

Two Feminist Waves and Two Cultures in *Little Women*: An Adaptation Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* into a 2022 Korean television series, focusing on feminist themes across cultural contexts. By examining the portrayal of women's choices and roles, the research reveals how feminist ideas are reimagined for contemporary audiences. Both the novel and the series portray second-wave feminism through characters like Jo March, who challenges traditional gender roles, and third-wave feminism through characters like Meg March, who emphasizes autonomy and personal agency. The Korean series, featuring characters like Oh In-joo and Oh In-hye, illustrates the interplay between traditional values and modern feminist discourse. This study highlights the cultural reinterpretation of feminist values in adaptations.

Keywords: adaptation, feminism, Korean series, *Little Women*, novel

INTRODUCTION

Adaptations from novels to various media forms, including television, movies, stage plays, and novels themselves, are prevalent in modern media (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). When discussing adaptations to movies specifically, the process involves translating rich narratives from print into visual and gestural elements on screen, a tradition dating back to early cinema with films like Georges Méliès' 1902 adaptation of Jules Verne's "A Trip to the Moon" (Hollands, 2002). Adaptations often spark debates over fidelity to the original work; some argue that films inevitably alter novels, potentially detracting from their essence (Hollands, 2002), while others contend that movies can successfully preserve the core of a novel while presenting it in a new format. These discussions underscore the complexities and creative decisions inherent in adaptation processes across different media.

This study explores the adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" into a 2022 Korean television series, focusing on the themes of feminism across different cultural contexts. By examining the portrayal of women's choices, behaviors, and roles in both the novel and its adaptation, this research sheds light on how feminist ideas are reimagined and adapted to resonate with contemporary audiences. This analysis contributes to adaptation studies by illustrating the dynamic relationship between original works and their adaptations, emphasizing the cultural transfer and reinterpretation of feminist values.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach to examine the adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* into a 2022 Korean television series with the same title. The primary data collection involves reading the novel and watching the series, followed by content analysis. Key characters are selected to illustrate the issues addressed, ensuring the chosen scenes and dialogues authentically represent these complexities. The study integrates the theories of cultural transfer and adaptation to analyze how feminist themes are conveyed in both works. This approach highlights the portrayal of women's choices, behaviors, and roles in different cultural contexts, providing a comprehensive understanding of the adaptation process and its implications.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter analyzes the adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* into a 2022 Korean television series, focusing on feminist themes in both works. It examines the portrayal of second and third-wave feminist issues such as choices, behavior, and roles of women.

Issue of Choices in the Novel: Job and Marital Affairs

In the novel, Jo March is depicted as a non-conformist, challenging Victorian norms by choosing a career in writing over marriage. Her independence and self-determination serve as a critique of the restrictive gender roles of her time. Jo's decision to remain single and pursue her passion symbolizes second-wave feminism's call for economic independence and personal agency for women. Specific example from the novel includes Jo's choices in her writing's genre which illustrate her commitment to her personal and professional goals despite societal expectations, as can be seen in the example below:

I do think THE WITCHES CURSE, an Operatic Tragedy is rather a nice thing, but I'd like to try McBETH, if we only had a trapdoor for Banquo. I always wanted to do the killing part. 'Is that a dagger that I see before me?' muttered Jo, rolling her eyes and clutching at the air, as she had seen a famous tragedian do (Alcott, 1868, p.12).

Jo expressed a desire to pursue writing beyond operatic tragedies popular in the Victorian era, aiming to explore themes like those in Shakespeare's "Macbeth." This aspiration reflects a departure from the prevalent Victorian fascination with doomed love and intense emotions depicted in operatic tragedies such as Verdi's "La Traviata" and Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor." Jo's ambition to delve into themes of violence and tragedy, stating, "I always wanted to do the killing part," highlights her intention to challenge stereotypes and venture into less conventional literary territories. Her choice symbolizes a departure from societal norms, opting instead to explore themes and narratives less commonly pursued during that period.

