

Time is Memory

Time. It's complicated, stressful, stoic and ever present implications in our lives can always be felt. *Felt*. Can we even feel time? "Living in the moment" may be preached to us by many well-meaning therapists, inspirational speakers, and travel-bloggers, but can one even live in the moment if by the time we perceive each moment, the moment has already passed?¹ Perception. We recall time through our memory. We recall moments from seconds ago and years ago. When we examine this, it becomes clear that time is about memory. Memories from moments have emotional connotations that make them important to us. Time has feeling.² We categorize memories by their emotional impact on us: nonlinearly.

What is there left to learn from memories and experiences? Is there joy to be found unexpectedly in the rejuvenation of a timeless tale of four sisters? Many believe that new stories must be prioritized in today's media as Disney has remade at least eighteen films based on their previous most popular films, such as Kenneth Branagh's *Cinderella* (2015). But what left is there to gather from the story of such a prominent fairytale, besides more money to a company that already could have saved Cinderella from poverty millions of times? Greta Gerwig heard these calls, and answered in the most timely way.

¹ Robin Le Poidevin, "The Experience and Perception of Time," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, May 10, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/time-experience/>. When I first read this question posed in this Stanford paper, my head exploded. It seriously made me completely rethink what the "present" even means.

² Much like I would much rather spend two hours playing with friends than spend two hours in AP Government class. Two. Agonizing. Hours.

Gerwig proves a remake of *Little Women* — a loveable, complicated, analysis on the transition to adulthood for young women — still had more to share with the world, and it only needed a single tweak for its messages to leap off the screen. *Little Women*, the novel published in 1868 by Louisa May Alcott (a slightly autobiographical account, something Gerwig also explores in her film and deserves its own ten page analysis), tells the story of the four March sisters. They help others. They meet new friends and feel new things. They deal with loss and grapple with their own changing role in society. The novel explores these concepts as a linear progression of time and their developing lives, yet its third film adaptation in 2019 takes a nonlinear approach.

A master seamstress, Gerwig patches together each memory with grace. The order being intentional, a quilt of memories from each Alcott sister and the lessons they learn. Nonlinear in its timeline of events, yet linear in its emotional storytelling. Beginning with a scene from



³ Amy's adult life and quickly cutting to all four March sisters as children, both plotlines advance side by side, teaching each other a lesson. Connecting the dots.

Examining the root of adulthood struggle from childhood influences. Each event feels personal. Purposeful. Teaching the sisters life lessons they draw on during the struggle for purpose and direction that comes with womanhood. *To project memory ahead of experience — becomes a tool of philosophical and*

³ *Little Women* (2019) (Columbia Pictures, 2019).

emotional inquiry.⁴ Gerwig alludes to the purpose of each memory. Their emotions were formative for their adult years, their emotions mirroring those of childhood and revealing sometimes painful truths for the sisters.

When analyzing memories for their emotional value, much like how humans themselves perceive time, new lessons can be drawn from their content. Gerwig applies this to *Little Women* (2019), allowing new audiences to learn from the March sisters, who have been guiding women since the late 1800s. Looking back on memories and their emotions can allow us to grow and apply early life lessons to new experiences.

Bibliography

Robin Le Poidevin, "The Experience and Perception of Time," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, May 10, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/time-experience/>.

This paper examines the science behind how humans perceive time. Although wordy and very academic, it sparked my interest in the perception of time by posing a simple question: Are we really experiencing the present if by the time we perceive each moment, the moment has already passed? I utilized this source to examine the complexities of the perception of time.

Little Women (2019) (Columbia Pictures, 2019).

⁴ A. O. Scott, "Little Women' Review: This Movie Is Big," The New York Times (The New York Times, December 23, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/23/movies/little-women-review.html>. This is a quote from A. O. Scott's review of Little Women which felt too powerful for me not to include.

The basis of my paper, *Little Women* (2019) was a fresh take on a classic story. What gave it its acclaimed sense of awareness and depth was Gerwig's story structure, where she jumped back and forth between the present and the past. This inspired me to think deeply about how I categorize my memories and the emotions they connect to.

A. O. Scott, "Little Women' Review: This Movie Is Big," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, December 23, 2019),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/23/movies/little-women-review.html>.

A. O. Scott's wrote a very thoughtful and well researched review on the film *Little Women* (2019). His thoughts about the film *Little Women* echo mine completely, but I was inspired by his piece specifically because of the way he examined the emotional effect Gerwig's story structure had on the audience. His quote about the emotions of time was so inspiring to me that I chose to include it in my writing.

Intention Statement

Time is Memory is a lyrical essay about the perception of time in a nonlinear progression and how the film *Little Women* (2019) by Greta Gerwig explores this idea and uses it as a plot device. I chose to write this essay because I have recently become interested in how humans perceive time. We understand time passing so loosely, yet time itself is the most standard measurement of our society. In the developing stages of my essay, I realized I needed a focusing lens to explore this idea. The film *Little Women* was the perfect example of a piece of art bending the rules of time to convey messages and invoke an emotional response in the audience. In the structure of my own writing, I was inspired by both Gerwig and Eula Biss in her writing "Time and Distance Overcome." Biss weaved together two ideas which concluded in her analyzing their similarity. I also connected two concepts: time perception and the consequences of remaking an old film. The first paragraph examines time, the second examines film remakes and their benefits and negative aspects, and then they begin to blend, resulting in an examination of the lessons one can take from their memories. I integrated short sentences and blunt phrases into my essay, taking inspiration from how Gerwig cut up the plot of *Little Women* into short scenes or "memories." I chose to include the specific photo from *Little Women* because the scene

it is from is the perfect example of Gerwig pairing two scenes, one from childhood and one from adulthood, together in her film to help the audience connect the two. In the first scene, pictured in the image cited in my essay, the four March sisters are having a beautiful day on the beach, enjoying each other's presence and playing like children. Gerwig then cuts to Jo and Beth on the same beach, now as adults. The gold tint of the film is gone, and the happiness seems to have left the beach. Beth is very sick, and Jo realizes that she will soon lose her sister. The parallel of the beach in the two scenes allows the audience to understand Jo's pain and complicated emotions. The most helpful feedback I received included making my writing more concise. I took this feedback and revised my essay to be more straightforward about time and its focusing lens. Time is a very easy topic to ramble on about, and I am grateful that my peers helped me narrow my vision to its most powerful messages.