

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is considered a medium language for social creation. Literature has been applied as traditional literary devices to reflect society. It means that the work of literature portrays a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation. Bertens (2002) stated that “*literature focuses on its own form, its focus is on the message rather than on the sender, the addressee, or any other possible target*”(p.45). It means that literature brings messages from society. The first relationship, as it is known that literary works more or less reflect social or social conditions in the real world, although some think it is not really like that (Amelia, 2021; Kasih & Strid, 2020; Fithratullah, 2021). It can also be just an imitation, but the basic concept remains the same, whether it is a fantasy that has patterns or elements that are similar to social life in the real world. Literary works as a result of community creations express or articulate issues that occur in society (Kasih & Fithratullah, 2018). The social issues that emerge are clearly found in *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and *The Adopted Son*. The issue of materialism contained in the short story *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and *The Adopted Son* is closer to the Marxist issue.

The Yellow Wall-Paper is a short story written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This short story actually tells the story of a woman who is a prisoner in her own home, in the name of caring for her mental health. This short story also focuses on the efforts of husband John to make every effort to care for his wife. John himself is a doctor and he feels he has the knowledge to do the best for his wife. During his wife's treatment, John made decisions about his wife and all of which were based on material things. John arranged the layout of the room and the contents of the room in his house. John made his wife stay upstairs in the infirmary and he stayed downstairs. John thinks he owns the money and for that he arranges everything for his wife who is not working. Besides John, another character in this short story, John's sister Jennie is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper. The characters of John and Jennie present a life full of material pursuits. For this reason, this short story study focuses on materialism.

This thesis has also centered on another short story. It is *The Adopted Son* written by Guy Maupassant. The story tells about two families who have been living in peace as neighbors. The Tuvaches and Vallins work as farmers, and they both live near the beaches where the soil is not suitable for plantation. Both families live side by side, and they have the same condition, poor but happy. They also have the same children of the same ages. As the story continues, the families have visitors. Madame Henri d'Hubieres and her husband are driving by when they see the children, and they stop to meet them. She begins regularly coming to play with and give them treats. After several visits, the couple meets with the Tuvaches and ask if they can adopt the youngest Tuvache child, Charlot. The

couple offer to adopt him as their heir and give the Tuvaches a monthly stipend as compensation. Madame and Monsieur d'Hubieres go next door and ask the same thing about the Vallins' youngest, Jean. The Vallins accept. The acceptance of adoption causes a massive rift between the families. The Tuvache mother insults the Vallins. When he is 21, Jean Vallin returns, and he is very well-off. Charlot Tuvache is angry at his parents because he realizes that that wealthy life could have been his if they had accepted the offer.

Both stories above seem to explore the issue of materialism as from the characters' portrayal. Materialism for many people means two things. The first is an obsession with material things such as possessions, conspicuous wealth and consumption. The second one is a rejection of a belief in God and spirit and acceptance of the view that the natural world of which we are part is all there is. Scott (2009) states that materialism has four goals: having nice possessions, the right image, high status, and getting financial success. Karl Marx argued that materialism makes it the central point of human history and the history of the arena of conflict.

Marx said that human life is influenced by the ability of the human brain to absorb all life processes centered on the process of material achievement. All factors of life such as religion, morals and metaphysics are closely related to matter as cited by Barrett (1991, p. 6), "*The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises*". Barrett's opinion is

rooted in the theory of Karl Marx which emphasizes material life. The theory underlines that the fulfillment of human life is all related to material attainment.

Marx says:

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their *social being that determines their consciousness* (Marx & Engel, 1848, ix)

This quote from Marx confirms that Marx was not satisfied with abstract thinking. Marx believed that the history of human life is material because ideas are born as a result of social conditions. Marx's belief is "*it is not the consciousness of men which determines their consciousness*". This means that there is a very large role of the social environment to shape human consciousness. Thus, human consciousness does not determine human existence. Living humans will not be recognized and their awareness is not real without a social environment. In practice, humans will tend to make decisions based on social norms that exist in society. Social norms themselves are all material-based which have many prerequisites in life. Marx further said:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production (Marx, 1977)

Humans are basically social beings, in this quote it is explained that whether we want it or not or whether we like it or not, humans will experience interactions with other humans or in short it can be called socializing.

Finally, this study focuses on the finding of materialism issues in the short story, *The Yellow Wall-Paper* using materialism theory by Karl Marx. This short story contains elements of materialism because this story represents the feeling of being trapped by the objects mentioned as it is reflected by the main character, John. Marx argued that these ideas and habits of thought represented a distorted picture, or ideological representation, of the underlying material or economic reality. The thought of getting rich makes the idea distorted or corrupted and overpowers reason or common sense. The focus is all on material that must be supported by social relations. Marx's materialism defeats common sense so that it actually causes failure in material fulfillment or family happiness. Social relations make John unaware of the problem in his family. John's only focus is his existence. His ambition to exist overshadows any negativity. The issues are the devotion to material needs and desires, the tendency to make decision based on social norm, and the neglect of living human.

The Adopted Son was also chosen as the story focused on analyzing through a Marxist materialist lens to examine the ways in which the material conditions of the society in which the story takes place shape the experiences of the characters. The fulfillment of this material is in accordance with Marxist theory and the character in both novels. Finally, the researcher constructed the study entitled *Karl Marx's Materialism in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wall-Paper Short Story and Guy Maupassant's The Adoptive Son*.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background above, the problem is as followed:

How is Marxism's notion on materialism portrayed by Gilman in *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and Guy Maupassant's *The Adopted Son* short story?

1.3 Research Objective

The objectives of the study are as follow:

To analyze Marxism's notion on materialism portrayed by Gilman's *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and Guy Maupassant's *The Adopted Son*.

1.4 Uses of the Study

There are several benefits that can be obtained from the implementation of this research, namely:

1.4.1 Theoretical Use

The study is expected to contribute to the development of body knowledge, especially literary study materialism as portrayed in the character of Charlotte Perkins Gilman short story: *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and Guy de Maupassant short story: *The Adopted Son*.

1.4.2 Practical Use

The study is expected to give an additional contribution on understanding the major character in *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and *The Adopted Son* viewed by materialism theory from Karl Marx.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to the discussion on materialism especially in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and also in Guy de Maupassant's *The Adopted Son*. The researcher analyzed the materialism issues in the short story *The Yellow Wall-Paper* and *The Adopted Son* based on Karl Marx's Marxist theories.