“Just Breathing Isn’t Living”: Disability and Constructions of Normalcy in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature

by

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Abstract

This study seeks to demonstrate the ways in which disability is negatively and stereotypically presented in classic children's literature and how it is used to prescribe constructions of normalcy. Although disability studies have become an increasingly popular avenue for critical study, one glaring omission is its use in analyzing children's literature. Representations of disability pervade nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature especially, and classic children's texts that continue to be read widely today, like *Pollyanna*, *The Secret Garden*, *Heidi* and *What Katy Did*, all include disabled characters. These texts reinforce normalcy through the prescription of certain gender roles, specific moral and ethical behavior and through the use of nature as a space of healing for disabled characters who often must undergo a miracle cure. My thesis will explore how early children's literature functions as a point of origin for the construction of social attitudes and behaviors surrounding gender and moral normativity, as well as conceptions of disability.

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Introduction
Childhood and the Inscription of Normalcy in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature

In Eleanor Porter's novel *Pollyanna,* the title character exclaims, "Just breathing isn't living!" Although cloyingly optimistic, Pollyanna shares my concern for representations of children's lives during her time. Published in 1913, *Pollyanna* became a bestseller and has since been canonized as a classic of children's literature. Although most are familiar with the novel through the term "Pollyanna" as someone with a perpetually optimistic outlook, many are not aware that the novel offers a number of chapters where Pollyanna's attitude towards life is not so positive, when she is involved in an automobile accident which leads to "an injury to the spine which had seemed to cause—paralysis from the hips down" (164). As in many other classics of children's literature, disability is introduced as a handy metaphorical trope in order to offer the main character, and by extension the reader, a lesson in normativity.

I began with a quote from Pollyanna because she originally prompted my endeavor into the topic of disability in children's literature. Although at times Pollyanna's specific brand of saccharine optimism may be difficult to appreciate, the text begs bigger questions of the reader; how were nineteenth and early twentieth-century children represented in the literature widely available to them, especially in terms of how their bodies appeared to be regulated in these texts? More specifically, what kind of a message does this bodily policing offer to children of the nineteenth and early twentieth century? What continued role do these messages and texts play in the lasting script regarding childhood and (dis)ability studies today? Pollyanna begins the story an already extraordinary girl, and the accident that causes her disability comes swiftly, near the end of the narrative. In fact, the reader is not offered much by way of Pollyanna's eventual cure, as a letter from a faraway clinic sums up her treatment as well as the novel, and although we are

assured she is able to walk once more, one begins to wonder why the accident was necessary for the plot of the story in the first place. In fact, Porter's blasé treatment of Pollyanna's disability speaks to a larger trend in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature, including the novels presented in this study. Porter does away with Pollyanna's disability just as suddenly as it is introduced, which reinforces the notion that to a nineteenth-century author, disability represents an easily employed mere literary tool. Towards that end, an investigation into how disability is treated in literature more broadly allows one to recognize how disabled, or differently-abled characters, are introduced in order to reinforce normative behavior, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in which disability is an unusually pervasive aspect of both novels and short stories for young readers.

Throughout this paper, you will notice that I use the terms "disability" and "differently-abled" interchangeably. I employ both here to mean the same thing: a character who has a disability in the traditional sense of the term, one who cannot walk, cannot see, cannot hear, etc. Most of the texts studied here represent disability as an inability to walk (also referred to as paralysis or "lameness" in the texts themselves). Although other texts portray blindness and deafness, paralysis is by far the most prominent disability found in nineteenth-century children's stories. This study also includes autism under the umbrella term disability when analyzing the story "Wooden Tony" because the character is marginalized in much the same way other disabled characters are in these texts. In choosing to use "differently-abled" as interchangeable with the term "disabled," I hope to evoke a destabilization of the ways in which one normally regards the term disabled. Disability breaks down into the term "non-ability" which carries a negative connotation. The term differently-abled instead represents a more inclusive categorization, which refrains from suggesting normality and abnormality; instead, it speaks to

the wide range of variances that exist within the human condition. My research seeks to change the ways in which disability is regarded, especially as it is portrayed negatively and stereotypically, and I hope to begin this process by using the term differently-abled along with disabled throughout this study.

Critical disability theory is a burgeoning area of study. In analyzing the ways in which disability is represented in literature, scholars have begun to unpack how these depictions are informed by, and how they inform, real life. Often, disability is presented stereotypically which allows it to be used as a literary tool. David T. Mitchell posits disability as "first, a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphoric device" in his article "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor" (15). My work on the representation of disability in children's literature rests heavily on this concept. Because differently-abled bodies are not provided the variability that exists amongst them in real life when represented in literature, especially literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they become "not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (*Extraordinary Bodies*, Garland Thomson 6). Rosemarie Garland Thomson, who works on disability as well as its intersection with feminist theory, further explains that disability, as represented in literature, "sets up static encounters between disabled figures and normate readers, whereas real social relations are always dynamic" (11). Thus, the depiction of disability in literature offers little by way of real life experience. So what is its intent and purpose? Why is disability so pervasive, so routinely depicted and paradoxically, why are differently-abled characters disqualified from the shared social identity of not only other characters in the stories, but readers of the texts as well?

Lennard J. Davis offers us one way to answer these questions—by looking at how normalcy is constructed, and how its enforcement is what ultimately creates the representation of Other. Davis notes that "the very structures on which the novel rests tend to be normative, ideologically emphasizing the universal quality of the central character whose normativity encourages us to identify with him or her" (11). Thus, differently-abled characters are relegated to the sidelines of the story and disability is "rarely centrally depicted…although minor characters can be deformed in ways that arouse pity" (Davis 11). Garland Thomson agrees:

> Disabled literary characters usually remain on the margins of fiction as uncomplicated figures or exotic aliens whose bodily configurations operate as spectacles, eliciting responses from other characters or producing rhetorical effects that depend on disability's cultural resonance. Indeed, main characters almost never have physical disabilities. (9)

Although I do agree with both scholars, there is a trend in the depiction of disability in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature which contradicts one part of their message; the main character in many of these stories becomes disabled (though more often than not does not remain so), and the text then centers on this disability in the way that it does not when cursory characters are given a similar fate. However, the accidents that befall these main characters also are used to elicit a specific emotional response, and produce a rhetorical effect that continues to represent disability unrealistically, and instead, as an important cultural tool in enforcing normative behavior. Because these texts are written for children, there is a strong underlying didactic element to most, which is what allows disability to function as a convenient plot device. In these texts, differently-abled characters either become a symbol of moral instruction or, characters become disabled in order to learn an important lesson about how to behave properly.

Thus, disability is used in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature to reinforce constructions of normalcy.

Normalcy, then, is reinforced through gender roles and identities, moral character, the correct path to how and where knowledge can be found and the embodiment of proper behavioral conduct in general. There is also a strong connection forged between disability and the natural world in these texts. Nature is almost always a large part of childhood, whether to occupy the imaginative minds of country children who use mountains and moors as veritable playgrounds, or to provide valuable lessons regarding other living creatures and the importance of fresh air. Nature acts both as an instructor and policing agent in these texts, as the natural world becomes all the more prevalent in texts with differently-abled characters where mobility is often limited. Thus, normalcy is reinforced through representations of disability in ways in which the able-bodied children who were reading these texts could easily interpret and, considering the didacticism of such stories, could then perform as heteronormative cultural scripts.

It is not shocking to discover that differently-abled characters were treated stereotypically in literature from this time period. What is shocking is how little analysis this topic has garnered. The vast similarities that exist within these texts, and the prevalence of such representations in nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature should yield a number of critical analyses on this topic. However, very little has been done in terms of bringing nineteenth-century children's texts into conversation with each other regarding their representations of disability. Lois Keith's study *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk* does address a number of the texts I study here. Although her study, the only one of its kind, is quite extensive as well as carefully nuanced, it draws the texts together in a different way from what I propose in my study. It is important to address the portrayal of disability in these texts, because it leads to a continued examination of how it is

represented today. Although disability studies is a burgeoning area of study, due to an increased awareness of unrealistic and stereotypical representations of various social constructions (including race, class, gender, etc.), little has been done by way of research in children's literature. Questions regarding disability and normativity become all the more important when the instructive nature of literature for children is taken into account. Fictional texts, under the guise of mere entertainment, informed children how to function in the society from which they were emerging, and continue to do so today. In fact, the canonized children's texts offered in this study, including *Pollyanna* by Eleanor Porter, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri and *What Katy Did* by Susan Coolidge, are still read widely today. Some of the lesser known texts and short stories offer alternatives to the practice of using disability as a social construction to reinforce normalcy. It is important to discover both where these paradigms exist and how they are countered. The fact that the more popular texts exhibit disability as a prescription for normativity also reinforces its stereotypical representation, which has a detrimental effect on how disability was regarded in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as well as how these depictions have a continued impact on how disability is considered today.

In order to avoid portraying a merely anachronistic analysis of these texts, it is important to situate them in the cultural milieu from which they came, especially regarding medicine in this time period, and ideas surrounding children and childhood. With some general information on these topics, an analysis of how fictional texts written for children moralize and treat differently-abled characters will demonstrate a clearer understanding of how these authors appropriated disability and illness to the end of reinforcing normalcy.

In Sara Newman's "critical history" entitled *Writing Disability*, she situates the idea of disability within the medical context of the time period from which it arose.

> By the eighteenth century detailed medical taxonomies and associated practices named particular physical problems as disabling and framed them now as categorical illnesses to be cured. With the medical model born and mass printing disseminating its sentiments, notions of impairment, diagnosis, and cure were more fully inculcated in cultural practices. During the nineteenth century, physical deviations from the norm were often understood as deformity, a term which focused on extreme bodily abnormality; disability had become a spectacle. (7)

Although disability had become a spectacle, it was also paradoxically pervasive within society due to the ubiquity of the medical model and medical knowledge's inculcation into cultural practices. It is no wonder, then, that authors began to use figures of disability in their texts, and further, use them in order to reinforce certain cultural scripts.

Most of the children's texts that incorporate disability into their plotlines do so with little to no medical accuracy. Of the characters who are injured and are not born without the ability to walk, an accident usually occurs in which a general reference is made to a bump/bruise on the spine, which results in an injury and prognosis of lifelong paralysis. Although medicine seemed to be making leaps and bounds within this time period, fictional texts refrain from delving into these disabilities with any medical accuracy. Michael Bliss writes that "in the decade of the 1880s…confidence in the medical profession…was beginning to be restored" (36). He also praises the rise of surgery in the late nineteenth century, stating that it was beginning to make healing possible (44). Before this, physicians were still useful in accurately predicting illnesses, which Bliss likens to a kind of "medical meteorology," so doctors had become useful before they were able to cure with any certainty (35). These "cures," however, occurred few and far between when it came to disabilities that required more skilled medical attention, including those that

affected nerves in the spine or brain. Although Bliss writes of a Dr. Cushing who restored a Johns Hopkins scientist's ability to walk through the removal of a damaged nerve in the thigh, and cites that in some cases Cushing "could literally make the lame walk and the blind see," these medical innovations were just beginning to occur in the late nineteenth century (44, 47). The medical model may have been more widely available, but still lacked the resources to inform many of the complicated methods of diagnosing what was then considered deformity.

It is no wonder, then, that authors appropriated the obscurity that still surrounded disability into convenient plot devices for their own prescriptive purposes. Of the characters who are injured and become paralyzed, a vague medical prognosis is given, followed by lessons regarding gender normativity and morality that seemingly have a great deal to do with the character's now disabled state, and finally, a miracle cure is offered in which little medical accuracy is provided, once the character has learnt to properly embody cultural norms. The characters who are already afflicted with a disability when the text introduces them to the reader often also learn a lesson in normativity and undergo a miracle cure, although their previous disability seems to become more of a mental state than physical embodiment as the story goes on. Bliss writes of patients who sought out "faith healers" when it came to most functional disorders, because physicians seemed even less effective than religious deities in helping eliminate certain ailments. He observes:

> In the grey area, where mind and body interacted to create paralysis, hysteria, neurasthenia, and like disorders, if patients had as much faith in their physicians as they did in their clergy, if they had faith in Saint Johns Hopkins Hospital, they would experience the same cures that the faith healers offered. (55)

These characters whose disabilities are efficiently cured once they embrace appropriate standards of normativity exist within this "grey area." Although it could be argued that most characters within these texts occupy the same space, in which mental state and physical ability are so closely linked that one has the faculty to outright transform the other, in characters like Colin from *The Secret Garden* and Clara from *Heidi* the intense connection between mental state and disability is most prominent. Although medicine was beginning to transform into a basis of knowledge that was both more scientifically advanced and to which the public had more access, authors of fictional texts could still superficially work around questions of medical accuracy in using disability to the end of prescribing normalcy.

Children's literature becomes immeasurably important when attempting to analyze how the world is presented to us when young and impressionable, gaining valuable experience, which will ultimately shape our own position within society at large. As Seth Lerer points out, "the history of children's literature is inseparable from the history of childhood, for the child was made through texts and tales he or she studied, heard, and told back" (1). Since I am looking specifically at children's literature in the nineteenth century, it is also important to consider practices regarding children, child rearing and children's health during this time period, and determine how these ideas may have had an impact on what was written for children and widely available for their consumption. It is also important to note that notions surrounding child-rearing may have been different depending on location; hence, this study seeks to unpack representations of disability in children's texts both from England and America, as well as Sweden. The universality of these texts becomes an important factor, as most are regarded as classics of children's literature today. The following information depicts ideas about how to keep children

happy and healthy in a somewhat generalized manner because it draws from both England and America, and presents the similarities where they exist.

