

TARTU UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

NARVA COLLEGE
STUDY PROGRAM “HUMANITIES IN MULTILINGUAL SCHOOL”

Zhaniya Salimbayeva

**A CHANGE IN PERCEPTION OF GENDER ROLES IN THE
NOVEL “LITTLE WOMEN” BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT AND
TWO FILM ADAPTATIONS: “LITTLE WOMEN” (1994) BY
GILLIAN ARMSTRONG AND “LITTLE WOMEN” BY (2019)
GRETA GERWIG**

Bachelor Thesis

Supervisor: N.Raud, PhD

NARVA 2023

Olen koostanud töö iseseisvalt. Kõik töö koostamisel kasutatud teiste autorite tööd, põhimõttelised seisukohad, kirjandusallikatest ja mujalt pärinevad andmed on viidatud.

Zhaniya Salimbayeva

14.05.2023

PREFACE

“Little Women” written by Louise May Alcott is a recruiting work that reflects the spirit of the 19th century and its characterised society. During those times, a given story was perceived as a novel about the lives of four sisters and their destinies as “a woman”, however nowadays the written story is rapidly acquiring new boundaries of perception. Due to numerous modern adaptations, the story is now known as a statement of the presence of gender inequality in history, and therefore remains open to controversy. Thus, the change in perception of gender roles has become one of the central and relevant issues for modern readers and viewers.

The first aim of the research is to define the position of a “woman” and social regulations existed in the second half of the 19th century. The second aim implies a literary analysis of the characteristics of a social-critical perspective that are reflected in the book “Little Women”, including gender inequality, patriarchy, and gender roles. The third aim considers the novel from the point of modern feminist theories to reveal a possible background for changes in the plot and characters of the screen adaptations of the novel by means of comparative analysis. A survey is conducted to know the opinions of viewers on possible differences between the novel and its screen adaptations.

The Bachelor’s thesis is divided into four parts. The introduction gives an overview of the concept of gender roles, the position of a woman through the time. Chapter I “Gender Roles in “Little Women”” includes the historical background of the novel, makes comparative study of the plot and characters within the original story. Chapter I considers the perception of a woman regarding social settings. Chapter II “Social Critical Perspective of “Little Women”” provides results of the survey on the topic of gender issues and a potential feminist interpretation appearing in the novel and two film adaptations. The Conclusion summarises results of the research and comments on the hypothesis of the research.

PREFACE	3
<i>Contents</i>	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Historical Background on “Little Women”	5
The Concept of Gender Roles in Society.....	6
Position of Women in the 19th Century.....	8
The Feminist Perspective.....	9
CHAPTER I. GENDER ROLES IN "LITTLE WOMEN"	13
1.1. The Plot and the Characters in the Novel.....	13
1.1.1 Plot.....	13
1.1.2 Characters.....	13
1.2. Perception of Women Regarding Social Settings.....	17
1.3. Film «Little Women» directed by Gillian Armstrong (1994).....	19
1.4. Film «Little Women» directed by Greta Gerwig (2019).....	21
CHAPTER II. SOCIAL-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF “LITTLE WOMEN”	27
2.1. Description of Survey.....	27
2.2. Analysis of Results Based on Two Film Adaptations Survey.....	28
CONCLUSION	33
REFERENCES	35
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN	38
APPENDIX 1	40
APPENDIX 2	45

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background on “Little Women”

For more than two hundred years, the work of Louisa May Alcott has attracted the attention of critics and researchers (Ebert, 1994; Curtis, 2013; Bender, 2017) in the field of literature. Over time, the readers perceive her not just as a talented children's book writer, but as a broad-based author who is able to cover the most pressing topics of society (Debruge, 2019). So, telling a story about the fate of four sisters in “Little Women”, the author also describes the historical time to which the characters belonged.

Louisa May Alcott, as one of the authors of the late 19th century, can be considered as the follower of “the first wave” (Sicherman, 2010, p. 2) feminist movement. In the story of “Little Women”, two layers of action are developed and closely intertwined with each other. Bender (2017) states that the main one is the narration about four different sisters - Margaret, Jo, Beth and Amy, who throughout the novel follow their personal and unique dreams. The second one that is equally noticeable and actually forms the core storyline, is a layer of social consciousness. The life of four women is told according to the gender roles of the mid-nineteenth century society, where marriage intended to be the epicentre of the life of every young woman.

The plot of the novel and the author’s own life are repeatedly intertwined with each other. Debruge (2019) mentions that Louisa May Alcott was the second child in a family of four daughters. The sisters were friendly not only with each other, but also with their neighbours, and often put on plays written by Louisa. Thus, the intersection between the author’s life and the plot of the novel can be clearly noticed. As well as in the March family, the financial situation of the Alcott family was difficult, so from her early age Louisa tried to strive for a job by working as a seamstress or teacher. The author’s life experience can be traced in many books, one of which was "Little Women". Hypothetically, the prototype for Meg in the book could be her elder sister Anna, while the images of Beth and Amy could be possibly taken from her little sisters as well. Despite the fact that similarities between Joe and Louisa can also be called obvious, the question of the prototype is still controversial (Matteson, 2016). However, unlike the main character, Louisa May Alcott was never married. Subsequently, the author of "Little Women" became an

activist for women's rights and is also known as the first woman who registered for elections in Concord, Massachusetts (Alcott, 1968).

Louisa May Alcott, like the main character of her novel, was temperamental and stubborn. There is an expressive intersection of personal views and the fate of both women is revealed. Louisa May Alcott herself remained unmarried till the last days of her life. Nadège (2019) summarised that she was pressured to continue the novel in the "right" (Alcott, 2011, p. 31) way not only from the publishers, but also from the readers. Alcott expressed her views in a letter to her friend - "As if marriage was the only end and purpose of a woman's life. I will not marry Jo and Laurie to please someone." (Alcott, 2011, p. 45) However, to some extent, in order to reassure readers Alcott agreed to marry her character. Thus, again, neither Alcott nor the fictional Jo March escaped the standard interpretation of femininity of their time. It is extremely hard to name Jo March as a clear prototype of a writer, however their common thinking can be noticed.

Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. They've got ambition, and they've got talent, as well as just beauty. I'm so sick of people saying that love is just all a woman is fit for. I'm so sick of it! (Armstrong, 2019, p. 75).

The Concept of Gender Roles in Society

In today's world, having the role of a man or a woman does not only mean a single concept of possessing certain anatomical features in the body. It implies the fulfilment of certain predefined gender roles - models that society prescribes for men or women. The given concept also includes a set of expectations that are presented by people performing a certain gender role. Researcher Amy Blackstone (2013) highlights that gender roles are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals cues about what sort of attitude is believed to be appropriate for a certain sex.

For a proper designation of the term "gender roles" it is also necessary to highlight and define the term "sex" for further use of the concepts. It is important to remember that gender and sex are comparatively different concepts. Sociologist Ann Oakley (1972) is one of the first figures in science, who has reached a reasonable separation of the concept of gender from another then similar concept of sex. Initial term "sex" refers to the biological identification of an individual based on his or her sexual characteristics. (Oakley, 1972) At the same time, the concept of

"gender" implies a wide range of meanings, individual traits, values and characteristics that are attributed to different genders by society. According to Oakley (1972), gender not only includes a similar process of dividing sex into male and female, but also constitutes a general assessment of femininity and masculinity in society.

It is necessary to emphasise that the biological differences between males and females are not merely connected to anatomical gender. Today, external signs can also include the peculiarity of speech (tone, volume, intonation and pitch of the voice), language (set of words used), demeanour, observance of etiquette, culture of gestures, clothing, focus of interests, mental attitudes, as well as hobbies.

Gender roles are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex. (Blackstone, 2013, p. 338). A historically traditional understanding of gender roles has developed, on which the current transformation of each of the sexes was based. So, for example, many Western communities traditionally believed that women have more caring traits than men. As a result, the traditional gender perception has developed that women should be predominantly caring. This small trait further developed into a chain of accepted norms with which a woman could show her deep caring and protectiveness. Thus, a woman fulfils a traditionally female gender role, which is taking care of her family and fulfilling household obligations as well. At the same time, there is a traditionally formed gender role of a male - to be a leader. This position obviously presupposes that men must be the dominant person in the family circle, be the decisive person in family matters and produce financial support for it.

The above mentioned gender role models are fundamental to the individual understanding of each gender. These characteristics are still dominant today, despite the appearance of alternative views on gender roles in the 21st century. Blackstone (2013, p. 337) notes that a biological perspective does not imply that one gender role is inherently more valuable than another. The sociological view of gender roles also suggests that if initially male and female gender roles were assimilated in a certain way, then they also can be weaned, and then once again new different social roles can be created.

