

# Louisa May Alcott in Conversation with Margaret Fuller; Transcendentalist Feminism and Jo

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# Overview

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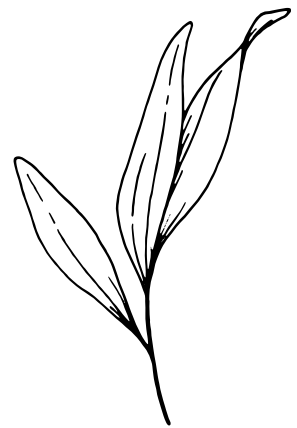
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Louisa May Alcott is influenced by Margaret Fuller's Transcendentalist Feminist Philosophy regarding gender roles, male-female friendships, and marriage. This is then reflected in *Little Women* through Jo's character and relationships.

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# Louisa May Alcott's Upbringing

- Her father, Bronson Alcott, was a notable Transcendentalist
- Raised as an "experiment"
- Moved to Concord
- Lived amongst and was educated by other Transcendentalists and writers



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisa\\_May\\_Alcott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisa_May_Alcott).



# Margaret Fuller's Philosophy

- Fluidity of gender roles
  - "no man is wholly masculine and no woman is fully feminine" (728).
- Positive male-female friendships
- Egalitarian Marriage
- Relationship with self
  - "Happy Women," Louisa May Alcott



<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/on-margaret-fuller-and-woma>

# Jo Character Analysis

- Jo holds traditional masculine qualities and interests
  - "a girl who is rapidly shooting up into a woman, and didn't like it" (6).
  - Evolves through the novel
- Passion for education
- Gains independence through writing
- Wishes to never marry

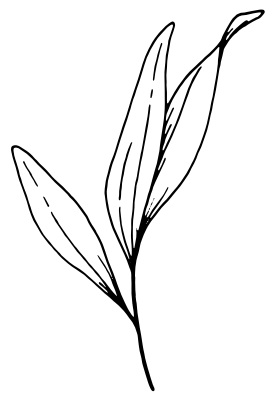


[https://littlewomen.fandom.com/wiki/Jo\\_March](https://littlewomen.fandom.com/wiki/Jo_March).



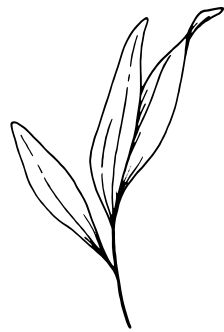
# Jo and Laurie

- Laurie holds traditionally feminine qualities
- Complement each other
  - "she seemed to understand the boy almost as well as if she had been one herself" (57).
- Egalitarian friendship
  - Demonstrates value in friendship that does not end in marriage



# Jo and Professor Bhaer

- Professor Bhaer holds authority above Jo
- Confusion
  - "Was it self-pity, loneliness, or low spirits? Or was it the waking of a sentiment which had bided its time as patiently as its inspirer? Who shall say?" (449)
- Jo does not continue writing and loses her independence

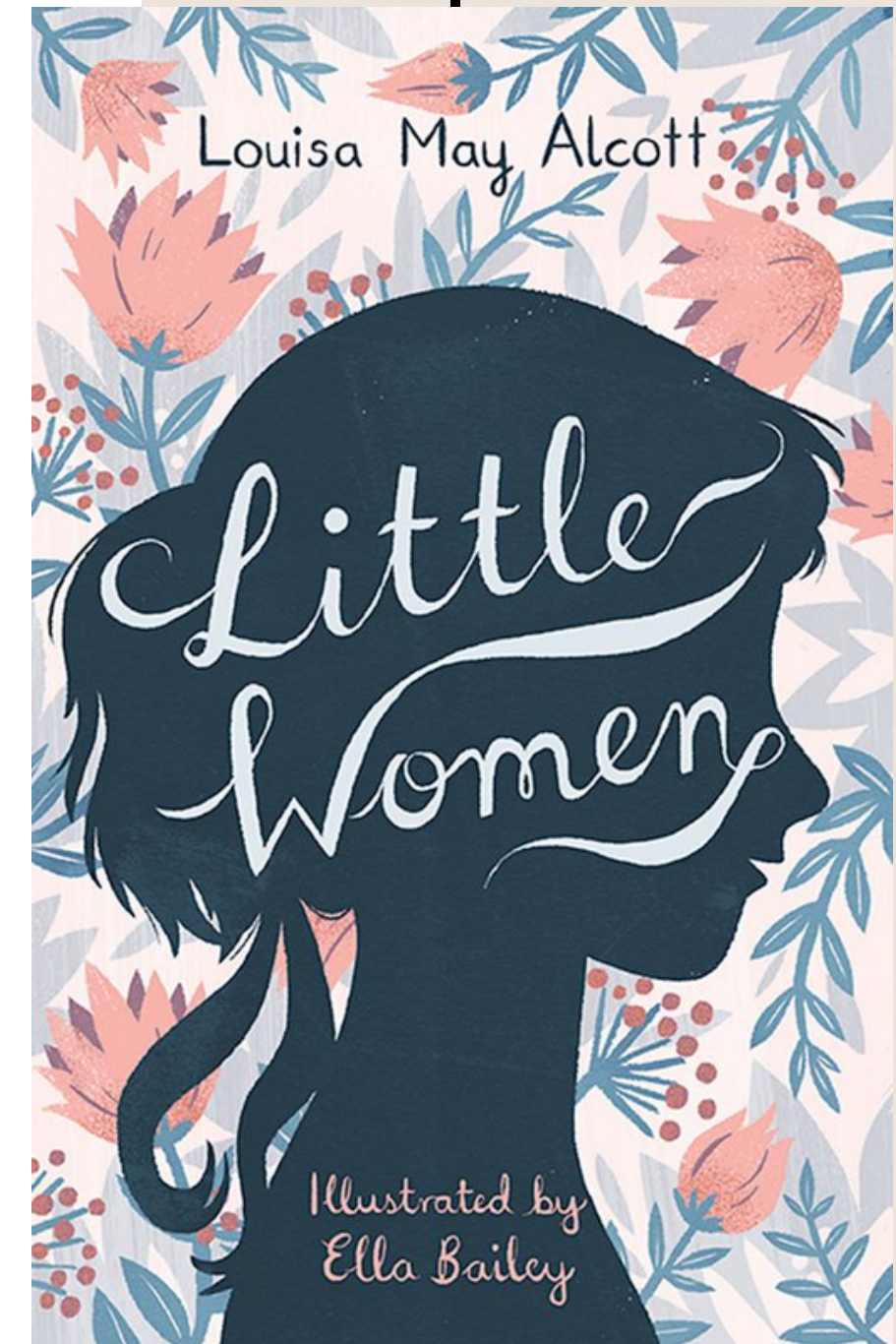


<https://www.indiewire.com/2018/05/little-women-jo-laurie-bhaer-change>



# Conclusion

- Louisa May Alcott was influenced by Margaret Fuller's Transcendentalist Feminist Philosophy
- Alcott demonstrates value in friendship
- Marriage to Professor Bhaer is a cautionary tale
- Push against societal gender roles and relationships between men and women during the First Wave of Feminism in America



<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/little-women-97818474958>

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Questions?