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Longing for Longing: Girlhood, Narrative, and Nostalgia  
in American Literature for Children and Young Adults

By

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An abstract of  
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## Abstract

### Longing for Longing: Girlhood, Narrative, and Nostalgia in American Literature for Children and Young Adults By Megan E. Friddle

Girls' books—including *Little Women*, Maud Hart Lovelace's *Betsy-Tacy* series, the novels of Judy Blume, and beyond—are an underused resource for information about the experience of girlhood in American culture. These books offer a wealth of details about the changing parameters of what it means to be a girl, a woman, and an individual with a self-narrative. Through analysis of fictional and autobiographical texts—as well as archival documents, travel narratives, and museum spaces and promotional materials—this study investigates the shifting terrain of girlhood in the US and the role of memory and nostalgia in linking experiences of girlhood across time and space. Focusing primarily on fictional texts from the 1860s onward, the reception of these texts among critics and readers, and the fan clubs, societies, and online groups that connect their readers, “Longing for Longing” places the texts and related supplemental materials in a transhistorical conversation about memory and identity, desire and loss. At stake in this project is the centrality of narrative texts, specifically novels, in the processes of self-making and negotiating relations between individuals.

This study identifies several specific figures from classic books for girls, including the “Girl,” the Diarist, the Patient, and the Tourist. These figures and their stories provide girls with the vocabulary to narrate experiences of physical and emotional pain as well as longing, pleasure, and loss. “Longing for Longing” traces the ways in which these figures and narratives persist, often in unexpected ways, in contemporary Young Adult (YA) novels, and argues for the necessity of historicizing contemporary YA novels in the context of earlier books for girls. Neither overtly subversive nor wholly conventional, the texts themselves offer complex readings of childhood, the passage to adulthood, and the available options for *being* in the world, all inflected by the larger historical and cultural concerns surrounding the period of each text's genesis and publication. This study illuminates the ways in which books for girls both adopt and interrogate discourses surrounding the physical and mental maturation of young women, and reflect larger cultural anxieties surrounding issues of girls' innocence, sexualization, and gender expression.

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There are three professors whose pedagogy and disciplinary engagements had a profound effect on my early development as a student. As an undergraduate at Sarah Lawrence College, I first discovered American Studies and gender theory through a course taught by Molly McGarry called “Architectures of Desire.” The readings and materials we

covered in that course remained foundational to my subsequent academic career. My SLC experience was also deeply enriched by my ongoing work with Elfie Raymond at the intersection of poetry, philosophy, and digital media, as well as the many meals and conversations we shared. In my first semester at Penn State, Scott Herring's "Sexologies" seminar was the first place I was able to approach children's literature from a scholarly perspective; the work I did in his course provided the genesis and inspiration for this project.

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**Longing for Longing: Girlhood, Narrative, and Nostalgia  
in American Literature for Children and Young Adults**

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## Introduction

*Nostalgia responds to the experience of discontinuity - to the sense that agency or identity are somehow blocked or threatened, and that this is so because of a separation from an imaginatively remembered past, homeland, family or community. By returning, in text or vision, to these lost pasts, places, and peoples, the nostalgic author asserts a sense of continuity over and above her sense of separation, and from this continuity may be able to replenish a sense of self, of participation, of empowerment, belonging, righteousness or justification, direction.*

—Stuart Tannock<sup>1</sup>

*"I must be getting old," [Betsy] thought, "the way things remind me of things."*

—Maud Hart Lovelace, *Heaven to Betsy*<sup>2</sup>

*Little Women*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and the *Betsy-Tacy* series: adult readers frequently write about their relationships to these and other American “girls’ books” in both scholarly works and popular media. Their accounts often describe a practice of reading and re-reading these texts and the emotional response to certain kinds of highly-charged realizations that accompany their readings. These realizations include: the fleeting nature of life and youth, the necessity of recognizing and staying true to one’s authentic self, and the inevitability of certain life experiences, particularly the bittersweet or ambivalent emotions that accompany “growing up.” Passing these books on to a new generation of readers becomes a way both to pass on a narrative structure for how to become a woman and to offer the potential for an experience of deep affective power. In this way, girls’ books are a creative (and) ideological apparatus for transmitting narratives and social practices—of girlhood in particular and of American culture in general.

14-year-old Betsy Ray, in *Heaven to Betsy*, is immediately recognizable as a teenage girl. Maud Hart Lovelace even refers to Betsy as a “teen,” in the text, though the book is set in the early twentieth century and the terms “teen” and “teenager” had not yet been adopted as

labels for a girl of Betsy's age and disposition. Betsy mopes her way through the first fifty pages of the novel. Then, by turns moody and dramatic, nostalgic and adventurous, wise beyond her years and deeply innocent, Betsy dances, skates (badly), and sometimes stumbles in and out of her first year of high school, her first love affair, and several tests of her loyalty and discipline. Despite the novel's setting—1906-07—and date of publication—1945—the adventures of Betsy and her “crowd,” and Betsy's thoughtfulness about self-knowledge, faith, and the passage of time are striking for their ability to transcend both Lovelace's well-wrought historical setting and the time period of the novel's writing and publication. As a result, *Heaven to Betsy*, as well as the other novels in Lovelace's *Betsy-Tacy* series, remains popular today.

But *Heaven to Betsy* isn't just a book for pre-teen and teenage girls. Betsy's thoughts and feelings, based on Lovelace's own and channeled through her limited omniscient third-person narrator, are a carefully rendered map of human experience. Throughout the research and writing of this project, I found that the novels of the *Betsy-Tacy* series served as more than just several of my primary sources. The series provided me with an unexpected trail between theory, text, and history. Each time I went searching for a quote or a page number I found myself falling into the rabbit hole of Betsy's world without noticing—a passage would turn into a page, a page would turn into a chapter—and I would suddenly find myself 80 pages in, nodding my head in agreement with Betsy as she looks at the yellow cottage that had been her childhood home, hugs her best friend, and observes that “[i]t's such trouble to grow up” (256).

I first traveled with Betsy to “Deep Valley” in my imagination as a child. Then during the past four years, the *Betsy-Tacy* series led me to Mankato, Minnesota, the site of the Betsy-Tacy Houses and the Betsy-Tacy Convention, and to Minneapolis, the site of

Lovelace's homes as a young adult, and the location of her papers, in the Kerlan Collection at the Andersen Library of the University of Minnesota. Lovelace's novels also introduced me to a community of readers who share a love for the books, a sense of compassion for one another, and a remarkable thoughtfulness about nostalgia and the past. Betsy, in her situatedness and universality, and her author, Lovelace, are at the center of this project.

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With a focus on books for girls and the social construction of girlhood in U.S.-American culture, this dissertation is an intervention at the intersection of American Studies and Girls' studies. In addition, I utilize insights and theoretical frameworks from several specialized (inter-)disciplinary formations: Literary Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Disability Studies, and Memory Studies. Though I pull the majority of my primary texts from children's literature, "Longing for Longing" is concerned with larger questions about the relation of the subject or "self" to narrative, memory, and society. In order to explore these questions, I utilize a number of theoretical and historical positions, including those offered by scholarly work on the aesthetics and ideology of children's literature, feminist materialism, psychoanalytic theory, disability theory, and cultural memory studies.

The boundaries that separate books for "children," from books for "adolescents," "teens" or "young adults," from books for "everyone else" (ostensibly "adult" readers) are just as porous, unstable, and culturally-bound as the lines that separate these categories as developmental or biological states. The recent success of crossover titles, like J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, or the *Twilight* novels by Stephenie Meyer, does nothing to stabilize the status of these texts as books for a certain "kind" of reader. Despite breathless media coverage regarding the broad appeal of these texts, which might suggest the novelty of the

crossover novel, books appealing to an audience of both children and adults have a long history starting in the eighteenth century, particularly in Anglo-American publishing. Yes, the subsequent centuries have seen an explosion in child-oriented texts, often with explicitly didactic or pedagogical aims, but at the same time, there have persistently been texts that appeal to both child and adult readers—sometimes together, sometimes separately, and often moving back and forth between the two depending on the cultural conditions of a given moment.<sup>3</sup>

As children's literature scholars like Perry Nodelman and Gail S. Murray argue, literature for children and teenagers serves to instruct as well as entertain, retaining elements of the didactic, moral mode even in contemporary texts. As a result, the experiences and identities portrayed in the narratives of children's literature tend to be those of idealized children, as seen from an adult perspective. The dual voice in books for children allows for a double identification for both child and adult readers. Even when a text is focalized through a non-adult character, in first or third person, the narrative structure still encourages a double (or even triple) consciousness. This multiple consciousness allows several possible positions for child and adult readers, and the narrative may offer commentary on children's desires for knowledge and adults' desires for children to remain as innocent as possible, as well as on adult nostalgia for the innocence or simplicity of the child's experience of the world. These multiple positions are further complicated by the gender of the protagonist. While it is possible to extrapolate to all literature for young people, there are often marked differences between books that are written for an audience of boys (and/or with male protagonists) and those written for an audience of girls (and/or with female protagonists). Not simply a Victorian phenomenon, this split, which becomes noticeable in short chapter books (for ages 7-9) and is particularly striking in contemporary middle-grades (for ages 9-

12) and young adult titles (for ages 12+), suggests (and perhaps reinforces) a bifurcation of boys' and girls' experiences as they approach adolescence.

Gender theory provides a broader framework for theorizing about the experiences of girls and women in America. For instance, my thinking about gender is deeply influenced by the strain of feminist work called “feminist materialism” for its anti-essentialist position and its foundations in developmental systems theory. Though much of the work that has emerged from this materialist perspective is oriented toward science studies, the conceptual framework provides important insights into how we imagine the relationships among interconnected but seemingly disparate objects and ideas, including body, text, identity, and world.

My thinking on gender, identity, intersubjectivity, bodies, and society is also deeply influenced by my reading of the works of Michel Foucault. Though this is not an expressly Foucauldian project, many of my key concepts and frameworks are derived from his work. These include his use of “apparatus” (*dispositif*) to describe complex systems of knowledge production; his explication of confession and “techniques of the self” as discursive practices;<sup>4</sup> his discussions of repression and sexuality; and his wariness about transplanting contemporary concepts or terminology into the past.

Children's texts offer a unique and relatively untapped source of materials that bring together disparate discourses on identity, development, memory, and the transmission of knowledge. Though very little in this project is overtly scientific, the insights of feminist materialism are extremely important to the conceptual frame. Through this lens, girlhood becomes a complex phenomenon rather than a single essential experience of embodiment or gender. By using this framework, we can denaturalize our conceptions of adolescent

development and gender, particularly the idea that a certain kind of gender identity or gender expression is more “natural” or “normal” than another. By presenting childhood and adolescence in this way, I seek to both illuminate and question the normative developmental timelines (child-adolescent-adult) that are at work in the fictional texts. Though I focus on the experience of “girlhood,” I am also interested in those characters who trouble the binarism of boyhood/girlhood, including adolescents who identify as trans- and/or cross-gender (which I explore in Chapter 2).

In addition, the field of disability studies—particularly the work of David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, and Tobin Siebers—offers important theoretical frameworks for considering the importance of narrative in projects of self-making, inter-subjectivity, and the politics of difference. Though feminist theorists have at various points called for a move away from narrative, and particularly autobiography, it is those very texts that resonate with the authenticity of lived experience that remain both treasured by readers and politically powerful, in disability theory and elsewhere.

I use this broad theoretical approach, drawing on gender theory, feminist materialism, and disability studies, to remember that certain models of girlhood—usually white, middle-class, biologically female, and ostensibly heterosexually oriented but not yet sexual—have come to signify normative or “good” girlhood in American culture. In troubling these definitions, I hope to trace some of the ways that hegemonic American culture influences girls as they narrate their experiences and their identities, and how reading may both reinforce and counteract these broader cultural norms.

Much of the theory-oriented work on children’s literature, including publications by Perry Nodelman, Beverly Lyon Clark, and Ellen Spitz Handler, uses a case study model

rather than attempting a broad, inclusive historical account, and I will use a similar strategy in my own research and writing. Rather than trying to account for every girls' book published between 1860 and 2013, I instead focus on certain popular texts, which are still read and/or remembered by women and girls, as well as contemporary texts, which typify the essential elements of books for girls. These include adolescent female protagonists; home and school-based settings; close third-person or first-person narrators; and conflict related to relationships, emotional experiences, and adult responsibilities.

My primary method throughout this project is textual analysis. And my primary texts are novels written for an audience of girls. Though some critics might argue that there are better sources for information about contemporary girlhood—for instance, teen magazines, television, or social media—these texts cannot provide an extended historical perspective on girlhood in the United States, and do not have the multi-generational readership of popular girls' classics. Narrative texts, on the other hand, can provide clues about the stability (or lack thereof) of individual identities and identifications across time and space. Published novels and stories also offer important information about the marketplace, while other texts, especially journals and letters, offer details about family life and self-narrative that might otherwise be inaccessible. In examining these narrative texts, I utilize strategies of reading from narratology, literary aesthetics, and psychoanalytic theory.<sup>5</sup>

In examining both texts and historical events, I undertake a project of historicization. As Trisha Travis describes her method in the opening of her book on the history of the recovery movement, I aim “not simply to recount the order and details of events [or texts] that occurred at distinct moments in time, but to embed those events [and texts] within the larger cultural contexts and flows of power that helped shape them” (10). I want to examine the specific phenomena of girls' books within the general context of modern American



culture. Both girlhood and books for girls are dynamic, multifaceted cultural formations that have been perpetually in flux over the last 150 years.

Novels published for young people make up the central component to my study, and I include both recent publications in the Young Adult category and earlier novels about girlhood and adolescence, published between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, which found a wide readership among girls. In many ways, the foundational text for my study is Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. I chose *Little Women* because of its trans-historical presence in the experience of American girlhood, as a novel and also as a larger cultural phenomenon (films, plays, musicals, dolls, and other consumer objects). In charting a genealogy of the YA novel that extends beyond its origin story, which is traditionally set in the 1950s, texts like *Little Women* are important because of their descriptions of the movement from girlhood to young-womanhood, and also because of their popularity among readers who would have been classified, due to age and maturity, as "Young Adult," had that category existed. A great deal of work has already been done on Alcott and *Little Women* and I draw on some of this work to help support my argument that *Little Women* has played an important role, since the 1860s, in the construction of narratives of American girlhood.

In terms of contemporary texts, I have selected YA novels that address issues of identity, subjectivity, sexuality, and gender, including classics like Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind* (1982) and novels by Judy Bloom like *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (1970) and *Forever...* (1975). These texts, which are still cited by current adolescent readers as relevant and important to them, also serve as key texts in conflicts over censorship and access to information for adolescent readers. Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1990), a critically acclaimed and immensely popular book among teenage readers, revolves around the

character Melinda's experience of sexual trauma and offers potent examples of the ways in which adolescent girls are expected to negotiate sexual desire and experience.<sup>6</sup> Other, more recent texts include series of novels which address non-normative sexuality and/or gender without making it the focus of the narrative, like Sara Ryan's *Empress of the World* (2001) and *Rules for Hearts* (2007). I also devote significant attention to YA novels published in the last decade that address trans- and cross-gender identification. These include *What Happened to Lani Garver* (2002), *Luna* (2004), *Parrotfish* (2007), *Debbie Harry Sings in French* (2008), *Almost Perfect* (2009), and *I Am J* (2011). My selections have been guided by book reviews, blogs and journals by contemporary adolescent readers, as well as by work published by researchers of adolescent literacy.

Between *Little Women* and texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there is almost one-hundred years of publications for children. I have selected several notable texts, mostly semi-autobiographical series, from this period. Though I do not discuss them all in detail in this version of my study, these texts include *What Katy Did* (1872), *Caddie Woodlawn* (1936), the *Little House* series (1932-43), the *Betsy-Tacy* series (1940-55), and the *All-of-a-Kind Family* series (1951-78). While a great deal has already been written about the earlier texts in this list, very little attention has been paid to Maud Hart Lovelace and the *Betsy-Tacy* books. Though this dissertation does not focus solely on Lovelace, her historical position, writing practices, and later commemoration make her an important figure of study at the intersection of girlhood, American culture, memory, and nostalgia.

During the summers of 2011 and 2012 I traveled to Minnesota, with the financial assistance of Professional Development Support funds from Emory's Laney Graduate School, in order to visit several important locations for my research. During my first trip, in July 2011, I visited the Children's Literature Research Collection (CLRC) at the Andersen

Library at the University of Minnesota, where I examined archival materials from the Kerlan Collection, including correspondence, manuscripts, and related materials for the children's authors Carol Ryrie Brink (*Caddie Woodlawn*), Lois Lenski (illustrator for the first four books of the *Betsy-Tacy* series, author of *Strawberry Girl*, *Bayou Suzette* and others), Maud Hart Lovelace (*Betsy-Tacy* series), and Sydney Taylor (*All-of-a-Kind Family*) and Lois Lowry (*The Giver*). In addition, I traveled to Mankato, MN, the location of the "Betsy-Tacy Houses," the museum and restored home of Maud Hart Lovelace, administered by the Betsy-Tacy Society. While there, I also visited the Mankato public library, which holds several original Lenski prints from Lovelace's books as well as other materials related to the *Betsy-Tacy* books, including multimedia interpretive packages for young readers of Lovelace's books. During my second visit to Minnesota, I attended the 2012 Betsy-Tacy Convention, an experience that serves as the basis for my fifth and final chapter on literary tourism. The 2012 trip also coincided with the deposit and cataloguing of Lovelace's personal papers in the Kerlan collection, and I was one of the first researchers to obtain access to these materials.

These two trips provided me with important sources for several aspects of my research. The access to archival materials was invaluable to my discussion of the role of autobiography in the works of these particular authors, and access to correspondence and news clippings provided me with important information about the reception of the books at the times of their publication. The Andersen Library has also collected materials from the two societies related to Lovelace: the Betsy-Tacy Society and the Maud Hart Lovelace Society. This archive included programs, letters, and articles related to the early conferences and events hosted by the societies, as well as their work to get Lovelace's books back into print in the early 1990s. The Brink papers collection included letters and artwork that the author had received from children all over the U.S., responding to her book, *Caddie*

*Woodlawn*. These materials offer important information about children's responses to her books, and the ongoing relationship between the author and her readers. The travel to Mankato, and my attendance at the convention, provided me with important information about contemporary literary tourism, and the relationships among multiple generations of women and girls and the fictional texts they share. Of particular interest to me was the slippage between the author (Lovelace) and her semi-autobiographical character ("Betsy") in many of the materials provided by the Betsy-Tacy Society, as well as in the tour at Lovelace's childhood home, and the events that were part of the convention. Many of the materials I examined in the Andersen Library and during my travel to Mankato provide important evidence for the claims I make in this dissertation, including the authors' use of autobiographical details in their writing processes, and the role of nostalgia in the creation of fiction for children and young adults.

\* \* \*

I begin the dissertation by placing the books I examine within the larger American historical context of the past 150 years. In particular, I focus on the figures of the teenager and adolescent and their emergence over the course of the twentieth century. During the summers of 2012 and 2013 I taught an interdisciplinary course for undergraduates at Emory titled "From Innocence to Experience: Adolescence and the Making of the American Teenager." The figures of the "adolescent" and "teenager" have become so naturalized that it can be difficult to think of a time before they existed. So I opened the course with two sets of readings: one that provided historical background for the emergence of "the teenager," and another that offered a definition of adolescence as put forward by the American Psychological Association (APA).<sup>7</sup> After reading a short excerpt from Jon Savage's *Teenage* and thinking about their own diverse upbringings, my students were quick to find the flaws

in the definition offered by the APA. First, the standard age-range offered by the APA for adolescence is 10 to 19. Some students found this range too broad, while others found it too narrow. Many suggested that the timeline of adolescence should be divided into two (or more) subsections, which reflect the shift in expectations of social and economic independence and physical maturity between early and late adolescence.

The students in the course were generally between the ages of 19 and 23. Many self-identified as adolescents, while also simultaneously identifying as adults. As adolescents living in American culture—some native-born, some immigrants or from immigrant families, and some visiting as international students—they recognized the quixotic and multi-faceted jumble of experiences, expectations, and cultural narratives that produce “the adolescent” and “the teenager.” They also recognized that these terms are not absolute or universal, and that adolescence, as currently defined, is more than just a developmental stage between child and adult, but also a pre-defined social role with certain benefits and costs. Yet few realized, prior to the course, that the terms “adolescent” and “teenager” were recent additions, rather than long-standing entries, in the English lexicon. So it is with definitions—What is an adolescent? What is a teenager? What is children’s literature?—that I begin the first chapter.