Not only Jo March, her other sibling, Meg March is portrayed as someone who can make a decision on her own life, not based on what others said, in this context is about her marital affair. Meg stated that if she wants to get married, she must marry the one she really loves, as can be seen in the example below:

I couldn't do better if I waited half my life! John is good and wise, he's got heaps of talent, he's willing to work and sure to get on, he's so energetic and brave. Everyone likes and respects him, and

I'm proud to think he cares for me, though I'm so poor and young and silly,' said Meg, looking prettier than ever in her earnestness. 'Aunt March, how dare you say such a thing? John is above such meanness, and I won't listen to you a minute if you talk so,' cried Meg indignantly, forgetting everything but the injustice of the old lady's suspicions. 'My John wouldn't marry for money, any more than I would. We are willing to work and we mean to wait. I'm not afraid of being poor, for I've been happy so far, and I know I shall be with him because he loves me, and I..' Meg stopped there, remembering all of a sudden that she hadn't made up her mind, that she had told 'her John' to go away, and that he might be overhearing her inconsistent remarks. (Alcott, 1868, p. 404 – 405).

In the Victorian era, women were expected to marry and fulfill domestic roles, regardless of their social class. Meg's defiance of societal expectations by choosing John, a man she loves despite his lack of wealth, illustrates her determination to prioritize personal happiness over financial security. Unlike the upper classes, divorce was prohibitively expensive for the lower class, influencing their cautious approach to marriage (McDonnell, 2018). Meg's decision to marry John for love, as portrayed in the novel, challenges conventional norms and emphasizes her willingness to face potential financial challenges for the sake of her happiness and autonomy.

In the novel, Jo March embodies a second wave feminism by defying traditional gender roles and rejecting marriage, focusing instead on her literary ambitions and independence. Her choices challenge Victorian societal expectations for women. In contrast, Meg represents third wave feminism by choosing to marry John, despite familial criticism, asserting her personal agency and validating marriage as a valid path to fulfillment. The novel explores a range of feminist perspectives, emphasizing autonomy in personal aspirations and relationships. Ultimately, *Little Women* celebrates women's diverse choices and their challenges to societal norms across different waves of feminism, highlighting the importance of personal agency and self-determination in feminist discourse.

Issue of Choices in the Korean Series Adaptation: Job Affairs

In the Korean adaptation, themes are modernized with a focus on career and professional life rather than marital relationships. Oh In-joo's storyline exemplifies this shift as she navigates the complexities of investigating the embezzlement and suspicious death of her colleague, Jin Hwa-young. Initially hesitant despite financial offers, Oh In-joo's decision to participate reflects her moral conviction and the intricate balance Korean women face between personal integrity, societal expectations, and professional demands, as illustrated below:

Oh In-joo: I think I might be able to do a good job. But I have a few requests. First, I don't want to return to the office. I'll work somewhere else. The International Orchid Society? You said our CEO is the chairman there, right?

Choi Do-il: I'll take what you'll need there.

Oh In-joo: Second. Please don't call the deceased a thieving bitch.

Shin Hyun-min: What else would I call her?

Oh In-joo: If Hwa-young really committed the crime, of course it would leave you feeling awful. But if you keep calling her a thieving bitch, I feel like you'll tell people I'm a thieving bitch's friend. From where I stand, I still can't believe Hwa-young did something like that. I'll start to find the evidence of her embezzlement and slowly try to believe it. (Won, 2022)

In the Korean series, Oh In-joo boldly investigates her colleague's suspicious death and embezzlement, despite lacking wealth or a strong educational background. Initially offered money for her involvement, she insists on fair compensation, highlighting her ethical stance and

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determination. This challenges stereotypes about women in the workplace and reflects broader societal challenges faced by Korean women in achieving autonomy and fair treatment (Jin-young et al., 2016). Oh In-joo's resolute demeanor and focused gaze symbolize female empowerment and defiance of traditional gender roles.

