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A Heterotopia Divided: Spaces of Labor in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*

Bölünmüş bir Heterotopya: Louisa May Alcott'un *Küçük Kadınlar* Romanında Emek Mekanları

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Abstract

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the development of industrialization and the surging waves of immigration had drastic effects on the condition of the American working class. Coinciding with the Civil War and the following Reconstruction era, this period saw a stronger and more determined labor movement in organizing trade unions and resolving several work-related problems. Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* (1868) in such a social and economic climate. This essay will explore the novel's spatial configuration of the existing labor conditions as two different heterotopias by turning to how Louisa May Alcott organized characters and space in *Little Women*. Drawing from Foucault and Harvey's approaches to space, the essay will argue that the March family home functions as a labor heterotopia, and Jo March founds a counter-heterotopia against it. In other words, while the March house depicts, confronts and reverses the conditions of American labor in the Civil War era, Jo March attempts to follow the same procedure so as to counteract the order in her family home. Jo's counteraction is determined by her act of writing, which gives her an individual and independent voice. Yet, more importantly, her authorship that lets her develop her own working conditions has effects beyond the garret she uses for writing. The purpose of this essay is to re-read Jo March's character in terms of her function in both heterotopias, and to show that she constantly negotiates between these domestic and intellectual labor heterotopias in an attempt to empower her sisters.
Keywords: Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, heterotopia, labor, characterization.

Öz

On dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında sanayileşmenin gelişimi ve yükselen göç dalgaları Amerikan işçi sınıfının koşulları üzerinde büyük etkisi olmuştur. Amerikan İç Savaşı ve sonrasındaki yeniden yapılanma süreciyle kesişen bu dönem, sendikalar örgütlemekte ve çalışma koşullarıyla ilgili birçok sorunu çözmekte daha güçlü ve kararlı bir emek hareketine tanıklık etmiştir. Louisa May Alcott, *Küçük Kadınlar* (1868) romanını böyle bir toplumsal ve ekonomik iklimde yazmıştır. Bu makale, Louisa May Alcott'un *Küçük Kadınlar*'daki karakterleri ve uzamı nasıl düzenlediğine bakarak, romanın mevcut emek koşullarının iki farklı heterotopya biçimindeki uzamsal kurgulanışını inceleyecektir. Foucault ve Harvey'nin uzam yaklaşımlarından yararlanan bu makale, March ailesinin evinin bir emek heterotopyası işlevi gördüğünü, Jo March'ın ise ona karşı kendi karşı-heterotopyasını kurduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, March ailesinin evi Amerikan İç Savaşı döneminin emek koşullarını ele alır, eleştirir ve tersine çevirirken, Jo March kendi aile evinin düzenine karşı çıkmak için aynı işlemleri izler. Jo'nun karşı hamlesi, ona özgün ve bağımsız bir ses kazandıran yazma edimiyle belirlenmiştir. Ancak, daha da önemlisi, kendi çalışma koşullarını geliştirmesini sağlayan yazarlığının, yazmak için kullandığı tavanarasının ötesinde etkilerinin olmasıdır. Bu makalenin amacı, Jo March'ın

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karakterini her iki heterotopyadaki işlevine göre yeniden okumak ve onun, kız kardeşlerini güçlendirme çabasıyla, sürekli olarak ev emeği ve düşünsel emek heterotopyaları arasında arabuluculuk yaptığını göstermektir.
Anahtar sözcükler: Louisa May Alcott, *Küçük Kadınlar*, heterotopya, emek, karakter.

Introduction

In her introduction to the 2001 edition Broadview edition of *Little Women*, Anne Hiebert Alton mentions Louisa May Alcott's style and the significance of the novel, but imediately adds "[a]t the heart of the story, however, is Jo. [...] Jo delights readers with her boundless energy, her independence, her stubbornness, and her quirky individuality" (p. 10). Nicole Maruo-Schröder also acknowledges Jo as "the novel's most popular character" because Jo's transformation from a strong-willed and boyish young woman to the dutiful wife of an aged professor "led to a variety of different, sometimes contradictory readings" (p. 399). Furthermore, Elaine Showalter asserts that "Jo March has become the most influential figure of the independent and creative American woman" and inspired female authors and intellectuals ever since the novel was published (p. 42). As an aspiring female author, Jo has also come to voice the struggles of female authorship. Accordingly, her persistence to write, mature her style and earn a living by publishing stories have been associated with Alcott's own experiences. Showalter, for example, writes that the author "takes Jo through a literary progress that resembles her own pilgrimage" (p. 59); in addition, Christy Rishoi maintains that the novel "is an idealized version of Louisa May Alcott's own childhood that vividly illustrates how girls are socialized to be women, particularly through Alcott's fictional self, Jo March" (p. 66). The transformation of Jo's literary style from sensational thrillers in *Little Women* (1868) to moral juvenile fiction in *Good Wives* (1869), therefore, is interpreted by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar as the author's self-denial in that "it is hypocritical of her to continue writing such tales herself" (p. 70), considering that she published such works even after Jo's aversion from them[1]. In brief, Alcott's *Little Women* has led feminist literary scholars to concentrate their efforts on studying Jo March as the central character of the novel.