In this first chapter, “The Books: On Genre, Audience, and Culture,” I offer a brief history of American discourse surrounding the transition from childhood to adulthood for girls in the U.S., noting in particular the instability surrounding the naming of the “teen” and the definition of this developmental stage during the early to mid-twentieth century. In this chapter, I also argue for the necessity of historicizing contemporary YA novels in the context of earlier books for girls. Rather than separating books into “books for children” and “books for adolescents (or young adults)” I have chosen to focus instead on “the girls’ book.” I outline the history and features of the girls’ book, relying on historical work by

Anne Scott MacCleod, as well as theoretical and methodological tools from genre theory and narratology. Rather than moving in a chronological order, as though to suggest a progress narrative, subsequent chapters instead concentrate on certain figures—or orientations toward the world—that emerge from girls’ books: The “Girl,” The Diarist, The Patient, and the Tourist.

Following the definitional work of the first chapter, chapter two, “Who—and What—is a “Girl”?: The Tomboy, the Lesbian, and the Transgender Child,” interrogates and explodes the boundaries of the term “girl,” in this instance by probing the anxieties about gender and sexuality that are present in Young Adult texts and in the discourses surrounding them. As part of this chapter I discuss several YA texts that deal frankly with bodily development and/or sexuality and have thus been the subject of censorship attempts. I also chart the emergence of a small collection of YA novels that address the experience of teens who identify as transgender, gender-variant, or intersex, and offer a primer on contemporary therapeutic approaches to cross-gender identification in children and teenagers. I examine the ways in which these YA texts are at once subversive and highly conventional, hiding the ghost of the classic girls’ book beneath a contemporary exterior.

Borrowing both a theoretical framework and methodology from Feminist Materialism, I use the techniques of developmental systems theory (DST) to try to map complex systems as networks of phenomena, rather than oppositional binaries or linear progressions. The insights of DST offer a more holistic approach to understanding development over time, and the ways in which biological, cultural, and environmental influences act upon individual entities.<sup>8</sup> Building on these techniques, I also rely on the work of Karen Barad and Vicki Kirby, two scholars whose work re-imagines the relation of reality and representation. Both Barad and Kirby offer a critique of “shared representationalist

assumptions” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 48), the idea that things and words (or, in Barad’s terms, “matter and meaning”) exist as separate entities, with one preceding or mediating access to the other. By using these frameworks/methods in my project of textual analysis as I examine contemporary YA texts that trouble the notion of what it means to be “a girl,” I hope to illustrate the ways in which the concepts of “girl” and “girlhood” exist as complex, shifting phenomena at the intersection of biology, culture, and environment, as well as to reinforce the power of texts in shaping individual experience. This methodological approach also requires me to recognize and acknowledge my own entanglement in the very systems I hope to describe and analyze.

The third chapter, “The Diarist: Self-Narrative and Adolescent Identity,” utilizes Jane H. Hunter’s research into girls’ journaling practices of the nineteenth century to enable a discussion of narrative and self-identity. In this chapter I examine the journaling practices of actual girls, those presented in fictional texts, and the adolescent journals used by girls’ book authors like Maud Hart Lovelace. Referencing Foucault’s work on techniques of the self and confession, I explore the history of the journal as both a disciplinary tool, especially within the middle-class family of the nineteenth century, and an apparatus for self-definition. In particular, this chapter focuses on the ways in which journals and self-narrative are shared (and not shared). I argue that the Victorian journaling practices described by Hunter are essential to understanding contemporary online culture, in particular girls’ blogging practices. Though the technology is new, the techniques and narratives used by teenage girls are much older, and are highly influenced by the legacy left by their diary-keeping predecessors, both fictional and actual. To narrate one’s experience via a journal, diary, or blog, is to participate in a specific discourse of the self, one that is reinforced by the protagonists of many books for girls, and flourished in direct relation to psychoanalysis. Using Laurie Halse Anderson’s

*Speak* as a case study, I end this chapter with provocative ideas about sexuality and self-identity drawn from psychoanalytic theory, as well as a discussion of first-person narrators, authenticity, and the role of narrative and literature in the development of intersubjectivity.

In the fourth chapter, “The Girl-As-Patient: Illness, Disability, and the Vocabulary of Pain,” I examine the ill and/or disabled girl in literature. These are figures around whom discourses of crises and vulnerability cohere, as they need to be “rescued” from their conditions (mental, emotional, and physical). The illness or disability narrative has been and remains a popular schema for figurations of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. In addition, secondary characters frequently succumb to illnesses or other negative outcomes as a result of their inability to meet the demands of adult life, in particular the expectations of normative heterosexuality. These figures and narratives are present in a broad range of texts, from Beth’s death in *Little Women*, to Caddie’s climactic injury in *Caddie Woodlawn*, to the maladapted heroines and friends in the problem novels of the 1970s. This chapter ends with a provocative question: despite perpetuating narrative tropes of the nineteenth century, is it possible that books for girls that feature narratives of illness and disability are one of the only sites in which girls and women are offered a vocabulary and discourse to express and name physical and emotional pain? And could this explain the ongoing popularity of these texts?

The fifth and final chapter—simply “The Tourist”—addresses the figure of the tourist, including literary characters as tourists and the phenomenon of literary tourism in the United States. This chapter also investigates the broader implications of “tourist” as a subject position. The ongoing popularity of books like *Little Women*, the *Betsy-Tacy* series, and *Anne of Green Gables*—and the remarkable memorial and consumer cultures that have sprung up around the books and their authors—speak to the continuing desire on the part of both



child and adult readers to “take a trip” into the past. In this chapter I describe my own participation in the Betsy-Tacy Convention, an experience that provided me with examples that both confirmed and confounded my suspicions regarding literary tourism as I found myself entangled in the very nostalgia that I sought to illuminate as an observer.

In a brief epilogue, I return to the popularity and controversy of contemporary cross-over YA texts, and the creative world-making—and, as a result, *self-making*—that children’s literature enables, both for child and adult readers. I also note the striking absence of children of color from the majority of children’s literature, and I explore the affective pull of the “past” and its importance in considering the role of adult nostalgia in both utopian and dystopian imaginings of the future.

\* \* \*

It has been suggested to me on more than one occasion that my interest in books for girls is, perhaps, a bit narcissistic, or that I am trying to reconstruct—through scholarly means—a kind of reading experience that I had as an adolescent. While I would be willing to admit if either of these were the case, the driving force behind this project is both strikingly simple and disarmingly complex. The truth is that many of the fictional texts I discuss in this project—particularly the YA texts, both historical and contemporary—are works that I read only after I began graduate studies.

Inspired and unsettled by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s essay “How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate Boys,”<sup>9</sup> I began thinking about the kind of messages and tools for self-narrative that are offered to queer (or “proto-gay,” in Sedgwick’s terminology) children and adolescents in the narrative texts they encounter. To put it another way, I wondered what kind of future worlds fictional texts encouraged young readers to imagine,

and if there was room for non-normative gender, sexuality, and partnership in these texts. What sort of narratives—if any—existed for and about LGBTQ young people? Truthfully, I had no recollection of reading any myself.

During that first semester of graduate school at Penn State, I went to the education section of the Paterno Library, which is where the children’s literature was then housed, and began the hunt for children’s books with LGBTQ themes and characters. With the assistance of Frances Ann Day’s *Lesbian and Gay Voices: an Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Literature for Children and Young Adults* and Christine Jenkins’ quantitative work on books with queer protagonists, I left the library with a stack of Young Adult novels, including the 1982 classic *Annie on my Mind*. I spent the weekend immersed—because it felt a bit like falling under the spell of these books—in the world of high school, parental conflict, and questions of self-identity. The scholar in me recognized that many of the plots were formulaic, and the characters lacking in depth. But here and there, I encountered a book that, despite its shortcomings as a “literary” text, still managed take me back to the intensity of feeling—G. Stanley Hall’s “stress and storm”<sup>10</sup>—that characterizes modern conceptions of adolescence. Despite their often-pedantic storylines and normative outcomes, these YA novels with LGBTQ characters and themes left me hopeful that a new generation of kids was consuming these books and asking questions about what was “normal” and what adult life might look like for them—gay, straight, or otherwise. I decided that I wanted my scholarship to explore the power of children’s literature to move us—adults and children alike—and to try to understand how this literature could use, and perhaps transcend, the limitations of genre to tell us something about growing up, about experiencing love and heartbreak, about having and sometimes resisting gender. In other words, what it means to be human.

That was 2005. In the intervening years, I have reassessed many of the assumptions that initially powered my inquiries into gender, sexuality, childhood, and literary texts. I have also witnessed an extraordinary sea change in U.S.-American culture and politics with the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, and the legalization of same-sex marriage in many states.<sup>11</sup> I have seen the rise of organizations and campaigns to address the issue of queer youth suicide, a problem highlighted by Sedgwick in “How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay.” Meanwhile, a small and growing number of children’s and YA texts have been published that feature transgender and gender non-conforming protagonists. I can now find a whole section of Young Adult novels that present storylines of adolescent same-sex desire that are nearly interchangeable with those about opposite-sex desire. And I am still, even now, in awe of the power of fictional texts to make and re-make the world of each reader who is willing to be, for a period of time, overcome.

## Chapter 1

### The Books: On Genre, Audience, and Culture

It's almost impossible to engage with contemporary American popular culture without running into young adult literature and associated media. From the enormous appeal of the *Harry Potter* series (and the related movies, merchandise, and theme parks), to the ongoing fascination by teen girls and adult women with Stephenie Myer's *Twilight* books (and the tabloid misadventures of the young actors who portray Bella and Edward in the film versions), to the increased awareness and discussion of violent imagery brought about by the immense popularity of *The Hunger Games* series of books and films, young adult fiction is front and center. Novels that were once relegated to a few bookshelves between the children's library and the adult fiction section now have a readership that includes more adults than young people.<sup>12</sup>

Many commentators have remarked on the unusual crossover appeal of texts like these YA series, as well as others like John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* and R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*, which have garnered audiences of nearly all ages and genders. They have suggested that this is some sort of new multi-generational reading phenomenon, or, alternately, that it signals a kind of stalled adolescence that extends into adulthood. In a December 2013 Wall Street Journal article on the YA crossover phenomenon, Alexandra Alter suggests that the "growing appeal of children's literature" is the result of "a broader cultural shift as the taste gap between generations collapses."<sup>13</sup> Though adult interest in YA texts shows no sign of abating, and adolescence remains a popular topic for fiction and film, I argue that there is something deeper at work. By taking a broader view, and examining the history of publishing for children and youth, particularly in the United States, we can see that the wide appeal and

expansive readership of these texts is not, in fact, a new phenomenon, but rather an echo of an earlier model, where reading was an activity shared by an entire family, and books for children were intended to appeal also to their elders.

But in order to take this “broader view” and look at the past 150 years of publishing for children and youth, we must first uncover a number of assumptions about the exact nature of the “genre” of children’s literature, the intended and implied audience(s) for books for children and youth, and the significant shifts in understanding of child development and youth culture that have occurred since the mid-nineteenth century in the United States. In this chapter, I argue for the necessity of historicizing contemporary Young Adult novels within the context of earlier books for girls and American children’s literature in general. By reading these books alongside one another, we can map the shifting terrain of girlhood in the U.S. and the changes that have occurred over time, as well as the commonalities that link experiences of girlhood across time and space. Rather than separating the books into those intended for “children” and for “teens,” I argue for the necessity of examining these novels based on their commonalities beyond simply an audience of non-adult intended readers.

As Perry Nodelman notes, children’s literature—including Young Adult Literature—is the only genre of literature defined primarily by its audience.<sup>14</sup> While this is useful for determining the age and reading level of a given book’s intended audience, it offers relatively little information about what makes these texts more alike than different. For this reason, I have chosen to focus instead on “the girls’ book.” While at first glance this may appear to simply replace one problematic implied audience with another, the term “girls’ book” itself has a history reaching back to the nineteenth century that suggests not just an audience of girls, but also a unique set of genre conventions.

Growing directly from the domestic novel of the nineteenth century, the girls’ book

utilizes the conventions of sentimentalism, domesticity, and heightened reader affect, offering certain kinds of characters, tropes, and narratives that persist even in contemporary literature. Anne Scott MacLeod offers a list of defining characteristics of the girls' book (or "girls' story") in her essay "American Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century: Caddie Woodlawn's Sisters": the narrative almost always has a heroine of 12-16 years old; both the physical setting and the emotional tenor are "intensely domestic and interior" and the narratives are primarily focused on the primary character and her relationships and moral development; the narratives nearly all feature a dramatic transition from childhood to adult womanhood, and the texts contain explicitly didactic messages about the obligations and limitations of an adult woman's future (14). In many girls' books of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this dramatic transition, as well as the didactic lesson, takes the form of an experience with illness, disability, or death. Later texts address additional experiences that can be a source of trauma in the lives of adolescent girls, including sexuality, parental divorce, mental illness, eating disorders, and substance abuse. These transitional experiences serve both literal and metaphorical roles in teaching young women how to change and adapt to the demands of adult womanhood in American culture.

In this first chapter, in addition to outlining the history and significance of the girls' book to my project, I also offer a brief history of American discourse surrounding the transition from childhood to adulthood for girls in the U.S., noting in particular the instability surrounding the naming of the "teen" and the definition of this developmental stage during the early to mid-twentieth century. Ilana Nash (*American Sweethearts*) and Anne Scott McLeod suggest that the naming and cataloguing of the "teen girl" shifted throughout the 1920s and 1930s and didn't begin to cohere until the 1940s. Read in the light of this instability surrounding the exact nature of the "teen girl," texts written in the 1940s (and

earlier) that deal with the (now-)adolescent years can offer new insights into this process, or at the very least point to the continuities and discontinuities of narratives that trace the movement from girlhood to womanhood.

Even after examining the most controversial or seemingly “contemporary” books for girls, I find it difficult to argue for a progress narrative that begins with *Little Women* and ends in the present day. Though contemporary commentators are happy to applaud and sometimes decry so-called “progressive” or “controversial” texts—the recent case of the State of California’s updated “Recommended Reading List,” for example—these texts are rarely straightforward in their presentations of “progressive” or “liberal” ideologies.<sup>15</sup> Just as the discourse surrounding the characteristics of the adolescent girl and what “counts” as adolescence remain unstable and ever-shifting, so too have depictions of these girls shifted and changed from generation to generation and from book to book. Rather than moving in a chronological order, as though to suggest just such a progress narrative, the subsequent chapters instead focus on certain figures—or orientations toward the world—that emerge from girls’ books.

## QUESTIONS OF GENRE

*A genre is a loose affectively-invested zone of expectations about the narrative shape a situation will take.*  
 —Lauren Berlant<sup>16</sup>

Reading scholarly work on children’s literature, one is often struck by the sheer amount of time, energy, and ink that is used up arguing over whether children’s literature (and/or Young Adult literature) constitutes a separate literary genre. In many ways, contemporary notions of genre have as much to do with the taxonomies created by publishers and booksellers as they do any kind of essential qualities of the books that fall into these seemingly ever-expanding categories and sub-categories. Rather than becoming mired in an

argument about genre, I prefer to utilize Berlant's flexible definition, which privileges narrative expectations and affective investments, over one defined by audience or subject matter. Consequently, I follow both Perry Nodelman and Beverly Lyon Clark in utilizing the term "Children's Literature" as a broad category of texts defined primarily, but not solely, by their audience: non-adult readers. Though I may also make additional distinctions—for example, "domestic fiction," "family literature," or "young adult literature"—I consider these more specialized and historically contingent categories that overlap and/or reside within the larger group of texts that constitute literature for children and youth.

In *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*, Perry Nodelman notes that children's literature creates a "divided subjectivity"(79) by working to "encourage child readers to replace whatever sense they have of themselves and the meaning of their own behavior with adult conceptions of those matters" (78). Another primary theme in books for young readers is the evaluation of "the relative merits of knowing and not knowing": childhood is nearly always identified with lack of knowledge, while adulthood is identified with the possession of knowledge. As a result, "[b]ecause the texts encourage an adult understanding of childlike behavior in children, they often work to disperse innocence in the process of celebrating it" (Nodelman 79). The child reader must occupy a space that is less wise than the adult author but still wiser than the child protagonist through whom the story is focalized. In this way, Nodelman argues, these texts "encourage child readers, no longer purely childlike, to enact the childhood they have moved beyond" (79). This nostalgia for an earlier, fictional childhood helps block or obscure the complexity and uncertainty—and yes, inherent knowledge—of actual childhood experience. These qualities are also present in those texts we categorize as young adult, written and published for an audience of readers who are neither fully children, nor fully adults.



In her book *Kiddie Lit*, Beverly Lyon Clark takes to task the feminist movement for participating in the larger strategies of elevating maturity and adulthood at the expense of “childish things” (4). It is nearly impossible to escape tropes of innocence to experience, in literature or otherwise, and most children’s literature explores, however obliquely, the child’s relation to knowledge. Because the authors of books for children are almost never the children themselves, books for young readers are often ambivalent about the relation between innocence and knowledge, suggesting the complicated relation of adults to children, and particularly of adult writers to child readers. And, I would argue, even books written by children and adolescents are so steeped in the genre itself, that they perform the conventions of “children’s literature” almost seamlessly.<sup>17</sup>

As Gail S. Murray describes in the introduction to *American Children’s Literature and the Construction of Childhood*, the overt cultural work of literature for children is that it “provides insights into the social milieu in which the work was developed and uncovers the values that society hopes to transmit to its children” (xv). Deeply nostalgic and insisting on a reader position that embraces this nostalgia, “[c]hildren’s books often tell us more about the image of the ideal child that society would like to produce than they do about real children” (xv). The development of fiction written specifically for children and adolescents parallels the nineteenth century conception of childhood as a protected, romanticized time apart from the responsibilities of adulthood.<sup>18</sup> The “Young Adult” novel is a twentieth century concept, linking the disciplinary work of the children’s book with the style and content of adult literature. While focusing on the problems and crises specific to adolescent life in its narrative, the YA novel still remains concerned with the larger goals of children’s literature “to shape morals, control information, model proper behavior, delineate gender roles, and reinforce class, race, and ethnic separations” (Murray xvi). To understand the genealogy of

the contemporary Young Adult novel, one must acknowledge the contribution of the “problem novel” to the creation of the genre.

The shift to the “problem novel” in the 1960s marked an important change in literature for children and teens that affected both audience and style. Though “teen novels” existed in the 1940s and 1950s, targeting a newly-identified emerging “teenage” post-war market, the books aimed at teen girls retained many of the conventions of the Victorian domestic novel. These included a narrative centered around home and school, with emphasis placed on relationships and character development. Parents and authority figures like teachers were generally presented as benevolent, helpful, and caring, and there was little in the way of rebellion or resistance on the part of the teen protagonists. Traditional femininity and marriage (often early marriage) were presented as the ideal outcomes for any teen girl, and the struggles and conflicts encountered by the protagonist were rarely serious or significant.<sup>19</sup>

Compared to these post-war novels for teen girls, the Young Adult novel, or “problem novel,” broke new ground in terms of voice, point of view, and the topics addressed in the narrative. Though not originally published for a specifically teen audience, J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) is often considered the model for many later YA texts.<sup>20</sup> Unlike earlier teen novels, which are most often narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator who frequently offers moral guidance or reassurance to the reader, most YA novels feature a first-person narrator (or a limited omniscient third-person narrator with the story focalized through the protagonist). The narrator/protagonist in YA texts is often not particularly trustworthy or reliable. The YA novel also frequently uses the conceit of the journal or diary to offer a glimpse into the protagonist’s inner thoughts and feelings.

Familiarity with the genre conventions of the “Problem Novel” is fundamental to understanding the form of contemporary young adult fiction. The 1960s saw a major shift in American ideas about the construction of childhood. Emotional upheaval was no longer seen as an attack on the sacred space of childhood, but rather as a necessary and useful step in the process of becoming an adult.<sup>21</sup> After the success of Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* in the late 1950s and S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* in the 1960s, children’s literature, and especially fiction for teenagers, began to take on issues of alienation, drug and alcohol abuse, and family crises. Murray outlines the major aspects of the problem novel as follows:

- The protagonist is alienated from the adult world, and often from peers as well.
- The author uses a first-person narrative.
- The style of writing is clipped, colloquial, and confessional; dialogue predominates; vocabulary is limited and relies heavily on the vernacular and slang.
- The settings are urban, usually New York or California.
- Sexuality is openly and freely discussed.
- Parents are absent, either physically or emotionally.<sup>22</sup>

The problem novel, as a material artifact, is frequently marked not only by the qualities of the text, but by a predictable cover, showing representations of the protagonist, often with a pensive expression, and several other key characters from the text—either a romantic partner or a couple who play a major role in the plot. The books tend to end predictably, with either reconciliation with family and a relationship with a new romantic partner, or a departure for a new place, often college.

