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**Western society and expectations of women:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of two texts from Little
Women (2019) and Barbie (2023)**

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Alla mia mamma e al mio papà.

Vi voglio bene.

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INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation presents the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of two texts from two different movies, namely *Little Women* (2019) and *Barbie* (2023). The present investigation aims to identify the presence of implications and presuppositions within the two texts and to see how these, and consequently the elements that can be found during the analysis, can be connected to the context in which they are included, hence the Western socio-cultural context. In particular, the present dissertation focuses also on how the results of the CDA correlate to nowadays Western society and culture. Hence, a specific questionnaire was created and administered to people online primarily using social media.

The existing literature that specifically addresses the expectations placed on women in Western society seems scarce, except for studies exploring the connection between gender, language and discourse, such as Bucholtz (2003), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), Livia (2003) and McElhinny (2003). This study has been an opportunity to further analyse, in a more profound and concrete way, how texts and discourse can be closely linked to the contexts in which they are situated and, therefore, to reality. In particular, the analysis of these two texts provided an insight into the connection between discourse and social issues related to women. Furthermore, having texts with such different settings, one being set in the 19th century and the other in the present day, made it also possible to observe how these issues have evolved over time.

The first part of the dissertation revolves around the illustration of the methodology. As already mentioned at the beginning of the Introduction, a Critical Discourse Analysis is carried out to investigate the two texts. In particular, in the present dissertation the methodological tool provided by Norman Fairclough (1995, 2003) is used, as broadly explained in Chapter One. The Critical Discourse Analysis approach was chosen for the present investigation because it represents a unique tool to analyse the connections between discourse and real contexts. Hence, it can be assumed that a text and the socio-cultural context in which it is produced, shared, used and consumed are strictly intertwined with each other. CDA, in particular, also can be very useful to highlight the socio-cultural issues that might be hidden in a determined

text and, therefore, it can help revealing certain dynamics embedded in discourse and that are related to real problems in a certain society.

Chapter Two focuses on the critical analysis of the first text under investigation. It is a very brief monologue delivered by Florence Pugh as Amy March in *Little Women* (2019). After a thorough presentation of the authoress of the original book, Louisa May Alcott, and the description of how the original story was then developed and transformed in many other projects throughout the decades, the possible implications and presuppositions present in the text are analysed in detail. Every assumption regarding such elements was supported by examples and in some cases also by other research.

Chapter Three of the present dissertation follows the investigation of the longer monologue taken from *Barbie* (2023). The monologue was delivered by actress America Ferrera, who played the human Gloria in Gerwig's movie. Greta Gerwig and her works are briefly presented at the beginning of the chapter, with a special focus on the film from which the monologue under analysis is taken. In this regard, the phenomenon of "Barbenheimer" is addressed and also the history of how the iconic doll was created and developed by *Mattel* is described. Following the summary of the film's plot and the role of feminism in it, there is a detailed analysis of implications and presuppositions, again supported by examples and other sources.

Chapter Four revolves around the presentation and discussion of the questionnaire. This was created ad hoc for the present dissertation, both in Italian and in English, in order to reach as many people as possible, overcoming in this way any language related problems. The questionnaire was shared online, mostly via Instagram and WhatsApp on August 1st and the responses were collected for approximately two weeks, up until August 14th. The respondents to the survey were in total 140. The participants include both women and men of various age and professions. Having such variety within the survey's sample allowed us to better investigate how the possible connection between speech, language and context is actually perceived in reality. It also made it possible to analyse whether and how the monologues investigated here are truly related to the Western socio-cultural context, allowing us to better understand the results found during the analysis of the implications and presuppositions seen in chapters two and three. The questionnaire, both the Italian version and the one in

English, can be found at the end of the present dissertation, in the Appendix Section.

The final chapter of the dissertation, Conclusions, summarises what has been found out through the thorough and detailed analysis of the two texts under investigation and how these are connected to the results received from the questionnaire. Moreover, it is explained how these various results can be connected to the Western socio-cultural context and some suggestions for possible future research are provided.

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology

1. General introduction to methodology

As mentioned in the Introduction, the present dissertation concerns the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of two distinct texts. Both are taken from films written and directed by Greta Gerwig; the first and briefest one is taken from *Little Women* (2019) and the second one from *Barbie* (2023). In particular, the current paper focuses on the possible implications and presuppositions that can be found in the monologues. It also aims to investigate the connection that may exist between these factors and nowadays Western society, and it tries to do so also using a questionnaire, specifically created to explore if people actually perceive what results from the critical analysis of the concerned monologues. Hence, the research questions guiding this investigation are as follows:

1. Are there particular presuppositions and implications in these texts? If so, might they be related in general to nowadays society or do they only refer to the world depicted in the movies from which the monologues are taken?
2. Do people perceive as possibly true what emerges from the critical analysis of the texts in question and the possible implications and presuppositions they may present?

The premise of CDA is that it is somehow concerned with social problems that can be discovered in discursive practices. Indeed, close connections can be found between a text, its elements, and the socio-cultural context in which this text is produced and/or delivered. Thus, content and context are likely to be intertwined and to be representative of how, for instance, discourse can be shaped by specific social groupings or social and cultural constructs. Sometimes this might lead to also constraining people's knowledge, understanding and beliefs.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) encompasses several theoretical frameworks that guide researchers in examining the intricate relationships between language, power and society. The analysis of the monologues here concerned is based on the

methodological tools provided by Fairclough (1995,2003). Therefore, the present paper represents primarily a qualitative and critical discourse analysis. This means that the discussion of the data collected and of the consequent results are the outcome of critical interpretations of the primary sources from which the data were collected.

1.1 Fairclough's framework

Norman Fairclough's (1995) model represents the foundational framework in the field. It is a useful tool to expose the links between discourse and society related constructs, leading the analysis from a more general point of view to a more detailed one and investigating the connections between discourse and society and patterns that can be found in a specific text. In doing so, the methodological toolkit based on Fairclough's work also guides the researcher in the analysis of the 'voices' present in the discourse and the power dynamics that are hidden within it. Nonetheless, it also permits to investigate eventual linguistic patterns that can be found in a text.

More specifically, Fairclough's framework is based on the interrelationship between three dimensions: text, discourse practice and social practice. Each dimension will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

1.1.1 Text

Fairclough (1995) provides different definitions for this notion. In Fairclough (1995: 4) he explains that in general the word "text" is simply understood to refer to a written language, that for example might be found in a novel, poem and so on. However, within the field of discourse analysis, this word has gained a far broader meaning, including also the spoken dimension. This means that also the words used during a conversation can be considered "text", just spoken instead of written. Nevertheless, this definition needs to be surpassed by the comprehension of this concept in a multi-semiotic view. In fact, Fairclough (1995: 4) affirms that "texts in contemporary society are increasingly multi-semiotic; texts whose primary semiotic form is language increasingly combine language with other semiotic forms. Television is the most obvious example, combining language with visual images, music and sound effects."

Moreover, Fairclough tries to underline the importance also of noticing what he calls the "texture" of a certain text, which means that it is important not only to

consider the content but also the form and the organization of the content and the text. Both content and text may be useful while conducting socio-cultural research. This is not only with regard to what is present in the text, but also to identify what is actually missing, i.e., while sharing a certain topic, whether all information is provided or whether some data is left out with a specific strategy in mind and, in case this other information is present somewhere in the text, it is important to consider how it has been included.

Furthermore, it must be noted that sometimes texts show the presence of information that is only sort of present, or as Fairclough (1995: 5) says, “a sort of halfway house between presence and absence.” He calls this kind of information implicature, or **implications**.

Presumptions can also be included in Fairclough's definition to a certain extent, since they too are information that is not given openly, but their nature is slightly different from that of implications'. More specifically, Fairclough defines them as part of information that is not explicitly stated, but that can be inferred by the listener or reader of the text. Thus, presuppositions can be regarded as common knowledge that is not included in the text and that the reader or listener can simply summon up on their own.

Both implications and presuppositions are central to the present paper, since these nuances of information represent a precious tool to discover what kind of information is ‘taken as given’, i.e. what is normally considered as real or true, but without, in this case, openly explicating it. Consequently, implicit information can be considered as a guide for better understanding the ideology of a group of readers for instance. Fairclough explains that texts are impregnated with social processes, that do not only concern the cognitive sphere and the mental representation of the world, but social interactions as well. Therefore, texts are social and multilayered spaces, and it is the way in which discourse becomes an effective social practice. Thus, while analysing a text, a researcher must keep in mind what role the text can cover under a sociocultural point of view.

Texts are the instruments through which language can represent certain social struggles for instance. Fairclough (1995) gives some examples of how a text can include social matters and differences, echoing the work of Billig (1988). On the

concept of ideological dilemmas, Billig (1988, cit. in Fairclough, 1995: 7-8) says what follows:

[...] with respect to the ideational function, people deal textually with contradictions or differences in beliefs, knowledges and representations. With respect to the interpersonal function, texts negotiate social relations between people in circumstances of doubt or contestation, and people attempt to work out textually, in their use of language, the dilemmas they face in defining their own identities.

1.1.2 Discourse practice

When talking about discourse practice, we refer to the way in which individuals use any social, and cultural, resources available to them while they engage in any discursive event, such as discussing a text, creating it or interpreting it. In simpler terms, people involved for instance in the creation of a text rely on the social and cultural tools at their disposal. These tools are directly connected to how the text is structured and organized, which means, as Fairclough (1995: 10) says, that discursive events are “dependent upon and shaped by them.” The action that directly connects text and discourse practice is the intertextual analysis, that permits to uncover the connections between a certain text and all the social and cultural tools on which the author of the text relies on.

The discourse practice concerns also the use of these tools in order to create a certain type of text that conforms to a specific domain and that can be use in a certain context. In this regard, intertextual analysis might be useful to ascertain which domain a text concerns, on the basis of the socio-cultural tools that are used by the author. Employing these social and cultural traits, the text somehow represents also the historical side of a discursive event. The texts reproduce the history related to a certain discourse event and domain, showing also the continuity of discourse events with the past, as also explained by Fairclough (1995: 11).

As Fairclough mentions, other approaches to critical discourse analysis do not focus on this dimension. For instance, much research tries to focus on how social categories, especially those who are not directly referred to in a text, can be left out of

the intertextual analysis and from CDA in general. An example in this sense is Schegloff's research (1992, cit. in Fairclough, 1995: 11), briefly illustrated by Fairclough. Here some principles regarding social categories are theorized and that can be summarised by saying that social categories should be included in the analysis, but only if it is clearly recognized by the participants as relevant and has a significant impact on how the text is structured or organized.

Fairclough does not agree with the conceptualization of social categories in this sense. In fact, he tends to recognize their importance and utility in the analysis of a text and of social structure, even when they are not openly relevant for the participants in the communicative event and do not clearly influence the structure or organization of the text investigated. In fact, while analysing a text, the category of power can be useful to better understand dominance relations during a communicative event and, together with the category of ideology, it can be used to comprehend how people choose among practices in a particular event. This because, both ideologies and power relations can be represented in a discourse, more or less indirectly, and these representations might also lead to a better comprehension of how social struggles work. It should not be forgotten that these aspects are under constant process of change, reflecting the socio-cultural change and contributing to it to some extent.

1.1.3 Social practice and the concept of power

This is the last of the three dimensions on which Fairclough's framework is based. This dimension of the framework tries to understand how this mutual influence occurs and, to be more specific, it tries to explain how discourse concurs in the representation and, in some cases, maintenance of power relations and ideologies. Nonetheless, Fairclough (1995) reports, some researchers criticise the dominant ideology thesis". According to this theory, dominant ideologies maintain the social order gaining consent and being accepted by the majority of people in society. In addition to that, another example of critique that is made against the notion of ideology and its connection to discourse and texts, is forwarded by Baudrillard (1988) as explained by Poster (1988, cit. in Fairclough, 1995: 16) and Norris (1992, cit. in Fairclough, 1995: 16). This researcher underlines how the difference between reality and image is not visible anymore, especially in postmodern times. However, as valid as this non-

existent difference can be, many researchers consider Baudrillard's intuitions regarding certain tendencies as generalized to the concept of society as a whole, as also reported by Eagleton (1991, cit. in Fairclough, 1995: 17). Nonetheless, Fairclough illustrates how in general the concept of ideology seems to have a depreciative meaning, even when it is in fact taken as a synonym of worldview, as in Thompson's research. This pejorative view of the term seems to be connected to its role as an instrument to represents social relations of power.

Regarding discourse and language, as already mentioned, social aspects are considered playing a major role in communicative events and, in general, in the creation and analysis of a text. However, as seen in the previous paragraph, this concept, and more specifically the concepts of power and ideology, still seem to be the centre of debate. In general, Fairclough seems to sustain that socio-cultural structures have an influence on discourse, and, at the same time, they are influenced by it. Moreover, the concept of ideology, would be de facto instrumental to represents how these structures work and it would be directly connected to the concept of power relations. These latter are to be considered in the sense of asymmetrical relationships, in which domination is also included, as mentioned in Fairclough's (1995) work.

The roots of the strict bond between power, domination and ideology are to be traced back to Marxist theories. In these, power is usually intended in the sense of class power, and it is also investigated the dominance and the use of its power by the state on behalf of a certain social class. Also in this case, ideology is the way in which this class and the state secure their dominant position, e.g. regarding ethnic groups and minorities, but also with regard to gender relations. However, as Fairclough (1995: 18) explains, ideologies and their mechanisms should not be seen as fixed, unchanging and deterministic. Ideologies and their use represent what is called a "struggle". Thus, they represent a constant conflict, in which there is an endless shifting of positions and alliances among the participants, that include not only the dominant social classes but also every other social group (i.e. feminists, people part of the LGBTQ+ community and ethnic minorities).

Regarding the notion of power, also Van Dijk (2001) tried to theorize the role and impact that the concept can have in the field of CDA. As Fairclough, he connects power to social groups and institutions. Moreover, Van Dijk (2001: 354-355) connects

this concept to the notion of control, and he adds that, consequently, “groups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups.” He also adds that to exercise some form of control over another group, the ruling class is assumed to have one, or more, elements forming a ground base for their control, for instance money, a specific status, fame or they can also use different forms of discourse (which includes not only content but also its structure). Hence, depending on the ways in which it is exercised, different forms of control between social classes arise. This means that there are different ways to represent the struggle at the basis of which lies power, as Fairclough also described it. Controlling power, these dominant classes uses and at the same time control discourse too. Van Dijk (2001: 355) adds to this matter: “those groups who control most influential discourse also have more chances to control the minds and actions of others.”

Furthermore, Fairclough and Van Dijk seem to agree also on the importance of the context in relation to discourse and power relations. However, Van Dijk, as in the rest of his framework regarding discourse analysis, insists on explaining the role of contexts connecting it with cognition. He, in facts, defines contexts as a mental representation of the social situation in which a certain discourse is concerned. Therefore, there seems to be a sort of distance between the social power relations and their representation through language and discourse. In the study conducted by Van Dijk these two dimensions seem not to be directly connected, but rather in need of a mental representation to really be seen in relation with one another.

1.2 The gender issue in CDA

The role of gender in studies regarding sociolinguistics gained more importance in the last decades also thanks to the work of feminist researchers. They found that it was necessary to revalue the role of women and their experiences also in these disciplines, with the objective to modify current conceptual models and paradigms, as already happened in other research fields, such as history and literature. In doing so, feminist scholars do not forget, however, that other disciplines also influence the wide research department of sociolinguistics. In fact, in her study McElhinny (2003: 22) argues that “the fundamental feminist category of ‘gender’, as implemented in sociolinguistics,

has often included certain political and social assumptions.” This might be useful to understand how language and, more specifically, language used in gender concerned discourse, might, even in an indirect way, represent conceptual structures and ideologies built by political and social groups.

The correlation between the concept of gender and discourse interested many scholar and different approaches were used to try and highlight the connection between these two notions and thus to investigate the relation between language and culture. In particular, Bucholtz (2003: 43-68), introduces two frameworks that consider the importance of the interconnection between language, culture and discourse and that contributed, although in different ways, to the study of gender: the ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics.

In the first case the study of language and culture is conveyed with the use of the ethnographic method, focusing on the perspective of the people part of the culture under analysis and not on the one of the anthropologists. Consequently, the way of speaking of members of a specific culture are analysed, including the cultural meaning hidden behind their use of language in certain situations and contexts. However, this can lead to generalisations, since speakers are considered at that point primarily as “cultural actors”.

On the other hand, interactional sociolinguistics focuses on emphasizing the contact between languages and cultures and its consequences. It does not consider only one specific cultural framework; thus, it concerns the use of language more heterogeneously, as explained by Bucholtz (2003: 48-50). For example, it takes into consideration also the contact between different cultural and linguistic groups that are, nevertheless, part of the same society. This implies that also the use of language between a stronger majority towards a minority may be accounted for.

In general, what can be perceived by Bucholtz’s research (2003), is that research regarding the analysis of the gender in discourse concerned more the representation of the female gender in texts through morpho-syntactic expedients. While the ideologies regarding the position of women stayed hidden within the discourse, but without being paid much attention to at the beginning and women are apparently not seen as real agents in the construction of discourse. The female role is as consumer or direct subject of discourse (Bucholtz, 2003: 58). Moreover, as also Bucholtz (2003: 58) states,

“critical discourse analysis does not usually investigate readers' relationships to such texts, it is not clear whether the potential effects of the discourse that the analyst identifies are in fact the effects experienced by the text's consumers.” An attempt to demonstrate this is also part of the present essay. This has been an objective of feminist text analysis for many years, since this current, unlike others, tried not only to show how gender is portrayed in texts but also how readers of such texts may remain tangled in the imaginary depicted in what they are reading or hearing and so on. Bucholtz (2003: 56) also mentions how feminist text analysis also tries to explain how, thanks to more awareness, readers might be able to resist the gender representations and embedded ideologies that indirectly influence them through texts.

Many researchers involved in this kind of analyses of discourse, brought forward the use of hidden assumptions about female gender in advertising for example, but also in literature and even poetry. These studies drew attention on the fact that in these kinds of texts, which are mainstream, women are mostly displayed, as Bucholtz (2003: 56) affirms, “as objects of heterosexual desire and violence”, representative of a more widespread belief regarding power roles in society. Is it specified, however, that this is only one of the many interpretations that can be given to these texts. In addition, Mills (1998, cit. in Bucholtz, 2003: 56) underlines that it may be the very influence of feminism in recent decades to be the deterrent that makes such demonstrations of sexism, which nevertheless remain in mainstream texts, less visible.

Feminist analysis of discourse is deeply connected with CDA. In fact, also Bucholtz explains how many research studies of this topic contributes not only to one field but also to the other. Livia (2003) illustrates two main approaches that were chosen by linguistics to research the gender issue specifically in literary texts. The first one focuses on the author of a text and their gender, identifying in some way two different writing styles, one ascribable to men authors and a different one to women. This approach implies that gender is directly connected to the author or authoress of the text and their cultural identity. On the other hand, the second approach focuses more on how gender is represented in literature in terms of linguistic forms, namely the linguistic gender.

In the case of the former, Virginia Woolf tried to make clearer the difference between a masculine writing style and one, on the other hand, referable to an authoress.

She does so by analysing a writing by Dorothy Richardson and, more specifically, Woolf focuses on the use of pronouns and relative referents in passages where the authoress used the interior monologue. This narrative technique, as explained by Livia (2003: 143), “has the property of breaking down the boundaries between character and narrator.” This means it allows the reader to be transported directly into the mind of the character, without the clear filter of a narrator. Hence, an assumption might be made, which is as follows: a more feminine writing style to an also more introspective kind of writing. However, this assumption is too vague, as for Woolf’s attempt to explain this difference. Modern scholars try, in fact, to find more subtle differences, for instance Sara Mills tries to identify these differences between masculine and feminine writing styles in the way characters are described and self-descript. Nevertheless, as reported by Livia (2003), Mills (1995: 47-48, cit. in Livia, 2003: 144) conclude that “the concept of a female-authored sentence stems from overgeneralization on the part of the literary critic rather than from any inherent quality in the writing.” In general the debate on this particular approach is still very active. For many contemporary critics, there are some features that might be reconducted to women’s writing style, such as more complex sentences and an indefinite and evocative use of words. In addition, many scholars sustain that the content of a text might be sufficient to identify it as a product of a woman. Nonetheless, since no determinant proof has been given to demonstrate that women’s writing style is different and can be clearly distinguished by men’s one, these theories should not be considered in a deterministic way.

