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GENDER, STEREOTYPES, AND WOMEN'S POTENTIAL IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S *LITTLE WOMEN* (2019)

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Abstract
Literature, as a mirror of society, serves not only to entertain but also to shape human consciousness and challenge entrenched ideologies, including those related to gender. This research examines gender stereotypes, and the roles and positions of women in Louisa May Alcott's Little Women. The analysis utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach, employing thematic analysis within a sociological and literary framework, presenting and describing the data and findings in narrative form. The theoretical framework is grounded in Rosenstand's (2021) feminism, which advocates for equal opportunities and pay for women and men, free from gender-based discrimination. The research findings reveal four types of feminism depicted in Little Women, focusing on the characters' choices between achieving their dreams and living within the confines of marriage. The novel not only chronicles the characters' journeys from adolescence to adulthood but also illustrates their encounters with gender stereotypes embedded in societal and cultural constructs. The conclusion underscores the marginalized position of women, who lack the same opportunities as men. Various societal constraints limit women's freedoms, placing them in restrictive social roles and causing internal conflicts between pursuing personal desires and adhering to societal expectations. This study contributes to feminist literary criticism by offering a more nuanced analysis of gender representation in Little Women, highlighting its relevance to contemporary discourses on equality, and providing insights that extend beyond prior studies of Alcott's work.

Keywords: *feminism; gender; liberal feminism*

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INTRODUCTION

The representation of gender in literature has been a subject of intense scrutiny and discussion in recent times. Enukora (2025) emphasizes how feminist voices in literature continuously shape social transformation and challenge patriarchal ideologies. Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* serves as a prime example of how societal gender stereotypes were perpetuated through literature during the late 19th century. *Little Women* explores the lives of four sisters, Jo, Beth, Amy, and Meg March, as they navigate their roles within a patriarchal society. This study aims to examine how the movie portrays gender roles and stereotypes, with a focus on how these representations constrained the potential of women during that era.

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* is widely acclaimed for its depiction of powerful female characters, particularly Jo March, who is portrayed as a tomboy with a strong sense of independence and ambition. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that even these strong female characters are not immune to the societal pressures of their time. The novel's portrayal of gender roles is often criticized for reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes, where women are expected to prioritize domesticity and marriage over personal aspirations and career goals.

This research employs a sociological perspective to investigate the representation of gender in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. It delves into how the movie mirrors and reinforces societal attitudes towards gender roles during the late 19th century. Additionally, the study incorporates theoretical frameworks from children's literature to explore how the movie's portrayal of gender shapes the development of its young female characters. Indarti et al. (2025) explore how Chekhov's *Little Woman* reflects traditional gender roles and family values in 19th-century literary traditions.

In this modern age, women possess the same authority as men in economic, social, and political spheres. Feminism advocates for the complete integration of women into society, emphasizing their equal rights, equal work, equal compensation, and equal treatment in both public and private settings. Additionally, Rosenstand (2021) emphasizes that women and men should have equal opportunities, without gender-based discrimination, and that they should receive equal pay for equal work.

In Indonesia, despite the progress made, there are still many individuals who believe that marrying wealthy men is a viable option for women, allowing them to avoid higher education and employment. This phenomenon is significant for research as it highlights the crucial and empowering message in the movie, which is particularly inspiring for women. The film also explores the challenges women face in securing their rights, and through the character of Jo, it showcases her determination to succeed without relying on marrying a wealthy man.

Feminism means a rejection of inferiority and a shining for recognition. It seeks to give the woman sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human being. Feminism is a reaction to such stereotypes of women which deny them a positive identity. Feminism is for the self-actualization of women so that they will believe in themselves, actualize their dreams, live fulfilled lives, and generally not live in fear (Oldacre, 2016). Feminism stated that men are more competent, good orientation, strong, active, competitive and confident than women. This condition is unfair for women and also portrays that there is gender discrimination in the past. It happens from the generation to the next until they realize their injustice (Desmawati, 2018).