Ideas regarding optimal childhood have been around as early as the second century, in which the Greek physician Galen cited the normal child as one who is "healthy in every way. His manners need no correcting" (as quoted in Beekman, xiii). It is clear that from very early on, the idea of health was linked to both normalcy and morality, a very important factor that is reinforced again and again by the authors of the texts presented in this study. Centuries later, in 1473, Bartholomaeus Metlinger paraphrased Galen's sentiments in a sense in his text "A Regimen for Young Children," by stating that "Healthy children have good habits and do not complain. If children are angry or upset or lie awake, this is a sign of the beginning of fevers and diseases" (as quoted in Beekman, 19). Although ideas regarding childhood progressed into the nineteenth century, and have progressed much further today, the fact that health and morality have been closely linked for centuries gives one some sense of why authors of nineteenth-century children's fiction were so easily able to appropriate physical disability into convenient metaphors for moral and social abnormality.

Young children's impressionability also reinforces how disability is used to correct early behavior regarding normality. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, children were regarded as blank slates, or "Strangers in the World" according to John Locke's ideas on education (Lerer 104). Beekman cites Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the creator of childcare's "first systematic theory: the vision of the child as an unspoiled creature of nature, the offspring of the noble savage" (41). Rousseau even goes as far as to posit that if the child "was to be inured to the rigors of the seasons, the climate, the elements, to hunger, thirst, fatigue," it was not simply "a matter of health; it was a matter of morality" (Beekman 43).

In America in the mid-eighteenth century, Locke's ideas regarding the natural child who was strengthened by cold air and wet feet were prioritized as the new world required "a need to keep every child alive. Colonial success depended on an increasing labor force" (Beekman 67). Later, in nineteenth century England, Beekman describes Victorian childhood with a nod towards Charles Dickens.

> Our images of Victorian childhood are still shaped by the genius of Dickens. His descriptions are most often of orphans and small children surrounded by middle-and upper-class adults who are generally eccentric or grotesque, and by lower-class figures either sinister and aggressive or good natured but helpless. Victorian society was polarized into these two worlds with the child caught between them—the only individual in society with real alternatives yet powerless to determine his own future. (85)

This view of childhood posits the child as one who must choose which direction his or her life should take, yet is incapable of making such a choice. Thus, scripts found in fictional stories that provide lessons as to how to live properly and morally become huge and influential factors during childhood.

Other ideas regarding production and regularity began to become popular in the nineteenth century, and some of these prescriptions could be easily adapted to methods of proper child rearing. Beekman asserts that:

> Little was known about children in a scientific sense, but a good deal was known about production. Production demanded regularity, repetition and scheduling. All that seemed to be required of the family was that the parents submit to the same kind of systematization and discipline in the handling of their children as was routinely demanded of factory workers on a production line. (113)

These kinds of questions are grappled with in the children's texts studied here, especially when problems regarding schooling and nature's potential to be a teacher, as posited against conservative methods of book-learning, are suggested. Disability helps to reinforce these messages, which are at times progressive, because they advocate for theories just emerging out of the nineteenth century which favored the natural world as an agent of both learning and healing (Beekman 143). Although these texts may use disability to support enlightened theories regarding health and wellness, they continue to do so in a way that treats disability as a handy metaphorical device and nothing more.

In order to offer an extensive account of both the pervasiveness of disability and its enforcement of normalcy, I have chosen to look at texts from both American and British literature (as well as the novel *Heidi*, written by Swiss author Johanna Spyri), written in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. I have deliberately decided upon a wider range of texts historically as well as geographically in order to understand how ideas and thoughts on disability have shaped society today, as well as how they have travelled and been adapted into popular culture. *Pollyanna* and *The Secret Garden*, for example, are stories that have been retold in film. I have chosen popular classics of children's literature, as well as lesser-known texts, which offer alternative readings of disability and normativity. Early children's literature functions as a point of origin for the construction of social attitudes and behaviors surrounding the relationship between disability and normativity.

My thesis will seek to analyze the ways in which disability and differently-abled characters are used in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature to demonstrate and disseminate prescriptions of normalcy. First, I will look at a number of texts that use disability in order to prescribe heteronormative gender roles for their main characters, and by

extension, the targeted audience. Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* offers the story of a young girl who is taught how to become a paragon of domesticity once an accident leaves her paralyzed from the waist down. Through her suffering, Katy abandons many of her tomboy qualities and learns how to properly embody normative femininity. In the sequel to Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna*, entitled *Pollyanna Grows Up*, the reader is offered a differently-abled and highly feminized male character who, despite his efforts, is never able to claim a full sense of masculinity due to his paralysis. The theme of feminizing illness is continued in Francis Hodgson Burnett's classic *The Secret Garden*, which offers a highly feminized and paralyzed male character who, in a similar fashion to *What Katy Did*, learns how to embody his proper gendered stereotype, and becomes a strapping vision of masculinity once his paralysis is miraculously cured. This chapter will use Rosemarie Garland Thomson's work on feminist disability theory in order to present connections between the subjugation of feminine bodies as well as the subjugation of disabled bodies, and will ultimately represent one of the ways in which disability is used in early children's literature to advocate heteronormativity.

The second chapter will focus on how nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's texts' depictions of disability are used in order to teach children lessons in morality, and how to become useful members of society, as well as to support certain forms of education. I will explore two short stories, "Deb" by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and "Wooden Tony" by Lucy Lane Clifford; these stories include characters with full-body paralysis and what is not noted in the text, but could be termed autism, retrospectively. These characters are so stricken by their disabilities that lessons in conduct are hinted at, but ultimately remain useless. Interestingly, these characters are not cured, and instead the endings leave the reader questioning if the actions performed by their caretakers are morally sound, in a type of resistance against dominant

narratives of disability. Here, I will also invoke Foucault's work on biopower in order to further interpret how bodies interact with the environment in terms of production, and how differently-abled bodies are judged by their ability (or lack thereof) to do so. I will also discuss *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri and *The Little Lame Prince* by Dinah Mulock Craik, two texts that advocate for experiential learning over traditional forms of book learning. Both texts include differently-abled characters, one who is miraculously cured and the other who is not, but instead disappears at the end of the story; both benefit greatly from being able to learn from nature, and in doing so, also learn how to behave virtuously.

Finally, as may already be evident, nature plays a large role in many of these stories. It is not just in *The Little Lame Prince* and *Heidi* where nature becomes a teacher, but similar sentiments are embedded in Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. In *Pollyanna*, *Pollyanna Grows Up* and *What Katy Did*, nature is presented as more of a physical space where children are allowed to remain free from normative structures of constraint before they are disabled, though it becomes a site of ultimate restriction once physical mobility is limited. In the two short stories, the differently-abled characters have a strong emotional connection to the natural world although they are denied a physical connection until the very end of the respective texts, when they are then fully embraced by the natural world, to the extent that they disappear from the rest of human society as a whole. Thus, nature becomes a space in which learning and healing are epitomized, but only to the end of promoting normativity, or eradicating abnormality. Ultimately, nature is used as a site of inculcation into normative modes of being; it miraculously "heals" differently abled-bodies, restricts those bodies that continue to be disabled and completely absorbs those bodies that are disabled to the point that society deems too abnormal to continue in existence. Although nature may represent a site of childhood freedom and frivolity on the surface, it is in

these spaces where ideas regarding abnormal and even "unnatural" ways of being (i.e. being differently-abled) are most heavily resisted.

In tackling issues of gender, moral conduct, learning and how the natural world is evoked in each of these texts, I hope to demonstrate the various ways in which nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature uses disability to prescribe constructions of normalcy. I hope that by illuminating how disability is used over a wide time period and through a variety of texts, I will demonstrate the provenance of ideas regarding disability, and further, the great potential influence children's texts have, whether they be classics of literature or texts written today, on their young readers. The tendency children's fiction has to use disability as a metaphor for abnormal social behavior reinforces in the young reader a prescribed world-view—one in which being differently-abled coincides with being outside of normative behavioral patterns, and ultimately, signifies inferiority. By recognizing these patterns, one has the capacity to demand more of these authors, of these texts, and of other harmful negative and stereotypical depictions of disability, because Pollyanna's exclamation, "just breathing isn't living," should be allowed to illuminate a wide range of different abilities.

Chapter One
To "behave like ladies": Constructions of Gender and Disability

The children's texts presented in this study are didactic by nature, which allow them the ability to impart lessons to their young readers. Although moral values and virtues may be the first that come to mind when one thinks about the lessons gleaned from story time, often these texts prescribe normative behavior based solely on unnecessary and often damaging social constructions. These stories are vehicles providing children messages that do not necessarily represent inherent qualities, although they may be presented as such. Gender, for example, is a social construction that has little to do with biological traits. Although modern academic notions regarding gender realize the divide between gender identity and biological sex to some extent, texts in the nineteenth century did little to change, distort or outright reject these rigid binaries. Associating femininity and femaleness with submissiveness, domesticity and passivity, and oppositely, masculinity and maleness with traits like assertiveness, power and strength is damaging to children of both sexes, who learn that they must properly embody one categorization or another through the very texts to which they look for instruction and entertainment. Nineteenth-century children's texts become tools used to prescribe normative behavior in terms of gender roles and constructions.

This chapter will analyze how nineteenth-century children's texts use disability in order to prescribe normalcy specifically in terms of heteronormative gender roles and identities. David T. Mitchell notes how disabilities are used in narrative to "resolve or correct a deviance marked as abnormal or improper in a social context"; in the case of the novels studied in this chapter, the deviance is characters who embody improper gender roles (20). Although the nineteenth century's perceptions of sex did not recognize gender as a social construct separate from distinguishing biological factors, our modern understanding of gender allows us to recognize the

ways in which disability is regularly equated with femininity, both in nineteenth-century texts, and to this day, even though we may have more modern perceptions of sexual identity. I will use three novels to demonstrate the ways in which disability is used to teach children how to embody their appropriate gender identity. First I will demonstrate how disabled male characters are often feminized, drawing primarily on descriptions of Jamie in Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna Grows Up*. Jamie is a male character who does not represent typical masculine traits because he is unable to walk. Porter's representation of Jamie points to the much larger trend in which disability and illness are feminized. Rosemarie Garland Thomson's work on the integration of disability into feminist theory analyzes why disability and femininity are conflated, while other scholars dissect the links between disability and masculinity. After recognizing the links between gender and disability, we can look to Susan Coolidge's novel *What Katy Did* as an example of how disability is used to promote normative gender roles. Coolidge writes Katy into a terrible accident in order to disable her, and subsequently, Katy learns to become a paragon of nineteenth-century femininity. The opposite process occurs in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, where Colin Craven's disability begins to be cured once he embraces masculine traits. Lois Keith's work on these novels is very useful in reinforcing how both Katy and Colin begin their respective novels possessing certain traits that are not indicative of their suitable gendered identity, while disability is then used to rid them of those traits and restore normalcy. In demonstrating how uniformly disability is treated as a metaphor in these texts to prescribe gender normativity, I hope to begin the process of understanding how nineteenth-century children's texts represent disability with little to no realistic accuracy, and instead, use it as a mere tool to reinforce normativity.

In "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory" Rosemarie Garland Thomson states the informing premise of feminist disability theory: "disability, like femaleness, is not a natural state of corporeal inferiority, inadequacy, excess, or a stroke of misfortune" (5). These two categorizations, which have more to do with cultural constructs than biology, are conflated because of the association of both women and the disabled "as helpless, dependent, weak, vulnerable, and incapable bodies" (7). Garland Thomson attributes this association to Aristotle's definition of women as "mutilated males," and western society's emphasis on understanding both femaleness and disability "as defective departures from a valued standard" (6-7). She takes this connection even further by tackling a modern day insult, "throwing like a girl," which restricts women's "sense of embodied agency," and echoes Iris Marion Young's idea that women are physically handicapped with these modes of thinking in a sexist society (6). The association of femaleness and disability with helplessness and weakness offers a negative message to both those who identify as female as those who identify as differently-abled.

These social constructions also work negatively in the opposite way. If illness and disability are both highly feminized, where does that leave differently-abled male characters? In "The Dilemma of Disabled Masculinity" Russell Shuttleworth discusses how masculinity and disability are in conflict with each other because disability evokes dependency and helplessness while masculinity does the opposite, suggesting powerfulness and autonomy (174). He also recognizes that masculinity and its typical expectations, including "initiative, competitiveness, self-control, assertiveness, and independence," are culturally constructed (166). Clare Walker Gore echoes these sentiments in her study by stating how "the idea that disability and masculinity have been constructed as mutually oppositional states has become something of a critical consensus, and is not restricted to the late nineteenth century" (364). Gore's study echoes

my own in terms of male characters who are emasculated due to their disability. However, these associations become much more potent in children's literature because of the didactic nature of these texts and the impressionability of the young minds reading them.

Texts like *Pollyanna Grows Up* exemplify the association between disability and femininity by presenting a disabled male character who is highly feminized throughout the text. Eleanor H. Porter published *Pollyanna Grows Up* in 1915, two years after the great success that came from her first novel, *Pollyanna*. Disability seems semi-cursory in *Pollyanna*, as her accident arrives late in the text and her cure is explained via letter in the last chapter that feels more like an addendum to the reader than an actual resolution. Disability is treated much more centrally in the sequel, because Porter offers the reader Jamie, a character whose "legs wasn't right" since he was a young boy (Porter 60). Lois Keith discusses Jamie's feminization in her study titled *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*. She focuses mainly on Porter's representation of Jamie's sociopolitical status. Keith praises Porter for creating a character whose disability is a physical reality because he is not miraculously cured and sees her representation of Jamie as a social commentary on problems with philanthropic practices in the early 1900s (160). However, Keith admits that Porter's novel only touches the edges of social inequality, and I would agree that although Jamie is not offered a miracle cure and his disability seems somewhat rooted in reality, she does not depict a radical vision of disability. Instead Jamie who, as Keith notes, "we are told constantly 'will always be a cripple'," is highly feminized through his appearance, physical pursuits and the way in which he is compared to the very masculine and able-bodied Jimmy Pendleton (154). Because Jamie is not cured at the end, he is never able to embody normative masculinity.