The second approach, as already mentioned, focuses more on the linguistic gender and its use in literature. Livia herself produced vast research using this approach while studying the question of gender in literary texts, focusing on textual cohesion, and the use of morphological and syntactic elements to better represent a certain focalization in the text or empathy. To summarise, she sustains that some morphological and syntactic elements, may be used also to express some personality traits or particular characteristics of characters in literary texts. Livia (2003), more specifically, investigate the role of linguistic gender also in relations to those categories of people that do not identify in a single gender. Thus, these might be more difficult to represent in literature if gender is in general considered only in a

deterministic and unflexible way, only following the traditional gender norms. These norms shows that linguistic gender is, in fact, a dualistic structure, but nowadays writers try new and creative ways to bypass this system (for instance non-gendered pronouns and other forms) and represent, in this way, also categories that do not identify in a single gender in terms of male or female (namely gender fluids, transsexuals, drag queens etc).

However, it must be said, that in the present paper the latter approach has not been taken into consideration, since the monologues under analysis do not present a challenge in terms of linguistic gender and gender identification. The former approach, on the other hand, might be useful not to identify a difference between male or female writing style but in terms of connection. It is possible to use this approach as a general guide to link the writer of both monologues, and also director of the movies from which they are taken, Greta Gerwig, to a specific style or at least a certain perspective on the socio-cultural contexts that she portrays in the movies and, especially, through her writing.

1.2.1 Female gender and the concept of power

As we have seen above, there has been made much research regarding the interconnection between language, discourse and gender. Lakoff's study (2003) tries to examine the interconnection and relationship between women and power, taking as examples three different institutions that characterise the American society and culture, namely academia, politics and the arts. As base for her research and as an introduction to this topic and complex dichotomy, Lakoff illustrates some examples of situations in which the difference between male and female gender is made visible and the connection between this distinction and the power is also underlined. In fact, Lakoff (2003: 161) reports that many researchers found in "power" the major responsible for the discrepancy between the behaviour and treatment of men and women, for instance Conley, O'Barr and Lind (1979) and Brown and Levinson (1986). All seems attributable to the old belief that men have more affinity with power than women. For men, seeking power seems to be a natural, while for women might lead to be considered as un-feminine and simply weird. Lakoff (2003) underlines as this conception of the relationship between power and the sexes, allows, de facto, a cultural

system to keep women away from power roles, included at a political level. If this belief is taken under consideration from an historical point of view, it might appear more evident how it had a major role in building not only a culture, but also a certain type of societal structure.

Lakoff (2003) also illustrates how language has also a role in reflecting and maintain this kind of stereotyped mentality. An example of this can be found in lexicon. Different lexical terms are used to identify and talk about a man with power and a woman with power, even if they are exhibiting the same, or at least similar, behaviour. Moreover, words with negative connotations, and that might be considered to be related to the semantic field concerning women, are used to describe instead men who apparently are not able to control “their woman’s” attitude or behaviour, for instance they get defined “henpecked”. However, there is not an equivalent for women who are not able to dominate “their man”.

The differences shown in this study, include also the expectations about how men and women are supposed to use the language. In this matter, Lakoff (2003:162) states as follows:

Men are expected to be direct, women indirect. While that distinction in itself does not necessarily create a disadvantage to women, it is the basis of a familiar double-bind. If a woman is indirect (i.e. a proper woman), she is variously manipulative or fuzzy-minded. If she is direct she is apt to be called a shrew or a bitch.

This entails that there is a drastic difference in the lexicon used to identify women’s and men’s behaviour. The language, as can be seen in the example proposed above by Lakoff, can even tend to be offensive when referred to women’s conduct. This concept was also illustrated to a certain level by a worldwide famous artist, Taylor Swift, in 2019, during a video interview for *CBS Sunday Morning*. In this interview she addressed the presence of sexist labels in the music industry, and she explained that a different vocabulary is used when referring to female artists than when referring to male artists. The singer and songwriter says, for example, that “a man does something: it’s strategic. A woman does the same thing: it’s calculated.” With this example Taylor Swift tries to underline how most of the time the difference in vocabulary takes a negative turn when referring to female artists. Although this is not an academic source,

it is nonetheless a valid argumentation that sustains Lakoff's research. Moreover, it is an useful example that can be helpful to understand the perspective of the general public, expressed in this case with the use of the media.

Many other examples were given by Professor Lakoff (2003) to show and explain the discrepancy existing in language between men and women, especially regarding the relationship that the two sexes have with power. These other examples include the role that the two genders cover in conversations and also how that are supposed to express emotions. Nevertheless, even if in some cases the female gender might seem somehow in advantage with respect to the men, with a more observing eye it is visible how, implicitly, women are in any case in disadvantage in terms of power.

However, for what concerns Lakoff's work, Sunderland (2006: 95) remembers us that she mostly used introspection to conduct her studies, which is part of the "Chomskyan" tradition. This implies that she used her own experience and her own speech, together with the ones of her acquaintances, as basis for her research. This led to her research being considered from a negative perspective in some cases, still in this paper was considered as an ulterior tool to reflect during the analysis of the two texts.

1.2.2 Implications and presuppositions in conveyed content

Professors Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) dedicated an entire chapter of their book to investigate how what people say can often, if not always, convey not only the meaning understandable only from the language features. They analysed how the content of a discourse is characterized by three different levels: what is linguistically encoded, which refers to what is affected and controlled by the language system (namely words and grammatical structures that are used), what is actually said, which implies connecting what is encoded to the context in which a text, for example, is produced, transmitted and interpreted. The last, and deeper layer concerning content, is what can be implied or inferred.

This last level represents the heart of the present paper, hence a brief but clear explanation is fundamental. Implications can add meaning to what is said. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 200) bring the example of "boys will be boys". This sentence is understood only thanks to implications hidden under what is said. This sentence is usually used to dismiss behaviours or attitudes that generally teenage boys or young

men show and that might be taken as inevitable or even natural for those categories. However, sometimes implications might be used in discourse as contradictions of what is said. Examples of this use may be some sarcastic statements.

It is to be said that implications are not always intentional and sometimes speakers who are made aware that they use implications may act as surprised, because they are not conscious of using them. Hence, in these cases speakers are not trying to make the hearers understand something more or different from which is actually said, but these implied meaning are anyway transferred to the people listening and receiving the content. In some cases this implied activity, unconscious or not, may lead even to embarrassing situations.

However, while talking about this last level concerning discourse's content, presuppositions are also included. These refers to those texts in which some information is implied but presented as common knowledge. Which means that the implications are something that speakers assume hearers know or are aware of. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet bring forward the topic of **gender** in this matter, asserting that it is common to find gender assumptions transmitted through presuppositions and implications. These help even more naturalizing gender stereotypes. The example used by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:205) is as follows:

An Internal Revenue Service representative is interviewing a married couple about their tax returns and directs all questions to the man, ignoring the woman. A guest compliments the woman of a couple on the delicious food that's just been eaten or on the beautiful window coverings.

Reading these examples, it is clear that the speaker assumes hearers are aware of some gender differences between man and woman in the managing of a household. From this statements it can be inferred that the man is responsible for the management the financial situation of his family, while woman's role is primarily connected to the domestic sphere (namely food and home decorations).

Nonetheless, it must be noted that presupposing is not always a bad thing. It is, actually, fundamental to be able to take things for granted on a community level. This is what permits people to share common background knowledge, which includes cultural and historical aspects. Without these elements, people would find themselves

completely isolated and outside of any kind of social community. However, one must be careful in using presupposition and take some things for granted that are, instead, stereotyped information.

1.3 Fairclough's framework as a tool for CDA

The present analysis was led following Fairclough's (1995) framework. As also reported by Janks (1997), Fairclough's explained how the three dimensions he presented in his model need different types of analysis, depending on the different aspect of a text being considered. While focusing on the mere text, namely the object of the investigation, one is supposed to proceed with a 'text analysis', or description, that not only concern the verbal aspects, but also any visual element involved. Furthermore, the researcher should take notice of the way in which the object of the analysis is received by people. Hence, it must be considered if the text is shared in written, visual or oral form and how it is consequently perceived and interpreted by the public, i.e. if it is read, viewed or listened to. This means that a 'processing analysis' should be carried out at this point. Ultimately, a 'social analysis' should be included, explaining the connection between the text and the socio-cultural context in which it is involved. Concerning this approach, Janks (1997: 329) states:

[...] it also requires you to recognise that the historical determination of these selections and to understand that these choices are tied to the conditions of possibility of that utterance. This is another way of saying that texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and that the processes of production and reception are socially constrained.

Hence, this approach permits to take into consideration the connections that a text has with the socio-cultural and also historical context in which it is used, produced and transmitted. It does so without forgetting the other aspects that characterize a text, namely the linguistic and verbal elements and how they are combined. It seems not important in which order the three different aspects of the analysis are carried out. However, it is fundamental for the CDA that all these three dimensions are considered and included in the investigation. This because they do not represent three distinct pieces of the text, rather they are inseparable and interconnected aspects that converge together in the in-depth analysis of a text.

Following Fairclough's framework and with the notions given by Prof. Janks and illustrated in the paragraphs above, the present analysis was carried out as follows: first, the monologues under analysis were read focusing only on the general meaning that was delivered through the linguistic and verbal elements¹. The global reading was then followed by a more critical one. The aim of this second reading process was to focus on the details and the different aspects that were meant to be analysed. Therefore, eventual implications, which means things that were not actually said in the monologue but whose meaning can be perceived anyway, were noted. The same was done with hidden presuppositions, namely things tacitly assumed and strictly connected to the socio-cultural context in which the monologue was born. During the reading session, the "voices" represented in the monologue were also considered, since they were believed to be strictly connected to the two focal point of the present paper, i.e. implications and presuppositions.

During the analysis, the presence of eventual patterns was also considered, in particular with the aim to make hypotheses about the power dynamics involved in the discourse and their connections to the context. Moreover, it was observed how the main information in the text was delivered, that is to say the directness with which information was delivered. In doing so, the use of pronouns was underlined and the presence of other elements that could, on the other hand, express uncertainty (for instance, the use of verbs such as 'could', 'might', 'may', 'should' etc.) was considered. Nonetheless, these verbal forms do not appear in the monologues under analysis, leaving the pronouns the power to give more certainty and decide the directness or indirectness of the discourse.

It was decided to use Fairclough's framework (1995) because of the particular prospective that it gave to the texts under analysis with respect to the socio-cultural context and, as a consequence, to its construct. The possibility to give more depth to the present investigation was considered too, since the monologues address significant social problems, such as the impossible society's expectations that women nowadays feel they must achieve. Furthermore, it depicts what kind of role women were supposed

¹ Although both monologues examined are part of film projects, no visual elements were considered during the text analysis. The focus of the present work was exclusively on the texts presented and not on their subsequent film representations.

to play in the Nineteenth century and it draws a comparison with the role that women have in today's Western society, creating a certain temporal continuum that represents how the role of the female figure has actually evolved over time.

CHAPTER TWO

Critical Discourse Analysis of a monologue from *Little Women* (2019)

2. Louisa May Alcott and *Little Women* (1868 - 1869)

As already mentioned in Chapter One and in the Introduction, the present dissertation investigates also a brief, but meaningful, monologue taken from Greta Gerwig's movie *Little Women* (2019). However, before proceeding with the analysis of that piece, it is necessary to present and analyse the original work that inspired that film, namely Louisa May Alcott's novel, and of the different versions that were made throughout the years is necessary.

2.1 Biography of the author and historical background

The American novelist Louisa May Alcott was born in 1832 in Georgetown, Pennsylvania, but she spent most of her life in Concord, Massachusetts, a place rich in history. In fact, as reported by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Concord-Massachusetts>), this small town in Middlesex County, together with Lexington, was the starting point of the American Revolution's military phase. This, in fact, started, with the Battle of Lexington and Concord in the April of 1775. In the following century, Concord was a vibrant cultural centre and Luisa May Alcott had the chance to make contact with other philosophers and literary figures of the time, such as the Unitarian pastor Theodore Parker, who was a fervent participant of the movement against slavery (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Theodore-Parker>).

Louisa May Alcott was born in a family deeply dedicated to literature, philosophy and passionate about social matters. Her mother, Abigail May (1800-1877), also known as "Abba", was known for her kindness and dedication towards the social causes she defended. She was, in fact, an advocate for slavery's abolition and a suffragist, as explained in both the official website of Orchard House (<https://louisamayalcott.org/abigail-may-alcott>) and in the National Park Service's

website (<https://www.nps.gov/people/abigail-may-alcott.htm>). From her marriage to Bronson Alcott, four daughters were born: Anna Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Sewall Alcott and Abigail May Alcott.



Figure 1: Louisa May Alcott, portrait by George Healy, circa 1870; preserved in the "Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association" collection, Concord, Massachusetts. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louisa-May-Alcott#/media/1/13467/8260>)

The figure responsible for L.M. Alcott education was her father, Amos Bronson Alcott. He was a teacher, philosopher and also a member of the Transcendentalist² group that rose in New England in that century. He directed his children studies both at home and at the Temple School in Boston, a school that he established in 1834 with the help of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. She was an American educator, also part of the transcendentalists' group, as explained by Cheever (2011: 6). However, this project had short life and closed in 1841. Nevertheless, the Temple School project was not the only failed project in the life of L.M. Alcott's father. As also discussed by Cheever (2011: 62-88), in 1843 he and his companion transcendentalist Charles Lane created a utopian community together, namely Fruitlands. However, their attempt to build an Edenic centre didn't succeed. Due to hunger, the cold brought by the winter, food shortages, illnesses and the growing discontent of the members of the community, the project completely failed towards the end of that same year. Bronson Alcott's failure led to a family crisis. The result was a growing distance between Bronson and his wife and children. As largely discussed by Cheever (2011: 62-88), in her biography of Louisa May Alcott, Bronson's experiment might have been a way to cope with the

² As explained by Encyclopaedia Britannica (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Transcendentalism-American-movement>), Transcendentalism is a movement of writers and philosopher active in New England during the 19th century. The members were adhered to a philosophical system of thought that believes in the intrinsic unity of the universe, the natural good of humanity, and the prevalence of intuition over rationality and experience to understand higher truths.

industrialisation process taking place in the United States at that time. His idea seems to have been to try and return to a simpler life, based on agricultural values. However, this project not only confirmed the end of an epoch in which these kinds of values were much more regarded, but also the beginning of a deep and painful fracture in the Alcott's family.

The time spent in Fruitlands and the difficulties that her family had to go through, forged Louisa and induced her to grow quickly. She started working very young in order to help her family, especially during the years they spent in Boston. As reported by Cheever (2011: 89-114), Alcott tried different professions during her years in Boston: she worked as governess, teacher, and also as seamstress. However, throughout her life she seems to have always taken pleasure in writing. When she was a child, she already enjoyed writing small poems and short stories, and at the age of 22 her first book, *Flower Fables* (1854), was published. In those years, she also had an important encounter with James T. Fields, an already established publisher, editor and husband of Alcott's second cousin, Annie Adams, with whom she lived for a brief period of time, as explained by the Historic Boston Inc. (<https://historicboston.org/louisa-may-alcotts-pot-of-gold/>). The meeting with this prestigious character did not go as she expected, though. Fields suggested that she should not think of becoming a writer and that she continued teaching instead, as also reported by Cheever (2011: 89-114) and in the Historic Boston Inc.'s article (<https://historicboston.org/louisa-may-alcotts-pot-of-gold/>). Nonetheless, his harsh criticism seems to have motivated the author, rather than discourage her. In the years that followed, in fact, Louisa May Alcott published several stories and plays, and some of these were supervised by James T. Field himself, as explained by Cheever (2011: 89-114).

Once again back in Concord, the Alcott's family bought their new place thanks to a loan from Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher, writer and long-time friend of the family. They named their new home Orchard House. This house became a refuge for the Alcott's family and, as stated by Cheever (2011: 116), this "was to be the family's final refuge, the place that would come to be the symbol of their family life and which still stands there at the bottom of the steep hill today." Orchard House is still today a popular destination for all those people interested not only in *Little Women's* (1868)

setting, but also in its author's life.



Figure 2: The home of Bronson Alcott and his family, including his daughter Louisa May Alcott, in Concord, Massachusetts, wood engraving, 1875.
(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Louisa-May-Alcott>)

Louisa May Alcott apparently devoted her life only to her family and her art. It is normal to compare her with one of the protagonists, and maybe the most known character of her book, Jo March. Cheever (2011: 117) describes Louisa May Alcott as a free spirit, who refused to marry. She is seen as a rebel that apparently transmitted these characteristics to one of her characters and was able to create a novel in which this simple girl find a way to take control of her own life. It must be added that, in the book Jo March's story ends with her marriage. However, Louisa had initially refused to finish the story like that. She had no intention of giving the idea that marriage was a happy ending, since she was well aware of the incorrectness of such assumption, as explained by Cheever (2011: 121).

Soon after they moved back to Concord, Louisa experienced different kinds of departure from her sisters. Lizzie Alcott and several other members of the family fell ill with scarlet fever, right before moving in Orchard House. However, while the other relatives gradually got better, Lizzie's heart started weakening more and more and she died in March 1898. Months after the death of Lizzie, Louisa's older sister, Anna, announced her engagement. Nonetheless, Cheever (2011: 120), reconstructing this family news from L.M. Alcott's journals, reports that this news was not received in a completely positive way by the author. She felt somehow betrayed by her sister, because Anna had decided to get married, which meant that she was going to leave her family to build her own one. Cheever (2011: 121) states: "Lizzie's death and Anna's engagement signalled the end of the Alcott family as Louisa had known it." This

statement by Cheever, it is hypothesised in the present dissertation, could be useful to give an idea of Alcott's idealisation of the concept of family. Traces of this idealisation might, in fact, be found or perceived in the March's story itself and in Gerwig's movie³. The marriage of one of the sisters and the death of another meant that two members of the Alcott family would no longer be part of the united family living in Orchard House.

Moreover, in the years that preceded the American Civil War, the Alcotts came into contact with an important representative of the abolitionist movement, John Brown. The passion with which Brown brought forward the fight against slavery, even with the use of force and aggressions sometimes, inspired Bronson and some of his companions transcendentalists and philosophers. Cheever (2011: 123) says, in fact, that "John Brown reflected the passion of the Alcotts and their friends, a passion that in their case had come from the very personal experience of helping frightened runaways to freedom." When John Brown was hanged in Virginia in December 1859, Louisa May Alcott, who was working and living in Boston at the time, was saddened by this news, as reported by Cheever (2011: 124-125).

In these same years, L.M. Alcott's career also reached a turning point. After one of her stories were published on the famous literary magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*, she started writing even more seriously and officially started working on her first novel, published years later with the title *Moods* (1864). This was a novel that, as reported by Cheever (2011: 126), was representative of the essence of the life in Concord, with preoccupations concerning love, family and marriage. During her first steps as a professional writer, Louisa May Alcott did not lose the support of her family, especially when she almost starved herself, because too focused on her job. Cheever (2011: 133) describes it as a sort of trance. This would be due to the fact that, while writing fiction, authors become so concentrated and so involved in the fictional world and lives they are creating, that it is almost impossible for them to redirect their

³ In one scene of *Little Women* (2019), Jo tries to convince her sister Meg not to marry Laurie's tutor and, instead, to run away with her and the sisters, in order to remain together. Seeing her attempt failing, she realises that that part of their life, childhood, is over, and it is Meg's marriage that formalise the end of it and the beginning of a new phase in the life of the March sisters. As can be seen in the original script of the movie written by Gerwig (2019: 93), and published online by Variety (<https://variety.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/little-women-by-greta-gerwig.pdf>), Jo says to Meg "I just hate that you're leaving me. [...] I can't believe childhood is over."

attention to the reality that surround them. However, there are some events that intact this delicate state between reality and fiction. For Louisa May Alcott, the news concerning the war were still worthy of her attention, otherwise completely ruptured by her novel.

