

The Puritan tradition values an organizational approach to education, which extends to a tradition of naming characters in a way that expresses their role, or what their role should be in society. Furthermore, the Puritan educational system followed a belief in empiricism or “blank slate”---essentially, education would be based on the acquisition of knowledge. These Puritan traditions of names having clear meaning and an empiricist approach to children’s literature have persisted throughout children’s literature up until today.

The unique Puritan practice of naming still influences modern children’s literature, both today and within the last century, because it conveys information in an obvious way that can be considered more stylistic and creative than didactic. As previously mentioned, the Puritan tradition involved using names that were clear in their significance to the character and to the context of the story. For instance, the real name *Goody Two Shoes* is “Margery Meanwell.” Although Margery might be significant in no other way than the era, “Meanwell” is clearly a combination of “mean well” or “to mean well.” Therefore, from the first mention of the main character’s name, the audience is already made aware that this little girl means well and is a good girl. As time passes and children’s literature evolves to fit the evolving cultural consciousness---this refers to the shift away from the widely-accepted Puritan norms to the modern understanding and perception of children’s literature. For example, the *Harry Potter* series revolves around roughly the same character in each book, one being Remus Lupin, who is a father figure to the main character and, at one time, a professor at Hogwarts (Rowling). However, he is fired when his tendency to turn into a werewolf becomes common knowledge (Rowling). His name emphasizes this tendency given his first name, “Remus,” refers to the myth Romulus and Remus and his last name, “Lupin,” refers to the Latin root for wolf, “lupus.” *Harry*

*Potter* has continued the tradition of names having a clear connection to their characters but has also modernized the tradition: though many of the names are clearly related to some important aspect of their character, they are less obvious than a name such as “Meanwell.” Therefore, the Puritan tradition of a clear relationship between name and character has been sustained throughout the last century of children’s literature, but the tradition has been modernized in a way that presents it to a modern audience. Furthermore, in Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*, Coraline asks a cat what his name is and the cat responds, “cats don’t have names... now, *you* people have names. That’s because you don’t know who you are” (43). Although this separates a bit from the Puritan tradition because it relies on the lack of naming, it does respond to the Puritan tradition; perhaps, the tradition of names with clear meaning has a more profound origin---the Puritan tradition is based on the desire to know one’s self with as clarity as an obvious name could present. In this way, the Puritan naming practice is still inarguably relevant to modern children’s literature, however, the ways in which it is re-imagined have changed it to maintain its significance in a modern context. Similar to the Puritan value for naming, the Puritans also valued empiricism in the context of a child’s education, which has translated to modern children’s literature.

The Puritan tradition valued an empiricist education because it adhered to the belief in a “blank slate” at birth and this belief led to a tradition of female excellence manifesting as witchcraft. An empiricist education was based on the idea that children learn through acquisition, therefore, the literature that they consume from a young age would shape them into adulthood. Thus, children’s literature had to play a significant role in shaping the future of society: what a child read, they’d become, so it was important to instill “proper” values from a young age. For

this reason, stories like *Goody Two Shoes* presented female achievement as supernatural. More specifically, the story states that “she contrived an instrument,” then “a warrant was issued out against Mrs. Margery,” to which she responded “if I am a witch, this is my charm, and... it is with this... that I have taught my neighbours to know the state of the weather” (*Goody Two Shoes*). This passage is, first, informing young women that their extraordinariness is discouraged because Margery Meanwell is charged as a witch for her innovation and, second, informing young women that their intelligence and innovation is, indeed, supernatural regardless of its benefits. Although Margery defends herself in this passage, the overwhelming tone of this passage discourages women from innovating in the way that Margery Meanwell does, especially for little girls reading this passage. This translates to reinforcing the “traditional” role of the woman: she should only be a wife and mother. This idea is echoed in *Harry Potter* when Hermione Granger simply exists as an extraordinary witch and she was viewed as insufferable for her unending knowledge as an outsider, or muggle-born. However, it’s clear that, in this situation, the Puritan tradition has been modernized to encourage women to be smart because Hermione accomplishes feats that her male counterparts, Harry and Ron, would never have been able to. This idea is complicated when Hermione ends up marrying Ron and completing the image of the “traditional” family---a woman acting as a mother and a wife. The Puritan tradition emphasizes extraordinary women as supernatural to discourage little girls from pursuing the same feats as their male counterparts. Hermione does prove this incorrect in some ways, given that her unmistakable intelligence becomes an undeniable tool and sign of independence. In other ways, though, Hermione falls in line with the Puritan ideal: a woman acting as a wife and mother---that’s not to argue that a woman can’t fulfill the “traditional” female role and be an

independent woman outside of her marriage but simply that Rowling does maintain the Puritan ideal in this way despite her attempt at modernity. The Puritan tradition, centered around empiricist education, discourages women from achieving the extraordinary by actively dissuading girls in literature from doing so.

The Puritan tradition can be characterized by a clear relationship between name and character as well as a belief in empiricist education that leads to the subordination of women as no more than wives and mothers. This tradition has sustained in more modern children's literature in many ways because it has modernized while still maintaining some (possibly archaic) values present in Puritan children's literature. In this way, modern children's literature has reintroduced Puritan values time and time again, even when attempting to modernize outdated cultural beliefs, such as those surrounding the women's role in society and the family. It's important to recognize the relevance of the Puritan literary tradition as a method of accessing some deeper understandings of people and society—especially in the context of who people are, why people need names, and how people actively sustain archaic values whilst trying to actively combat them.