Jo's seeming centrality is, however, hampered by her liminal position in two workspaces, namely the domestic space in which she unwillingly continues to do the housework, and her chamber in the garret which she transforms into an office for writing. In this sense, although she has been considered central, that does not qualify her as the novel's hero. It is true that Jo is given a privileged position in terms of character-space, as her name is mentioned more than any other character in the novel[2]. Nevertheless, while Jo is attributed with agency, she is not the subject whose quest for her desire constitutes the plot. Even though the novel starts with her complaint about the family's recent economic difficulties arising from the father's absence and wartime conditions, she raises the collective voice of the women in the family and emphasizes the father's absence as the cause of the family's collective suffering. At best, in her struggle to develop an independent voice, she might be the subject of her own subplot never realized and gradually hampered in the sequels. Conversely, her prominence in the novel comes from her liminality, which gives her a power emanating from her labor and a negotiating function for easing and regulating the female characters' survival in what is presented as a decentered family.

It is not surprising that Jo's negotiating function coincides with her father's absence. His absence transforms the house into a space in which all social codes are revised. The family's economic loss created by this absence is emphasized in *Little Women*'s first sentence, with Jo's complaint that "Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents" (Alcott, 2008, p. 11), implying the disparity between the family's previous and recent economic conditions. Such economic difficulties introduce the concept of work into the March household, and several labor-related issues of the Civil War era thus enter the novel, albeit in

[1] The contemporary scholarship on Alcott's works has led to a revaluation of her publications other than the *Little Women* series. It is known that in between the publication of *Little Women* [1868] and *Jo's Boys* [1886], Alcott continued to publish sensational narratives such as *A Modern Mephistopheles* [1877] and *A Whisper in the Dark* [1877].
[2] In the first book of *Little Women*, also known as *Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy*, Jo's diminutive and proper names are used 613 times, whereas the same scores for Meg, Beth and Amy are 472, 244 and 229 respectively.

different forms. In other words, Alcott uses the absence of the father as a juncture for modelling what might be called a labor heterotopia for middle-class women. In his essay titled "Of Other Spaces", Michel Foucault defines the term heterotopia as "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (p. 24). The March house similarly represents, contests and inverts the labor conditions in the Civil War era through the novel's treatment of child labor, apprentice training, closed shops, immigrant laborers (specifically Irish immigrant workers) and the regulation of work hours. Jo's negotiating function emerges in the domestic space as she bargains with the labor heterotopia of the March house to establish and maintain her counter-heterotopia of intellectual labor. Jo's authorship requires a space outside the labor heterotopia of the March house, but simultaneously creates another work environment where she pursues her work in discipline. Jo's counter-heterotopia is, therefore, far from offering her absolute liberation from work, since it introduces a different set of codes and conventions. Her intellectual labor not only gives her empowerment, but also lets her organize creative practices with her sisters, offers her payment, makes her realize work conditions outside the March house, and consequently opens the family home to the outside.

In this paper, I will examine the heterotopic configurations of labor in the mid-nineteenth-century United States by turning to how Louisa May Alcott organized characterization and space in *Little Women*. To this end, I will focus on the first book in Alcott's series[3], since this is the book that initiates and encapsulates Jo March's negotiating function. In the following study, I will show that Jo's characterization as a negotiator originates in her being a laborer whose ability to work in two sectors gives her a liminal position. For this, I will explain the labor heterotopia of the March house and Jo's counter-heterotopia of intellectual labor. The purpose of this essay is to re-read Jo March's character in terms of her function in both heterotopias so as to show that Jo constantly negotiates between domestic and intellectual labor heterotopias, which results in the potential empowerment of all the young female characters in the novel.