The secession of the Southern states from the Union and the growing divisions concerning the slavery dispute, led to the outbreak of the American Civil War, which lasted four years, from 1861 to 1865 (<https://www.britannica.com/event/American-Civil-War>). The war started with the attack of the Confederate troops towards Fort Sumter in April 1861. The fort was under the control of the Union, at the time. Cheever (2011: 127-128) tries to describe the enthusiasm expressed by L.M. Alcott for the imminent conflict. She appears to have been a great sustainer of the Union. The author demonstrated a deep patriotism and would have even liked to fight, if only she had been a man. At the beginning of 1862, Louisa May Alcott began what was going to be her last job as a teacher. And when, at the end of the semester as a teacher, she found herself with nothing to do and the war still raging outside, she took the decision to become a Civil War nurse, as reported by Cheever (2011: 135). Soon she started working in a hospital in Washington D.C.

While working in the Union Hospital, Louisa May Alcott witnessed first-hand the horrors created by the war. Moreover, she experienced illness and pain herself. Cheever (2011: 135-163) explains:

Decoding the signs and symptoms of nineteenth-century medicine is not an exact science, but Alcott seems to have contracted pneumonia and then typhoid, a disease carried through the drains or water that has been infected with fecal matter. Her illness started with a cough and soon progressed to the high fevers and delusional fever dreams that are typical of typhoid. Then, as the pneumonia and typhoid resolved, her body was racked by the effects of the mercury poisoning caused by the doses of calomel medicine that the kind doctors provided her with every day in the hospital. Mercury poisoning is insidious, damaging the central nervous system, distorting the mental processes and causing muscle weakness, [...]

After a period of illness, and the arrival of her father, the doctors decided that she would be able to travel. But she was changed, her character and body had been

transformed by the months spent in the hospital. In the months that followed her return, L.M. Alcott started to get better and began also considering writing again. In 1863, *Hospital Sketches* was published. This was based on the letters she had written back home during her period as a nurse, and that had already been a success when published in the *Commonwealth*, an antislavery newspaper, as reported by Cheever (2011: 135-163). *Hospital Sketches* (1863) was such a success, that more and more publishers cultivated their interest in Louisa May Alcott's work.

In the years that followed, Alcott focused on her work and her career, as discussed in a particular chapter by Cheever (2011: 164-192). She travelled to Europe, visiting Paris and London. In the meantime, at home her family was oppressed by debts. After a period of sickness, also due to the pressure for finding a way to pay the family debts, she moved to Boston by herself, to focus more on her work. During the years she spent in the city, she was capable to sustain herself without recurring to teaching or sewing. She wrote stories for several magazines and newspapers, especially the illustrated magazine for children *Merry's Museum*. Cheever (2011: 193 - 220) states that "in her pieces for Merry's Museum, Louisa was finding a rhythm of writing that seemed to work well for children's stories." She became editor of his child's magazine, but she had to quit her post when she moved back to Concord for her family. Again in her family home, she started to write what would become her most successful novel, *Little Women* (1868).

When Alcott first presented her editor, Thomas Niles, with the first chapters of this new novel, he was not sure that the story of four simple girls and their family would be the right choice. As Cheever (2011: 193-220) explains, he was convinced that these characters and the story would be too boring and ordinary for the public. It was his niece that made Niles change his mind realise that Alcott's novel could actually sell well. As recounted by Cheever (2011: 193 – 220), the novel was published only four months after Louisa May Alcott began to work on it, with some illustrations made by her sister May. The original title was *Little Women: Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy*.

Suddenly Louisa May Alcott became famous and an affirmed writer. Both the first and second part of *Little Women*, published just one year after the first one, in 1869, were a success. Consequently, in the years that followed, the pressure to write more stories and books increased. In the two decades that followed, Louisa May Alcott

published several books. The novels under her own name include *Little Men* (1871), *Eight Cousins* (1874), *Rose in Bloom* (1876), *Jack and Jill* (1880) and *Jo's Boys* (1886). Her works include also a group of thrillers, that were first published using the male pseudonym A.M. Barnes, for instance *Behind a Mask* (1866), *Pauline's Passion and Punishment* (1862), as reported by Cheever (2011: 193 – 220).

However, as also Cheever (2011: 193-220) explains, her success did not protect Alcott's from health problems. The illness she had contracted during her period as a nurse came back again and again bothering her. Louisa May Alcott died the 6th of March 1888, only two days after her father, leaving behind her just her sister Anna and an enormous success.

2.2 The novel *Little Women* (1868 - 1869)

Little Women (1868 - 1869) was the first major success of Louisa May Alcott. The novel follows the story of the four March sisters: Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. At the beginning of the story they are still little girls, experiencing the end of their childhood, within the framework of the American Civil War. Their father is, in fact, far from home, he is a chaplain in the Union Army, and the four girls are at home with their mother (known throughout the book as Marmee). During the story the reader can follow the four sisters' adventures and experiences. These lead them to transition from childhood to adulthood, while also meeting other important characters, such as their young neighbour, Laurie Laurence.

The story and the characters that to this day still fascinate so many readers are thought to be inspired by the Alcott family itself. It is difficult, in fact, to not see the resemblance between Louisa May Alcott's private life and affections, and the characters of her book. The writer had three sisters. She was the second and most rebellious one. Her older sister, Anna, inspired the beautiful and responsible Meg, Beth March was built on the image of Lizzie Alcott, who also died when she was still young

because of a bad illness. And the little sister, May, who also illustrated the first edition of her novel with her artistic talent, became Amy March.

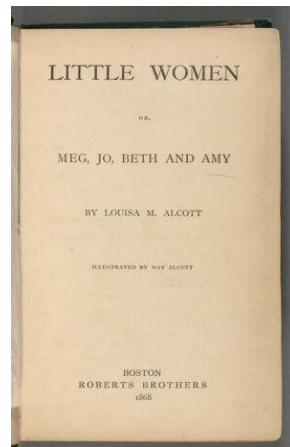


Figure 3: Title page of the first edition of the novel *Little Women* (1868). Harvard University, Houghton Library (<https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:30527536>)

However, Cheever (2011: 193 - 220) adds that even though the March family might be modelled on the Alcotts, the writer still takes some liberties creating a prototype of family that can only resemble her own, but it's not identical. This is the family she dreamed to have, without so many debts and economic difficulties, and with a less complicated father.

After the novel was published, the story of the four March girls was met with a huge success, as already mentioned in the previous Section. Many young women were eager to see how the story would continue. Thus, the Second Part followed in 1869, with the continuation of the story, in which we see the March girls entering and experiencing adulthood. In the First Part of *Little Women*, in fact, the reader assists to their going from childhood, with its small, but not less significant, problems to teenage years. Their growth is inserted in a framework that includes the news concerning the Civil War, signs of immigration, poverty, the problem of equality and other social issues.

Furthermore, several researchers conducted studies questioning whether *Little Women* (1868 – 1869) might be considered a feminist novel, or at least they tried to discover traces of feminism among the pages of L.M. Alcott's work. However, to better understand the presence of feminism in her novel, it is necessary to understand what the term "feminism" really refers to.

2.2.1 Feminism in *Little Women* (1868-1869)

According to the definition given by the Oxford Dictionary, a possible definition of the term “feminism” can be the following one: “Advocacy of equality of the sexes and the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex; [...]” (<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6092042326>). Moreover, as explained by Desmawati (2018), the feminist movement does not have a linear story; there are different waves of this movement, and each one of them refers to different social issues that female figures have to go through. Desmawati (2018: 92) describes these three waves in the following way:

The first wave in the late 19th and early 20th centuries pushed for political equality. The second wave, in the 1960s and 70s, pushed for legal and professional equality and the third wave, in the past couple of decades, has pushed for social equality.

What may be extrapolated by this brief explanation concerning feminism, is that, historically, women have suffered from the gender gap. This differentiation led to limitations for women regarding their opportunities in life and also certain expectations regarding their role within society. For instance, women might be expected to focus on domestic responsibilities, “while men held positions of power and authority”, as stated by Scott (2007, cit. in Putri and Nugroho, 2024: 2127). This gender gap and the societal expectations that can derive from it, have an impact on women’s position. From this short description, it can be said that the feminist movement tried, and still tries, to achieve an equality between genders that concerns every aspect of a human being’s life, namely a social, political and even economic equality.

Furthermore, in her study Desmawati (2018: 93-96) identifies not only the presence of feminism in Louisa May Alcott’s novel, but she was also able to subdivide these traces into different types of feminism. To be more specific on a group of 33 small passages taken by the novel, she could identify four kinds of feminism, namely liberal, existentialist, Marxist, and radical feminism. The latter is the least present in the data recovered by the researcher and it concerns the oppression of women on the basis of the belief that the female gender is biologically weaker and hence is also object of violence. Desmawati (2018: 95) explains existentialist feminism in these terms:

[...] existentialist feminism that stated woman must become a self, a subject who transcends definitions, labels, and essences. Jo always do anything in her way and also does not care about the words of others, in the 19th century the depiction of a woman is by using a long skirt and also her long hairstyle, but not for Jo, she is styled as she wants [...]

Marxist feminism concerns the conception of woman on the basis of her social existence, which is in main part defined by her work or profession. In *Little Women* (1868-1869) proof of this can be found in the situations in which the father of the March sisters is still on duty. Thus, he is not the breadwinner of the family anymore and someone has to replace him in this role. Jo March is the one who steps forward to cover that position (“I’m the man of the family now Papa is away.” (Alcott, 1869:13)).

Finally, the current of feminism that is most prominent is the liberal one. Desmawati (2018: 94) explains that this form of feminism concerns gender equality and the consequent liberation of women from “oppressive gender roles”, which led to many advances for the female figure, both in the economic and civil rights sectors, but also as far as self-fulfilment is concerned. The study reports a part of the story in support of this theory. In this part the March girls talk about the money they have earned, which could be used to buy some Christmas presents. The focus is on the fact that they earned the money they needed working really hard and, consequently, they want the freedom to use their own money to do something they want, fulfilling themselves and satisfying their personal wishes.

The element of the woman as a hard-working figure, is under analysis also in other research, which also includes an investigation of the presence of feminism in *Little Women* (1868-1869). In their study, Putra, Simanungkalit, and Hum (2020: 30-31) explain that when a literary work is under analysis, different approaches can be used: a sociological, a moral or even a feminist approach, which focuses on women’s rights. Their research focused on the image of women and the presence of feminism in *Little Women* (1868-1869). Based on their findings, Putra, Simanungkalit, and Hum (2020) were able to depict the image of woman that is mostly given in Louisa May Alcott’s novel. In many cases, evaluated by chosen pieces from the novels, the women in this story answer to the description of the hardworking woman. This kind of attitude

is also supported with sentences from the story that show both Meg's and Jo's commitment to rise the finances of their family, even if the job is not of their liking sometimes.

However, Alcott's novel is also the source of a debate that is still raging and may never find a single, deterministic resolution. This discussion might also make some people rethink their position regarding the feminist presence in the novel, viewing the story of the four March girls from a completely different perspective. Murphy (1990: 564) summarises the questions that can make this debate more understandable in this way:

Is *Little Women* adolescent sentimental, and repressive, an instrument for teaching girls how to become "little", domesticated, and silent? Is the novel subversive, matriarchal, and implicitly revolutionary, fostering discontent with the very model of female domesticity it purports to admire?

These kinds of questions lead the author of the present dissertation to wonder if feminism can be even considered a vague presence in Alcott's novel, or if it is just a well architected construction created by the writer in order to sell more books, fix her family's finances and survive, as also assumed by Fetterley (1983: 13).

Nonetheless, as Murphy (1990: 565) also affirms, "the novel does not permit rigid answers to these questions." Hence, the book itself cannot be seen in a unique, unflexible, and deterministic way. It is the patchwork product of different topics and nuances. Murphy (1990: 565) summarises this variety of critics that can be done to Alcott's novel saying that it "preaches domestic containment and [...] self-denial while it explores the infinity of inward female space and suggests unending rage against the cultural limitations imposed on female development." What might be presumed by this perspective on the intricate web of debates surrounding *Little Women* (1868-1869) is also that the critics themselves might be due to the subjective view of the story. This, in fact, can be seen under different points of view and, consequently, sparks numerous and various opinions on the topics that it concerns.

Furthermore, there is another way to consider Alcott's work and her position regarding feminism and the cultural situation that surrounded her and, in general, the female figure. This other perspective consists in envisioning this apparent Alcott's

submission to the established patriarchal view and structure, which culminates with Jo marrying Professor Bhaer, as a form of subversion towards the system, as also assumed by Keyser (1999: 137-150, cit. in Howe, 2001: 153-154). Keyser (1999) explains that Alcott, while showing how the perfect family is supposed to be, also depicts the sadness of dreamers having to renounce their own vision of life to settle for a position that follows the system's order. Hence, considering this, Jo marrying Bhaer would confirm her rendering to being a wife, rather than following her rebellious dreams to be a writer and maintain herself independently from a man.

2.3 Cinematographic adaptations of Louisa May Alcott's novel

Several adaptations of Louisa May Alcott were made, both in the shape of films and miniseries, but also television shows, ballets, musicals, opera, plays at Broadway and animated series. Since when the novel was published, people tried to bring the March sisters' story to life.



Figure 5: Japanese animated version of Little Women. Original title: "Ai no wakakusa monogatari", 1987.
(screenshot taken from: <https://www.imdb.com/it/title/tt0168283/>)



Figure 4: 1918 movie adaptation of *Little Women*. This silent movie is the first American adaptation of L.M. Alcott's novel. The first adaptation ever was a 1917 British silent movie. This, however, is considered to be lost.

(<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/specialfeatures/little-women-adaptations/#>)

In the present dissertation only the movie versions of the novel will be taken into account. In particular, the speech under analysis is taken by Greta Gerwig's film *Little Women* (2019). As far as movie adaptations are concerned, *The Hollywood Reporter* created a list evaluating *Little Women*'s major and most known adaptations, including both big and little screens examples, and ranking them from the best to the worst.

The most loyal to the novel, appears to be the movie released in 1994. This adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's book was directed by G. Armstrong. In her article, Bahr (2019) says about this particular movie: "It's a tender and traditional imagining, faithfully capturing the homey spirit of the novel [...]." (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/critics-picks-best-worst-major-little-women-adaptations-1263303/1-little-women-1994/>)

Armstrong's version stars Wynona Rider as Jo March, Claire Danes as Beth, Susan Sarandon as Marmee (the mother of the four girls), Kirsten Dunst as Amy, Trini Alvarado as Meg and Christian Bale as Laurie. Ryder even got a nomination as Best Actress at the Academy Awards for her interpretation of Jo's character. Moreover, the 1994 version of *Little Women* might be also considered special the novel's adaptations had never been directed by a woman until that moment and the choice fell on Armstrong. In an interview she states: "The big sell when they approached me was: A woman has never directed this story, one of the most important stories ever written by a woman." (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/12/movies/little-women.html>) At first, she refused to direct this movie. Nevertheless, Denise Di Novi, producer of the movie, persisted and in the end, Armstrong accepted the proposal.

As much as Ryder impersonation of Jo was hugely approved by the audience, journalist Bahr (2019) indicates Katharine Hepburn as having best represented the second March girl, namely the protagonist of the 1933 adaptation of the novel. Her performance is vigorous and boyish. However, the rest of the cast does not seem to live up to this protagonist, nor to the novel's characters. Nonetheless, the monologue under investigation in the present essay does not concern Josephine March.

The character delivering the monologue under analysis and taken from *Little Women* (2019) is Amy, the youngest March girl. This character is often underestimated by the novel's readers and also by the viewers of the various adaptations. This might be due to the fact that people usually tend to identify with Jo more, leaving the youngest sister and her personal growth in the shadows of their mind, as also explained by writer and blogger Bose (2020). However, as many other readers, she recognises the appeal exerted by Amy. Bose describes the character as she met her while reading the novel. She states that Amy is "the aspiring artist with a penchant for using big words and a strong desire to impress and be known." (<https://mspriyankabose.medium.com/amy-march-was-always-a-great-character-4b9bf0971793>) Moreover, Amy March is commonly known to be the most disliked among the four March sisters. This is also reported by *Stylist*'s journalist Yee (2019), who says that "fans have decried the youngest March sister as spoiled, bratty and naive." (<https://www.stylist.co.uk/life/little-women-amy-march-florence-pugh-best-sister-greta-gerwig/339469>) She adds that it is not difficult to see why so many people, readers and also fans of the adaptations, feel this way. The famous episode, which can be found in the very first chapters of the book, in which Amy steals Jo's manuscript and throws it in the fire out of spite is usually the moment in which the public starts to really dislike this character. And, as also explained by Bose (2020) the onscreen adaptations of Amy March did not modify this view of her character. According to Bahr (2020), the onscreen Amy proposed by Kirsten Dunst in the 1994 movie adaptation was the best, even though 12-year-old Dunst had to be substituted by the older Samantha Mathis in the second part of the movie.



Figure 6: Kirsten Dunst as Amy March in *Little Women* (1994), directed by G. Armstrong.
(<https://www.mycast.io/talent/amy-march-1994/images>)



Figure 7: Florence Pugh as child Amy March in Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019). In this scene, Amy burns Jo's manuscript.

(screenshot:

https://www.imdb.com/it/title/tt3281548/mediaviewer/rm3834742017/?ref=ttmi_mi_149)

One of the things that distinguishes Gerwig's movie from the other ones is the fact that the first time we see the March girls on the screen they are already adults. Gerwig's adaptation, in fact, distorts the temporal order of events as they are found in Alcott's novel and also in the other screen adaptations. The film and its plot develop through a sequence of flashbacks. It is a constant back and forth between the present, when the March sisters are already adults, and the past, when they were still in the prime of childhood. This is something that gives the fans the possibility to see Amy from another perspective right from the beginning of the movie. They do not meet her the first time, like Yee (2019) says, as a "spoiled, bratty and naïve", but as a young woman following her dream to become an artist and, at the same time, trying to find a husband. Yee (2019) adds: "With Gerwig's script and Pugh's bright and confident performance, Amy is given a depth that she has never had onscreen before." (<https://www.stylist.co.uk/life/little-women-amy-march-florence-pugh-best-sister-greta-gerwig/339469>)

Gerwig forces the audience to see Amy March in different terms. The growth of the character is clearly shown throughout the whole movie, adding details and statements that are not present in Alcott's original text. These additional parts, which also help the public to understand Amy's depth a little more, reach their peak with the monologue whose analysis is proposed in the present dissertation.

As reported by Putri and Nugroho (2024), Gerwig's adaptation of Alcott's masterpiece sets the feminist topics of the novel under a special spotlight. Moreover, the director does so by also providing a connection with the present context. Hence, she maintains the core themes of Alcott's story, showing the societal challenges that the four March girls must face during the story and that are characteristic of the 19th

century. However, the movie contains a sort of common thread with the issues that still touch the sphere of women's role in our society to this day. As Putri and Nugroho (2024: 2130) state, “Gerwig's *Little Women* provides a nuanced exploration of feminism that is both timeless and relevant in today's world.”

The 19th century is a period marked by many struggles and conflicts in the social field. Women were simply expected to become good wives, tend to their households, be good mothers. On the other hand, Alcott's tries to show the need for freedom that some women had. Josephine March is the epitome of the research and the longing for freedom and independence. She is determined to become a writer, and a successful one. As Putri and Nugroho (2024) explain, Gerwig translates this main characteristic of the rebellious March that readers can find in the novel and includes it in her movie. Gerwig shows the challenges that Jo has to face in order to achieve her goal, depicting also the situations in which Jo, as explained by Putri and Nugroho (2024: 2132), should “compromise her artistic vision to fit the industry's narrow expectations [...]” Jo asserts in more than one point that she has no intention of depicting women as “an appendage of a man.” (2024: 2132)

In the movie, Amy's character also shows this determination in becoming her best self in the artistic field. However, the girl is aware of not being an artistic genius, she does not have enough talent to become successful. In fact, in a scene Amy states: “Talent isn't genius” (Gerwig 1:03:57), a line that can be also found in Alcott's novel. Thus, she embodies the ambition, determination and hunger for more, while also being well aware of what her strengths are, her duties and what society expects from her, of what her family needs: her marrying a rich man. The development of this character in Gerwig's movie is different from the other adaptations and also from the novel itself. As already mentioned in the present Section, the audience first see Amy as an adult accompanying her rich aunt in Europe. She is already mature and understands how the world she lives in works. When the “child” Amy appears, Florence Pugh, the actress playing the character, shows a frivolous, spoiled and childish character, just like people passionate of the Alcott's novel knows her to be.

