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Representation of Female Characters

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*

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Dedication

I dedicate this work:

To my beloved parents, may Allah protect them,

To my brothers, sisters, and kids,

To my colleagues and friends,

To my dear teachers,

To my supervisor Dr. Sadoune Farida,

To myself,

Without forgetting any people who helped and supported me near or far.

Hadjer

I dedicate this work to my beloved parent, may Allah protect them;

To all my family members;

Thanks to all people who supported me even by a nice word;

I also dedicate it to all my friends, to my supervisor Dr. Sadoune who gives me a great helping hand, and to myself

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List of abbreviations

CV: Civil War

LMA: Louisa May Alcott

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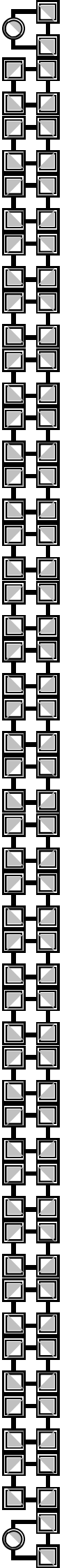
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General Introduction



The background of study

The nineteenth century American literature is characterized by the throne of the queen Victoria then named this period by her name (the Victorian era). The Victorian era was timed with the industrial revolution, social changes, the growth of the economic states and the political reforms. It started from 1837 until her death in 1901.

The literature has focused on the childhood, family and the country. The English society has related to the development of the writing, poetry and novels. Most of the novels reflect the social problems and traditional values of the nineteenth century. It highlights the stories of sexes (men and women). So, our analytical investigation is specialized to study women.

The American period is one of the highly important periods which give a picture about the suffering women. Women in the 19th century had very limited rights. They faced many kinds of physical and psychological violence. Women in that period were neglected and did not have all their legal rights: They could not vote and give their opinion; and they did not have the right to ask for the divorce, even they did not behave like men because they obliged them to stay at home and should clean, cook, wash, and take care of their husbands and children. Also, they suffered from the poverty and oppression. So, Women began to portray their suffering in the media and children literature.

After that, many female authors appeared and spoke about women and what they faced in the Victorian age. One of them was Louisa May Alcott, the American feminist writer, poet, biographer and storyteller. She was the best novelist of classic novels. Louisa was born on November 29, 1832 in Germantown, Pennsylvania in US. She was raised in England between her parent: Abigail May and Amos Bronson Alcott and she had three sisters Anna, Elizabeth, and Abba. Her father was a teacher, philosopher. He caused a financial problem to his family and big misery which was as a consequence to his failing method (self-taught). The family left Boston to live in Concord. Louisa always claimed that no boy and no girl could be her friends.

At the age 7years, Louisa started writing her diaries then she moved to write poetry at the age of 8 and later she wrote short stories. In 1860s, she started writing by using a pen name (A. M. Barnard) to express her feeling and write sensation novels for adults. She was a successful writer, most of her writing focused on the passion and

revenge. Louisa May Alcott known by her first novel “Little Women” after the American Civil War (from April 12, 1861 to May 9, 1865).

In early age, exactly when Louisa was at the age 15, she was a responsible for her family and started working to support them because she suffered from the poverty and the financial difficulties. She never married and died on March 6, 1888 in Boston. The author in her writing tries to explore the social issues of the Victorian era. Most of her novels and stories have a boyish protagonist.

We chose the novel of *Little Women* as a case of study. Luisa May Alcott focuses in her novel on the female characters using the Feminist theory to study the status of women especially that Feminism appeared in this period 1960s, and because it is considered by the feminist researcher as the best story of the American children literature.

Statement of the problem

This study works to present the feminism in the status of the four sisters within the social, political and economic background. In addition to that, describe the inequality between genders of the characters in the novel. And because the writer is a woman and she lived in the same period. She chose to describe the life of each character and give us a general view about this age.

Objectives of study

This study aims:

- To describes the inequality between genders of the abused characters in the novel of *Little Women*
- The reader will reach the inequality portrayed and the oppression of women in the nineteenth century.
- The work aims to explore the social issues and highlights the humanity values which it is not just a theory, and to show the respect to women and their rights.

So, we divide our research paper into three chapters. The first chapter seeks to provide and discuss the Feminist theory which includes in this novel. The second chapter is attempted to study the historical background of the American literature. The

third chapter; we works on the corpus analysis of the female characters representation in the novel.

Research questions

We intend to answer to the following questions:

- How was the position of women in society during the nineteenth century?
- How did the American female novelists portray women in that period?
- How did Louisa May Alcott portray the female characters in the novel of *Little Women*?

Methodology

The analysis of the novel of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* adopted by the Feminism literary theory which challenges the situation of inequality between the genders in the American society and it can give us the effects of that. Also, it is the system of the government or the society at that time. So, our dissertation is analytical thematic study of the writer for women.

The definition of key terms

American literature: it is the written which produced in the United States. It divided into periods timed between 1492 to present.

Character: it is a symbol used in the writing. In literature; the character is a person, it can be protagonist or antagonist. The character represents the actions in the literary work.

Female: according to the oxford (1994); it is to being women or girls.