The Other Space of Labor

The all-female house in *Little Women* encapsulates the private and domestic space of the Civil War era, during which the male members of American families were conscripted for military service; yet simultaneously (and ironically) it is where national, republican and abolitionist ideals are embodied and realized, despite the fact that the March family home is safe from the war zone and outside the real-political realm. This convergence of the private and the public is due to the novel's ironic configuration of the March house. Far from being a cozy and comfortable nest, Alcott depicts the March house as a workspace, where all the female members of the family do the housework. Aşkın Çelikkol indicates that the republican ideals of the American Revolution transformed society not through a novel distribution of wealth and educational resources, at least initially, but through a revaluation of labor, which aristocracy had long depreciated. Çelikkol writes "[e]ducation, intelligence, decorum and wealth all came to be refigured around this single principle and benevolent act of laboring. With laboring came equality, and the sovereignty of the public" (2019, p. 43). The house as a workplace symbolically keeps the house undivided by following Abraham Lincoln's metaphor in his famous "A House Divided" speech of 1858 and maintains the one out of many by gathering the family members for a common cause in accordance with the American motto "E Pluribus Unum". Although the March sisters belong to the same family, a binding common cause is deemed necessary, since the family members are initially presented with a lack of unity in their physical descriptions, manners and interests. That Meg is "very pretty", Jo has a "comical nose", Beth has a "shy manner, a timid voice" and Amy has "blue eyes and yellow hair" (Alcott, 2008, p. 14) indicate their noticeable differences.

[3] The confusion in the title of *Little Women* is related to its publication history. Upon the popular success *Little Women* received after its publication in the United States, Alcott rapidly completed its sequel as the second volume. When the novel was published in the United Kingdom in 1880, the two books were printed as a single novel titled *Little Women*. In this edition, the novel and its sequel are organized as two parts, titled "Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy" and "Good Wives" respectively. In this study, I use the title *Little Women* for the first book in order to follow the original publication of this volume.

Furthermore, Meg's preoccupation with her physical appearance, Jo's authorship, Beth's interest in playing the piano and Amy's fascination with valuable objects suggest that their interests vary. Housework done together thus symbolically resolves the problem of potential disintegration in the March family.

It is not a coincidence that *Little Women*'s publication corresponds to the rise of industrial labor in the United States. By the mid-nineteenth century, the United States had already left the Jeffersonian ideal of agricultural society and begun its transformation towards industrialization. Several technological innovations had paved the path for the surmounting industrialization that would later define the Gilded Age, such as Samuel Cunard's first transatlantic steamship line in 1846 and Samuel Morse's first electronic telegraph in 1844. Yet the gradual development of the transcontinental railroad, which took decades to finalize, marked the potential ramifications of industrialization in the United States. Aside from its contribution to the Union's victory in the Civil War by establishing the connection between the Northeast and the Northwest, the railroad was essential to American industrialization in that it required heavy industry for the production of railway materials and the manpower for construction. The railroad's greatest impact was, however, its transformative power. Hugh Brogan writes that the long period of building the railway "created and sustained hundreds and thousands of new jobs; new coal and iron mines; new coking plants [...] new iron and steelworks; new towns, which were also new markets; new skills; and new forms of financial and industrial organization," (p. 380) and concludes that it led to the urbanization of the United States. From this perspective, he considers the railway the American version of the Industrial Revolution. Newly organized agriculture, on the other hand, increased productivity yet significantly dropped the demand for agricultural work force (Trachtenberg, 2007, p. 53). Alcott's *Little Women* was, therefore, composed not only in the context of the American Civil War, but also in a climate of gradually rising industrialization.

The rise of industrialization in the United States led to the revitalization of trade unionism. For example, Philip Foner documents American laborers' brewing discontent with low wages, high prices, dismal working conditions, the introduction of machinery (which narrowed down the number of jobs), and the increasing number of apprentices as replacement for skilled mechanics (pp. 339-40). Against these conditions, a gradually increasing number of laborers started to organize in trade unions with the cooperation of female workers from several trades. With the formation of Worker Women's Protective Union in 1863, female workers had the opportunity to learn different skills needed in other trades; they also received further training for their present skills to increase their wages and helped recruit male and female laborers to several trade unions (Foner, 1972, pp. 341-2). This combined force started to organize strikes and boycotts, initiated the Eight Hour Movement to limit work hours, organized the labor press, and sought to establish national federations for scattered trade unions, although the unionist laborers were demonized on the grounds that they were immigrants. All these labor-related issues of the era are reverberated in Alcott's configuration of the March house.