2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis of Amy's monologue in *Little Women* (2019)

The present dissertation aims to critically analyse a brief monologue delivered by Florence Pugh, who impersonates Amy March, in the movie *Little Women* (2019).



Figure 8: Poster of the movie *Little Women* (2019), directed by Greta Gerwig. Source: Pinterest (<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/124904589658716232/>)

The principal focus of the investigation is to discover the existence of any possible presuppositions and implications in the text under analysis. Furthermore, the present work assumes the connection between these aspects and the socio-cultural context women were confronted with in the 19th century, i.e. in the period in which the story is set, and also in the present day. Hence, using the methodological tool provided by Fairclough (1995, 2003) and extensively addressed in the first chapter, this dissertation has the objective to show how discourse can be really linked to the context of situation through the investigation of implications and presuppositions that can be found in the text. Examples taken from the original script will be provided in order to support this assumption.

The monologue under analysis is the following one, taken from the original script of the movie written by Gerwig (2019: 68-69), and published online by *Variety* (<https://variety.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/little-women-by-greta-gerwig.pdf>).

Well. I'm not a poet, I'm just a woman. And as a woman I have no way to make money, not enough to earn a living and support my family. Even if I had my own money, which

I don't, it would belong to my husband the minute we were married. If we had children they would belong to him not me. They would be his property. So don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is. It may not be for you but it most certainly is for me.

2.4.1 Background information

As indicated at the beginning of Section 2.4, the passage under investigation is taken from the movie *Little Women* (2019). The film was directed and written by Greta Gerwig and starred Florence Pugh as Amy March, Saoirse Ronan as Jo March, Timothee Chalamet as Theodore (Laurie) Laurence, Emma Watson as Meg March, Meryl Streep as Aunt March, Laura Dern as Marmee, James Norton as John Brooke and Eliza Scanlen as Beth March. The movie was mainly produced by *Columbia Pictures* and distributed by *Sony Pictures* (in Italy by *Warner Bros.*). It was first released in cinemas in the US on December 25, 2019.

As previously discussed in Section 2.3, Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) follows a plot that is different from the traditional story created by Louisa May Alcott. The narrated events follow a non-regular order. At the beginning of the film, the protagonists are viewed in their adult lives; one of the first scenes shows, in fact, Jo March running to a publishing house to have one of her stories published. While Jo lives in New York and is following her dream to become a successful writer, Amy is in Europe with their old and rich Aunt March, trying to fulfil her desire to become an artist, and, at the same time, she is looking for a husband. Meg, the oldest March sister, is already married and has two children, while Beth is still living at home, with their parents. The film and the plot go back and forth between the past and the present. By present, one means the timeline from the beginning of the film, i.e. when the March sisters are already adults. Whereas flashbacks recount their childhood and how they came to adulthood. The two timelines are reunited to form one at about the time when Beth dies and Jo begins to write her book, which tells the story of her family and sisters.

During the flashbacks, as already explained, the audience watches the four girls growing up, make experiences that help them develop their character traits and personalities, within the framework created by the difficult period in which the story is set: the American Civil War. Their father is at the front as a chaplain, and they live only with their mother and a maid. The family is not rich, but they try to gift something

to whose needs it more and to help poorer people. For example, one of the first childhood's episodes shown in the movie concerns the March sisters gifting their Christmas breakfast to the Muellers, a poor family that lives not far from them. at this juncture we also get to know their neighbours: Mr Laurence and his nephew Theodore Laurence, known as Laurie, who are very wealthy. Soon Laurie and Jo become best friends, and the boy is secretly in love with her.

Through various experiences and vicissitudes, the sisters leave childhood behind and become real women. The episode that marks the transition from one phase of life to the next may be Meg's marriage to Laurie's tutor, John Brooke. Jo states, in fact: "I can't believe childhood is over." (Gerwig, 2019: 93) Soon after the wedding, Amy leaves for Europe with Aunt March and Laurie reveals his feelings for Jo, but she promptly refuses to marry him. This marks somehow the end of their friendship for quite some time. The next time they will talk to each other will be almost at the end of the movie, after Beth's death and when he is already married to her younger sister Amy.

The problem of society's expectation on womanhood during the 19th century appears clearly in the brief monologue under analysis. As already mentioned, Gerwig's movie, and therefore also the passage under investigation, is also successful in representing also today's issues. Hence, it can be also seen as a tool to connect the expectations society had in the past, to the expectations of women that still exist nowadays. As a result, it might be also said that to some degree, *Little Women* (2019) spread some enlightenment to those people who usually do not pay attention to these kinds of socio-cultural issues.

2.4.2 Qualitative Analysis: Implications and presuppositions

In this part of the chapter, the text of the monologue under investigation is analysed, focusing on the implication and presuppositions that transpire from the chosen part. During the analysis of the monologue, whose text can be found at the end of Section 2.4, several implications were found. This means that there are several things that are not explicitly expressed in the text, but whose meaning is somehow identifiable within the text.

In general, the most important implication in this case, considering the brief

monologue as a whole, is the fact that society's expectations during 19th century were extremely high. The context and surrounding society seem to be in charge of drawing the trajectory of a woman's life, even if this concept is not openly explicated in the monologue. This pre-established trajectory seems to imply that a woman is expected to marry, to have children and a household to take care of. This can be perceived in the way Amy speaks about her prospects, mostly regarding her (present and) future economic situation. She clearly expresses that she would not be able to maintain her families or any children on her own. In fact, she says what follows: "as a woman I have no way to make money, not enough to earn a living and support my family." Hence, she needs a man that can provide for her in this regard. This implies that, she, as a woman, is expected to marry, otherwise she would not have the faculty to live or even take care of herself, let alone children.

Moreover, another implication that might be found in the text under analysis, is the different consideration of the role and power men and women have in society. When Amy says that "if I had my own money, which I don't, it would belong to my husband the minute we were married", it is implied that men occupy a higher role in both society and also within a nuclear family. What is indirectly perceived is that the man is the principal figure responsible for the economical sustainment of the family and, consequently, receives much more consideration in society. Furthermore, the fact that the male figure seems to have more importance in society can also be found in the part in which Amy explains how the money she would earn, would not be her after the marriage. The money would automatically become her husband's property. The same fate seems to apply to the matter of children. Once a woman is married to a man, she has the responsibility to take care of the offspring, as already cleared, but she is not the key figure for them, the father is. This is implied when Amy say what follows: "If we had children they would belong to him not me. They would be his property."

There is also another important implication, concerning the fact that not a woman is expected to marry. She is also expected to marry well. That's what is perceived when Amy asserts that a marriage is an economic matter and agreement. After explaining to Laurie, who in the case of this monologue is the principal listener of her words, Amy states "don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is. It may not be for you but it most certainly is for me." This

last affirmation implies, as said above, that a woman must try to marry well, namely a wealthy man. On the other hand, however, this passage also implies that the same expectation does not apply to men, who are more or less free to marry whomever they want, always subject to other expectations (e.g. to marry a woman of their own rank or from a good family). This means that, however and whoever their bride is, they would in any case be the more powerful half of the couple. The male figure seems to be free from of this expectation to necessarily marry someone who can provide for them. Should he fail to do so, a man would still be fully empowered with his money and still be able to lead a respectable and dignified life both economically and socially.

The legal regulations in force in the 19th century in the United States say nothing about this transfer of a woman's money to her husband that would take place at the time of marriage. And there is nothing regarding the children either. However, it is known that the subordinate status of the woman within the marriage, starting from the moment in which the wedding was celebrated, followed a common-law concept called “coverture” and that was a social and normal practice especially in English-speaking countries, even in the 19th century. This “dictated a woman’s subordinate legal status during marriage.” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/coverture>) As a consequence, after marrying a man, the wife was considered as a unique entity together with her husband and became, de facto, his property. Everything that she had and brought into the marriage, was to go to her husband at the moment of the wedding and the husband “exercised almost exclusive power and responsibility.” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/coverture>) This explanation means that, even if there was not an official and unique regulation concerning the position of the woman/wife with respect to her man/husband, it was common knowledge that the female figure was expected to have a minor role and importance within the family and, thus, was also expected to have less power and responsibility.

Based on this concept, the economic implications found in the monologue under analysis and explained in the first part of the present Section, might be considered not only as implied but also as presupposed, hence they could also be categorized as presuppositions. This because, it can be considered that when Amy says “as a woman I have no way to make money, not enough to earn a living and support my family. Even if I had my own money, which I don’t, it would belong to my husband

the minute we were married. If we had children they would belong to him not me. They would be his property. [...]”, it is common knowledge for the public, or at least the direct listener of the monologue (in this case Laurie) that there is a social and cultural law at the basis of this, namely the concept of “coverture.”

As a consequence, it appears to be that in the 19th century, marrying for a woman is a well-known and generally approved expectation. Thus, it can also be presupposed that the subordinate position that a woman covers after the marriage is also something the general public is well aware. Moreover, a woman, consequently, as explained by Amy, cannot maintain herself nor her children because she is not responsible and does not own the money she earns and the brings into the marriage as a dowery for instance.

The monologue under analysis apparently seems to confirm the idea of the female role in the 19th century, in which a woman only objective would be find a husband and create a family to take care of. There are, on the other hand, also examples of texts written by female authors that try to revendicate women rights, such as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In her text, she tries to show how the female figure was represented and considered by the society of her time, i.e. in the 18th century. Wollstonecraft (1792: 9 - 10), in particular, represents this idealisation as follows:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives.

This passage might support what has been found in the monologue under analysis. Amy does not talk about an eventual pressure she perceived directly by her mother or her family. Nevertheless, also on the basis of the implications and presuppositions that were observed in the first part of this section, the presence of a man is important. While describing the situation of the women of her time, Wollstonecraft attributes the male figure the function of ‘protection’. This is also the function that somehow can transpire from Amy’s words, even though she is a character

of a story set in the 19th century. Hence, it might be also assumed that the consideration society had of women did not vary in the transition from the 18th century to the next. Hence, Gerwig with *Little Women* (2019) and, in particular, with Amy's character, seems to succeed in conveying and, consequently, reinforcing the consideration society had of women in the 19th century.

However, it must be also considered that Wollstonecraft (1792) depicts a general image of the conception of womanhood in her time, and she does not seem to make a differentiation between the female figure as strictly considered from the prospective of British society and from the point of view of the American society. Being *Little Women* (2019), as well as the original novel written by Louisa May Alcott, a story set in Massachusetts (USA), it appears significant to separate American society, and its consequent view of women, from British society.

In particular, Cogan (1989) focus on this differentiation, also trying to explain how the 19th century American society saw women and what expectations had of them. In doing so, she also tries to reveal any specific ideological beliefs that might hide behind these factors. As reported by Boydston (1991), Cogan (1989) first of all presents two models that are thought to have guided the concept of womanhood in the 19th century. Cogan (1989, cit. in Boydston, 1991: 1608 - 1609) introduce the idea of 'true' and 'real womanhood'. The first one seems to be strictly connected to the Victorian society, hence also to the British one. On the other hand, the model of 'real womanhood' is considered to be more representative of the American society and consideration of the female figure, as also explained by Boydston (1991: 1608 – 1609). It must be specified, however, that the two models proposed by Cogan (1989) do not appear to be completely opposed to each other. On the contrary, Cogan (1989, cit. in Boydston, 1991: 1608 - 1609) highlights that there are fundamental similarities between the two paradigms. Boydston (1991: 1608 – 1609) summarises the differentiation between these concepts and their similarities as follows:

To be sure, the two paradigms shared some ground-most important, both represented women chiefly in terms of familial roles: good daughters, good sisters, good mothers, good wives. And yet they offered young women of the middle classes quite different road maps for maneuvering toward and through adulthood. Where "true womanhood" celebrated passivity and obedience, "real womanhood" praised women who

demonstrated resourcefulness, autonomy, and pragmatism [...].

It might be presumed, consequently, that also on the basis of the distinction proposed by Cogan (1989), Amy's character in *Little Women* (2019) embodies the prototype of the 'real womanhood'. This means that she confirms the idea of a 19th century woman, whose only purpose in life is to find a husband. Furthermore, how she grew in the period she spent in Paris with her great-aunt, shows another example of the reinforcement of this idea of womanhood. In several scenes of *Little Women* (2019) it can be seen how her great-aunt allows Amy to nurture her passion for art and drawing. However, it also transpires that the great-aunt's main objective, as can also be seen in Alcott's original story (1868-1869), is to push her niece towards an advantageous marriage. In particular, there is a scene that confirms what is stated by Wollstonecraft (1792: 9 - 10) and previously reported in the present Section. When Beth arch first is ill and Amy is sent to live with her Aunt March so that she will not be infected by her sister, her aunt shows her a ring. She tells Amy that when she grows up it will be hers and, to the disbelief of her niece, she reveals what is expected of her. As we can see in Gerwig's screenplay (2019: 68), Aunt March affirms:

You just keep being a proper young lady [...]. You are your family's hope now. Beth is sick, Jo is a lost cause, and I hear Meg has had her head turned by a penniless tutor. It'll be up to you to support them all, and your indigent parents in their old age. So you must marry well and save your family.

Nevertheless, Gerwig's (2019) movie and her vision of Amy's character, might be said to have something that is, on the other hand, groundbreaking. The revolutionary aspect of Amy's character is supposed to lie in the monologue under analysis. This is explained by Gerwig herself at the Teen Vogue Summit in Los Angeles, in 2019. Journalist Lindsay Weinberg, from *The Hollywood Reporter* (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/greta-gerwig-says-meryl-streep-inspired-a-powerful-scene-little-women-1251906/>), disclosed some details of Gerwig's contribution. Weinberg reports that the director was inspired to write that particular dialogue between Laurie and Amy, by the actress Meryl Streep, alias Aunt March in the movie. Hence, Amy's speech was born from Streep's intention of

powerfully transmitting to the audience the position women covered in 19th society. It is also explained how Gerwig saw in Amy's speech a possibility to show how the challenges faced by women are still present, even if not as visible as they were in the past. In particular, Weinberg (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/greta-gerwig-says-meryl-streep-inspired-a-powerful-scene-little-women-1251906/>) includes Gerwig's words:

Although we're in a different position now, I think the disconnect between what Laurie sees as options and what [Amy] knows to be the truth of her life is just as true today [...]. That chasm is something that needs to be bridged all the time.

From Gerwig's words it can be assumed that the innovative and significant aspect of the brief monologue under analysis might be seen in the fact that Amy is a woman trying to expose the luxurious nature of love in the 19th century. In doing so, she also shows the privileged position held by Laurie as a man, and who in this scene is the only listener of Amy's speech.

The aim of this part of the dissertation was to gain a better understanding of how eventual implications and presuppositions that can be found in the text under analysis could also be connected to Western socio-cultural context and, in this case, to the 19th century's society. Considering the investigation illustrated in the present Section, evidence was obtained that such a connection can be observed in the analysed text. In fact, it has been observed that both implications and presuppositions are present in the monologue, and they concern the situation of women within the society and culture making part of the context in which the monologue is set in, i.e. the 19th century. However, traces of a possible connection between that time and the present might also be found. In fact, it is visible how extremely exaggerated expectations of women correspond to normal expectations during the 19th century, as much as it might be today, even if the primary focus of those expectations may look different. In the 19th century a woman was expected to marry, better if she married wealth. Nowadays, this might not seem an expectation anymore, but there are other expectations that fall on women's shoulder that are anyway connected to the Western society and that sometimes even still concern the male gaze on women somehow and the gender gap that can still be found in different aspects of life and society. Nowadays' exaggerated

expectations of women will be further investigated in the next chapter, with the analysis of a monologue from another Gerwig's movie, namely *Barbie* (2023).

CHAPTER THREE

Critical Discourse Analysis of a monologue from *Barbie* (2023)

3. Greta Gerwig and *Barbie* (2023)

The present Chapter aims to critically analyse a monologue delivered by actress America Ferrera's character, Gloria, in the movie *Barbie* (2023). As for the brief monologue from *Little Women* (2019), the principal focus of this investigation is to discover the existence of any possible presuppositions and implications in the text under analysis. Moreover, it aims to uncover, with the elements investigated, some connection between all these aspects and the socio-cultural context that characterise Western culture and with which women deal with on daily basis.

Nevertheless, before proceeding with the analysis of the monologue, it seems necessary to present the director of the movie, Greta Gerwig, and the general synopsis of the movie.

3.1 Biography of the director, Greta Gerwig

Barbie's (2023) director and main writer Greta Gerwig was born in 1983 in Sacramento, California. As reported by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greta-Gerwig>) Gerwig grew up in a middle-class family and she spent her youth in a Catholic school for girls. Afterwards, she attended a college in New York, where she earned a degree in English. Both her life and personal experiences, although not reported with 100 per cent accuracy, seem to have been an inspiration for the creation of her first solo directorial film, *Lady Bird* (2017), as reported by *Indie Wire* (<https://www.indiewire.com/features/general/greta-gerwig-inspirations-lady-bird-1201892209/>).

Gerwig first approached the world of cinema as an actress, thanks to some acquaintances as explained by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greta-Gerwig>). In fact, her boyfriend of the time introduced her to Joe Swanberg, a filmmaker who gave her a part in *LOL* (2006). However, it must be said, that Gerwig always showed a certain interest for the cinematic and theatrical field. During her teenage years she was involved in many

theatre productions.

In the following years her first appearance as an actress, she continued acting in several other movies and also began writing and directing various films, as explained by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greta-Gerwig>). As already mentioned in the present Section, *Lady Bird* (2017) represented her official debut as a solo writer and director. Gerwig received various nominations for this movie, which preceded *Little Women* (2019), which was largely discussed in the previous Chapter. In the years that followed the release of *Little Women* (2019), she briefly resumed her acting career, starring in *White Noise* (2022).



Figure 9: Greta Gerwig at the Barbie (2023) Celebration Party at the Contemporary Art Museum in Sidney, Australia. Source: The Hollywood Reporter Roma (<https://hollywoodreporter.it/celebrities/greta-gerwig-dichiarazioni-regia-barbie-paura-futuro-nuovi-progetti/65191/>).

In 2023 Gerwig's third movie as a solo director was released, namely *Barbie* (2023). Gerwig's current husband, filmmaker Noah Baumbach, helped her write this blockbuster, as reported by Colin McEvoy in *Biography* (<https://www.biography.com/actors/greta-gerwig>). The movie starred Margot Robbie as the iconic doll Barbie, Ryan Gosling as Ken, and America Ferrera as Gloria, the human co-protagonist. The movie was "the highest-grossing film of 2023, topping \$1.4 billion worldwide" as stated in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greta-Gerwig>). It received several nominations, both at the Global Awards and the Oscars and it won several prizes, including Best Song for *What Was I Made For?*, by Billie Eilish. Nevertheless, there was also a certain amount of controversy regarding the nominations that Gerwig's movie received, especially at the Oscars. The film was not nominated for Best Original Screenplay and both Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie were excluded from the Best

Director and Best Actress categories respectively.

Moreover, this film helped to establish a new record for what concerns movies directed by women. *Barbie* (2023) was not only a personal success for Gerwig. It in fact, recorded the highest earnings on the day of debut. It was worth a \$162 million at the box office on the first day, which was “the biggest ever for a female director”, as stated by journalist Angela Watercutter in her article on WIRED website (<https://www.wired.com/story/barbie-box-office-oppenheimer/>). The journalist also expressed how this achievement was extraordinary considering that this movie faced different types of difficulties. First and foremost the widespread misogyny, which always seemed to be a barrier for films directed by women, most of all if they talked about women and showed an open feminist intent. This matter might be seen as strictly connected to the content of the monologue under analysis and with the aim of the present essay, which is investigating the existence of some kind of connection between what it is said in the monologue and nowadays socio-cultural situation.

