CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research that covers background of the study and the research question. Moreover, this chapter also includes the aim of the study, the scope of the study, and the signification of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Film is a representation of reality because it usually presents a story which might happen in everyday life. Even though the film is created by imagination, it does not diminish the problem of finding ways to present the reality (Heintz & Stracey, 2006). In addition, the film is the best mirror for people's life which gives familiar yet new experiences (Bonifazio, 2018). Hence, the film industry creates many types of film for the audience to enjoy according to their preferences. For example, people who like love stories will enjoy more romantic films or there are also people who like to watch documentaries films. Accordingly, films become a necessary entertainment for people in everyday life, and then it creates a high demand on film production (Mazdon, 2013).

The increasing demand of film makes an adaptation and remake practice become common (Mazdon, 2013). Although there are many types of new films, some films and works that have been made remain memorable for some people. Loock and Verevis (2012) also quoted that to keep the love from the audience, the film industry remakes old stories for different times, with fresh stars and ambitious directors. Therefore, the practice of adaptation in film industry is not only recreating a new film with the same story from the existing films. There are some popular films which are produced from novels, plays, and even poetry (Heintz and Stracey, 2006). A filmmaking is usually adapted to the current situation and condition, so that the adaptation films which made in different time periods will not have exactly the same aspects like the original. Seger (1992) stated that an adaptation is a conversion from one medium to another and it implies changes in some aspects of

the film in its process. The change can be in the cinematography, the shot and editing, the plot, or the new scenes and situations that will give development to the characters. Hence, the changes in adaptation film will build the same characters in the same story with different characterization.

One of the examples of literary work which turned into film adaptations is a novel by Louisa May Alcott entitled *Little Women.* The novel was originally published in 1868 and then it was adapted into a film for the first time in 1917 as a silent film. Since then, there have been six films remake of *Little Women* in total. The second feature film of *Little Women* released in 1918 was also categorized as silent film. The third *Little Women* adaptation film created in 1933 directed by George Cukor was the first *Little Women* film with dialogues and music. *Little Women* produced by Mervyn LeRoy in 1949 is the fourth film of *Little Woman* adaptation and also the first colored version of *Little Women* film. After 45 years, Gillian Armstrong's debuted *Little Women* (1994) was the fifth film of *Little Women* adaptation. The most recent version was released in 2019 and directed by Greta Gerwig.

Despite the different versions of *Little Women*, the films always highlighted the characterization of the main female character. Greene (2000) said that the main female characters always portrayed to be the representation of feminism and masculinity. It is because the original story of *Little Women* narrates the feminist empowerment in American Literature, and the representation of female characters in the story is reflected from male-generated images at that time (Hovet & Hovet, 1993). Seger (1992) asserted that the number of adaptations of this works in different period of time will result in a variation of characters' portrayal in *Little Women.*

The characterization of the main character in *Little Women* film is often discussed over the time. On the one hand, the main female character, Jo March, in both novel and film is portrayed as a tomboy and independent women who aspire to be a writer. Based on its portrayal as tomboyish, independent, and caring woman, Jo March has always been represented as a liberal feminist figure in most versions

of the film (Plath, Sinclair and Curnutt, 2019; Septiana, 2020). Quimby (2003) also explained that Jo March character is always abnormally male-identified due to her desire to be a man in the family. On the other hand, Laurie, the main male character is considered to have no reflection of masculinity. Parille (2001) remarked that even though Laurie is perceived like many mid-nineteenth century middle-class young man, he is subjected struggles that are usually relevant in women's lives. In *Little Women* story, Laurie does not have the freedom to choose the path of his life which is always arranged by his grandfather. Laurie's limited freedom in taking the life choices that he wants illustrates the experiences which generally happened to women back then. The character of Laurie is also considered as an example of masculine plight (Keyser, 2000). In other words, his position as a man has been marginalized and powerless under the patriarchy expectations at that time which should have given Laurie the freedom to determine what he wants because he is a man, and the rise of feminism (Connors in Micciche, 1997). Nevertheless, the characterization in an adapted film which is produced in different time period will not hold the same audience's perspective like the original one due to several scenes and situations added in film.