Little Women is not Alcott's only work that depicts female labor. Before and after *Little Women*, Alcott published *Hospital Sketches* (1863) and *Work: A Story of Experience* (1875), both of which depict women who decide to work. The female characters in both novels attach value to labor even at the stage of taking the decision to work. In the semi-autobiographical *Hospital Sketches*, for example, Tribulation Periwinkle's excitement for a suggestion to "nurse the soldiers" is encapsulated in the exclamation mark as she says, "I will!" (Alcott, 1993, p. 3). Christie in *Work* announces her decision to her aunt with great joy and calls it "a new Declaration of Independence" (Alcott, 1875, p. 1). Yet in these two examples, the female characters leave their homes for the workplace, and they seek professionalism so that they can be employed in a regulated work environment where they develop an expertise. While Tribulation does charitable work and is not paid, she performs the profession of nursing, and Christie enters different work environments where she is paid for domestic work. In *Little Women*, however, domestic work is unpaid and calls for affective labor as well. It is in this very sense that, unlike the settings in Alcott's other labor-related works, the March house is a labor heterotopia, because the actual work conditions of the Civil War era (and of the Reconstruction era in which Alcott published the novel) are inverted and revised in order to form an alternative space which is not originally a workspace.

The March house is obviously all-female, but aside from the mother, the maid and the eldest sister Meg, it is also all-children. In other words, the house heavily invests on child labor. The issue is known to

be a severe problem during the rise of industrial labor in Europe and the United States. Friedrich Engels, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, documents the surging demand for female and child workers for more intricate jobs in the textile industry, as the muscular power of male workers were transferred to heavy industries (p. 164-5). Furthermore, describing the condition of the American working class, Stephan Thernstrom writes "a great wave of working-class children entered the labour market during the Civil War decade" (p. 108). In line with the reformists of the following decades, known as "child savers", the labor heterotopia in *Little Women* keeps the working children at home under a caretaker's supervision and protection. As an alternative model of child labor, this heterotopia makes the March girls engage in domestic work in limited hours and provides them with enough nourishment. In one instance, the girls set to work after dinner and from the words of the narrator, "the needles flew as the girls made sheets for Aunt March. It was uninterested sewing, but to-night no one grumbled" (Alcott, 2008, p. 21). This work stops at nine o'clock in the evening and the girls start singing by the piano before they go to bed (p. 21). In terms of child labor, regulated work hours, occasional free time and adequate nourishment are not only improvements for the mid-nineteenth century, but they also imply a model closer to an apprenticeship program which prepares the children for their future individual households.

Considered an alternative to the limitations of a strictly regulated social order, the term heterotopia has been positively valued by a number of scholars. For example, in his own formulation of Foucault's heterotopia with the term thirdspace, Edward Soja states that "[e]verything comes together in thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable ... the disciplined and the transdisciplinary" (pp. 56-7). Because of its definition of thirdspace as a potentially creative and imaginative medium, Soja's conceptual framework attaches positive value to heterotopia. David Harvey, in particular, criticizes such an approach and turns to Kevin Hetherington, who defines heterotopia as "spaces of alternate social ordering" (p. viii), and maintains that it regulates a certain aspect of the social world differently. In Hetherington's reformulation of heterotopia, Harvey finds a pertinent remark for order: Heterotopia is not a space of boundless liberation from social order; in contrast, it is an establishment of an order distinct from the existing one. For this reason, Harvey reminds that Disneyland and shopping malls are also heterotopias, and maintains that "what at first sight as so open by virtue of its multiplicity suddenly appears either as banal [...] or as a more sinister fragmentation of spaces that are closed, exclusionary, and even threatening" (p. 185). Such negative qualities of heterotopia are not disregarded by Foucault himself. In his essay that treats the concept in full, Foucault lists psychiatric hospitals and prisons as heterotopias of deviation "in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (1986, p. 25). Considering that Foucault delivered the speech on which "Of Other Spaces" is based eight years before the publication of his *Discipline and Punish*, Harvey concludes that he abandoned the concept due to its failure to constitute a viable alternative. To be precise, the closest Foucault gets to heterotopia in his later work is the Mettray penal colony for young offenders. A concentration of "all the coercive technologies of behavior" (Foucault, 1995, p. 293), this prison model is shown to embody the function of a family, an army, a workshop, a school and a court. As a heterotopia, the March house functions similarly: It exerts limits to the girls' potentials and reforms them as prospective housewives in a closed workspace of alternative coercion. In the March house, therefore, the sewing and singing skills are not equally attended. While the girls sew in discipline, they can sing out of tune and without proper articulation, since only Beth can "get much music out of the old piano" while Amy "chirp[s] like a cricket" and Jo always comes "out at the wrong place with a crook or a quaver" (Alcott, 2008, p. 21). Deliberately reluctant to invest on the girls' artistic skills, the March heterotopia is established as an "other space" to reproduce the labor power of the future housewife.

