

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

A *patriarchal society* is a society that adopts the patriarchal ideology. It is a society which exists in many places all over the world. Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (214). The United States of America in the nineteenth-century is an example of a patriarchal society. It is a society where women face inequalities and become victims of social and economic discrimination. Jobs are filled mainly by men, especially in higher positions. Women are not allowed to be independent, even if they are genius or highly talented in particular fields as if they are incapable of doing great things. Women have to depend solely on their husbands; the husbands focus on their work and make money, and the wives have to do unpaid domestic work at home. The only role dedicated to women is to be a good wife and a great mother, the homemaker.

Such a patriarchal society is described in *Little Women*, a novel written by Louisa May Alcott, an early American feminist and a renowned writer born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 29 November 1832. A novel about young girls stepping into their womanhood during nineteenth-century American patriarchal society, *Little Women* is a semi-autobiography of Alcott's childhood with her sisters in Concord, Massachusetts. The *Little Women* novel was published in two parts; the first was published in 1868, and the second was published in 1869. The

story is set in Massachusetts and New York around the American Civil War in the 1860s.

The novel tells the journey of the March family's four daughters: Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Meg, the eldest daughter of the March family, is a romantic and dreamy young woman who is responsible for her little sisters; the second-oldest, Jo, is a tomboy, creative and ambitious; the third-oldest Beth, is a shy and kind one, and the youngest Amy is another ambitious daughter who loves art and beauty. Each of the sisters has dreams they want to achieve later in life. Meg dreams of living in luxury, Jo aspires to be a famous writer, Beth wants to look after the March family, and Amy wants to be the best painter. Despite facing challenges as a middle-class family and with all of their quarrels, the sisters remain close and always care for each other. As they grow older, they have to go separate ways to pursue their dreams. The story then continues to showcase the struggles of the four sisters to reach their dreams as middle-class women in America's nineteenth-century patriarchal society.

Amy, the youngest daughter of the March family, is an interesting character to analyze. Amy has an ambitious nature, and as the youngest, she is spoiled and quite self-centered. Amy takes a hobby in the artistic field, which makes her dream of becoming the best painter and doing fine pictures in Paris. Amy throughout the story recognizes the limitations placed on women in the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society. Amy realizes that marrying someone from a higher social class would be the only way to help her achieve her dreams and give her and her family a chance to live a better life. Due to that

reason, Amy intends to marry for status and money instead of love. Alcott's *Little Women* novel has been adapted several times into movies and series. However, Amy's character in the adapted versions has caused some debate among the audience. Amy's character is often overlooked and misunderstood because of her intentions. But, the latest movie adaptation of *Little Women* has given audiences a new perspective on Amy March.

The latest adaptation of Alcott's all-time classic *Little Women* novel is the latest movie adaptation with the same title. The movie was released in December 2019, directed and written by Greta Gerwig. The way the story is delivered in Gerwig's adaptation differs from the previous adaptations, which emotionally impacts the audience. The plot in Gerwig's *Little Women* is divided into two timelines, seven years apart, in a nonlinear order. Robyn Bahr, a film and television critic for *The Hollywood Reporter*, says that the play of timeline in Gerwig's adaptation constructs an unexpected emotional beat compared to the original novel and other adaptations (Bahr). The nonlinear plot highlights the strong connection between the characters' present-day events and their past, providing a unique perspective on their development and motivations. It also serves as a nostalgic reminder of the childhood dreams and unforgettable moments they once had.

In addition, Gerwig brings a different perspective to Amy March, a character whom audiences in previous adaptations have often misunderstood. Gerwig's portrayal of Amy in this adaptation is effective in breaking down the stereotype that often characterizes Amy as the selfish little sister who only values

wealth and beauty. Erin Blakemore, a journalist contributor for *Smithsonian Magazine*, states in her *Little Women* movie review that Gerwig has given Amy March justice by portraying Amy as a strong and decisive character instead of selfish and defensive (Blakemore). In Gerwig's adaptation, Amy is a brave character who is not afraid to make and believe in her own decisions. Amy's perspective on societal norms and expectations placed upon women plays a significant role in shaping her choices. In Gerwig's *Little Women*, Amy is a character with strong ambitions and is brilliant in how she can utilize her circumstances as a middle-class woman in the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society to her advantage.

1.2 Research Problems

The criticism and review of Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* raise the following research questions:

1. How is Amy March characterized in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie?
2. How is Amy March's characterization related to the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie?
3. How do Amy March's struggles represent women struggle in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the previously stated research questions, the objectives of this study are :

1. To analyze how Amy March is characterized in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie.
2. To analyze how Amy March's characterization related to the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie.
3. To analyze how Amy March's struggles represent women struggle in the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie.