#### **AUDIENCE MATTERS: “THE GIRLS’ BOOK”**

Given the concern with audience that often defines the genre “children’s literature” in the broadest sense, I frequently turn to a sub-category: the girls’ book.<sup>23</sup> In order to offer a broad overview of what constitutes “the girls’ book” and illustrate its qualities, I focus in this section primarily on four books written for an audience of (mostly) girls, and return to these

books, and others by these and other authors, in the chapters that follow. I have selected texts that are still read and/or remembered by women and girls, and that include adolescent female protagonists, home- and school-based settings, close third-person or first-person narrators, and conflict related to relationships, emotional experiences, and adult responsibilities. I include Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Maud Hart Lovelace's *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* (1943), Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (1970), and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999). These texts can be classified individually, based on the original publication date, reception, and intended audience, as "children's classic," "middle grades," "young adult (YA)," "series book," and "realist fiction." I have chosen these books for the range of publication dates and settings (from civil war Massachusetts to contemporary American suburbia) as well as the continued popularity of both the texts themselves and their authors. In this section, I analyze the relationship among interlocking aspects of "the girls' book": the ideal girl reader, the heroine or protagonist of each text, and the author—in particular the author's relation to the protagonist, and the norms and genre expectations of children's literature. By doing this, I hope to highlight certain unique mechanisms of nostalgia and knowledge-making in the texts themselves and the material practices that arise from the texts, as well as the disciplinary work the texts do in the inter-generational relation between reader, author, and text—themes that I will return to in subsequent chapters.

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, first published in two volumes (*Little Women* in 1868 and *Good Wives* in 1869 [Lyon Clark 104]), remains the standard bearer of the girls' book in American culture. Inspired by Alcott's own childhood and set at the home her family occupied beginning in 1858, *Little Women* illustrates the struggles—and pleasures—of four girls' coming of age in the Northeastern United States during and just after the Civil

War. In addition to themes of rebellion and acculturation to feminine norms, particularly in the character of Jo, the March sisters of *Little Women* also grapple with the consequences and frustrations of genteel poverty, and the struggle to be active, ethical, and creative individuals in their social milieu. Jo has been embraced as the quintessential tomboy, and her presence is felt in a number of other classic girls' books featuring resilient, independent girls (for example, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, and *Harriet the Spy*). Alcott and Jo are frequently conflated in both popular and scholarly treatment of the book.<sup>24</sup> This is partly due to Alcott's admission that she based the character of Jo March on her own experience, but also due to a broader cultural desire for authenticity and a strong nostalgia for past childhoods that permeates the production and reception of children's literature.<sup>25</sup>

Of the four novels I discuss in this section, Jo is the oldest protagonist in this group of texts, fifteen years old at the beginning of *Little Women*. However, given the third-person narration and the closeness of the four March sisters (ages 12 to 16 initially), *Little Women* offers a slightly broader perspective, allowing a glimpse into the four worlds of the strikingly different sisters. Each has her own personal fault to overcome: for Jo it is her independence and hotheadedness; for Beth, it is her shyness and reticence. Both Meg and Amy suffer from a certain amount of envy toward their better-off friends and relatives, though this manifests in slightly different ways—for Meg, a sense of unhappiness at being denied the things she desires, and in Amy a certain selfishness, though the text suggests she begins to overcome this debility as she becomes more “womanly.”<sup>26</sup>

Literary scholars have made much of Jo's proto-lesbian qualities,<sup>27</sup> and of Alcott's move to marry her off to Professor Bhaer, despite Alcott's own refusal to marry. Alcott herself suggested that her readers insisted that Jo be married, writing her pleading letters in the lull between the publication of the two volumes.<sup>28</sup> I suspect, however, that something

more complicated was at play. As Perry Nodelman suggests in *The Hidden Adult*, the notion of genre, particularly as analyzed and developed by Frederic Jameson, suggests a kind of structure that persists in texts even when their authors intend, or would prefer, to construct a more progressive narrative.<sup>29</sup> Certain ideological foundations become embedded in the genre in a way that makes them persist, sometimes beyond their wider cultural acceptance. Nodelman writes: “The idea that genres have ideological power suggests another important dimension of them. That power might represent a resistance to change” (114). Though Alcott was able to live with her family, unmarried, late into her life, Jo’s marriage is as necessary for the shadowy didacticism of children’s literature as for the pacifying of Alcott’s readers. The combination of the two—genre conventions *and* reader expectations—makes it impossible for the plot to proceed otherwise and allows *Little Women* (or at least the *Good Wives* half of it) to remain “children’s literature.”

### **FICTIONAL HOMES AND MEMORIALIZED “REALITY”**

Louisa May Alcott and twentieth century author Maud Hart Lovelace are particularly interesting examples of the memorialized author and her “real” home.<sup>30</sup> Though other beloved girls’ book authors have societies and/or museums dedicated to them, the “childhood” homes of Alcott and Lovelace are a consistent presence throughout time in the narratives of the books, and often through multiple books. This is in marked contrast to a figure like Laura Ingalls Wilder. Though there is an active Wilder society, and several of the Ingalls-Wilder homes have been preserved or reconstructed, the family’s nomadic existence doesn’t lend itself to singular memorial space in the way that Alcott and Lovelace’s fictionalized childhoods do. Ironically, the Alcott family moved more than 20 times in the 30-year period prior to their arrival at Orchard House in 1858, and Alcott herself did not live

in Orchard House as a child (nor did Elizabeth Alcott, the real-life inspiration for “Beth,” who died, in much the same way as her fictional alter ego, shortly *before* the move to Orchard House).

The societies that maintain the Alcott and Lovelace homes are committed not only to the preservation of the homes, but also to the preservation of the authors’ legacies, which is to say active memorialization of the authors and ensuring that their books remain in print. The website for Orchard House, in Concord, MA, offers only truthful claims about Alcott’s relation to the house and its use as the setting for *Little Women*; however, the main title announces “Welcome to Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House: Home of Little Women,” making the importance of the relationship among author, home, and text clear from the very first view of the website and eliding the detail that Orchard House was Alcott’s home only as an adult.<sup>31</sup> A note at the bottom of the front page reaffirms the importance of the building itself in readers’ relation to Alcott and her work:

Orchard House is one of the oldest, most authentically-preserved historic house museums in America, and brings the Alcott legacy in the fields of literature, art, education, philosophy, and social justice to life every day through highly acclaimed tours, unique living history events, curriculum-based educational programs, and irreplaceable original family furnishings and archives. Annually, more than 50,000 visitors from all walks of life and every corner of the globe experience Orchard House and discover what it means to be “home.”

The final sentence in this description illustrates the multi-layered nostalgia at work in the intersection of Alcott, her home, and *Little Women*. Thousands of people come to Orchard House every year and experience a “homecoming” to a place many of them have never been, except imaginatively through the text. The house is both the “authentic” home of the real-

life Alcott, and also the “authentic” home of her alter-ego Jo March. By visiting Orchard House, one can participate in several interrelated movements through time and space: to an actual historical past, in which Louisa May Alcott lived and wrote; to the past of the novel, which overlaps with Alcott’s biography but is not the same; and to the nostalgic past of the child reader, who sees her imaginative world come to life in a visit to Orchard House.

Lovelace fans have a somewhat more complicated situation to navigate, since there are two coexisting societies dedicated to Lovelace’s work and the *Betsy-Tacy* books. One is The Maud Hart Lovelace Society, which declares itself dedicated to “passing our love of the *Betsy-Tacy* books onto a new generation of readers.”<sup>32</sup> The other is the Betsy-Tacy Society, an organization that is less vigilant in its attempts to keep its beloved author and her main character separate. Once one visits the website for Lovelace’s childhood home, maintained by the Betsy-Tacy society, things get a bit confusing. The house (as well as the house where the “real” Tacy lived) have been preserved. The website frequently uses the real names of the author and her childhood friends and family interchangeably with the names of characters from the books. For example, the images of the houses are listed prominently as “Betsy’s House” and “Tacy’s House,” a naming convention that is reflected on the wooden signs outside of each home.<sup>33</sup> The website also uses the real name of the town (Mankato, MN) interchangeably with its fictional counterpart, Deep Valley. This suggests to me, even more so than Alcott’s memorialization at Orchard House, the nostalgic relationship of adult readers to the idyllic world of the *Betsy-Tacy* books. The March house, while full of love, is still often the site of sadness, loss, and deprivation, due to the conditions of the war and the family’s finances. The Ray household, in contrast, is a delightfully pleasant place, filled with happy family meals and loving holiday gift-giving; even when something bad does happen, it seems that a positive experience ultimately results. The desire to return to this fictional house



in its real form is palpable, a longing that is echoed in the explicitly reproductive aim of the societies in passing on the *Betsy-Tacy* books to a new generation of (girl) readers.

In the case of more recent texts, Anderson and Blume stand as excellent examples of how the relation between author, heroine, and reader has changed. As living authors, Blume and Anderson do not yet have memorializing physical spaces dedicated to their legacies. They do, however, have personal websites.<sup>34</sup> Both authors maintain a strong presence on their sites, which include FAQs for their young readers on topics both personal and professional—as well as the answers to questions about their relationships to certain characters and texts—and each author maintains a blog with information about her travels, writing practice, and family. Though these authors are less closely identified with individual characters—Anderson discusses her discovery of “Melinda” (*Speak*’s protagonist) in a dream and the “emotional truth” of her novels,<sup>35</sup> while Blume admits that her own experience was very close to that of “Margaret,” though her family was quite different<sup>36</sup>—the actual physical space where the authors conduct their writing is also important. Blume mentions her “writing cabin” (which is also present in the cartoon-style logo in the upper left-hand corner of the site) and Anderson created and posted a video about the eco-friendly writing cottage her husband built for her.<sup>37</sup>

Homes of various kinds play an important role in many works of children’s literature. In *Hidden Adults*, Nodelman argues that many children’s books have a plot based around a movement from home to not-home and back to home again,<sup>38</sup> either episodically or in the larger arc of the narrative. The latter is the case in *Little Women*, where both Jo and Amy leave the March family home—Jo to work as a governess in the city and Amy to go “on tour” in Europe with her elderly Aunt. Both young women return to a home that is altered and, at the same time, begin the process of moving from the family home of

childhood into a more permanent home of adulthood. In New York, Jo meets Professor Bhaer, the partner who will join her in creating an adult home for herself that is also a progressive school for boys. Amy, while on tour in Europe, finds out about the death of her sister, Beth, and is inconsolable until she meets up with Laurie, who is also inconsolable because he has been rejected in love—for a second time—by Jo. As he joins Amy in grieving for Beth, the two fall in love slowly in the not-home space of Europe and return, changed, to a home that has also changed in their absence.

*Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*, *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret*, and *Speak* all follow a more episodic relation to home/not-home/home, with the characters leaving and returning several times before a climactic departure and return. In *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*, there are several important episodes where Betsy leaves the safe space of the house on the big hill and goes downtown. Each trip downtown, whether with her friends Tacy and Tib, or on her own, marks a change in Betsy, as she “grows up” a bit after each trip. In one episode, the girls see a “horseless carriage” for the first time. Another time, they attend a play for the first time—a touring production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, one of Betsy's favorite books. In another episode, Betsy goes alone to the new Carnegie Library, which also leads to a fortuitous afternoon tea with Mrs. Poppy, the wealthy but lonely wife of the local theater owner. In the final trip to town, the girls perform in a production of *Rip Van Winkle*. While there, Betsy discovers her long lost uncle, her mother's favorite brother, and brings him home to the Big Hill for a family dinner that changes her understanding of “home.”

*Are You There God? It's Me Margaret* opens with the largest move of the narrative: Margaret moves from New York City to the New Jersey suburbs just prior to starting sixth grade. However, it's the smaller departures—to her new friend Nancy's house, back into the city for trips to the symphony with her grandmother, and to a co-ed party at a classmate's

house—that change the way Margaret perceives herself and the people around her. The one major trip away from home—to visit her Jewish paternal grandmother in Florida—is cancelled when Margaret’s Christian grandparents come to town to see their daughter (and her family) for the first time since her marriage, when they disowned her for marrying a Jew. The cancellation of her trip, as well as the behavior of her grandparents and parents, complicates Margaret’s relationship with her family, even though most of the action occurs in her own still-empty living room.

In *Speak*, the most important and traumatic outside-the-home experience of the narrative has already occurred before the narrative even begins. However, in the temporality of memory that unfolds in the book, it is not until more than half-way through the text that Melinda can reveal what led to her social ostracization and psychic deterioration. Melinda is also different from the protagonists created by Alcott, Lovelace, and Blume—in a way that is altogether typical for the “problem novel”<sup>39</sup>—in that her home life is fractured and empty, a place of tension rather than the warmth of the parlors of the March family or the Ray family, or even of Margaret and her awkwardly interfaith parents and doting grandmother. For Melinda, school plays a particularly important role in establishing both the space of her recovery and the place where she must ultimately face the forces that are destroying her. It is not a parent or family member who rescues or reassures Melinda; she must do it herself, with the quiet assistance of her art teacher, Mr. Freeman.

Though it may seem like these books line up in a neat chronological progression, from oldest to most recent, there is one quality that disrupts an easy diachronic movement. While all four texts explore what we might now consider the movement from “childhood” to “adolescence” (though Alcott would not have used this language, nor would the figures in Lovelace’s text, during the time in which it is set)<sup>40</sup> and the relative value of knowledge and

innocence, the texts enact different relations to knowledge and the nostalgia for innocence, ones which do not map neatly to autobiography or setting.<sup>41</sup> The protagonists of *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* and *Are You There God? It's Me Margaret* have a relatively uncomplicated relationship to knowledge. These texts suggest that early adolescence is a time of exploration and sometimes anxiety, but that the knowledge the characters gain is for the most part appropriate and “normal,” though not always as pleasant as one might expect. Despite the specter of disappointment—for example, Betsy injures her ankle on the first night her parents allow her to go sledding with her older sister and her sister’s beau, and Margaret discovers that many things are more complicated than they seem on the surface, which can lead to disappointment—there is little nostalgia in these texts for a more innocent period of childhood, at least in relation to the character’s sense of herself. Any sense of nostalgia that pervades the *Betsy-Tacy* series is one engendered by the backward-looking view of the author and reader. The reader is asked by the text to reflect on her own childhood, and the differences she might perceive between that era and her adult (or young-adult) life. This nostalgia may also make the child reader long for the Victorian childhood she could never have. In a later book in the series, an older Betsy notes the speedy passage of time. She enjoys her memories but does not want to relive them:

“We’re growing up,” Betsy said aloud. She wasn’t even sure she liked it. But it happened, and then it was irrevocable. There was nothing you could do about it except try to see that you grew up into the kind of human being that you wanted to be.

“I’d like to be a fine one,” Betsy thought quickly and urgently. (292)

Nodelman suggests that children’s books “seem to conjure this sense of nostalgia in order to block out the knowledge of (or acknowledgement of the knowledge of?) the actual

complexity and uncertainty of childhood for both children and adults” (79). Betsy, like Margaret, tends to view her own growing up from a forward-looking position, even when that means discovering things that are unpleasant or uncomfortable.

Jo and Melinda, on the other hand, have a much more complicated relationship to their own innocence and knowledge. Faced with the prospect of Meg’s marriage and departure from the family home, Jo expresses her sadness and indignation at the cultural practices that will—must—separate the sisters. She wishes she could stop time, and keep them all girls, all together, and yet she recognizes the impossibility of this, expressing a nostalgia for a girlhood she has not yet lost.<sup>42</sup> Melinda frequently ponders the change that occurred as a result of her assault and rejection by her peer group, wishing for the innocence and relative inexperience of her childhood. Both Jo and Melinda experience growing up as traumatic, and orient themselves nostalgically toward a time “before” their respective traumas.

The nineteenth century was marked by what Melanie Dawson calls the “miniaturization of girlhood.” This process, identified as a “valuation of nurturing activities that privilege family harmony over individual distinction,” led to a marked difference between social expectations for girls and boys (Dawson, in Levander and Singley, 63). As Carol S. Murray explores in her chapter on boys’ and girls’ books in the nineteenth century (“Good Girls, Bad Boys: 1850-1890”),<sup>43</sup> a similar bifurcation was happening at the level of publication as well, with the release of domestic fiction for girls (and women) and adventure novels for boys. While there have been many books published since then that interrupt this neat gender binary in children’s literature, I think it is important to keep Nodelman’s argument about the power of genre at the front of our minds. *Little Women*, despite its progressive views and extraordinary qualities as compared to other nineteenth-century

domestic fiction, is still very much invested in certain ideas of appropriate behavior and morality for girls. Its setting is the space of the home, and its “real” home, Orchard House, remains an important destination for legions of Alcott fans. Though written in the 1940s, *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* also bears the mark of the domestic novel, pulling the genre conventions of the author’s favorite childhood books into the future. Though *Are You There God? It’s Me Margaret* and *Speak* in some ways illustrate the radical stylistic shifts that occurred with the rise of Young Adult fiction in the 1960s—first-person narrators, attention to issues of sexuality, etc—it is likely that they still bring the baggage, good and bad, of a century or more of children’s literature with them. After all, Judy Blume says the *Betsy-Tacy* books by Maud Hart Lovelace were her favorites growing up.<sup>44</sup>

#### **CULTURE AND CONTEXT: AMERICAN GIRLHOODS**

*To put it simply, culture is how we live nature (including our own biology); it is the shared meanings we make and encounter in our everyday lives. Culture is not something essential, embodied in particular ‘texts’ (that is, any commodity, object or event that can be made to signify), it is the practices and processes of making meanings with and from the ‘texts’ we encounter in our everyday lives. In this way, then, cultures are made from the production, circulation and consumption of meanings. To share a culture, therefore, is to interpret the world – make it meaningful – in recognisably similar ways.*

—John Storey<sup>45</sup>

Beginning in the 1960s, scholars of women’s history and gender studies have produced a great deal of research on the lives of women and developed historical practices foregrounding the experiences and testimony of women. However, it is only in the last decade, with the development of childhood studies, that girlhood has entered the conversation, and emerged as its own sub-discipline of girls’ studies.<sup>46</sup> Much of this work has focused on the social and cultural aspects of contemporary girlhood, emphasizing the experiences, concerns, and testimony of actual girls.<sup>47</sup> Girlhood has also become a site of fascinating historical research, particularly in relation to cultural changes that took place in the U.S. during the mid- to late nineteenth century and the reading and writing practices of

middle-class girls and women during this period. Yet the period in between, and in particular the texts and their girl readers of this period, has frequently been overlooked. And it was during this “in-between period,” from roughly 1900 to 1960, that concepts of the adolescent and the teenager began to cohere.

Just as children’s literature and Young Adult literature, when considered as genres separate from other kinds of literary texts, have a relatively recent history in the United States, so too do the figures of the adolescent and teenager. The word “teenager” entered common usage in the 1940s, with some early variations appearing in the 1920s. Even the term “adolescence” is relatively new, brought to public consciousness by the publication of G. Stanley Hall’s two-volume tome, *Adolescence*, in 1904.

Hall had begun lecturing on his theories of adolescent development in the late nineteenth century, but I argue, as John Savage does in *Teenage*, that both the adolescent and the teenager are products of the twentieth century. This is not to say that what we now call “adolescence” did not exist as a developmental period prior to that time. However, the period of late childhood and early adulthood was often simply referred to as “youth,” a term that could apply to anyone between the ages of, say, 15 and 30 (Savage 66). The genesis of Hall’s ideas about adolescence can be traced to earlier writings, including Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762) and Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), but the figure of the adolescent and the teenager are in many ways products of the social and economic forces of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>48</sup>

Hall recognized that adolescence was both biological (it coincides with puberty and physical maturation) and socially constructed, and offered a definition that encompassed the ten-year period from the start of puberty to the early- to mid-twenties (for girls, he suggested, adolescence began and ended earlier, an insight that still informs gendered models

of child development). Socially and culturally, this period of life was becoming distinct as a result of specialized educational institutions. During the decade in which Hall was developing and writing *Adolescence*, the number of high schools in the United States increased by more than 750 percent (Savage 69).

Perhaps drawing on his own unhappy late childhood and early adulthood, Hall was particularly invested in detailing the “storm and stress” of adolescence, noting the volatility that characterizes the emotional state during that period of life. In the chapter on “Feelings and Psychic Evolution” in volume two of *Adolescence*, Hall writes: “The ‘teens’ are emotionally unstable and pathic. It is the age of natural inebriation without need of intoxicants, which made Plato define youth as spiritual drunkenness. It is a natural impulse to experience hot and perfervid physic states, and it is characterized by emotionalism” (74). This focus on the emotional upheaval of adolescence, which Hall tries to place in the context of human evolution in the two volumes of *Adolescence*, continues to influence contemporary notions of adolescent development. Despite recent research that suggests most adolescents are socially and emotionally well adjusted,<sup>49</sup> Hall’s long shadow can be seen in everything from literary and filmic representations of adolescents, to scientific research into adolescent brains and impulse control.<sup>50</sup>

In the decades following the publication of Hall’s text, the United States saw a series of major social, political, and economic upheavals, including the First World War and the Great Depression. Yet there were also periods of significant prosperity and the increasing influence of the middle class on many aspects of American culture. One area that is particularly important when considering “the adolescent” is the way in which schooling changed significantly in the early twentieth century. While historians frequently point to the raising of the minimum age for compulsory schooling in the years surrounding the Great



Depression,<sup>51</sup> this was the culmination, rather than the genesis, of a major change in the role of education in American social and economic life.