Gender and sexuality issues are examples of issues that never escape stereotypes. Both women and men are often portrayed with gender stereotypes that apply in society. Through texts and images, the concept of gender discrimination and sexuality is constructed in the media and they are consumed by society Muthi'ah et al. (2023).

Discrimination is defined as being treated unfairly in any field of public life based on one's personal characteristics, such as race, gender, or religion. When a group of people is stigmatized based on their characteristic, since stigma is linked to social difference, they could easily face the difficulties of discrimination (Kim, et al., 2020). Gender discrimination can be in many ways. It is based on her or his genders; they are suffering from it in several causes. Especially for women, they are mostly getting discrimination in several aspects such as education, workplace, marriage and other things. The position of women in society mostly is controlled by men and women do not have freedom of their life. Women have struggled for freedom of living without violence and discrimination (Ekasanti, N. R., & Hernawati, 2019).

Liberal feminist politics took important weapons of the civil rights movement—anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action—and used them to fight gender inequality, especially in the job market (Nsana, 2020). Simply put, it can be said that women can go to work. De Beauvoir recognizes that working in a patriarchy can be oppressive and exploitative, especially when it requires women to work two shifts: one in the office or factory and one at home. Nonetheless, de Beauvoir insists that no matter how taxing or exhausting a woman's job is, it still provides her with opportunities she would not otherwise have. Woman "regains her transcendence" by working outside the home along with men; she concretely affirms her status as subject, as someone who is actively charting the course of her destiny (Sitepu et al., 2023). It is depicted as focusing on individual rights and on the concepts of equality, justice and equal opportunities, where legal and social policy changes are seen as tools for engineering women's equality with men (Purwarno et al., 2021).

Despite the rich body of scholarship on *Little Women*, many previous studies have tended to emphasize either its moral values or its depiction of domestic life, leaving less attention to the nuanced ways in which the text reproduces and challenges gender stereotypes from a feminist perspective. This research seeks to address this gap by situating Alcott's work within a socio-literary and thematic analysis framework. The goal is to uncover how *Little Women* both reinforces and resists societal attitudes toward women in the late 19th century, and to contribute fresh insights into the continuing relevance of feminist literary criticism for contemporary gender discourse.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the representation of gender in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, with a particular focus on societal attitudes towards gender roles in the late 19th century. Rooted in a sociological perspective, the study seeks to uncover how *Little Women* both mirrors and shapes these attitudes.

The primary data source consists of Louisa May Alcott's 2019 film adaptation, both of which depict the lives and struggles of the March sisters. Supporting secondary data include scholarly works, journals, and critical studies related to gender and feminism, which provide a theoretical foundation and comparative lens.

The analysis employs thematic analysis, a qualitative method adept at identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns within textual and visual data. The process was conducted in several systematic steps:

1. Close reading and data collection – extracting relevant textual and dialogical evidence related to gender stereotypes, roles, and feminist perspectives.
2. Initial coding – categorizing data based on emerging ideas, such as domesticity, marriage, education, or independence.
3. Theme development – grouping codes into broader thematic categories aligned with feminist theories.
4. Interpretation – contextualizing the themes within a sociological and literary framework to highlight their cultural and ideological implications.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employed several strategies. First, theoretical triangulation was applied by integrating feminist frameworks from Rosenstand (2021) with broader sociological perspectives. Second, the analysis was cross-checked against existing studies (e.g., Desmawati, 2018, 2018; (Ekasanti, N. R., & Hernawati, 2019) to ensure consistency and alignment with prior scholarship. Third, expert consultation and peer discussions were conducted to refine interpretations and minimize researcher bias. These measures strengthen the credibility of the research process and enhance the trustworthiness of the conclusions.

Taken as a whole, by employing thematic analysis within a sociological and literary framework, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how gender is depicted in *Little Women*. It emphasizes the text's role in perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes while also uncovering its potential to challenge cultural constructs, thereby enriching discussions of gender representation in literature and its broader societal implications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Many lines in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* reflect the representation of gender, exposing stereotypes that limit women's potential. This subsection provides a detailed analysis of how these lines illuminate societal attitudes towards gender roles, particularly focusing on their impact on the portrayal of female characters within the story.