A particular site of struggle for trade unions of the Civil War era was the arrangement of closed shops where the employer could only agree to recruit union members. By symbolically employing its family members, the March house functions as a closed shop, and protects its members' rights. In this sense, the familial model that had been replaced by the workers' solidarity in the workplace returns to the family institution in order to reorganize the domestic labor in *Little Women*. Another important union activity was striking to improve work conditions. In the chapter titled "Experiments", the March girls decide to stop working for a period and spend their entire time with leisure activities. This however proves unfulfilling,

because the sisters get bored quickly, but what is more, when the mother decides to "finish off the trial in an appropriate manner" (p. 125), she gives the maid and herself a day off to show them the effects of their strike on the domestic order. On the last day of the strike, during which they can neither manage without an employer nor do all the housework, the girls decide to end it. Their determination turns into a discourse of negotiation, illustrated by Jo's comment that "it is better to have a few duties, and live a little for others" (p. 131). In this example, Alcott prioritizes the continuity of work, and because of this, considers strike a destructive and inconsiderate activity which can only be done by young, immature girls. Conversely, Alcott's desired labor struggle for girls is negotiation: She lets the girls negotiate with the mother for better conditions. Depicted as their symbolic employer and introduced as the "most splendid woman in the world" (p. 17), the mother tells them not to "go to the other extreme, and delve like slaves. Have regular hours for work and play; make worth of time by employing it well" (p. 133), hence grants them limited rights.

The Irish maid employed in the March house responds to the problem of immigrant workers. Describing workers' conditions in Britain, Engels repeatedly draws attention to Irish immigrants, and observes that the Irish are the most destitute and dispossessed of all immigrant worker communities, since they had no specific expertise for better jobs and could only find the poorest means of accommodation in which they teemed with several other tenants and even their animals (p. 124-5). In the context of the United States, the black worker in the Northern states "suffered the same fate Irish workers suffered in Britain" (Çelikkol, 2015, p. 5), and Alcott herself has been criticized for not having even a single black character in *Little Women*, which is considered to signify "the white privilege embedded in little womenhood and the attendant foreclosure of possibilities and fantasies for a heroine who is black" (Alberghene, 1999, p. 354). Nevertheless, reconsidering *Little Women*'s character distribution from a standpoint that emphasizes the color line does not necessarily elevate or belittle the condition of the Irish working class of the era. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States witnessed waves of immigrants from Ireland, who started establishing their Catholic churches and constituted the largest portion of the urban ghetto (McCaffrey, 1992, p. 164). Female Irish immigrants in particular managed to form solidarity networks by joining Irish organizations and funding their sisters' journey to the United States as new immigrants (May, 2011, p. 58). The Irish maid Hannah, in this regard, symbolically resolves the problems of the Irish immigrant workers in that the March house offers her humane conditions, makes her part of the domestic space and yet acknowledges her only as an individual, hence severs her social relations with the Irish immigrant community.

Jo's Counter-heterotopia

Jo destabilizes the labor heterotopia of the March house, because she considers housework worthless. Her complaint about housework is not solely determined by her consequently lessened time for reading and writing at home. The narrator explains that Mr. March's loss of property for the sake of supporting a friend's finances led the two eldest March sisters to work outside the house. For this reason, Meg starts working for the rich King family as a governess. However, she does not share Jo's discomfort with housework, since her work corresponds with her subsequent marriage plot with Mr. Brooke. Furthermore, her work lets her have a contact with the social elite; she enjoys the rich family's luxurious lifestyle (Alcott, 2008, p. 47), while at times she resents the economic divide between them and her family. The other sister who is sent to work is Jo, but she is employed by a member of the extended family, namely Aunt March. Considering her old age and solitary life as well as her younger brother's relatively poor status, Aunt March initially wants to adopt Jo. While the family rejects her demand, they eventually have no option but to send Jo to the aunt for work. Jo's employment record is thus marked by the threat of losing her family. Aunt March is also known to have a disagreeable personality. The "occasional tempest" (p. 47) in her house, her insistent knowingness that demands the March family "take her advice next time" (p. 79) and her interventions in the family members' decisions, such as her attempts to change Meg's mind from marrying Mr. Brooke and orient her towards making "a rich match" (p. 253) result in her description as "the peppery old lady" (p. 48) and "cross old soul" (p. 61). When the family decides to send Amy to Aunt March for protecting her from Beth's illness, Amy likewise protests by saying "it's dull at Aunt March's, and she is so cross" (p. 197).