Feminism: is like a gap or bridge between men and women. It is the belief that women should be equal with men in social, economic, and politics. So, it looks for the rules and norms. The feminist theory used in the late of the 19th century by the French suffragist Hubertine Auclert.

Oppression: according to Merriam Webster (1828) it is unjust or cruel exercises of authority or power.



Chapter One: The Feminist Theory

Introduction

During the previous eras and before the emergence of feminist, women were fighting to earn their rights in many fields. They were under the men oppression, and under the men persecution. So, women at that time were suffered more than men. After that, literature has witnessed a special movement of gender roles in the earliest of the nineteenth Century.

Writers find themselves portrayed their opinion through their literary works. So, Feminism became official, and the first feminist was in 1850. Women suffrage was an important spearhead of women's movement. This movement started also in the nineteenth Century, but took place until the beginning of the twentieth Century.

I.1- Portal to Feminism

Feminism is a movement that has a special goal to change the system of gender role and inequalities between men and women. It actually aims to impose equality between male and female .Bringing all the stolen rights of women. Another aim of feminism; it makes people understand the women tragedy in sexual preference, class, race.

The feminist theory adopted by the Europe, North and Latin America, but it used first by the French suffragist Hubertine Auclet in the late of the nineteenth century (1900).

There are many feminists who influence this movement such as Alice Walker (1944), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Elizabeth Candy Stanton (1815-1902), Bratty Friedan (1921-2006), Gloria Steinem (1934), and others.

And there are some feminism people saying quotes:

"If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."
(Thatcher, 1965)

This means that women have a great important in all the society fields.

Madeleine Albright (1937) also highlights this theory of feminism by saying her quote "It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent." To encourage women to make their voice heard everywhere.

Another quote to G.D. Anderson "Feminism isn't about making women stronger". (2013)

Women are already strong; it's about changing the way the world perceives that strength."

Anderson in her saying wants women to take their supremacy in the society, and try to be strong without men, because they are already strong without this theory of feminism. So, the feminist theory challenges the male in all the social aspects. This theory rejected all the oppression view about women, as Weitzman et.al (1972) announced in their study that female were seriously ignored in most of literature especially the young people. (Cited in Kelly, 2011).

I.2- Feminist Literary Theory

Maya Angelou said "Each time, a woman stands up for herself without knowing it possibly, without claiming, she stands up for all women". So, the Feminist theory aims to make feminism theoretical, functional, and philosophical discourse to understand the nature of gender.

This theory allows us to examine this gender role, experiences, interests. The theory may also analyze gender inequality in every social field, and that what create the early feminist thoughts .However, it can be defined as the range of social, political, movement and ideologies. Therefore, Feminism is not concerned with certain society as the western society, but with all societies that neglected the study of women. This confirms that women have been as subordinate to men and to his orders. Also, Feminism is a theory that fights against some definitions of male and female, it aims to understand gender inequality that is applied in many fields.

According to PENY.A.PASQUE in his article “Feminist perspective” Feminism has some important principles, as follows:

1. Women have something valuable to contribute to every aspect of the world.
2. As an oppressed group, women have been unable to achieve their potential, receive rewards, or gain full participation in society.
3. Feminist research should do more than critique, but should work toward social transformation. (Ropers- Hualman, 2002).

There is dark point that emerged in the earliest of this theory which feminist took into consideration just the white people to educate. So, it was classification feminism .Actually, if women win all their rights without suffering about them, it will mean that we are matured society. So, Oxford (Andrew, 1994, p.np) defines this theory as the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of the equality of sex.

I.3- Types of Feminism

Feminism is for everybody; Passionate politics, bell books 200 shares her “simple definition” of feminism.

Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. (Bell, 2000, p8)

French people were the first ones who use this term of feminism in 1872.Great Britain in the1890, and United States in 1910.Feminism is until now a worldwide concept, it is divided into three types which are social feminism, Radical feminism, and liberal feminism.

I.3.1- Social Feminism

The social Feminism is a movement that advocates for social rights and issues, but it is specify for women accommodation.

They used this term to describe some members of women's suffrage in the late of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, because they were already concerned with social problems that impact women. They took suffrage as a mean to achieve some social and women reform goals. Social feminism observes that society is the main cause of women oppression and will be limited by the development of women.

I.3.2- Radical Feminism

The radical Feminism is a perspective within feminism that came as a radical change of society in which the mastery of male is neglected in all society and economic fields. Radical feminism also wants to take women experiences into consideration and affected by other social division such as race, class, sexual orientation. It investigate the women subjugation and seeks to eliminate the existence of both social norms and sexism, it also refers to emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women .Radical feminism aims to organize the political and the social fields to dismantle patriarchy rather than making adjustments to the system through legal changes, it also want to reduce the oppression.

By applying Radical feminism, women should be able to determine their social role with great pride as do men.

I.3.3- Liberal Feminism

We can consider this type as the extreme one. It focuses on the ability of women to preserve or to protect equality by knowing their rights .It affirms to give equal rights for women as men.

Lobber (1997) defines feminism as” movement that works within the structure of main stream society to integrate women into it, and make it more responsive to individual women's rights, but does not directly challenges the system itself or the ideology behind women oppression”.

I.4- Waves of feminism

The American feminist Elaine Showalter is one of the literary critic and writer on culture and the social issues in United State. She analyses and shows the progress of women's writing and how conflict and struggle for their rights.

