

# Louisa May Alcott's Worldview in the Main Character of *Little Women* Novel

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Abstract: Worldview is the result of the social condition which was faced by the subject or the author. The historical background and social fact are the reason behind the author's worldview that was presented in the literary work. In accordance, the aim of this study is to find out how Josephine as the main character of Little Women novel presents the worldview of Louisa May Alcott. This study applies the genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann. Besides, this study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The study finds that life principle of the main female character who is Josephine is the embodiment of Louisa May Alcott's worldview on her perspective to put her family as her priority and also her perspective that women have their freedom to determine their life path in marriage while her surrounding says that women have to marry someone. Then, Alcott's worldview also shows the reflection of the social condition around Alcott in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: family, genetic structuralism, marriage, worldview

### **RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Literature always becomes an exciting topic to discuss more about it. Because, from literature we may learn about life in the era before we live, having more understanding about the culture and history around the world by reading the literary works such as prose, poetry, until the drama that we may enjoy and learn from its story. Moreover, from literary work we may find the worldview of the author which may give us broader knowledge about what happened in the era such as the social condition which was faced by the author that is described in the novel or other literary works.

The novel entitled *Little Women* was written by Louisa May Alcott in 1868. This novel describes the sisters of March family were Josephine Meg, Amy, and Beth March. They were born in a low-income family during the war era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they struggled to pursue their dreams while fighting the stigma against women at that time. The characters are made with a unique way of thinking. From Josephine, who is the main character of this novel, she is a novel writer and independent woman. Across from the modest March Family house, stand the majestic Lawrence Family residence, where wealthy Mr. Lawrence and his grandson, Laurie live together. The two families eventually became friends and filled eachother. In the past, Laurie fell in love with Josephine and then it turns out that Jo's younger sister had a special feeling for Laurie. This become one of the challenges for Josephine at the end of the story.



In terms of story Little Women brings many topics, from the perspective on marriage in that era, the economic situation, until the family topic in March family. Therefore, with a variety of topics described in *Little Women* novel this research aims to reveal the life principle of the main female character who is Josephine in the novel entitled Little Women on her perspective in seeing marriage and family as her priority which it is the result of Louisa May Alcott's worldview towards her character in this novel.

In discussing the main topic which is marriage, this novel firstly described the great kinship between Josephine and her sisters. Celebrating Christmas together, having a theatre performance together, and always helping each other in the house until they work hard in the different cities to fulfill their family needs. Josephine always works hard for her family because her sister is mostly getting married, so it becomes her obligation to have more money for her mother and her youngest sister, who suffer from sickness. This part shows that Josephine, as a woman has to be brave to fight for her family as Louisa May Alcott's perspective about a family at that time. This perspective about women and family is certainly influenced by the stigma in her surroundings, and this stigma has been spreading until now.

While describing the great kinship between the four sisters, this novel starts to describe marriage, and this topic is the most discussed topic in this novel. Almost all characters have problems in marriage life, different perspectives, and the women's role after marriage. In this novel, people in that era thought that as women, they had to marry well to support family condition. Also, women in this novel have to get married and have a family in the future even though some women do not want to have a family or get married. Josephine is the only character that has a different perspective about marriage. She has her principle about it. Josephine thinks that women have their freedom to determine their life path in marriage while her surrounding says that women have to marry someone. Then, when her elder sister wants to get married, as the younger sister Josephine thinks that her elder sister has to reach her dream rather than get married. However, her elder sister had a different perspective of dream than Josephine. Today, many women want to have the freedom to determine their life path in marriage without having a bad stigma about women who want to achieve their dreams first than getting married. Shostak (1987) describes how never-married women are more prone to stigmatization.

Many more exciting topics are described in this novel, and it is written amazingly by the outstanding plot by Louisa May Alcott and makes many novel enthusiasts or even researcher want to know more about its interpretation. There are many moral and social values that we can take from this novel. From how feminism has been discussed from many years ago, and how people in that era suffered from the stigma of women until how the family became the primary purpose of life in this novel. Then, from those two topics that are mostly brought in this novel, the influence of the author's worldview on the main character named Josephine in this novel will become the focus of this research. A work of literature was born inside society as a reflection of the author's imagination and representation in their life (Zimmerman & Goldmann, 2013). From that statement, it can be said that the historical background and social fact of the author are the reason behind the author's worldview that was presented in the literary work as it consists of the social reality of the life they lived. Thus, Alcott'sworldview is the result of the historical background and social facts that were faced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So, from Alcott's worldview, it is important to analyze for getting information and broader knowledge about social identity, society group, and also social class, especially how women should have their freedom to choose their life path about marriage and about women who want to support



her family that actually lived by Alcott as a human in the society in 19th century. Nevertheless, an overview of Alcott's historical background is also needed to gain more understanding of this study. This will help the writer to have a better grip on comprehending Alcott's way of thinking in her worldview in seeing marriage and family through Little Women novel.