Thus, the concept of gender roles is a wide range of study and includes both various external aspects (like speech, lexicon, etiquette) and internal (values, worldview). It was found that the concept of "sex" is designated separately, since it is initially based on the physiological characteristics of a human. However, gender roles are largely characterised by the person's physical gender (i.e sex). Consequently, the position of a certain person in society may predominantly depend on his gender.

Now, it is necessary to consider the issue of gender roles using the mentioned example of "Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott. Thus, identifying the gender problem in the novel will help to understand the role of women in the society of the 19th century, the change in its perception and emergence of modern perspectives.

Position of a Women in the 19th century

Samantha Curtis (2013) reveals that gender equality in the United States dates back to the First World War and the Industrial Revolution, when the production of goods was necessary and women eventually obtained access to the labour force by working in factories and as nurses in hospitals. During the First World War, women were housewives and had a dependent position in society, as it was previously mentioned. Almost all women lacked adequate education and any opportunities for growth in their workplace. Combining pregnancy, difficult working conditions, and inadequate medical care, a woman's life expectancy was extremely low. Therefore, the end of the 19th century and the industrial revolution were the primary impetus for reforms and changes in discriminatory relations towards women. Blackstone (2003) states that the beginning of the 20th century was highlighted as the time of women's participation in politics, where they could defend their own rights. Thus, the end of the 19th century was a crucial period for the revision of the cultured image of women as only a submissive wife and mother in society.

Through the reference to history, persistent social and legal barriers that limited women can be identified. More specifically, the self-determination of a woman was closely related to her social role and mission. Until the second half of the 20th century, an American woman lost her legal capacity and all rights in marriage. The husband and wife were considered as one legal entity in which the identity of the woman was absorbed by the identity of the husband. Ann Oakley

(1972) points out that the value of family and marriage was central, so the woman was subordinate to relatives on the male line - first to her father, then to her husband or brother. Thus, the dominant position of men in society compared with women of the late 19th century can be clearly distinguished.

In the modern world, the role of women is no longer limited with the narrow circles of family life, raising children and getting married. Thanks to the gradual transformation of social roles and values, a woman on an equal basis with a man has the right to build a career and defend her political views. The image of a woman as a subordinate model of a person is no longer relevant and is perceived particularly acutely in today's society. (Blackstone, 2003, p.337) Therefore, any activity affecting the balance of gender roles now causes heated debate and even criticism in a whole world. Gender related questions are discussed with extreme caution and without controversial overtones in the speech.

Along with recognition from the reader's world, the story of "Little Women" is a constant inspiration for masters of various art spheres, so the story is recreated to the screens and regularly finds its second wind. Specifically, two film adaptations of a given book can be highlighted: the first work was directed by Gillian Armstrong "Little Women" (1994) in the end of 20th century and the newest "Little Women" by Greta Herwig (2019). First of all, each of the mentioned works is a historical heritage in which the life and foundations of society are shown to the present-day human. With given adaptations, the modern viewer is able to get acquainted with the public consciousness of that time and make a comparison with the mentality of modern society which he is related to. Secondly, the director's film adaptation with a modern view of the story takes on new facets of understanding the whole narrative. Thus, questions about gender roles and inequality in society are gradually moving to the front place nowadays.

The Feminist Perspective

In today's society, gender issues are discussed thoroughly on the global level. New social concepts have emerged and effectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the interaction of male and female gender positions. In modern society, concepts such as gender inequality, feminist point of view and sexism have become even more relevant. Gender inequality

determines a social process in which unequal opportunities can be identified in consideration of men towards women and vice versa. Factors of unequal treatment include a group of social stages such as education, career, interests, political activity and even life expectancy of a certain sex. Also in turn, the feminist perspective is focused on ideas about the different levels of power that are distributed between men and women in society. These concepts are related to each other and to some extent complement the field of research on gender roles.

The feminist perspective is overwhelmingly focused on the equal influence of each of the sexes in global activities, i.e. gender equality. To understand feminist goals movement, the following examples can be provided. In several cultures, maintaining economic control within a family is a common tool in which men could possibly gain more influence in society than women. Thus, men become the main breadwinners in their families, and after divorce women often find themselves in poverty. In such cultures, men are less likely to lose their traditional power and social status. According to feminist point of view, men considerably have more power in marriage, economic and financial matters in this case.

Even in the early twenty-first century, many corporations operate from a perspective that favours traditional beliefs about gender roles (Blackstone, 2013). Traditionally, men are assumed to be more ambitious and goal-oriented, while women are more interested and emphasised in developing social relationships at work. Thus, women often take the role of secretary, while men are more likely to occupy the position of leaders. (Kanter, 1993) As a result, gender stereotypes are formed.

Should be clearly understood that gender inequality can manifest itself not only in relation to the female sex. This, in particular, can be an example of gender stereotypes. In own analysis, Amy Blackstone speaks of gender stereotypes as “exaggerated or erroneous statements about the nature of men and women”. (Blackstone, 2013, p.338) Other examples of classic stereotypes are the bias that men are not emotional. On the contrary, women can be perceived as overly emotional and as an irrational gender.

Today, numerous international organisations are created with the aim of a qualitative understanding of gender roles and maintenance of a social balance between them. On a political scale, there is also a feminist movement that aims to erase gender stereotypes in society. Such alternative views emphasise equality between men and women.

So, today a woman has the total right to fulfil her personal career ambitions along with creating a traditional understanding of female happiness, i.e. the family. The given issue of gender roles repeatedly appears in literary masterpieces. Therefore, the position of women in the work “Little Women” can also be determined by paying attention to the characterised features of a social structure in the second half of the 19th century, to which the heroes of the novel belonged.

The novel sheds light on the women’s limited choice of opportunities about personal life paths and gives rise to a social conflict, where Jo March as one of the sisters became a symbol of it. (Doyle, 2020, para. 8) More precisely, with the given social situation the heroines of the novel encountered and where each of the March sisters was forced to shape their own fate under the unequal settings of their time. This internal and external conflict has become an inspiration for contemporary directors who illustrate the story for the modern audience. And so, the presence of a feminist interpretation in this story gives a new impetus to create a new perspective on it. Thus, the question of gender roles in the book “Little Women” by Louisa May Alcott remains open up to the present days.

The novel has been repeatedly adapted both to the screens and reviewed in detail by literary critics. To this day, the work leaves open the question of representing the social system and namely the relationship between the role of a woman and a man. The present study hypothesises that traditional images of each gender are distinctively shown, although, with the next adaptation the facets of perception of gender balance are constantly expanding. Each audience has its own values that are relevant to its era. This, in turn, affects the change in the traditional narrative of the plot story and thus can potentially lay a new level of the main problem of the story. Though the novel “Little Women” by Louisa May Alcott reflects a socially subordinate position of women in the second half of the 19th century, its modern screen adaptations, being influenced to

a certain extent by modern feminist theories, introduce changes in the original story to appeal to modern readers/ film audience more.

CHAPTER I. THE CONCEPT OF GENDER ROLES IN “LITTLE WOMEN”

1.1. The Plot and the Characters in the Novel “Little Women” by Louisa May Alcott

The novel “Little Women” narrates the story of the four March sisters growing up during the American Civil War. The story covers the themes of first love, youthful hopes, family support, the formation of a worldview and personal development of the main female characters.

1.1.1. Plot

The March family lives in the small American town of Concord. The whole country is in the midst of the Civil War, however four sisters Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy did not face the horror of war as they live in the North of the United States, while the war is taking place in the South. Despite this fact, the March family lost their breadwinner - a father who serves as a regimental priest. On top of that, the family fell into poverty due to the unsuccessful money investment by the head of the family in an enterprise that eventually went bankrupt.

A prosperous past reminds of the best days when they had a fairly comfortable lifestyle in society. Now they are all forced to lead a humble lifestyle, which can be considered as humiliating for people from their circle. They get to know their young neighbour Laurie, who will later become a friend of the entire family and who will strengthen them within the group. In addition, the sisters themselves will hold a thorny path to become a support for each other. (Alcott, 2011) Each of them will have to deal with their own negative qualities and their sisters' traits. All these things will help them to acquire significant knowledge and finally learn crucial life lessons.

1.1.2. Characters

The novel is based on the maturation process of four sisters who throughout the entire story explore themselves and life itself. However, the work also contains other characters who reveal not only the ideological intent, but also the disclosure of the issue of gender roles in the work.