Oh In-hye, the third child, is depicted as someone who enjoys freedom in making her own life choices. As the youngest among the Oh siblings, Oh In-hye asserts her autonomy by deciding to study abroad in Boston with her friend, Park Hyo-rin, despite familial tensions. In a heated exchange with her older sister Oh In-joo, Oh In-hye expresses her willingness to work as a maid in Hyo-rin's household to avoid causing strife between her siblings. This decision highlights Oh In-hye's determination to pursue her educational aspirations independently, as can be seen in her dialogue below:

Oh In-hye: I'd much rather live as a maid in Hyo-rin's house than live like you two in this house.
Oh In-joo: What?
Oh In-hye: I made up my mind when Mom took off with my field trip money. That I'll do anything to get out of here. Nothing in this world is free, In-joo. If you break your back to send me abroad, how am I supposed to pay you back? You'd already be crippled by then. Mom already submitted her consent to the school. After all, you're not my mom.(Won, 2022).

Oh In-hye's assertion of autonomy challenges traditional Korean family expectations. In a conflict with her older sister Oh In-joo, who believes she can dictate Oh In-hye's choices, Oh In-hye insists on studying abroad with Park Hyo-rin. She rejects familial expectations, asserting her right to decide her future independently. This contrasts with Korean norms of respecting elders and filial piety, which typically guide family decisions (Lee & Holm, 2011). Oh In-hye's firm stance and rebuttal to Oh In-joo's arguments underscore her determination to make her own choices despite familial pressures.

In the Korean series *Little Women*, the Oh sisters' choices reflect both second and third wave feminism. Oh In-joo's pursuit of financial independence and career fulfillment mirrors second wave feminism's focus on women's rights and workplace equality, despite the series being set in the 21st century. This wave emphasized breaking traditional gender roles and promoting women's autonomy in education, careers, and personal aspirations. Meanwhile, the third wave of feminism, embracing inclusivity and diverse choices, underscores the importance of individual agency and personal autonomy. Oh In-joo's career decisions challenge societal norms, while Oh In-hye's choice to study abroad despite familial pressure illustrates her insistence on autonomy, reflecting third wave feminism's emphasis on empowerment and diverse gender experiences.

Issue of Behavior in the Novel: Language, Manner, and Appearance

During the Victorian era, women were expected to embody both physical and emotional fragility while upholding moral superiority. This expectation dictated that women must possess exemplary morals to ensure they could nurture their future children properly. Therefore, at that time, if women are “different” in the context of everything, women are being judged. The example can be seen in the quotation below:

'Jo does use such slang words!' observed Amy, with a reproving look at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. 'Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!' 'That's why I do it.' 'I detest rude, unladylike girls!' 'I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!'"(Alcott, 1868, p.5).

Jo, in the novel, challenges Victorian gender norms through her adoption of a masculine style and language, contrasting sharply with the refined speech expected of women at the time. Criticized for her use of slang and rejection of conventional femininity, Jo defies societal expectations and rejects traditional gender roles. Her behavior anticipates the second wave of feminism's focus on dismantling gender norms and stereotypes. Victorian women were expected to speak formally and deferentially (Cote, 2020), with educated women navigating these boundaries (Marsh, 2023). Jo's unconventional conduct underscores her quest for independence and authenticity, reflecting later feminist ideals in the novel.

Jo is depicted not only as unconventional in her language but also in her mannerisms, such as her preference for boyish activities and disdain for wearing long gowns. Her tomboyish behavior sets her apart from her siblings and is evident in the following example:

'I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty,' cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane. 'I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China Aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!' And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room (Alcott, 1868, p.5-6).

Jo's tomboyish nature is evident from her statement where she openly expresses her aversion to being a conventional girl. She boldly asserts, "It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games and work and manners!" rejecting societal expectations placed on girls. Throughout the story, Jo's defiance is highlighted by her engagement in traditionally male-dominated activities like climbing trees and prioritizing writing over needlework. Her disdain for feminine behavior and attire, coupled with her preference for adventurous pursuits typically associated with boys, further illustrates her rebellion against traditional gender roles.