The notion of masculinity in a film character apparently is not always about male characters. Connell (2005) affirms that masculinity is a gender practice which both men and women can engage in. Accordingly, the female character can be created with man's appearance and personality while the male character also can have woman's experiences. Connell (2005) then mentioned that the actors in the film are usually represented with hegemonic masculinity which highlighted the dominant traits of men. However, the construction of masculinity especially in a film character is based upon social and cultural conditions (Stets & Burke, 2000). In other words, the construction of masculinity is influenced by the society's perspective of the time and will affect how masculinity displayed by the characters in the film.

Based on the previous studies above, the construction of masculinity in *Little Women* has been widely used on the analysis of the main female character, while the construction to the male character is less discussed. Therefore, this study

focuses to analyze how the male character who dominantly appears in *Little Women,* Laurie, is constructed in *Little Women* film across time. To see the character construction over the time, this study will compare Laurie in two versions of *Little Women* which were directed by Gillian Armstrong (1994) and directed by Greta Gerwig (2019) because those are directed by women. This is to see how male characters are constructed by female directors as *Little Women* story originally written by woman. Moreover, this study employs some of cinematic aspects such as *mise-en-scene,* the camera works as a part of film theory by Bordwell and Thompson (2008), Boggs and Petrie's (2012) theory of characterization, and is framed within the theory of masculinity by Connell (2005).

1.2 Research Question

This study is gearing towards answering the following question:

- How is Laurie constructed in two different versions of *Little Women?*

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate the construction of main male character of *Little Women* in two different versions of *Little Women* film produced in different time period, which are *Little Women* directed by Gillian Armstrong (1994) and *Little Women* directed by Greta Gerwig (2019) by using *mise-en-scene* aspect as the cinematic techniques of film in film theory proposed by Bordwell and Thompson (2008), the theory of characterization by Boggs and Petrie (2012), and masculinity theory by Connell (2005).

1.4 The Scope of the Study

The study specifically examines the main male character in *Little Women* films, Laurie. The study focuses on analyzing the scenes containing Laurie as the main male character in two different versions of *Little Women* film, (1994) and (2019), to find out how the character is constructed in two different time periods. The other characters may be presented to support the analysis of Laurie's characterization.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give a contribution to critical thinking analysis in film studies. This study intends to provide insight into how the characterization is built from the same story in a different period of time. The use of cinematic aspects such as *mise-en-scene,* shot, camera angle, and characterizations within the film aid to give deeper analysis in the result of how the character is portrayed in the film.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

1. Film

Film is motion pictures which communicate and offer information, ideas, and experiences. The experiences are often driven by stories, with characters we come to care about. It also can develop and explored by the visual qualities and sound textures. (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008)

2. Characterization

An ensemble of indicators in a character scattered along the text and, when in need, gives a reference of the character's traits (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002).

3. Masculinity

Masculinity is a pattern of practice which both men and women can engage the position of men in a gender order (Connell, 2005).

1.7 Organization of the Paper

The organization of this research is divided into five chapters and they are described as follows:

1. CHAPTER I: Introduction

    This chapter presents the introduction of the study which contains background of the study, research question, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

2. CHAPTER II: Theoretical Framework

    This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of the study which consist of the basis theories for this research. They are theory of film by Bordwell and Thompson (2008), theory of characterization by Boggs and

Petrie (2012), and theory of masculinity by Connell (2005). It also provides the previous studies that are related to the present study.

3. CHAPTER III: Methodology

    This chapter deals with the method of the research in conducting the study. This chapter includes research design, data collection, synopsis of the data, and data analysis.

4. CHAPTER IV: Findings and Discussions

    This chapter contains the findings and discussions of the study. The main purpose of this chapter is to answer the research question.

5. CHAPTER V: Conclusion

    This is the final chapter which presents the conclusion from the overall findings in the previous chapter. Suggestions regarding the results of the study are also presented.