Elaine Showalter breaks down women's literature into three stages passing from the Victorian period to modern writing.

I.4.1- The First Wave

It occurred in the late nineteenth Century and the early twentieth Century. Actually it was born with the term of "Gallantry". It was concerned with women vote. In literature a new form has emerged. It served to provide female conduct. The premise is that women had to be under authority of men. They differ only on the way of respecting women in society .In this wave; the women writers used the male pseudonym to integrate themselves into society and the tradition. They attempted to express their experiences and suffering as women. Also, they tried to identify the woman within the limitation of the Victorian bourgeois properties.

"Vindication of rights of women" by "Mary Wollstonecraft" epitomized the feminist debate of the enlightenment and put its arguments, and she became the classic primer of feminism because of her work that seeks to turn the ideal of feminism into reality. Rousseau is also one of the principle theorists; said that many of the differences that distinguish the sexes were the result of habits and lifestyle adopted by society .He also mentioned that feminism should be evident to all that in relationship of servitude. This wave also promoted equal rights for women, argued the ownership of married women by their husbands (Charles, 1995)

I.4.2- The Second Wave

This wave emerged in the 1960-1980. It refers to the women liberation movement for equal legal and social rights .It also focuses on the issues of equality between male and female, identified women's cultural and political inequalities .Betty Friedan in 1963 was one of the important public figure in the second wave. She wrote her book "The Feminine Mystique" which criticized the way of women's living through

childrearing and homemaking. Friedan hypothesis that women are victims of false beliefs, wants them to find identity to their lives through husbands and children.

I.4.3- The Third Wave

It began in the early of 1990, because of the failure of the second wave. This ideology seeks to change the definition of feminism that grew out of the ideas of the second wave, arguing that the second wave emphasizes just the experiences of the upper class and the white women.

So, the historical writer Margret Oliphant describes all the changes in that period as “a period of transition, in which many great names were falling into silence, and the men who were destined to take their places were but slowly pushing to the front”.(p1)

I.5- Sex VS Gender

Historically there is difference between the terms “gender” and “sex”, it is important to understand that gender is not the same as “sex”. Gender is more difficult to be defined, but actually it refers to the roles of male and female in the society, known as gender roles. It can also refer to an individual’s concepts of themselves, or gender identity. Gender highlights the difference between men and women interest, and how these interest are expressed within society .It also highlights the conventions of women and men position. Gender refers to the social elaboration of biological sex. “Sex” referring to the biological based primarily on reproductive potential (Ginet, n.d). Gender is not the thing that we were born with, but something we express and we do in our life because every generation has brought different expectation for the men and women way of acting .THE WORLD HEALTH organization “WHO” defines gender “gender refers to the society constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men.it varies from society to society and can be changed”. Sex is a set of biological attributes .Therefore, sex is the physical and the physiological features. (Harriet, 2013, p 7)

I.6- Gender roles

Gender roles are the expected actions which depend on “sex” such as to act, dress, and groom. For example girls and women are generally expected to dress feminine ways, and be polite. In the other hand, men are expected to be strong, bold and so on. It can be defined as a range of behaviors that are generally acceptable, appropriate based on the biological sex of someone .According to “Gilbert Herdt” , gender roles arose from correspondent inference , meaning that general labor division was extended to gender roles .Gender roles can be linked to expectation of male and female in realms outside of the family as well, such as work (WILLIAMS 1995), not only in the family but also at work , male and female are often expected to do different tasks and different roles .For example, women are more likely to work as secretaries , and men are more likely to work as managers, executives. As these examples demonstrate, gender roles are created on the principles of stereotypes about gender (according to Gender stereotype)

I.7-Feminist characterization

The characterization will actually appear in the literature work of the feminist writers themselves. So, their works portrays ideas that attempt to change gender norms, and argued for the change against gender roles through the written words.

Conclusion

The late period of the nineteenth century, the world witnessed development in the women’s status because of the gender development, culture also plays a big role in that decade .Therefore, culture will affect the way that depends on “sex”, and “gender” has to be examined according to culture, and also in the perspective of the economic and history of society (BEST, 2005) This chapter has attempted to give out some points that are related to the picture of feminism as a concept.



Chapter Two: The Nineteenth Century American Literature

Introduction

The literary critic works are ranged from the beginning of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century. In this decade, the literary works considered to be the most important works were written after the American Revolution. The people were emphasis on the American literature. The period was passed through a great literary development. Also, it witnessed a member of important events which flourished by some writers and has some characteristics. Then, the American literature are more influenced and connected to another literature like Dutch, French and Spanish literature.

In this chapter, we get to highlight the main features of the American literature during the nineteenth century. Also, we mention some American female writers.

II-1- The Literary Genre

A literary genre is a category of literary composition. Genres may be determined by literary technique, tone, content, or even (as in the case of fiction) length. They generally move from more abstract, encompassing classes, which are then further subdivided into more concrete distinctions. The distinctions between genres and categories are flexible and loosely defined, and even the rules designating genres change over time and are fairly unstable.

In the nineteenth century, America welcomed a variety of literary genres such as stories, personal journals, and letters addressing a myriad of topics likes politics, science, Religion, and philosophy. In this period the Narrative-style and contemporary literature took place in the nineteenth century because of these varieties of genres.