> *"If the main character is a woman, make sure she gets married at the end of the story." (00: 03: 53)*

The line "If the main character is a woman, make sure she gets married at the end of the story" reflects a deeply ingrained stereotype in storytelling and literature that perpetuates traditional gender roles and expectations for women. Khalid (2025) analyzes how unconventional female representation in Langston Hughes' *Thank You, Ma'am* challenges marriage-centered stereotypes. The statement exposes stereotypes that limit women's potential. The statement implies a prescriptive narrative expectation based on the character's gender. It suggests that a woman's storyline must culminate in marriage, reinforcing the societal norm that marriage is a defining goal for women. This expectation limits the portrayal of women to certain roles and trajectories, often overlooking alternative paths or

achievements. By prioritizing marriage as the ultimate fulfillment for female characters, the statement diminishes the value of other aspects of a woman's life and accomplishments. It suggests that personal fulfillment and success for women are primarily achieved through marriage, ignoring career achievements, personal growth, or individual aspirations. The expectation reinforces traditional gender stereotypes by suggesting that a woman's happiness and narrative resolution hinge on finding a husband. It perpetuates the idea that women exist primarily in relation to men and within the confines of heterosexual relationships, sidelining narratives that explore diverse experiences and identities. By prescribing marriage as a necessary endpoint for female characters, storytelling possibilities are constrained. This limitation restricts creative freedom and reinforces a narrow view of women's potential roles and contributions in literature and society. Such narratives not only reflect but also shape cultural perceptions of women's roles and aspirations. They contribute to the normalization of societal expectations that can influence how women are perceived and treated in real life, potentially reinforcing barriers to gender equality and individual agency.

In conclusion, the statement underscores broader societal attitudes that confine women within stereotypical roles and narratives. It highlights the need for critical analysis and revision of these narratives to challenge and expand representations of women, allowing for more diverse and empowering portrayals that reflect the full spectrum of women's experiences and potentials.

> *"Volunteer for the Union Army. I want to fight alongside him."(00:14: 48)*

In the lines quoted above, Jo March's impassioned plea signifies her defiance against societal norms that confine women to domestic roles and exclude them from active participation in significant societal endeavors like warfare. This scene exposes and challenges stereotypes that historically limited women's potential based on gender. During the Civil War era depicted in the film, women were indeed marginalized from participating in military activities due to prevailing beliefs in their physical and emotional frailty. These stereotypes reinforced the notion that women's primary domain was the private sphere of home and family, where their roles were defined by caregiving and adherence to established norms. Jo's desire to join the Union Army alongside her father not only underscores her admiration for his heroism but also reflects her aspiration to transcend these limitations and contribute meaningfully in a traditionally male-dominated arena. Jo March serves as a powerful representation of gender equality and female empowerment in *Little Women*. Thulin (2025) argues that Jo embodies a feminist resistance to both gender and class constraints in Alcott's works. Her determination to fight challenges the stereotype that women are inherently unsuitable for physically demanding or technically skilled roles. By advocating for her right to participate in the war effort, Jo symbolizes the broader struggle against societal constraints that stifle women's ambitions and potential. Her character embodies resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity, inspiring

audiences to reconsider outdated stereotypes and embrace the idea that women are capable of achieving greatness in any endeavor they choose to pursue.

Moreover, Jo's defiance highlights the film's thematic exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. Through her narrative arc, *Little Women* critiques the restrictive norms that hinder women's autonomy and self-expression, advocating instead for a more inclusive and equitable society where individuals are judged by their abilities rather than their gender. Jo's journey resonates as a call for representation and recognition of women's capabilities beyond traditional domestic roles, fostering a dialogue about equality and the limitless potential of women in historical and contemporary contexts alike.