Jamie is consistently described through his disability; Pollyanna often feels pity for him, and he is rarely depicted without his wheelchair or crutches. When we are first introduced to "the boy in the wheelchair," small woodland creatures surround him. He feeds birds and squirrels, and they are "so tame that the doves would perch on his head and shoulders, and the squirrels would burrow in his pockets for nuts" (Porter 50). His association with small, helpless creatures parallels his own nature. These interactions are reminiscent of Dickon from *The Secret Garden* in some sense, because both boys have a kind of connection with non-human beings that seems more intense than the connections with other characters in the stories. However, Dickon has a command and mastery over his creatures that Jamie does not. Dickon's knowledge about various creatures and the natural world also evokes a sense of ruggedness in his character. Jamie, on the other hand, names his small friends after various literary figures, which is another feminizing aspect of his character. Porter refers to him as a "romance-fed boy" which reinforces his femininity by invoking thoughts of storytelling and sentiment (53).

Perhaps the most revealing example of Jamie's femininity is his constant comparison to Jimmy Pendleton (Keith 162). The novel sets up a bit of a subtle love triangle between Pollyanna, Jamie and Jimmy. Pollyanna's love for Jamie is implied in a friendly manner, but when she travels back to Beldingsville and cannot seem to stop talking about Jamie, whether others want to hear about him or not, the reader is allowed a glimpse into Pollyanna's feelings for him, although she may not even be aware of them herself. The love triangle becomes especially explicit in the same chapter entitled "Jimmy and the Green-Eyed Monster" where Jimmy's love for Pollyanna becomes apparent to the reader, although he will not admit to these feelings for Pollyanna in the same way that she refuses her own. Jimmy remains jealous of Jamie until the moment he realizes Jamie is differently-abled. As soon as Jamie's disability is evident,

he becomes automatically erased from the triangle in Jimmy's mind. In fact, Jimmy suddenly thinks "of what his own good legs meant to him. He even, for the moment, was willing that this poor crippled youth should have a PART of Pollyanna's thoughts and attentions" (124). Jamie returns to being pitied and feminized when his disability completely removes his ability to be considered a suitable mate for Pollyanna. This inability does not only exist in Jimmy's mind. When, after years away, Pollyanna sees Jamie again, she is at first struck by how handsome he has grown (125). Instead of allowing Jamie this small victory, Porter follows Pollyanna's shock directly with pity, when she catches a glimpse of his crutches and has a "spasm of aching sympathy" contract in her throat (125). Pollyanna's "aching sympathy" is referenced once more a few lines down, which leaves the reader with her pity rather than attraction.

Once Jamie and Jimmy begin to occupy the same space within the novel, the comparisons grow more prominent. Jimmy, for example, would like to grow up to be an architect, while Jamie's success lies in drawing and writing, which Keith labels the "much more feminine and romantic pursuit" (163). Even their names emphasize these gender distinctions, as Jamie is the feminized version of James, while Jimmy (or Jim) sounds slightly more masculine. Jimmy even admits to hating Jamie's name because it "sounds sissy," and we discover that both were given the same name at birth (94). While Jimmy is allowed to take on a different, less "sissy" sounding name, Jamie remains trapped in his, much as he remains trapped in the construction of his disability.

One scene in particular highlights Jimmy's masculinity while simultaneously underlining Jamie's femininity. On a camping trip, a rogue bull attacks Pollyanna, and while Jamie screams to alert Pollyanna that she is in danger, Jimmy rushes to save the damsel-in-distress (Keith 166). Jimmy's overt presentation of masculinity in the form of bravery and physical strength feminizes

Jamie, who must stand by passively and watch in horror, unable to do anything to help. It is after this episode that Keith asserts Pollyanna could not possibly marry Jamie, as "our heroine needs a hero and it is clear that Porter has in mind someone who can stand and protect, not someone who must wait and watch" (166). Once again, Jimmy's superiority is reinforced as the plotline which seeks out Mrs. Carew's long lost son, coincidentally named "Jamie", is finally resolved. The reader learns "that it is not 'crippled' Jamie who is the rightful heir to a family fortune and noble heritage, but the tall, manly, physically perfect Jimmy, [which] is all part of the portrayal of the non-walking Jamie as tragic and emasculated" (Keith 156).

Jamie's disability is not cured; thus his masculinity is not fully restored, although Porter allows Jamie to rid himself of some feminine connotations when he marries Sadie, a minor character who "does not view Jamie's life as a tragedy" (Keith 166). Throughout the novel, Sadie seems the only character who does not interact with Jamie in a pitiful and sentimental manner. The reader is relieved to discover that Jamie's feelings were always directed towards Sadie over Pollyanna, and in a plot twist as convenient as Jimmy's handy inheritance, all four characters are neatly married off within the cultural scripts provided to them. Jamie also wins a literary prize and his manuscript is sent to a large publishing house, which, along with his marriage, allows him to regain some of his masculinity. Keith remarks that it "seems impossible for [Porter] to overcome her obsession with crutches and the state of non-walking", because even though she breaks some of the standard conventions associated with disability as a metaphorical device, *Pollyanna Grows Up* still strongly aligns disability with femininity (168).

Another way in which disability is used to prescribe normative gender roles is evident in the novel *What Katy Did* by Susan Coolidge. Coolidge writes Katy, a young girl who embodies certain masculine qualities that are unsuitable to her gender, into a terrible accident in order to

teach her a lesson about how to embody proper nineteenth-century feminine ideals. Through her accident and subsequent disability, which Keith labels an "enforced period of passivity," Katy learns how to be domestic and becomes the "Heart of the House" (Keith 70, Coolidge 59). Lois Keith explains that Katy is in "a state of social 'wrongness'" before her accident because she is a "Victorian girl who is wild and unconventional," or in essence, one who does not embody femininity (80). "Katy's hair was forever untidy; her gowns were always catching on nails and 'tearing themselves'" and she consistently gets into trouble (Coolidge 16). It is clear from these descriptions that Katy is masculinized before her accident, because she does not epitomize the reserved and refined nature that is especially important in a "Victorian girl" (Keith 80). Instead of being concerned with quiet, household duties and a spotless appearance, Katy's thoughts are occupied by having fun. Katy, for example, asks her father "what makes some days so lucky and others so unlucky" to which the ultimate answer is Katy's own reckless actions (17). Her father's answer begins Katy's understanding that in order to be good, she must put others before herself and embody the passive and submissive ideals so often associated with femininity.

Katy also spends a lot of her time out-of-doors, which reinforces her masculinity. Outside is where she can be unconcerned about her physical appearance, and where most of her clothes are torn. She is masculinized in the literal sense when she invents the "Game of Rivers" and plays the role of "Father Ocean," who leads the class into such uproar that the teacher is shocked she could not trust them to "behave like ladies when her back was turned" (31, 32). A discussion with her neighbor and siblings also masculinizes Katy, as they consider what they are going to be when they grow up, and Katy's prospects all involve slightly masculinized pursuits. Her sister and friend's ambitions occupy the passive expression of "being"—being beautiful and good, by visiting the poor and teaching Sunday-school, or wearing "gold dresses and silver dresses every

day, and diamond rings, and hav[ing] white satin aprons to tie on when dusting, or doing anything dirty" (Keith 74, Coolidge 23). Katy intends to be all of this when she grows up, but also intends to "do" in the form of "rowing out in boats, and saving people's lives" or even heading a crusade and riding on a white horse with armor and a helmet (24). In attempting to have it all, Katy is resisting the feminine script assigned to her.

The reader can assume that Katy's masculine behavior arises from the fact that she grows up without a mother, and with a father who wished to have the children "hardy and bold" and who "encouraged climbing and rough plays, in spite of the bumps and ragged clothes which resulted" (6). It is Aunt Izzie who tries to impose domestic duty onto the children (especially Katy), although her attempts are much less effective than Katy's impending disability. Even before her accident, Katy is not entirely comfortable with her conflicting desires because she realizes they remove her from stereotypical gender roles and do not characterize how a young lady is supposed to act. Katy often struggles between *being* good and listening to Aunt Izzie's instruction, and *doing* what makes her happy by having fun, following her father's implicit desires for his children. Keith explains that "the reader is made to share this ambivalence," which is why Katy's accident and subsequent feminization is not a shock (75).

Katy's disobedience gets her into the ultimate form of trouble when she ignores her aunt's instruction not to use the broken tire swing in the barn. The swing breaks and Katy falls, which leaves her bedridden, unable to move her legs. Katy's father explains the injury to her with quite a bit of medical accuracy, which is rare for a nineteenth-century children's text (Keith 79). He roughly sketches the biology of the spinal cord, but ends the explanation with a somewhat more vague reference to "a fever in the back" and no knowledge as to whether or not she will recover, although he believes it possible because she is so young and strong (Coolidge

53). It is here that Keith recognizes Coolidge's purposeful vagueness in describing Katy's condition in order to allow the reader to "believe in the possibility of some kind of magical resolution" (80).

It is with this accident, as Keith explains, that the "independent, lively spirit literally has to be knocked out of girls in order for them to become women" (81). Although Katy is reluctant to do much of anything right after the accident, she accepts the fact that she has to remain in bed, and eventually starts undertaking domestic pursuits. The first instance of Katy adopting feminine ideals occurs because she can no longer play outside, and instead, spends time sitting at the window. This kind of interaction with nature mirrors Coolidge's distinction between "being" and "doing." Before Katy's accident, she was able to interact physically with nature, which masculinized her. After the accident, she sits by the window and discovers that "looking out at the clouds, the people going by, and the children playing in the snow, was delightful," which is a more passive interaction, reinforcing normative femininity (Coolidge 115).

Katy is led by her differently-abled cousin Helen, whose first lesson involves teaching Katy to "Be nice and sweet and patient, and a comfort to people," and starts by making her room pretty so that her siblings will come to visit often (103). Katy asks Helen what she can do simply lying in bed, to which Helen answers that she can enter God's school, named "The School of Pain," evoking a sense of self-sacrifice and goodness that can only be achieved by putting others before oneself (56). Some of the lessons in this house include "Patience," "Cheerfulness," "Making the Best of Things," "Hopefulness" and "Neatness," which Keith labels "the lessons girls have been taught for generations and the lessons disabled people are still expected to follow" as disability is once again strongly aligned with femininity (85-86). These feminine

ideals are reinforced throughout the rest of the text, as Katy takes over the household duties after her aunt's death, and fills the role of her absent mother. Keith asserts that

> Katy is doing the housekeeping not despite her disability but because of it. If she were not an 'invalid' she would still be a girl, at school all day, running with her friends and allowed at least another year or two of freedom and girlhood. As it is, after a brief period of regret when the children all wish that they had appreciated Aunt Izzie more when she was alive, Katy begins to manage the housekeeping from her room upstairs.…It is her invalid status which allows her to throw off any vestiges of childhood and mature into a refined and reformed young woman. (91)

Ironically, Katy's disability is what *cures* her wild and unconventional nature, and by the end of the novel, Katy has embodied domesticity and is completely confined to the private sphere (Keith 91). Katy receives a wheelchair that allows her some mobility, although she does not use it to leave the house at all. In fact, Keith notes that Katy remains not only upstairs but "in her own room until the last chapter of the book, when she is able to walk again" which is reinforced by her sibling, Clover, who explains how she sometimes thinks she would be sorry if Katy gets well because she provides such nurture and care from remaining in her chair (92).

Even after Katy is cured, the reader gets the feeling that her days of frolicking about outside are over, and her place as a young woman now exists as firmly rooted inside, in the private sphere, as "The Heart of the House" (154). Keith notes how Katy's gradual cure comes on much the same way as "her transformation from wild girl to tame woman," in a slow and steady manner (92). In fact, even after Katy begins to walk again, she remains upstairs for two or three weeks, and then decides to come downstairs in celebration of her returned ability. She

chooses her deceased mother's birthday as the day she will come downstairs, which symbolically places her into the role her mother no longer occupies, as the "little mother to the household" (Keith 93). The fact that Coolidge cures Katy provides further evidence that her disability is used only as it is necessary to instill femininity, and is then conveniently displaced once Katy has embraced young womanhood.

Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic *The Secret Garden* uses disability as a metaphor to prescribe normative gender roles, just as Coolidge does in *What Katy Did.* Instead of writing her character into an accident, however, Hodgson Burnett introduces the reader to Colin while he is already disabled, and he only begins to embody masculinity as his disability is cured. This popular novel for children has repeatedly been reproduced on television and in film, which reinforces the lasting impact of its didactic message on the healing powers of nature, and perhaps more subtly, the importance of adhering to gender normativity. It follows the story of Mary Lennox, a young girl who comes to live with her absentee uncle after the death of her parents. Although *The Secret Garden* begins only with Mary, she soon discovers her long-lost cousin, twelve-year-old Colin Craven, a boy who has been made to believe he will develop a hunchback and die at a very young age.

Colin is "highly feminized" when the reader is first introduced to him (Keith 121); he has "a sharp, delicate face, the colour of ivory, and he seemed to have eyes too big for it" (Burnett 134). His appearance is romanticized in the same manner as Jamie from *Pollyanna Grows Up*. Burnett puts emphasis on his "black lashes" and large eyes to draw connections between him and his deceased mother, an act that feminizes his appearance. Colin is similar to his father in the way that he believes he will have a hunchback, and is frequently told he will die before reaching adulthood. Burnett makes clear that Colin's disability is psychosomatic, which, according to

Keith is an indication of Burnett's interest in the idea of the mind's power over the body (Keith 128). There is no accident to describe Colin's condition; thus the reader believes early on that his paralysis will be cured. In fact, it is Mary who is first to point out that he is not going to die, as she believes that he only uses his illness to "make people sorry" and have them spoil him (183). Colin throws a number of tantrums and frequently works himself into hysterics, which Keith points out, makes him a "victim of his emotions," a stereotypically feminine trait (137). Colin is also "entirely dependent on others and frightened of everything, even fresh air" which reinforces his helplessness and dependency, both indicative of feminine and disabled cultural scripts (137).