3.1.1 The “Barbenheimer” phenomenon

The movie was also at the centre of a particular kind of competition. In the US *Barbie* (2023) was in fact released on July 21, 2023, the same day of another very successful movie, namely *Oppenheimer* (2023). The latter then won several Academy Awards in 2024, including Best Picture and Best Director for Christopher Nolan, as explained by journalist Tyler Picotti in *Biography* (<https://www.biography.com/movies-tv/christopher-nolan>). This hypothetical competition turned out to be a marketing success, promoting both films at the same time and motivated people to watch both movies instead of one. The term used to refer to this phenomenon is, indeed, “Barbenheimer”, as explained by journalist Nicholas Barber in a *BBC*’s article (<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20230720-what-does-barbenheimer-really-mean-for-hollywood>).

In addition, this phenomenon, which spread more or less globally, has been considered as a way to reanimate the cinemas. As explained by journalist Coneschi in *The Oxford Blue* (<https://theoxfordblue.co.uk/barbenheimer-phenomenon/>), the years characterised by Covid-19’s pandemic, represented a difficult situation for cinemas and theatres. Streaming platforms and services met a huge success in that period, but

the “Barbenheimer” phenomenon seems to have helped prevent the extinction of the tradition of going to the cinema. This might be due to more than one reason. *The Oxford Blue* (<https://theoxfordblue.co.uk/barbenheimer-phenomenon/>) explains:

To begin with, the two movies had both an incredible cast and crew, making them some of the most anticipated movies of the year. The directors, well-known for their previous work, had already raised expectations. *Oppenheimer* was directed by Christopher Nolan, acclaimed by both fans and critics [...], while *Barbie* was directed by Greta Gerwig, who gained respect for her amazing scripts as well as directorial masterclasses in *Lady Bird* (2017) and *Little Women* (2019). The casts of both films were also star-studded, with Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, Robert Downey Jr. and Matt Damon starring in *Oppenheimer* and Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling and Will Ferrell acting alongside fan-favourites such as John Cena, Dua Lipa and Emma Mackey in *Barbie*.

With such a stacked cast and high expectations all around, it was obvious that these movies would enliven the movie theatres.

These reasons and, most importantly, the renewed tradition of going to the cinema with friends and family, are thought to be part of the success of both movies. It also led to various trends, such as going to the cinema wearing pink outfits and details to watch *Barbie* (2023) and less conspicuous colours to view *Oppenheimer* (2023), as reported again by Coneschi (<https://theoxfordblue.co.uk/barbenheimer-phenomenon/>).

3.1.2 *Barbie* (2023) and Mattel Inc.

The live action movie featuring the beloved doll was produced together by different production companies, including Warner Bros. Pictures and Mattel Films, which is part of Mattel Inc. *Barbie* (2023) it is considered a fantasy comedy, and it was always *Mattel Inc.*’s intention to have a blockbuster be created about the iconic doll that would only be the first of many, as reported in *Biography* (<https://www.biography.com/actors/greta-gerwig>). Mattel is now a worldwide famous toy company, which produced the first Barbie dolls. The history of this company dates back to the 1940s, when Ruth Handler, the real creator of Barbie, her husband Elliot and Harold “Matt” Matson started working together on toys that completely changed the way in which children played, as explained in *Mattel*’s official website

(<https://corporate.mattel.com/history>).



Figure 10: Ruth Handler, at the time executive of Mattel Toy company, posing with collection of Barbie dolls in 1961. The picture was originally published by the *Los Angeles Times*. (<https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz0002qg0b>).

The success of the company does not actually start with the famous doll. The first *Mattel Inc.*'s famous toys are the Uke-A-Doodle, a toy instrument, and the Magic 8 Ball, still very popular. Barbie was officially born in 1959, from an idea of Ruth Handler. She was inspired by her daughter, Barbara, and the objective of the doll was always to inspire young girls, showing that they could be and become anything, as explained by *Mattel Inc.* itself (<https://corporate.mattel.com/history>). The doll's creator noticed that her daughter, whose name also inspired Barbie's name, and her friends played with their paper dolls projecting their own dreams and future aspirations as adults. They used the dolls to represent their future selves. Hence, Handler's idea to give these paper dolls a three-dimension shape, as Ruth Handler herself explained in her memoir, and as reported by journalist Kelsie Gibson in *People* (<https://people.com/who-is-ruth-handler-all-about-the-barbie-creator-7562140>).

In the decades that followed, in fact, the idea of having the doll Barbie representing what all the girls around the girl could be, was hugely developed, especially from the 1980s. They did so creating several different Barbies that represented different occupations and they tried to spread this message as much as they could with the campaign "We Girls Can Do Anything" , from 1985, as reported in *Mattel Inc.*'s website (<https://corporate.mattel.com/history>). And in the years, the Barbie doll has indeed represented many different occupations and professions. For instance, in 1965 "Barbie Astronaut" was launched, in 1985 "Day-to-Night Barbie"

appeared, showing girls they could even become CEOs. Ken, a male doll created as Barbie's partner, was released in 1961. This because, apparently, Mattel Inc. at the time received many complaints about the singledom that had characterised Barbie until that moment, as explained by Shannon Carlin in the *Time* (<https://time.com/6296386/barbie-ken-history/>).

In the movie, Gerwig shows perfectly how the Barbie doll evolved in the years, using different actresses to represent the different occupations that the doll could and can have. In the same way, it has been represented, how Ken does not cover a specific role or professional role. Carlin in her article (<https://time.com/6296386/barbie-ken-history/>) says about the Ken represented in the movie:

Ken is a piece of delicious, but wholly unnecessary arm candy for Barbie, a woman who can do it all on her own. For the last sixty-four years, she has been doing just that: holding down more than two hundred jobs, including air force pilot, robotics engineer, baby doctor, Mars explorer, and president, putting other famous multi-hyphenates to shame. All Barbie's boyfriend does, according to Gerwig's film, is 'beach,' which, as *Barbie's* über Ken Ryan Gosling has noted throughout the movie's press tour, is a difficult occupation to define and certainly not one to brag about.

On the other hand, while not having apparently a defined profession, Ken embodies perfectly the idea of being Barbie's male companion. In fact, in various pieces of the movie and of the script, Ken explicates how his existence revolves around Barbie, and how that is the only reason he was created. Gerwig and Baumbach (2023: 105) in the script, in fact, wrote: "But it's Barbie AND Ken. There is no just Ken. That's why I was created - I only exist within the warmth of your gaze. Without you I'm just some blonde guy who can't do flips."

Barbie (2023) is not the only project in which the famous doll is represented. As reported by Byrnes, Loreck and May (2024: 762):

Barbie appears in over forty straight-to-DVD and streaming films and animations (from *Barbie and the Nutcracker* [Owen Hurley, 2001] to *Barbie: Skipper and the Big Babysitting Adventure* [Steve Daye, 2023]), sixty video games (including the bestselling *Barbie Fashion Designer* [1996]) and hundreds of books and comics.

All this permitted Barbie to survive the passing of time. Nevertheless, it appears important to add that, despite Mattel's attempt to make their product more inclusive, creating dolls with different skin colours and giving them outfits that reflect various cultures, it still looks like Barbie would be first and foremost a symbol of the "true white womanhood and femininity", as also explained by duCille (2004:268, cit. in Byrne/Loreck/May, 2024: 763). As a consequence, she appears to represent Western's culture tendencies towards patriarchy and, of course, capitalism. Such critique has also been represented in Gerwig's movie, especially in the scene in which Barbie first meets teenager Sasha, played by Ariana Greenblatt, who then proceeds to say that the doll is in fact representative of all that is wrong in Western culture, as also reported by Byrne, Loreck and May (2024:763).

3.2 The synopsis of the movie *Barbie* (2023)

After the initial presentation of how the Barbie doll was born, the main plot of the movie appears as follows. Barbie Land appears as a place governed by women, namely the Barbies, each one with her special profession or occupation. On the other hand, men, the Kens, who are inhabitants of Barbie Land as well, play a secondary, have a totally passive role in the administration of the world they live in. While Barbies have prestigious jobs and busy lives, all Kens do is staying at the beach. They think that is indeed their profession, the beach, and their life revolves around Barbie⁴. Thus, this fantastical reality is ruled by a completely matriarchal society.

The protagonist of the movie, that the audience encounters in the first scenes of the movie, is the Stereotypical Barbie (who in the movie and in the rest of the present paper is simply referred to as Barbie). She is played by actress Margot Robbie, she has blonde hair and blue eyes, and, as any other Barbie in her world, her life is essentially always the same. Barbies live an ordinary and perfect life in Barbie Land, and

⁴ Ryan Gosling as Ken, in the script written by Gerwig and Baumbach (2023: 10), has a scene in which he says: "Because my job is actually just, you know, Beach." This let the viewer or reader know that Ken identifies his profession with only that, not as a lifeguard or another actual job on the seaside. Moreover, when Ken is first introduced in the movie, the narrating voice says, as written by Gerwig, and Baumbach (2023: 7): "Barbie has a great day every day. But Ken only has a great day if Barbie looks at him." On the basis of this and other similar scenes, it becomes clear how Ken's life, the male character, is completely subjugated to that of the main female character.

apparently their carefreeness is also represented by the fact that the heels of their feet never touch the ground.



Figure 11: Screenshot scene from the main trailer of Barbie (2023) released on YouTube by Warner Bros. on May 25, 2023. In this scene Margot Robbie as Stereotypical Barbie waves at her friends by her house and Barbie Land is visible in front of her (<https://youtu.be/pBk4NYhWNMM?si=giZqwt7Hf95Q1ho>).

Everything changes when the protagonist, Barbie, starts to have some thoughts about death and, consequently, an existential crisis. The day afterward, her heels are completely on the ground and her life does not seem so perfect anymore. Her friends, the other Barbies, advise her to meet with Weird Barbie, who was cast away from the rest of Barbie Land's society because disfigured. Weird Barbie explains how Barbie's thoughts are connected to the thoughts of the human girl connected to her and motivates her to reach this girl and fix things. Otherwise, Barbie will not go over her existential crisis and will end up like Weird Barbie.

Barbie travels to California, in the real world, together with the Ken, played by Ryan Gosling. Both characters feel the difference between their world and the real one. Barbie, in fact, notices how men in the real world seem to leer at her and make many indiscreet comments. As Ken is busy discovering patriarchy and how the real-world works, Barbie succeeds in finding her owner, a teenage girl whose name is Sasha, who actually hates the doll and the cultural concepts that the girl thinks she represents. At the same time, the CEO and *Mattel*'s all-male executive board discovers that Barbie and Ken arrived in the real world and orders them to be captured. While Ken travels back to Barbie Land on his own, Gloria, Sasha's mother, played by America Ferrera, helps Barbie to escape *Mattel*'s agents and the doll discovers that her death thoughts had been triggered by Gloria and not Sasha.

Barbie offers to take the two humans back to Barbie Land, with the intent to show them her perfect and harmonious world. However, when they arrive, Barbie Land

is unrecognizable and it is because of Ken, who introduced patriarchy in their world. This led to a takeover of power by the Kens, who also subjugated the Barbies, indoctrinating them to being completely dependent on male figures and relegating Barbies to secondary roles, such as dutiful girlfriends, housewives, etc. In this way he transforms Barbie Land into a sort of replica of the real world.

Barbie goes through another existential crisis when she sees what happened to her world, but Gloria wants to try and fix things using her knowledge she gained living in real-world's society. This is the point in which Gloria delivers the monologue under analysis, restoring Barbie's confidence and donating her some awareness as well.



Figure 13: America Ferrera as Gloria, who delivered the monologue under analysis in the movie, in a poster for the film *Barbie* (2023). Source: Pinterest (<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/45950858692267424/>).

3.2.1 Feminism in *Barbie* (2023)

As explained in Chapter Two, Section 2.2.1, feminism advocates for the equality between sexes. It must be added, however, that in the 21st century this fight to overcome the disparity between sexes, has not ended yet, as also suggests a Queen Anne's School's student, Nellie (<https://www.qas.org.uk/news/2024-03-19/feminism-and-the-new-challenges-of-being-a-woman-in-the-21st-century>). Furthermore, it should be said that nowadays feminist activism began to have a prominent role also for what digital media and internet are concerned, especially with regard to younger generations' feminists. In fact, Munro (2013, cit. in Jackson, 2018: 35) even talks about a "fourth wave of feminism" being born thanks to the level of connection that new technologies and, in particular, social media share with feminism. As reported by Sue Jackson (2018: 32-33), the new rising wave of young feminist activists is indeed

connected to the new popularity that the concept of feminism gained in the media. Feminism in this way also seem to possess a new kind of elasticity that apparently allows almost anything to be “(re)signified as a feminist issue, as added by Gill (2016: 619, cit. in Jackson, 2018: 33). There is, in fact, a term used to refer to this new current of feminism, which is becoming increasingly popular in Western culture. This specific term is “popular feminism”, as it is called by Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018, cit. in Byrne/Loreck/May, 2024: 764) and it does not involve only academics or activists, but also a new range of people such as influencers, fans or bloggers, for whom feminism is now active part of the material they produce, consume and engage with daily

As can be perceived by the “Oppenheimer” phenomenon discussed in Section 3.1.1, *Barbie*’s (2023) success may be also considered connected to social media and the influence these have, especially on younger generations. And this also allows to see the connection between Gerwig’s movie and feminism. As explained by Byrnes, Loreck and May (2024: 761) Gerwig herself in an interview that *Barbie* (2023) is a feminist movie. Gerwig (2023, cit. in Byrnes/Loreck/May, 2024: 761) states “It’s feminist in a way that includes everyone.” This serves to underline as also discussed at the end of Section 3.1.2., how the doll created by *Mattel* is nowadays often recognised as a sexist symbol, which transmit the idea of infantilisation and presents an “unattainable” ideal of the female figure. Moreover it shows how, in fact, feminism is also clearly present in *Barbie*’s (2023) plot, as reported by Byrnes, Loreck and May (2024: 761).

However, on the basis of what has been said about popular feminism in the present Section, Byrne, Loreck and May (2024:764) highlight how *Barbie* (2023) would have found fertile ground in which to take root, even without the director’s confirmation that she intended to create a clearly feminist film. Nonetheless, they also specify how, even though *Barbie*’s correlation to feminism has been other times investigated, Gerwig’s movie is provoking in a new way.

As precedingly mentioned in the present Section, the plot that has been summarised in the Section 3.2, already gives some kind of clue as to the feminist intent that might be found in *Barbie* (2023). The present dissertation considers, in particular, how also the monologue under analysis, which will be presented in toto in the next Section, appears to be the vehicle for a feminist message that to some degree condemns

and challenges the incredible and essentially impossible expectations that still seem to weigh heavily on Western women today.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis of Gloria's monologue in *Barbie* (2023)

The present Section focuses on the Critical Discourse Analysis of the monologue delivered by America Ferrera's character, Gloria, in *Barbie* (2023).

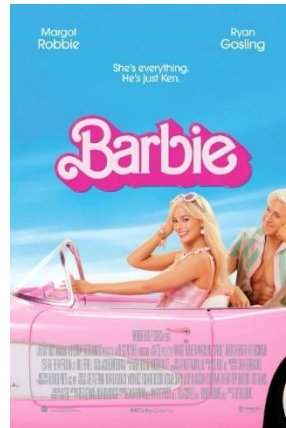


Figure 12: Poster of the movie *Barbie* (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig.
Source: Pinterest (<https://it.pinterest.com/pin/422281211443508/>).

The primary objective of the present investigation is to highlight the existence of possible presuppositions and implications in the monologue under analysis. Moreover, this work assumes the connection between these aspects and nowadays Western socio-cultural context, namely also the period in which *Barbie* (2023) is set. Thus, using the methodological tool provided by Fairclough (1995, 2003) and extensively addressed in the first and second Chapter, the present dissertation has the objective to find and show how discourse can be linked to the context of situation through the investigation, as already mentioned above, of implications and presuppositions. Examples taken from the original script of the movie will be provided in order to support this assumption.

The monologue under analysis is the following one, taken from the original script of the movie written by Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach (2023: 86-87), and published online by *Deadline* (<https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Barbie-Read-The-Screenplay.pdf>).

IT IS LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BE A WOMAN! You are so beautiful and so smart and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like we have to always be extraordinary and somehow we're always doing it wrong. You're supposed to be THIN but not TOO THIN and you can never say you want to be THIN you have to say you want to be HEALTHY but you also have to BE thin. You have to have money but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss but you can't be mean. You're supposed to lead but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to LOVE being a mother but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You're supposed to be a career woman but always be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is INSANE, but if you point that out then you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to be pretty for men but not SO pretty that you tempt them too much or threaten other women. You're supposed to be part of the sisterhood but also stand out but also always be grateful. You have to never get old never be rude never show off never be selfish never fall down never fail never show fear never get out of line. It's too hard, it's too contradictory and no one says thank you or gives you a medal, and in fact, it turns out, somehow, that not only are you doing it all wrong but that everything is also YOUR fault. I'm just so damn tired of watching myself and every single other women tie ourselves in knots so that people will like us. And if all that is also true for a doll just representing a woman then I don't even know!

3.3.1 Background information on the monologue

The monologue under investigation has already been at the centre of several other analyses, delivered both by critics and journalists. Many of these focus on the different types of masculinity that can be seen in the movie, while others centre their attention on the entirety of the movie and how it might affiliate with feminist movements and be seen as a critique to the patriarchal society in which women live. Myisha, Sabila, Maharani and Ramadhan (<https://consensus.app/papers/decoding-the-perpetuation-of-patriarchal-culture-in-the-myisha-ramadhan/6ba728dba3e65af88eafef44c7d92f3c/>) stated: “in patriarchal cultures, male privilege is ingrained, leading to the marginalization and subjugation of women. This entrenched culture of male privilege influences deep-rooted misogyny, sexism, and societal expectations”. However, the way in which the film's central monologue includes certain implications and presuppositions, the way it addresses the issue of patriarchal culture and, above all, the consequently rising assumptions about the Western socio-cultural situations has not

yet been fully analysed. Relatively recent research led by Gunawan and Prihandini (<https://ojs.unikom.ac.id/index.php/mahadaya/article/view/11411>), has tried to analyse the speech act on the monologue's utterances, also examining "the verbal techniques employed in Gloria's speech, elucidating its emotional impact advocacy for change, and cultural importance". However, this research paper does not show the possible implications and presuppositions of the monologue. It only focuses on the way the texts tries to deliver and share certain values, but it does not explain which values are actually concerned, nor if they are openly stated or need to be interpreted by the reader.

As already mentioned at the beginning of the present Section, since much research regarding *Barbie* (2023) focuses on the movie as a whole rather than on the single monologue here under investigation, it was necessary to narrow down the primary sources to the ones in which only the meaning of the text under investigation was discussed. As a result, the present analysis is mostly based on articles written by journalists, critics and other experts.

3.3.2 Qualitative Analysis: Implications and presuppositions

In this part of the paper, the text of the monologue under investigation is investigated. The analysis focuses first on the implications and presuppositions noted in the monologue presented at the end of Section 3.3. Several examples of implications and presuppositions were found. Hence, there are several concepts and ideas that are not explicitly expressed in the text under investigation, but whose significance can be identified within the discourse.

Several implications have been found in the monologue under analysis, which means that there are various things that are not explicitly said in the speech, but that are implied, hence that can be perceived even if they are not actually stated. After a first reading of Ferrera's monologue, the most important implication, which might be actually also seen as a presupposition at the same time, is the fact that there is some kind of standard that women are expected to achieve as women. There are, hence, some expectations that weigh on the female figure. In this case, these expectations, which seem to be almost if not totally impossible to achieve, are assumed to concern only Western women, since the monologue and the movie are set in the US and in the present

day. The fact that it is the Western socio-cultural system to have these kinds of expectations can be implied, and / or presupposed, by considering all together the meaning of the monologue. However, the monologue has been analysed more thoroughly, in order to dissect the various implications and presuppositions that lead to this final way of comprehending the general meaning of the text under investigation.