First and foremost, it is necessary to consider the images of the sisters in the book. The oldest sister is Margaret March, who is naturally endowed with true feminine beauty. All family members affectionately just call her Meg. The sixteen-year-old girl has excellent manners, exquisitely behaves in society and is also incredibly feminine and romantic in comparison with the rest of her sisters. This “little woman” is a kind-hearted and humble person who cares about the positive reputation of her own family and loved ones. Nevertheless, in spite of the aristocratic character of the heroine, there are also negative traits in her. She is deeply burdened by family poverty, dreams of getting into high society in order to shine in luxurious and beautiful dresses. Envious of the beautiful jewellery and clothes of her friends, Margaret yearns for a beautiful life in high society. However, over time the oldest sister also realises that happiness does not depend on money. Need to be noted, that Meg is the only out of her sisters who strove for her own definition of happiness in the traditional female sense, for a marriage. So, she marries John Brooke and eventually becomes the mother of three children. In this story, Meg is the embodiment of a gentle feminine nature who represents traditional female happiness. Louisa May Alcott (1968, p.467) described her:

Meg looked very like a rose herself, for all that was best and sweetest in heart and soul seemed to bloom into her face that day, making it fair and tender, with a charm more beautiful than beauty (Alcott, 1968, p. 467)

The second sister is Josephine March, who is one year younger than her older sister Margaret. All family members affectionately just call her Jo. She is ashamed of her full name as she thinks it is too girly for her personality. (Alcott, 1968, p. 38) Jo March is distinguished from her large family by her unique temper. Compared to Meg, she is not interested in lush balls and feminine conversations. Jo regrets not being born a boy. (Alcott, 1968, p. 71). She willingly climbs tall trees and skates on the lake. Playing with Laurie gives her more pleasure than any feminine business. Second older sister has a true passion for reading and therefore dreams of becoming a writer in the future. In terms of family relations, Jo has a great affection towards his little sister Beth. She also admires the beauty and manners of her older sister, Margaret. Nevertheless, it is difficult for them to find a common ground because they are too different. Jo is also distinguished by her straightforwardness, since she is unaware how to dissemble or to flirt either. Sometimes she seems rude, but this peculiar openness attracts people to her. The heroine is

distinguished by a free spirit and a desire for justice in society. In future film adaptation Gillian Armstrong (1994, p.87) will highlight her temper:

I find it poor logic to say that because women are good, women should vote. Men do not vote because they are good; they vote because they are male, and women should vote, not because we are angels and men are animals, but because we are human beings and citizens of this country. (Armstrong, 1994, p. 87)

So, the neighbour of the March family, Laurie falls in love with Joe after their meeting at the ball, but she immediately rejects him. Jo realises that she will not be able to be a good wife and completely unfit for the role of an obedient and humble wife. Despite these words, at the end of the book Jo falls in love and marries Professor Friedrich Baer.

The third sister's name is Elizabeth March or Beth for short. The given heroine is distinguished by her meekness and shyness. She is thirteen years old, extremely bashful and has a hard time finding common ground with other people besides her family and only friend Laurie. Her passion is music, she enjoys singing and plays the piano. She is also strongly attached to Mr. Lawrence, who loves and treats her like his own granddaughter.

The sisters call her "an angel", as she has the most peaceful and pleasant character among them all. (Alcott, 1968, p. 113). However, unlike her other sisters she has no ambition at all. Her true joy and the whole meaning of life consist of the happiness of her family. Hence, Beth is ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of her loved ones. After a severe fever her health weakens and she dies as a young eighteen-year-old girl. Out of all the March sisters, she has the most tragic fate. Louisa May Alcott (1968, p.114) wrote:

There are many Beth's in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind (p. 114)

Amy March is the youngest among sisters and the most spoiled one. The girl is only twelve years old, but she already has an attractive face and appearance, she is well-mannered as well. Out of all the sisters, she is distinguished by a unique quality - cunning. She can easily gain people's trust, get the necessary attention and often uses these qualities in her own interests. (Cruea, 2005)

It is interesting to note that Alcott endows the prettiest sisters in the book with strong negative qualities.

The heroine Amy initially represents the qualities of vanity, capriciousness and selfishness. However, good upbringing forces a girl to constantly restrain her own temper. Like all sisters, Amy has her own passion - drawing. Growing up, Amy becomes an exemplary lady with excellent manners and modesty. At the end of the story, Laurie falls in love with Amy and she expresses her mutual feelings towards him. Among all March sisters, her steadfast personality that can be compared to Jo's temper:

You laugh at me when I say I want to be a lady, but I mean a true gentlewoman in mind and manners, and I try to do it as far as I know how. I can't explain exactly, but I want to be above the little meannesses and follies and faults that spoil so many women. (Alcott, 1968, p. 568).

It is also significant to introduce minor characters that influenced the development and disclosure of the main characters.

Robert March is the head of the family and the father of four sisters. In the beginning of the narrative he was in the Civil War and fulfilled a military duty to his homeland. The personality of the elderly father is presented as a kind, fair and wise person.

The main female authority in the family for girls is illustrated in the image of their mother, Marmee March. Mrs. March is a virtuous, yet honest, strict and fair woman. For all four sisters, she is a role model. Woman is presented as a symbol of true feminine wisdom and humility. She comprehends that each of all her daughters are completely different, but she sincerely dreams about their real and modest female happiness. It is mentioned in her response:

I'm not ambitious for a splendid fortune, but I know, by experience, how much genuine happiness can be had in a plain little house, where the daily bread is earned, and some privations give sweetness to the few pleasures. I am content to see Meg begin humbly, for if I am not mistaken, she will be rich in the possession of a good man's heart, and that is better than a fortune. (Alcott, 1968, p. 391-392).

There is also Theodore Lawrence, or Laurie, as all the March sisters called him. The young man lives with his grandfather next to the March family and therefore they soon become good friends.

The boy received an excellent education in Europe but returned to his grandfather to prepare for Harvard university admission. Laurie has a good and strict upbringing but he also can be rebellious and cocky sometimes. His grandfather wants him to succeed in "important business" (Alcott, 1968, p. 89), so he discourages grandchild's interest in music. Although Laurie loves her grandfather, he resists such overprotective parental control. He dreams of "leaving for Europe and living as he wants" (Alcott, 1968, p. 96-97). This is the only male young character who has been associated with all four different sisters of the March family. In the middle of the story, he confesses his romantic feelings to Jo. The rejected Laurie returns to Europe and meets Amy March there and falls in love and then marries her.

Someday you'll find a man, a good man, and you'll love him, and marry him tremendously, and live and die for him. And I'll be hanged if I shall have to stand by and see it. (Alcott, 1968, p. 415)

The novel sheds light on the women's limited choice of opportunities about personal life paths and gives rise to a social conflict, where Jo March as one of the sisters became a symbol of it. This internal and external conflict has become an inspiration for contemporary directors who illustrate the story for the modern audience. The screen adaptations directed by Gillian Armstrong (1994) and Greta Gerwig (2019) deeply reflect not only the historical spirit within a story but also the social conflict represented in the book. Central link in both film adaptations is the issue of gender role and inequality. Therefore, through modern perception, the original story of "Little Women" can be considered as an author's contribution to the feminist ideology, where the question of gender roles originates and develops furtherly in subsequent adaptations.

1.2. Perception of Women Regarding Social Settings

The story of the "Little Women" can also be viewed in a historical context. The author describes her heroines as confident and educated girls. As a role model in a family, Marmee encourages the curiosity of all her daughters. There are also social restrictions that constrained the sisters because they were women. Despite her perky nature, Jo refused to go in search of adventure when Laurie offered her an escape. Because women, especially young ladies, are not allowed to do so and further question their families' reputation (Arslan, 2019).

"Little Women" creates an urgent conflict between the two constituent poles of a young woman's life. For Jo and Amy, internal conflict presented in a moment where each of them is obligated to

choose between professional self-realisation and the family concept of an obedient woman. Thus, social conflict is expelled with the help of an internal one. According to Cruea (2005), when Louisa May Alcott wrote this novel, the status of a woman in society “was undergoing a transformation”. (Cruea, 2005, para. 7) Hence, it is natural to believe that the process of promoting gender equality has been very slow then.

Sicherman (2010, p. 13) points that Alcott could probably suggest four possible paths of female destiny which are intertwined with the constraints of the nineteenth century. The first path is presented in Meg, who gets married at a young age and creates her own large family. The second image demonstrated Beth, whose happiness was not focused on herself but on obedience to her parents and loved ones. The next prototype of the female path is shown in Amy, which focuses on creativity and personality. Jo March is a prime example of a woman's transforming life fulfilment. "This heroine talked about the women of the future and today millions of little women are inspired by Jo March" (Sicherman, 2010, p. 11) It should also be noted that Olcott did not position one particular life model as more desirable than others. Each model of femininity is realistic, unique and requires appropriate discretion.