"Especially women. You should marry a rich man." (00: 35: 33)

In the quote above, Aunt March's statement exemplifies entrenched gender stereotypes and societal expectations regarding women's financial dependency on men. This scene exposes and challenges the traditional view that women's success and well-being are contingent upon marriage to wealthy partners. During the time period depicted in the film, prevailing societal norms often relegated women to dependent roles within marriage, emphasizing financial security over personal ambition or independence. Aunt March's advice to Jo reflects this mindset, implying that a woman's happiness and comfort could be assured through marriage to a wealthy man, rather than through her own efforts or achievements. Ćojbašić (2025) highlights similar domestic stereotypes in modern Instagram advertising by Serbian small businesses. This advice perpetuates the stereotype that women are incapable of achieving financial stability or success on their own merit, reinforcing the notion that their primary role is to secure a favorable marital arrangement. Jo March's response to her aunt's suggestion contrasts sharply with this viewpoint. Her desire to succeed independently challenges the assumption that women must rely on men for their livelihoods or happiness. Jo embodies a rebellious spirit against societal expectations, advocating instead for personal fulfillment through individual accomplishment and self-reliance. Her character serves as a beacon of resistance to gender norms, inspiring audiences to reconsider the value of women's autonomy and agency in defining their own destinies.

Furthermore, Aunt March's traditional perspective underscores the film's broader exploration of gender dynamics and societal pressures. By portraying Aunt March as a representative of conventional wisdom, *Little Women* critiques the limitations imposed on women's aspirations and possibilities. The narrative encourages reflection on the implications of such stereotypes, urging viewers to challenge and redefine societal expectations to foster a more equitable and inclusive society.

Overall, Aunt March's advice to Jo March encapsulates the film's thematic emphasis on representation and the exposure of stereotypes that restrict women's potential. Through Jo's journey and Aunt March's perspective, *Little Women* prompts a dialogue about gender roles, independence, and the pursuit of fulfillment beyond traditional gender norms, advocating for a world where women are empowered to forge their own paths and define success on their own terms.

"Yes, women are better suited to study at home." (00: 39: 33)

The quote above reflects Mr. Laurence's restrictive and outdated view regarding women's access to formal education. This scene exposes and challenges the stereotype that women's intellectual pursuits should be confined to domestic settings rather than institutional learning environments. During the historical period depicted in the film, prevailing attitudes often relegated women to roles primarily centered on domesticity and familial duties. Mr. Laurence's assertion that women are better suited to study at home perpetuates the belief that formal education, traditionally associated with men, is unnecessary or inappropriate for women. Mahmud (2025) shows how restricting women's access to knowledge and space is often portrayed as leading to madness and oppression in literature. This viewpoint reinforces gender norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities over intellectual and professional development for women.

Moreover, Mr. Laurence's decision to exclude Amy March from school further highlights the systemic barriers that women faced in accessing education during that time. Denying Amy the opportunity to attend school not only limits her educational advancement but also symbolizes broader societal constraints on women's autonomy and self-determination. It underscores the injustice of denying women the fundamental right to education, which is essential for personal growth, empowerment, and participation in society. In contrast to Mr. Laurence's viewpoint, the film *Little Women* champions the importance of education as a means of personal and intellectual enrichment for all individuals, regardless of gender. The narrative challenges the notion that women should be confined to traditional domestic roles and advocates for equal opportunities for women to pursue knowledge, skills, and expertise. Through the characters' journeys, the film encourages audiences to recognize and dismantle discriminatory barriers that limit women's educational and professional aspirations.

Taken as a whole, Mr. Laurence's statement underscores the film's thematic exploration of representation and the exposure of stereotypes that restrict women's potential. By confronting and critiquing antiquated views on women's education, *Little Women* promotes a progressive dialogue about gender equality and the imperative of empowering women through access to education and opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment.

"I'm sick of hearing people say women are only to be loved."(1: 42: 40)

Jo's experience highlights a direct challenge to the stereotype that women are entitled only to be loved, but not to actively love or freely choose their life partners. This societal expectation positions women primarily as objects of affection, valued for their capacity to be cared for rather than for their individuality. Such a view is both limiting and dehumanizing, as it denies women agency and undermines their ability to pursue personal goals or desires beyond relational roles. Jo's resistance, therefore, can be read as an assertion that women should be acknowledged and respected as autonomous individuals, with distinct

identities, interests, and aspirations, rather than being reduced to their function within romantic or familial relationships.