The first implication that can be found when Gloria's says: "we have to always be extraordinary and somehow we're always doing it wrong." This implies that apparently there is a right way to be a woman (being "extraordinary"). It is not explicit, however, who or what decides what is the righter way to cover the female role. Nonetheless, it is implied that this sentiment could be infused by society in general, and the expectations that it has of female figures. Furthermore, it is understood that, apparently the majority of women, share the feeling that, somehow, they are not extraordinary or that, at least, they are not doing it in the right way or that they are not enough, as if there actually is a righter way to be a woman.

Gloria goes on explaining what actually means being "extraordinary", hence what women are expected to do or to be. She says: "You have to be thin, but not too thin[...]". This implies that society's usually preferable to see a woman who has a fit body, which, it might be said, is also what young girls generally grows up seeing on social medias, on TV or on the cover of some magazines. Hence, they enter adulthood convinced that that image is what they should achieve.

However, Gloria goes on saying "And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy". This passage implicitly expresses how, after the rise of the current generally referred to with the term *politically correct*, it is not fair to say that people do not want to look overweight, simply because of the aesthetic of it. Instead, they must express their desire to look thin because they would like to be healthier, almost as if looking healthy always equates to looking thin. This might imply a critic to a general kind of hypocrisy; it might be masking the fact that "wanting to be thin" is usually connected to a standardised and stereotyped image that people have growing up, rather than to a real and honest willingness to have a healthy lifestyle.

Furthermore, in the following sentence, Gloria says "You have to have money but you can't ask for money because that's crass." This implies that, differently from what has been discussed in the speech analysed in Chapter Two, women are expected

to earn and have their money. Nonetheless, there is some kind of expectation also connected to the way in which they receive that money. They must not ask for it, which leads to imagine also that this concept might be connected to the world of prostitution, which in general is thought to revolve around asking for money in exchange for some peculiar service. This connection has also been assumed by the simple way in which Gloria ends this passage (“because that’s crass”), which means that asking for money is perceived as vulgar or even rude.

Another implication emerged in the following passage: “You have to be a boss but you can’t be mean. You’re supposed to lead but you can’t squash other people’s ideas.” In this part, it is implied that even in the occasion in which a woman cover a higher role for example on the workplace, she is expected to behave in a serious and competent way, but without ever damaging someone else. It is not explicated, but it is implied that it is important not to destroy other people’s idea especially if they are men. Almost as if, even if a woman has a higher position in the hierarchical scale, she is expected anyway to have a behaviour that shows some sort of inferiority. Nevertheless, this implication might also be connected to another one, concerning a certain “sisterhood”, that will be discussed afterwards. Hence, the fact of not having do endanger other people’s ego and ideas might not only be connected to the other gender but also other women. Moreover, it is also connected to another thing that Gloria says: “You’re supposed to be a career woman but always be looking out for other people.” Also in this part it is clear that it is expected of a woman too to be professionally successful, but without interfering in a negative way with other people’s personal journey, which there is no need to imply because it is clearly stated (“always be looking out for other people”).

In addition, there is an implication that has something in common with the other speech investigated in the present dissertation. Here too, in fact, there is a reference to being a mother. Gloria at a certain point says that “You’re supposed to LOVE being a mother but don’t talk about your kids all the damn time.” In this case, it is implied that a woman is in any case expected to become a mother at some point in her life, and, most importantly, you must feel extremely happy in this role (“LOVE being a mother”). However, it also seems to be implied that talking about one's role and one's children can be perceived as overly proud or, in any case, can be perceived as annoying

or even boring to other people listening to stories about the woman's children.

Moreover, there is an implication regarding the difference in power between men and women. America Ferrera's character says: "You have to answer for men's bad behavior, (...), but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining". This passage somehow tries to convey how women must answer for their own behaviour, but also for men's one. On the other hand, men seem to be not expected to do the same for the counterparts, and they are usually not even expected to answer their own bad behaviour. This implicates a disparity between the sexes.

In the monologue there is also a reference to a "sisterhood" which women are supposed to be all members of. In the monologue, Gloria says: "You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood". In this part it is implied that women are all members of a secret group right from when they are born, just because they are, in fact, females. In this group, or "sisterhood", there seems to be implicit rules and ulterior expectations, adding to the already existing ones given by the rest of society. And, to some degree, these adding intra-group expectations, appear to be anyway connected to the other gender, the male one. Because, women are expected to respect these other expectations, that should concern women and women only but indeed are connected to the kind of behaviour women are supposed to show towards men, or at least especially in relation to the male figure. Thus, women have to work together to deal with society as a whole and its standards but always trying to reach them somehow without going against each other.

Moreover, Gloria states:

It's too hard, it's too contradictory and no one says thank you or gives you a medal, and in fact, it turns out, somehow, that not only are you doing it all wrong but that everything is also YOUR fault.

With that first "It" at the beginning of the passage, the character refers to what has been said before, all the contradiction and implications that have been discussed. But there is an implication here as well. This last passage taken as example might indeed imply that all that has been said is really expected of women by the society of which they are and apparently must be active members. From the words transpire the effort

required to try and meet these expectations, which seem impossible, or, in any case, it appears to be too demanding to try and achieve them all and, in this way, to become the perfect woman that society expects.

During the investigation also some presuppositions were identified, i.e. something that both parts included in the communication know it is true, and, in this case, presuppositions do not seem to involve only the characters of the movie. Since the monologue is supposed to convey something to the public watching the movie, the presuppositions might be considered as full of value for both parts. Hence, they might be aspects known by the characters directly involved in the communicative event as well as by the public, which has an indirect and passive role in the communicative event. For instance, in the part in which Gloria says:

You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard! It's too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you! And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault.

Here it is presupposed that this is how reality works like and how womanhood is considered. It is a general presupposition considered to be common knowledge for the people watching, listening or reading the monologue; it entails that everyone involved in the communication knows women have to act strong, never show their vulnerability, not only in dealing with other people ("never be rude"), but also in dealing with the passing of time ("never get old").

Furthermore, towards the end of her speech, Gloria says something else: "I'm just so damn tired of watching myself and every single other women tie ourselves in knots so that people will like us." In this small passage, an ulterior presupposition might be identified. It seems to be given for granted that this sentiment of tiredness and exhaustion towards these hypothesised expectations is shared by most women and it is also presupposed that it is normal to try and achieve society's expectations, and in this way, as explained by Gloria herself, be liked by the rest of society. Thus, again it appears clear that the attempt to achieve this more appropriate form of womanhood, which is supposed to be preferred by Western society, is extremely challenging.

As already mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter, the main purpose of this investigation is to gain a better understanding of how eventual implications and presuppositions present in the monologue under analysis can be connected to the nowadays' Western socio-cultural context. Considering the analysis illustrated in the present Section, there are many parts in the text that have been chosen that present presuppositions and implications concerning the situation women experience every day in our society.

For what presuppositions are concerned, in the monologue it is clearly assumed that the audience is aware of the exaggeratedly high expectations of women in today's society, since they are supposed to show a strong façade to the rest of the community, never wavering on any decision nor even on their appearance or age apparently. Moreover, they are expected to show a perfect behaviour towards others and have to achieve a certain standard for what their physical appearance is concerned. This is a depiction of women that also coincides with the work developed by the psychiatrist Nada L. Stotland. For instance, in her article about menopause, Stotland (2002) broadly addresses this condition that unites women and that has an impact on their life after a certain age. As explained by Dr. Stotland (2002: 5), this phase of their life, puts women in the position to deal with tensions between menopause and other aspects of their life, including not only their sexuality but also social expectations. Specifically addressing the challenge between experiencing getting old and the Western youth culture, Stotland (2002: 7) also adds: "The old woman is a marginalized, even demonized, figure in much of Western society." This demonstrates that the monologue under analysis is actually connected to reality, since in a passage from the monologue it can be read "You have to never get old [...]." Both the monologue and Stotland's article convey youth-oriented mentality of today's Western society and culture. Moreover, it demonstrates how this sort of expectations are impossible to achieve, since a condition such as menopause is in any case inevitable.

Furthermore, the results from the implications analysed in the monologue merit some comment and can find some support in other research. Firstly, it is interesting that these also address the expectations society has of women. However, other subtopics connected to this main one have been identified and that concern other aspects of the wider socio-cultural context in which the movie *Barbie* (2023) is set and

that coincides with the present. Some of the implications that have been analysed, in fact, recall the disparity issue between men and women for instance. Western nations are often assumed to be among the most advanced in terms of gender equality and rights for women. For instance, it has been taken into consideration a post published in an online public forum. This post has been written and published by a common person, and it has been chosen to include it in the present dissertation because it might give a better idea of how opinions regarding gender inequality in Western society can be various. In 2020 a person on *Quora* (<https://www.quora.com/Does-Western-society-view-women-as-more-important-than-men>), answering in this case a question asking what gender holds the most benefits in Western society, replied saying:

Females may be oppressed in certain countries and cultures, but in the western world they are without a doubt the more privileged gender. They are given preferential treatment in many ways; they receive chivalry, they are protected and catered to at all times, they never have a shortage of possible partners, and they are always at the center of attention. [...] The more attractive females don't even have to work real jobs to make ends meet; they can simply become 'gold diggers' and find themselves a wealthy husband and if that fails, become models, porn actresses, escorts/prostitutes or 'camgirls'.

And, of course, they always have the 'sexist' / 'misogynist' card at their disposal and can use it to effortlessly counter even completely valid criticisms and arguments and make themselves look like victims of persecution [...]. Feminism is no longer needed in the western world.

In this message the very existence of gender inequality between men and women is completely overcome by the affirmation that women are actually in a better position than men in Western society. This is just an opinion. However, even though in the last decades, significant progress has been made to achieve gender equality, a complete gender equality seems still distant, and women do not appear as beneficiaries of this inequality, they rather seem the injured party. As Annemiek van Vliet also says in an article for LYMEC's (European Liberal Youth) website (<https://www.lymec.eu/blog/libertas-1/mind-the-gap-gender-equality-as-a-distant-dream->

To be more specific, Ryan (2023) stated that “many workplace inequalities arise because the societal view of women's warmth is incompatible with 11 societal views of leadership and success” (<https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/addressing-workplace-gender-inequality>). Hence, once again, in a way, it comes back to what societal constructs are and how they affect women's lives.

On the basis of what has been said till now, it might be said that the movie *Barbie* (2023) was a huge success, also because of the way it dealt with critical matters that concern nowadays Western socio-cultural situation and especially women's role and position in society, while also not so subtly generalising and criticising men's attitude, entitlement and predominant position at times. Nevertheless, the focal point in which women's position and role are explained in their integrity appears to be the monologue under analysis in the present Chapter.

On the surface, this monologue might be considered a direct demonstration of a female character's opinion about the expectations that society has from women, namely how a woman or a girl should behave or look, how her body and personality should be in order to satisfy society's impossible standards and wishes. This specific part of the movie might be considered as an open complaint towards women's present situation in a patriarchal and male oriented society and culture, without openly assessing the differences in treatment that permeate women's and men's careers or lives.

CHAPTER FOUR

Western society and expectations of women: a survey

4. The study

The objective of the present Chapter is to describe the research that has been carried out through the questionnaire that can be found in the Appendix Section. The principal aim is to investigate whether people in real life perceive the existence of some expectations placed on women by Western society. In doing so the survey uses the texts analysed in Chapter Two and Three, trying, in this way, to confirm the connection between the results found during the investigations of the texts and the context in which they are included.

The questionnaire includes a total of 18 questions. It was shared online, mainly via WhatsApp and Instagram, in order to reach as many people as possible and obtain the largest possible sample. The questionnaire was shared both in Italian and English, in order to overcome any possible language barriers and thus reach as many people as possible. Questions were to be answered in different manners: 9 followed multiple choices, 5 checkboxes and 4 Likert scales, with 5 levels in which 1 corresponds to “I don’t agree”, 2 corresponds to “I don’t think so”, 3 to “I don’t know”, 4 corresponds to “I think so” and 5 corresponds to “I completely agree”.

The designed research questions ask, as already mentioned at the beginning of Chapter One, are two and revolve around both the analysis of the two texts and the connection between these, the Western socio-cultural context and the perception real people have regarding both of these aspects. The research questions are as follows:

1. Are there particular presuppositions and implications in these monologues? If so, might they be related in general to nowadays society or do they only refer to the world depicted in the movies from which the monologues are taken?
2. Do people perceive as possibly true what emerges from the critical analysis of the monologues in question and the possible implications and presuppositions they may present?

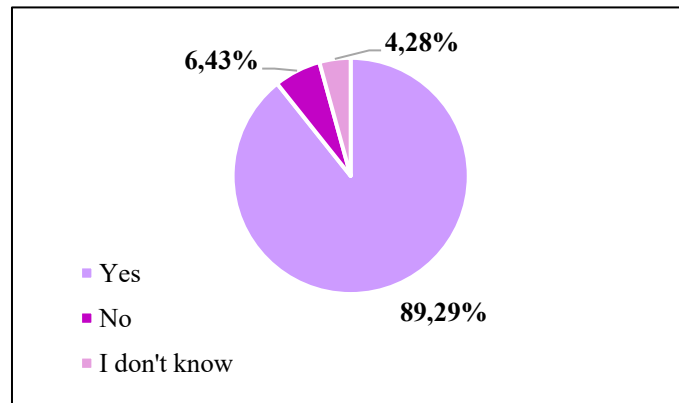
The subjects involved in the survey were 140, of whom 133 responded to the Italian version of the questionnaire, and 7 to the English one. They received the survey, which represents the instrument used to collect the official research data, via social media, as previously mentioned at the beginning of the present Chapter. The survey was designed and developed by the author of the present dissertation and the results were collected in a period of time stretching from August 1st, the first day on which the questionnaire was distributed, to August 14th.

The type of data collected is mostly hard quantitative data, especially given the nature of the closed questions present in the survey and on the basis of the levels of the Likert scale (1-2-3-4-5). However, it must be specified that the analysis of the results was descriptive and, at some level, interpretative, since the answers to the questions present in the survey are anyway the results of people's personal considerations. Moreover, it is necessary to clarify that the responses of both questionnaires, the Italian version of the survey and the English version, were summarised and analysed together.

The subjects involved in the survey represents an heterogenous example of population, since it includes different genders, various ages and several professional lifestyles. Of the people who responded to the questionnaire, 107 were women and 33 were men. This means that even if a large part of the respondents are representative of the female gender, there is also a small representation of the masculine gender. Moreover, there is a wide range of ages among the people who answered the survey's questions. The majority are included between the ages of 18 and 24 (59 people). The second age group with the most participants is 25-34 (30 people). The participants in the age groups with 17 or less years and between 35 and 44 are 13. The age group 55-64 includes 11 participants and the least participating age groups (with 7 people each) are those aged 45-54 and 65 and over. There is also a wide variety among the professions of the participants. There are mostly students (62) and office workers (44). Then there are factory workers (11), retired people (8), technicians (2), teachers (2), freelancers (2), nurses and care givers (2), supermarket salesgirl (1), babysitter (1), educator (1), housewife (1), lawyer (1) and also some unemployed people (2).

To the question "Have you ever perceived, directly or indirectly, the presence of societal expectations on women?" 125 people, hence most of the respondents,

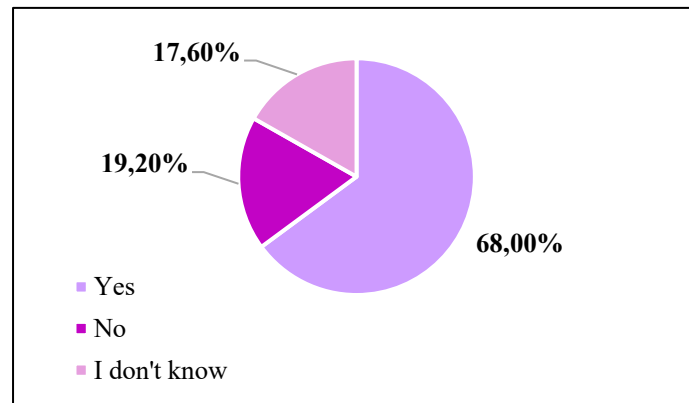
replied in a positive way, declaring that yes, they perceived expectations of such kind. To be more specific, and as can be seen in Graph 1 below, the 89,29% of the people who completed the survey perceive some kind of societal expectations on the female gender, while only the 6,43% do not believe or perceive in expectancies of this kind and the rest (4,28%) simply do not know. Among the ones who say they perceive such expectations on women, 85 even affirmed these expectations feel exaggerated.



Graph 1: Data collected from the question “Have you ever perceived, directly or indirectly, the presence of societal expectations on women?”

Graph 1 appears to be important because it gives a clearer idea of the proportion of people who have perceived some kind of expectations on women created by the society they live in. This is also helpful to understand more whether some implications and presuppositions found in the texts analysed in the previous chapters might be also real and not only the result of fiction.

Moreover, it was asked whether in the respondents’ opinion, these expectations would be exaggerated or not. It is interesting to note that the majority of the people who responded “yes” in the previous question believe such societal expectations of women to be exaggerated. In fact, 68% of the sample replied in a positive way to this question too, as can be seen in Graph 2 in the following page. While the rest is divided between disagreeing with the assumption that such expectations are exaggerated and not knowing what to respond.

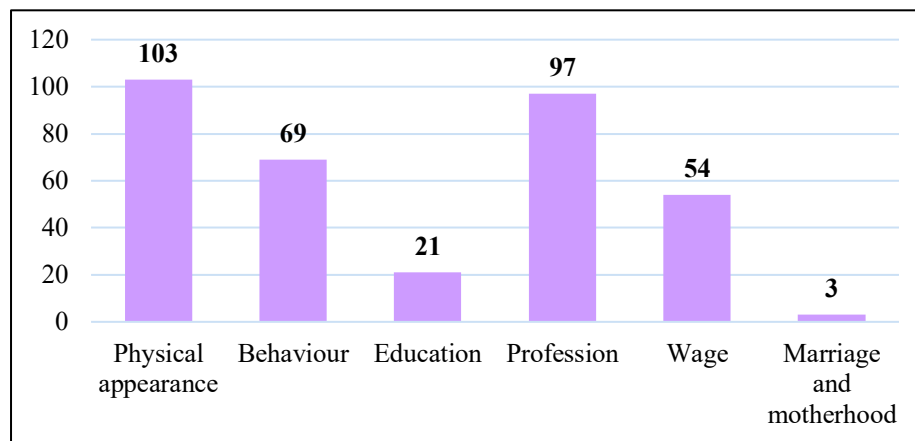


Graph 2: Data collected from the question “If so, did they seem to be exaggerated expectations?”

When asked “What were the expectations you perceived about or what do you think they might be about?” respondents had to choose one or more options among the ones given as examples. As can be seen below in Graph 3, people seem to agree that the main area in which expectations weigh on women regards the physical appearance, namely their weight, height etc. This option was chosen 103 times, as indicated by the first column in the histogram below. The second most picked alternative (a total of 97 times, as can be seen in the fourth column of Graph 3) concerns the professions women are supposed to have, which means women are considered to be more suited for a certain type of professions rather than others and that can even find themselves in the position of having to abandon their careers in order to take care of their children. Other highly chosen options regarded behaviour and wage, which were chosen respectively 69 and 54 times, indicated by the second and fifth columns in the histogram. Behaviour in the sense that women might be expected by society to behave in a specific way, for instance in a shy way. The term ‘wage’ here concerns the expectation whereby women would be expected to earn less than their masculine counterparts. The choice concerning education was picked less, as can be seen in Graph n.3 (only 21 times), giving the idea that maybe there nowadays there are less societal expectations regarding what kind of educational path a girl is supposed to take, even though it is still present anyway.

Answering this question, respondents had also the chance to add other contexts in which they thought societal expectations could be present and perceived. The option regarding specifically marriage and/or maternity was added 3 times, as can be seen

below in the far-right column in Graph 3.



Graph 3: Data collected from the question “What were the expectations you perceived about or what do you think they might be about?”