Luoisa May Alcott is a daughter of a transcendentalist Bronson Alcott and her mother Abigail May. She was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania on November 29th, 1832 and spent most of her time in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts until she died on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1888. Alcott was the second child and spent her childhood with her three sisters, Anna Bronson Alcott was her older sister and two youngest sisters were Elizabeth Sewall Alcott and Abigail May Alcott. In her early age she worked to help her family which suffered from financial difficulties. She did many things to help support her family at that time, taught for a while, worked as a domestic, and started to write until she had many famous works in her lifetime. When Alcott turned into 11 years old, she wrote "I wish I was rich, I was good, and we were all a happy this day" thus, this quotation show the financial condition of Alcott's family at that time.

Therefore, in analyzing those topics in Little Women novel, the writer uses Genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann and descriptive qualitative as the approach to elaborate the life principle of the main character, named Josephine, about marriage and family as the representation of Louisa May Alcott's worldview in the novel entitled Little Women.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

To achieve the originality of the research, the writer presents a literary review and divides it into two parts, those are some previous researches or studies related to the novel and also theoretical studies to support this research.

### **Previous Study**

The first previous study that the writer uses is the research entitled "An Analysis Image of Women in Little Women Novel by "Louisa May Alcott" which was written by Afriani Rismauli Simanungkalit and Emil Eka Putra, S.S., M.Hum in 2020. This study describes the image of women in Little Women's novel by Louisa May Alcott. In analyzing the novel, the method that the writer uses is qualitative descriptive. The data of this study is taken from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel and from the quote in the novel that shows the image of women by using the feminist approach. From the research above, the finding discussion explains that a feminist approach is an approach that can be used to assess gender differences and also to analyze social and political problems that include the image of the main women character in the *Little Women* novel. In this study, the writer explains that the image of the woman in this novel is working hard for her family and doing extraordinary things.

In this study, it explains the detail of how women image was shown in the novel which gives a big direction to the writer to use this study as reference material for further research in better understanding of how the view of Louisa May Alcott influences the main character in Little *Women* novel especially about her view about marriage by using the different theory.

For having more direction and a better understanding of the author worldview by using genetic structuralism theory, the writer searches the previous study which discusses the literature structure which is portrayed by the author and that literature structure has the relation with the social structure where the author lives and published their literary works. Then, the writer find the study entitled "Jane Austen's View on The Industrial Revolution in Pride and Prejudice" was written by Aralia Heaverly and Elisabeth Ngestirosa Endang Woro Kasih in 2020. In this



paper, the writer analyzed Jane Austen's view in Pride and Prejudice novel which the author was triggered by the social systems in British society and was influenced by the industrial revolution's phenomena in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in England and it reveals the social system there. This study aims to reveal how Jane Austen's view towards the industrial revolution in British society by using genetic structuralism by Lucien Goldmann and the dialectical method. In result discussion, this study finds that in Austen's view about the society in that era who used the landed gentry and the system of inheritance to define the social class in the society. Then, Jane Austen think the inheritance system is not good to be practiced among the society, because this is leading the parents to do matchmaking to their children for the better condition or even their family economy in the future. Those thoughts are portrayed in the character and characterization of Pride and Prejudice Novel. Not only about landed gentry and inheritance system, but Jane Austen also put her view about the industrial revolution in the character in this novel that actually industrial revolution took a big role in shaping the occupation of the society and also the system in that era. This paper also explains how the condition of workingclass made them have to work in the town, meanwhile the society in the upper-class, they were doing trade in the town and the middle-class society mostly work with rich people. Then, those Jane Austen's views about the industrial revolution were also put in this novel and were portrayed by the character and characterization in Pride and Prejudices novel.

From this study, the writer gets a better understanding of the author worldview which was portrayed in the literary work but in the different material of research. By using the same theory, this study also gives the writer direction on how to analyze the worldview of the author by using genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann. Then, it makes the writer easier to do the analysis in the current research.