The economic prosperity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the decreasing reliance on agriculture, meant that more and more middle-class families were able to send their children to secondary schooling, and even on to college and university. High school, which had previously been the domain of certain individuals, mostly young men, who planned to attend university and earn a professional degree, suddenly became accessible to young people of both genders from a wide variety of cultural and economic backgrounds. Curriculum changed to accommodate this influx of new students, and continued to change as more and more students, including children from immigrant and working-class families, began to attend high school.

At the same time, reformers recognized the importance of high school in serving as a disciplinary tool (and in keeping young men and women off the streets) and the minimum age for compulsory schooling was raised periodically until the 1930s, when high school became mandatory in many places, ensuring that jobs went to breadwinners rather than adolescent workers during the Great Depression. The enforced attendance at high school not only created a new class of punishable offences for youth, particularly truancy, but also—for the first time—created a system where students moved through school in lock-step with their age mates. This combination of economic prosperity followed by changes in compulsory schooling created a nascent “teen culture” that found its full expression by the 1940s and is still the dominant form of social structure for U.S. adolescents today.<sup>52</sup>

The early twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of the “high school girl”—like Lovelace’s “Betsy”—who then became the “teenager” or “teenage girl,” which defined a period of life separate from childhood and womanhood, a concept that was not stabilized

until just before the Second World War. This liminal, early twentieth century period offers a fascinating study of girls' self-identifications and engagements with consumer culture, parental and societal anxieties about girls' behaviors and development, and the consolidation of the teenage girl as both a cultural type and a self-identity for the girls it describes.

Ilana Nash's *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth Century Popular Culture* is one of the only monographs to address the intersection of the emergence of adolescent girls as a separate social and developmental type with narrative texts. In *American Sweethearts*, Nash utilizes media studies work informed by Althusser's theory of interpolation<sup>53</sup> to argue that films, magazines, and other "girl-centered texts have offered their young female consumers implicit lessons in self-subordination to paternal(istic) authority—for that authority is ultimately what these entertainments were designed to celebrate and protect" (13). Yet girls still managed (and manage) to consume these media in ways that are not always anticipated or condoned by their creators, publishers, or marketers. In the case of books for girls, there are also often multiple levels of meaning-making occurring simultaneously. These multiple levels can be conscious or unconscious on the part of the author, related to elements of genre, aesthetics, narrative conventions, or the explicit or implicit demands of agents, editors, parents, teachers, and librarians.<sup>54</sup>

Describing youth culture of the 1920s, Nash writes: "Youth's peer culture circulated in the media the way all popular panics do: as a source of anxiety and pleasure simultaneously, offering viewers the opportunity to consume provocative stories and images while allowing them also to feel superior to those they read about" (82-3). For the legal and cultural anxieties surrounding teen girls, particularly those about innocence and purity,<sup>55</sup> Nash suggests a direct relationship to—or even displacement of—larger "crises of

masculinity” that emerge from men’s joblessness during the Great Depression and the social and economical upheaval that came in the wake of WWII.<sup>56</sup>

Nash quotes a movie magazine’s 1937 description of Bonita Granville, star of the Nancy Drew films, as not part of the “baby class” but not yet “with the adolescents.” Granville, however, was fourteen at the time, which suggests, as Nash argues, “the degree to which the categories of youth were still mutable in popular 1930s discourse” (86). Nash attributes the emergence of youth culture to increased college enrollment in the 1920s followed by increased high school enrollment in the 1930s as more and more students delayed entering the workforce during the Depression. (This trend began in the middle classes much earlier.) She writes: “The forced proximity fostered a distinct teenage subculture, allowing the events of high school life to shape common experience along an age axis that ameliorated differences in geography, class, or ethnicity that had more rigorously separated youth in previous years” (87). This collapsing of difference, however, did not necessarily lead to more diverse representations of high school age youth. Novels and films remained focused on the experiences of white middle-class children and teens.

Another important factor to consider when examining adolescence in the United States is the concept of “generations,” and in particular the conflict between adolescents and their parents or other adults (or “generational antagonism,” as it is now commonly called). The horrors of the Great War initiated an early generational divide, between those who were teen-aged during the First World War, and their elders. This split can be seen in the jazz culture that emerged in the years following the war, and the major challenges to traditional morality and social conventions that this form of youth culture embodied.<sup>57</sup> Though there was much less pronounced generational antagonism immediately following World War II, unique forms of youth culture played an important role in constituting adolescent or teen

identity during that period—think sock hops, drive-ins, and rock-and-roll. Later, a similar, and perhaps even more pronounced split occurred during the years of the Vietnam War, the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since the Vietnam era, and not coincidentally at the same time the problem novel emerged, the idea of teens and adolescents being innately opposed to an older generation has become so naturalized as to seem universal and perpetual, but it is a relatively recent phenomenon—and may in fact be the exception, rather than the rule.

As American consumer culture was shaping—and, one might argue, *producing*—the figure of the adolescent, consumer culture and the emerging middle class of the nineteenth century also created the genre of American children’s literature. Prior to the 1860s, books for children that included stories, poems, and other forms of literary entertainment were imported from England, though this was partly due to the absence and the limited availability of printing presses in the Colonies and the early United States. However, the absence of literary entertainment for children was also strongly influenced by the cultural milieu of early American society, specifically the influence of Puritan values, particularly in Boston, which was the literary center of the young country.

There is a tension in children’s literature—all children’s literature, but especially American—between the didactic message of a text and its role as a form of entertainment. As Nodelman and others have argued persuasively, books for children provide messages about what ideal children should be like. Often, though not always, these messages are encoded in a protagonist who is “good” and a storyline that offers a moral lesson. Though nearly all publishing for children in English can trace its roots to a general embrace of literary didacticism in the eighteenth century, the strong cultural legacy of the New England Puritans continues to manifest in children’s literature.

Despite the fact that American colonial societies were generally early proponents of literacy, even for women, this literacy was in service of biblical reading and interpretation.<sup>58</sup> Novels were considered a form of entertainment that distracted one from more important questions of salvation and eternal life, and were therefore forbidden. Children were not exempt from this prohibition; if anything, they were more strictly constrained from objects and activities that might distance them from spiritual contemplation. This prohibition on fictional entertainments, combined with the limited access to printing presses during the Colonial period, meant little literature for children was being created and produced in the U.S.

In the early nineteenth century, the vast majority of literature for children published in the U.S. came in the form of “Sunday School Books”—short fictional texts that told stories based on biblical events and parables.<sup>59</sup> Sunday school books served as both a source of moral (didactic) instruction as well as literacy instruction, particularly for those urban children and youth who were not able to attend school. The development and publication of Sunday school books—led by the American Sunday School Union—emerged from a larger progressive movement to increase literacy, particularly among poor and immigrant children, as well as from the broader culture shift from what scholars have called a “Calvinist passivity” to an “activist moralism.”<sup>60</sup> Sunday school books were designed to be entertaining, in a way that might have horrified the Puritans, but the authors of the texts took the injunction to instruct very seriously. Policies of the American Sunday School Union “stipulated that imaginative works should not provide false presentations of life and duty.”<sup>61</sup>

The real flowering of fiction for children and youth didn’t begin to take place until the mid-nineteenth century, following the establishment of American authors and publishing houses earlier in that century. I would argue that the legacy of American colonial culture can

also be seen in the late and limited offerings of fantasy literature for children by authors in the United States. Though Britain had an early, thriving genre of children's fantasy books, one that continues today with popular series like *Harry Potter*, and these texts found a large audience in America, few were actually produced outside the British context. Christopher Myers notes that for most of the history of American children's literature, there has been an "injunction against the occult," which still affects contemporary texts, particularly those about children of color.<sup>62</sup> This legacy also continues in the censorship of fantasy books like *Harry Potter* and Phillip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* in American schools and communities. In this case, the movement is led primarily by a small but vocal group of fundamentalist Christian parents and clergy; however, the movement to restrict children's and teen's access to books is by no means an isolated phenomenon. As I illustrate in the next chapter, the fight over what constitutes "appropriate" narratives and subject matter continues to have an impact on young people's access to material, including novels, that addresses controversial and polarizing subjects.

## Chapter 2

### Who—and What—is a “Girl”? The Tomboy, the Lesbian, and the Transgender Child

The question of the role of children’s literature, and of the binary that lies beneath—whether it serves to subvert dominant narratives, or to further hegemony—is one of the engines that has powered (and continues to power) the scholarly study of children’s literature. From this question of subversion versus socialization, it is a quick jump to questions of authenticity and the power relations between adult authors and their implied child readers. But this binary, like so many others, simply seems to lead one endlessly in circles, seeking examples that provide evidence for one side or the other, bouncing ambivalently back and forth between poles.

Children’s books that address controversial subject matter are often seen as automatically subversive—by both their proponents and their detractors. Yet texts that appear outwardly subversive or progressive often mask deeply conservative narratives and tropes. For example, *Almost Perfect*, the 2010 American Library Association’s Stonewall Award<sup>63</sup>-winning YA novel about a teen boy who falls in love with a transgender girl, has been lauded for its realistic dialogue, authentic teen voice, and attempt to represent the experience of a transgender teen, while also criticized for transphobic language and depictions. Richard Flynn writes in the introduction to a 2007 issue of *Children’s Literature Quarterly* on the subversive and socializing functions of children’s literature: “Even now I try to convince myself that a combination of instruction and delight is potentially liberating, although I recognize that much of what passes for subversiveness in children’s literature amounts to little more than a spoonful of sugar” (311). Flynn’s use of the word “liberating”

is instructive here, requiring one to ask what, exactly, do children need to be liberated *from*, except the attitudes and assumptions they have already learned from adults?

To assume a Foucauldian stance, one must also wonder what power structure might be served by framing children's literature in terms of liberation. How and why must children be liberated, and who will benefit from their liberation? Flynn's use of "liberation" suggests a repressive form of power, and yet, as Foucault argues in one oft-cited passage from *Discipline and Punish*, power is not repressive, but productive: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it excludes, it 'represses,' it 'censors,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.' In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained by him belong to this production" (*Discipline and Punish*, 194). As such, "liberatory" children's literature must first teach its readers about the reality that power has produced before any alternative can be suggested.

Books for children and teens that address controversial subject matter—particularly issues surrounding gender and sexuality—offer a unique glimpse into the disciplinary role that children's literature plays, while simultaneously providing a mirror to adult fears about child and adolescent "deviance" and desires. By "liberating" the narratives of children and teens who reside outside of the mainstream, or who have suffered trauma as the result of their gender expression or sexuality, these texts offer narrative frameworks for readers to utilize as they attempt to make sense of their own lives—serving as both inspiration and cautionary tales, often simultaneously, yet always in relation to the adult writers and publishers who make these narratives available.

\* \* \*



I have struggled with how to organize this chapter and the chapter that follows it. Should they be two distinct chapters—one on gender and one on sexuality? A single chapter on gender and sexuality? Or should they be separated by some other organizing principle? I follow Eve Sedgwick (and others)<sup>64</sup> in thinking that the de-articulation of gender from sexuality, and vice versa, is a necessary and important step in theorizing both. However, there are several compelling reasons to group gender and sexuality together in a discussion of books for girls. First, the figure of the tomboy, a stock character of children's literature in general and girls' book in particular, serves as a repository for adult fears about deviant gender *and* sexuality—and the conversion of the tomboy into a proper young lady over the course of a narrative has historically assuaged and resolved these fears. Second, many of the children's and young adult books that have been challenged or banned, according to the ALA, have been targeted based on adult objections to content related to gender and sexuality, which are almost always conflated. So rather than separating gender and sexuality, I have kept them together—dividing chapters 2 and 3 into a discussion of books that complicate the idea of what a girl is and who gets to count as a girl (Chapter 2), and a discussion of self-identity, journaling, and the use of first-person narrators in YA fiction (Chapter 3).

Young adult fiction, as a genre positioned precariously between the instructive world of children's literature and the less-policed narrative of fiction for adult readers, generally reflects culturally-condoned outcomes for teenage sexuality. Librarian Christine Jenkins places YA novels in their historical context, noting: "The didactic tradition of mass-market books for young readers leaves scant room for postmodern multiple identities or inconclusive endings" (326). Yet there now exists a sizable group of YA novels with queer and transgender characters, and a market of young readers for these books. Given the

constraints of the genre, perhaps *any* reconciliation of sexual difference, no matter how formulaic or normative, is a positive move.

In the chapter that follows, I offer a brief history of “queer” YA fiction for girls, including Nancy Garden’s groundbreaking 1982 novel *Annie on my Mind*, and later texts that center on queer, adolescent protagonists. I then examine the emergence of the figure of the transgender child in popular culture, and the simultaneous appearance of transgender characters in YA novels. Finally, I reflect on adult anxieties about child and adolescent sexuality by discussing the ongoing censorship of children’s literature.

### **GIRLS’ BOOKS: FROM TOMBOY TO LESBIAN TO TRANS**

The history of children’s literature in the United States is tied closely to the history of childhood itself. In stories written for children, specific images of the ideal child emerge, with special care taken to delineate the differences between ideal boys and ideal girls. While these stories are written *for* children, they are rarely, if ever, written *by* children. Their role is not simply to entertain, but to instruct. The history of children’s literature (specifically books written for adolescent girls) and the construction of adolescent girlhood in America both play an important role in understanding the contemporary form of the young adult novel.<sup>65</sup> Teenage girls are not expected to experience desire. The model of maturity in girls is that of physical change, i.e. menarche or fertility, and emotional investment in romantic attachments. In her essay “Daring to Desire: Culture and the Bodies of Adolescent Girls,” Deborah Tolman points to the missing discourse of female sexuality, that “[i]n the studies that consider adolescent sexual behavior, girls are assumed not to have embodied sexual feelings” (252). This psychological perspective not only reinforces Victorian stereotypes of

feminine development, but also frequently makes a discourse of same-sex or opposite-sex adolescent female desire impossible.

The figure of the tomboy appears frequently in books for girls, and many of the heroines of girls' classics begin as tomboys, morphing into proper young ladies late in the text—often only after great personal loss, and much to the dismay of many readers. The tomboy is often read as a proto-lesbian figure, the boyish girl who doesn't want to play with dolls or practice at womanhood in what has been called the nineteenth century “miniaturization of girlhood.” The liminal nature of the tomboy's gender and sexuality, and readers' discomfort, are reasons cited by critics when discussing the marriages and romances that frequently end these texts. The author's marrying off of the tomboy reassures readers that the tomboy's gender transgressions are only temporary, a mild deviation on the path to normal womanhood. Though Anne Scott McCleod argues in “The Caddie Woodlawn Syndrome” that the vast majority of nineteenth century girls were much less feminized and restricted than early twentieth century nostalgic texts about the period would have readers believe, there is a great deal of personal writing by women of the period to suggest that they deeply mourned the loss of their tomboyish girlhoods, regardless of whether this experience was the exception or the rule.<sup>66</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the “girls' book” emerged from the tradition of didactic children's literature. Usually written by women, these stories model ideals of proper girlhood and the passage to womanhood, often using the device of illness or death to illustrate feminine moral development,<sup>67</sup> while instructing the reader in proper female behavior. Working with Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Karin Quimby focuses on the tomboy narrative of Jo's coming-of-age story and “the panic that her queer anomalous state” unleashes (9). Despite an increase in representations of gay and lesbian characters, many

modern young adult novels subscribe to normative binaries of gender identification, and normative ideas of homosexual coupling. Quimby's discussion of Jo's marriage as a narrative device at the end of *Little Women* resonates with contemporary coming-of-age conventions: "[N]arratives of childhood often have extreme or didactic endings contrived to impose order on any ungovernable fantasies that animate into the middle of the plot. These endings expose, specifically, the anxiety aroused in the reader by characters whose sexual identities or desires are not fixed" (10). Readers, Quimby says, must be placated with characters who discover their essential identities by the end of the narrative.

Judith Halberstam provides a contemporary social context for this "tomboy panic" in her essay "Oh Bondage Up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy." She describes the sense of anxiety expressed by adults that tomboy identity in childhood leads to the persistence of masculinity and homosexual identity in adolescence and adulthood.<sup>68</sup> This anxiety over gender identification becomes a contentious element of YA fiction. As Christine Jenkins observes:

Positive depictions of queer gays challenge the naturalness of gender itself and disrupt the notion of sexual orientation as a dichotomous variable. The shift that adolescents experience in viewing themselves, and being viewed by others, as sexual beings is already disturbing to adults who are hoping that their teenage children really will Just Say No. Further disruption is virtually intolerable. (324)

Though Jenkins makes a troubling distinction between "queer" gays (which is to say genderqueer, trans, and other non-gender normative individuals) and everyone else who identifies as gay, her observation illustrates the tension between the expectations of adolescent and adult readers of YA literature.

Many of the classic texts for girls—whether dating from the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first century—are, effectively, marriage plots. Even quintessential tomboy Jo March must be married off before the narrative can come to an acceptable end. A strong emphasis on romance still persists in many of the books marketed to adolescent girls, and, in nearly all cases, this romance is expected to end with a conventional coupling. Beginning in the 1970s, a few books began to expand the idea of what a couple could look like, and Young Adult novels started to include gay and lesbian characters, initially as supporting characters, and later as protagonists. At first, these characters were denied the happy endings available to their straight counterparts. Having same-sex attraction was often quite literally a death sentence: gay and lesbian characters were killed off through car accidents, fatal illnesses, or suicides in the course of the narrative. Those who survived were often sent to mental institutions or simply pitied for their difficult lots in life. This changed with the publication of Nancy Garden's Young Adult novel *Annie on My Mind* in 1982.

Despite its publication over thirty years ago, *Annie on My Mind* is still one of the most realistic portrayals of teenage same-sex desire in young adult fiction. The story, set in New York City, centers on Liza Winthrop, a gifted student from an affluent family in Brooklyn Heights, and Annie Kenyon, an aspiring classical singer from a poor family living in upper Manhattan. Liza and Annie meet one afternoon at the Metropolitan Museum of Art just before Thanksgiving during their senior year of high school and forge a friendship out of a shared love of art, music, and play. Several weeks later Annie and Liza share a first kiss on the abandoned Coney Island beach. After that kiss, issues of morality and shame enter the girls' relationship and permeate the remainder of the narrative.

Both girls have future plans when they meet: Liza will attend MIT in the fall as an architecture student, and Annie will be returning to California, her childhood home, to

attend Berkeley. As in most young adult novels, the space of the school plays an important role in the narrative, particularly the difference between Liza's close-knit private school in Brooklyn Heights and Annie's large, impersonal, and dangerous public school. The teachers and administrators of Liza's school, Foster Academy, are present in much of the text, as are her parents and younger brother, Chad. Annie's family is much less visible, and other than the music concert Liza and her family attend at Annie's school, the reader knows little about Annie's school experiences.

The financial situation of Foster Academy plays an important role in the story as well. Liza has several altercations with the school headmistress and her secretary related to fundraising efforts for Foster. In the week after Liza first meets Annie, she is punished for not stopping a classmate who has set up an ear-piercing booth as a fundraiser. Later, in the climax of the story, Liza and Annie are "discovered" by the secretary, who initiates expulsion proceedings against Liza due to the "immoral" nature of her relationship with Annie. Playing a key role in the development of Liza and Annie's relationship are Liza's art and English teachers, Ms. Stevenson and Ms. Widmer. During spring break, Liza offers to take care of the women's cats. She assumes they are just roommates, but when she and Annie venture to the top floor of the apartment, they discover a shared bedroom, and a collection of the same books Annie and Liza have surreptitiously purchased in an attempt to understand their attraction to one another: *Patience and Sarah*, *The Well of Loneliness*, *Female Homosexuality*. In the unmonitored space of Ms. Stevenson and Ms. Widmer's house, Liza and Annie finally feel free to explore the physical aspect of their relationship. But the experience comes to a terrible conclusion when they are discovered and "outed" by the school secretary.