Maslin (1994) recognizes the limited life choices of all the girls in a book. While the sisters Meg and Amy aspire to marriage and finally get married, the fate of the other sister was predetermined by a weak heart. According to critics' reviews, all the girls in the stories “should be either married or dead” (Maslin, 1994, p. 3). When Beth dies due to illness, Jo remains completely alone with this burden and deeply lost. One of her expressive remarks in the film adaptation is "I am so alone." Alcott herself was never married, so such feelings were not alien to her, as the author experienced similar obstacles in her own way (Keating, 2020).

As it was acknowledged by Bender (2017), a story of “Little Women” developed in a form of a multilayer conflict, where the external comes from the internal and vice versa. Thus, a certain idea was highlighted, which is closely related to the problem of gender and self-identity. This means that it is human nature to flourish under the approval of his surroundings and those who are dear to him, but also gradually collapse under the yoke of rejection from his beloved people (Matteson, 2020). The film expressively shows that a key priority in every woman's life should

be a successful marriage and humility to her husband, which is what the three daughters and the mother of the family themselves follow. Having become an exception in the family, Jo goes through his own thorny path towards recognition, where she also meets her love. This is where the discrepancy occurs between the vision of the director and Louisa May Alcott - "the film is a symbol of hope, and not a simple story of great love" (Matteson, 2020, p.12). Gerwig's work tells us that "the little women" of her time are girls whose hearts are full of aspiration, brave spirit and an invincible desire to live their own life. (Matteson, 2020, p.19) As a classic of American literature, the book was adapted to the screens several times and yet, specific changes happened in the way of how "Little Women" is narrated. Each adaptation was a peculiar addition to the original story and gradually started to make an emphasis on the minor social position of a woman of the 19th century.

1.3. Film «Little Women» directed by Gillian Armstrong (1994)

Critic Roger Ebert notices that Gillian Armstrong "finds serious themes and refuses to simplify the story into a 'family' formula. (Ebert, 1994, para.1) In his review, the author remarkably says that the film «Little Women» of 90th helps «to sense personalities of young women», presents the flamboyant sister Jo as a tomboy image with a strong, bold personality.

Additionally, adaptation can clearly be noticed by the absence of plot dynamic actions, which also characterizes the 19th century novel about traditional representation of women and concept of femininity. The entire film's narration was produced in a way for a viewer primarily to pay attention to deep conversations between the characters, related to the topics of personal hopes, beliefs, dreams and mainly to the marriage issue. (Ebert, 1994) Gillian Armstrong provides a serious approach towards her own adaptation of Alcott's story, so the hidden problems of the novel are distinctly visible on the surface: "How does the young lady of 19th century society feel? How should she choose the right path between the public's view of marriage, household and her personal dreams?" (Ebert, 1994, p. 4)

Maykor (1994) emphasises that "Little Women" is a timeless case with never-ending relevance. The critic calls the novel a "feminist text" in the best sense of the word. (Maykor, 1994, p.1) The ideology of finding your own path is reflected not only in the vividly represented fate of Jo

March and her three sisters, but also in the images of male characters. In this adaptation of “Little Women”, Armstrong is betting on believability - women are portrayed as independent individuals, who express their desires, talents and uniqueness.

Distinctive feature of Gillian Armstrong’s adaptation (1994) lies in its «sentimental without being saccharine» narration. (Maslin, 1994, p.1) As it was mentioned before, the director constantly keeps actual social issues on a surface (Maslin, 1994). One of the most inspiring scenes of the film can be considered the moment when Jo cuts off her long hair and secretly sells it. The reaction to this decision is quite expected: little sister Amy loudly says "Jo, how could you?!" "Your one beauty!" (Armstrong, 1994, p.68). Interestingly, the given situation may seem ironic in the eyes of today's viewer. As it was mentioned earlier, out of all the sisters it was Jo who preserved the image of an intellectually ambitious girl with a unique charm. When the sisters see her short and boyish haircut, they claim that she has "lost her beauty." In fact, this episode showed the girl's maturity and self-sacrifice in order to feed her large family. Her sisters are dumbfounded, because the traditional perception of the female image was violated and according to the sisters, was absurd. Thus, here director Armstrong "reinvents Little Women" (Maslin, 1994, p. 4).

Maslin (1994, p. 7) also vividly calls a movie “occasional breath of feminism”. In addition to more pronounced images of young sisters, the director correspondingly pays special attention to the image of their mother. After all, she was a role model for the younger generation of the story. Specifically, this film adaptation puts Marmee March's political consciousness on several levels higher. This feature is freshly reflected in Marmee’s next confession:

I wish I could give my girls a just world. I know you'll make it a better place. (Armstrong, 1994, p. 42)

Hence, through the familiar story of “Little Women” Gillian Armstrong shares her own hope for an equal and just world for future generations.

In turn, Doyle (2019, p.3) mentions how "true this adaptation is to the tone of the book itself." Doyle remarks that the “Little Women” film of 1994 is the perfect opportunity for viewers to witness the true rage of a teenage girl. (Doyle, 2019, p. 3) In her analysis, she states that Jo is not

necessarily used as a symbol of the feminist movement, but rather is just an excellent reflection of the sincere aspiration of the heroine in the novel. Apart from that, the critic does not deny potential influence and emotional appeal to women of all ages around the world. The only thing that is undeniable by the majority of critics is that the story faithfully reflects the way of life, realities and the social structure of the era.

The listed factors lead to the idea that the issue of gender equality is also filmed by Armstrong in the 1994 adaptation of “Little Women”. First of all, the narrative is identical to the novel. Secondly, the character, actions and path of each of the characters does not go beyond the image originally written by Louisa May Alcott. Nevertheless, the story about four sisters’ paths has reached a new level, where the question of life purpose and the social uncertainty of the heroines is put on the forefront. The film does not provide an unambiguous ending but rather leaves the final decision of each character open to contemplation. So, Marmee March as mother of “Little Women”, holistically summarises:

If you feel your value lies only in being merely decorative, I fear that someday you might find yourself believing that's all you really are. Time erodes all such beauty, but what it cannot diminish is the wonderful workings of your mind. (Armstrong, 1994, p. 151)

1.4. Film «Little Women» directed by Greta Gerwig (2019)

Another 2019 film adaptation of the novel “Little Women” by director Greta Gerwig greatly portrays the original story with a twenty-first century perspective. One of the main features of a given movie lies in competent interweaving between “Little Women” and “Little Wives” - Louisa May Alcott's next book with continuing ending about March sisters.

By referring to Gerwig’s film, Debruge (2019) states that «joyous and love-filled adaptation revels in the undying spirit of femininity and even hands out tangible defences for the constant battle for equality through its introspective approach”. (Debruge, 2019, para.8) The film is distinguished by non-linear storytelling, since throughout the film the author compares the past and present of the four sisters. This technique is called retrospective storytelling. Also, this visual solution contributes to a deeper understanding of each character, their storylines and their general development.

Compared to the traditional opening narration with the whole March family, the recent adaptation starts with the main heroine Jo standing alone in the publishing office. Then she kindly offers the publisher short manuscripts allegedly written by her friend. She continues: "A friend of mine desired me to offer a story by her. She would be glad to write more if this suits". (Gerwig, 2019, p. 11) Following this case, later Friedrich Bhaer curiously asks about such a strange decision to "hide" her real name, on which she replies that her mother does not like it.

It's too gory for her. I want to help with the money I make and not worry her. (Gerwig, 2019, p.18)

Doyle (2019) explains this idea with an unspoken reason. In fact, Jo's real name was Josephine, but in the book she calls him "too feminine" (Doyle, 2019, p. 11) for her. Staying neutral between male and female names allowed her stories to have a great chance of being printed in newspapers, or, at least, have an equal chance with male representatives of the writing craft. Therefore, any writing was not considered as a women's labour area of 19th century society, so she wished to remain undisclosed in order to help her own family financially in any way, as well as maintain impartiality to her works.

In Gerwig's adaptation, not only Jo March remained a vivid representation of the female image. Amy March is shown as a confident, well-mannered lady, who in spite of her spoiledness, constantly remembers her own duty to family. The future of the youngest sister is practically expected, as she comes to Paris and plans an engagement with a stately lord. But besides this, modern Amy March is largely seen as a separate person, whose true passion is art. Having arrived with her aunt in search of a respected husband, Amy also hopes to become a "drawing genius". (Gerwig, 2019, p. 87)

The priority to obtain a status of a married woman with a wealthy man bothers Aunt March much more than the cultural or even personal development of her niece. So, she repeatedly reminds Amy about it: "You shouldn't go home until you and Fred Vaughn are properly engaged." In turn, niece answers "Yes, and until I complete all my painting lessons, of course". (Gerwig, 2019, p. 87) After these words, the most stately woman of the March family passively and sluggishly nods her head.