Hodgson Burnett also offers another young male figure, Dickon, by which to compare Colin and his lack of masculinity. Although Dickon is gentle with Mother Nature, his knowledge and the strength of his connection with the natural world insist that he is not feminized by this quality. He is able to "go off on th' moor by himself an' play for hours" and seems to be able to speak to the animals he interacts with (34). Colin and Dickon are often paralleled with one another, and come to represent complete opposites. Mary hears about Dickon often before she has the chance to meet him; by contrast, she hears nothing about Colin's existence before seeking out his room one night by following the sounds of his cries. When Mary is first introduced to Dickon, she notices his bright blue eyes and cheeks "as red as poppies," completely opposite of Colin's dark grey eyes and pale skin (102). Keith writes of Dickon as "the symbol of everything which is simple and alive," the opposite of Colin's preoccupation with death and dying (134). Instead of taking a turn towards finding a suitable mate for Mary, à la *Pollyanna Grows Up*, Hodgson Burnett opts to unite her three main characters in embracing nature to become young and healthy children.

Once Colin leaves his darkened bedroom and accepts the fresh air he had detested, he begins to overcome his disability, and consequently, his femininity, both physically and emotionally. Although the children ascribe Colin's rapidly improving health and ability to a kind of "magic" that is provided through time spent in the secret garden, Keith notes that it is a moment of hurt masculine pride during which Colin gains the ability to walk for the very first time (136). Colin is seen in the garden for the first time by the gardener, Ben Weatherstaff, and when he calls Colin a cripple, Colin's anger and denial cause him to stand and declare "Look at me!"—a moment in proud assertion of his ability and masculinity (242). By the end of the novel, Colin has completely done away with his wheelchair and is "the embodiment of young manhood" (Keith 139). He becomes "a tall boy, and a handsome one," and although his eyes remain large and framed by thick lashes, there is now color in his cheeks and he looks "taller than he had ever looked before—inches taller," a proclamation that reinforces the fact that he is no longer sitting in a wheelchair or leaning on a pair of crutches (318). The novel itself ends with a picture of Colin standing upright "with his head up in the air and his eyes full of laughter walk[ing] as strongly and steadily as any boy in Yorkshire" (322). Hodgson Burnett insists that it is Colin's story that remains important by ending the novel in this manner. Colin's femininity disappears with his disability, leaving the reader with the notion of disability as a cultural tool used to promote gender normativity.

These texts represent nineteenth-century children's literature's tendency to use disability in order to promote normativity in terms of gender constructions. In *Pollyanna Grows Up*, Jamie is feminized because he is differently-abled. Porter asserts his femininity again and again, and because Jamie is not offered a miracle cure, he never quite becomes fully masculinized because he continues to be differently abled. The texts *What Katy Did* and *The Secret Garden* also use

disability to prescribe gender normativity, but do so by giving their characters a disability because they do not yet fit into their gendered stereotype, and then remove the disability once normativity is restored. These authors inflict disability temporarily, much the same as the character's occupation of the incorrect gender categorization. These authors use disability only as long as it is needed, which reinforces its use as a mere literary tool.

The prescription of gender matters because it creates different opportunities allowed to the characters that it affects. Because it was much more difficult to get around if you were differently-abled, these novels represent a strong connection between mobility and independence. The disabled characters lack independence because they lack mobility; since a sense of independence is tied to masculinity, Jamie does not achieve full independence because he remains disabled, Katy has her independence mostly removed because she becomes fully feminized and lastly, Colin is allowed full independence by the end of the novel because he has claimed his masculinity and overcome his disability. This negative and prescriptive representation of disability in these texts reinforces the normativity of what were considered proper gendered stereotypes, and ultimately uses differently-abled characters to advocate a narrow and harmful conception of normalcy.

Chapter Two
"And the place where the lessons are to be learned is this room of yours": Morality and Disability

Gender is not the only social construction that is reinforced by the stereotypical representations of disability in children's literature. Often, stories written for children also bring with them great moral dimension. Children look to literature not purely for entertainment, but also to learn how to behave. Through these stories, children are offered models of both good little boys and girls who are rewarded, as well as the naughty children who are often punished and serve as an example of what young readers should avoid. The lessons offered to children through clever (and sometimes much more blatant) storytelling include how to treat others, how to obey authority figures, how to ensure chores are done, how to embody virtues, avoid vices, and ultimately, how to mature into functioning, morally sound adults. Classic children's literature uses fiction as a medium through which to entertain as well as instruct, which keeps readers happy as their imaginations are pricked by interesting stories and colorful characters, while adults are contented by the notion that the texts are teaching their children how to behave while simultaneously keeping them amused.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, heteronormative gender roles are one of the ways in which nineteenth-century children's texts use disability to prescribe normalcy. Differently-abled characters are also often used to teach other characters, or to learn valuable lessons themselves on how to behave ethically and morally; these lessons are then reinforced in young readers, and disability once again is represented stereotypically, as a mere tool in supporting normativity. From Pollyanna's cheerful moralizing to the lessons imparted to Katy regarding normative femininity, including an ethical Christian component in *What Katy Did*, these nineteenth-century children's texts preach and moralize regularly. Colin learns much more

than how to be masculine from overcoming his disability, and Mary also transforms from a sour, unhappy little orphan into a healthy and polite child in *The Secret Garden*. *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri and *The Little Lame Prince* by Dinah Mulock Craik are also texts that use disability in order to instill virtuous behavior in their characters, and by extension, the readers. Here, disability is used to teach various characters moral lessons, but these lessons are taken a step further when the authors criticize how knowledge has been traditionally disseminated to young folk. Interestingly enough, both Spyri and Craik advocate for experiential learning, and an immersion in nature, rather than gaining value from traditional book learning, although it is through this very medium that they present their own moral instruction. Differently-abled characters are used to support this contention, once again, in a very stereotypical manner in which they are negatively portrayed. These examples lead to other questions regarding benevolent behavior in nineteenth-century children's literature and how disability is used to promote feelings of pity, and even questions regarding parenting and caring for the differently-abled. The short stories "Deb" by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and "Wooden Tony" by Lucy Lane Clifford include two differently-abled characters and interestingly, their caretakers are the ones who are criticized from a moral standpoint. Here, disability is not treated stereotypically, and instead, the authors offer a poignant social commentary on how differently-abled characters should be treated in an ethical manner.

There are small variations within the portrayals in these texts, depending on which characters are written as differently-abled. Keith explains that

> In novels, characters who had spinal weakness through one cause or another were likely to be cured by a combination of bed-rest and bracing fresh air as suggested by the doctors, but also through some kind of inner moral or spiritual change. In literature

> designed for children there was no question of any moral weakness being ascribed directly to sexual excesses, but there was often the clear message that weakness or failure of character was responsible for the calamity that had befallen them. (31)

This pattern rings true for Colin Craven, Katy Carr, Clara Sesemann and even to Pollyanna in a somewhat diminished manner, because her outlook on life before the accident already brings with it a sense of moral and spiritual purity. Another similar pattern emerges, which Brandy L. Schillace explores in her paper titled "Curing 'Moral Disability': Brain Trauma and Self Control in Victorian Science and Fiction." Like Keith, Schillace contends that Victorian fiction "portray[s] disabled characters as "purified," and trauma itself as potentially sanitizing" with a concept that represents "trauma-as-cure" (587). Schillace also observes how these disabled characters "exist in the narrative as moralizing agents" helping those physically able characters who seem to suffer from a type of "moral disability" (588). She notes that "in a culture of sexual anxiety and fears of devolution and moral decay, the physically disabled and "weak" are portrayed as strangely free from moral corruption" (587). The reader is not always offered "trauma-as-cure" situations for all the disabled characters a text portrays, and instead, the reader often finds examples of perfectly moral disabled characters who, because of their disability, come to represent paragons of virtue. There are also the older, secondary characters who bemoan their disability and live a tortured, unhappy life, until their spirits are lifted by a child who has achieved moral soundness, reminding others that they must always live patiently and piously, no matter what hardship they have been dealt.

Thus, these texts often present us with three classifications of disability and their various positions on reaching sound moral character: the young, morally weak character who, through overcoming the disability that befalls her or him through the texts or that she or he begins the

story with, achieves morality after all the suffering, the already established virtuous disabled character who will not be cured but offers the perfect example of how to deal with one's misfortunes, and lastly, the older differently-abled character whose life is a tragedy until she or he learns how to glean happiness from the dire situation. None of these representations offers disability in a positive light, but rather, as a period of suffering and trepidation that one must seek to get through with a good natured spirit in order to achieve happiness in the after-life if there is no chance for miracle cure, or in order to become morally pure once the disability has been conveniently alleviated. These characters appear in a number of stories for children that ultimately allow disability to be used as a handy plot device to ensure that children are gleaning moral lessons from the novels they read.

In *What Katy Did*, Katy learns lessons that can be attributed to more than just attaining her normative gendered role. Katy's reckless behavior before the accident also implies a moral culpability. She does not take authority figures seriously, and it is specifically by ignoring instruction that she becomes disabled. This direct correlation reinforces in the young reader how important it is to obey all rules put forth by parents and other caretakers. However, the reader knows from the start that Katy's intentions are good, and that she has a pure heart. Her accident and subsequent lessons focus mainly on curtailing her bad behavior and reinforcing her good spirit, as well as firmly rooting her in stereotypical nineteenth-century constructions of femininity.

What Katy Did very briefly presents the reader with an older disabled character, Mrs. Spenser, with whom Katy has spent time becoming friends until her mostly unexplained absence, attributed to Mr. Spenser's illegal activities in counterfeiting. Katy has a collection of strange friends, strange mostly alluding to those non-normative characters who have been shunned by

the rest of society for a variety of reasons, including a young poor girl, a German family that speaks little English and a criminal with whom she communicates through the window of the jail. Within this list exists Mrs. Spenser, "a mysterious lady whom nobody ever saw" and who was said to be an invalid (32). Katy brings Mrs. Spenser flowers in a moment of curiosity, and this begins a friendship in which Katy visits Mrs. Spenser every day. Mrs. Spenser's status foreshadows Katy's beginning experiences with disability, and subsequently, what she learns from it. Mrs. Spenser's room is explained as "disorderly and dirty as all the rest of the house, and Mrs. Spenser's wrapper and night-cap were by no means clean, but her face was sweet" (33). The state of Katy's dark and dismal sickroom is similar right after her accident. As Katy visits Mrs. Spenser more and more often, Mrs. Spenser begins to be able to get up and move around feebly, and although there is no complete transformation to happiness, her room becomes much tidier and brighter with a small child's presence, especially one who holds an already generous spirit. Mrs. Spenser falls into the third category of representations of disability, although the pattern is not completely followed as Mrs. Spenser is quickly taken out of the story. The reader does not need Mrs. Spenser in order to have moral wisdom imparted because it is offered through Katy's accident, as well as the example she follows from Cousin Helen.

Cousin Helen represents the saintly invalid, who, Keith writes, is not offered a cure because she "is already so near to Heaven" (81). Her primary role is to offer guidance to Katy on her pursuit of ideal womanhood as well as moral purity. Cousin Helen tells Katy that "the place where the lessons are to be learned is this room of yours," inside the home, in the private feminine sphere (56). These lessons not only include keeping one's room and one's appearance tidy, but also learning how to put other people before oneself, as well as how to make the best of any situation. Helen preaches "God's school" otherwise entitled the "School of Pain" which "is

based on the Christian ideal that there are lessons to be learnt from suffering and that out of this torment, it is possible to be a better person" (Keith 86). Katy is struck by how happily and merrily Helen seems to embrace her disability, because she expects a patient individual who bears her calamity with reservation rather than tranquility. Much of the description of Helen focuses on her lovely outward appearance, and although Coolidge attempts to distance her from conventional saintly invalid stereotyping by having her exhibit joyfulness and an excessively sweet nature, Cousin Helen is an unrealistic, unflawed and purely educational figure. Helen is lauded for not being jealous of others who have the ability to walk around because "she is half an angel already, and loves other people better than herself" (44). Thus, the instruction is not how a differently-abled person has the ability to live a full and valid life in the same manner as any able-bodied person, but rather, that Helen has achieved moral superiority through her suffering, and becomes the embodiment of a lesson on how to teach others to do the same.

Like Mrs. Spenser in *What Katy Did*, Porter's *Pollyanna* also includes an older and misunderstood differently-abled character who learns how to play the "Glad Game" and embrace the suffering her condition has caused. When we are first introduced to Mrs. Snow, her sick-room is similar to Mrs. Spenser's and Katy's at the very beginning of their suffering. Though somewhat more disagreeable than Mrs. Spenser, Mrs. Snow also remains in bed in a dark and gloomy room, and pays no attention to her own appearance. Pollyanna begins by opening the curtains, fixing Mrs. Snow's hair and offering her a mirror so as to realize how pretty she can be if small effort is made. However, it is when Pollyanna describes the "Glad Game" to Mrs. Snow that a change in her begins to take place. Pollyanna offers the story of Mrs. White, who had rheumatic fever and had to lie in bed listening to her neighbor's piano lessons, and who although annoyed by the situation, discovered that she could be glad that her ears still worked well enough

to hear the music, unlike the unhappy fate of her husband's sister, who was deaf (Porter 77). Here, disability is once again offered as the worst-case scenario, and the more critical reader wonders how recognizing other's misfortunes fits into a game about being glad at all. However, Pollyanna is quick to rectify this situation in telling Mrs. Snow that she can be glad for the fact "that other folks weren't like you—all sick in bed like this" (78). Although Snow is hard-pressed to agree at first, the chapter ends with tears falling from her face, and the reader is left with the notion that Pollyanna has had a profound effect on her attitude. Although it takes some time for Mrs. Snow to completely absorb Pollyanna's lesson, through continued visits that lead to budding friendship, Mrs. Snow's room, appearance and disposition all become much brighter, and once again, disability is used to promote virtuous behavior, which must include putting others' happiness before one's own.