Amy's stepping into the aunt's house reveals Jo's working conditions and the aunt's character as an employer in detail. Since the aunt gathers that Amy is "more docile and amiable than her sister" (p. 210), she starts training her to reverse the liberties she has enjoyed at the March house. At her aunt's, Amy is made

> to wash the cups every morning, and polish up the old-fashioned spoons, the fat silver teapot, and the glasses, till they shone. Then she must dust the room, and what a trying job that was! Not a speck escaped Aunt March's eye, and all the furniture had claw legs, and much carving, which was never dusted to suit. Then Polly must be fed, the lap-dog combed, and a dozen trips upstairs and down, to get things or deliver orders, for the old lady was very lame, and seldom left her big chair. After these tiresome labors she must do her lessons, which was a daily trial of every virtue she possessed. (pp. 210-1).

Amy's work follows as she reads aloud to Aunt March and does the sewing and stitching, while the aunt continues training her during Amy's free time in the evenings by recounting stories to her from the past. Amy is not the only employee at Aunt March's; the French cook Esther is also employed there, and through her it is revealed that the aunt recruited her on condition that she change her original French name Estelle if she insists on maintaining her Catholic faith. Although Amy has familial relation to Aunt March, she and Esther easily connect as two laborers working under the same strict employer. Esther's permissiveness lets Amy "roam about the great house, and examine the curious and pretty things stored away in the big wardrobes and the ancient chests" (p. 212) and observes the extent of Aunt March's accumulated wealth. When Amy is attracted to one of the aunt's old rings, however, she says "I'll be a lamb, if I can only have that lovely ring [...] I do like Aunt March, after all" (p. 213), and thus learns to comply with her aunt in order to inherit part of her fortune.

In contrast to Amy's compliance, Jo's actions at Aunt March's have the characteristics of resistance. When she is sent there, she does not work as hard as Amy does, and spares some of her time in the large library. Although her reading is constantly distracted by the aunt's calls, her reluctance to be available for work at all times is also acknowledged by the aunt. In addition, Aunt March does not attempt to change her looks and behavior. Jo's resistance, therefore, aims to improve the working conditions in the aunt's house, and the narrative voice implies that the aunt is harsher to Amy because she does not follow her sister's steps. Considering that the March girls were able to start a strike, Jo's actions at Aunt March's cannot be deemed rebellious, but she functions as a negotiator in organizing better conditions for the workers the aunt would recruit in the future.

Jo's negotiating function comes with a repressed discourse that enables her to occupy and resist the two domestic workplaces at the same time. Such a discourse becomes even more necessary since Jo's pursuit of literary writing demands yet another workplace and schedule that contradict domestic labor. In a particular example, Jo writes a book of fairy tales, but her completed work is burnt up by Amy. Jo feels a rage against Amy to the point of not saving her when she falls through thin ice while skating on a frozen pond. Yet Alcott does not let Jo embody class warfare and eventually makes her resent her rage. On anger in *Little Women,* Judith Fetterley asserts that "in the world of 'little women' female anger is so unacceptable that there are no degrees to it; all anger leads to 'murder'" (p. 380). While Fetterley relates Jo's rage to female anger, this rage originates not in female sibling rivalry, but in Amy's depreciation of Jo's work. To continue writing and remain part of the March family, Jo not only learns to repress her anger, but also manages to transform it into an act of imagining beyond the existing heterotopic configurations of labor.

Jo's authorship is one of the key issues feminist literary scholars have focused on. Her passion for writing has a distinguishing mark on her actions since writing grants her a strong will and an independent voice. Yet more importantly, her authorship is depicted not simply as a passion but as labor. After Amy burns up her book it is revealed that Jo's book was short, but she "had worked over them patiently, putting her whole heart into her work, hoping to make something good enough to print. She had just copied them with great care, and had destroyed the old manuscript, so that Amy's bonfire had consumed the loving work of several years" (Alcott, 2008, p. 87). Jo's meticulousness, her editing the manuscript and the repeated use