The earlier mentioned scene convincingly presents the situation of public opinion about female destiny. Despite the internal conflict of each of the March sisters, each of them was worried about the issue of marriage. In the case of Amy, she was presented as the burden carrier, more precisely as “last hope of the family” for a prospective future. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 90) Consequently, she can resolve it through successful marriage, to pull the family out of a penniless state.

Nevertheless, according to Doyle (2019), "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig is a fresh reincarnation of the heroines previously familiar to the viewer. (Doyle, 2019, p. 3) The fundamental question that can be traced both in the book and in all the film adaptations is "What are you going to do with your life?" This phrase is bluntly pronounced by Laurie when he questions Amy March's feelings for the lord. In turn, Amy ironically replies that she is going to polish all her other talents and become an "ornament of society". (Gerwig, 2019, p.91). Comparing herself with the ornament of society, the girl marks the limitations of her own choice in life. Therefore, the director paid special attention to these words, because later follows one of the most memorable speeches of the heroine in the modern history of Alcott's "Little Women":

I always knew I would marry rich. Why should I be ashamed of that? I am not a poet, I am just a woman. And as a woman, there is no way for me to make my own money. Not enough to earn a living or to support my family. If I had my own money, which I don't, that money would belong to my husband the moment we got married. If we had children, they would be his, not mine. They would be his property. So, don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition. Because it is». - Amy March (Gerwig, 2019, 91)

The story of Louisa May Alcott is more about women in society and their rights, but Greta Gerwig was able to significantly show the realities of the male character as well. If a woman experiences a sense of injustice in relation to the created social and legal restrictions, then a man equally feels the pressure from economic responsibilities as the breadwinner of the family. One of the most important dialogues happens between Meg and her husband John Brooke. Meg allowed herself to buy expensive fabric, knowing the dire financial situation in the family. Constrained by a sense of pride and shame, her husband admits:

I am really sorry that you have had to do without so many beautiful things ... and you are married to someone who can't give it to you. (Gerwig, 2019, p.40)

As it mentioned earlier, out of all four sisters it was Meg who missed a past sophisticated lifestyle of the March's family, luxurious dresses and balls. It was brilliantly shown with the

smooth transition from young Meg dancing on a ball to her as a wife asking sorry for buying expensive textile. Both characters are baffled by their financial condition, but as a housewife Meg is just capable of dreaming about beautiful things. Knowing that he cannot give her wife the beautiful lifestyle she so passionately desires, John Brooke feels a deep sense of humiliation. As men had a predominant position in the family, his inability to support could be interpreted as personal inferiority. Therefore, in her modern interpretation of “Little Women” Gerwig skillfully showed how gender position can be double-natured. On the one hand, it was positioned as a type of dominance, but on the other hand it reflected the natural vulnerability of the male sex.

The institution of marriage has been reflected in a distinct way in modern adaptation. Greta Gerwig makes old Jo March more cocky and rebellious in her version of “Little Women”. On her older sister Meg's wedding day, Jo seriously invites her sister to run away. Meg later admits that her dream is simply to get married. Next memorable quote from Jo will characterise the entire 2019 adaptation:

You will be bored of him in two years and we will be interesting forever. (Gerwig, 2019, p.54)

Can be seen how Jo March does not believe in the institution of marriage and considers his sister's choice to be wrong. In turn, the older sister answers her:

Just because my dreams are different than yours, it doesn't mean they are unimportant. (Gerwig, 2019, p.54)

Here, an open choice for all viewers appears. Each of the parties remains unconvinced, and accepts another point of view at the same time. For Jo, the desire for marriage is alien, while Meg's happiness lies in family life. Each of their sisters represents a different development of women's destiny and does not put one above the other. Thus, "Little Women" of 2019 expresses unlimited personal choices and adherence to the image of traditional happiness at the same time.

The juxtaposition of the women's role in relation to men's in society is also prominently shown in the dialogue between Jo March and the publisher. In the first scene after reading Jo's short stories, the publisher makes a pivotal note:

Tell your friend to make stories short and spicy. And if the main character is a girl, make sure she's married by the end. Or dead. Either way. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 6)

Gerwig defiantly returns to the original ideas of Louisa May Alcott's book - if the heroine does not marry, then the character has no further development. The publisher says so, since the alternative ending will not be able to be sold to the public. The image of a woman was incomplete without marriage, or at least a certain connection with the dominant image of a man or husband. However, this attitude is put under controversy in the episode when the daughters of the publisher themselves demand from their father the ending of "Little Women" earlier sent by Jo. "How does the story end? Who will the main character choose?" - little girls are genuinely interested in these questions. His daughters symbolise a new generation that is in need of changes and an alternative ending for the story.

Reading the story of Little Women, where Joe stands between the choice of Friedrich Bhaer, Laurie and personal choice, the publisher agrees to the first publishing of the book. Then comes the twofold conclusion of the "Little Women" story, both in Jo March's book and in Louisa May Alcott's original book. There is a next dialogue:

Publisher: Who does Jo Marry?

Jo: No one. She doesn't marry either of them.

Publisher: No! It won't work at all. Who cares? Girls want to see women married, not consistent.

The right ending is the one that sells!

Jo: I suppose marriage has always been an economic proposition, even in fiction.

Publisher: It's romance.

Jo: It's mercenery. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 121)

Here, the director cleverly refers to Amy's speech, who previously told Laurie that marriage is partly a financial agreement. Jo, being involved in the real question of profit from her own work, also depended on the concept of marriage for her heroine. This seemed to be a special rule to be followed. Again, the author creates a double comparison - not only the real Jo has legal limitations, but also the one written by her - each of them is not able to completely choose the fate that she sees fit.

For now, the 2019 adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's novel "Little Women" by director Greta Gerwig is considered the latest. The book itself, due to its "timeless quality" is an inspiring story for many young girls around the world (Debruge, 2019, para. 2). Therefore, the issue of timely interpretation will also be relevant. Today, many readers and viewers find an open feminist context in the story of the March sisters and discuss it fiercely. Themes of unequal social attitude

towards women and men, creation of legal restrictions make viewers more and more convinced of certain propaganda.

However, neither Gillian Armstrong nor Greta Gerwig put the idea of feminist interpretation at the centre. Each of the films has its own method of storytelling, directorial interpretation and presentation of social themes at the proper level. However, the question of explicit neglect of one gender for another is incorrect. All authors coherently recreate the era, time and society to which the characters belonged and provide an open choice for each of them - both for their own main characters and for the audience.

CHAPTER II. SOCIAL-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON “LITTLE WOMEN”

2.1. Description of the survey

This chapter presents the results of a survey regarding the audience's disclosure of the feminist interpretation in the original book by Louisa May Alcott and its two film adaptations.

During the practical part of the research, a group of sixteen people was created. The main task of the group was acquaintance with two different film adaptations - “Little Women” (1994) directed by Gillian Armstrong and “Little Women” (1994) directed by Fret Gerwig.

For data collection, sixteen people were anonymously interviewed with consideration of different age groups, gender, previous book reading and gender related questions awareness. Here, it should be noted that 3 out of 16 students are familiar with the novel itself and have read it, but most of them completed the questionnaire based on the two proposed films. The group was told in advance to pay attention to the comparison of the two adaptations of the book and to the preferability of each. The process involved representatives of both sexes and different age categories (from 18 to 26, from 27 to 35, from 36 to 45, from 45 and more). This division was done in order to obtain results that are more extensive in quality, which will not be determined exactly by one age, one sex or one information field. These criteria serve several purposes.

First of all, it is crucial to find out the viewer's opinion about possible changes in the plot of the story, the development of the characters and the narrative. Taking into account the diversity of the focus group, it will be possible to notice the attributes that this viewer is paying attention to. Secondly, viewers of the two films will be given the opportunity to identify scenes, episodes and dialogues that could potentially contain ideas of feminist ideology. At this stage, the existence of a feminist interpretation will be compared and tested. Finally, the survey will help identify which adaptation of Little Women is more preferable and more often recommended for viewing in today's society.