In the following months, Liza finds herself trapped in a series of lies and denials about her relationship with Annie. When the school suspends Liza and reports her behavior

to her parents, she lies to her parents about her relationship with Annie. Yet even the specter of lesbianism prompts her father to confess:

...honey, I know it's not fashionable to say this, but—well, maybe it's just that I love your mother so much and you and Chad so much that I have to say to you I've never thought gay people can be very happy—no children, for one thing, no real family life. Honey, you are probably going to be a damn good architect—but I want you to be happy in other ways, too, as your mother is—to have a husband and children. I know you can do both...(191)

Liza's thoughts, "I am happy, [...] I'm happy with Annie; she and my work are all I'll ever need; she's happy too—we both were till this happened," remain unspoken. Liza does not tell her parents the full story, and she is not expelled from Foster Academy. Ms. Stevenson and Ms. Widmer lose their jobs after the discovery that they are romantic partners. Liza feels terrible guilt, but Ms. Stevenson assures her that the most important thing is the love between two people. "Don't let ignorance win," said Ms. Stevenson. "Let love" (232). However, Liza's stress over hiding the relationship and doubts about her own sexual identity force the girls apart.

The novel is set up with the majority of the story told as flashbacks from the perspective of Liza's first semester at MIT. The book ends with a hopeful scene: Liza finally calls Annie in Berkeley. They arrange to meet at the airport in Boston and spend winter break together. Their conversation and the book both close with the following exchange:

"Annie, Ms. Widmer was right. Remember—about the truth making one free?  
Annie—I'm free now. I love you, I love you so much!"

And in a near whisper: "I love you, too, Liza. Oh, God, I love you, too!" (234)

Though the ending of the book is left open—no marriage, literal or metaphorical, has taken place—the final scene ends on a confessional note. Annie and Liza are finally redeemed by love: they have reconciled over the phone, and confessed their love for one another, therefore legitimizing their relationship and their identities, and replicating the exchange of vows of the traditional romance in a slightly different way.<sup>69</sup>

Though *Annie on my Mind* was published over three decades ago, it is difficult to find too much fault with Garden's novel. The text itself is engaging, the main characters are complex and well-developed, and—though the text is by no means explicit—the physical relationship between the female protagonists is made clear. The fact that neither girl must die or ultimately renounce her sexuality is remarkable for the time period, and the novel marked a turning point in depictions of gay and lesbian teens in Young Adult fiction. In the forward to *Lesbian and Gay Voices*, an annotated bibliography of books for children, Garden describes her own search as a teenager in the 1950s for novels with lesbian characters that reflected her own experience and desires, and her disappointing discovery that there was little available besides *The Well of Loneliness* and pulp novels. *Annie on My Mind* was her personal attempt to fill this gap with a narrative that offered the possibility of a queer future beyond madness or redemption through a heterosexual marriage.

The same qualities that make *Annie on My Mind* a strong book have also led to censorship of the novel; it consistently makes the American Library Association's list of "Most Challenged Books." Yet the narrative of *Annie on My Mind* is for the most part that of a conventional romance. Though the novel was groundbreaking in that it offered the possibility of a happy ending for the two female protagonists, the story is structured around normative notions of marriage and family. In Garden's novel, the words of wisdom given to



seventeen-year-old Liza Winthrop by her art teacher Isabelle Stevenson provide a positive, but still limiting option:

There are a lot of unfair things in this world, and gay people certainly come in for their share of them—but so do lots of other people, and besides, it doesn't really matter. What matters is the truth of loving, of two people finding each other. That's what's important and don't you forget it. (Garden 229)

As the only openly gay adults in the novel, Ms. Stevenson and her partner Ms. Widmer offer a single possibility: happiness can only be found with a romantic partner, gay or straight. As a result, Eliza and Annie's happy ending is predicated on their willingness to emulate or approximate a traditional marriage, a social structure that is stressed over and over again by the adults—gay and straight—in the girls' lives.<sup>70</sup>

In the years since Farrar, Strauss and Giroux published *Annie on My Mind*, the number of books for children and young adults that show multi-dimensional gay and lesbian characters has increased exponentially (Jenkins 298). Despite more nuanced representations of gender and sexuality in Young Adult Literature published since the 1980s, the instructive and moralistic aspects of the genre still result for the most part in fixed, normative identifications. By ending contemporary YA novels with a feminine lesbian-identified character happily ensconced in a committed homosexual relationship, the character is labeled and identified for the reader, which resolves any lingering anxiety about sexuality or gender. As a result, these novels, even those featuring queer characters, offer few options for a “happy ending” outside of identity as a partner in a hetero- or homosexual couple.

The novel *Empress of the World* (2001) by Sara Ryan is unique among recent young adult fiction for several reasons. First, the teenage characters of the story are comparatively

young—fifteen years old—but are still allowed to experience physical desire. Second, sexual identity is an important aspect of the plot, but sexual fluidity and adolescent questioning take on equal importance. Third, the story is set within a subculture of adolescent subculture: a summer program for academically gifted high school students. The setting of the novel allows the plot to develop with little adult influence in the lives of the characters, creating the alienated space of the problem novel, but not requiring problematized relationships between the adolescent and adult characters.

The story is told in first-person narrative from the perspective of Nicola Lancaster, Nic for short. Sections of the novel are designed to appear as if they are entries from Nic's journal, and each section is given a date, time, and location heading. Nic is multi-talented; she's studying archaeology as a student at the Seigel Institute Summer Program for Gifted Youth, but she's also an artist, and she plays the viola and works in technical theater at her high school. During the first day, she falls in with a group of four other students that includes two other girls, Katrina and Battle, and two boys, Isaac and Kevin. Even before they meet, Nic sketches Battle, making notes in her journal about Battle's gorgeous long blonde hair. During the first few weeks of classes, Nic finds herself more and more attracted to Battle, but unsure what it might mean.

Nic's journal entries are witty and penetrating. On the first page of her journal she writes: "hypothesis: taking an actual class in archaeology will serve to confirm Nicola Lancaster in her lifelong dream of becoming an archaeologist" (3) and then proceeds to replace "lifelong dream," changes her mind, and writes "ignore: this is dumb" (4) above the journal entry. Early in the summer, Battle comes to Nic's room with ice for her headache and—as she leans over to place it on her forehead—kisses Nic on the lips. Nic's subsequent journal entry is full of anxious musings on the meaning of the kiss and her sexual self-

identity and the reactions of her friends. Later, Nic muses again about her new-found lesbian identity:

I've started to keep track of the number of times I hear someone mutter the word "dyke" in my direction—five so far.

I guess I should be getting angry, or upset, but more than anything, it's just odd—what has changed about me, that makes these people now want to call me this name? Do I look different? (115)

The major conflict that develops in Battle and Nic's relationship is over Nic's psychological dependency on the categorization of people and objects. When Nic comments that everything Battle says "just feels... important," Battle responds, "I don't talk a lot because words don't always work" (113). Nic repeats this to herself over and over to try to break the habit of explaining, constantly putting every experience into words.

The two girls separate for part of the summer when Battle's frustration over Nic's taxonomic obsession becomes too much for her to handle. Battle briefly becomes involved with a male friend, but then confesses to Nic that she just needed to spend time with someone who wasn't constantly trying to explain herself. The book ends with reconciliation between Battle and Nic, but no definitive plan for the future. The summer is ending and they will soon return to their normal lives, living with their parents in different parts of the country. When Nic, frustrated, says, "I want a happy ending, dammit," Battle responds "It's not an ending" (212). The novel ends without the neat coda of a marriage or shared future. Ryan's companion novel, *The Rules for Hearts* (2007), follows Battle through the summer before her first year of college, but Nic plays only a distant, limited role.

*What Happened to Lani Garver* (2002) and *Luna: A Novel* (2004) also focus on the lives of young women in crisis. What makes these books important are the realistic portrayals of queer youth, including transgendered and other-gendered supporting characters. However, in the case of both novels, the queer characters end up separated, both physically and emotionally, from the protagonists. In *Luna*, Regan's brother Liam leaves for Seattle in order to safely transition to a female gender identity, and in *What Happened to Lani Garver*, androgynous Lani is killed in a hate crime. Both novels utilize the tropes of the problem novel to explore issues of illness, family conflict, and sexuality. Only by removing the troublingly queer character from the narrative, however, can the teenage protagonist continue on to her—presumably straight—adult life.

Lani and Luna mark the first appearance of genderqueer or transgender characters in Young Adult Fiction, though they serve as supporting characters, rather than the protagonists, in their respective stories. Since *Luna* was first published in 2004, general awareness of transgender individuals, and transgender children in particular, has increased in American culture. At the same time, the number of YA novels featuring GLBTQ and genderqueer characters has increased significantly. Since fiction for teens is dominated by heterosexual characters, perhaps *any* representation of queer desire or gender variance does the work of critiquing what Judith Halberstam describes as “the careful social scripts” of normativity. These books have been subject to many of the same challenges and opposition that were leveled against texts like *Annie on My Mind* a generation earlier; opposition of this kind reflects a continued discomfort on the part of parents, educators, and librarians about providing minors access to materials about gender and sexuality. Meanwhile, discussions of gender and sexuality, whether in popular media, handbooks for parents, or children's literature, continue to reinforce problematic binaries of nature versus nurture and

essentialism versus constructionism,<sup>71</sup> fixated on the question of what “makes” someone gay or transgender.

## TRANSGENDER CHILDREN AND THE NATURE/NURTURE BINARY

*The immemorial, seemingly ritualized debates on nature versus nurture take place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about both nature and nurture.*

—Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Axiom 4, Epistemology of the Closet*<sup>72</sup>

The pervasiveness of the nature/nurture binary is revealed in all aspects of contemporary discourse. One need look only as far as a radio program, newspaper article, or the latest pop single to see questions of innate immutability opposed to social constructionism. While an argument from immutability offers a seductive way to affirm differences among individuals, it ignores the many factors of environmental and cultural situatedness that shape human experience, and leaves one open to arguments utilizing language like “mistake of nature” to describe human variation. Just because one is “born this way,” does not always lead to the conclusion that “this way” is better than the way one might be after aggressive intervention. And yet the opposing side, which leans on “nurture” to suggest that a human emerges into the world as a blank canvas, a *tabula rasa*, is equally problematic. So too are positions which attempt to take a 50/50 (or another “quantified” ratio) approach to nature/nurture, as though assigning numerical values to each side of the binary would allow it to resolve neatly.

In this section, I focus on representations of the *transgender child* and *transgender adolescent* to explore some of the assumptions and violence of a binaristic, nature-vs-nurture view. I examine several fictional and socio-medical narratives of childhood and adolescent transgender experience—including those presented in the parenting guide *The Transgender*

*Child* and two novels published for an audience of Young Adult readers: *Parrotfish* and *Almost Perfect*. Brill and Pepper's guidebook *The Transgender Child* provides a snapshot of the current best practices and controversies in the treatment of gender-variant children and adolescents. Meanwhile, YA novels about transgender and gender-variant teens offer support and narrative models for children and teens who are working out their own gender identities and identifications; these texts also provide a rich source of information about what contemporary American culture has to say about gender identity and transgender individuals.

Several important questions arise simply from engaging the topic of childhood gender identity. For example, given existing nature/nurture dichotomies in discussions of transsexuality and gender identity, how can one discuss gender-variant children without falling into a trap of gender essentialism versus constructionism or a mind/body split? How does self-knowledge function in larger discussions of transgender issues and gender identity? In order to address these questions and others, I introduce theoretical work which has emerged from scholars working at the intersection of science studies and feminist theory in a field often referred to as "feminist materialism."<sup>73</sup> I examine the work of theorists Anne Fausto-Sterling, Karen Barad, Susan Oyama, and others to complicate notions of subjectivity, causality, and development, and provide provocative ways to think systemically about gender and childhood—outside the nature/nurture binary.

\* \* \*

Published by San Francisco-based Cleis Press in 2008, *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals* has been marketed as the first practical book for and about gender-variant children, from birth to college.<sup>74</sup> The text aims to address the medical, developmental, legal, and educational issues encountered by transgender children and their

families. The authors, Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper, both come from backgrounds in LGBTQ studies; as a result, the text is oriented toward a “spectrum” model of gender, rather than a strict adherence to psychological categories of gender dysphoria and Gender Identity Disorder (GID) as outlined in the fourth edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM-IV.

Though transgender children and their parents may seem like a niche audience, recent media coverage of transgender and intersex issues—including legal cases, long-form articles in publications like the *New York Times Magazine* and *Salon*, appearances by trans and intersex individuals on *Oprah* and other popular television shows, interviews and stories on *NPR*, and the participation of self-identified trans contestants on reality TV—has contributed to a wider recognition of the experiences of transgender individuals.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, due to advocacy, education, and the development of new hormonal treatments, major changes have occurred in the medical and psychological frameworks used for evaluating and treating transgender and gender-variant children and adolescents.

In addition to the visibility of transgender individuals in popular media, the experiences of transgender and intersex children also occupy theorists of gender and sexuality. In “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality,” Judith Butler negotiates the concept of “the human” as it pertains to cases of unintelligible sex/gender. Echoing Foucault, she suggests that recognizable gender is one of the requirements for intelligibility as that which is human. She writes: “The very criterion by which we judge a person to be a gendered being, a criterion that posits coherent gender as a presupposition of humanness, is not only one that, justly or unjustly, governs the recognizability of the human but one that informs the ways we do or do not recognize ourselves...” (622).

Butler's primary focus is the well known John/Joan case, which supported a strong social constructivist argument both for gender-reassignment specialist Dr. John Money<sup>76</sup> and feminist analyses of gender in the 1970s. John was one member of a set of Canadian identical twin boys who, during a surgical procedure during infancy, had his penis damaged beyond repair. His parents report hearing an interview with John Money on television and then taking their child to the Johns Hopkins University Gender Disorder clinic for consultation. Based on his prior work, Money recommended that the parents raise "John" as a girl instead, and the family went forward with an initial surgery to feminize the child's genitals. Though Money reported success with the child, now known as "Joan," and used the case as primary evidence for his theory for the social construction of gender, Joan (in her teen years) began to sense that something was amiss and refused to have further treatment at the clinic. A local team of endocrinologists later helped "John" discontinue feminizing hormone treatments and transition to an adult male gender identity. Though "John," or David Reimer, was neither intersex nor transsexual or transgender in the traditional sense, his experience highlights many of the anxieties and cultural practices surrounding non-normatively gendered children—anxieties about both their bodies and behaviors.

Butler uses interviews with Reimer to try to make sense of his own complicated gender identity, and his narration of the movement from male to female and back to male. Butler is particularly interested in the way Reimer chooses to emphasize both physical qualities—thinness, broad shoulders—and behavior or personality—distaste for "girls" toys, preferring to play with other boys (630). Butler offers the suggestion that John "shows [...] that there is an understanding to be had that exceeds the norms of intelligibility itself. And he achieves this 'outside,' we might speculate, by refusing the interrogations that besiege him..." and goes on to suggest, perhaps, that there is "some core of a subject who speaks,



who speaks beyond what is sayable” (634). By the concluding paragraph, she has dialed back this argument slightly and returned to Foucault, suggesting that John is threatened by “desubjugation” by “positioning himself in relation to the norm, but he does not comply with its requirements.” John, Butler argues, occupies an ironically privileged position, not outside intelligibility; he “emerges at the limits of intelligibility, offering a perspective on the variable ways in which norms circumscribe the human.” (635) In a parallel but wry observation, disability theorist Tobin Siebers suggests: “It is easy to mythologize disability as an advantage. Disabled bodies are so unusual and bend the rules of representation to such extremes that they must *mean* something extraordinary” (*Disability Theory* 63).

Current thinking on transgender children tends to operate within one of two models: the therapeutic model or the accommodation model. Practitioners of the therapeutic model, informed by older psychiatric approaches to gender variance and disorders, advocate pathologizing and treating gender dysphoria and gender non-conformity within the context of the child’s family and social environment(s). Practitioners who follow the accommodation model tend to privilege the child’s desire to *be* another gender and work to accommodate that gender expression from a non-pathologized position, including social, hormonal and surgical intervention, when desired. Unlike many issues related to child development and sexuality, these two models cannot be reduced to a neat nature/nurture binary.

In *The Transgender Child*, Brill and Pepper attempt to find a middle ground that combines parental commitment and compassion, the involvement of therapeutic treatment when necessary, and full accommodation for those children who are strongly transgender or cross-gender identified. They also advocate that both parents and children need to take time before making any major decisions and not rush into unnecessarily labeling a gender-variant or gender-fluid child as transgender.<sup>77</sup> Part of this “taking time” is enabled in Brill and

Pepper's model by the use of "blockers"—hormone-suppressing medications that can delay puberty. The psychiatric diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder plays a relatively small role, appearing late in the text, as a footnote to the larger discussion of medical issues for trans children. Like many trans allies, Brill and Pepper see GID in Childhood diagnoses as a necessary evil for accessing treatment, but not particularly useful as diagnostic criteria. They emphasize that a GID in Childhood diagnosis can, in fact, sometimes cause feelings of shame in gender-variant children.

Discourses of transgender identity and gender identification—particularly those that are presented in materials for a general audience—frequently fail to account for self-making as a complex on-going lifetime project. These narratives present identity as a set of categories that are discovered and then refined, to remain static through the rest of an individual's lifetime. Brill and Pepper appear conflicted on this point, first writing, "[i]t is impossible to say how your child will feel in relation to their gender next week, next year, or ten years from now" (26); and: "Just as you do not know what profession they will choose when they grow up, you do not know what their gender identity or expression will be. Keep in mind that it may always remain fluid" (103). This fluidity of gender suggests a complex process mediated by many factors, including birth gender, social expectations, and cultural practices. Yet later they write:

Children are not transgender in order to rebel or to make your life harder for you. These children are brave and beautiful individuals. Their *need to be themselves* is greater than any other concern for them. Their desire to live out in the world within their *natural gender expression*, or in alignment with their gender identity, is the desire to live life *authentically*." (115, emphasis added)

Though Brill and Pepper recognize that gender can be fluid and evolve over the course of a lifetime, they seem unable to provide a full account of gender identity and expression, falling back on problematic tropes of “natural” or “authentic” gender (as opposed, one must assume, to “constructed,” “unnatural,” or “inauthentic”), emphasizing that “there is nothing anyone can do to change a child’s gender identity. It is a core part of self” (4). While this insistence on the immutability of gender identity may help parents feel less shame or responsibility for their child’s gender variance, and give them the language to explain their child’s behavior to others, ultimately we return to the conundrum of the “authentic” or “natural” gender, which is at once inborn and yet also constructed through cultural scripts and practices. This conundrum is further complicated by the interrelationship between gender and sexuality, and the ways in which sexuality and gender identity are frequently conflated in both popular and academic discourses, as well as in the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood.

Despite its problematic moments, *The Transgender Child* is written from a place of acceptance and compassion. Regardless of the problems with existing theoretical models for trans identity, the practical goal of the book is to create safe, secure spaces in which trans and gender-variant children can grow up. Clearly the welfare of actual children is more immediately critical than theoretical models of identity, making the book an important resource for its audience of parents, teachers, and medical professionals; nevertheless, it is important to remember that rethinking our larger framework for understanding gender identity may also contribute to a safer, more secure world for people of all gender identities and identifications.

## READING TRANS TEENS

Just as there has been a small surge in parenting and professional guides about trans children and teens during the past five years, so too has there been a steady uptick in fictional texts featuring trans and gender-variant children and teens. Early texts released by major publishers for a YA audience include *What Happened to Lani Garver* (2002) by Carol Plum-Ucci, *Luna: a Novel* (2004) by Julie Ann Peters, and *Parrotfish* (2007) by Ellen Wittlinger. These texts were followed by *Debbie Harry Sings in French* (2008) by Meagan Brothers, *Almost Perfect* (2009) by Brian Katcher, *I Am J* (2011) by Cris Beam, *Being Emily* (2012) by Rachel Gold, and *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* (2012) by Kirstin Cronn-Mills.<sup>78</sup> Each of these texts includes a gender-variant character, though sometimes in a secondary role; *Parrotfish* was the first YA novel from a major publisher (Simon and Schuster) to be focalized through the first-person narrative of a trans character. The sophistication with which individual authors address issues of identity and gender varies significantly across the texts, and though many of the books have been nominated for—and won—prestigious awards from LGBTQ organizations, the texts have also been the target of critiques by transpeople and their allies for over-simplification of complex issues, normalization of medical intervention on young bodies, and violence and harassment directed toward trans characters in the narratives.<sup>79</sup> Books with a cis-gendered protagonist and a trans secondary character, like *Luna* and *Almost Perfect*, have come under scrutiny for their representations of trans characters; however, the authors of these texts have cited their concerns over questions of authenticity and their desire to reach a broader audience as reasons not to focalize the narrative through the trans character.<sup>80</sup>

Young Adult novels that depict the experiences of trans teens play a multi-layered role, serving as entertainment, educational material, and bibliotherapy for several different

audiences. As most authors appear to be keenly aware of the educational and bibliotherapeutic role of their work, they often include resources for support and further research in an appendix at the end. The two books I have chosen to focus on in this section—*Parrotfish* and *Almost Perfect*—offer a glimpse of adolescent transgender experience in two different geographic and socioeconomic locations, and show the variety of options available during the transition process for an Male-to-Female (MTF) or Female-to-Male (FTM) transgender teen. The experiences and thoughts of the young trans characters in these novels help illustrate—and sometimes resolve—the contradictions that arise in Brill and Pepper’s text: the gap between one’s internal sense of authentic gender and the lived experience of having (a) gender. Grady and Sage, the trans characters in these texts, live in the space between knowing their birth gender no longer fits—if it ever did—and discovering how they can comfortably be gendered in the world.