In the novel, Victorian women were expected to conform to societal stereotypes, primarily centered around fulfilling familial duties. They embodied selflessness and dedication, sacrificing personal ambitions for the well-being of their families. The concept of domesticity defined womanhood, emphasizing a woman's role in creating a loving home environment and prioritizing her family's needs over her own aspirations, such as education and career advancement (Gökçek, 2020). Despite these norms, Jo from the novel diverges from this pattern as an unmarried woman who sacrifices her hair to help support her family financially. Her act underscores her commitment to familial welfare, despite not conforming to traditional roles expected of women in Victorian society.

Despite her unconventional behaviors as noted earlier, Jo demonstrates a strong sense of morality. Throughout the novel, Jo consistently emphasizes her desire to be true to herself and not conform to societal expectations. However, her attitude shifts when it concerns her family, revealing her selfless nature. An example of this can be seen in the following instance:

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'Tell me all about it, Jo. I am not quite satisfied, but I can't blame you, for I know how willingly you sacrificed your vanity, as you call it, to your love. But, my dear, it was not necessary, and I'm afraid you will regret it one of these days,' said Mrs. March. 'No, I won't!' returned Jo stoutly, feeling much relieved that her prank was not entirely condemned. 'What made you do it?' asked Amy, who would as soon have thought of cutting off her head as her pretty hair. 'Well, I was wild to something for Father,' replied Jo, as they gathered about the table, for healthy young people can eat even in the midst of trouble. 'I hate to borrow as much as Mother does, and I knew Aunt March would croak, she always does, if you ask for a ninepence. Meg gave all her quarterly salary toward the rent, and I only got some clothes with mine, so I felt wicked, and was bound to have some money, if I sold the nose off my face to get it'. (Alcott, 1868, p.288 – 289).

In the novel, Jo confronts economic hardship when her father's illness requires her mother's presence in Washington. To support her family, Jo selflessly sells her long hair, a symbol of her identity and independence, to alleviate their financial strain. This act showcases Jo's resourcefulness, sacrificial spirit, and deep familial devotion. By contributing financially and rejecting traditional gender roles, Jo demonstrates agency and independence contrary to societal expectations of passive domesticity. Her preference for writing and outdoor activities over feminine pursuits aligns with second wave feminism's emphasis on dismantling restrictive gender norms and advocating for gender equality (Soken-Huberty, 2023). Jo's defiance of societal expectations invites readers to reconsider conventional gender roles, offering a narrative of feminist resistance and empowerment.

Issue of Behavior in The Korean Series Adaptation: Emotional Expressions

In the Korean series adaptation, the Oh sisters display non-traditional behaviors that align with feminist movements, challenging conventional gender roles and societal norms. For instance, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung take on motherly roles. The context of this scene is a dinner scene with the Oh siblings and their mother. During their dinner, their mother counts the money from Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung's savings meant for Oh In-hye birthday present, allowing her to go on a study tour to Europe. However, their mother, who is very money-minded, believes Oh In-hye shouldn't go. This angers Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung, as illustrated in the transcript below:

Oh In-kyung: Mom, In-hye goes to the best arts high school in the country. Did we help her get there? She took the test on her own and got a full scholarship.
Mother: But, that.. I thought she got in as a charity case for underprivileged kids.
Oh In-joo: When In-hye started school, In-kyung and I made a pact. That even if she can't be like the other kids, we'd make sure that she never feels embarrassed.
Mother: In-joo, have you ever gone on a field trip? How about you, In-kyung? I couldn't send either of you on a field trip. Not to Gyeongju, Busan, or Jeju. So as a mother, how can I only let her travel abroad?
Oh In-kyung: If In-hye was getting her parents' support like other kids, we could be jealous of our baby sister like ordinary people. But even though In-joo and I have so much debt we need to pay off, we're so happy we can send our sister on a field trip to Europe.
Oh In-joo: (take the money from her mother) Stop counting on that. (Won, 2022).