Although Pollyanna suffers through her own accident and subsequent disability (it is very brief and cured by the end of the novel), Keith notes that "her function in the story is to transform the lives of others" (146). Through these transformations *Pollyanna* teaches children how to be appreciative of the lot they were dealt in life, and to constantly find things to be glad for. Because Pollyanna does "not need to be taught a lesson in unselfishness and humility," her disability is thrown into the text late in order to reinforce the strength of her own spirit, as well as the power it has had on the individuals around her (Keith 149). All of the townspeople that Pollyanna has helped become better individuals, visit her or send their well wishes, which strengthens her already generous demeanor and ultimately allows her to bear her paralysis with continued cheerfulness. Although it increases the dramatic momentum of the story, the rather short time period with which Pollyanna lives with a disability and the ease in which it is done away with signal to the reader that the importance of this character is the effect she has on others,

rather than the brief paralysis that she must bear. In presenting differently-abled characters in strictly rigid terms, and reducing them to a period that must be suffered through or accepted in order to achieve moral superiority, these texts offer a negative and stereotypical image of disability that is used to enforce normalcy.

The Secret Garden works in a similar vein in offering characters who learn how to be morally sound through its representation of disability, although it is also a text that criticizes the children's caretakers as much as it does their own bad behavior. Both Mary and Colin learn significant lessons in appropriate behavior by the conclusion of the novel. When we are first introduced to Mary, she is "the most-disagreeable looking child ever seen" (1). She is so disagreeable, in fact, that "when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also" (1). Here, illness is automatically equated with fretfulness, ugliness and disagreeableness, which also have moral dimensions to them. Mary is not only frightful in appearance, but also behaves in a manner "as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived" (1). Colin is introduced in a similar manner, although his pale and frail appearance is emphasized; because he is referred to as an invalid, his disability must reflect negatively on his appearance. Burnett explains that "Mary had not known that she herself had been spoiled, but she could see quite plainly that this mysterious boy had been. He thought that the whole world belonged to him" (140). Once again, the child's terrible behavior is not totally credited to his own inherent faults, but rather, to the adults surrounding him. Colin has become an ill and spoiled "rajah" because he has been made to believe he is sick, and will be for his entire miserable existence. Instead of comforting him through this fact, the surrounding staff caters to his every whim regarding material items, when all he really needs is someone to care about him the way Mary learns to. His absent father, who

cannot stand the sight of Colin as it reminds him of his deceased wife, is one of the main reasons that Colin is such a misbehaving child, both literally and figuratively; Colin was made to believe he will inherit his father's humpback, and suffers without the love and attention a parent should offer his or her child.

Only once both Mary and Colin become aware of their own selfishness and rudeness, through the tantrums they throw in regard to one another and time spent together immersed in the healing "magic" of nature, do they do away with their previous bad behavior, and subsequent ill demeanors. Burnett spells this out for the reader in the last chapter when she describes the change that has come to both Mary and Colin.

> So long as Mistress Mary's mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. (303)

Burnett clearly associates illness ("sickly") to both an undesirable appearance ("yellow-faced") and moral disposition ("wretched"). Just as in *What Katy Did*, Mary's "healing starts when she begins to think of people and things beyond herself," which reinforces the moral dimension involved in recovering from illness (Keith 124). Burnett then describes Colin's transformation:

> So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness and his detestation of people who looked at him and reflected hourly on humps and early death, he was a hysterical half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew nothing of the sunshine and the spring and also did not know that he could get well and could stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. (304)

Here, Burnett makes clear that what was termed Colin's disability can simply be labeled a psychosomatic condition thought up by the "hysterical half-crazy little hypochondriac."

However, in invoking Colin as an invalid throughout the entire text, and then doing away with this construction once he is morally and spiritually cured, disability becomes a mere plot device with which to offer moral instruction. Keith takes this notion a step further when she recognizes the moral implications of Colin's now-straight back. She notes that "'straight' and 'upright' mean honest, honorable, frank and trustworthy" (138). Colin becomes a healthy and morally righteous character once he realizes he is no longer disabled, and normativity is once again reinforced as disability is discarded.

As in *The Secret Garden*, *What Katy Did* and *Pollyanna*, *Heidi* and *The Little Lame Prince* use disability to do some heavy moralizing. However, these texts also delve into the importance of experiential learning over book learning, and use differently-abled characters to do so, although they are presented in similar stereotypical roles as those we have witnessed in many other nineteenth-century novels. *Heidi* tells the story of a young orphaned girl who is sent to live with her grandfather, Alm Uncle, in the Swiss Alps. Unlike Mary Lennox, Heidi is an already kind-spirited child. In fact, her overall pleasantness has a bit of a Pollyanna quality to it, although this text was written thirty-or-so years before. Nevertheless, the spirited young heroine represents a staple in children's texts, and it is not Heidi who must learn from a disability, but rather her cousin Clara, who seems to have a kind of paralysis that lies somewhere between Colin's psychosis and Katy's miracle cure. *Heidi* also includes the older, and begrudging differently-abled character, whose life is changed by the light of an optimistic youngster. Peter, Alm Uncle's helper and Heidi's friend amongst the Alps, has a grandmother who is blind. Much less of a curmudgeon than her counterpart character in *Pollyanna*, grandmother is represented as kind-hearted throughout. Her disability inspires Heidi to visit, which lightens her spirit, because otherwise she is written off by the townspeople as useless to society. When Heidi is first taken to

Herr Sesemann's house, grandmother is the only one who knows the truth about how well Alm Uncle treated her, but no one takes heed of the opinions of someone "too old to understand, and [who] very likely had not heard rightly what was said; as she was blind she was probably also deaf" (36). Through Heidi's friendship, the grandmother is able to find light, and feels "darkness much less when Heidi [is] with her" (30).

But it is Clara, whom Keith labels "the typical storybook invalid" because she has a "thin, pale face and soft blue eyes and is both patient and passive," who represents the bulk of disability in this novel (107). Unlike Katy, Clara's disability is not used to teach her a lesson or goal specifically. Her disability is also not the result of being unloved or poor, as she comes from a rich family, and although her father is often away, he loves her dearly. Instead, Keith attributes Clara's disability and subsequent cure to the power of faith, both in God and in nature (which will be discussed further in chapter three). Clara's illness is described in the vague terms often used in "typical invalid" fashion, which include labeling it a weakness and illness, with no specified time for recovery. Clara spends her time indoors taking lessons throughout the first half of the story, and here we can see Spyri's rising criticism of traditional forms of learning for a more hands-on interaction with the natural world. Keith writes of Spyri's "ideas about how children suffer and fail to learn when they are locked up in school or in the hands of foolish tutors" (101). It is precisely this convention that keeps Clara locked up in her house, learning reading, writing and arithmetic, before free-spirited Heidi comes to stay with her.

At first, Heidi finds great difficulty in learning from Clara's tutor because she has never before learnt from traditional forms of instruction. However, when a storybook is presented to her with beautiful pictures reminiscent of the natural landscape she could delight in each day with Alm Uncle, Heidi quickly learns how to read "so rapidly…quite unlike most beginners"

(65). Here, Spyri makes a comment on the necessity of interesting material for the child who seeks to learn. By inspiring Heidi with what she truly loves—nature and all of its reverences—Spyri shows how these books enable her heroine to quickly adapt to more traditional forms of knowledge. This pattern is once again reinforced when Clara is brought to the mountains to stay with Heidi and Alm Uncle through the second half of the novel. Clara's health only improves from breathing the fresh mountain air and abandoning her suffocating urban home and all the trappings that go along with it (including conventional forms of learning), which eventually leads to the cure of her disability. Although nature and God's will play a prominent role in Clara's healing, the reader is left with the idea that her previous situation, which included constant studies and being locked up inside, were the primary sources of her continued "illness." Thus, disability is once more used as a handy literary device with which to prescribe a certain set of behaviors, which in this case reinforce the author's thoughts on proper child-rearing techniques.

Craik's novel *The Little Lame Prince* works in a similar manner. Prince Dolor, named after his mother and also in possession of her sweet face and disposition, is dropped as a baby, and subsequently, has legs that do not work. The disability in this novel is presented in typical vague Victorian fashion. His mother falls ill after giving birth and dies at his christening, although the kingdom does not realize how sick she is because she "said nothing about it herself, but lay pale and placid, giving no trouble to anybody" (3). The Prince's condition, termed a "slight delicacy…in the spine," is said to be an inheritance from his mother, since nobody knows that one of the nursemaids dropped him as a baby, besides the mysterious godmother figure who returns throughout the novel to watch over the Prince (5). The Prince becomes a stereotypical representation of disability in that he is deemed unfit for his future role as King, because his disability strips him of the masculinity and power often associated with the role. Instead, Prince

Dolor is given a special quality, as the "pretty little crippled boy with large dreamy, thoughtful eyes, beneath the grave glance of which wrongdoers felt uneasy, and, although they did not know it then, the sight of him bearing his affliction made them better" (6). This ability to arouse pity, however, is not suitable for the power a King must command, so shortly after his father's death, the Prince is sent away to live amongst the "Beautiful Mountains." Although the townspeople are told he dies during the trip, the Prince actually lives and remains in the highest room of a tower far away, with only the maid who dropped him and a courier to offer him scattered company.

In a fashion similar to Clara in *Heidi*, the Prince is not only a prisoner because of his disabled legs, but also because of the only situation he is offered: a locked room. The Prince spends time reading and studying because it is all he is afforded, until his mysterious godmother shows up with a cloak that allows him to travel outside his tower to wherever he pleases. At this point in the story the lines between imagination and reality become fuzzy, as the Prince joins birds flying through the sky, and gets to discover the natural world in a way that was previously denied to him, although he is fearful of this adventure at first. The narrator explains that he would be a courageous boy, but because of his legs, "could only show his courage morally, not physically, by being afraid of nothing," which reinforces the strong connection between disability and moral superiority (12).

Prince Dolor eventually learns the secret of his own heritage, and though struggling to believe that he is a Prince, he ultimately decides to take charge of his position and use the cloak to travel to his hometown. Although Prince Dolor has learned how to be intelligent and morally sound from the education books provided him in the tower, it is nothing close to the experiences he receives in using the cloak to leave his room. In recognizing the sad state of his urban city, the Prince vows to return to his role as King, and with some help from his godmother and nurse, is

able to do so. Here, Craik gives some status and masculinity back to her differently-abled character. However, because a miracle cure does not lie in the Prince's future, he is mysteriously whisked away by his cloak at the end of the story. Although the Prince "does a good many things" for the town, these things include sentimental pursuits that once again justify good moral behavior (21). He pardons the nurse who had dropped him as a baby, and chooses a "quiet, unobtrusive boy" to be heir to his throne (21). *The Little Lame Prince* demonstrates that book learning is not quite enough, but at the same time, lessens the importance of force and might in successfully ruling a kingdom. Craik uses disability to represent the importance of a good strong moral character over physical ability; although her novel tends towards the idea of an inclusive model of disability, she does not quite go far enough. Prince Dolor is still stereotypically portrayed as a patient and sentimental individual whose main purpose is to instill virtuous behavior in the story's young readers.

These stories do a specific type of moralizing, one that is directed towards readers, leaving them with lessons with which to apply to their own lives. However, an analysis of the short stories "Deb" and "Wooden Tony" yields quite a different goal in their respective moralizations, as well as the ways in which they portray disability. Both stories include a differently-abled character whose disability seems to prevent them to the point of function. However, these are not the saintly invalids we have already been introduced to, nor naughty children who must learn a lesson and are cured by the end of the story. Instead, these rather short tales offer great insight into the minds of the differently-abled child, and the take-away lessons leave the reader questioning the actions of the children's respective caretakers rather than the disabled children themselves. By neglecting to treat disability in a rigidly stereotypical manner,

both Phelps and Clifford offer a poignant commentary on how not to treat differently-abled characters, and the importance of resisting normalization as the only mode of being.

Thinking of both the characters Deb and Tony in the part they play in their families, and further, communities, helps reinforce how their situations are criticized, rather than their disabilities. Evoking Foucault's work on normalization of the body illuminates how these disabled bodies are regarded in their respective texts. In Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, he points towards the power of the norm, which is reinforced through a number of disciplines. Like the educational system, law and the government, the creation of a national medical profession leads to an era wherein "normalization becomes one of the greatest instruments of power" (184). Foucault situates the body historically, and not simply in terms of biology:

> This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (25)

This system of subjection ultimately brings with it hierarchical comparisons, whereas the unproductive body, which does not run as a well-operated machine, creates the idea of a norm that is then used to measure human bodies in concrete terms that can be classified and regulated (Garland Thomson 39). Both Deb and Tony do not fit into Foucault's model of the "docile body" because their bodies are considered abnormal. Deb, who is described with a curve in her shoulders, and who has "withered feet that [hang] down useless from her high chair" is also

called a "cripple" by another character in the story (102). Tony's disability is described even more abstractly, because he is not differently-abled in a physical sense, but instead is described as "the idlest boy in Switzerland," a "Wooden-head" who grows to "look quite stupid, as if his wits had gone a-wandering" (222). Rudolf Ekstein uses childhood autism to explain Tony's ambivalence to the people around him and the difficulty they find in communicating with him. Neither Deb nor Tony is offered a miracle cure or any kind of medical intervention by the end of their short tales. Instead, we are offered their stories as commentaries on bodies not considered within these boundaries of subjugation and production, as well as the failings of their respective caretakers.