The questionnaire includes sixteen different questions, providing multiple choice questions and open questions. The audience chose an adaptation that was more suitable according to the

proposed criterion, such as historical accuracy, the display of characters, the tone of the narrative. With open answer questions, the viewer suggested scenes and episodes in which the ideology of feminism could be reflected.

2.2. Analysis of Results Based on Two Film Adaptations Survey

The first two questions are drawn to reveal the age and sex ratio in the group. So, this questionnaire was passed by 12 women and 4 men (in a ratio of 75% to 25%). In the case of age, most of the audience was from 18 to 25 years old (8 people), followed by 27 to 35 years old (4 people), then 36 to 45 years old (2 people) and over 45 years old (2 people).

First of all, it needs to be clarified that the task did not specify the order of watching the films. Hence, each person could independently choose either the more preferable version, or , or watch them in the chronological order of production.

The question "In what order did you watch both films?" demonstrated a nearly equal ratio: 7 people preferred to watch the early version of "Little Women" (1994), while other 9 participants preferred to watch the recent version first (2019). In addition, it was necessary to find out the reason for choosing a particular adaptation, so the question "What was your criterion, when you were choosing between two versions for the first time?" includes the following options of answers:

- a) «1994 film came out first, so I started with it» (8 people)
- b) «2019 film came out recently, so I chose the newest» (5 people)
- c) «Chose by popularity» (4 people)
- d) «Chose by reviews and recommendations» (4 people)

A certain tendency to watch the movie in the chronological order can be easily identified. The choices "chosen by popularity" and "chosen by recommendation" can be correlated as one, and they in turn demonstrate the importance of the overall evaluation of the film's selection. Despite the fact that the films are based on one story, viewers are more likely to give their final preference to the film with a higher rating.

Next, viewers were asked to answer the question "Which of the films left the biggest impression?" Here, a fairly strong gap was revealed in favor of the 2019 film "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (12 people). The 1994 adaptation by Gillian Armstrong received only 4 votes. Explaining their answer choices, many participants repeatedly added that the 2019 film is "more interesting in storytelling," "more vibrant", "fresh and different" and "masterfully makes a comparison between the present and the past." Those who chose the 1994 version also added that compared to Greta Gerwig's film, the earlier adaptation is "less confusing in its own narration." Thus, it can be noticed that viewers find the later adaptation of "Little Women" more engaging in terms of storytelling and left an impression.

The hypothesis is also confirmed by the results of the following question: "In your opinion, which movie has the most relevant storytelling approach?" One of the most contrasting differences between both film adaptations has been found to be in the style of storytelling. If Gillian Armstrong tells the story of "Little Women" in a traditional form (identical to Alcott's narration), then Greta Gerwig endows the story with a retrospective narrative, i.e. draws a parallel between the past and the present. The gap in voices is noticeable:

- a) 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (4 people)
- b) 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (10 people)

The second option also contains the preferences of people who have read Louisa May Alcott's novel of "Little Women". This potentially may suggest that a new interpretation of an old story is gradually generating new interest in enthusiasts of the original written story.

The representation of the main characters was also discussed. The question "In your opinion, which adaptation presents main characters more interesting? Why? " revealed the following results:

- a) 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (6 people)
- b) 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (10 people)

Those who voted for the first option added further remarks: "the heroines are shown traditionally", "the heroines reflect their time well" and "the characters were able to perfectly

show the women of that time." It leads to the idea that viewers believed more in the historical plausibility of Gillian Armstrong (1994) and the authentically portrayed 19th century woman. In comparison, Greta Gerwig's "Little Women" was described as "brave and honest." Also, the opinion was added that the two films complement not only Alcott's novel, but also each other. More precisely, with each film adaptation the story of the March sisters becomes richer.

The plausibility attribute of the both adaptations was also asked in two following questions: "The narrative tone (mood) of which adaptation do you consider as more appropriate for the story of Little Women?" and "Which of adaptations managed to reliably capture the historical time of the novel (19th century)?" In this case, the audience had to choose which of the films was more authentic and deeply immersed viewers in the society of the 19th century, including visual demonstration and social mentality. The results were:

- a) 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (11 people)
- b) 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (5 people)

Most of the participants praised the historical spirit and atmosphere of the 1994 film. They describe it as "traditional, straightforward, unhurried and steady." Thus, despite the great popularity of the new adaptation, viewers find a plausible image of the era and society in Gillian Armstrong's 1994 film adaptation.

A gradual transition to gender issues in films is provided. Firstly, it was necessary to define which film adaptation portrayed the female characters boldly. At this stage, the votes were equal (correlation of 8 to 8 people). It should also be taken into account that some participants chose not one particular film in their answer, but both listed adaptations. Therefore, both films portrayed the female characters of "Little Women" equally vividly. Arguing their choice, viewers supplemented their response with the statement that "both complemented the original story."

One of the most important questions in the study was the viewer's recognition of the problem of male characters. So, the question arises: "In your opinion, in which adaptation the problem of male characters has been more vividly shown?" Here is the answers distribution:

- a) 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (0 people)

- b) 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (8 people)
- c) Equally in both of them (1 person)
- d) In none of them (7 people)

Obviously, the problem of male characters is not central in either the first film adaptation or the second one. The issue of the women's role in society has a dominant position and therefore, almost 43% of the participants say that none of the films demonstrated it. However, 50% of the rest participants also answered that Greta Gerwig's 2019 film makes a fragmentary emphasis on men's social position. Despite the fact that it can be depicted to a relatively small extent, the viewer still confirms this fact. Consequently, it suggests that the later adaptation of "Little Women" develops a broader spectrum of social constraints. Those limitations are not only towards the female, but also towards the male characters.

Answers to questions "In which adaptation the issues of social equality and gender balance were shown better than in the other film?" and "In your opinion, is there spirit of the feminist movement in one of the films? If so, which one? " showed a clear lead in favour of Greta Gerwig's 2019 adaptation (14 votes and 14 votes respectively). All participants almost unanimously claim that "the first part is softer in its narration." This strong contrast in the results leads to the idea that the later (2019) version of "Little Women" stands out for its fresh and new portrayal of social inequality.

Following on the gender issue, the next question was: "Which scenes or details can be interpreted as the message of feminist ideology?" The given question did not necessarily consider just one adaptation. Quite a few new responses have been received later. Majority of viewers had a strong impression from the scenes and dialogues between the publisher and Jo March, so they chose it all as an episode of feminist ideology. Along with that, Jo's character was mentioned as an image of a modern and independent woman. "Many people may consider her as a role model today" - similar thoughts were shared by the survey participants. In addition, the male participants noted that "Jo's marriage dilemma remained unsolved". This scene could symbolise not only the freedom of choice of the heroine herself, but also of all the viewers' who watched both film adaptations. Also, for some of the participants, the scene with Jo's short hair

seemed quite hilarious, because "this is the kind of haircut that a modern feminist or rights activist can have."

In the conclusion part, the audience was asked: "Which version of "Little Women "on the screen would you recommend to other people? Why?" This question was one of the most important, since a personal recommendation is able to express the general impression of a person from each adaptation. The difference in results was only one vote in favour of Greta Gerwig's "Little Women". Nearly every survey participant wrote that they would recommend both adaptations, as it was said "both film adaptations complement each other."

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the 2019 adaptation of "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig left a stronger impression on the viewers than the 1994 adaptation by Gillian Armstrong. Most participants who chose the 2019 version explained that it was "more vibrant," "fresh and different," and "masterfully makes a comparison between the present and the past." The participants of the survey concluded that Greta Gerwig's adaptation is more engaging in terms of storytelling and «brave». The 1994 adaptation was found to be more traditional, while Greta Gerwig's adaptation endows the story with a retrospective narrative. Despite this, viewers have praised the historical spirit and atmosphere of the earlier adaptation. Overall, the prevailed number of people believed more in the historical plausibility of Gillian Armstrong (1994) and the authentically portrayed 19th-century women. However, they also felt that both film adaptations complement not only Alcott's novel but also each other.

In conclusion, the conducted survey shows that neither Gillian Armstrong's nor Greta Gerwig's film adaptation placed the concept of feminist interpretation as the focal point. Each director demonstrated their unique storytelling and directorial interpretation to present social themes adequately. The idea of gender roles is depicted in both the novel and the two film adaptations, but the original story doesn't convey the feminist values. As a result, it only holds significance in modern times and not in the historical setting of the story.

CONCLUSION

Numerous adaptations of "Little Women" is a symbol of how culture and morality towards women are gradually changing. But despite certain expansion, the concept of femininity is unable to avoid the outmoded attributes even with purposeful activism. So, the happiness of a woman is still defined under the concepts of marriage and virginity. (Nadège, 2019). The role of women in society and gender ideology were captured by the influence of normative femininity, which prevailed throughout the culture. Consequently, women formed completely vague criteria to be evaluated on a par with men as professionals. And yet, "Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott will always remain a living story in terms of femininity (Bennett, 2020).