II-1-1- Short Stories

During the American Renaissance from the 1830s roughly until the end of the American civil war in which American literature, came of age as an expression of national spirit.

We find within short stories in this period. the classic ones such as “*Rip Van Winkle*” by Washington Irving 1820, ‘*The Fall Of The House Of Usher*’ by Edgar Allan Poe 1839, “*The Tell-Tale Hear*” by Edgar Allen Poe 1839, and others. American short stories have some common features like distinct climax which develops directly from the conflict, plot and theme, and others.

II-1-2- Poetry

The Fireside Poets were a group of the nineteenth century American poets from New England. Other notable poets emerged in the early and middle nineteenth century includes Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), Sidney Lanier (1842–1881), and James Whitcomb Riley (1849–1916).

The American poetry refers to the poetry of United State. The first internationally that acclaimed poet in the nineteenth century was HENERY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1908-1882) who nearly surpassed some great poets in the international popularity such as Lord Tennyson, William Cullen Bryant and others.

Walt Whitman, was also one of the most famous American literature in the nineteenth century, its publication in 1855, his work is situated between transcendentalism and Realism.

II-1-3- Personal Journals and Letters

American Letters were often handed directly to captains of ships and boats. U.S. law required captains to deliver all mail to the post office at the first port of entry, but they sometimes were brought to addressees or local posts for delivery. (PR, 2020, p4)

II-2- The Major Themes

1-The American Dream

The American dream is one of the most popular issues in the American literature, which means a kind of belief that everyone in the United States, if only make efforts and never give up, will get better life and his dream comes true. We can see I also have the meaning of the ideal that every US citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success through hard work.

2-Relationship with nature

We can consider nature as the positive life that gives the characters of every literary work a great force. It also means the need to affiliate with other life such as plants, animals, or the desire to be near nature, so every American literary work defines how humans use nature for their basic needs even if the writer use that as a hidden meaning.

3-Relationship with society

In the literary works during that period, every character from the literary work has relationship with society; as crimes, and punishments we see when individuals break laws, commit crimes and were punished.

4-oppression

Individuals violate the laws of society infringes upon the rights of rebellion. one of the famous oppression in the literary works in the 19th century is the oppression under women, and the supremacy of men.

5-Alienation and isolation

The alienation and isolation are the experience of being isolated from a group in some literary works in which a character should belong, or which one should be involved. (Mathew and Mimno, 2012, p17)

II-3- The Female Characters

This period of the nineteenth century America was known by authors using female characters in their literary work. We look back on the 1800s as a time of rampant sexism, patriarchy, male dominance, and gender inequality, whatever you want to call it. And it was indeed that sort of time. But a number of nineteenth century female novelists, and a few male ones, managed to directly or indirectly speak against that in some of their books.

II-4- The American Female Writers

The nineteenth century is characterized by many female writers who flourished with their works

II-4-1- Sara Payson Willis

Sara is known as Fanny Fern (1811-1872). She was born in 1811 and died in 1872. Fanny Fern "was hugely popular in the nineteenth century. Also she was a highly paid journalist. Fanny Fern had a newspaper column that was widely syndicated, it was humorous and cutting and smart and accessible, and people gobbled it up. In addition to that, Sara was resuscitated by feminist scholars in the 1970s.

II-4-2- Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880)

Lydia is a woman's rights activists and novelist who used her words to express to fight for women rights. Following to her success, Child wrote several novels, poetry, and an instruction manual for mothers, The Mothers Book. But her most successful

work was *The Frugal Housewife*. Her book contained mostly recipes, but also contained this advice for young housewives "If you are about to furnish a house, do not spend all your money.... Begin humbly." First published in 1829, the book was expanded and went through 33 printings in 25 years. Child wrote that her book had been "written for the poor ... those who can afford to be epicures will find the best of information in the *Seventy-five Receipts*" by Eliza Leslie.

II-4-3-Emma Willard

Emma Hart Willard (February 23, 1787) was an American woman's rights. She dedicated her life to education. Emma worked in many schools and founded the first school for women's higher education. She succeeded and tried to travel abroad and across the country.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century is one of the most important periods which witnessed a great development in the American literature. The American literature followed by the World War. So, it is based on the aspects of the United States literature. The literature in that period reflected the time and the changing in the social circumstances. Also, we mention the main figure of the American literature and some famous writers. We deal in this chapter also with the most important American literary themes during the 19th century, and who is the great writers that deals with that.



Chapter Three: The Corpus Analysis of the Female Characters Representation

Introduction

In this chapter; first, the study will be about the general analyses of the novel. It facilitates the understanding of the work completely. We start from the analyses and show the feminist values and the gender roles in the novel.

III-1-The General Analysis of the novel

“*Little women*” is a novel written in two parts, in the early 19th century. The first part was published in September 30, 1868. It consists of 23 chapters. The second part was published in 1869. And it consists of 24 chapters.

