

**(Re)Imagining a Force for Moral and Social Change:
Louisa May Alcott's Fairy Godmother in *Flower Fables***

Cinderella stories and magical fairy godmothers pervade fairy tales. More modern and Americanized versions of the fairy godmother perpetuate rags-to-riches ideals innate within the national consciousness. However, Cinderella's fairy godmother has not always existed merely to provide golden carriages and ball gowns; she is often adapted based on needs of author or audience. During her teenage years, Louisa May Alcott wrote a series of fairy tales and fables for children called *Flower Fables*, including several stories that reimagine Cinderella's godmother as a force for the moral and social good. Instead of giving pretty gifts that dissolve at midnight, Alcott's fairy guides impart lessons to last a lifetime. Inconsistency and immaturity in young Alcott's fairy stories often keep the collection from being seriously considered in scholarship; however, the stories provide crucial insights into the life and mind of the great American author, and therefore, beg further consideration. More specifically, in the short stories "Little Annie's Dream" (1855) and "Fairy Pinafores" (written in 1864 but published in 1873) from *Flower Fables*, Alcott uses fairy godmothers to socialize characters towards more acceptable moral behaviors. I argue that Alcott's decision to use her fairy godmother as a moral force, rather than a materialistic benefactor, springs from her own complicated upbringing. By exploring her personal history, the paper connects Alcott's earliest characters with her attempts to conform to the transcendently-influence ideals of Bronson Alcott, her strict and often difficult father. Alcott's adaptations of the fairy godmother illustrate how the young author grappled with troubles of her early life, whether her families financial woes or her efforts to subdue a tempestuous nature. Although lacking the artistic force of her later writing, short stories from Alcott's earliest works, such as "Little Annie's Dream" and "Fairy Pinafores," ultimately provide insight into Alcott's coming of age, as she struggled within familial and societal expectations.