In the scene, the Oh siblings' mother challenges traditional caregiving roles by prioritizing herself over her family, contrary to the stereotype of self-sacrificing South Korean mothers (Kim, 2001). Typically expected to prioritize family needs and endure hardships for their well-being, the mother's actions create complex dynamics and conflicts within the family. A debate ensues when

she argues it's unfair that her daughters refuse to give her money, while Oh In-joo explains they've been paying off debts for Oh In-hye's future. Despite her claim of unfairness, the mother later takes the money and leaves. Oh In-joo's serious and disappointed expression highlights her dedication to her sister's well-being, sharply contrasting with their mother's selfish behavior.

Not only within the family context, but emotional expression is also evident in their professional lives. In the series, Oh In-kyung demonstrates her bravery by standing up to someone more powerful than her. Oh In-kyung demonstrates courage by standing up for what she believes is right. This scene takes place during Park Jae-sang's press conference for the launch of his foundation, the Park Jae-sang Foundation. As is typical, he invites journalists to ask questions. Oh In-kyung, a journalist herself, attends the press conference. While other journalists ask about his foundation, Oh In-kyung diverges from the topic. Instead of inquiring about the foundation, she questions him about his involvement in the Bobae Bank case, as shown in the transcript below:

- Oh In-kyung:* You represented Bobae in the Bobae Savings Bank Case. Among the 32 people arrested, four of the people you defended committed suicide. Do you have anything to say about that?
- Park Jae-sang:* Well, I'm not sure. I was one of thirteen attorneys working for the law firm Hwang and Moon, who had taken on the case. That is my answer.
- Oh In-kyung:* It's true that 13 attorneys defended those 4 defendants, but you were the only one who worked with all four of them. Is that a coincidence?
- Park Jae-sang:* What was your name again?
- Oh In-kyung:* I'm Oh In-kyung from OBN. (Won, 2022).

In this context, Oh In-kyung demonstrates her bravery by questioning Park Jae-sang. Instead of asking general questions, she poses ones that could jeopardize her career. Her seriousness is evident in her eyes, as shown in Figure 4. After her inquiry, Park Jae-sang's curiosity about her increases, highlighted by the camera shifting to his face before returning to Oh In-kyung. This marks the end of the scene. Given the emphasis on respecting authority and seniority in traditional or hierarchical work environments, it is uncommon in South Korea for women with lower educational backgrounds to confront someone with higher status about a controversial issue (Jae-hee, 2011). Thus, Oh In-kyung's actions towards Park Jae-sang are quite atypical, especially considering her lower educational background.

The Oh siblings in the Korean series *Little Women* reflect second and third-wave feminism by challenging traditional gender norms in South Korea. Second-wave feminism, focusing on education, occupations, and autonomy (Soken-Huberty, 2023), contrasts with the expected obedience of South Korean daughters (Kim et al., 2023). The Oh sisters defy stereotypes: they reclaim money for Oh In-hye against their mother's wishes, Oh In-joo exposes an affair to protest a colleague's death, and Oh In-kyung questions Park Jae-sang despite risks, aligning with second-wave feminist activism. Their decision to act as "mothers" to Oh In-hye exemplifies third-wave feminism's emphasis on choice and autonomy. This is evident in Oh In-joo's commitment to ensure In-hye never feels embarrassed (Won, 2022), showcasing their autonomy and adherence to third-wave feminist principles.

Issue of Women's Role in The Novel: The Family's Provider

This subchapter delves into the portrayal of women in the novel "Little Women" and their evolving roles. It examines how the novel challenges societal norms by depicting women who

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transcend traditional expectations. In the novel *Little Women*, women are portrayed as active, dynamic individuals rather than passive participants confined by stereotypes. The female characters assume roles as providers for their families, reshaping conventional ideas of gender roles and responsibilities. For instance, Jo exemplifies the role of family provider through her sacrifices for her family as can be seen below:

I hadn't the least idea of selling my hair at first, but as I went along I kept thinking what I could do, and feeling as if I'd like to dive into some of the rich stores and help myself. In a barber's window I saw tails of hair with the prices marked, and one black tail, not so thick as mine, was forty dollars. It came to me all of a sudden that I had one thing to make money out of, and without stopping to think, I walked in, asked if they bought hair; and what they would give for mine (Alcott, 1868, p.289).