III-1-1-The plot summary

The novel of “*Little Women*” by Louisa May Alcott is a novel about the daily life of family March in their house. The family consists of the mother and their four daughters Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy. Their father is working as a clergyman in the CW which occurred in 1860. Each one of them has different experiences in her adulthood. Although the four teenagers lived in poverty but they work hard to help their family and to keep together. Meg is the oldest daughter, she is beautiful girl. Her dream is to be good housewife. The second daughter is Jo. She is a tomboy character; she likes writing and she has a dream to be good and famous writer. Beth is the third girl; her love is playing music. And she wants to be a great musician. Amy is the last one; she likes paint and seeks to be a great painter. In addition to the dreams of the girls; they have also many adventures in their life. Meg all the times looking for a work outside the home to support her family. Also, she spends her days as a governess to the small children. Jo spends her time for taking care to her grand Aunt and reading all the books in her Aunt’s library. The four teenagers have a wise mother, she has a soft heart. March family lived in a poor but they did not complained.

Louisa May Alcott (henceforth) started her novel by mentioning the setting; where the family was sit in the living room. In occasion of the Christmas, the girls decide to buy gifts to their mother, instead to bring a gift to themselves. In the same time, the mother received a letter from her husband. This letter inspired the girls to fight

and struggle against the poverty and did not complain. Although the letter inspired the girls but also it leaved them sad.

On the Christmas day; the girls gave to Marmee their gifts. On day, the sisters “Jo” and “Meg” were in the house of their wealthy friend waiting for the New Year party. Jo meets with Laurie Laurence. Later on, Laurie becomes the best friend of the March family.

One day, the wealthy friend “Laurie” invited “Jo” and “Meg” to watch with him “The Seven Castle of the Diamond Lake”. Amy wants to go with them to the theater but Jo refused to take her with them. So, Amy was angry then she burns the manuscript of Jo. Jo feels hurt and did not forgive her sister Amy. So, Jo lets her sister drown while she was in ice skating. Then Jo forgives her sister.

In the party of Annie Moffat, Meg was very sad because she is poor and did not have money to buy a new dress like the others. Then she hears from the people that she wants to marry Laurie just for his money.

After that, the March family received a telegram which let them sad. It contained that Mr. March is sick in the Washington hospital. Jo goes and sells her beautiful hair to financing the trip of her mother to go and treat her father. In the same time, Beth confined in the bed due to scarlet fever. Amy sends to her Aunt in order to do not attack her by fever. Then Beth died.

At the end, Marmee returns and the fever breaks. Mr. Brooke asks Meg to marry him. Jo was very resent to lose her sister, but her mother tried to comfort her.

On the Christmas, Mr. March returns home and the happiness come back to the March family.

III-1-2-The Typological Analyses

“*Little women*” by LMA in the early nineteenth century is one of the most popular novel at that period .We can notice that the characters are imperfect. So, they did some mistakes just like any one from the real world emotions and actions.

So, we can see that the way of writing itself makes every character alive and hence. The four sisters are the main characters in this novel. Meg is the elder. She is dreaming to meet her prince from a rich family to live eventually the life that she wants. Jo is the next sister after Meg, described her as free spirited girl who does not care about the society view. She also has a dream to becoming authoress. Amy is the third sister. A little selfish in compared to her sisters, believes that a real women has to be elegant. The youngest one is Beth. She is a peaceful girl. All her dream is to see every one of the family good. So, she has a good heart.

This novel of "*Little Women*" begins with the sentence

"Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents, grumbled Jo, lying on the rug."

(May Alcott, 1869, p.3)

This quotation states the time of those events within the novel. This story as we mentioned before at the first paragraph started reciting about the four sisters Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy. But the writer focuses on Jo as a principle character. It is clear in the novel that those sisters have a common dream which is fighting poverty and being as their wealthy friends. In this novel the sisters thoughts and moves such as when Meg and Jo attend the pool party, and how Jo tries to hide herself behind the curtains because she does not like that kind of atmosphere.

The narrator used in her writing the third person, and that what make the reader be in the real image that the author wants him to reach, because the events of the novel substantiate the social issues in the 19th century.

III-1-3- The Gender Roles in the novel

In "*Little Women*", Louisa May Alcott also gives sense of diversity in character presentation. It also shows the aspects of gender roles. For example, the protagonist has a girlish name but prefers the boyish one. We as readers noticed that the author treated social issue in that period. So, she ignored some female characterization. For example, the less care about physical appearance, the use of an aggressive language,

and manly behaviors. The four sister courage intend of weak, aggressive instead of passive.

Jo once said:

I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I will wear it in tow
Tails till I am twenty, cried Jo, pulling off her met, and shaking down a
chestnut mane

(May Alcott, 1869, p.5)

So, the writer expressed how women were very sensitive, dress, and how were neglected. From this quotation, Jo thinks about her girly appearance when she grows up and worries about that. It means that everything related to men in that period was acceptable and preferred by "Jo". Also, she wants to depart from the stereotypical image of female character.

Gender roles are expressed by the writer Louisa May Alcott in the quotation below:

Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. "Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!" That's why I do it." I detest rude, unladylike girls!" "I hatefected, niminy-piminy chits!" "Birds in their little nests agree, sang Beth, the peacemaker, withsuch a funny face that both sharp voices softened to a laugh, and the pecking ended for that time. Really, girls, you are both to be blamed, said Meg, beginning to lecture in her elder-sisterly fashion. You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady

(May Alcott, 1869, p5)

So, Jo dislike being in women appearance, and dislike being older because she was responsible to their family in absence of her father. Also, she attempted to show the strength of women in a picture of men. So, Louisa May Alcott indicates her character with masculinity rather than femininity.