It can be concluded that the novel "Little Women" is somewhat autobiographical. Finding a partner was necessary in order for the Alcott book to be accepted by the publisher. Thus, the book could be accepted by readers, critics, and society as a whole. In order to achieve acceptability, the necessity of marriage in the end for a young woman was distinctively shown.

In the past, Louisa May Alcott challenged the traditional perception of gender roles with her book about four little women. The March sisters were authentic images of women in the 19th century and images of gender stereotypes as well. (Nadege, 2019) The institution of marriage was considered as a crucial stage in every heroine's life, but the author was able to share a contrasting attitude towards this topic. Particularly, the older sister Meg symbolised the generally accepted female happiness as a family woman. Sisters Jo and Amy were a new generation of women who identified the socially approved gender role of women as insufficient, especially for their personalities. Then, the author inherits the image of Beth with the idea of an ideal woman's death (Bender, 2017). Beth also showed the brutal philosophy of earlier society, where the heroine must either get married or die.

In 1868, Louisa May Alcott began to question social gender expectations. Subsequently, numerous directors found new interpretations of the gender classification within a story. It is quite probable that when the book was first published in the 19th century, society was not fully aware of the large-scale boundaries that Alcott's novel crossed (Sicherman, 2010). However, over time, this work has acquired a powerful theory of breaking gender stereotypes.

Numerous film adaptations have been created and based on “Little Women”, but most successful and memorable ones were produced by Gillian Armstrong in 1994 and Greta Gerwig in 2019. Each version uniquely reflected the story of the four March sisters with a fresh narrative style, tone and evolution of the protagonists. Bender (2017, p. 152) argues that both adaptations managed to convey that Jo, as the “symbol of a new generation of women, can retain the qualities of an approved female ideal and an independent, ambitious persona at the same time”. Alcott’s demonstrated compromise also occurs in the denouement of the two released adaptations.

Gillian Armstrong displays freedom of the female character in a more conservative way. 1994’s “Little Women” focuses more on Jo March’s romance and thus makes it predominantly a movie about love. In contrast, Greta Gerwig concludes the narration of “Little Women” as a story about a girl who breaks down stereotypes about gender and its controversial role in society. Therefore, instead of the hand of her beloved, Jo holds the first copy of own book. In the given context, it symbolises certainty of a woman about her identity as a human being (Arslan, 2019). The given ending can be considered as a potential feminist interpretation. The outcomes of the conducted survey also confirmed that the contemporary viewer clearly may recognise the issue of gender roles in both films and highlights the spirit of feminist interpretation in the 2019 adaptation of director Greta Gerwig. Therefore, the 2019 adaptation can be interpreted more as a feminist ideology than the 1994 film version.

The concept of gender roles is presented in the novel and both film adaptations, nevertheless the meaning of feminist value is missing in the original story. Hence, the social element of feminist interpretation is presented in the context, however it is relevant only in modern perception and not in the past.

REFERENCES

Alcott, Louisa M. (1869). *Little Women*. Little, Brown and Company.

Alcott, L. M. (2011). *Louisa May Alcott HER Life, Letters, and Journals*, p. 3-77. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38049/38049-h/38049-h.htm> (last accessed 23.11.2021).

Armstrong, G. (Director). (1994). *Little Women* [Motion Picture], p.1-138. United States: DiNovi Pictures

Arslan, O. (2019). *Gender Roles and Feminism in Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" (1868/1969) and Anna Todd's "The Spring Girls" (2018)*. Munich: GRIN Verlag. <https://www.grin.com/document/512678> (last accessed 15.01. 2021).

Bender, C. (2017). *Gender Stereotyping in Little Women: "Let Us Be Elegant or Die!"*. p.140-153. University of Northwestern (last accessed 15.01. 2021).

Blackstone, A. (2003). *"Gender Roles and Society."* Human Ecology: An Encyclopedia of Children, Families, Communities, and Environments, (p. 335-338). ISBN I-57607-852-3 (last accessed 20.04.2021)

Cruea, S. M. (2005). *Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement*. General Studies Writing Faculty Publications 1. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_pub/1 (last accessed 10.04.2021).

Curtis, S. (2013). *How Did the Roles of Women Change Over the Course of the Late 19th Century*. <https://sites.suffolk.edu/slcurtis92/2013/02/12/how-did-the-roles-of-women-change-over-the-course-of-the-late-19th-century/> (last accessed 23.11. 2020).

Gerwig, G. (Director). (2019). *Little Women* [Motion Picture]. p.1-125. United States: Columbia Pictures, Regency Pictures, Pascal Pictures (last accessed 30.04.2022)

Debruge, P. (2019). 'Little women': Film review. Variety Magazine. <https://variety.com/2019/film/reviews/little-women-review-2-1203407660/> (last accessed 10.02.2021).

Doyle, K. (2020). *Little Woman (2019) Gerwig Establishes herself as Important 21st Century Director*. The Film Magazine: Movie Review. <https://www.thefilmmagazine.com/little-women-2019-gretagerwig-saoirse-ronan-movie-review/> (last accessed 10.02.2021).

Doyle, K. (2019). *Little women (1994) Retrospective Review*. The Film Magazine: Retrospective Review, <https://www.thefilmmagazine.com/little-women-1994-gillian-armstrong-movie-review/> (last accessed 15.01.2021).

Ebert, R. (1994). *Little Women Movie Review & Film Summary (1994)*. Roger Ebert: Criticism. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/little-women-1994> (last accessed 25.03.2021).

Kanter, R. M. (1993). *Men and Women of the Corporation: New Edition*. p. 73-110 New York: Basic Books. (last accessed 05.05.2023)

Macor, A. (1994). *Movie review: Little Women*. <https://www.austinchronicle.com/events/film/1994-12-23/little-women/> (last accessed 15.01.2021).

Maslin, J. (1994). *The Gold Standard For Girlhood Across America*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/21/movies/film-review-the-gold-standard-for-girlhood-across-america.html> (last accessed 15.03.2021).

Matteson, J. (2016). *The Annotated Little Women*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. p.11-24. (last accessed 20.04.2021)

Nadege H. (2019). Medium. *Little Women, Big Statements About Society*. <https://medium.com/@nahdeji/little-women-big-statements-about-society-e7ee4b9578f7> (last accessed 15.03.2020)

Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender, and Society*. New York: Harper and Row.

Roof, J. (2020). *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Culture Society History*. *Encyclopedia.com*.
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/gender-roles> (last accessed 23.11.2020).

"*Sexual Identity and Gender Identity Glossary*." (2006). *Feminism and Women's Studies*.
<http://feminism.eserver.org/sexual-gender-identity.txt> (last accessed 23.11.2020).

Sicherman, B. (2010). *Well Read Lives: How Books Inspired A Generation of American Women*, p.326-345, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
<https://uncpress.org/book/9780807839096/well-read-lives/> (last accessed 10.04.2021)

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Louis May Alcott'i romaan "Väikesed naised" on kirjanduslik teos, millest on tehtud mitmeid filmiadaptatsioone, mis kajastab 19. sajandi vaimu ja ühiskonda. Lugu on tänapäeval tuntud veel ühe avaldusena soolise ebavõrdsuse olemasolust ajaloos ning seetõttu jääb see endiselt avatuks vaidlusele. Esitletavas töös tutvustatakse ja analüüsitakse keskse teemana soorolle.

Töö sissejuhatav osa uurib "naise" positsiooni ja ühiskondlikke regulatsioone, mis eksisteerisid 19. sajandi teisel poolel. Vajalik terminoloogia nagu "sugu", "sooline identiteet" ja "sooline ebavõrdsus" määrati, uuriti ja selgitati. Töö sissejuhatuse teine osa annab kirjandusliku analüüsi sotsiaalkriitilise vaatenurga omadustest, mis peegelduvad "Väikesed naised" raamatus. Selles osas on käsitletud termineid "feminism" ja "feministlik tõlgendus". Feministlik perspektiiv keskendub ideedele erinevate võimutasemete jaotusest meeste ja naiste vahel ühiskonnas. Seetõttu kajastab romaan naiste sotsiaalselt alluvat positsiooni 19. sajandi teisel poolel ja demonstreerib naiste piiratud võimaluste valikut.

