoisie). In this movie, the subject of social class is portrayed as a depiction of social issues found in literary works that are connected to social changes that take place in society where the lower classes have different conflicts from the upper classes and that they struggle to be free from the bourgeoisie's oppression. Therefore, the researcher wants to focus on the issue of class struggle and class conflict found in *Little Women* (2019) which is revealed through the characters and their characterization.

## 1.2 Limitation of the Problem

The researcher limits this research to ensure that the results and discussion does not come out of the formulation of the problem. This research is limited by

focusing on the concept of base and superstructure from a Marxist perspective, the representation of class struggle, and the representation of class conflict, all of which use the Marxism approach. In addition, the movie's characters and characterization is also described to support the analysis. This research is also limited by the research object, which is the movie *Little Women* (2019). Thus, all data that are outside the limitations are considered invalid and unreliable with the formulation of the problem and objective.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the background reviewed regarding the point of view of Marxism in real life and how it is reflected in literary works, the researcher decided to formulate three problems which are categorized as follows:

1. How is the character and characterization in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig?
2. How is the concept of base and superstructure reflected in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig from a Marxist perspective?
3. How is the representation of class struggle and class conflict reflected in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig from a Marxist perspective?

### 1.4 Objectives of the Research

Based on the problems that have been formulated regarding Marxism in real life and its reflection in literary works, the researcher decided to adjust the objectives with the formulations categorized as follows:

1. To describe the character and characterization in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig.
2. To find out the concept of base and superstructure reflected in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig from a Marxist perspective.
3. To analyze the representation of class struggle and class conflict reflected in *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig from a Marxist perspective.