III-1-4-The setting

The setting is one of the most important things in writing. Most of the novels have more than one setting. The novel “*Little Women*” takes place in New England town; after the American Civil War; exactly on Concord, Massachusetts in 1860s.

The novel opens with the statement

“‘Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents,’ grumbled Jo, lying on the rug”.

(May Alcott, 1869, p3)

Most the action is about the March’s family home on the Christmas night. The mother and her four daughters with her husband away who was with the soldiers fighting in the CW as a clergyman.

III-1-5-The characters

The novel is a narrative but it is a little long. It has a number of characters (protagonists and antagonists). The antagonist or the hero is often presented in each scene. The novel has more than one protagonist. In Louisa May Alcott’s “*Little Women*”, we have 5 antagonists (Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy and their mother), in addition to the protagonists.

Margret March

Margret or Meg is the oldest daughter. She is sixteen years old and she was responsible, simple, kind and very pretty. Meg loved and interested in the luxurious things in the life.

Margaret seemed to find it a little hard to tell hers, and waved a

brake before her face, as if to disperse imaginary gnats, while

she said slowly, ‘I should like a lovely house, full of all sorts of

luxurious things—nice food, pretty clothes, handsome furniture,

pleasant people, and heaps of money (May Alcott, 1869, p202)

Josephine March

In the novel, Josephine is known by Jo. She was one of the main characters and she has the same life and personality with the author. Jo and LMA were like tomboy and tempered. Their actions not like ladies and quick to anger. Jo did not accept herself as a woman. In the beginning LMA mentioned that Jo is the second oldest sisters. She is fifteen years old. She likes plays and has a dream to be an actress. Jo became a writer and always eliminates the social view about how women should behave.

No gentleman were admitted, so Jo played male parts
to her heart's content and took immense satisfaction
in a pair of russet leather boots given her by a friend,
who knew a lady who knew an actor

(May Alcott, 1869, p24)

In the two pages 7 and 8. Louisa describes Jo:

but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way.
Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look
to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl
who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it

Mr. March

Mr. March is the father of the four sisters. He was a clergyman in the American civil war. He is an intelligent philosopher man. At the beginning of the novel, he was away their family and always sends letters to them. In the middle, he fallen into illness while Marmee obliged to travel and take care to him.

Marmee

The mother of the girls, they call them Marmee. Marmee is intelligent, kind and modest woman. She worked hard to rise and educate her girls with patience and sincerely to be little women and achieve their dreams. Marmee is the moral role for her girls.

Elizabeth March

Elizabeth or Beth is the third daughter of the March family. She is fourteen. Her personality is very shy, quiet, peaceful, timid and never complaining. Beth loves music, collection dolls and cats.

Beth was too bashful to go to school. It had been tried, but she suffered so much that it was given up, and she did her lessons at home with her father. Even when he went away, and her mother was called to devote her skill and energy to Soldiers' Aid Societies, Beth went faithfully on by herself and did the best she could.

(May Alcott, 1869, p54)

Amy March

Amy is the youngest March daughter. She is a little charming artist. She is twelve, and selfish little girl. She likes fancy and luxurious things like her sister Meg. And she is very angry like Jo.

Hannah

Hannah is the housekeeper and loyal servant of the March family. She is a lovely person.

Aunt March

She is the aunt of the four teenagers. She is a wealthy widowed. She took Amy with her to the Europe to take care of her in exchange she offer money to Amy to help her study.

Laurie Laurence

A wealthy neighbor for March sisters, He is a close friend. He prefers to call him Laurie. He educated at home by Mr. Brook. Laurie loves music. He always feels loneliness. When he finished his study he proposed married to Jo but she refused him. After that, he travelled to Europe with his grandfather and met with Amy then they get married.

Professor Fredrick Bhaer

He is a German professor. He is kind and lives in New York where he met Jo then they married and he encourages her to keep writing.

Mr. John Brooke

He is the teacher of Laurie. He was poor but he did not accept the offer of Mr. Laurence to help him. He was virtuous and prefers to establish himself alone and bought a house to get married with his beloved Meg.

Mr. Laurence

Laurie's grandfather. He is a kind person.

III-2- The Feminists Issues**1. Family and marriage**

The novel is dominant for the family female characters as girls in the nineteenth century. The characters defined by the familiar relations toward each other. All of them are supporting one another. LMA emphasizes on the importance of the family from different aspects.

The message of the family is the most things that matters. The four sisters Jo, Meg, Beth, Amy belong to very poor family, Leave the mother to care about the children; these struggles make them have a great meaning of family.

2. Female stereotype

From the novel we notice that Beth is the first characters that substantiate the female stereotype .we have a quotation from the novel which clarify that when Jo said:

There are many Beths in the world, shy and quite, sitting in the corner 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, sunshine presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind

(May Alcott, 1869, p68)

So, from this quotation, the female stereotype is a traditional one and still exist within society .Jo described her sister Beth as a real female: her shyness, curtness, and her way of girly behaving.