"It's better to stay single and fight alone"(1:32:50)

The quote reflects that Jo March articulates her frustration with societal expectations that confine women to roles defined by their capacity to be loved and cared for by others. This scene challenges and confronts the stereotype that diminishes women's agency, autonomy, and individuality. Throughout the film, Jo encounters numerous instances where societal norms restrict women to roles primarily centered on their relationships with others, particularly as daughters, wives, or mothers. This prevailing attitude often overlooks or dismisses women's ambitions, aspirations, and capacity for self-determination beyond romantic or familial roles. Jo's declaration reflects her desire for women to be seen and valued as complete individuals with their own identities, interests, and aspirations. Nkuna et al. (2025) examine how complex gender identities in Siswati short stories also challenge traditional roles imposed on women. It critiques the dehumanizing notion that women exist solely for the emotional fulfillment or caretaking of others, rather than pursuing their own passions and goals. Furthermore, Jo's sentiment resonates with the film's broader thematic exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. By challenging the stereotype that women's worth is tied exclusively to their roles in relationships, *Little Women* advocates for a more inclusive and empowering perspective on female identity and agency. It prompts viewers to reconsider and dismantle limiting beliefs that diminish women's autonomy and potential, advocating instead for recognition of women as multifaceted individuals deserving of respect, equality, and the freedom to choose their own paths in life.

In principle, Jo March's statement highlights *Little Women*'s thematic emphasis on representation and the exposure of stereotypes that constrain women's potential. By expressing her frustration with societal expectations that diminish women to objects of affection or caregivers, Jo asserts the importance of recognizing and respecting women's inherent autonomy, agency, and right to define their own narratives beyond traditional gender roles.

"You have to be an actress, you must have a career on stage"(1:31:53)

In the quote, Jo March's encouragement to Meg during her wedding day challenges societal norms that limit women's aspirations and potential. This scene exposes and critiques the constraints imposed by societal expectations, particularly regarding women's roles and ambitions in the arts and public sphere. During the historical period depicted in the film, women faced significant barriers in pursuing careers outside of traditional domestic roles. Meg's desire to be an actress reflects her talent and passion for the performing arts, yet societal norms compel her to prioritize marriage and family over her personal ambitions. Jo's encouragement underscores the importance of recognizing and supporting women's talents and dreams beyond conventional expectations. Meg's situation

highlights the broader theme of women's agency and self-expression within a patriarchal society. Despite her talent and potential as an actress, Meg feels compelled to conform to societal norms that prescribe marriage as the primary path for women's fulfillment. This narrative critique resonates with the experiences of many women who have been historically constrained by social expectations and limited opportunities for self-realization. Director Greta Gerwig's portrayal through Jo's encouragement to Meg reflects a feminist perspective that challenges the notion of women's innate inferiority or incapacity. By depicting Meg as a talented woman whose aspirations are stifled by societal pressures, the film invites viewers to reconsider and critique the historical and ongoing barriers that have hindered women's participation and recognition in diverse fields.

In core, Jo's words to Meg in *Little Women* underscore the film's thematic exploration of representation and the exposure of societal stereotypes that restrict women's potential. By advocating for Meg's talent and ambitions as an actress, Jo advocates for a broader understanding and acceptance of women's diverse talents, aspirations, and contributions beyond traditional gender roles. Joshi (2025) connects feminist and post-colonial perspectives, stressing the significance of cultural freedom in women's artistic expression. The scene prompts viewers to reflect on the importance of empowering women to pursue their dreams and fulfill their potential, free from societal constraints and expectations.

"Women can't do men's work."(00:14:49)

The quote reflects Jo March's frustration with societal limitations that confine women to roles perceived as traditionally male-dominated. This scene challenges and confronts the stereotype that women are inherently incapable of performing tasks or pursuing ambitions typically associated with men. During the historical period depicted in the film, gender norms rigidly defined women's roles within the domestic sphere, relegating them to caretaking and supportive roles rather than active participation in public life or professions requiring physical strength or assertiveness. Jo's disappointment stems from her desire to emulate her father's bravery and dedication in volunteering for the Union Army, activities that are deemed inappropriate or off-limits to women due to prevailing attitudes about gender roles and capabilities. Jo's encounter with Laurie at the dance party underscores her dissatisfaction with societal expectations that limit her opportunities for personal fulfillment and achievement. Despite her intelligence, courage, and ambition, Jo confronts the reality that her gender places significant constraints on her aspirations and potential contributions to society.