1.4 Previous Studies

To aid this analysis, the writer uses several preliminary findings related to the issues of the research topic and object. The first related study is a journal article written by Nurmala Dewi and Tatia Ishlah Medina in 2020, entitled "Feminism Portrayed in Greta Gerwig's Movie *Little Women*; Analysis in Modern Era" that focuses on how the type of feminism is portrayed by the leading main character, Jo March, by using feminism theories by Tongs and Botts. The article argues that there are five types of feminism found in Jo which are liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, radical-libertarian feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, and postmodern feminism. Dewi and Medina concluded that the aspects of feminism have embedded Jo March in executing her decision of life (115). This study is done by using qualitative research method and library research method to collect the data.

The second study is an undergraduate thesis entitled *Liberal Feminism Depicted by Jo March as the Main Character in Greta Gerwig's Movie Script*

Little Women, written by Melinda Septiana in 2020. The main concerns of this study are gender stereotypes and feminism, analyzed through Jo March by relating her character depiction to the values of liberal feminism. The feminist theory used is the liberal feminism theory by Margaret L. Andersen, Betty Friedan, and Rosemary Tong. Septiana argues that Jo March has strong and smart characteristics and that she depicts the values of a liberal feminist character (6). Septiana used the feminist approach and library research method to analyze the study's object.

The third study is a master's thesis by Bc.Kateřina Stehnová entitled *Greta Gerwig's Movie Adaptation Little Women and Its Relevance to the Current Society*, written in 2021, focusing on the relevance of the story to current society and its modernity in the movie adaptation version. Stehnová argues that Gerwig modernizes the already up-to-date topic by implementing certain strategies and makes the adaptation relevant to the present day (8). The first part of the study provides the overview of the female position on society. The second part of the study emphasize on the analysis of gender roles, archetypes, stereotypes, dual timeline narration, metafiction, theory of colors, and the plurality of feminism.

The fourth study is an undergraduate thesis written in 2022 by Rifka Sukma Putri with the title *Women's Strategies of Requests as Depicted in the Little Women Movie*. Putri argues that the female characters in *Little Women* make their listeners do what they want and show how clear and polite they are when making requests by reinforcing their request sentences in daily conversations. There are nine types of request strategies in the female main characters when

making requests: mood variable, hedged performatives, performatives, obligation statements, want statements, preparatory queries, suggestory formulae, strong hints, mild hints. The data were analyzed by using the theory of request strategy by Blum-Kulka and the theory of factors influencing the use of strategies by Brown and Levinson, the data is collected by using the free-to-play observation method by Sudaryanto.

The fifth study is an undergraduate thesis titled *Independent Woman Portrayed in Jo March in Little Women Movie (2019): A Feminist Approach*. It was written in 2021 by Belladina Kusuma Indriani. The study uses feminist approach to identify the feminism values and independence of Jo March. Indriani states that Jo March cares deeply about the fate of the women around her especially in education that makes her tries her best to help the change of the fate of those around her for the better. There are four kinds of independences in Jo which are independence in society, in education, in economy, and in work place. The feminism values found in Jo are breaking patriarchy system, woman emancipation, and woman stereotype.

Most of the studies above focus on Jo March character and employ feminist approach in analyzing the movie. This study analyzes Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) movie by using sociological approach and focuses on the character Amy March. This study focuses on the social circumstances in the movie which affects Amy March and forces her to struggle for her dreams as a middle-class woman in the nineteenth-century American patriarchal society.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the character Amy March in her relations with the struggle of being the family's only hope and the struggle to reach her dreams within the situation of the society occurs in the movie. Thus, the intrinsic elements analyzed in this study are limited to setting, character and characterization, and conflict. The extrinsic elements analyzed in this study are how Amy March struggles and how Amy March represents the condition of women in nineteenth-century American patriarchal society. Even though she has to struggle to get the life she desires, Amy March is brilliant to take advantage of the situation for her interest as a woman in nineteenth-century American patriarchal society.

1.6 Writing Organization

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of six sub-chapters which are background of study, research problems, purpose of study, previous studies, scope of study, and writing organization.

CHAPTER II : THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter consists of the theory and method used to analyze the movie. The cinematography elements focus on camera shots. The intrinsic elements focus on the setting, character and characterization, and conflict of the movie. The extrinsic elements focus on patriarchal society and struggle theory.

CHAPTER III : AMY MARCH'S STRUGGLES WITHIN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY IN GRETA GERWIG'S *LITTLE WOMEN* (2019) MOVIE

This chapter consists of the analysis of the intrinsic elements of the movie and the extrinsic elements of the chosen character, Amy March. The setting analysis of the movie focuses on the place, time, and social setting. The character and characterization analysis focus on Amy March. The conflict analysis focus on the internal conflict of Amy and the external conflict between Amy with Jo and Amy with Laurie. The external analysis focus on Amy's position and struggles as a middle-class woman in the nineteenth-century American Patriarchal Society. The struggles analysis will focus on Amy's struggles to be a painter, to fit in upper-class society, and to marry well.

CHAPTER IV : CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of the study's conclusion on the research problems based on the conducted analysis.