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# Miniaturizations: Louisa May Alcott's Children's Tales

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## Abstract

Louisa May Alcott went to Europe only twice in her life but was always very active in strengthening relations between the American abolitionist movements and the European revolutions. In my paper I intend to illustrate her ability to cross a variety of literary genres to reach a popular audience and adopt the didactic tones of children's literature to challenge cultural conventions and address controversial issues of equality and democracy often evaded by critically more acclaimed literary genres. I will explore Alcott's indefatigable production of children's tales as effective vehicles to convey, in a miniaturized form, her adult concerns as a woman of reform and her patriotic vision of American history, from independence to Civil War. She reshaped in the form of children's plots and to the advantage of her young readers Concord's transcendentalist values, depicting a "little world" representative of the turbulences of her times and of the progress of female emancipation. Considered socially diminished, women who sought a public role in Victorian times, often identified with grown-up children, and notably wore men's breeches during their suffragist battles and on stage. Likewise, in their aspirations to equality, Alcott's tomboys imitate Alcott's adult reforming spirit, by playing election in "Little Boston" and by nursing wounded soldiers in "Nelly's Hospital." In many instances, as Eiselein points out, they prove even more advanced and courageous than their adult counterparts. In this respect, Alcott's children's literature provides miniaturized allegorizations of a larger historical and public scene that even Louisa's father, - the transcendentalist educator Bronson Alcott, - found effective. Her fairytales and children's stories never fail to capture the many trials and the sincere forming spirit of the Sandean woman, resistant to the gender limits of Victorian womanhood, and nourished with the Romantic ideals that proudly fought oppression at home and abroad.

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