During the Victorian era, the March family faced financial strain due to Mr. March's absence and illness from the Civil War. To support her family, Jo challenges gender norms by deciding to cut and sell her long, beautiful hair—a significant sacrifice symbolizing her selflessness and determination. Prompted by seeing hair for sale in a barbershop window, Jo acts decisively to prioritize her family's needs over her own. This impulsive yet practical decision reflects the limited opportunities for women to earn money and critiques societal expectations that confined women to domestic roles. Jo's willingness to sacrifice her hair highlights her independence and agency, questioning stereotypes of women as dependent and showcasing her determination to provide for her family despite societal constraints.

Not only supports the family economically, Jo, as the family's provider, also supports her family in terms of dedication and time. It can be seen in the example below:

Jo never left her for an hour since Beth had been ill, and all her efforts seemed to make no impression. Night after night she stayed, sleeping on the floor; ready to help with the feverish fancies that assailed the poor little head (Alcott, 1868, p.290).

When Beth's health worsens, the March household is engulfed in anxiety and fear. Jo becomes a pillar of strength, embodying steadfast devotion and selflessness as she assumes the role of primary caregiver. The quoted passage illustrates Jo's tireless efforts to comfort Beth, depicting her as a constant presence by her sister's bedside through long, difficult nights. Jo's actions reveal the depth of her love for Beth and the profound bond between the March sisters. This scene reflects the themes of familial solidarity and resilience, emphasizing the power of love and sacrifice to sustain the human spirit.

During the Victorian era, women were expected to prioritize family roles and caregiving, emphasizing self-sacrifice and duty within the family unit. Jo's decision to care for Beth, sacrificing her own comfort, aligns with these societal values of sisterhood and familial bonds, highlighting virtues of loyalty and devotion central to Victorian ideals. Jo's journey from spirited youth to compassionate caregiver illustrates her personal growth within these roles. Additionally, Jo's actions reflect aspects of both second wave and third-wave feminism: selling her hair challenges gender norms and supports her family, resonating with second-wave ideals of women's agency, while her pursuit of writing and assertion of autonomy align with third-wave feminism's emphasis on independent life choices. Louisa May Alcott portrays Jo as embodying feminist ideals across different waves, depicting female assertiveness and resistance to patriarchal constraints.

Issue of Women's Role in the Korean Series Adaptation: The Family's Leaders

This section examines the portrayal of women in the Korean adaptation of *Little Women*, highlighting their evolving roles. It challenges societal norms by presenting women who defy traditional expectations. By analyzing the characters' complexities, the aim is to show how *Little Women* portrays women as vibrant individuals and family leaders, reshaping conventional gender roles and celebrating women's agency and resilience.

In many families, the eldest daughter often feels a deep sense of responsibility for her younger siblings (K. Wu et al., 2018). In the Korean adaptation, Oh In-joo, as the first daughter, assumes the role of protector for her sisters. Oh In-joo takes on the role of family leader. In this scene, Oh In-joo finds her youngest sister, Oh In-hye, at Park Hyo-rin's house, having accepted money from Park Hyo-rin's mother despite previously refusing it. Outraged, Oh In-joo intervenes to protect her sister from embarrassment as can be seen in the dialogue below:

- Won Sang-a:* *I hope you don't misunderstand. I happened to see her paintings and I loved them. So I asked her if she could paint with my daughter, Hyo-rin. I thought they'd be a good influence on each other. The money was for cab fare.*
- Oh In-joo:* *I won't misunderstand. And we don't need cab fare (give the money back). Hyo-rin, come over to our place next time (Hyo-rin smiles).*
- Won Sang-a:* *In-hye has such a dependable sister. I heard she didn't have a mother. It must be hard for you. If I were you, I would've been scared since In-hye is so talented. Come over for some tea next time. We can share notes (gives the money back to In-joo).*
- Oh In-joo:* *(refuses the money) It's okay. (Won, 2022).*