of the word "work" for her action and its material result show that her writing is characterized as labor. Similarly, for her final preparations before submitting her story to the *Spread Eagle* journal, she is described as "very busy up in the garret", seating herself "on the old sofa writing busily, with her papers spread out upon a trunk before her" while she is "[q]uite absorbed in her work" and when she finishes writing, she starts reading "the manuscript carefully through, making dashes here and there, and putting in many exclamation points" (p. 165). Although the labor heterotopia of the March house forces her to write as free time activity, Jo rationalizes her practice by occupying a specific space, converting old house furniture to office furniture, and following a systematic procedure in which she first writes, then organizes her manuscript and finally edits it. That she writes in the garret also resonates with Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the madwoman in the attic in that Jo's authorship poses a threat to the established order in the March house and is considered a deviance from it. As a result, the space she occupies is the inversion of what the house represents. Furthermore, writing gives her the opportunity for unalienated labor, since the papers, the work and the desk are all used with personal pronoun. By writing, she owns her labor, unlike the tasks in Aunt March's house or in her family home. Besides, in submitting her manuscript to the journal, she means to sell her labor herself and establish non-familial relations. Jo consequently manages to form a counter-heterotopia in the garret where she writes.

Jo's counter-heterotopia of labor is equally regulated as the March house, since her professional attitude gives an order to her social actions as well. Her reading, writing and editing transgress the limits of her authorship and come to define her character and actions. To illustrate, Jo corrects Amy when the younger girl mistakes the word "libel for "label" (p. 13) and "vampire" for "samphire" (p. 122). Jo's alertness for correct English use might be read through her assuming the father's role in his absence, hence maintaining the law of the father. However, with her counter-heterotopia, Jo does not merely attune her language and discourse to the symbolic order, but also uses language creatively. Furthermore, Jo's interference to her sister's use of language extends beyond Amy's individual errors and transforms the sisters into temporary literate communities. For example, at the end of the first chapter, the sisters sew a quilt for Aunt March by taking guidance from Jo, who suggests "dividing the long seams into long parts, and calling the quarters Europe, Asia, Africa and America" (p. 21) and conversing about the countries in these continents as they are stitching the parts. Here, Jo's counter-heterotopia intervenes to the labor heterotopia of the March house. Furthermore, in this example, her creative plan of sewing the quilt includes all the sisters indiscriminately, assigning each of them a continent in the form of division of labor, so that only their collective action can complete the work. Yet, even more importantly, by dividing and naming the parts after continents, Jo shows her sisters a model through which they can create an alternative world themselves. When Jo manages to publish one of her stories, the sisters similarly form an audience as she reads it aloud. After listening to the story attentively, Amy criticizes "the artistic parts of the story, and [offers] hints for a sequel", Beth gets "excited" and Meg says she liked "the lovering part" (p. 173). The girls are, therefore, tentatively encouraged to imagine a world beyond the March house. In both cases, it is Jo who introduces alternative ways of labor to her sisters. In doing so, Jo modifies the inversion of the very heterotopia that keeps the working children at home, feeds and trains them, but leaves them without proper education that would limit their socialization to their prospective households. Jo's linguistic intervention is thus compensatory to the sisters' lack of education, and functions for equipping them with the necessary tools to use language properly without having to comply with the ruling voice.

While Jo turns her sisters into an imaginative community within the house, hence inverts the principles of the labor heterotopia, she also supports them in their socialization outside. Although the sisters are invited to social gatherings on several occasions, the novel prioritizes the girls' relation with Laurie, the grandson of their neighbor Mr. Laurence. The first mention to Mr. Laurence is when he sends the family a full-fledged supper for Christmas upon hearing that they shared their breakfast with a poor immigrant family; however, it is Jo who coincidentally meets and befriends Laurie. After their recently established friendship, the girls' prejudgment on Mr. Laurence that he does not "like to mix with his neighbors" (p. 32) and their own lack of socialization with the other sex significantly change. This friendship specifically enables Jo and Laurie to enter their respective households; in other words, Jo's intervention folds the outside into the inside simultaneously as the inside is opened to the outside. This double exchange lets the March

girls into Mr. Laurence's house, where Meg can visit the conservatory and enjoy the flowers, Jo can borrow books from the library, and Amy can observe paintings closely. Yet Beth is the sister who most benefits from her visits, since she can practice and improve her music skills with a properly functioning piano. Mr. Laurence's house thus physically illustrates the extensions of Jo's counter-heterotopia.