3. Women struggles

LMA described the four March girls' journey from childhood. The author also centers on the conflict between two emphases in a young women's life that which she places on her family .In this novel, we notice that family duties detracts from women's abilities to attend to their personal growth. For example, Jo has double personalities, her personality as professional artist and being dutiful women in the family and that what creates a conflict or struggles.

4. The necessity of work

In the novel, the March sisters were doing some daily activities, but when they do not have productive work, they end up remorseful.

III-3- The types of Feminist Theory

Through reading the novel of *“Little Women”*, we find that the author Louisa May Alcott has the same personality with the main character “Jo”. Both of them are struggle for independence women, and challenging the society. Hughes (2002) defines six concepts for feminist theory which are: a- equality b- different c- choice d-care e- time f- and experience.

These six values have an indicator in the novel which proves the feminism.

a. Equality

The equality value is one type of the feminist values. It appeared in some sentences and expressions in the novel. The equality found it in the novel in the main character “Jo”

LMA describes “Jo” not like any normal woman in the novel because she was as a boyish character. The reasons behind her style are: she refuses the way of thinking about women. Also, the way of Jo’s speaking broke the image of women society. So, Jo wants to make the equality and similarities between men and women.

From the two excerpts “I’m sure we work hard enough to earn it,” cried Jo, examining the heels of her shoes in a gentlemanly manner.” (May Alcott, 1869, p4)

And

'I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March,
and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster!
It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's ga-
mes and work and manners! I can't get over my disappo-
intment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now,
for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only st-
ay home and knit, like a poky old woman!'

(May Alcott, 1869, p6)

Jo has a man style. Especially her manner is like a man. She hates to follow the style of young woman. Jo is like China Aster were rigid to follow the norms and rules of society. She wished to go to the army with her father to take care to the solders in the CW, but the law in that time did not allow to women for fights

In addition to that, the expression: "Jo in maroon, with a stiff, gentlemanly linen collar, and a white chrysanthemum or two for her only ornament."

(May Alcott, 1869, p36)

Jo likes to wear the costume of man. She did not wear prestige grown style like a lady. She did not care about the social. The protagonist wants to challenge the social view and to be equal with men.

Another expression: "How I wish I was going to college! You don't look as if you liked it."

(May Alcott, 1869, 42)

The main character struggles about another right which is to get the right to go to college like her neighbor Laurence. In one side, because she is poor woman and it caused trouble for her family.

b. difference

The second type of the feminist values is the difference. The equality has a relation with the difference. The equality happened as a result of some differences.

From the analysis of the novel “Little Women” we find different values.

Fifteen year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt, for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way. She had a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, gray eyes, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns fierce, funny, or thoughtful. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way

(May Alcott, 1869, p7)

And

Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a flyaway look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it.

(May Alcott, 1869, p7-8)

The author described all the characters of the family March in the first chapter. And the above expression, she described “Jo” character as uncomfortable girl. She shows that “Jo” is different to the common women's style. Jo did not like to show her beauty, she always preferred to be different by bundle her long and thick hair into a net.

The feminist researchers make a clear appearance to the difference value of the main character “Jo” according to her sisters. The three sisters characterized by good appearance and manner like any natured women. In contrast with “Jo” who looks like unnatural woman (not like an ideal woman).

The expression:

‘Poor Jo! It’s too bad, but it can’t be helped. So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls,’ said Beth, stroking the rough head with a hand that all the dish washing and dusting in the world could not make ungentle in its touch”

(May Alcott, 1869, p6)

It presents the situation which was the reason caused by the way of her father. They were lived with their mother and did not have a man with them. So, “Jo” takes a place of man, she was a tomboy and has a boyish style and prefer to call her “Jo” instead “Josephine”. Even the author wrote and used the name “Jo” much when she wrote the novel to indicate and show the interest of the gentlemanly of Jo style.

c. Choice

In the novel, Jo takes a decision when she bought her beautiful hair in order to lend some money.

It came to me all of a sudden that I had one thing to make money out of, and without stopping to think, I walked in, asked if they bought hair, and what they would give for mine.

(May Alcott, 1869, p230)

The feminist researcher like Sandra and Gilbert found that the decision of “Jo” as a great for help her mother. And she had a brave to face the problems.

d. Care

The care value is found more in the second chapter.

‘Poor Jo! It’s too bad, but it can’t be helped. So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls,’ said Beth, stroking the rough head with a hand that all the dish washing and dusting in the world could not make ungentle in its touch the little baby as tenderly as if it had been her own. The girls meantime spread the table, set the children round the fire, and fed them like so many hungry birds, laughing, talking and trying to understand the funny broken English.

(May Alcott, 1869, p22, 23)

Jo sacrifices to help the people who need care especially that she wanted to join to soldiers to take care of them.

Sevenhuijsen (1998) (in Hughes: 2002: 127) shows that the ethics of care focus on the values like attentiveness to need for care, the willingness to accept the responsibility, and the responsiveness.

e. Time

The feminists has challenged the time through the analyses. Jo takes place the head of the family.

I will confess, though, I felt queer when I saw the dear old hair laid out on the table, and felt only the short rough ends of my head. It almost seemed as if I'd an arm or leg off. The woman saw me look at it, and picked out a long lock for me to keep. I'll give it to you, Marmee, just to remember past glories by, for a crop is so comfortable I don't think I shall ever have a mane again.