*Parrotfish* (2007) was one of the first YA novels to feature an FTM transgender person as a main character, as well as one of the first to focalize the narrative through a trans character. By using first-person narrative that includes interior monologue as well as screenplay-style imaginary dialogue, author Ellen Wittlinger offers the reader “the illusion of a speaking subject by representing that subject to us in an unmediated way, with direct access to or the illusion of ‘eavesdropping’ on the private diary of the writer” (Gruner 8). Grady, the protagonist of *Parrotfish*, is a keenly self-aware adolescent and the text is filled with his observations about the instability and fluidity of gender and the interconnectedness of bodies and culture. Much of the conflict centers on the difficulty of communicating to others—particularly his family and childhood friends—his “new” (to them) gender identity. Grady’s task is also one of narrative re-fashioning: he must create the story of how and why “Angela” became Grady in a way that is coherent for him and for others.

When the narrative of *Parrotfish* begins, Grady has just revealed to his parents that he has decided to transition and they have not taken the news well, though Grady confesses to having felt unhappy in a female body for as long as he can remember. Wittlinger occasionally lapses into clichéd binaries in Grady's interior monologue: "inside the body of this strange, never-quite-right girl hid the soul of a typical, average, ordinary boy" (9) and "[w]ould I eventually have surgery to make my body fit my soul?" (285); however, from the beginning, she gives Grady a nuanced understanding of gender performativity and the difference between gender expression and sexuality, gleaned from Grady's own experiences and access to online information and support. In the second chapter, Wittlinger utilizes Grady's interior monologue to explain his predicament and offer readers a primer on gender expression and sexuality:

I realized it wasn't just that I became interested in girls when I hit puberty and started figuring out sex. I was a boy way before that, from the age of four or five, before I knew anything about sex. On one of the websites it said that gender identity—whether you feel like a boy or a girl—starts long before sexual identity—whether you're gay or straight. In my dreams at night, I was a boy, but every morning I woke to the big mistake again. Everyone thought I was a girl because that's the way my body looked, and it was crystal clear to me that I was expected to pretend to *be* a girl whether I liked it or not. (19)

Grady ricochets between anxiety and relief as he tries to explain to his friends and family how he feels. He must negotiate his newly-visible gender identity at school and at home, coping with friends' and classmates' confusion (and sometimes disgust) and his family's disappointment and willful misunderstanding. The book ends with a tentative sense of understanding and compassion, aided by Grady's new friends at school, and the work of his

parents and siblings to understand Grady's point of view. A brief, but unsuccessful romantic entanglement is both disappointing and reassuring, and Grady closes the narrative by looking toward the future and reflecting on the contingency of identity and identification: "Things change. People change. We spend a long time trying to figure out how to act like ourselves, and then, if we're lucky, we finally figure out that being ourselves has nothing to do with acting" (287).

In contrast to *Parrotfish*, Brian Katcher's *Almost Perfect* is focalized through the protagonist Logan, a straight male working-class student at a high school in Missouri. The narrative is moving and realistic, but not without significant flaws. The trans character, Sage, enters the narrative in the third chapter, but Sage does not reveal to Logan that she is transgender until the end of the first third of the book. Unlike Grady, who is just beginning his transition, Sage has been receiving hormone therapy for years, so it comes as quite a shock to Logan when Sage reveals that she is transgender. The scene takes place in an empty field, where, after weeks of subtle flirting, Logan and Sage finally kiss. But as soon as Logan opens his eyes, he sees that Sage has a look of "abject fright on her face" (98). Though the scene is tender and realistically fraught, Katcher is ham-fisted in his treatment of Sage's revelation, having her tell Logan, after much hesitation, "I'm a boy" (99). This dialogue, as well as Logan's interior monologue that opens the following chapter—"Sage is a guy. A boy. A MAN! I had never been so disgusted. How could I not have known?" (100, italics in original)—undermine Sage's conviction of her self-identity as female or a girl, even as the novel presents a realistic portrayal of transphobia in Logan.

Though the details of Sage's transition that are revealed later in the text—her unhappy parents, their requirement that she be homeschooled, her adoring younger sister, her years of estrogen treatment—and her comfort in the details of living as a woman all

suggest that Sage’s internal sense of gender is entirely female, the simple but dramatic statement that reveals her trans identity by reaffirming its unnaturalness—“I am a boy”—has already undermined the reader’s trust in Sage and her authentic gender. (Note how this is the opposite of Grady, who consistently repeats “I am a boy,” even when describing his past). Ultimately, however, the book is not about Sage herself; the narrative is instead invested in Logan’s transformation from a normative, mildly chauvinistic teenage boy to a caring trans ally. Sage is the catalyst for this transformation, but like gay characters in YA fiction from the 1960s and 70s, she must disappear from the narrative so that the straight protagonist can move on with his life. The content of Sage’s parting letter to Logan is also troubling, when she writes: “*Logan, I wonder if you realize how much you changed my life. Before I knew you [...] I thought I was a fraud, a fake woman, a transvestite*” (352, italics in original). Though Sage’s actions in the book suggest one thing—her conviction of her female gender identity—elements such as her letter to Logan and her “coming out” revelation undermine this strong sense of authentic gender expression. Sage’s speech regarding her gender draws a stark line between “biological” or “natural” gender and the artifice of “performed” gender and calls into question the “naturalness” or “authenticity” of Sage’s gender, and, by extension, that of all transpeople.

### **BODIES, IDENTITIES, AND NETWORKS: DEVELOPMENTAL SYSTEMS THEORY AND AGENTIAL REALISM**

In her groundbreaking work *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), Anne Fausto-Sterling offers the following analysis of the relentless circularity in discussions of sexuality:

...the truths about human sexuality created by scholars in general and by biologists in particular are one component of political, social, and moral struggles about our



cultures and economies. At the same time, components of our political, social, and moral struggles become, quite literally, embodied, incorporated into our very physiological being. My intent is to show how—through their daily lives, experiments, and medical practices—scientists create truths about sexuality; how our bodies incorporate and confirm these truths; and how these truths, sculpted by the social milieu in which biologists practice their trade, in turn refashion our cultural environment. (5)

Though Fausto-Sterling’s book focuses primarily on intersex—rather than transgender—issues and bodies, her analysis of the relations between sexuality, scholarship, culture, and biology offers a model for how to disentangle the complex web in which many elements come together to form what can appear to be a singular, sedimented *thing*, like “transgender,” or “intersex.” What she seeks—along with a number of other scholars engaged in questions of embodiment and materiality—is a mode of inquiry that takes both materiality and the pressures of social forms seriously, without falling into the trap of a nature/culture binary. For Fausto-Sterling, this means utilizing the insights of developmental systems theory and connectionist theory to take a more holistic approach to understanding development over time, and the ways biological, cultural, and environmental influences act upon individual entities.<sup>81</sup>

One assumption that permeates nearly all of the feminist and queer work on gender—including Brill and Pepper’s text, and to some degree Fausto-Sterling’s as well—is the presence of a stable agent. Certain causal chains are presented with direct one-to-one connections between biological sex, gender, and cultural practices. The so-called “linguistic turn” in feminist theory articulated gender as a discursive practice, a move that initially appears liberating, but which seems to solve the question of biology by making *everything*

discursive, or language-based. Certainly language, and language acquisition, shape thinking, but to ignore “the material” is both reductive and naïve. DST can help us see the networks in which individuals act and are acted upon, but we often imagine these networks with a static agent (or subject) at the center. While Fausto-Sterling’s work can help us see beyond the nature/nature binary, her use of developmental systems theory is primarily focused on individuals, and individual human development. Her goal is to envision the wider picture of the construction of human sexuality and its various nodes. But Fausto-Sterling is not trying to re-imagine the relation of reality and representation that underlies the problematic binaries she identifies. For this, we must turn to other theorists, particularly Karen Barad and Vicki Kirby.

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad tackles the problem of materiality head-on, reading Judith Butler’s theories of performativity through the lens of what Barad calls “agential realism.” Drawing on her background as a theoretical physicist, Barad articulates an “onto-epistemology” where the boundaries of subject and object become permeable, and theory—seeing and observing—is not separate from but the same as practice. Each element, even as it appears stable and bounded, is simply a single phenomenon in the moment that it is observed—like the particle/wave paradox of quantum mechanics. In her model, she writes: “Reality is therefore not a fixed essence. *Reality is an ongoing dynamic of intra-activity*. To assert that reality is made up of phenomena is not to invoke one of another form of idealism. On the contrary, phenomena are specific material configurations of the world” (206, emphasis in original). Through Butler, Barad posits gender as a kind of phenomenon, “not an inherent feature of individuals, some core essence that is variously expressed through acts, gestures, and enactments, but an iterated doing through which subjects come into being” (57). Parallel to the way that genetic material and heredity constitute but do not

fully determine an organism, Barad writes, “gender performativity constitutes (but does not fully determine) the gendered subject” (62).

Both Barad and Kirby offer a critique of “shared representationalist assumptions” (Barad 48), the idea that things and words (or, in Barad’s terms, “matter and meaning”<sup>82</sup>) exist as separate entities, with one preceding or mediating access to the other. This, they argue, is the problem that haunts feminist attempts to account for materiality and escape the nature/nurture binary. The solution is an ontological shift in which there *is* no “outside” the system. In *Telling Flesh*, Kirby describes a world in which writing constitutes not only human language but all reality—that it is not a form of mediation of reality, but it *is* reality.<sup>83</sup> Barad offers a similar account, though rather than coming from the direction of critical theory and social science as Kirby does, Barad draws on her training as a theoretical physicist to illuminate the problem of “things” and “words.”

There are several key terms from Barad’s text which require definition in order to be understood in the correct sense. First, Barad describes her system as one of “agential realism,” which is “a non-representationalist form of realism that is based on an ontology that does not take for granted the existence of ‘words’ and ‘things’ and an epistemology that does not subscribe to a notion of truth based on their correct correspondence” (56).<sup>84</sup> Instead, the constitutive elements of agential realism are “phenomena” and “apparatus.”<sup>85</sup> Rather than envisioning individual agents acting through self will, agential realism imagines a version of performativity that is not only a quality of the “human,” but where various human and non-human actors come together in specific spaces and times and produce knowledge in specific ways. An apparatus can be something as seemingly mundane as a microscope, or as theory-heavy as a concept like “the human” or “gender.” The phenomena/apparatus can draw borders that enact difference, but there is no privileged position “outside” the system

from which to observe objectively; the observer is always part of the system, part of the apparatus as it is constituted. Barad uses the term “onto-epistemology” to describe the position offered by agential realism as one of entanglement and becoming, where knowledge and being are inseparable. In “Posthumanist Performativity,” Barad describes the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena:

On an agential realist account, discursive practices are not human-based activities, but rather, specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted. And matter is not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency. (146)<sup>86</sup>

One of Barad’s major critiques via agential realism is of Judith Butler’s account of performativity, and her insistence on a system which privileges the human and therefore returns to the problem of representationalism.

Coming from the perspective of philosophy of science, rather than feminist theory, Susan Oyama suggests that an equally complex system is necessary for envisioning development. She, like Eve Sedgwick and others, critiques the neat (and paralyzing) dual divisions of what she terms “the nature-nurture complex.” In *The Ontogeny of Information*, Oyama writes:

What we need here, to switch metaphors in midstream, is the stake-in-the-heart move, and the heart is the notion that some influences are more equal than others, that form—or its modern agent, information, exists before the interactions in which it appears and must be transmitted to the organism either through the genes or by the environment. This supports and requires just the conceptions of dual

developmental processes that make up the nature-nurture complex. Compromises don't help because they don't alter this basic assumption. (31)

Oyama points to the foundational problematic assumption of the nature/nurture split—that something had to come first, that some influence is somehow “more equal” than other influences.

Though we can observe influences as phenomena for a moment, we cannot know how our observation influences that which we observe. Although the behavior of quantum particles suggests that temporality is not the neat splicing of past/present/future that we humans are trained to imagine ourselves moving through, models like Oyama and Barad's force us to conceive of the future as contingent and multiple, the product of collisions and intra-actions we may not be able to predict or even perceive. The same contingencies and collisions produce subjectivity and the “I” in an on-going web of intra-actions.

Yet if the constant return to the nature/nurture “complex” can be used as evidence, we have a deep desire for neat causal chains, a need to know the origin story. So we construct systems based on a single observation, where a single element is static or exists at the center, holding the relationships, the phenomena, and the intra-actions in place. The stories we tell about trans-becomings and adolescent development reflect and reinforce this desire for something like gender to be fixed and knowable.

By avoiding a foundational opposition between reality and representation, Barad's “onto-epistemology” makes room for an understanding of phenomena that also potentially escapes the trap of nature/culture or nature/nurture. This kind of model allows us to think through the concepts of “transgender child” and “transgender adolescent” as phenomena situated in time and space, and constituted through a number of complex intra-acting

apparatuses—including childhood (what does a “normal” child look like? How will this affect development?), medicine (medical knowledge, history, and practices), family influences (did the family want a child of a particular gender?), and economics (Will therapy, medication or surgery be a hardship? Do the parents feel inferior to doctors? Does the child come from a social class that particularly values gender dimorphism? Will the parents see gender deviance as a social and economic burden?)—not simply an opposition of the “body” (nature) running up against “social constructions of gender” (culture). Yet both the body and gender are part of the phenomena, and are phenomena in their own right. However, any conception of “the body” as an entity clearly has socio-cultural elements to it, particularly in the extrapolation from an individual body to “the body” as a theoretical construct (norms can only be constructed in the presence of other bodies). And it would be absurd to think about gender, even in the sense of being “socially constructed,” without the presence of gendered bodies that “do” gender in particular ways—ways that involve spoken and written discourse, as well as other kinds of overtly and implicitly communicative practices.

The production of gendered norms, like the production of subjectivity itself, is the result of a constantly shifting network of various phenomena and apparatuses through which we perceive and create the world. For instance, as more children, particularly girls, begin to engage in gender expression outside existing norms, embracing a gender fluidity that may not be at odds with their born gender, why is there suddenly a surge in biologically male transchildren who subscribe to an extremely rigid gender binary, insisting on their gender identities as girls? Perhaps in another ten or fifteen years, gender norms will have shifted, and boys will have begun to experience a broader range of culturally approved gender expression. By taking a step back to see complex processes like identity and subjectivity as produced by an infinite number of small intra-actions, we can see at once the many points at

which one can apply pressure, as well as the vast potentiality produced by the system, and the powerful possibilities that open up through narrative forms like the Young Adult novel. It is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to try to predict how this web of phenomena will inter-relate in the future; it may be beyond anything we can imagine at this moment.

Cris Beam's 2011 YA novel *I Am J* offers a useful case study for examining the intersection of gender, sexuality, censorship, and children's literature. *I Am J* follows J—born Jennifer—through his struggle to resolve his male gender identity with his female body and live as a young transman. J's "coming out" as transgendered is complicated by his working-class Puerto Rican family and their unwillingness to accept his new gender identity. J ends up staying with a friend and her mother and attending a special school for GLBTQ youth in New York City while he sorts out the emotional, physical, medical, and psychological complexities of both growing up and transitioning. Beam's narrative has been described as exploring "the intricacies of self-hatred, self-discovery, self-love, and the universal, intrinsic need for family approval, genuine love, and true acceptance"<sup>87</sup>—issues that are pertinent to many adolescents, not just those who identify as transgender. In her author bio and other writing, Beam mentions her work with GLBTQ teenagers in an academy in Los Angeles, and her transgender foster daughter. The acknowledgements and author's note at the end of *I Am J* make explicit her debt to these teens and her daughter in particular for offering her a glimpse of J's world.

Unlike many YA novels that address the crises of adolescence, *I Am J* is written in a limited omniscient third-person, rather than first-person, voice. This gives the reader access to J's thoughts and feelings, but also offers a view of J from the outside. In her "Author's Note" at the end of the novel, Beam discusses her authorial position, which is likely connected to her choice of the third-person:

Of course, it's scary to take an imaginative leap and write a character who is not you. I have known and loved several people who are *like* J, but J is not me. I'm not of trans experience, and I know what tricky territory this is, partly because there are still not enough published works by transgender authors, proclaiming their lived experience. I can only know a kind of truth by proxy. I'm blessed that my foster daughter, Christina, is transgender, and my partner is gender variant—so my immediate family and my deepest ties are trans in nature (or nurture!). (Authors Note, 3)

Beam recognizes the personal and political importance of giving voice to J, but also the politics of representation, an issue that plagues other books about trans teens written by cis-gendered authors like Katcher's *Almost Perfect*. Beam also notes that her novel comes at a time when gender norms are very much in flux:

Definitions of masculinity and femininity are expanding every day, and adolescent transboys are finding more creative ways to discover, and be, themselves. As their ranks grow, I imagine, they'll look for even more reflections of who they are and are becoming. And their teenage friends, who know them or wonder about them, need and often crave a way to understand their experience. That is why I am so excited and hopeful about *I Am J* and about the many books that others are writing about themselves and their friends right now. There are still so many kinds of transgender stories to be told and cherished—and so much room on the shelves.

Beam hopes that her text will provide an opening for more books about trans experience—ideally written by transgender individuals. It is also notable that apart from a parenthetical reference to “queer time,” nowhere does Beam mention sexuality as a driving force for the



text. Yes, J is working out his romantic attractions and need for intimacy in the text, just as nearly all adolescents do, but the emphasis is firmly on his gender identity and the ways in which that challenges gender normativity, not sexuality. If anything, J's attractions to women, like his best friend Melissa or the young painter Blue, are heartbreakingly average in their representations of adolescent fumbling with members of the opposite sex.

\* \* \*

In early 2013, the State of California updated its recommended reading list for grades K-12. The list now includes more than 7,800 books, and can be searched via an online portal. The 2013 revision was the first version to include Stonewall Award nominees and winners, and though it was not a Stonewall Award recipient, *I Am J* is now included in the list—the first and only book with a transgender protagonist to be included. The annotation for the book describes it as articulating “J’s struggles to find his place in the world and to find love and friendship where some say it cannot be found, successfully conveying the emotions and difficulties experienced by transgendered teens.”<sup>88</sup> The entry also includes the boilerplate warning that accompanies many of the books in the list that were originally written for an audience of older teens and/or adults: “This book addresses controversial issues of interest to many adolescents and includes scenes and language that reflect mature content. Before handing the text to a child, educators and parents should read the book and know the child.” Though many other recently published books from other genres and on other topics were added to the list, which had not been revised since 2008, it was *I Am J* and the 1991 play *¿De Donde?*, about the experiences of illegal immigrants in Texas, that received local and national media coverage. While LGBTQ advocacy organizations applauded the inclusion of books like *I Am J* in a list for recommended reading, conservative commentators insisted that educators were “raping the innocence of our children” and that these books enabled the

“promotion of sexual anarchy” and represented the successful attempt “to further dumb down American students and to mold their minds and not to shape them academically.”<sup>89</sup>

Though the 2013 list of frequently challenged books has not yet been released by the ALA, *I Am J* is included in the Texas American Civil Liberty Union’s annual list of banned books, which was released in September of 2013.<sup>90</sup>

Following the controversy of the inclusion of *I Am J* on California’s recommended reading list, Beam wrote a piece for the Guardian’s “Books Blog,” defending her novel against claims that it was an attempt at “social engineering.” She writes: “After *I Am J* was published [...] I received heart-wrenching emails from [...] children saying the book had saved their life; they hadn’t read about ‘someone like them’ before. These children weren’t connecting with a political movement or a symbol. They were connecting with a human being, written on a page and brought to life in their minds.” Despite their inability or unwillingness to articulate it, this is what social conservatives are in fact so afraid of: not the “dumbing down” of curriculum, but moving, realistic narratives that show children and adolescents that there are other ways of being in the world. *I Am J* offers trans adolescents a vision of what life might be like for them—with all its pleasures and pains—and it offers their friends, families, and teachers a glimpse of how it feels to be inside a trans body. Good books, however one defines them, are often joined together by what they enable: world-making and empathy. Books like *I Am J* make imaginatively possible what might have seemed impossible, and this is, perhaps, their most radical contribution. As Beam writes, “literature, at its best, doesn’t live in this world of agendas and witch hunts, as tools for any side’s political purpose. Literature and its readers are in an alternate realm, and they’ll continue to meet in this quieter place.”<sup>91</sup>

## Chapter 3

### The Diarist: Self-narrative and Adolescent Identity

*There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.*

*–Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1<sup>92</sup>*

The diary and the diarist are such common features of books for girls, past and present, as to be almost unremarkable. But their presence and persistence offer a fascinating example of the ways in which adolescent (and proto-adolescent) girls have participated in the larger cultural shift to the confessional mode and discourses of truth-telling. In this chapter I examine the emergence of the diary and diary-keeping as a disciplinary technique and self-making tool in Victorian girlhood, a cultural practice that entered American middle- and upper-class society in tandem with psychoanalysis and “the talking cure” in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this same period, diary-keeping became a key element of books for girls, which included fictional diaries published in book form and diary-keeping protagonists. In the twentieth century, these elements remained popular, with many authors of books for girls basing their own semi-autobiographical narratives in part on the journals and diaries they kept during their own girlhoods.