The scene portrays Jo as a symbol of defiance against these constraints, challenging the notion that women's abilities are inherently inferior to men's. Her desire to participate in the war effort reflects a broader critique of gender inequality and the systemic barriers that hinder women from realizing their full potential. Director Greta Gerwig uses Jo's character to provoke reflection on the injustices faced by women in historical contexts, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and challenging gender stereotypes that restrict individual freedoms

and opportunities for self-expression. Darmawan (2025) highlights how feminist readings of *House of Leaves* also challenge patriarchal oppression through narrative structures. By depicting Jo's disappointment and determination, the film encourages audiences to reconsider societal expectations and advocate for gender equality, thereby promoting a more inclusive and equitable society where individuals are judged on their abilities rather than their gender.

> *"Marriage has always been an economic proposition, even in fiction." (44:32:08)*

In the quote, Jo March discusses the pragmatic considerations often associated with marriage, highlighting societal norms that prioritize economic stability and social status over personal fulfillment and emotional connection. During the historical period depicted in the film, marriage was frequently viewed as a transactional arrangement aimed at consolidating wealth, securing alliances between families, and maintaining or elevating social standing. Jo's observation underscores the pervasive influence of economic factors in shaping marital decisions, both in reality and in fictional portrayals. Jo's conversation with her sister reflects a critical perspective on the institution of marriage, suggesting that pragmatic concerns often overshadowed considerations of love, compatibility, and personal happiness. This perspective challenges romanticized notions of marriage prevalent in literature and popular culture, emphasizing the practical realities that have historically influenced marital relationships.

Moreover, the film *Little Women* explores the implications of these societal expectations on women's lives and choices. By acknowledging the economic dimensions of marriage, the narrative prompts viewers to reconsider traditional gender roles and power dynamics within relationships, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of marriage as a complex interplay of personal, social, and economic factors.

In principle, Jo March's reflection on marriage as an economic proposition in *Little Women* contributes to the film's thematic exploration of representation and societal expectations. By critiquing the prioritization of economic gain over emotional fulfillment in marital relationships, the scene invites viewers to reflect on the evolving dynamics of gender, power, and agency in historical and contemporary contexts alike. It prompts a dialogue about the complexities of love, autonomy, and social norms, encouraging a reevaluation of traditional narratives surrounding marriage and gender roles.

> *"Just because my dreams are different from yours, doesn't mean they're not important."(50:03:46)*

In the quote "Just because my dreams are different from yours, doesn't mean they're not important" from *Little Women*, Jo March asserts the value of pursuing personal aspirations that diverge from traditional expectations. This statement contrasts with her sister Meg's choice to prioritize marriage and domestic life over a career in painting. Jo's assertion challenges the societal norms

that prescribe specific roles and paths for women based on gender stereotypes. By affirming the significance of her own dreams—specifically her ambition to become a writer and pursue a literary career—Jo emphasizes that personal fulfillment and individual aspirations should be valued equally, regardless of whether they conform to societal expectations.

This scene underscores the film's thematic exploration of representation and autonomy, advocating for the recognition of women's diverse ambitions and the right to pursue paths that resonate with their personal goals and interests. It prompts viewers to reflect on the limitations imposed by societal norms and encourages a broader acceptance of individuality and self-expression beyond conventional gender roles.