Phelps' tale, "Deb," is presented as a "little thing" that the author is compelled to tell; yet in just a few short pages, Phelps undermines stereotypical nineteenth-century depictions of disability by starting with Deb as the speaking subject, asking "I wonder," and then continuing to delve into her consciousness although she rarely speaks throughout the rest of the text (106, 102). By beginning with a long description of all the things Deb wonders about before getting to just why she wonders, Phelps's story becomes one about Deb rather than Deb's inability to walk. The driving force of the story is the "straight young lady" for whom Deb's mother washes laundry, her recognition of Deb and the sleigh ride that she takes her on through the town. In consistently referring to the young lady as "straight," Phelps is reinforcing both her ability and her ethical morality. Like Colin, this young lady's straightness signals to the reader that she is kind-hearted and means well. The story continues to describe Deb's happiness in being able to witness the town from somewhere other than her high chair by the window, and leaves the reader with Deb, who no longer does not speak because she has nothing to speak of, but rather, cannot speak because she is so full of happiness at having the ability to remember rather than wonder at

the beauty that the world has to offer (106). In not focusing on Deb's disability, and not presenting it in a stereotypical manner, Phelps makes a comment on how Deb is treated abnormally, as opposed to the abnormality of her body.

When the straight young lady questions Deb's mother about why she remains in the chair, she replies "She's jest set in that chair ever sence she's ben big enough to set at all" and then immediately asks a question regarding the washing the lady has brought her to do. The young lady is shocked that Deb's mother never mentioned her crippled child, to which she replies "You never asked me, Miss" (104). Here, Phelps is not necessarily criticizing the actions of Deb's mother, but rather, the social system that has landed her in the position of being unable to properly care for her child. The family's poverty is what inhibits Deb from being cared for; her social standing is reinforced by how Phelps writes her dialect in broken and accented English. In replying "you never asked me" to the young lady who asks about Deb's disability, Deb's mother recognizes her subordinate position in the social hierarchy; she is merely there to do her job rather than ask for charity, help or guidance from her employer. By presenting the young lady as compassionate and caring, Phelps is criticizing the system in which Deb must grow up in this way, only ever able to sit at the window and watch the world go by. Phelps still presents the text in a sentimental manner, and ends by referencing how Deb's story is a "little thing" but also "the sweetest, saddest, tenderest little thing in the world," which leaves the reader with the sense that this tale is somewhat unimportant (106). However, in underscoring the proper treatment of disabled Deb as a sweet and tender little thing, Phelps illustrates how the improper treatment of disabled characters is a large and very important problem. Phelps begins a process of mending this problem by offering insight into the psyche of a differently-abled character who has not been through an accident in order to learn a lesson, and who is not cured in order to solve

his or her abnormal behavior, Phelps' "Deb" represents a "little" but important text in nineteenth-century children's literature.

"Wooden Tony" is another short story that deals with disability in an unusual way for a nineteenth-century children's text, and also offers a criticism of Tony's parents rather than critiquing the moral character of the differently-abled subject himself. Found in the collection entitled *Anyhow Stories: Moral and Otherwise*, "Wooden Tony" offers a glimpse into Tony's life in a manner similar to "Deb". Tony's tale, however, is not summed up with sentiment and pity, but rather, ends quite chillingly, with Tony going off and becoming a wooden figurine to the great distress of his mother who struggles to properly care for him throughout the story. Tony's mother posits that "perhaps he thinks more than he can say," which is reinforced when Clifford offers the reader a glimpse into his mental state (222).

Tony has problems trying to communicate with others, but sings a melody instead, and also wishes to be far off and tiny, to become a part of the natural world, with which he is enamored. Although his mother attempts to defend her son, his father consistently refers to Tony as stupid, and a fool. Tony's mother even recognizes that "some are made to use their hands and some their feet, and some it may be just their hearts to feel and their lips to speak," which sounds like an ideology inclusive of many differently-abled individuals (234). Her husband continues, however, reaffirming Tony's nickname, "Wooden-head," and the fact that his desire to be a wooden figurine and his constant singing distract him from being able to work (234). Here, Foucault's idea of the docile body is evoked. Tony is not accepted by his parents, especially his father, because his body is not regulated or productive, and falls outside the norm.

While Tony's mother tries to support her son, she lets him go off with a dealer to the city in order to showcase his singing talent. In her article on Clifford's work, Patricia Demers

suggests that within the story "the expected protection, or bonds, of the nuclear family disintegrate" (190). It is at this moment that Tony's mother represents what Demers labels the parents, as "absent or punitive monitors, or otherwise ineffective non-interventionists," because although Tony is asked whether or not he wants to go away with the dealer by his father, the reader is not given Tony's answer, and his mother agrees to sending him off without even her own son's consent (199). Tony leaves with the man and walks "as one who was dazed," captivated by the natural landscape that surrounds him, all the while heading into the city, where he completely loses touch with nature (234). Eventually, Tony is granted his desire to be tiny and far off, and literally becomes a wooden figurine that remains encased within a clock. His mother recognizes Tony in the figurine and laments the fact that she has lost her son forever. Clifford does not offer Tony a cure, but rather literally locks him into his illness. Tony is ambivalent about his place inside the clock; the text tells us that Tony "knew he was bound and a prisoner, but it did not matter, he did not care" (239). Clifford does not offer a straightforward message, and Demers suggests that the tales in *Anyhow Stories*, "in denying moments of understanding or illumination.…implicitly question the stability of such a moralizing project" (189). Though no clear morals can be drawn from Tony's position at the end of the story, it is obvious that his mother's melancholy regarding her son's position was caused by her own lack of protection. Tony's disability writes him off as an unproductive member of society in his parent's eyes, and as such, he becomes an object, the very commodity of the consumerism his father wished Tony to take part in. In a manner similar to "Deb", the story of "Wooden Tony" leaves the reader with a representation of disability that is in no way stereotypical. Instead of using disability to instill morals within the young reader, these short stories criticize the system and authority figures who allow differently-abled characters to suffer such injustice.

Through these examples I have hoped to demonstrate the heavy moralizing that accompanies representations of disability in nineteenth-century children's literature. The ways in which these texts represent disability fall into very rigid categorizations, which are used to instill lessons of normativity in the young readers, and often, these lessons include how to adopt and foster virtuous behavior. Novels like *Pollyanna*, *The Secret Garden*, *What Katy Did* and *Heidi* do not only include main characters who are differently-abled, but also secondary characters through whom disability is used to teach a lesson. The main characters earn virtuous behavior once they have overcome their disability, and thus, the moral of the stories becomes cemented in the mind of the child reader through the use of disability as a metaphor for curing social ills. It may be much too late to "cure" older characters within these texts, so instead, they act as lessons in further reinforcing ethical behavior. Most of this behavior consists of putting others before oneself, embracing proper gendered stereotypes and offering pity and sentiment to those who are deemed less fortunate than you, due to rigid and hierarchal categorizations of bodies in terms of production and worth.

Interestingly, the two short stories "Deb" and "Wooden Tony" offer somewhat different depictions of disability. Because they are not large moralizing projects with a clear goal in mind, these short tales reference disability in a unique manner for nineteenth-century children's literature in delving into the psyche of the differently-abled characters, and presenting the reader with representations that encompass more than mere pity. Although Phelps' story remains quite sentimental, she offers the reader a chance to view the circumstances surrounding Deb's disability as abnormal, rather than viewing Deb's body as the abnormality. When read in conjunction with Foucault's theory in *Discipline and Punish*, Deb and Tony are represented as completely outside of the docile body because they cannot be subjected to the normal means of

production. Instead of focusing on the moral ability of the differently-abled characters, these stories question their supposed caretakers from a moral standpoint, and result in a heavy criticism of the ways in which differently-abled characters are often regarded.

Two of the texts studied in this chapter also opt for different forms of learning rather than traditional methods of teaching. *Heidi* and *The Little Lame Prince* use disability to comment on the negativity of offering children only traditional forms of learning. Instead, these authors praise the natural world as a great environment from which to learn, both in terms of health and wellness, and overall moral character. In fact, nature comes up quite often in these texts, and is a connection that begs to be analyzed, especially when questions of isolation, mobility and the naturalizing effect of the outdoors are regarded along with disability. My next chapter will seek to answer these questions, and ultimately, recognize the way in which nature and disability can reinforce morality and suitable gender constructions to the end of prescribing normalcy in nineteenth-century children's texts.

Chapter Three
Those who "belonged to the wind and the trees": Disability and the Natural World

In recognizing all of the vast similarity that exists within these texts, it is easy to neglect what an important role nature and the natural world plays in them as well. While disability is used to prescribe gender normativity as well as offer child readers lessons in morality, its representation also has much to do with nature as a space that disabled characters become isolated from, and oppositely, seek out in order to become healed. Nature functions in a number of different ways in these texts, but its presence is always emphasized. From Katy and Jamie's interactions with nature in *What Katy Did* and *Pollyanna Grows Up*, to the healing power of the moors and the Alps in *The Secret Garden* and *Heidi*, the natural world becomes a place where children discover health and wellness. However, the natural world also has a naturalizing effect in bringing these child characters into their respective gender roles, teaching them how to properly behave and lastly, ridding them of their disability and returning them to full health. Once again, disability is done away with as children learn how to embrace nature and become healthy individuals. Before healing, these differently-abled characters are portrayed negatively and stereotypically, and the natural world reinforces these associations. Representations of nature also abound in the two short stories "Deb" and "Wooden Tony." But as in other respects, these texts challenge and question the naturalizing effect of the outdoors, and instead offer differently-abled characters who long to be closer to the natural world, but are not cured at the end of their texts. Once again, a pattern emerges wherein the longer novels reinforce representations of normativity, while the two short stories analyzed here refute them. Nature has a strong influence in both instances.

The nineteenth century brought with it advances in technology, medicine and science, which ultimately led to an interest in the natural world and the inner workings of the environment. In their study entitled *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, U.C. Knoepflmacher and G.B. Tennyson write of the Victorian fascination with nature and how it changed throughout the nineteenth century. In the introduction, the authors note that nature, "though partially discredited and bereft of some of its 'mysteries,'…would continue to be cherished for its symbolic representations and sacramental meanings in the face of the rapid advances of science into a very different natural order" (xxi). In these children's texts nature's symbolic representation and sacramental meaning, especially in the case of the miracle cures in *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*, become very evident. The introduction also expands upon this theory, stating that although Victorian biology, physics and chemistry would have a great influence on the way the future would come to regard nature, the "imagination of poets, novelists, painters, designers, and architects remained essentially conservative, clinging to the icons of the past, adapting and reshaping earlier modes of expression" (xxi). The tendency for ideas surrounding nature to remain conservative shape the effect nature has in children's texts that also include disability. Often, nature conserves specific modes of being. Knoepflmacher and Tennyson write that "for most Victorians, 'Nature' remained above all a repository of feeling, a sanctuary they were all too eager to retain" which once again reinforces an author's affinity for using nature as a space where normative social constructions are reinforced (xxi).

Porter's *Pollyanna* and *Pollyanna Grows Up* are two texts in which nature reinforces themes of normativity, and although not used in these texts to "heal" differently-abled characters, the natural world is still very present. In the first novel, Pollyanna laments her Aunt Polly's methods of child rearing. Aunt Polly is concerned with children spending their time in a

productive manner, having them stay indoors and follow a strict timetable from which to learn various lessons. Pollyanna would much rather participate in fun activities that mostly include playing outdoors. In arguing against Aunt Polly's strict child raising policies Pollyanna exclaims "just breathing isn't living!" because she does not equate time spent indoors with living and being happy (48). Keith notes that Pollyanna "has a much better sense of what children need to be happy than do the adults around her…[who] often seem unaware that fresh air and freedom to play is important to the health and happiness of children" (145).

Nature is also where Pollyanna meets the various characters she helps throughout the novel, which is especially important when the reader remembers Keith's contention that Pollyanna's main role is to transform the lives of others (146). Pollyanna brings light into Mrs. Snow's room, and in doing so, changes her disposition entirely. Just a little bit of sunlight has a rejuvenating effect on a miserable differently-abled character. This theme, recognizing the healing power of nature, is reinforced in most nineteenth-century children's books that deal with disability. Pollyanna also helps Mr. Pendleton when she finds him with a broken leg in the forest behind his home. Pollyanna decides that "nothing would do her quite so much good as a walk through the green quiet of Pendleton Woods," and ends up doing even more good than she bargains for when she finds the injured Mr. Pendleton and uses the glad game to help nurse him back to health (101). Pendleton's temporary paralysis mirrors Pollyanna's own later in the novel; once again the moral lesson of putting others before oneself and maintaining a cheerful disposition, which often leads to the curing of a disability, is reinforced.

Pollyanna Grows Up also uses nature to reinforce normalcy in terms of Jamie's character. I have already briefly mentioned the two instances in which nature is used to feminize Jamie, in his representation with small woodland creatures, and the scene with the rogue bull

(see chapter one). Although it seems as though nature should masculinize Jamie in order to direct him into his proper gendered stereotype, it does not because Jamie is differently-abled. His disability prevents him from ever becoming fully masculine because of the way in which disability was fully equated with illness and femininity in nineteenth-century culture. Nature is once again the space where Pollyanna meets various people, and she encounters Jamie while he spends time in the park in his wheelchair. Jamie interacts with various small creatures in Snow White, fairy-tale fashion, which feminizes his character.

This first interaction with non-human nature is paralleled later when Jamie, Pollyanna, Sadie and Jimmy embark on a camping trip and run into a rogue bull. This scene no longer depicts the gentle and timid nature associated with Jamie, but rather, a nature that can inflict violence, and that Jimmy must overcome in an overt presentation of his masculinity, which also underscores Jamie's illness and related femininity. Jamie watches in horror while Jimmy saves Pollyanna, and has an emotional outburst during which he exclaims, "Don't you suppose it hurts to see a thing like that and not be able to do anything? To be tied, helpless, to a pair of sticks?" and then laments making a scene (143). Later, Jimmy ruminates on the episode with the bull, and realizes his love for Pollyanna, whilst trying to reconcile the jealousy he feels for the attention she pays to Jamie. Jimmy ultimately decides that he would step back and allow Jamie to have a chance with Pollyanna first, because due to his disability, it would never be a fair fight between them, in much the same way it was with the bull. In using a bull to ignite the rest of the romance plot, as well as to incite pity for Jamie's character, Porter aligns disability with femininity and sentimental romance. Here, nature ensures Jimmy as Pollyanna's future husband and disregards the differently-abled Jamie, thus prescribing constructions of normativity.

