CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Literature is one of the greatest creative and universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual or intellectual concerns of mankind. Literature is as the expression of beautiful thoughts, feeling and human experience in beautiful language. Taylor states in his book, *Understanding the Elements of Literature* that literature is essentially an imaginative act, which is an act of the writer's imagination in selecting, ordering and interpreting life experience (1). Literature provides a portrayal of human life in writing form, which reflects the human actual experiences and contains philosophical and moral concerns. The concept of literature was developing into specific term. It is not aimed for entertaining purpose only but also concerning the matter of physiological, social, historical and idea of human beings.

Another prominent thing exists in the literature is that it may also reflect society's life in a particular time as De Bonald says in Wallek and Warren in *Theory of Literature* that "literature is the society's expression or society's ideas feelings" (95). It means that literature is life's imitation.

Literature is depiction of the society exists at the time. Readers can learn about the condition of the society in a particular time. It may reflect the politics, social situation and economy condition of the society. Literature is reflection of the life in all its varied and shapes. Literature is the mirror to life

and society. Literature as an imitation of human action, often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in society.

One form of literature is novel. Novel is a long narrative, normally in prose, which describes fictional characters and events, usually in the form of a sequential story. The word comes from the Italian novel is "novella" which means a story or a piece of the story. Taylor stated that novel is normally a prose work of quite some length and complexity which attempts to reflect and express something of the equality or the value of human experience or conduct (46). In general, a novel tells the story of the characters in everyday life and all the nature, character and temperament.

Novel gives many themes that sometimes can be the representation of what is happening in the particular time. Society and class are probably one of the most interesting theme to be explored since it talks about society which people live in. this theme may also reveal the class difference in the society itself. It represents the way people interact in the society with others, and makes more interesting to explore. Then, novel can also set a gender stereotypes as a theme. According to *Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, "gender is the notion of gender can be understood to be referring to the cultural assumptions and practices that govern the social construction of men, women and their social relations. The concept gains much of its force through a contrast with a conception of sex as the biological formation of the body. Femininity and masculinity as forms of gender are the outcome of the cultural regulation of behaviours that are regarded as socially appropriate to a given

sex" (Barker 73). It means that gender is refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationship of and between groups of women and men.

Then, "stereotype is vivid but simple representation that reduces persons to a set exaggerated, usually negative, character traits and is thus a form of representation that essentializes others through the operation of power" (Barker 188). Stereotype can be thought as a cognitive method or procedure, used by our mind in order to simplify the complex barrage of information it experiences. From this perspective, a stereotype is a method of understanding, which works through classifying individual people into a group category (Pilcher and Whelehan 166). It means that gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by women and men.

Little Women is a novel written by Louisa May Alcott. This novel adapted issues about gender stereotype, women's struggle between familial duty and personal growth. This novel is first published in 1868 and followed by the second volume in the next year. Little Women is a novel about the struggle of the four March sisters named Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy in facing their life in a family by the absence of father figure. Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy March are four sisters living with their mother in New England. Their father is away serving as a chaplain in the Civil War, and the sisters struggle to support themselves and keep their household running despite the fact that the family recently lost its fortune. In the process, they become close friends with their wealthy neighbor, Theodore Laurence, known as "Laurie." As the girls grow older, each faces her own personal demons and moral challenges.

The main character of *Little Women* is Josephine who turns into a woman in a society in America during Victorian age. To be a female is not easy as to be a male human during that period because there are some restricting regulations regulating women's behaviour and even in law, women have less power than men do. Women must be dependant on men and what girls should do is to prepare themselves for the marriage since the aim of life for every woman must be married. 'Jo is an outspoken tomboy with a passion for writing. Her character is based in large part on Louisa May Alcott herself. She does not want to be a conventional female. In her desires and her actions, she frustrates typical gender expectations. She feels uncomfortable on herself to be a woman. Even she rejects not to wear accessories of women and resists the culture that women should stay at home. She looks like more masculine than her sisters. She shows clearly the manner of a man such as putting her hands in the pocket, sometimes whistling and even examining the heels of her shoes in a gentlemanly manner. She does not like the life of marriage. Though God's destiny put her into women, but she refuses it. Jo confesses that she is more comfortable to be a man because he thinks that a man's life is not as complicated as women's lives.

Thus, this research is conducted to get a better understanding about the content of the novel as the object using a proper theory. Related to this

research, the writer makes analysis about how Josephine March is characterized in the novel, how gender stereotypes portrayed in the society and her reaction to the construction of gender stereotypes in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. The character can be analyzed by personal description, character as seen by another, speech, past life, conversation of others, reaction, direct comment, and mannerism. This research will be focusing on theory of stereotype with the supporting theory that is new criticism.