Beginning with Jane H. Hunter’s research into girls’ journals of the nineteenth century, I examine the journaling practices of actual girls, as well as those presented in fictional texts. Utilizing Foucault’s work on techniques of the self and confession, I examine this history in order to point to the ways that journaling is a disciplinary tool, particularly within the family, as well as an apparatus for self-definition. I briefly examine the ways in which journals are shared, including the exchange of physical journals among friends, as well as the ways girls chose (or were forced) to share journals with parents and other adults. I see

Victorian diary-keeping as crucial to understanding contemporary confessional practices—girls' blogging in particular—and the online communities that emerge as a result, as well as the persistence of diaries and journals as narrative devices in YA fiction. Though the technology is new, the techniques and narratives used by teenage girls are much older, and are highly influenced by the legacy left by their diary-keeping predecessors, both fictional and actual. To narrate one's experience via a journal, diary, or blog, is to participate in a specific discourse of the self, one that is reinforced by the protagonists of many books for girls.

In the second half of this chapter I move from examples of self-narrative in journals and diaries to a discussion of psychoanalysis, subjectivity, and self-making. Psychoanalysis has a long history of appropriation by popular culture in the U.S., and it is with this popular appropriation of psychoanalytic theory in mind that I turn to the topic of self-narrative and the role of the first-person narrative and self-making in books for girls. Though the first-person narrator did not become a stock trope of children's literature until the emergence of the problem novel and YA novel, first-person forms of writing—like letters, journals, and diaries—have long played an important role in girls' books. These first-person forms provide a glimpse, via a confessional mode, into the inner hearts and minds of the protagonists, and suggest a continuous thread connecting nineteenth century girls' books and social practices to contemporary YA novels and the world of online blogging and journaling.

Using the lens of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory, I turn to Laurie Halse Anderson's Young Adult novel *Speak* to explore the intersection of self-narrative, trauma, and sexuality. *Speak* has been a popular book in recent scholarly discussions of children's literature; its fractured temporality and illusion of access to protagonist Melinda's inner thoughts make it attractive to scholars who wish to examine questions of gender, sexuality,

and self-making in relation to theoretical frameworks developed by scholars like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.<sup>93</sup> The events narrated in *Speak*, however, coalesce around an experience of sexual trauma rather than the discovery of sexual and/or gender identity.

Discussing the presence and role of sexuality in Young Adult fiction is challenging for many reasons, not least of all because of the ongoing threat of censorship, which I outline in detail in Chapter 2. However, there is also a much larger cultural influence at work, and that is the persistent absence of a discourse on child sexuality beyond the so-called pathological.

Though several psychologists have attempted to address this gap by interviewing women and girls about their sexual experiences and memories in childhood and adolescence, there is still little in the way of a framework for discussing sexuality in children and young adolescents beyond what is offered in psychoanalytic theory—which has been almost entirely focused on infant sexuality and the mother-child dyad.<sup>94</sup> By examining *Speak* alongside psychoanalytic theory, I hope to offer some lines of flight for future discussions of adolescent sexuality, as well as the ways in which adolescent self-making is enabled by fictional narratives.

### **DIARIES, DISCIPLINE, AND THE FICTIONAL “I”: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Barbara Sicherman’s work on women’s and girls’ reading practices in the nineteenth and twentieth century synthesizes a number of important theories and models for understanding the relationship between readers and texts. In *Well-Read Lives: How Reading Shaped a Generation of American Women*, Sicherman marshals both theoretical and autobiographical evidence to argue that “[l]iterature in general and fiction in particular have been of critical importance in the construction of female identity” (2). She sees literature as the way in which women of the post-Civil War era—a period marked by extreme gender stereotyping, particularly in the middle class—were inspired to pursue a wide range of public and professional roles, despite

the limits enforced by their girlhoods. Sicherman also argues that literature has been one of the few sources for models of “nontraditional womanhood,” particularly during adolescence. While her study is primarily focused on middle-class girls and women, she also addresses the reading practices of working-class and immigrant women. Her chapter entitled “Reading *Little Women*” offers important insights into the ongoing appeal of Alcott’s text across socio-economic and even racial lines, particularly the ways in which the text encourages “narratives of female fulfillment” (16). Important to Sicherman’s analysis is how readers appropriate texts and their meanings, often in ways that differ from what the author or publisher (or parents and teachers) might have intended. She writes: “Such imaginative leaps, though constrained by historically conditioned structures of feeling and interpretive conventions, permit the reader to move beyond her everyday circumstances” (16). Readers, she suggests, are shaped by texts—and texts are also shaped by their readers.

Sicherman’s method of reading relies on the personal and autobiographical writings of women, and owes much to prior studies of women’s personal writing by scholars like Carol Smith-Rosenberg and Nancy Theriot. In *Well-Read Lives* Sicherman cites the published memoirs and letters of contemporary and historical women as well as unpublished journals, diaries, and letters of Victorian-era girls in order to determine their reading methods and relationships to specific texts. Sicherman uses diaries and journals as a source of information about reading practices; whereas Jane H. Hunter—although turning to these same materials to focus on the writing practices of these same women—suggests that though “[t]hey spent long hours at writing desks producing pages of letters, composing poetry, copying passages from literature, keeping all manner of diaries and journals,” scholars have been “less attentive to the cultural significance of girls’ *writing*” (Hunter 243, emphasis in original). The

examination of girls' journals also offers a layer of complexity to the arguments about mother-daughter dyads put forth by Smith-Rosenberg, Theriot, and others.<sup>95</sup>

In Hunter's work, the practice of diary-keeping among middle- and upper-class adolescent girls has emerged as a rich site for the historical exploration of girlhood. In her monograph *How Young Ladies Became Girls*—as well as earlier articles like “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America”—Hunter offers an outline of the rise of journaling among adolescent girls in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Hunter stresses the important role that writing played in the construction of these young women's self-identities, and in their navigation of familial and societal expectations. Both disciplinary practice and confessional, diary-keeping is an excellent example of what Foucault terms a “technique of the self.”<sup>96</sup> Girls were encouraged to keep journals and diaries for their personal edification and discipline, but these texts often also serve other purposes. Some girls were encouraged or required to share their diaries with parents and other family members. Other girls shared their diaries with friends, passing books back and forth and commenting in the margins.

The period of the mid- and late nineteenth century in which girls began to take up diary-keeping was marked by economic changes that provided them with more leisure time and additional access to higher education. It was also a period in which ideas of romantic love fostered the sense of an essential self, and what scholars term “religious moralism”—wherein good deeds and regular habits became the route to salvation—began to replace the emphasis on Calvinism (and predestination).<sup>97</sup> “Moral character,” Hunter notes, “became an everyday affair, and diaries assumed new importance as regulators and also demonstrations of sustained virtue” (245).<sup>98</sup> The emergence of diary-keeping among girls during this period “initiated a discourse about the self rather than establishing a discourse about what the self

ought to be” and “contributed to the process by which late-Victorian girls amassed fragments of experience into identity” (Hunter 243).

As Hunter illustrates, the diary-keeping girl was a stock character of children’s fiction, particularly in books and stories for girls, almost from the birth of the genre in the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the fictional first-person diary emerged during this same period. One popular diary-novel of this period, *Stepping Heavenward* by Elizabeth Payson Prentiss, first published in 1869, sold over 100,000 copies. *Stepping Heavenward* documents the struggles of Kate, a willful adolescent girl, as she attempts to learn discipline in her own life as well as a love of God through the strategy of keeping a daily journal and recording her development through resolutions designed to lead to self-improvement. Hunter suggests that *Stepping Heavenward* often served as a model or a “plan of action” for adolescent girls who read the text. According to Hunter, the expectations inherent in the practice and technique of diary-keeping became internalized: “The resolutions sprinkled throughout diaries suggest that exhortations to self-denial and service were not simply the stuff of advice manuals”—or, for that matter, fictional accounts—“but made their way into girls’ own self-expectations” (252).

The fictional first-person diary remains a popular literary device. It continues to be deployed in more or less disciplinary or didactic ways, for example in *Go Ask Alice* (1971), a supposedly “true” diary that describes a troubled teen girl’s descent into drug abuse. Chris McGee, and other scholars of children’s literature, often point to the publication of *Go Ask Alice* as the “advent” of the “diary-confessional format” in teen novels (McGee 172), but neglect to note the long history of diary-keeping and fictional diaries that stretches back to Victorian books for girls. The use of first-person narrators in Young Adult fiction sometimes eschews the device of the diary, but offers the same illusion of unmediated access



to an individual's inner thoughts and feelings—the heart of the “self.” This, of course, is highly ironic. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the very criteria by which Young Adult novels are judged tend to privilege “authentic voice” and “realism,” which is ironic, given that the vast majority of these novels are written by adults who artfully attempt to replicate a realistic teen voice.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, fiction of all kinds requires a form of empathy in which authors enter into the minds of characters who are unlike themselves, so it is not clear that the line between adult (author) and child (character) is as sharply defined as these critiques might like to suggest.

Diaries and journals form an important explicit or implicit part of many fictional texts for girls; often the protagonist will keep a diary or journal of her own, or—in the case of first-person narrators—all or part of the narration will read as though it were a journal entry. The diary or journal has often been a key feature of fiction written for adolescent girls, serving as a tool to provide access to the inner thoughts and feelings of an individual character. Even authors who use postmodern conventions (multiple narrators, pastiche, fractured narratives—for example, Sara Ryan's *Empress of the World*)—rely on the journal as a key narrative device in their YA novels.

In “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America,” published in 1992 and before the advent of the World Wide Web, Hunter observes that in the popular culture of the early 90s, “diaries are almost exclusively the domain of the preadolescent girl—often merchandised in pastel colors with lock and key already affixed” (263). Hunter suggests that the absence of parental mandate or surveillance has diminished the appeal of the girlhood diary. Yet the journal is now everywhere: journaling has become a common pedagogical technique in primary and secondary schools, as students are asked to reflect on the visual and textual materials they encounter in the

classroom. For many girls—like Melinda in *Speak*—personal journals continue to play a therapeutic role as these girls negotiate the complexities and traumas (large and small) of adolescent self-making.

The personal journals of adolescent girls now take both paper and electronic form, some with an audience of friends, parents, and others, just as the diaries of Victorian girls circulated within and outside the space of the family. Little did Hunter know that the explosion of websites like LiveJournal and Blogger in the late 1990s and early 2000s would offer even more (and more public) ways to share confessional writing. These sites, which were followed in short order by the omnipresence of social networking, have (re)introduced the disciplinary practices and techniques of diary-keeping to a new generation of girls: girls who are self-consciously performing the enactment of the self for an audience of self and others. Yet the cat-and-mouse game of surveillance by parents and others continues, as does the repeated exhortation to be more disciplined: to write better, more often, more honestly—as though by offering a more thorough account, one could capture more completely the inner workings of the self and communicate that self to others. In between the Victorian girls (and fictional texts) upon whom Hunter bases her study, and the contemporary bloggers and diarist of young adult fiction, journals have remained an integral part of the plot as well as the writing process for realist and semi-autobiographical novels for girls. Maud Hart Lovelace’s *Betsy-Tacy* series offers a potent example of this phenomenon.

Like other authors of classic book series for girls—including Louisa May Alcott and *Little Women*, Laura Ingalls Wilder and the *Little House* books, and Sydney Taylor and *All-of-a-Kind Family*—Maud Hart Lovelace borrowed the characters, settings, and events depicted in the *Betsy-Tacy* series from her own life, drawing on friends and family members to populate the world of “Deep Valley,” her thinly veiled depiction of Mankato, Minnesota. By the early

1930s, Lovelace had written several historical novels for adult readers, along with a steady stream of stories and articles. However, it was not until the birth of her daughter, Merian, in 1931, that Lovelace began to consider writing for child readers. According to Lovelace's own account of the genesis of the *Betsy-Tacy* books, she began telling Merian stories of her own childhood at the turn of the century, and Merian was so transfixed by the stories that Lovelace decided to write them down.<sup>100</sup> The lore among "Maudies"—the nickname given to fans of Maud Hart Lovelace, particularly those belonging to the Maud-L listserv—has long been that the novels came directly from Lovelace's bedtime stories for her daughter. Though Lovelace herself often emphasized the kernel of truth at the heart of her stories, this autobiographical angle often obscures the craft of Lovelace's work. It was difficult, however, to make any strong claims about Lovelace's writing process for many years because her papers were inaccessible to scholars. In a number of letters, beginning in the 1960s, Lovelace insisted that her papers would be deposited in the Kerlan Library at the University of Minnesota, though she noted that Merian was very attached to materials related to the *Betsy-Tacy* series and was not yet ready to give them up. These materials remained with Merian until her death in 1997, and were then passed to a literary executor, finally making their way to the Kerlan Collection of the University of Minnesota Andersen Library and the Minnesota Historical Society in 2011 and 2012.

A quick browse through Lovelace's papers reveals several important details about her writing process. First, as was the practice of many authors, Lovelace rarely saved drafts of her work, except to use the reverse side for note-taking or subsequent drafts. The few extant drafts were either specifically promised to friends (for example, a partial draft of "Betsy In Spite of Herself" was donated to the Betsy-Tacy society in Mankato by Rosemond and Romie Lundquist, to whom the book was dedicated) or are from Lovelace's later works,

like *The Valentine Box*, which went through several rounds of changes between its initial appearance in *Jack and Jill* magazine and its publication by Thomas Crowell. Browsing through the 40-plus folders of notes in the Kerlan Collection illustrates both this process of over-writing drafts (for example, early drafts and character sketches for *Betsy's Wedding* can be found written on the back of numbered pages from *Betsy and the Great World*, which have been crossed out with pencil) as well as the extremely detailed research and character sketches that Lovelace completed for each book.

A reading of her letters and notes clearly shows that Lovelace drew on her own childhood and high school journals, and those of her sister Kathleen, in order to capture key details as well as the voice of her protagonist, Betsy, who ages from five and twenty-five in the course of the series. The novels also periodically include snippets of text and observations that Lovelace quoted directly from her own journals. In the novels, Betsy's journal-keeping is seen as a tangible example of her commitment to writing and her vocation as a writer. It is also where she records her struggles to improve herself—not only as a writer, but also in her relationships with friends and family, and in her studies.

Though having direct access to Lovelace's diaries would have been extraordinarily exciting to fans of the books—offering the illusion of unmediated access to the “real” Betsy—the draft of a letter to her step-cousin Marjorie Austin Freeman in 1966 indicates that Lovelace destroyed the diaries, preserving only a few snippets of the originals:

I am enclosing the best I can give you from the diaries. The notes I made [redacted] before destroying them were not helpful, because very few entries were copied exactly. They were just resumes for my own use. The enclosed, however, is an exact copy of a page torn out of my Sophomore Year Diary.<sup>101</sup>

The copied diary page is included with the letter in Lovelace's papers, and reads as follows:

Just a few lines to open the record of my sophomore year.

Isn't it a little mysterious to begin a new journal, like this? I can run my fingers thru the fresh, clean, pages, which I am going to write upon. But I cannot tell what the writing will be! It is almost as if I were ushered into the winding hall of fate, but next year's destiny was just hidden behind a turning and I could not reach it until the day was over. This is a very stupid simile, but who cares?

It is a year since I began my "Comedy of Errors", but a great deal of happiness has been crammed into it. However, I am not going to review what is past, but I'm going to turn over a new leaf, both mentally and physically.<sup>102</sup>

The first chapter of *Betsy in Spite of Herself*—"The Winding Hall of Fate"—opens with the first half of this entry, omitting the commentary about Lovelace's "stupid simile," as well as the second paragraph.<sup>103</sup> In her letter to Freeman, Lovelace comments on her reference to Shakespeare, and its absence from the journal entry that appears in *Betsy in Spite of Herself* and was inspired by this entry, and the other three *Betsy-Tacy* books set during Betsy's high school years:

I should explain the reference to "The Comedy of Errors" in paragraph two. That was the title I had borrowed from William S for my Freshman Year book. The Sophomore book from which I copied the page I am sending was called "Much Ado About Nothing" and the [redacted] last two were called "As You Like It" and "All's Well that Ends Well." I [redacted] do not believe I made any [redacted] reference to these titles in the BT books, because I felt sure the idea was not original to me.<sup>104</sup>

Instead, *Betsy in Spite of Herself* opens with three lines from *Hamlet* (beginning with “[t]his above all: to thine own self be true”), and returns to this quotation periodically in the course of the narrative of Betsy’s sophomore year. In the novel, Betsy follows her reflection on “the winding hall of fate” with a statement about her ambition to be an author, a theme that runs through the entire *Betsy-Tacy* series. In the novels, Betsy’s journals are seen as both the place in which she must improve her craft as a writer, and also evidence of her aptitude and suitedness to her chosen vocation as a writer. Her discipline (or lack thereof) plays a role in each of the high school books, and often Betsy’s absence from her journal-keeping practice is seen as a betrayal or forgetting of her true self, one that can only be remedied by a return to disciplined writing.<sup>105</sup>

A post-script to Lovelace’s letter to Freeman with the sophomore journal excerpt also provides additional evidence to suggest the intentional ways in which Lovelace edited and shaped her personal journals, omitting those parts that she deemed ridiculous or unimportant to the narratives of the *Betsy-Tacy* books.

Two of the very few entries I copied word for word out of the diaries were amusing and you might like to hear them, although they are no good for your purpose, I feel sure. One was “Muv [Mother?], Kathleen and I sat around all evebing [evening] eating ice cream and discussing leprosy.” Another referred to Bob Hughes, who became the character Dave Hunt in the books. “Dance coming up! A bid from Bob Hughes. Glory Be! He is tall and cute!” (As I remember there was another entry a few days later that everyone was warning me he never talked.)]”.<sup>106</sup>

Though Betsy's invitation from the strong-but-silent "Dave Hunt" (and their subsequent dating life) is part of the plot of *Betsy was a Junior*, alas the "very amusing" conversation about leprosy isn't included in any of the novels.

Betsy's sister "Julia" doesn't keep a journal in the *Betsy-Tacy* books—or at least this detail is not a major element of Lovelace's description of Julia or her story arc—but Lovelace's papers suggest that Julia's real-life counterpart Kathleen Hart did indeed keep an extensive journal, and one that reflects the Victorian injunction that girls use their journals and diaries as a site of self-improvement. Included in one of the folders of notes in the Lovelace papers is a seven-page transcription of diary entries, dated between December 21, 1908, and January 2, 1909, which would have been Maud's (and Betsy's) junior year of high school.<sup>107</sup> A note on the first page in Lovelace's hand reads "put in h.s. stories," but it only becomes clear after a reference to "Maude"<sup>108</sup> in the second entry from Christmas Day that these are Kathleen's diary entries, and not Maud's. Lovelace has also crossed out many of the names and hand-written others from the *Betsy-Tacy* series. The typed entries detail the Christmas and New Years festivities of the Hart household, as well as Kathleen's New Years resolutions and reflections on her faith and perceived failings. The journal entry from Christmas day includes her descriptions of parties and celebrations, but in it she also takes time to reflect on the sermon from that day's church service, which, she notes, "really did me more practical good than any sermon I have ever heard."<sup>109</sup> In the entry from January 1, 1909, Kathleen writes:

Well, New Year's day is gone, & not a solitary resolution have I made, excepting the one that I make every morning, namely, to try & remember the little things. It seems strange that as many times as I have made that resolution I never seem to be able to keep it. If I could just live simply and unselfishly, making my

presence necessary to my little world - just for one day! But every night I realize that I have failed, that I have said something unkind about some one, or have not done the little kindnesses that I might have. "I have left undone those things that I ought to have done, and done those things that I ought not to have done, and there is not health in me." Ah, Lord, how true that is! I am bitterly disappointed at what I have done this year. I pray that I may do better each day of this New Year; be kinder and more loving to God and my fellow creatures.<sup>110</sup>

Here, Kathleen's diary reinforces Hunt's claim that "[t]he resolutions sprinkled throughout diaries suggest that exhortations to self-denial and service were not simply the stuff of advice manuals, but made their way into girls' own self-expectations" (252). Though it may sound harsh to our ears, Kathleen's insistence on self-improvement and moral character is commonplace for girls' diaries of the period. Her emphasis on good deeds and mindfulness is also reflective of the religious conversion that took place in the lives of Kathleen and Maud Hart—and which plays an important role in the plot of the *Betsy-Tacy* books set during Betsy's high school years.