Peatükk I "Soo-rollid teoses Väikesed naised" sisaldab romaani ajaloolist tausta, võrdleb süžeed ja tegelasi originaal loos. I peatükk arutleb naise taju üle sotsiaalsetes seadetes. Romaani tegelaste analüüs väljendab elavalt mitte ainult süžeed, vaid ka ajaloolist konteksti ja sotsiaalset konflikti, mida iga tegelane elab läbi.

Peatükk II "Väikesed Naised sotsiaal kriitilises perspektiivis" annab ülevaate uuringu tulemustest sooteemal ja võimalikust feministlikust tõlgendusest, mis ilmnevad raamatus ja kahe filmi ekraniseeringutes. Uuring teeb järgneva analüüsi süžee muutuste, jutustamisstiili ja režissööride isikliku nägemuse kohta "Väikeste naiste" sotsiaalsest konfliktist.

16 osalejat analüüsisid vastavalt aastatele 1994 ja 2019 tehtud kahte «Väikesed naised» filmi ekraniseeringut. Korraldati küsitlus vaatajate arvamuste kohta võimalike erinevuste kohta romaani ja selle ekraanitöötluste vahel. Võrdlev analüüs tuvastab võimalike soolise võrdõiguslikkuse teooriate ja feministlike ideede mõju tänapäeva lugeja/vaataja silmis. Järeldus kokkuvõtlikult tõdeb, et igal režissööril oli oma unikaalne jutuvestmise stiil ja lavastuslik

tõlgendus, et esitada sotsiaalseid teemasid adekvaatselt." Mõlemas romaanis ja kahe filmi adaptatsioonis kujutatakse soorollide ideed, kuid algne lugu ei edasta feministlikke väärtusi. Iga vaatajal on oma väärtused, mis on olulised tema ajastule. Seetõttu on see tänapäeval elavalt tähtis, kuid mitte minevikus.

APPENDIX 1

Survey on “Little Women”

Hello!

Earlier, I asked you to watch two different adaptations of the novel "Little Women". The first version of the novel was directed by Gillian Armstrong in 1994. The other was released more recently - in 2019 and directed by Greta Gerwig. During the watching process, I also asked you to pay special attention to possible differences in plot, character development, themes and ideas in both movies. Now, it takes about 5 minutes to complete the survey.

This survey is anonymous.

Thank you very much for your time and shared opinion!

University of Tartu Narva College student,

Zhaniya Salimbayeva

Email: symphogearea@gmail.com

1. Пол / Gender

- мужской / male (4 people)
- женский / female (12 people)

2. Возраст / Age

- 18 - 26 (8 people)
- 27 - 35 (4 people)
- 36 - 45 (2 people)
- 45 и старше / 45 and older (2 people)

3. В каком порядке вы смотрели оба фильма? / In what order did you watch both films?

- Сначала версию 1994 года, затем 2019 / 1994 version first, then 2019 (9 people)
- Сначала версию 2019 года, затем 1994 / 2019 version first, then 1994 (7 people)

4. Впервые выбирая из двух версий, по какому критерию вы выбирали? / What was your criterion, when you were choosing between two versions for the first time?

- Фильм вышел первым (1994), поэтому я начал его смотреть / 1994 film came out first, so I started with it (8 people)
- Фильм вышел совсем недавно (2019), а затем я посмотрел более раннюю версию / 2019 film came out recently, so I chose the newest (5 people)
- Выбирал по популярности / Chose by popularity (4 people)
- Выбирал по рецензиям и рекомендациям / Chose by reviews and recommendations (4 people)
- Other:

5. Какой из фильмов вам запомнился больше всего? / Which of the films left the biggest impression?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (4 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (12 people)
- Other:

6. По вашему мнению, в каком фильме наиболее удачный стиль повествования? / In your opinion, which movie has the most relevant storytelling approach?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (10 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (4 people)
- Other: (2 people)

7. По вашему мнению, в какой версии главные персонажи были интереснее? Почему? / In your opinion, which adaptation presents main characters more interesting? Why?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (6 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (10 people)
- Other:

8. Тон повествования (настроение) какого фильма вы считаете более подходящим для истории “Маленьких Женщин”? / The narrative tone (mood) of which adaptation do you consider as more appropriate for the story of "Little Women" ?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (11 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (5 people)
- Other:

9. По вашему мнению, какому из фильмов удалось достоверно запечатлеть историческое время романа (19 век)? / In your opinion, which of adaptations managed to reliably capture the historical time of the novel (19th century)?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (11 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (1 person)
- Equally both of them (4 people)
- None of them (0)
- Other:

10. По вашему мнению, в каком из фильмов проблема женских персонажей была ярче показана? / In your opinion, in which adaptation the problem of female characters has been more vividly shown?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (0)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (8 people)
- Equally in both of them (9 people)
- In none of them (0)
- Other:

11. По вашему мнению, в каком из фильмов проблема мужских персонажей была ярче показана? / In your opinion, in which adaptation the problem of male characters has been more vividly shown?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (0)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (8 people)
- Equally in both of them (1 person)

- In none of them (7 people)
- Other:

12. В какой из фильмов темы социального неравенства были намного ярче показаны, чем в другой версии? / In which adaptation the issues of social equality and gender balance were shown better than in the other film?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (0)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (13 people)
- Equally in both of them (3 people)
- In none of them

13. По вашему мнению, присутствует ли дух феминистского движения в одном из фильмов? Если да, то в каком? / In your opinion, is there spirit of the feminist movement in one of the films? If so, which one?

- Yes, in 1994 "Little Women" film by Gillian Armstrong
- Yes, in 2019 "Little Women" film by Greta Gerwig (14 people)
- Yes, in both of them (2 people)
- No, in none of them

14. Какие сцены или детали можно интерпретировать как послы феминистской идеологии? / Which scenes or details can be interpreted as the message of feminist ideology?

(open answer)

15. Какую из версий “Маленьких Женщин” на экране вы бы посоветовали другим людям? Почему? / Which version of "Little Women" on the screen would you recommend to other people? Why?

- 1994 "Little Women" directed by Gillian Armstrong (11 people)
- 2019 "Little Women" directed by Greta Gerwig (12 people)
- Other:

16. Читали ли вы оригинальный роман Луизы Мэй "Маленькие Женщины"? / Have you read the original novel "Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott?

- Yes (3 people)
- No (13 people)
- Other:

APPENDIX 2

Results of 14th Question (open answer required):

Participant №	Participant's written answer
1	В обоих фильмах присутствует тема неравного отношения к полам. В ранней версии она более мягко показана, а в 2019 версии проблема более очевидна из-за более ярких героинь и сопоставления прошлого и настоящего.
2	2019 version had many scenes like this - when Amy spoke to Laurie, conversation with the publisher. 1994 version - just entire image of Jo
3	Резкие слова издателя, короткая стрижка
4	Джо с книгой в руках, разговор с издательством, вопрос брака
5	Издательство
6	Jo's romantic line isn't fully revealed - whether she is getting married or not
7	эпизод с книгой Джо в руках, сам образ главной героини
8	противопоставление позиции мужчин и женщины в фильмах
9	storyline of Jo March
10	образ дерзкой и независимой Джо
11	сцена школы и позиция женщины в обществе
12	Numerous episodes about marriage
13	тема брака и сама Джо
14	marriage theme

15	позиция мужчин и женщин в обществе
16	эпизод с издательством

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

Mina, Zhaniya Salimbayeva,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) minu loodud teose

MUUTUS SOOROLLIDE TAJUMISES LOUISA MAY ALCOTTI ROMAANIS “VÄIKESED NAISED” JA KAHE FILMIKOHANDUSEGA: GILLIAN ARMSTRONG “VÄIKESED NAISED” (1994) JA GRETA GERWIG “VÄIKESED NAISED” (2019)

mille juhendaja on Nina Raud,

reprodutseerimiseks eesmärgiga seda säilitada, sealhulgas lisada digitaalarhiivi DSpace kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse lõppemiseni.

2. Annan Tartu Ülikoolile loa teha punktis 1 nimetatud teos üldsusele kättesaadavaks Tartu Ülikooli veebikeskkonna, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace kaudu Creative Commons'i litsentsiga CC BY NC ND 4.0, mis lubab autorile viidates teost reprodutseerida, levitada ja üldsusele suunata ning keelab luua tuletatud teost ja kasutada teost ärieesmärgil, kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse lõppemiseni.
3. Olen teadlik, et punktides 1 ja 2 nimetatud õigused jäävad alles ka autorile.
4. Kinnitan, et lihtlitsentsi andmisega ei riku ma teiste isikute intellektuaalomandi ega isikuandmete kaitse õigusaktidest tulenevaid õigusi.

Zhaniya Salimbayeva
13.05.2023