Children's literature has always portrayed young girls in a way that demonstrates the change that they experience when going through puberty. Although it may not directly represent women as undergoing the process of maturation and menstruation, children's literature does demonstrate these processes through uncontrollable changes to the female body—much of these processes are fantastical in a way that can make natural bodily changes into a metaphor. Therefore, the female body is written about as a site of turmoil, on which society should be focused. Children's literature often portrays the female body, especially in young girls and preteens, as a site of control as a symptom of the patriarchy: no woman can exist beyond the realm of a man's or society's control, which is complicated by the changes that the female body endures during puberty.

In children's literature, the female body often undergoes changes that happen outside of anyone's control and in fantastical ways that are only affected by the naive actions of the woman who experiences them. For instance, in *Alice in Wonderland*, she encounters bottles labeled "Drink Me," upon which she deliberates when Lewis Carroll writes, "I'll first look and see whether it is marked poison or not... however, this bottle was not marked poison, so Alice ventured to taste it." When she drinks from each of the bottles, in turn, her body changes: she gets too large for the room and too small for the room. Alice experiences changes to her body that, although she induces, happen outside of her control so she has to grapple with unexpected, foreign changes. Rather than following Alice through the experience of a maturing body and her grappling with menstruation, Carroll, instead, illustrates these changes through metaphor: her body changes in response to ambiguous bottles of liquid. This phenomenon is also present in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, when Hermione Granger drinks from polyjuice

potion, which is intended to shift her body into that of another female student's, but plans go awry when she transforms into a cat--instead of plucking the student's hair off of her cloak, Hermione plucked a cat's (Rowling). In this instance, again, a woman's body changes and, although she makes the choice to drink a potion, these changes happen outside of her control. She has to grapple with the changes happening to her body, those which she has never experienced before, and accept that she has no power over them. In this way, Hermione, who is otherwise an extremely intelligent young woman, faces the unfortunate consequences of her momentary naivete and is even forced to let Harry and Ron venture to complete her plan without her. Both Hermione's and Alice's cases demonstrate a larger phenomenon in children's literature as pertains to young women: they experience changes to their bodies, over which they have no control yet somehow set into motion through some lapse in judgment. Both the causes of these changes and the changes themselves are always completely unrelated to the changes that the female body goes through, in reality, allowing authors to avoid broaching "sensitive" topics, while still attempting to document the female experience.

The recurrence of accidental transformations in the context of the female body demonstrates that the patriarchy constructs narratives surrounding these uncontrollable changes and how they are caused by young female naivete as a way for the patriarchy to shame the female into submission; unable to affect the natural functions of the female body, the patriarchy uses children's literature to shame young women into misunderstanding the changes they experience as they grow up. For example, in *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice encounters chess pieces that have come alive. The King decides to write a memorandum and picks up a pencil, then he tells his wife, the Queen, "I really must get a thinner pencil. I can't manage this one a bit; it

writes all manners of things I don't intend" (Carroll). Although this scene doesn't relate directly to the scene of Alice undergoing changes, this scene refers to Lewis Carroll's theme of the arbitrariness of social norms; in this case, he's referring to the relationship between words and their meanings. Throughout the novel, Carroll repeatedly challenges the belief that there is only one "correct" combination of words and their meanings. It's clear that what the King is writing is out of his control, but he expresses that he understands that he isn't in control and that he must do what he can to adhere to social norms once again; writing what he doesn't intend could mean that he's writing that which exists outside of the accepted discourse of language. In this way, this scene could relate to the scene in which Alice experiences changes within her body. Carroll always cycles back to the arbitrariness of social norms, however, the scene with the King appears to suggest that, in order to exist within a societal context, one must adhere to such norms. More to that point, Alice reflects that "somehow it fills my head with ideas---only I don't exactly know what they are" (Carroll). Therefore, Carroll extends this idea to Alice: her body is out-of-control, much like the King's pencil, so it exists outside of society because it's the one aspect of a woman that the patriarchy cannot control. However, the King acknowledges that his pencil is momentarily leading him to exist beyond society and the King expresses a distaste for it to the Queen. So, too, must Alice acknowledge how her body allows her to exist outside of society, and, so, too must she return within its bounds. When applying this to Hermione, it becomes clear that she, too, will eventually be wrangled by the patriarchy because she will eventually end up in a "traditional" marriage as a mother and a wife (Rowling). It's true that she has her own job, which gives her some semblance of independence, but the fact that the story ends with her giving in to a situation, in which the patriarchy has the most control, suggests that even a woman who

exists outside of social and patriarchal norms will eventually succumb to them regardless. It's important to recognize that *Alice in Wonderland* was written by a man and *Harry Potter* was written by a woman, yet both still cycle back to the theme of a young woman, who cannot control her body and, therefore, exists outside of the patriarchal norm of men controlling women, finding her way back to what people deem as socially acceptable.

When represented in children's literature, young women are often naive and lead themselves into situations that affect their bodies in an unprecedented way; given that the changes they undergo are unprecedented, the young women typically don't understand what is happening to their bodies. Therefore, these changes are meant to speak to the physical changes that women experience as they mature. More than that, they're also designed to remind female readers that their bodies will always be under the domain of the patriarchy and society, regardless of how uncontrollable they might become during puberty; this leads to internalized shame. It's important to consider how the representation of changes within the female body impacts young female minds into believing that their bodies, in their most natural states, are shameful because it reinforces the overlap between social norms and the patriarchy rather than working to dismantle archaic misogyny.