Not only using the previous study from the same novel as *Little Women*, but the writer also searches the other previous study that contains the same theory which is genetic structuralism by Lucien Goldmann to add more knowledge of how this theory was being used in different material since the writer is also focusing on genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann to reveal how Louisa May Alcott' view toward marriage and family influence the main character of Little Women novel. Therefore, the writer used the research entitled "Worldview in Maya Angelou's Poems: Lucien Goldmann's Genetic Structuralism Approach" was written by Lukitaning Nur Jayanti and Dr. Ali Mustofa, S.S., M.P.d. in 2020. In this study Maya Angelou had influenced her literary works, as it represented through her thought and ideology as an individual. The purposes of the study are to test the validation of the Goldmann theory of Genetic Structuralism in understanding the Worldview approach and to verify David Kelly's statement in his personal opinion of Maya Angelou. This study was conducted by analyzing Maya Angelou's three poems in the eyes of the Genetic Structuralism point of view by Lucien Goldmann. There were two different sources of the data taken for this study. As a result, it shows that a collective subject that all human behavior with historical dimensions is connected, and worldviews are constructed by the coherence of the context within literal work with reallife social contexts of the author, have been approved and validated and that they can be viewed in Maya Angelou"s works.

This study uses the same theory and purpose with the study that the writer conducts. The difference is in the material used, which this previous study uses poem as the main material while, the writer uses novel as the main material in the current study. From this previous study, it helps the writer to apply this theory to the Alcott's worldview on the main character of *Little Women* novel. It gives the writer a better knowledge and how to use it in the different object material.

For getting more knowledge and better understanding about author's worldview by using



genetic structuralism, the writer found the study entitled "Genetic Structuralism Analysis in "Go Set A Watchman" by Harper Lee" was written by Bima Atmana and Sumitro in 2020. The purpose of this study is to create a literature sociological analysis of the novel Go Set a Watchman. This study aims to reveal the worldview of the author by using Genetic Structuralism theory. The focus of the research is as follows; 1) Analyzing the literary structure of the novel 2) The social background of Harper Lee in relation with the novel 3) The historical events and condition of the society 4) The author's world view in the novel. In finding discussion, the analysis shows that Harper Lee sees the conditions of the society, at the time the novel was written.

This study uses the same theory and purpose with the study that the writer conducts. The difference is in the material used, which this previous study uses different novel as the main material. From this previous study, it helps the writer to apply this theory to the Alcott's worldview on the main character of *Little Women* novel. It gives the writer a better knowledge and how to use it in other novel.

The last previous study is entitled "Genetic Structuralism Analysis in Short Story Pusaka Tinggi by Darman Moenir Text Structure, Social Structure and World View Perspective" was written by Mutiara Widya Utam and Suminto A Sayuti in 2018. This study aims to describe the concept of short story Pusaka Tinggi by Darman Moenir of the concerns of the structure in short story text, social structure of society that underlies the birth of a short story, the social worldview of the author in the short story, and the relationship between social structures with the world view authors in short story Pusaka Tinggi by Darman Moenir. By using genetic structuralism theory Lucien Goldmann, this study found that the structure of short story text reflects the problem of disputes caused by the dissolution of understanding of Minangkabau society about the prevailing customs, the social structure underlying the birth of the short story is the social structure of Minangkabau society in a people in the inter- in Minangkabau, the author's worldview of Darman Moenir in short story is social humanism in Minangkabau society, and the relationship between the social structure and the authors' world view involves the setting of the life of a Minangkabau people in a kinship group based on the customs governing the pattern of behavior in social relations in Minangkabau.

This study uses the same theory and similar purpose with the study that the writer conducts. The difference is in the material used, which this previous study uses short story as the main material while the current study uses novel as the main material. From this previous study, it helps the writer to apply this genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann to the Alcott's worldview on the main character of Little Women novel. It gives the writer a better knowledge and how to use it in other novel.

#### **Genetic Structuralism Theory**

In this study, the writer uses genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann. Genetic structuralism is a study that is a branch of Sociology theory. (Bates, 2015) argued that the sociology of literature is applied to focus on the relation between literary work and the social structure in which it is created. This theory combines the intrinsic element of the work with the extrinsic element that consists of the historical background, social and culture related to the literary work. It examines social events and conditions pictured in the novel as a reflection of the writer's position in society. Then, it means that the social background as the extrinsic element is really important because it has a relation with the reason of the production of a literary work and what is represented from this literary work. Then, it will certainly create the worldview of the author.