What is summarised in Graph 3 can be helpful to better understand to what expectations are usually connected to. The expectations perceived by the respondents clearly mostly concern how a woman is supposed to look and appear, which is an issue that has also been discussed during the CDA of the text taken by the movie *Barbie* (2023) in Chapter Three. However, this is not the only important thing that can be noticed in the answers given to this question. Looking at the graphic given above, it is possible to envision that people do not perceive only one expectation. On the contrary, the subjects perceive these expectations concern or might regard various aspects of a woman life.

The following questions of the survey aimed to highlight what factors might be influential and if the language might be somehow connected and may hide socio-culturally created expectations. In the first case, the question was: “Do you think these expectations or the use of a certain type of language can be influenced by matters such as...” The focus was on gender stereotypes, the culture of the nation of origin or a person and individual factors, hence if these factors could have an impact the use of a certain type of language and, also consequently, some kind of expectations on women. A 5 levels Likert scale was given for each of these factors, in which 1 corresponds to “I don’t agree”, 2 corresponds to “I don’t think so”, 3 to “I don’t know”, 4 corresponds to “I think so” and 5 corresponds to “I completely agree”, as already explained at the beginning of the present chapter.

The factor that received the highest number of 4 and 5, which, as already

mentioned above, correspond to the greater levels of agreement, where the stereotypes of gender, which received 53 “I think so” and 49 “I completely agree”. Hence, most respondents appear to think that expectations or the use of a certain type of language can be influenced by gender stereotypes. However, the culture of origin seem to be another important element to consider. This factor, in fact received a total of 48 “I think so” and 46 “I completely agree” giving an idea of how much the culture of a certain nation can influence societal expectations. On the other hand, individual factors, for instance personality or certain experiences lived by people, appear to have less impact on these expectations, even though 45 people actually chose the option 4 on the Lickert scale for this factor, namely “I think so”.

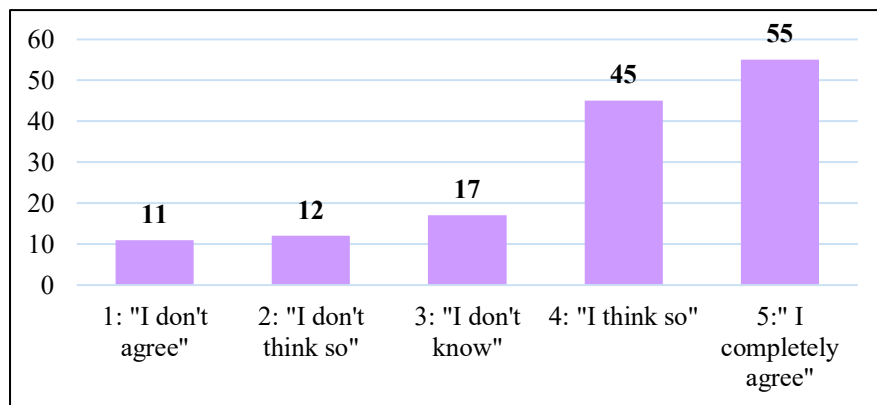
This question of the survey is directly connected to the next one, which asked “Do you believe that language can hide socio-culturally created expectations on women?” Thus whether respondents believed that language might conceal some kind of hidden socio-culturally created expectations. Half of the sample, namely 70 people, responded by choosing option 4 on a Lickert scale, i.e. “I think so”, while only a total of 14 people chose the disagreeing options, 1 and 2, respectively “I don’t agree” and “I don’t think so”. This is relevant because it helps to understand whether people actually perceive such expectations also from language and not only, for example, on the basis of concrete actions or events. This question was also important to introduce the main part of the questionnaire.

The next questions in the questionnaire were more focused on the texts analysed in Chapter Two and Three. In fact, the eighth question presented the brief speech delivered by Florence Pugh in *Little Women* (2019), while the ninth concerned the longer monologue from *Barbie* (2023), delivered by actress America Ferrera. The aim of this part of the questionnaire was indeed to confirm whether the results of the CDAs presented in the previous chapters were really perceived by people in reality, hence if the implications and presuppositions showing expectations, often exaggerated, created by the Western society and culture really exist or are at least perceived by people or not. Moreover, both texts were presented in order to see whether some expectations existing in the period of time in which the first speech is set, hence in the 19th century, are really representative of its time in people’s opinion and thus to create a sort of connection with what is perceived nowadays in Western

society.

In the case of the brief monologue taken from *Little Women* (2019) and largely discussed in Chapter Two, the complete question was as follows: “This passage is taken from a film set in the late 19th century. Do you think what the character says reflects the Western society of the time?”

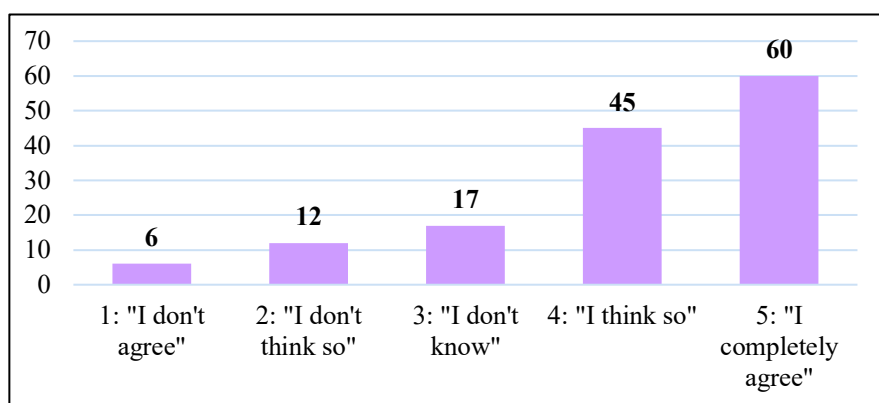
As can be seen in Graph 4, the answers given by the sample showed that the given passage seems to be a fair representation of the epoque in which is set. In fact, 45 respondents chose the option “I think so” and 55 “I completely agree”, represented by columns 4 and 5. In total, the people who showed disagreement with the question given by the questionnaire are 23 (11 chose “I don’t agree” and 12 “I don’t think so”).



Graph 4: Data collected from the question regarding the text from *Little Women* (2019): “This passage is taken from a film set in the late 19th century. Do you think what the character says reflects the Western society of the time?”

As previously mentioned, this graph clearly suggests that a majority of the sample perceives Amy’s speech in *Little Women* (2019) as representative of Western society at that time, namely the 19th century. This is consistent with what is suggested by the results of the CDA found in the second chapter of the present dissertation.

Very similar results were obtained from the subsequent question, which presented the monologue taken from *Barbie* (2023) and discussed in Chapter Three. In this case, the question concerned present-day Western society and whether or not it is represented by the text under analysis. As can be observed in Graph 5, most of the people who responded to the questionnaire chose options 4 and 5 on the Lickert scale.



Graph 5: Data collected from the question regarding the text from *Barbie* (2023):
 “This passage is taken from a film set in present day.
 Do you think that what the character says reflects present-day Western society?”

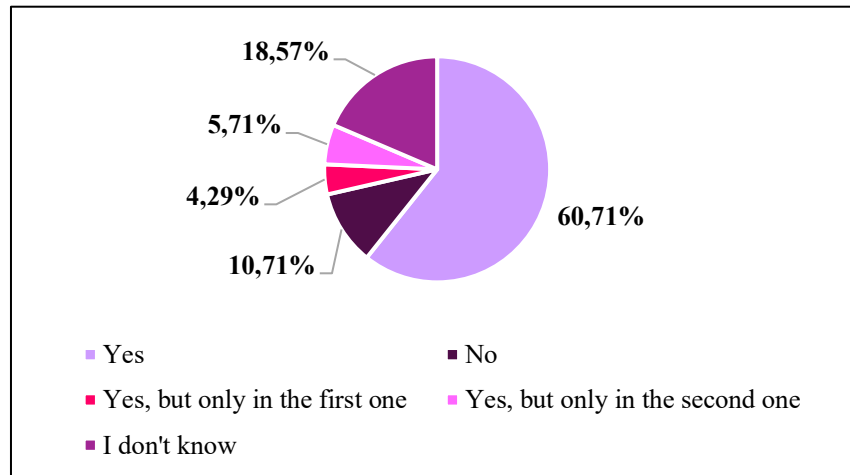
A slightly higher number of respondents chose 5, completely agreeing with the assumption that this monologue might be representative of nowadays socio-cultural Western context. However, it is relevant to add that while that number increased, as can be seen in column five, the number of respondents who completely disagree decreased. In fact, only 6 people chose option 1 on the Lickert scale this time.

This is particularly important because it helps to gain a clearer understanding of Western society nowadays, and not in the past. Furthermore, seeing how the subsequent questions in the survey were answered, it is also helpful to see the connection between discourse and reality, as perceived by people who actually experience this socio-cultural context on a daily basis. Moreover, it gives also the idea of the perception people have of such expectations on women.

Respondents were also asked to give their opinion on whether there is some concealed meaning in the texts proposed in the questionnaire. It was, in fact, asked “Do you think that in the above passages the language used hides an implicit/hidden meaning?”

To this question, 60,71% of the respondents answered in a positive way, hence that the language and the texts hide some implicit meaning. Furthermore, it seems certain that according to this number of people, there is not only some hidden connotation in the first passage (as is the case for 4,29%, indicated by the lighter pink part of the graph below), nor just in the second passage (the 5,71% of the sample chose this option, as indicated in the graphic representation). Only the 10,71% denied the

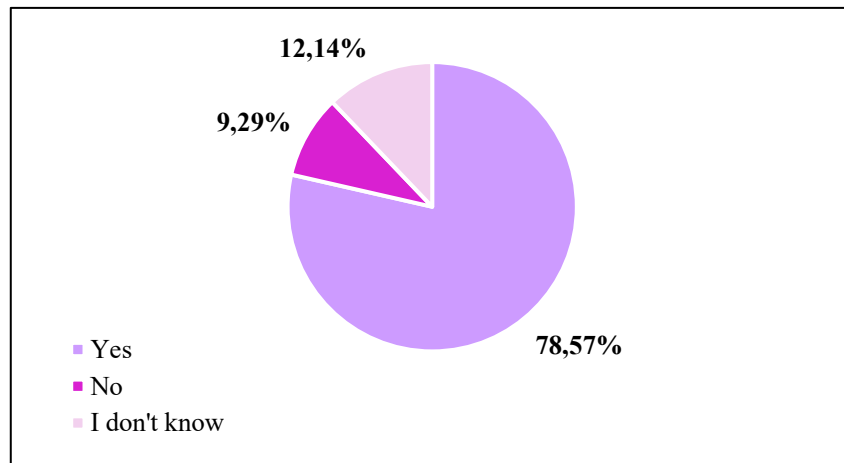
presence of some sort of hidden meaning in the texts proposed and the second largest portion of the sample (18,57%) admitted they do not know if there is this concealed connotation in the passages presented to them.



Graph 6: Data collected from the question: "Do you think that in the above passages the language used hides an implicit/hidden meaning?"

Moreover, when it was asked whether in their opinion (always on a Lickert scale from 1 to 5) this hidden meaning could regard some expectations, 65 people responded in a positive way, choosing option 4, hence 'I think so'. However, the focus was then shifted more specifically on the second passage, which is supposed to represent nowadays Western society and its expectations on the female gender. It was asked "In your opinion, does present-day Western society create expectations on women that could be summarised in the second passage you read?"

The proportion of the people who responded "yes" to the question given is 78,57%. Therefore, almost 80% of the sample appear to be convinced that the monologue delivered by actress America Ferrera in the movie *Barbie* (2023) would be representative of present-day Western society. Only 9,29% of the respondents replied negatively and the rest of them (12,14%) simply do not know whether the monologue might be considered a good representation of nowadays society or not.



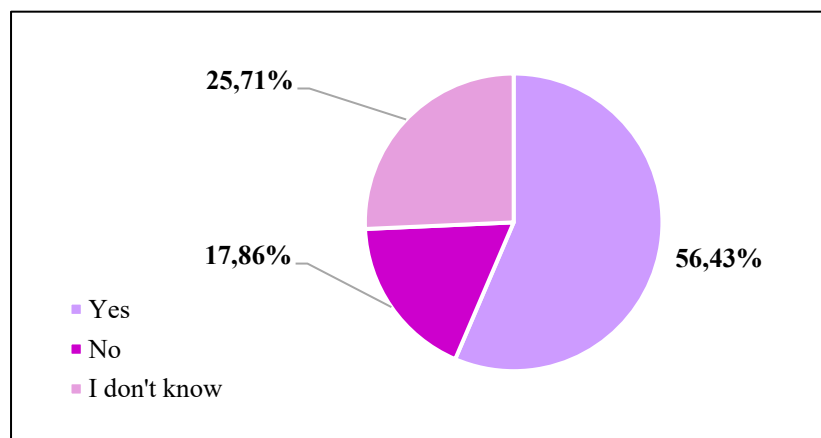
Graph 7: Data collected from the question: “In your opinion, does present-day Western society create expectations on women that could be summarised in the second passage you read?”

In the following question, respondents were asked to answer whether this passage, if not representative of present-day Western society, could be, instead, a mere construct of a feminist mind or movement. However, the majority of the respondents to this question mostly answered in a negative way (40), hence that the passage, even if not representative, might not be a construct of a feminist movement or mind. Other people (18) affirm they do not know whether this is the result of a feminist conception. A small part of the participants, however, answered positively, affirming this would be, in fact, a construct of a feminist way of thinking.

Nevertheless, concerning this last question, it must be said that not only the people who had denied the representativeness of the second passage propose, namely in total 13 respondents. To this question responded ca. 67 people more or less, thus the analysis of the results of the present question might not be considered entirely adequate or truthful.

The last four questions of the questionnaire serve more as an input for possible and hypothetical next steps in the research concerning expectations on women in present-day Western society. In fact, it was asked to the sample whether or not in their opinion something is changing nowadays. The complete question was what follows: “Do you think Western society is doing something to change or is changing in this respect?”

Here too the majority of the sample seems to be positive regarding some changes happening in Western society. 56,43% of the respondents, in fact, replied with 'yes'. However, it must be said that, in the case of this graphic above, the sample looks almost divided in half. In fact, a large part of the people replying to the survey (25,71%) actually do not know, or are not capable to understand, whether some changes are in progress or are happening regarding such expectations on women. Moreover, the remaining 17,86% appears to deny any transformation or programme to change in the future in this regard.



Graph 8: Data collected from the question: “Do you think Western society is doing something to change or is changing in this respect?”

Another interesting direction that research could take is to investigate which sectors are or would be affected by such changes in Western society. The question asked in the survey was “In what area do you feel there are or think there could be changes?” Even in this case a series of choices was given, and people could choose more than one:

- 1) Physical appearance (e.g. an effort is made to promote acceptance of one's body...), which as can be seen in Graph 9 below, it was chosen 81 times.
- 2) Gender inequality (e.g. trying to ensure that women are not treated differently from men in the workplace), chosen 73 times by respondents.
- 3) Income inequality between men and women (e.g. efforts are made to ensure that women are paid equally for the same job position). People chose this option 66 times.

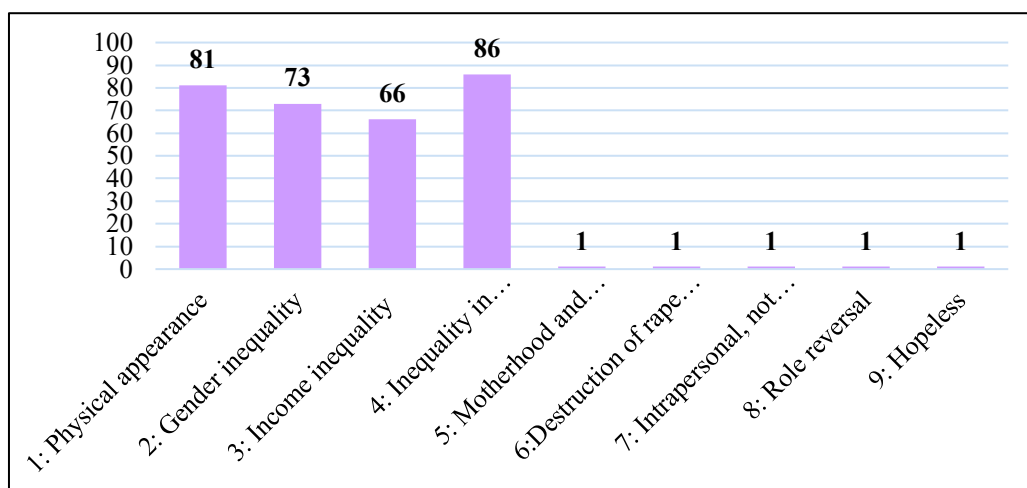
- 4) Inequality in education (e.g. trying to eliminate the belief that females are better suited to humanities and not scientific subjects), which was the most chosen option, namely 86 times.

In addition to these options, others were suggested by respondents themselves and chosen once each.

- 5) Expectations concerning motherhood and roles within the family.
6) Destruction of the rape culture, promotion of consent, mutual care and awareness of toxic masculinity.

Three respondents replied in quite a particular way, adding their own opinion as well:

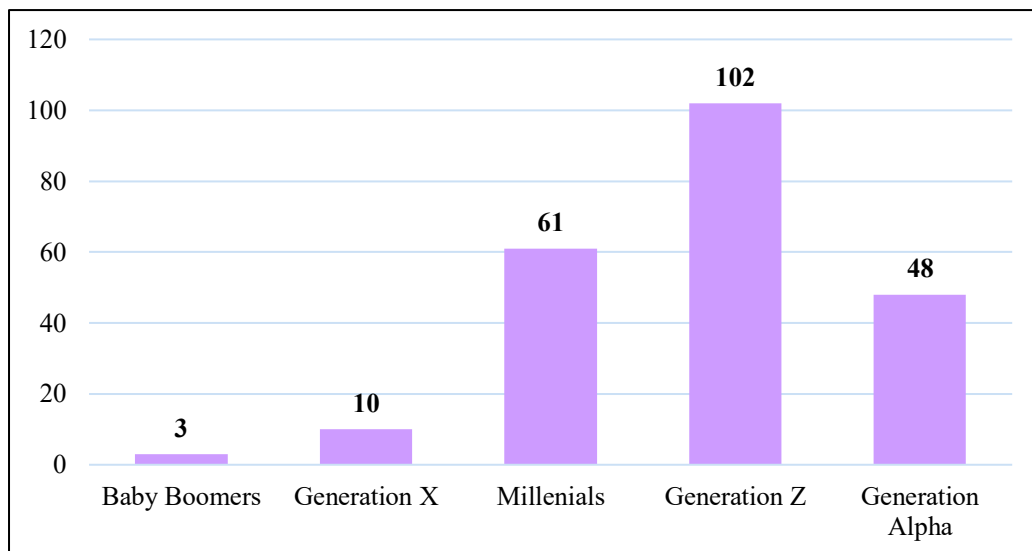
- 7) Changes only at an intrapersonal level and not systematic.
8) Another person argued that the treatment reserved for women will be reserved for men if it goes on like this, hence men will be treated as women are treated now it is supposed.
9) One last person affirms that they lost hope.



Graph 9: Data collected from the question: “In what area do you feel there are or think there could be changes?”

What is noticeable in Graph 9 is the number of times that the option regarding inequality in the education field was chosen (86 times). This, however, did not seem to be the area most affected by society’s expectations of women. In fact, going back to observe Graph 2, the most chosen option was the one about physical appearance. This option was indeed picked 103 times, while the one regarding the education field was only chosen 21 times.