(May Alcott, 1869, p 231)

Jo was a young lady but she gave her the responsibility to support their family. The author attempts to show the strength of the women even they are poor and without man beside them.

f. Experience

The experience is all the relationship between the people in the social life; it can be successful to face the future. The novel is full of experiences. One of them is the women's ability to fight.

In this expression:

“‘We'll work like bees, and love it too, see if we don't,' said Jo. 'I'll learn plain cooking for my holiday task, and the dinner party I have shall be a success.'”

The main character “Jo” did not know how to cook but she wants to improve herself. Also, always her mother gave her motivation to challenge her bad attitudes.

Conclusion

Louisa May Alcott used writing to present the social issues during the 19th century. She is known by the sensation novels to express her feelings. LMA shares her experiences in the life with the reader through the literary works. So, in this chapter; we

get sight to Alcott's life as a woman and as a female writer lived in the nineteenth century. LMA's "*Little Women*" gives a clear description to the female characters and tries to reach the reader a message through the hidden side of the characters from their names and behaviors.



General Conclusion

“Little women” is a form of literature which is very popular. The novel is a story about daily life of four sisters (Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy) lived with their mother. The family faced different difficulties during their growth to become women. Each one of them has its own personality. The novel teaches us a lesson about female independence against poverty. Also, teach us about the love of the family and duties, in addition to be responsible.

The childhood is the most important period which helps to determine the personality of the child. So, the four teenagers grow up strong because they guided by their mother and by the motivation and message of their father.

The story is told by the third person point of view (omniscient) which help the author informs the actions of each character and gives more explanation.

The literary analyses of the novel show the common similarity in the author and the main character of the novel “Jo”. So, the novel is reflecting the life of Louisa May Alcott. It is full of struggles and the difficulties of women.

In order to explore the position of women in the American society and to portrayed the female. The novel of *Little women* by Louisa May Alcott represent that.

The typological literary analyses of the novel is coding with the feminist issues which help to deduce the hidden meaning and the position of women.

On the other hand, the answers of the previous questions were guided by three chapters. Through the feminist theory, it characterized between the male and female, and shows the oppression through the explanation of the characters in the literary text.

LMA shows in the novel character that is resemble her personality.

Abstract

The objective of this study is to represent and give a picture about women in the American literature during the nineteenth century from a feminist perspective. The study describes the image of women in the novel of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Louisa as a female writer highlights the female characters towards different status of life during the Civil War in America. So, the structure of this investigation study is depending on three chapters. The first chapter which is the theoretical part and it is about the feminist literary school. It came to analyse the social, economic and political problems which include the image of women and their oppression, to take a general view about the theory especially when we know that the feminism came as a reaction to another theory. The second chapter is about the historical background of the nineteenth century American literature. And the last chapter is the analytical study of the literary text and its relation to the theory school.

Key words: Feminism, Female, Characters, American literature, Oppression.

ملخص الدراسة

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تمثيل وإعطاء صورة عن المرأة في الأدب الأمريكي خلال القرن التاسع عشر من المنظور النسوي. دراستنا تتمحور حول رواية "نساء صغيرات" للكاتبة لويزا ماي ألكوت. الكاتبة سلطت الضوء على الشخصيات النسائية في مجالات مختلفة من الحياة وهذا من خلال الحرب الأهلية في أمريكا. لذلك قمنا بهيكل هذه الدراسة الاستقصائية الى ثلاثة فصول. الفصل الأول وهو الجزء النظري والذي حولنا فيه القاء نظرة عامة عن المدرسة الأدبية النسوية. وقد جاء لتحليل المشاكل الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية التي تشمل صورة المرأة والاضطهاد الذي تتعرض له. ولأخذ نظرة شاملة حول النظرية خاصة عندما نعلم أن النسوية جاءت كرد فعل لنظرية أخرى. يتناول الفصل الثاني الخلفية التاريخية للأدب الأمريكي في القرن التاسع عشر. والفصل الأخير هو الدراسة التحليلية للنص الأدبي وعلاقته بالمدرسة النظرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظرية النسوية، الشخصيات الانثوية، الشخصيات، الادب الامريكي، الاضطهاد

Résumé

L'objectif de cette étude est de représenter et de brosser un tableau des femmes dans la littérature américaine au XIXe siècle dans une perspective féministe. L'étude décrit l'image de la femme dans le roman *Little Women* de Louisa May Alcott. Louisa en tant qu'écrivaine, met en évidence les personnages féminins vers des statuts de vie différents pendant la guerre civile en Amérique. Ainsi, la structure de cette étude d'investigation repose sur trois chapitres. Le premier chapitre qui est la partie théorique et il s'agit de l'école littéraire féministe. Il est venu analyser les problèmes sociaux, économiques et politiques qui incluent l'image de la femme et son oppression, d'avoir une vue générale sur la théorie surtout quand on sait que le féminisme est venu en réaction à une autre théorie. Le deuxième chapitre porte sur le contexte historique de la littérature américaine du XIXe siècle. Et le dernier chapitre est l'étude analytique du texte littéraire et sa relation avec l'école théorique

Les mots clés : Théorie féministe, Personnages féminins, Personnages, Littérature Américaine, Oppression

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