In *Little Women*, the communication between Jo and Laurie is made possible by their configuration as sexually ambivalent characters. Symbolically equalizing both sexes, the characterization of the tomboy Jo and the effeminate Laurie serves as an opportunity for the sisters' socialization, since they both include Laurie to their activities and join him in his activities with his friends. The promise of equality in this relation resonates with the demands of the women's labor movement, especially on the subjects of women's suffrage, equal pay for equal work and equal opportunities for education. Alcott herself is known for her advocation of these rights in her letters and newspaper articles. In her letter to Maria S. Porter from 1874, for example, she sounds as if she is addressing a larger audience, writing, "let us hear no more of 'women's sphere' either from our wise (?) legislators [...] or from our clergymen [...] Let woman find out her own limitations [...] Let the professions be open to her" (Porter, 1893, p. 22). In other words, Alcott acknowledges that the March house fails to resolve the problem of inequality in women's labor in the nineteenth century by forming an all-female domestic space of unpaid labor. The egalitarian relation of both sexes thus illustrates an alternative to the workspace of the March house.

Jo's sexual ambivalence is only a limited illustration of her general attitude: Since Jo is the negotiator, she is equipped with a bridging function despite her determinate and passionate character. That she is both inside and outside of the March labor heterotopia and that she establishes her counter-heterotopia in the garret indicate her liminal position. In the novel, Jo's passion for inverting the labor heterotopia is spatially illustrated with her use of the garden as a liminal space. Although the March sisters consider Mr. Laurence's house a fantasy space for their individual creative passions, they can visit there only temporarily. However, the garden that separates (and unites) both houses enables them to work simultaneously as they imagine their fantasies. When, for example, Laurie spends idle time in his hammock and is curious about what the girls are doing in the garden, he eventually learns that they are sewing and stitching. In the novel, it is not clear with whose decision the girls moved to the garden for work. When asked, Beth tells Laurie "we have tried not to waste our holiday, but each has had a task, and worked at it with a will" (Alcott, 2008, p. 157). She continues, saying "Mother likes to have us out of doors as much as possible; so we bring our work here, and have nice times [...] we can look far away and see the country where we hope to live some time" (p. 158). Here, Beth explains their working in the garden as their and the mother's idea at the same time, but her further description of the country implies that the girls make Jo's fantasy theirs: "Jo talks about the country where we hope to live some time; the real country, she means, with pigs and chickens, and haymaking. It would be nice, but I wish the beautiful country up there was real, and we could ever go to it" (p. 158). For Jo, the garden is another location for her counter-heterotopia, supporting her imaginative faculties. Furthermore, she encourages the others to imagine other worlds while they are working, since she asks, "Wouldn't it be fun if all the castles in the air which we make could come true, and we could live in them?" (p. 159). Upon her remark, she forms yet another imaginative community when Laurie responds, "I'd like to settle in Germany, and have just as much music as I choose", Meg adds "I should like a lovely house", Beth wants to "help take care of the family", and Amy expresses her wish to "go to Rome, and do fine pictures, and be the best artist in the whole world" (p. 160). Tentatively moving from the labor heterotopia and stepping into their own counter-heterotopias, the children make use of the garden's liminality for their fantasies.

Conclusion

Despite Jo's efforts to resist the existing labor heterotopia of the March house, her counter-heterotopia does not survive. Alcott disrupts the prospects of Jo's counter-heterotopia in the novel's sequels. For Jo, this failure amounts to her new disinterest in romance and her new passion for moral tales for children, her marriage to Professor Bhaer and the subsequent change in her so-called unladylike attitudes. However, there is an implication in *Little Women* that Jo will be made to abandon everything that characterizes her, because

she is left without a strong ally in her counter-heterotopia. In creating a room of her own, Jo does not have any prior role models, but she attempts to be one for her sisters. However, Beth, who benefits most from Jo's interventions and develops a serious interest in piano playing, forgets her passion abruptly; her imagination suddenly narrows down to the extent of not being able to imagine a life beyond the March family, and she becomes severely ill. The second novel, *Good Wives*, depicts her untimely death. In addition, Meg's romantic attachment to Mr. Brooke signals their marriage in the second sequel; Amy indeed becomes a painter, but she leaves for Italy to follow her pursuit, suggesting the impossibility of being an artist in the March house. To put it in another way, Jo's counter-heterotopia fails to persist when its rival heterotopia of the March house also ceases to exist as an inversion of the labor conditions outside and dissolves with the father's arrival and the sisters' departure. More precisely, both heterotopias ultimately disseminate into the March girls' future lives outside the house in alternative forms. Through the clash of both heterotopias of work, *Little Women* spatially characterizes and symbolically resolves the conditions of American labor in the second half of the nineteenth century, and critically reconsiders its own resolutions.

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