1.2 Statement of problems

Problems that the writer would like to analyze are:

- 1. How is Josephine March characterized in Louisa May Alcott's *Little* Women?
- 2. How is the construction of gender stereotypes portrayed in the society by Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*?
- 3. How does Josephine March react gender stereotypes in the society by Louisa May Alcott's Little Women?

1.3 Objectives of study

Based on the problems, the objectives of the study are aimed for:

- 1. Understanding how Josephine March is characterized in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.
- 2. Understanding how gender stereotypes portrayed in the society by Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.
- 3. Knowing how Josephine reacts to the construction of gender to stereotypes in the society by Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.

1.4 Significances of the study

A research is supposed to have significances. Those significances are expected to give some benefits for those who read this study. It is hoped to be useful for everyone. Here, the significances are divided in two categories which are theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this research will hopefully give the reader a deep understanding about gender stereotypes and how it is applied in a literary work. This is also expected to be useful for being a reference to whom who need to know about the novel itself. This research can also be studied by students, lecturers or other people who feel interested in this novel and theory used.

Practically, this research can also be the supporting reference for every people who want to conduct a research using this subject, especially for students in university, lectures or researchers. It can also be a supporting source for learning and teaching process and be useful for people who want to know this novel deeply. Finally, this research is conducted for every people studying literature.

1.5 Scope and limitation

Every analysis needs limitation in order not to make the analysis go far from the topic of discussion and make the analysis focus to what is being discussed. This study will only be focused on the Novel of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* about the character of Josephine, the construction of gender stereotypes portrayed in the society and her react the construction of

gender stereotypes in the society in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women. In conducting the research, the theory used must be limited. Here the writer will limited to theory of Stereotype and New Criticism.

1.6 Method of the study

1. Types of Research

In conducting this research, qualitative method is used. This method is called qualitative method because it presents the descriptive data, in forms of words, spoken or written by people and analysed attitudes (Moeloeng 3). Qualitative method is done in two ways. Those are library research and field research. Since this research will not focus on the reader response that is part of field research, so it will apply library research. One of the characteristics in doing library research is working through many books, journals, articles, and other supporting references to support the research itself. Anything including literature books, journals, and articles related to the novel chosen that is Louisa May Alcott's Little Women will be used as the references.

2. Sources of data

The data sources that are taken in this research will be divided into two categories:

Main data source

The primary data is the main data used as the source in conducting the research. The data are taken from the novel itself that is Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.

b. Supporting data source

The supporting data or also called the secondary data are used to support the main data. The data will be taken from other sources such as the previous studies, journals, essays, articles, or any other relevant information.

c. Method of collecting data

The method of collecting data that is used in this research is documentation method. One prominent thing that is done is reading the novel itself repeatedly while taking a note of the novel. The secondary data also must be got by finding some other relevant sources. Here are steps that are necessarily done. Those are:

- a. Reading the novel many times or repeatedly.
- b. Finding some other relevant sources that will be the secondary sources.
- c. Taking a note of the important parts in both primary and secondary sources.
- d. Classifying the data into some categories. They are the character of Josephine, the construction of gender stereotypes portrayed in society in the novel and her react the construction of gender stereotypes in society in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.
- e. Selecting the data by rejecting the information that are not relevant to the topic of the study.

d. Method of analysing data

This research will be focusing on a literary work, exactly the novel. So action that can be done is by doing criticism. According to Siswantoro, there are two methods of criticisms: evaluative criticism and descriptive criticism (46). This research will not use evaluative criticism because it will not give any judgment to the literary work itself. So, descriptive criticism is used here.

In analyzing the data, at first the writer makes a list about the data to select the proper data for this study. First, it will dig the character of Josephine in the novel. Then, the writer will concern about the construction of gender stereotypes in society. In this discussion, theory of New Criticism and Stereotype in Cultural studies will be applied to describe and to analyse the data of this research. One prominent thing that should be remembered is the chosen theory must be related to research problem that we have. Then, after describing and analyzing the data, the writer will give the conclusion from the discussion that is important to be read.

1.7 Organization of the study

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background of study, the statement of the problems, the objectives of the study, the significances of study, scope and limitation, method of the study, the organization of the study and last is definition of key terms. The second chapter will be focusing more on the literature review which consists of the

1.8 The definition of key terms

To avoid any different perceptions in understanding this study, it is considered essential to give some of definitions of key terms used here. That is listed as follows:

Character

: person in literary work; characters in book may have all sort of link with the people we meet everyday but we only meet them in book; character what they are like because of the way the have been made; the kind of conversation they have, they thinks they do, their appearances and so on are the particular ways in which the author has chosen to characterized (Mastering English Literature).

Stereotype

: a vivid but simple representation that reduces persons to a set exaggerated, usually negative, character traits and is thus a form of representation that essentializes others through the operation of power. (Dictionary of Cultural Studies)