Coolidge's *What Katy Did* uses nature in a similar manner, by representing it as a place of freedom and play for unruly children, but also, by locating it as the space that causes Katy her accident, and afterwards, as an environment that she must interact with quite differently because she is disabled. Katy and her siblings enjoy playing outside, although it often wreaks havoc on their clothing and manners, much to Aunt Izzie's dismay. Lois Keith likens Katy's time in the garden outside her house to the one in *The Secret Garden* or to the Alps in *Heidi*. She writes of the children's time in nature as "the place where they can shout, run, jump and scramble at will and where they make up stories and imagine the future…a place where children are beyond the ruling eye of adults" (76). Once Katy becomes paralyzed, the shouting, running and jumping are out of the question, as well as the storytelling and imagination, although these things have nothing to do with physical ability. Instead, the reader is offered at first a despondent Katy, and at last, a girl who has learned how to manage the home, and discard childhood frivolities. Katy now recognizes the beauty of the natural world, but is never allowed the freedom it once offered. This notion is made all the more poignant when one recognizes that it is a retreat and absorption into nature (along with a decision to ignore her elders, representing Katy's questionable morality) that causes Katy her accident. After getting into a tiff with her sister Elsie, Katy is reprimanded by Aunt Izzie, goes out into the yard and notices the swing in the old shed as she passes by. Katy continues to disobey her Aunt because she feels slighted by her reprimand, and takes a ride on the swing although she has been told not to. Katy swings to the highest point:

> She could almost touch the cross-beam above it, and through the small square window could see pigeons sitting and pluming themselves on the eaves of the barn, and white clouds blowing over the blue sky. She had never swung so high before. It was like flying,

> she thought, and she bent and curved more strongly in the seat, trying to send herself yet higher, and graze the roof with her toes. (49)

Directly after Katy hears a crack and the swing breaks, causing her to fall and become paralyzed for the rest of the novel. In correlating an expression for freedom, and specifically the freedom that can be found in flying amongst the white clouds blowing over the blue sky, with an accident that teaches Katy to become firmly rooted inside the home as the "heart of the house," Coolidge creates a dynamic that pits unruliness and an unwillingness to stay indoors with questionable morality and gender constructs; virtue and the embodiment of correct Victorian femininity lie on the other side. In order for Katy to make this transition, she must go through a stereotypical representation of disability. Coolidge reinforces this construction by using the outdoors as naturalizing, to her own end: at first, by representing it as a space where Katy is permitted to be unruly, and later, as a space she interacts with passively in order to reinforce what is considered "natural" for a young Victorian girl.

In her novel *The Little Lame Prince*, Dinah Mulock Craik presents nature in a positive light, but also as a space her differently-abled character has difficulty interacting with. *The Little Lame Prince* occupies a kind of middle ground between texts in its dealing with nature. Because the Prince is not offered a miracle cure, Craik does not use nature to prescribe normativity. Instead, she represents nature as a space of learning and experience that is lauded, in a similar manner to *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*, but a milieu Prince Dolor is excluded from because he is differently-abled. The Prince is sent off to the "Beautiful Mountains" as a form of exile, though ironically, Craik also brings him back to his town to rule at the end of the novel. Once the Prince has a hold of his magical cloak, he instantly sets out the window of his tower to discover the natural world. Oftentimes, he finishes his lessons, but acquires more knowledge from simply

observing the environment. The author tells the reader that the Prince takes joy in the "pretty country landscape" and notes that it "was nothing but what most of you children see everyday and never notice" (13). Here, Craik at once asserts the beauty that can be found in nature, and the tendency for children to take it for granted, which reinforces the Prince's increased moral ability because he is physically disabled. The Prince is delighted by the simplest aspects of nature, by the trees, river and leaves, and praises the environment for being so "active and alive" (15). By representing nature as active rather than its typical representation as passive, Craik underscores the idea that the Prince may be able to regain some of his own autonomy, as he does near the end in reclaiming his rightful position on the throne. However, Prince Dolor is never presented without his disability, and thus stereotypical and negative associations follow.

The positive aspects of nature are reinforced through the Prince's observation of a little Sheperd boy, as well as his extreme dislike of the urban landscape once he uses his cloak to fly over it. Prince Dolor wishes to see a creature like himself, so the cloak takes him to observe a Sheperd boy, although it does not allow him to interact with him, which reinforces the notion that all of the travels in his cloak may really just be a strong imagination. However, since the text is a children's book written in a fantastical manner, this contention does not detract from the messages Craik relays to the reader. The Shepherd boy is characterized as simple, when Craik explains that he is "not an 'examining' boy" when he assumes the Prince, his cloak and his hot air balloon are a large bird, and does not examine the mysterious figure any closer (27). The Prince notices the boy's "rough, hard voice and queer pronunciation" and his characterization is similar to that of Dickon in *The Secret Garden*, a simple boy who is one with nature. The Prince watches the boy run and frolic with his collie, and is at once disappointed because he realizes he will never be able to do the same. Although he is afforded some comfort when a lark comes to

keep him company, the Prince soon banishes his travelling cloak because it makes him realize how lonely he is. Thus, Craik posits the exquisiteness of nature, but also the necessity of company, be it in another person or a non-human creature. Once the Prince grows up and realizes he is a king, he takes the cloak again to travel to the city he should be ruling; the urban image is very negative. Craik remarks "an awful sight is a large city, seen any how from any where" and the Prince has similar feelings about it, although they are somewhat more paradoxical as he describes the sight as both dreadful and beautiful (20, 21). Craik launches into a social commentary, recognizing the disparity in wealth amongst the citizens; the description once again emphasizes the Prince's moral capability, as he wishes he had the power to change the social stratification he sees. In pitting the immoral, dirty and dreadful urban environment against the beauty of the natural landscape, Craik comments on the importance of recognizing the simple pleasure that one can take from unspoiled nature.

This pleasure is all the more poignant when the reader encounters characters who are, for the most part, isolated from the natural world. This is true for Prince Dolor as much as it is for both Deb and Tony in their respective short stories. These characters are not offered a miracle cure in the same way that the Prince is not, and although "Deb" follows a similar path in offering the main character some solace, "Wooden Tony" ends in a more disturbing way. However, both authors present nature as a place of beauty and repose that Deb and Tony seek to experience with great zeal.

Nature is heavily personified in Phelps' short tale. Deb seeks the companionship of "the skies [who] made faces at her," because the only interaction she is allowed with the natural world is watching it through the window from her high chair (102). Phelps does not create a disconnect between the natural world and urban environment since Deb is so isolated from both.

When she is offered a sleigh ride, she delights in the funeral and wedding processions she sees on the streets, as well as the "shining stream and the shining bank" and how the "snow-drifts blinked at her" (105-106). This story does not present disability in a manner typical of other nineteenth-century children's texts; Deb is not morally superior to other characters, nor is her disability a convenient method for writing Deb into normative social constructions. Instead, Phelps criticizes the stigmas and situations that surround disability, and perhaps most extensively, the fact that disabled characters are often isolated, relegated to the corners of their homes in the same manner they are relegated to the corners of stories. Although "Deb" praises nature in the same way that other nineteenth-century authors do, her short story presents a drastically different vision of disability.

Clifford's short story "Wooden Tony" also represents disability in a unique manner, and Tony's connection with the natural world is also unique. "Wooden Tony" recognizes nature as a place of knowledge and beauty, but does more, in presenting the reader with a main character who is so enthralled by the natural world that he wishes to become a part of it. Tony is only ever happy when immersed in the natural world; as the author explains, "the trees made pictures and he saw them, the wind blew and he understood: surely he belonged to the winds and the trees, and had once been a part of them" (228). This desire is at once attributed to his disability, which manifests itself in the way he can connect to the natural world and not to other people, as well as the negative treatment he receives from his family throughout the story.

Tony has a complicated relationship with the wooden figurines his father carves because he cannot place them either in the natural world, or the urban environment in which he lives with his mother and father. The figurines are both natural—in being carved from the wood of trees which Tony loves—and unnatural—in being commodities that his father sells for money. Tony is

at once afraid of the little woman his father carves, and wishes to be a small figure that can "be always little…be handled tenderly and put to sleep in a drawer till the summer, and then to be warmed through and through by the sun…[to have] legs that never ache and hands that never work" (232). He is caught between these contradictory feelings because his disability isolates him from the world around him. In his article, Ekstein remarks how Clifford perfectly portrays the "withdrawing child who feels comfortable within the primary process, within the primary autistic world that is his natural inner environment" (131).

Tony is offered some solace at the end of the story, but in a disturbing manner that does not leave the reader entirely at ease with the tale. Tony goes off with a man who wishes to display his singing talents, but Tony loses his voice and virtually all his other capacities in becoming a little wooden figure himself. On his way into town, Tony "seemed to have more and more kinship with the things that belonged to Nature's firstness—with the sky and the lake and the trees, nay, even with the dead wood that had been used on human dwelling-places" (237). In one way it is comforting that he becomes wooden, the very material with which he finds kinship. However, Tony also becomes part of a clock, an unnatural object that represents time, an entirely human construct that organizes the way people spend their days, completely tied to production and commodity. In ending the story by offering a place where Tony can feel comfortable, but that paradoxically represents all the things that make him uncomfortable, Clifford underscores society's inability to deal with differently-abled characters. Instead of attempting to offer Tony some happiness and comfort, in the way that the lady who takes Deb on a sleigh ride does in Phelps' story, Tony's parents merely question and deride his behavior, to no avail; their reaction leaves Tony the only option available to differently-abled individuals at this time: to be at once abandoned, but still conform to social constructions that are not created to fit them in the first

place. Although Tony recognizes nature as a kind of saving grace, he remains a disabled character, and then fades into a routine that is neither comfortable nor uncomfortable for him, much as his life had been. Like Phelps, Clifford presents this story in a way that does not pigeonhole the differently-abled character into a stereotypical representation, and does not use disability to relay lessons of normativity. Instead, these short stories question depictions of disability in nineteenth-century children's texts, and criticize the social constructs that surround disability rather than disability itself.

Heidi and *The Secret Garden* are two novels that connect disability and nature in the most prominent way, as both advocate for the teaching and healing powers of nature, while presenting differently-abled characters whose disabilities seem to symbolize character flaws rather than real physical conditions. In her study, Keith puts *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden* in the same category entitled "The Miracle Cures," and observes that the books "celebrate life, the freedom of the spirit and the restorative powers of the open air…[where] children learn to thrive in the natural world…[and] faith and healing are central" (95). *Heidi's* Clara is cured once she spends some time in the Swiss Alps, and her cure is definitely tied to moral lessons, as well as the healing powers of the natural world. When the reader is first introduced to Clara, she remains on a couch for most of her days and is obligated to take lessons daily from her tutor. If being cooped up inside all day due to limited mobility was not bad enough, Spyri emphasizes Clara's isolation by contrasting the closed-in environment of the city with the beautiful descriptions of rolling hills and glorious meadows from Heidi's time with her grandfather at the beginning of the story. Clara is not only trapped within her home, but within an environment that does nothing in allowing children to grow freely and healthily.

Once Clara is brought to the Alps, her health begins to improve immediately (Keith 112). Keith recognizes her increased appetite, which is a certain sign for health, as the typical nineteenth-century disabled character rarely eats heartily. It is not only the beautiful vistas, the delicious and simple food and fresh air that help heal Clara, but also the goats she befriends, who act as much as companions to Clara as Heidi has. Spyri connects Clara's healing with nature as well as a moral dimension when she writes of Clara's interaction with Snowflake, a goat with peculiarly human characteristics. Snowflake "snoozl[es] up to [Clara] in a confiding manner" when Heidi leaves them, which prompts Clara to dwell on the notion of being responsible for another creature.

> Clara found a strange new pleasure in sitting all alone like this on the mountain side, her only companion a little goat that looked to her for protection. She suddenly felt a great desire to be her own mistress and to be able to help others, instead of herself being always dependent as she was now. (134)

Here the reader understands that Clara's disability is seemingly one of will rather than physical capability; this notion is supported when Heidi explains God's will to Clara, and assures her that she must remember to pray for Him to remember her when arranging His plan. Clara's healing starts off slowly, as she takes small steps which Heidi assures her will hurt less and less each time, and Clara discovers is true (Spyri 135). Clara puts her feet out but "each time drew them quickly back"; this tentativeness reinforces the idea that her fear is keeping her from walking rather than physical impairment (134). Keith explains that Clara's cure happens "when God has judged the time to be right for her to stand on her own two feet and she has 'made the effort and won the day'" as quoted by Alm Uncle once the children tell him Clara has begun to walk (117).

However, these stipulations are entirely wrapped up in the healing powers of nature, which are also very prominent in Burnett's *Secret Garden*.

Colin's disability, like Clara's, is a psychosomatic disorder rather than a physical one. A change in health, temperament and moral behavior rids Colin of his paralysis, through the powers of the natural environment, in much the same way as Clara's cure. Keith also recognizes the change in Mary's behavior after she is exposed to fresh air and her own paradise, a secret garden that no one else can enter; she notes that her "healing starts when she begins to think of people and things beyond herself [and] like Clara…is cured by a combination of fresh air, wholesome food and a desire to be independent and make decisions for herself" (124). After time spent in the garden, Mary's appetite increases and she becomes "fatter," once again a representation of health, especially as she has changed from the disagreeable thin and yellow girl we were introduced to at the start of the novel. Nature has a similar effect on Colin once he begins to spend time outdoors. Keith writes of Colin's transition from "the closed, dark claustrophobic atmosphere of the house into the idyllic, bright world of the garden" in a similar way that Clara moves from her cramped house in Frankfurt to the lush mountain air (134). However, unlike Clara's situation, Colin's miraculous healing is not attributed to God's will, but rather, the "magic" that comes from the secret garden.