In analyzing using Genetic structuralism theory, the research can be formulated into three steps. Firstly, analyze the intrinsic elements of literary work. Secondly, is finding the author's social and cultural life.Lastly, is finding social and historical background from the works of the author. According to Faruk (1999) the basic concept of Genetic structuralism is divided by Goldmann into several concepts. Those are worldview, human fact, trans individual subject and significant structure.

### **Human Fact**

The basic concept of Genetic structuralism theory by Goldmann is the human fact. All of the act of a human is meaningful, either the behavior is verbally or physically, it can certainly give the influence to the social history. This fact can be as a social activity until cultural creation such as artwork. In finding the worldview of the author, the human fact is essential in getting the social fact to form social structure. Goldman stated that human fact is the social history in which the literary work was written and it is also the result of human behavior. Therefore, it makes human fact defined as the basic concept of Genetic structuralism.

### Worldview

Worldview have a tight relationship with social class, it means worldview is always a social class's view. It is an idea structure, feeling and also an aspiration that can make a unity of one social group to other social groups. (Goldmann, 1980) stated that worldview is the rule of both action and life, also as the solution to overcome the obstacles in life. Then, Goldmann continued that worldview is the result of the social condition which was faced by the subject or the author. The historical background and social fact are the reason behind the author's worldview that was created in the literary work. It can express the social identity, society group, and also social class that actually lived by the author as a human in the society.

### **Transindividual Subject**

Transindividual subject or also called asthe collective subject is a paradigm subject with social fact subject or historical. Social fact subjects such as politics, social revolution, economy, and also cultural work. Transindividual subject means that the author becomes a certain part of a social group. Therefore, the author writes or creates a literary work and put themselves as an individual person who does not stand on their own, then they try to represent a certain group in society in that literary work.

#### **Significant Structure**

Significant structure (important structure) is a portrayal of the history in society into literary work. Basically, social history can change over time, then it means it is not only about internal coherence. However, it also has a relationship with the global structure's meaning, the world, or the social even the natural environment. Therefore, in literary works, the significant structure shows the relation between the character in the story and object in surroundings or the social history where the authors life. Certainly it may show that author's surroundings and social history may influence their works.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In conducting this study, the writer uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the novel in detail, including in understanding the dialogue that appear in the story and the meaning of it related to the characters that are portrayed in the novel. Sandelowski (2000) noted that, in doing such descriptive qualitative studies, researchers tend not to penetrate their data in any



interpretive depth. These studies present comprehensive summaries of a phenomenon or of events. In brief, descriptive qualitative research is a research which is employing the method of collecting, describing, classifying and analyzing the data and then drawing a conclusion. The data can be sentences, discourse, pictures diary and memorandum. By using the descriptive method, this research is aimed to describe the role of the author's view on the main characters' life principle especially about marriage and family that highly affects the story through what she says, do and feel which are portrayed in *Little Women* novel. In finding the data as the reference of this research, the writer uses library research which the writer will collect some data or information related to the topic research from books, magazines, newspapers, the internet or audio visuals. In this study, the source of the data in this research are events and dialogue about Alcott's worldview in the Little Women novel written by Luoisa May Alcott. The writer takes two kinds of data sources, those are primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is the main data obtained from all the quotation which are taken from the novel like the texts such as words, phrases, and sentences in dialogues or monologues that occur in the novel related to the topic. Therefore, secondary data is the supporting data taken from the literary books, and journals related to the novel and genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this part, the writer presents the data taken from some parts in *Little Women* novel by Luoisa May Alcott. After that, the writer classifies the data into several parts according to author's worldview of marriage and author's worldview of family on the main character in this novel. The data are presented as follow:

### Author's Worldview About Marriage

"Nothing more, except that I don't believe I shall ever marry. I'm happy as I am, and love my liberty too well to be in a hurry to give it up for any mortal man." –Little Women pp 401

This quotation happens after Laurie confessing his feeling to Josephine. At that time, Josephine still fell happy without partner in her life. She thought that once she got married she will lose her freedom and she did not had any special feeling towards Laurie. Even though there was a time when Josephine thought that she would say yes if Laurie ask her again, because she want to be loved rather than losing her best friend.

"An old maid, that's what I'm to be. A literary spinster, with a pen for a spouse, a family of stories for children, and twenty years hence a morsel of fame, perhaps..." and there Jo sighed, *–Little Women* pp 481.

In this story, Josephine was an ambitious woman who want to reach her dream first rather than getting married. She wants to be a famous writer with many literary works in her future and she believes she will make it.

