

# Contents

Preface, xi

**Introduction, 1** ✕

Reading Illness, 5

Invalid Ideology, 8

Culture, Dialogue, and Discourse, 11

*Invalid Women*, 16

**Chapter 1 Defining the Feminine/Defining the Invalid: ✕**  
**Women and Medicine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 20**

Women's Health in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, 23

Physicians and Women, 30

Medical Discourse, Cultural Definition, 38

**Chapter 2 The Threat of Invalidism: Responsibility and Reward**  
**in Domestic and Feminist Fiction, 43**

Fiction Figuring Women, 45

Invalid Mothers, 50

The Feminist Invalid, 64

**Chapter 3 (Super)“Natural” Invalidism:**  
**Male Writers and the Mind/Body Problem, 75**  
The Domestic and the Romantic (Super)Natural, 76  
The Mind/Body Problem, 82  
Making Natural Art of Women, 87  
The Natural *Pharmakon* in the Garden, 94  
A Return to the Garden: The Healthy Invalid, 99  
The “Feverish Poet,” 106

**Chapter 4 The Writing Cure:**  
**Women Writers and the Art of Illness, 110**  
Mental Healing at the Turn of the Century, 114  
The Writing Cure, 123  
The Art of Illness, 129  
Happy Endings, 140

**Chapter 5 Fighting (with) Illness:**  
**Success and the Invalid Woman, 150**  
Success, Class, and Health, 153  
Failing Health, 165  
Invalid Men and the Ideology of "Separate Spheres," 177

**Chapter 6 Economies of Illness:**  
**Working the Invalid Woman, 184**  
Willpower, 186  
Clinical Ethics and the Invalid Economy, 201

**Conclusion Invalidism and the Female Body Politic, 212**  
The Political Representation of Feminine Illness, 216

Notes, 221

Bibliography, 245

Index, 263