The idea of magic comes from Mary's ayah in India, but she first recognizes it when the wind blows away branches to reveal the door of the secret garden. Although it is fully nature—a gust of wind—that allows Mary to find the garden, there is a bit of whimsy about the breeze because it is stronger than the rest, as if the natural environment recognizes that Mary is ready to enter the garden to begin to bring it back to life (Burnett 80). Mary tends to describe Dickon in terms of magic, and it is his strong connection with the natural world, and the creatures within it,

that allow him this trait. It is this magic (or in the reader's eyes, time spent in nature) that works on Colin "making him look like an entirely different boy" to Mary, as he grows rosier, fatter and all around healthier (236). In fact, the chapter in which Colin is miraculously cured is titled "Magic" and his transformation takes place within the garden, the very place that has led to his ultimate health and happiness.

The garden is a place where nature reinforces constructions of normalcy, both in gender and morality. In his chapter entitled "Theatres of Girlhood," Seth Lerer recognizes gardens as "spaces of both theater and repose in children's literature," and the fact that both Mary and Colin can have a space to call their own, away from the eyes of parents and guardians who have failed in terms of providing them with a positive and comfortable upbringing, also informs their growth (248). In the garden Colin and Mary learn to care for other things—the plants and health of the flowers, as well as the animals they interact with on a daily basis. It is also where their proper gendered identities are secured. Lerer notes that "much like the forest of the fairy tale, the garden is a space that defines boy and girl as different," which is represented in Colin's rise to masculinity, and Mary's growing enthusiasm in providing care for the natural world as well as her friends, a nurturing, feminine quality (248). Like *Heidi*, *The Secret Garden* reinforces nature as both a place that provides healing, as well as one that has a naturalizing effect on the characters who embrace it.

Nature has a strong tie to disability in these nineteenth-century children's texts, and for the most part, represents yet another way to enforce constructions of normalcy. The natural world is used in *Pollyanna* to represent childhood freedom and frivolity, although it is also the space where Pollyanna meets and changes characters for the better. Nature is not as positively presented in *Pollyanna Grows Up* as it is related to Jamie, because it is used to emphasize the

fact that he is disabled. Because Jamie is not cured, the environment does not naturalize him and instead, nature is used again and again to feminize his character. *What Katy Did* follows a similar pattern as *Pollyanna*, in representing the natural world as a space where children are free to play and frolic. However, once the time comes for Katy to disavow her childhood and instead embody Victorian femininity, Coolidge writes her into a disability that is quickly cured because she has learned her lesson. The natural world is lauded in *The Little Lame Prince*, *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*. In these novels, the natural world is a place of knowledge as well as freedom, and it promotes health and wellness. Although the Prince is not cured of his disability, he is enthralled by the natural world, and the reader is given a lesson in taking the beauty of nature for granted which is reminiscent of themes in both *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*. These novels present nature as a place of healing, and include characters whose disabilities are completely cured with fresh air and sunlight. These novels use representations of disability and the naturalizing effects of the outdoors to prescribe constructions of normalcy.

Interestingly, the two short stories in this study oppose stereotypical representations of disability. Both "Deb" and "Wooden Tony" present characters who are captivated by nature because they are so isolated from it. Instead of offering these characters the natural environment as a magical cure for their disabilities, the authors allow them to gain some peace from interacting with nature, but then place them back in the dispiriting situations from which they came. In refusing to treat disability stereotypically, "Deb" and "Wooden Tony" criticize how differently-abled characters are treated in this time period, rather than seeing a flaw in being disabled, as the other texts do. These short texts have the freedom to deal with disability in an original manner because they are just that—short tales that do not guarantee a lesson, or any type of direct moralizing. Although these texts do not treat disability conventionally, they still do

include nature as an important aspect of their character's lives. Although children's literature often deals with the natural world, nineteenth-century children's texts tend to use nature as a naturalizing force in representing differently-abled characters and reinforcing constructions of normativity.

Conclusion
"As if you weren't living all the time!": Looking Towards a New Representation of Disability

The representation of disability in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature is unfortunately quite negative, stereotypical and uniformly followed. Although it is not surprising that historical texts lack the sense of enlightenment that is afforded to some discourse through the use of critical disability theory today, it is odd that this genre has not been analyzed extensively through the lens of disability studies. Within this thesis I have hoped to introduce these similarities, and prompt further consideration regarding how disability was represented in the past, and how it continues to be represented in modern literature.

One of the first questions I had when embarking upon this research topic included why disability in children's texts has yielded so little research, especially in nineteenth and early twentieth-century texts where differently-abled characters pervade the genre. Most stories involve a disabled character, and although few center around one, they are always included in the margins of the text, usually existing in order to represent abnormality, and in turn, prescribe constructions of normalcy to other characters, as well as the reader. It is important to recognize why disability was used so pervasively, and the ways in which disability was treated stereotypically, because these things say a great deal about how the nineteenth century felt about differently-abled individuals. It is also important to question these representations when thinking about how differently-abled nineteenth-century readers must have reacted to these texts. The prevalence of representations of disability in the literature alone assures modern readers that differently-abled people made up a large portion of nineteenth-century society. Disabled child readers would recognize their own conditions in the stories they read, but because disability is treated largely in a negative and stereotypical manner, there would be a disconnect between

literary representations and their own personal truth. Because these texts offer miracle cures with little to no bearing in real life, child readers may be disappointed by the characters presented by their favorite authors; although these characters may look like them on the surface, they have very little in common with realistic representations. These texts can be thought of as harmful when prescribing rigid constructions of normative behavior based on gender and morality to child readers, and could have been even more harmful to their child readers who happened to be differently-abled. With this notion in mind, we must also remember that these texts provided children with more than mere entertainment. The novels in this study especially can be thought of as large moralizing projects, where constructions surrounding gender and proper behavior are reinforced, often through negative representations of disability. The two short stories that I have studied paint a different picture of disability, and their length allows them to stray from the idea of a large moralizing project; instead, these texts portray disability in a more enlightened manner, which proves that representations of disability were not wholly uniform within the time period. However, a great deal of nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's texts used disability as a mere literary tool in prescribing normalcy, and this study has offered a glimpse into the many similarities that exist between them.

One of the ways in which normalcy is reinforced through disability in these texts is with the prescription of heteronormative gender roles, as demonstrated in chapter one. Illness and disability is often feminized, and texts like *Pollyanna Grows Up* and *The Secret Garden* use differently-abled male characters to reinforce this feminization. Alternately, disability is used in *What Katy Did* to feminize a female character who, before her accident, exhibited masculine qualities, far outside the norm for the ideals of a young Victorian woman. Disability is not dealt with in any realistic sense in these texts. Instead, it is used as a literary tool to establish Katy's

femininity, inscribe Colin's masculinity and represent Jamie as a feminized character who is never quite able to achieve full masculinity, due to his disability. Disability is thus aligned with abnormality, and when the character is not offered a cure, the character is not allowed a sense of normalcy, something these texts represent as wholly positive and even necessary. A didacticism exists behind these novels, one which urges child readers to recognize the hardship that exists with being differently-abled, and by extension, teaches them to inhabit the heteronormative gender roles they have been assigned, or else be punished by disability, as it is negatively represented.

A similar pattern exists and is fleshed out in chapter two, where the texts are analyzed as moralizing projects that use disability once again to prescribe normalcy, in terms of good and ethical behavior. Disabled characters learn these lessons themselves, or are introduced in texts merely to teach other characters (and by extension, readers) these lessons as well. I use three categorizations of the disabled character to classify and represent how stereotypically disability is represented in these texts. Once again, *What Katy Did* and *The Secret Garden* follow these negative prescriptions of disability, as each has a morally weak character who overcomes her or his disabled state, and becomes a happy, healthy, gender normative, morally sound individual; by contrast, differently-abled characters are not allowed to achieve this state in their representations in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature. Another classification, the virtuous disabled character, or one whom Keith labels the "saintly invalid," is represented in *What Katy Did* by the character Cousin Helen. *What Katy Did* also presents the third classification, the older and unhappy disabled character who has no hope of a cure, but learns to accept his or her state (usually through another's disability, or the morally sound protagonist's well-wishes) through the character Mrs. Spenser. This character is prevalent in other texts,

including *Pollyanna* and *Heidi*. *Heidi* also includes a lesson to the reader on how children are able to best learn, as Spyri advocates experience and an immersion in nature as opposed to traditional forms of book learning, which is reinforced by Craik's *The Little Lame Prince*. Although these novels go against what were considered normative ideas regarding education at the time, they still represent disability stereotypically and do their fair share of moralizing. Some examples include curing Clara through determination and God's will, and representing the disabled Prince as a paragon of virtue because he is not allowed any kind of physical strength. The only texts that stay away from adhering to a strict moral prescription are the short stories "Deb" and "Wooden Tony." Instead, these texts propose a different way to look at disability, as they offer a glimpse into the psyche of the disabled characters in a way that the novels do not. They also offer a criticism of the way their differently-abled title characters are treated; instead of representing Deb and Tony in a state of social wrongness, they recognize that what is wrong is the way Deb and Tony are treated in their families and communities. Although these two stories refrain from representing disability as negatively and stereotypically as the other texts, the tendency for children's texts to prescribe normalcy through the promotion of good morals is prominent in the nineteenth century.

All of the texts in this study, including the short stories, also deal with nature to a large extent. In most cases, the authors naturalize characters' gender roles and morality, to the end of reinforcing normalcy. Nature becomes a space in which normalcy is reinforced in both *Pollyanna* and *Pollyanna Grows Up*. *Pollyanna* preaches a lesson that is echoed by all of the texts in this study: the importance of nature to a child's health and wellness, even though adults do not tend to have this understanding. When Pollyanna describes the necessity for "living" afforded by fun and frolic in the natural world, Aunt Polly replies "As if you weren't living all

the time!" reinforcing how nature is used to encourage children to run free and play, to get plenty of fresh air and be careless while they are young and able (48). The catch, however, lies in that ability; unfortunately, differently-abled characters are not offered the same situation. In *Pollyanna Grows Up*, nature is used to feminize Jamie because he is disabled. The natural world reinforces what is presented as normal for differently-abled characters in feminizing them. Nature once again inscribes normalcy in *What Katy Did*. Before her accident, the natural world encourages Katy to be wild and playful, as these texts moralize children should be. However, when Katy continues this behavior past a certain age, she is punished through the use of disability as a literary tool, and her interaction with nature reverses. Katy now must interact with nature in a passive way, which reinforces her learned femininity. Nature is lauded as a place of learning, experience, health and wellness in the novels *The Little Lame Prince*, *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*. Although the Prince is mostly isolated from nature, he learns a great deal in the few experiences he gets with the natural world. In the latter two novels, nature literally cures the characters with disabilities, reinstating their natural ability and restoring normalcy. Once again, the messages that the two short stories offer regarding nature are much less straightforward. Although both "Deb" and "Wooden Tony" present nature in an entirely positive light, the natural world does not cure the differently-abled characters. Instead, it offers them a short period of solace in each text, and then the characters become isolated from the natural world once more. In refusing to give the outside world a naturalizing affect in these stories, Phelps and Clifford once again stray away from the stereotypical depictions of disability. Instead of prescribing normalcy, these short texts do work in the vein of my very own thesis by recognizing and dismissing the wholly negative and stereotypical portrayal of disability, and questioning why such a ubiquitous representation exists in literature, when it does not exist in the real world.

The ways in which disability is represented in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's literature does not merely attest to how disability was presented historically. Rather, in looking at the ways these texts define and redefine or challenge how culture and society regard disability, early children's literature functions as a point of origin for the construction of social attitudes and behaviors surrounding normativity and conceptions of disability. Although disability theory is a burgeoning area of study, we still have quite a way to go in how we think about disability, and how it is represented in literature. Popular culture today often includes representations of disability, and although more inclusive, disabled characters are still relegated to the sidelines of texts or, differently-abled main characters must overcome their disabilities by the end of their stories. The recent trend towards representations of illness in literature, especially in young adult fiction, creates a slightly more inclusive depiction of different abilities. The representation of differently-abled characters in popular children's literature is also becoming more customary. Cece Bell's graphic novel, *El Deafo*, follows the story of a young partially deaf girl who uses her disability in the manner of a superhero, and the novel has just earned a Newbery Honor for its contribution to children's literature. There have also been strides made towards creating more comprehensive literature for even younger children, including Loving Healing Press, who work to distribute picture books for young readers that offer representations of disabled characters. Some of their texts take popular fairytales and re-write them to include differently-abled characters (like *Cinderella's Magical Wheelchair* by Jewel Kats) in order to demonstrate that people of all abilities can inhabit stories without being reduced to stereotypical representations, or without needing to undergo a "cure."

It is my hope that this thesis continues a process of questioning regarding depictions of disability in all kinds of literature. This process has already begun by the various scholars

referenced here, as well as others working in the field of disability studies, gender studies and the field of English literature more generally. Breaking these nineteenth and early twentieth-century texts down to their representations of gender, morality and the natural world and how each interact with disability allows one to recognize how uniformly disability is presented, and how it is often used to the end of denouncing the differently-abled and reinscribing normalcy. Sadly, there seems to be not much room in nineteenth and early twentieth-century children's texts for real illustrations of disability. And even worse, modern literature does little to change or alter these notions. It is especially important to consider how disability is represented in literature for children, as young readers glean important life lessons from these didactic texts. More subtly, these texts present children with representations of the world around them. A more inclusive representation of disability in children's literature would act as a starting point from which to alter society's prejudiced attitudes towards differently-abled individuals, and ultimately, create a more realistic depiction of the ranges of ability that exist within the spectrum of humankind.

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