From those quotations it shows Josephine's character mainly influenced by Alcott's worldview in seeing marriage except the ending part when Josephine got married to Professor Bhaer. Based on Alcott's biography, it stated that Alcott was also an ambitious woman who worked hard to achieve her dream as a writer and she was not marrying someone until she died. She always believe in her ability in writing and it made her become very popular because of her literary works. However, in 19th era where this novel was created there is still a stigma that



women have to marry someone in the end of their life path. By bringing her own perspective in seeing marriage towards her main character in this novel. Alcott shows to the reader that woman also have their right to choose their life path. They definitely may choose to achieve their dream first rather than getting married. This worldview give big impact to the main character's life principle especially in her perspective in seeing marriage and to the whole stories since this topic is one of the most discussed topic in this novel.

## **Author's Worldview About Family**

"I'll try and be what he loves to call me, 'a little woman' and not be rough and wild, but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else," said Jo, -Little Women, pp 10

This quotation shows that Josephine as a daughter always try her best to please her parents even though she has to suppress her natural personality. Moreover, Alcott's real live based on her biography, it described that her father, Branson Alcott, was a transcendentalist and preached strict Protestant values to his four daughters.

"Well, I was wild to do something for father," replied Jo, -Little Women, pp 185.

"My—my hair!" burst out poor Jo, trying vainly to smoother her emotion in the pillow. -Little *Women*, pp 188.

Similar to the first quotation, it shows how Josephine as a daughter will do everything to help her family. This quotation, happen when her father was in the hospital and her family needed money for it. Josephine thought hard how to earn money for her father since she really love to do something for her father and also her family. Until she found an idea to sell her beautiful hair for some money. It was not sad until the night come and Josephine was crying in her bed because of losing her hair. In other part in this novel, Josephine also did many things for helping her family's economic condition.

Based Alcott's biography, it described that Alcott's family suffered from financial difficulties. Similar with Jo's act, Alcott worked hard to support her family's financial in her early age. She started to write and teaching back then to earn money.

"I do think that families are the most beautiful things in all the world!" burst out Jo,-Little Women, pg 530

Those quotations clearly show how Josephine put her family as her priority in her life and it is the result of the influence of Alcott's worldview as its author. From how Alcott arrange the structure of her family such as her parents and her four sister based on her real life, which she had 4 sisters back then and one of her sisters died and she also make it into her story in this novel. Alcott and her other sister worked hard in the past to help her family's economy. From those fact it showed Josephine's character mainly influenced by the real condition or social condition that was faced by Alcott in the past. The family condition in this story also was shaped by the historical background of Alcott. Moreover, from the life principle of Josephine in putting her family as her priority showed the real condition of Alcott as the author in her social life as a daughter and a sister in her family in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### CONCLUSION

This study reveals the influence of the author's worldview on the main character named



Josephine in this novel will become the focus of this research. It found that Alcott's worldview is the result of the historical background and social fact that is faced in 19<sup>th</sup> century. So, from Alcott's worldview, it revealed the social identity, society group, and also social class of Louisa May Alcott as the author of this novel especially her perspective about how woman should have their freedom to choose their life path about marriage and about woman who want to support her family that actually lived by Alcott as a human in the society in 19<sup>th</sup> century which give big influence to the main character in this novel, named Josephine.

By using genetic structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann, it finally revealed the influence of the author on the main character of *Little Women* novel in seeing two most discussed topic, marriage and family.

Firstly, this study analyze about Alcott's worldview about marriage. From the main character in this novel, it shows that Alcott tried to tell the readers that woman also have their freedom to choose what they want for their life, they can also achieve their dream rather than getting married to someone. So, it must not be married in the end of woman's story but they also have the right to choose.

Secondly, this study analyze about Alcott's worldview about family. In this case, Alcott put mainly her real life family's story to the plot. Her parents, her four sisters and her family's condition are described well with an outstanding plot by Alcott. It shows how Josephine put her family as her priority and turns out that it is the influence of Alcott's worldview about her family in her real life.

This study finally found Louisa May Alcott's worldview in Little Women novel that reveal the historical background and the real social condition that was faced by Alcott when she lived as a human, a daughter and a sister in society especially her family in 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the study focuses on author's worldview on the main character in Little Women novel, the following studies regarding to author's worldview by genetic structuralism theory is suggested. The historical background and social fact are the reason behind the author's worldview that was created in the literary work. From analyzing it the researcher may find the identity and the real social condition that was faced by the author as a human in a certain group of a society.

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