Oh In-joo assumes a leadership role for her sister by rejecting charity from Park Hyo-rin's mother, asserting their self-reliance and dignity. Holding Oh In-hye's hand during a conversation with Won Sang-a demonstrates solidarity and support, emphasizing their shared challenges. When Won Sang-a suggests Oh In-joo should protect Oh In-hye more due to their lack of a mother, Oh In-joo firmly declines the money again, reinforcing her role as protector and leader. These actions highlight Oh In-joo's deep sense of responsibility and unwavering support for her sister's well-being, showcasing their strong bond and Oh In-joo's crucial presence in her sister's life.

In the Korean series adaptation, both Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung demonstrate their commitment to protecting their family, especially their sister Oh In-hye. Oh In-kyung attempts to persuade Oh In-hye to return home, but Oh In-hye insists on staying with Park Hyo-rin's influential family, who have offered to finance her education abroad. Despite facing obstacles, including Park Hyo-rin's family's guarded house and their social status, Oh In-kyung remains resolute in her determination to rescue her sister. She climbs a power pole and shouts to get Oh In-hye's attention, highlighting her relentless efforts despite the challenges she faces as illustrated below:

- Oh In-kyung:* *In-hye! Your painting was absolutely beautiful! You must've been devastated to sell it off! I'm sorry for failing to protect you! When I was in high school, I hated to going home too! Do you know why I still came home every day? It was because you were waiting for me!*
- Oh In-hye go out without any words.*
- Oh In-kyung bring Oh In-hye go, and she goes back again.*
- Oh In-kyung:* *Mr. Park Jae-sang. Hyo-rin's father. You have everything. So why are you eyeing the youngest girl of a poor family?*

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Oh In-hye: Be quiet. Let's just go.
Oh In-kyung: Let me tell you. She is the person I love the most in the world. If you ruin her, I won't sit back. I'll chase you to the ends of the earth and make you pay. (Won, 2022).

In the dialogue, Oh In-kyung shows unwavering commitment to protecting her sister, taking on the role of family guardian with determination. She confronts threats directly, warning Park Jae-sang and demonstrating her care even while visibly affected by alcohol. Climbing a power pole to call out to her sister underscores her courage and deep concern. Oh In-kyung's actions portray her as a fearless defender of her family's honor and safety, embodying qualities of bravery and steadfast commitment. In challenging traditional norms, both sisters exemplify Korean cultural values of prioritizing family bonds and responsibilities, despite personal sacrifices typically expected of male siblings.

Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung embody both Confucian principles of filial piety, particularly "hyo" extending to siblings (Chin et al., 2011), and themes from second and third-wave feminism. Their determination to protect each other reflects deep responsibility and challenges gender norms in Korean society. Traditionally associated with male roles, their fierce protectiveness upholds family integrity and honor, defying gender expectations. These actions resonate with second-wave feminism's focus on workplace equality and women's agency (Pruitt, 2023), while their courage in confronting danger exemplifies third-wave feminism's celebration of empowerment and diversity. By defying traditional roles, Oh In-joo and Oh In-kyung illustrate women's ability to lead and protect within families and society, embodying resilience and autonomy central to feminist ideals.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the adaptation of *Little Women* into a 2022 Korean television series, focusing on feminist themes conveyed through characters' choices and roles. In the novel, Jo March embodies second-wave feminism by rejecting traditional gender roles for a writing career, emphasizing liberation and equality. Meg March represents third-wave feminism by choosing marriage based on love and personal agency, highlighting individuality. The Korean adaptation modernizes these themes through characters like Oh In-joo and Oh In-hye, reflecting contemporary struggles for autonomy and empowerment. Their journeys underscore self-determination and negotiation of societal expectations, aligning with third-wave ideals emphasizing personal choice and intersectionality. The series showcases women asserting their choices amidst complex social landscapes, demonstrating the evolution of feminist thought from liberation to diversity.

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