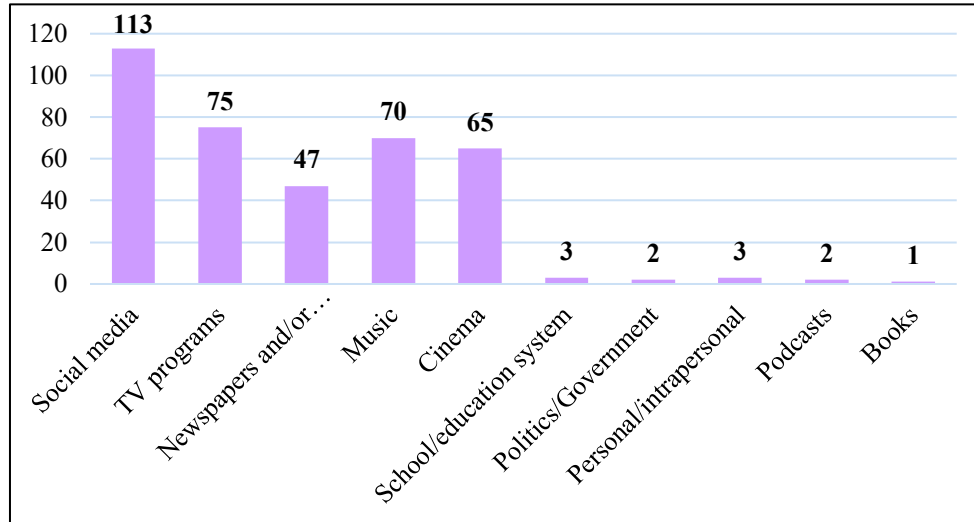
It was also asked which generational group might lead this change in Western society. Also in this case, options were given. Baby Boomers (those born in the period 1946-1964), represented by the first column in Graph 10, were chosen the least (only 3 times), followed by Generation X, which includes those who were born between 1965 and 1980. This option was chosen 10 times. The three most chosen options, as can be seen from the columns in the graph, were the younger generations, hence Millennials (born in the period 1981-1996), Generation Z (people born between 1997 and 2012) and Generation Alpha, the youngest (born 2013 and on). These were chosen respectively 61, 102 and 48 times, showing some sort of hope that the younger generations might be able to lead a significant change in Western society for what expectations of the female gender are concerned.



Graph 10: Data collected from the question: “In your opinion, which generation could lead or is leading this kind of change?”

The last question of the survey focused on which tools and especially media could help lead such changes. To be more specific it was asked “Through what media do you think such a change could be or is conveyed?” The answers were various and once again, respondents provided additional options to those initially given in the questionnaire. Of the ones proposed in the survey, the most picked media seems to be “Social media”, for instance Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook etc. (as can be seen in Graph 11 this was chosen 113 times), followed by “TV-programs” (picked 75 times). Other popular options were “Music” and “Cinema”, selected 70 and 65 times

respectively, as shown in the graph. The least picked option among the ones already provided in the survey was “Newspapers and/or Magazines (online and not)”. This one was only chosen 45 times in total.



Graph 11: Data collected from the question: “Through what media do you think such a change could be or is conveyed?”

The adding options given by the respondents were the following ones:

- School and in general the education system (suggested 3 times).
- Politics and government (added 2 times).
- Personal and intrapersonal. It is supposed the respondents in this case meant that changes could be made through people trying to change themselves and sharing their transformation with others circa the expectations of women. This suggestion was made 3 times.
- Podcasts (suggested 2 times).
- Books (only 1 person suggested this medium).

What can be deduced from the data collected through the questionnaire is that people actually perceive the existence of some sort of expectation created by Western society regarding women. It was also possible to see which areas these expectations concern more, in particular the physical appearance. This topic was thoroughly treated in the monologue taken from *Barbie* (2023), as well as other popular options chosen by the respondents, namely the behaviour women are supposed to show and their wage, as

can be noted in Graph 3, previously described.

Moreover, the large number of positive responses (as seen in Graph 4) to the question concerning whether the text from *Little Women* (2019) were representative or that time period or not, suggests that what was found in the CDA of this text might be true. Therefore, that the text investigated could be considered a faithful representation of the expectations that Western society had of women at the time. The same, in this case, could be also said of the monologue from *Barbie* (2023). In Graph 5 it is possible to see that most of the respondents agree that this text too is representative of the time period in which it is set, namely present-day Western socio-cultural context.

On the basis of this, it may be also noticed how, even though centuries have passed, the situation is pretty much the same. Society's expectations weighing on women in the 19th century appear to be not so different from the ones with which the female gender still deals with today. This is not only noticeable confronting what is said in the text taken from *Little Women* (2019) with the areas these expectations seem to impact described in Graph 3. Amy March talks about money, and how she cannot own her own money. Moreover, as also largely discussed in Chapter Two, from her speech a certain expectation towards motherhood and marriage was perceived. The topic of wage seems also a current issue, since, as already mentioned above in this page, wage is one of the most chosen areas influenced by societal expectations. Furthermore, motherhood and marriage were options suggested by real people participating in the survey, giving the idea that those are also existing expectations on present-day women.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, through the Critical Discourse Analysis of the two texts taken from *Little Women* (2019) and *Barbie* (2023) it was possible to answer the research questions presented in Chapter One of the present dissertation. However, the research that has been carried out also revealed the presence of some limitations as well as the possibility to further explore the main topic of the present paper, hence expectations of women.

During the CDA of the two texts under investigation, several implications and presuppositions were found. These elements have been then analysed with special attention in order to highlight some connections between the texts and the background context in which the monologue itself is embedded. This led to further analysis to uncover any more complex and broader connections with the socio-cultural context that can be related to the Western world. The latter, as already mentioned in the Introduction, mostly include nations that find their roots in North America and Europe. The investigation has led to the confirmation of the hypothesis that the two texts under analysis, and therefore also the implications and presuppositions they contain, are not only linked to the context in which these texts are directly inserted, i.e. the films. Rather, these implications and presuppositions also have appeared to be representative of the real Western context that the films aim to depict. Both texts, in fact, conceal expectations of women, even on similar issues, which in some way reflect the reality of today's Western society. Furthermore, this is also the case of the shorter text taken from *Little Women* (2019), which is set in the 19th century but evokes themes that can also be seen as relevant to today, thus creating a kind of continuum between the situation of women at that time and the current one.

Moreover, such connection to the real Western socio-cultural context is also confirmed by the survey discussed in Chapter Four. The data collected through the questionnaire, which was completed anonymously by a sample of 140 people, has indeed shown that people in real life have perceived and still perceive the presence of some expectations weighing on women in Western society, whose implicit presence has been uncovered during the analyses. The majority of the sample, in fact, expressed

they perceive such expectations in the society they live in or, in any case, in Western society, also on the basis of two excerpts taken from the texts under analysis and included in the questionnaire as examples. This was done to investigate if people could perceive such expectations being included, even though implicitly, in the texts. The results of the survey have been useful to respond to the second research question, which, in fact, asked whether the expectations socio-culturally present in Western society could also be perceived as real by people. The data obtained have served as confirmation for what has been hypothesized by the person conducting the present research. That is, even though Western society appears to be progressive on the surface and seeks to suppress certain types of expectations regarding the female gender, such expectations may still be widely perceived. It must be also specified, that the sample is not entirely composed by women. This means that, even if only a small portion of the sample is male, the majority of the respondents, including these men, has expressed the current presence of expectations weighing on women.

Although the present dissertation answers to both the starting research questions, it is appropriate to recognize that it also presents several potential limitations. These further issues could also be of inspiration and better investigated in future research.

The first limitation identified in this study concerns the fact that it mainly refers to the situation of women in Western society, not considering other societal contexts. This leaves open an equally important question and the personal experience and history of a significant portion of the world's female population. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to consider the situation of women described in this dissertation as representative of a broader reality, for instance by generalising it and including the situation of women in other parts of the world, such as Asia, Africa or in Middle East countries.

Another limitation that this study presents is that it focuses on the analysis of relatively small passages, which are part of movies directed by the same director and that have appeared to show a feminist intent to some level. Therefore, these passages, and consequently the present dissertation, may be perceived by some readers as directly meant to display an image of the Western socio-cultural context that may not be 100% truthful, but only convenient to convey that presumed feminist intention.

Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that the present research did not focus exclusively on the women's situation in nowadays society, but it primarily aimed to find possible connections between the issue of the existence of some expectations weighing on women and the text under analysis. And, even though, a first step has been taken in order to better investigate what people really perceive regarding these expectations, it must be considered that much work remains to be done before a full and global understanding of the extent of issues that are only hinted at in this dissertation is established.

Nevertheless, the limitations presented above may also be a good point of departure for future research that could enrich the scientific literature on this delicate aspect of the female experience of life. For instance, some research regarding the experiences of women in other part of the world might be interesting to investigate the similarities and differences between such societies and the one concerned in the present dissertation, as well as to better understand the singularities of the experience and the role of women in other parts of the world. Moreover, another example of possible future research, might concern different passages taken from other movies, not directed by Greta Gerwig or even directed by men. The Critical analysis of other texts might give a more truthful idea of how language, discourse and the issue of women's role and eventual expectations on the female gender are dealt with in other cinematographic, and non, projects.

In addition to those already mentioned, other avenues of research may be suggested, in order to further investigate issues that were only of secondary importance in the present study, such as the fact whether such expectations of women are exaggerated or not. This was only partially investigated through the questionnaire and hinted to in Chapter Three, while discussing the monologue from *Barbie* (2023).

In summary, the present research has led to a better critical understanding of the texts under analysis, underlining a further connection between language, discourse and reality. It has also provided much additional input for reflection. As a consequence, it is hoped that this study will represent a starting point for further research also towards an understanding of broader and more complex issues concerning the experience and the role that women cover in the world.

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APPENDIX

Italian version of the questionnaire
(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeWBy3zS5MSSKfxhkJI74xugyfoeHrLXVBYCgCATRtY9E_nA/viewform?usp=sf_link):



Società occidentale e aspettative sulle donne: un'indagine

Il presente questionario è completamente anonimo e ha lo scopo di indagare la presenza di aspettative poste dalla società occidentale di oggi sulle donne.

883425@stud.unive.it [Cambia account](#)

Non condiviso

* Indica una domanda obbligatoria

Genere *

☐ Femminile

☐ Maschile

☐ Altro

Età *

☐ 17 o meno

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65 o più

Professione *

- ☐ Studente/ssa
- ☐ Impiegata/o
- ☐ Operaia/o
- ☐ Pensionata/o
- ☐ Altro: _____

**Hai mai percepito, in modo diretto o indiretto, la presenza di aspettative *
da parte della società sulla donna?**

- ☐ Sì
- ☐ No
- ☐ Non so

Se sì, ti sono sembrate aspettative esagerate?

- ☐ Sì
- ☐ No
- ☐ Non so

**Che cosa riguardavano le aspettative che hai percepito o che cosa pensi
possano riguardare? ***

- ☐ Aspetto fisico (per es. peso, altezza, stile d'abbigliamento...)
- ☐ Comportamento (per es. donna silenziosa, intelligente, ingenua, sottomessa...)
- ☐ Istruzione (per es. aspettarsi che una donna vada all'università o no)
- ☐ Professione (per es. donne più adatte a certe professioni rispetto ad altre o che lasci il lavoro per occuparsi dei figli)
- ☐ Retribuzione (per es. ci si aspetta che una donna guadagni meno)
- ☐ Altro: _____

Credi che queste aspettative o l'uso di un certo tipo di linguaggio possano *
essere influenzati da aspetti come...

	1 (non sono per nulla d'accordo)	2 (non credo)	3 (non so)	4 (credo di sì)	5 (sono del tutto d'accordo)
Stereotipi di genere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cultura della nazione di provenienza	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fattori individuali	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Credi che il linguaggio possa nascondere aspettative socio-
culturalmente create e riguardanti la donna? *

(1-non sono d'accordo, 2-non credo, 3-non lo so, 4-credo di sì, 5-sono del
tutto d'accordo)

1 2 3 4 5

Non sono d'accordo ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sono del tutto d'accordo

*"Io non sono un poeta, sono solo una donna. E in quanto donna, non posso
guadagnarmi i miei soldi da sola. Non abbastanza per mantenermi da vivere o
per sfamare la mia famiglia, e se avessi soldi miei, cosa che non ho, quei soldi
apparterrebbero a mio marito nel momento in cui ci sposassimo. E se avessimo
figli, sarebbero i suoi, non i miei. Sarebbero di sua proprietà, quindi non startene
li a dirmi che il matrimonio non è una questione economica, perché lo è.
Potrebbe non essere per te, ma sicuramente lo è per me."* *

Questo passaggio è tratto da un film ambientato a fine 19° secolo.
Credi che quanto detto dal personaggio rispecchi la società occidentale
dell'epoca?

(1-non sono d'accordo, 2-non credo, 3-non lo so, 4-credo di sì, 5-sono del
tutto d'accordo)

1 2 3 4 5

Non sono d'accordo ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sono del tutto d'accordo

*"Devi essere magra, ma non troppo. E non si può mai dire di voler essere magri. *
Devi dire che vuoi essere sana, ma allo stesso tempo devi essere magra. Devi
avere soldi, ma non puoi chiedere soldi perché è volgare. Devi essere un capo, ma
non puoi essere cattiva. Devi comandare, ma non puoi schiacciare le idee degli
altri. Devi amare l'essere madre, ma non parlare dei tuoi figli per tutto il
dannatissimo tempo. [...] Non devi mai invecchiare, mai essere maleducata, mai
metterti in mostra, mai essere egoista, mai cadere, mai fallire, mai mostrare
paura, mai uscire dalle righe. [...]"*

**Questo passaggio è tratto da un film ambientato nella nostra epoca.
Credi che quanto detto dal personaggio rispecchi la società occidentale di
oggi?**

(1-non sono d'accordo, 2-non credo, 3-non lo so, 4-credo di sì, 5-sono del
tutto d'accordo)

1 2 3 4 5
Non sono d'accordo ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sono del tutto d'accordo

**Credi che nei passaggi riportati sopra il linguaggio usato nasconda un
significato implicito/nascosto? ***

- ☐ No
- ☐ Sì
- ☐ Sì, ma solo la prima
- ☐ Sì, ma solo la second
- ☐ Non lo so

**Se sì, credi che un eventuale significato nascosto possa richiamare delle
aspettative create a livello socio-culturale?**

(1-non sono d'accordo, 2-non credo, 3-non lo so, 4-credo di sì, 5-sono del
tutto d'accordo)

1 2 3 4 5
Non sono d'accordo ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Sono del tutto d'accordo

Secondo te la società occidentale di oggi crea delle aspettative sulla donna che potrebbero essere riassunte nel secondo passaggio che hai letto? *

- ☐ Sì
- ☐ No
- ☐ Non so

Se no, credi che queste aspettative siano solamente un costrutto di un movimento o una mente femminista?

- ☐ Sì
- ☐ No
- ☐ Non so

Credi che la società occidentale stia facendo qualcosa per cambiare o stia cambiando da questo punto di vista? (Cioè sul cercare di non imporre certe aspettative) *

- ☐ Sì
- ☐ No
- ☐ Non so

In che ambito ti sembra ci siano o credi ci potrebbero essere dei cambiamenti? *

- ☐ L'aspetto fisico (per es. si cerca di promuovere l'accettazione del proprio corpo...)
- ☐ Disparità sul posto di lavoro
- ☐ Disparità salariale
- ☐ Disparità nell'istruzione (per es. si cerca di eliminare la credenza secondo cui le femmine sarebbero più adatte alle materie umanistiche e non a quelle scientifiche)
- ☐ Altro: _____

Secondo te, un eventuale cambiamento da quale generazione potrebbe essere spinto o è spinto? *

- ☐ Baby Boomers (ca. 1946-1964)
- ☐ Generazione X (ca. 1965-1980)
- ☐ Millenials (ca. 1981-1996)
- ☐ Generazione Z (ca. 1997-2012)
- ☐ Generazione Alpha (ca. 2013-...)

Attraverso quali mezzi credi che un cambiamento di questo tipo potrebbe essere o sia trasmesso?

- ☐ Social media (per es. Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook...)
- ☐ Programmi TV (per es. reality, TG...)
- ☐ Giornali (online e/o cartacei)
- ☐ Musica (il tipo di linguaggio usato nelle canzoni)
- ☐ Cinema
- ☐ Altro: _____

Invia

Cancello modulo

English version of the questionnaire

(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSflCc9BVGo-Wi_mQixTIzvQ1u9f7Vc1_I0vst5SCYegEteATQ/viewform?usp=sf_link):



Western society and expectations of women: a survey

The present questionnaire is completely anonymous and aims to investigate the presence of expectations placed by present-day Western society on women.

883425@stud.unive.it [Cambia account](#) 

 Non condiviso

** Indica una domanda obbligatoria*

Gender *

☐ Feminine

☐ Masculine

☐ Other

Age *

☐ 17 or less

☐ 18 - 24

☐ 25 - 34

☐ 35 - 44

☐ 45 - 54

☐ 55 - 64

☐ 65 or more

Profession *

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Office worker
- ☐ Worker (e.g in a factory)
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other (Specify below)
- ☐ Altro: _____

Have you ever perceived, directly or indirectly, the presence of societal expectations on women? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

If so, did they seem to be exaggerated expectations?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

What were the expectations you perceived about or what do you think they might be about? *

- ☐ Physical appearance (e.g. weight, height,...)
- ☐ Behaviour (e.g. shy or silent woman, intelligent...)
- ☐ Education (e.g. whether to expect a woman to go to university or not)
- ☐ Profession (e.g. women being more suited to certain professions than others or having to leave their jobs to take care of their children)
- ☐ Wage (e.g. a woman is expected to earn less)
- ☐ Other (Specify below)
- ☐ Altro: _____

Do you think these expectations or the use of a certain type of language * can be influenced by matters such as...

	1 (I don't agree at all)	2 (I don't think so)	3 (I don't know)	4 (I think so)	5 (I completely agree)
Gender stereotypes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Culture of the nation of origin	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Individual factors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you believe that language can hide socio-culturally created expectations on women? *

(1- I don't agree, 2- I don't think so, 3- I don't know, 4-I think so, 5-I completely agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	
I don't agree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I completely agree

" Well, I'm not a poet. I'm just a woman. And as a woman, there's no way for me to make my own money. Not enough to earn a living or support my family. And if I had my own money, which I don't, that money would belong to my husband the moment we got married. And 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. It may not be for you, but it most certainly is for me." *

This passage is taken from a film set in the late 19th century.
Do you think what the character says reflects the Western society of the time?

(1- I don't agree, 2- I don't think so, 3- I don't know, 4-I think so, 5-I completely agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	
I don't agree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I completely agree

" You have to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. [...] You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. [...]" *

This passage is taken from a film set in present day.

Do you think that what the character says reflects present-day Western society?

(1- I don't agree, 2- I don't think so, 3- I don't know, 4-I think so, 5-I completely agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	
I don't agree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I completely agree

Do you think that in the above passages the language used hides an implicit/hidden meaning? *

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, but only in the first one
- ☐ Yes, but only in the second one
- ☐ I don't know

If so, do you think a possible hidden meaning could recall socio-culturally created expectations?

(1- I don't agree, 2- I don't think so, 3- I don't know, 4-I think so, 5-I completely agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	
I don't agree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	I completely agree

**In your opinion, does present-day Western society create expectations on *
women that could be summarised in the second passage you read?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

**If not, do you think these expectations are merely a construct of a feminist
movement or mind?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

**Do you think Western society is doing something to change or is
changing in this respect? ***
(i.e. on trying not to impose certain expectations)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

In what area do you feel there are or think there could be changes? *

- ☐ Physical appearance (e.g. an effort is made to promote acceptance of one's
body...)
- ☐ Gender inequality in the workplace (e.g. trying to ensure that women are not
treated differently from men in the workplace)
- ☐ Income inequality between men and women (e.g. efforts are made to ensure
that women are paid equally for the same job position)
- ☐ Inequality in education (e.g. trying to eliminate the belief that females are
better suited to humanities and not scientific subjects)
- ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ Altro: _____

In your opinion, which generation could lead or is leading this kind of change? *

- ☐ Baby Boomers (ca. 1946-1964)
- ☐ Generation X (ca. 1965-1980)
- ☐ Millenials (ca. 1981-1996)
- ☐ Generation Z (ca. 1997-2012)
- ☐ Generation Alpha (ca. 2013-....)

Through what media do you think such a change could be or is conveyed?

- ☐ Social media (e.g. Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook...)
- ☐ TV programs
- ☐ Newspapers and/or Magazines (online and not)
- ☐ Music (e.g. thanks to the kind of vocabulary used in the songs)
- ☐ Cinema
- ☐ Other (Specify below)
- ☐ Altro: _____

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