> *"I believe we have power over who is meant by love. It's not something that just happens to someone." (1: 27: 16)*

In the quote "I believe we have power over who we are meant to love. It's not something that just happens to someone" from *Little Women*, Laurie challenges Amy's belief in fate and romantic destiny, highlighting his perspective that love is a matter of personal choice and agency rather than a predetermined outcome. This scene illuminates Amy's growing awareness of societal pressures and limitations imposed on women, particularly in the context of marriage and financial security. Her assertion that love can be influenced and directed underscores her evolving perspective on personal autonomy and the ability to shape her own future. Amy's stance challenges traditional notions of romantic fate and destiny, suggesting that individuals have the power to make conscious decisions about their relationships and life paths. This sentiment is significant as it reflects Amy's determination to assert her independence and defy the societal expectations that seek to confine her to predefined roles and expectations.

Overall, Laurie and Amy's exchange in *Little Women* contributes to the film's thematic exploration of representation and autonomy, advocating for the recognition of personal agency in matters of love and life choices. It prompts viewers to reconsider deterministic views of romance and encourages a broader appreciation of individual empowerment and self-determination in navigating societal norms and expectations.

> *"I'm impatient by nature, but with 40 years of experience, I've learned not to let that get the better of me."(2: 05: 12)*

In the quote, Marmee offers a reflection on personal growth and emotional maturity. This statement contrasts with Jo's known fiery temper, illustrating Marmee's belief that patience is a skill that can be cultivated over time rather than a fixed trait. Marmee's words convey the idea that emotional control and self-discipline are learned behaviors that can evolve with age and experience. By sharing her own journey of overcoming impatience, she sets a positive example for her daughters, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and the ability to manage one's emotions effectively.

This scene underscores the film's thematic exploration of personal development and resilience, highlighting the importance of introspection and growth in navigating life's challenges. Marmee's wisdom encourages viewers to consider the value of emotional maturity and self-improvement, promoting a deeper understanding of character and the complexities of human nature. In essence, Marmee's reflection on patience in *Little Women* contributes to the film's broader message of personal growth and emotional resilience. It prompts viewers to reflect on their own capacity for self-improvement and emotional regulation, advocating for the development of empathy, patience, and understanding in navigating relationships and life's adversities.

During the Second American Industrial Revolution after the Civil War, more women joined the professional workforce, marking a significant shift as many mothers took on roles such as secretaries, writers, nurses, governesses, or, for women from lower classes, maids (Evans, 1997). Despite entering the public sphere, these women continued to shoulder responsibilities within the domestic sphere. Contrary to advocating for boundary-breaking progress for late 19th-century women, Little Women's author, Louisa May Alcott, upheld traditional gender roles. She portrayed women as needing to embody piety, purity, and submission to earn respect rather than challenging societal norms (Evans, 1997).

CONCLUSION

A stereotype is a view or assessment of a group that carries expectations about what individuals in the group are like and how they will behave. Stereotypes about women can also emerge from women's groups themselves, often resulting in limitations that shape their ways of thinking, acting, and moving within society. Negative stereotypes about women, perpetuated both in media and in cultural narratives, restrict women's freedom and affect their opportunities in education, work, marriage, and public life. Within Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, such stereotypes are illustrated through the struggles of the March sisters, particularly the tension between pursuing personal ambitions and conforming to societal expectations.

This study's findings highlight that *Little Women* reflects not only the persistence of gender stereotypes in the 19th century but also the seeds of resistance against them. By employing a thematic analysis within sociological and literary frameworks, the research identified four types of feminism embedded in the narrative, illustrating both the limitations and the agency of women in a patriarchal society. These results emphasize the marginalized position of women, who were denied equal opportunities, and reveal the internal conflicts arising from restrictive social roles.

The contribution of this research lies in its nuanced examination of *Little Women* as both a product and a critique of its cultural moment. While previous studies have often emphasized the novel's moral or domestic values, this study focuses on the interplay of gender stereotypes and feminist ideas, thereby offering fresh insights into how Alcott's work resonates with contemporary gender discourse.

In conclusion, this research not only reinforces the importance of feminist literary criticism in revisiting canonical works but also underscores the continuing relevance of *Little Women* in debates on gender equality. The study points toward the need for further interdisciplinary inquiry—bridging literature, sociology, and cultural studies—to better understand how gender stereotypes are reproduced, resisted, and redefined across contexts. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the broader goal of empowering women to challenge stereotypes and to inspire new ways of imagining equality in both literature and society.

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