When Betsy and Julia decide to leave their family's Baptist church to be baptized in the Episcopal Church, it is something of a crisis in the family, and requires serious conversations between the girls and their parents before a decision is reached. The movement can be read as reflective as the late-Victorian move to a "softer Christianity" (Brown 19), and reflects what Jane H. Hunter describes as a shift in self-narrative during this period: "the characteristic narrative of the self changed from the conversion narrative to a daily diary that documented a route to salvation through good deeds and regular habits" (243). In *Heaven to Betsy*, Betsy reflects on the deep satisfaction she receives through regular prayer: "When she prayed alone like that, it seemed to her that she could hardly bear the



painful sweetness of life” (186). Yet apart from the seriousness of their decision to join the Episcopal Church, Betsy and Julia (and Maud and Kathleen) appear to have had few conflicts in their family life; Kathleen’s journal excerpt includes her conversation with Maud on Christmas day where they agree that their “childhood had been happier than [that of] just about any other children on earth.”<sup>111</sup>

The situation of the Hart/Ray home, where daughters were encouraged to follow their dreams of personal and professional autonomy and success, is not necessarily typical for families of the period. For many girls, personal aspirations had to be checked in the face of parental expectations, and their journals and diaries became a safe space in which to work out dreams and desires, as well as to vent frustrations. Hunter contrasts Victorian girls’ diaries to those of adults, noting that “girls’ diaries did not permit uninhibited freedom, but instead remained ‘working papers’ filled with tension and controversy” (244). These diaries and journals also served as something of a safety valve for girls’ rebellion and anger. Hunter writes: “Girls’ diaries offered them a compromise—a way to release and contain rebellious impulses, however circumscribed, without breaking with families” (249). This compromise worked in a number of ways. The diaries could serve “as surrogate battlefields upon which girls struggled to blend family expectation with personal impulse,” or “as parental talismans—and as security blankets—in girls’ developing relations with peers.” They also became a site where girls could “compartmentalize desire” and “forestall conflict” and provided spaces of “imaginative freedom” while still “preserving the network of affiliations at the center of their lives” (Hunter 249).

In placing nineteenth-century practices of journaling and diary-keeping in their larger historical context, Hunter describes the “moderating” effect of diaries: “Certainly keeping a diary that recorded successes and failures on the road to virtue was an additional incentive to

be good” (254). Kathleen Hart’s diary, particularly the excerpts from New Year’s Day that I include above, offers an excellent example of this kind of record of “successes and failures on the road to virtue.” Hunter also suggests that “an always-listening, never-judging diary was something of a tonic” (249). From this “tonic” effect, Hunter moves to a more provocative claim about the relationship between Victorian girls’ journaling practices and psychoanalysis:

Girls who talked enough about their efforts to be good availed themselves of a simplified version of the “talking cure,” which would soon be used by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer with middle-class Viennese girls. (The disproportionate number of adolescent or late-adolescent females in Freud and Breuer’s early work, and indeed the role of hysteria in their formulation of psychoanalysis, corroborates that special salience of language therapy for Victorian girls.) (Hunter 254)

As I describe in the second half of this chapter, both the diary and psychoanalysis continue to haunt fictional accounts of girls’ adolescent self-making and response to trauma. That these two elements often appear together is perhaps much more than happenstance, and suggests the importance of psychoanalysis—and its circulation in popular discourse—for understanding the stories and strategies that fill the self-narratives of actual and fictional adolescent girls.

## PSYCHOANALYSIS: UNTANGLING SEXUALITY, TRAUMA, AND SUBJECTIVITY

*My throat squeezes shut, as if two hands of black fingernails are clamped on my windpipe. I have worked so hard to forget every second of that stupid party, and here I am in the middle of a hostile crowd that hates me for what I had to do. I can't tell them what really happened. I can't even look at that part myself. An animal noise rustles in my stomach.*

—“Melinda,” *Speak*<sup>112</sup>

In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry suggests that “[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (4).

Laurie Halse Anderson’s noteworthy Young Adult novel *Speak* (1999) explores this unspeakability<sup>113</sup> of both physical and psychological pain and the resulting destabilization of subjectivity through her 13-/14-year-old protagonist Melinda. The novel focuses not only on Melinda’s experience of sexual assault, but also on the effects of her inability to communicate her experience—to herself *or* to others—and the impossibility of knowable causality. Using Melinda as a case study, in this section I explore the role of narrative/confession—inside and outside the clinical setting—in subjectivity and self-making, as well as arguments for the production of subjectivity through sexuality. I am particularly interested in the ways in which Freudian and Ferenczian versions of the seduction theory continue to lurk in psychoanalytic accounts of sexuality, sexual trauma, and subjectivity, and the affective power of fiction to illustrate the struggle of adolescent self-making.

Though psychoanalysis has fallen out of favor as a therapeutic tool—patients and insurers seem to prefer the shorter, targeted forms of intervention like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)—psychoanalytic theory remains a robust framework at the base of theories of attachment, child development, and interpersonal relations. Psychoanalytic theories also inform a great deal of popular psychology, and concepts drawn from Freud and

psychoanalysis like the Oedipus Complex and female hysteria retain cultural currency, appearing in films, novels, and popular publications. In addition, psychoanalysis and children's literature have a complex and ongoing relationship. As Michelle Massé notes in "Constructing the Psychoanalytic Child," the two emerge at the same time, into an "industrial world in need of docile subjects" (149). As I discuss in Chapter 1, the economic and political changes of the nineteenth century led to a lengthening of childhood. Massé suggests that "[a]s the span that constitutes 'childhood' lengthens and the roles possible within that span multiply, the stories we tell ourselves about children through history, psychoanalysis, and literature multiply as well" (149).<sup>114</sup>

Though this chapter is not attempting to offer a popular history of psychoanalysis, I would like also to point to the ongoing fascination of American culture, and Hollywood in particular, with psychoanalytic explanations for personality and behavior. Massé writes of the early history of psychoanalysis in the United States:

After Freud's visit to the United States [to Clark University] in 1909, psychoanalysis became all the rage. [...] psychoanalysis also became a sort of parlor game, as people eagerly identified "slips," "complexes," or nodded knowingly when a behavior was announced to be "Freudian." By 1930, even the conservative *Ladies Home Journal* was willing to pay for an advice column by the psychoanalyst Karl Menninger, in which he responded to readers' inquiries about child rearing, among other things. (151)

I was surprised and amused to catch a recent showing of the 1938 Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers film *Carefree*, in which Astaire plays a psychiatrist who uses psychoanalytic methods to treat marriage-phobic Rogers. The film includes an early scene where Astaire explains the basics of psychoanalytic theory to a doubtful Rogers, and the screwball antics that follow,

including a hypnotized Rogers and a wedding gone awry, owe much to Astaire's character's psychoanalytic methods. *Carefree* is just one example of the long history of popular appropriations of psychoanalysis. A recent film like David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method* (2011)—which focuses on the complicated relationships between Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Sabina Spielrein, a patient and pupil of Jung's who went on to become one of the first female psychoanalysts<sup>115</sup>—suggests that this popular appropriation of and fascination with psychoanalysis continues today.

*A Dangerous Method* also features a brief appearance by Sandor Ferenczi, one of the early theorists of psychoanalysis and a close associate of Freud. Ferenczi was known for taking on difficult patients, and his active interventions put him at odds with Freud, who favored a more reserved, passive role for the analyst. Though Ferenczi has all but disappeared from most popular accounts of psychoanalytic history, his quarrel with Freud over child sexual abuse and trauma, and his essay on “the confusion of tongues,” offer important interventions into discussions of child sexuality and sexual development. In the next section, I bring forth Ferenczi's work on trauma and sexuality to examine the questions of self-making and subjectivity at the heart of Laurie Halse Anderson's novel *Speak*.

*Speak* is useful for examining issues of child and adolescent development and sexuality for several reasons. First, though Melinda does not undergo a clinical intervention,<sup>116</sup> the text lends itself to post-Freudian psychoanalytic readings with its emphasis on trauma and shame, as well as its recursive narrative style. Second, the book is both critically acclaimed—it was a National Book Award Finalist and a Printz Honor Book<sup>117</sup>—and remains popular with its intended audience of teenage readers, suggesting it captures something affectively resonant about adolescent experience. The tenth anniversary edition of *Speak*, published in 2009, contains additional materials from the author.<sup>118</sup> In

several places, Anderson notes the novel's success, and the intensity with which her readers respond to the book. Even as an adult reader, I found the text profoundly moving.

Melinda, thrust into the role of outcast observer, renders her world with an unflinching, darkly comic voice. Anderson balances the wry sarcasm of Melinda's observations with momentary breaches of intense emotion, using the text to perform Melinda's attempts to hold herself together. The text proceeds in a roughly chronological narrative, through the nine months from the first day of Melinda's freshman year until the last. Melinda's memories frequently appear in flashback form, though not simply as background material for the reader—Anderson integrates these memories as though they were triggered by Melinda's daily experiences. When the book opens, Melinda finds herself ostracized by her high school classmates as the result of calling the police at a summer party. We only know that her friends have turned against her, and that high school is proving to be a kind of elaborate hazing ritual. Melinda frequently notes how the words and actions of the adults in her life are often at odds.<sup>119</sup> It becomes clear through the course of the text that Melinda suffered some kind of sexual assault at the party—later revealed as a rape—an experience which has intensified as a result of social rejection, thus becoming a trauma in the psychoanalytic sense.<sup>120</sup> She attempts to negotiate the general anxieties and confusion of adolescence while also recovering from this specific traumatic experience.

Psychoanalysis, as a theory and a practice, is invested in the creation, interpretation, and reinterpretation of narrative. Psychoanalytic accounts of childhood development and sexuality circulate, and still hold extraordinary currency in contemporary American culture. As Michelle Massé suggests in “Constructing the Psychoanalytic Child”:

We are all Freudians now: the “psychoanalytic” in “psychoanalytic child” almost seems a redundancy, so thoroughly have its concepts been naturalized. The

constructed child is the cornerstone of psychoanalysis's foundation, the child who will figure in thousands of subsequent case histories and novels. The assumptions of analysis in turn become the authorization for a host of social, legal, and educational measures that shape children individually and collectively. (162)

Psychoanalytic accounts of the emergence of subjectivity—whether from a classically Freudian, object relations, or other standpoint—frequently cite the infant's ability to understand interrelatedness with the primary caretaker, and to recognize that the caretaker will leave and return, as the first step in self-making. But subjectivity is not simply the emergence of the self and a single point in a child's life; subjectivity is the on-going production of the self over the course of the lifetime, and many developmental stages as well as life experiences contribute to the creation and re-creation of the self. For Freud, sexuality is of foundational importance in the negotiation of subjectivity. Ferenczi too cites sexuality, and in particular its relation to trauma, as a catalyst for subjectivity.<sup>121</sup> Though child sexuality largely drops out of psychoanalytic theory post-Klein, and is remarkably absent from work on attachment theory, scholars currently working in the psychoanalytic field, like Peter Fonagy and Steven Angelides, have urged a return to the consideration of child sexuality.<sup>122</sup>

Yet even the term “child sexuality” is problematic. As Angelides argues in “Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality,” a number of disparate elements came together in the mid- to late twentieth century to produce a discourse of child *a*sexuality. As a result, children, due to positions of developmental incapacity and/or immaturity, are deemed unable to have or exercise sexual agency. While the sexual abuse of children is a very real and problematic issue, the division of individuals into strict binaries of child/adult, asexual/sexual, victim/perpetrator is equally problematic. Even the introduction of the term “adolescent” into the discourse obfuscates as much as it clarifies. Adolescents

are treated as either children or adults, depending on the situation, and sexuality remains directly tied to age and temporality, suggesting that there is an “appropriate” developmental timeline for sexuality—generally one that begins at the end of puberty and is not fully realized until legal adulthood.<sup>123</sup> Discourses of “appropriate sexuality” also appear in such disparate realms as media ratings, statutory rape law, and access to contraceptives and sexual health services for minors.

Prohibitions on adolescent sexuality—which rely on the strict binaries of child/adult, victim/perpetrator, generally with a gendered bias of female/male—erase the complexity of individual experience. This model reduces sexuality to a single point, located somewhere on a presumptively middle-class developmental timeline near the eighteenth birthday and high school graduation, and collapses the broad range of experiences, affects, and physical and psychological sensations that constitute “sexuality” into a small range of “sex acts.” Though a significant portion of adolescent girls delay sexual intercourse until their senior year of high school,<sup>124</sup> both qualitative and quantitative research suggest that—for many girls—sexuality, and sexual intercourse in particular, begin much earlier, even prior to the onset of puberty.<sup>125</sup>

*Speak* is structured by events and descriptions that illustrate many of these problematic assumptions about child and adolescent sexuality, as well as the definitional problems of terms like “child,” “adolescent,” and “adult.” Melinda frequently shuttles between memories of herself at age 8 or 10, and memories from her age in the novel (13 to 14 years old, though she sometimes refers to herself as a child), placing her on the cusp of childhood and adolescence and/or adulthood. She struggles with a sense of what kind of sexuality she can be comfortable with—a process that is complicated by (but not caused by) her sexual assault.<sup>126</sup> Even calling her experience “rape” is a negotiation. In Melinda’s retelling, she initially enjoys the attention from Andy, feeling pleased and proud to have been



chosen by an older boy. This initial pleasure increases her shame—and her fear of complicity—in regard to the rape that follows.

The details of Melinda’s sexual assault remain unspoken through much of the text. One of the turning points in the text occurs when Melinda goes shopping for new jeans because she has outgrown her old ones. She stares at herself in the mirror, seemingly unable to recognize herself—an image that repeats throughout the narrative<sup>127</sup>—and her thoughts turn to a story she heard about a burn victim. She thinks, “I feel like my skin has been burned off... I just need to hang on long enough for my new skin to graft. Mr. Freeman thinks I need to find my feelings. How can I not find them? They are chewing me alive like an infestation of thoughts, shame, mistakes” (125). This experience in the dressing room signals a change in Melinda: she is finally willing to consider her emotions rather than ignore them or will them away.

Shortly thereafter—more than halfway through the school year—Melinda finally relates the story of her traumatic experience at the party. The memory surfaces in the context of a bout of insomnia, during which she goes out onto her porch to stare at the moon; here, memories of the summer night, the party, the beer, the attention from a popular senior boy, and of how he pulled her into the shadows and began kissing her come flooding back. This passage marks the first time that Melinda can “look at [this] part [herself],”<sup>128</sup> the first time she can narrate her experience. Melinda’s wry first-person voice alternates between blunt declarative statements, her internal monologue, and an out-of-body view of the situation as it unfolds.<sup>129</sup>

In my head my voice is clear as a bell: “NO I DON’T WANT TO!” But I can’t spit it out. I’m trying to remember how we got on the ground and where the moon went and wham! shirt up, shorts down, and the ground smells wet and dark and NO! I’m

not really here, I'm definitely back at Rachel's, crimping my hair and gluing on fake nails, and he smells like beer and mean and he hurts me hurts me hurts me and gets up  
and zips his jeans  
and smiles. (135-6)

Though Melinda is willing to concede a feeling of woundedness, it takes time for her to consider that what she experienced could be called rape.<sup>130</sup> This plays out in a scene when she stays home from school and spends the afternoon watching talk shows, then imagines her story in that context:

If my life were a TV show, what would it be? If it were an After-School Special, I would speak in front of an auditorium of my peers on How Not to Lose Your Virginity. Or, Why Seniors Should Be Locked Up. Or, My Summer Vacation: A Drunken Party, Lies, Rape.

Was I raped? (164)

Ultimately, Melinda comes to the conclusion that she was raped, and admitting this helps her manage some of the shame surrounding the experience. In the final scene, she reframes her own narrative, affirming,

IT happened. There is no avoiding it, no forgetting. No running away, or flying, or burying, or hiding. Andy Evans raped me in August when I was drunk and too young to know what was happening. It wasn't my fault. He hurt me. It wasn't my fault. And I'm not going to let it kill me. I can grow. (198)

The dialogue that follows, with her art teacher, Mr. Freeman, suggests that Melinda is now, finally, ready to speak. Notably, her "recovery" is not the result of a single intervention, but a slow process that involves reconfiguring her sense of self.<sup>131</sup> This reconfiguration—one

which Melinda intuits as necessarily partial and contingent—occurs through the telling and retelling of the past, through the creation of a self-narrative that she can—literally—live with.

### **MAKING SENSE OF “CHILD SEXUALITY”**

In the 2004 article “Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality,” Steven Angelides examines the discourse of what he terms “child sexual abuse feminism”—the “rediscovery” of child sexual abuse by feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, and the subsequent—and problematic—erasure of child sexuality. Angelides argues:

This placing of child sexuality under erasure has had deleterious consequences at both the level of everyday practice and at the level of theory. First, the desexualization of childhood has damaging psychological and psychotherapeutic consequences for child victims of sexual abuse. Second, with “child sexuality” figured only as an oxymoron in the feminist discourse of child sexual abuse, its erasure ensures that the categories of “child” and “adult” are kept distinct and at a safe epistemological distance. (142)

Of particular importance are “failed feminist attempts to hierarchize sexuality by way of a linear and sequential logic of age stratification” (142). In making this argument, Angelides provides a reparative reading of Freud’s interpretation and re-interpretation of the seduction theory, arguing that Freud did not so much abandon his seduction theory as modify it to reflect the fact that—despite the prevalence of incest and sexual experiences in childhood—these experiences did not necessarily lead to pathological symptoms. Angelides suggests that feminist readings frequently accuse Freud of concealing abuse, when in fact his turn away

from the seduction theory was the result of his understanding of the ubiquity of sexual abuse. Angelides writes:

Freud repudiated not the seduction theory as a whole but the part of the theory that had assumed that hysteria was universally caused by actual sexual abuse. His reasoning was not that abuse was rare but, on the contrary, that so many children were sexually abused without becoming hysterics that abusive encounters themselves had no etiological significance. (156)

This reasoning on the part of Freud leads to the primacy of *nachträglichkeit*<sup>132</sup>—“afterwardness” or belated understanding—in his conception of neurosis, the role of fantasy in the reinterpretation of events. Summarizing Freud, Angelides suggests, “it is not enough to identify an act of sexual assault or seduction as the pathogenic cause, because it is the retroactive reinterpretation of this event in the context of later events that yields the clue to neurotic symptomatology” (157). For Angelides, as for Freud, trauma is a dynamic process of retelling events, never a single static event.

But what about those individuals for whom Freud’s model—of *nachträglichkeit* and the Oedipus complex—does not work? Ferenczi’s so-called “return to the seduction theory” offers another model for understanding trauma, sexuality, and subjectivity.<sup>133</sup> As Philippe van Haute and Tomas Geyskens argue in *Confusion of Tongues*, their study of sexuality in Freud, Ferenczi, and Laplanche, Ferenczi’s return to the seduction theory suggests broad implications for the necessity (or lack thereof) of *nachträglichkeit* in the formation of neurotic and psychotic symptoms. Through his rejection (or perhaps revision) of the Oedipus complex, as well as his experiments with thought transference and mutual analysis, Ferenczi questions Freud’s conceptions of normative development, and creates a model where trauma

of all kinds—and not only the trauma of sexuality—shapes the experience of the child, a model where trauma is constitutive of the human experience.

Ferenczi's "return" to the seduction theory problematized a number of psychoanalytic tenets. First, Ferenczi's insistence on the value of "the real"—of lived experience—stands in marked contrast to Freud's emphasis on the primacy of fantasy. Ferenczi carefully points out that his re-embracing the seduction theory is the direct result of his experience with patients in analysis. He writes, "Even children of very respectable, sincerely puritanical families, fall victim to real violence or rape much more often than one had dared to suppose. The immediate explanation—that these are only sexual fantasies of the child, a kind of hysterical lying—is unfortunately made invalid by the number of such confessions, e.g. of assaults upon children, committed by patients actually in analysis" (161). In their moves back to and away from the seduction theory, both Freud and Ferenczi rely on clinical data—the experiences of their patients—to validate their theories. Yet they come to very different conclusions.<sup>134</sup>

Whereas the Freudian model of the Oedipus complex and infant sexuality suggests a specific series of stages and steps in the realm of fantasy, through which one must pass in order to reach adult sexuality (and any misstep could lead to pathology), Ferenczi's model, via the return to the seduction theory, suggests that temporality collapses for those children who experience sexual abuse. The possibility of separation between fantasy and "the real" becomes of the utmost importance.<sup>135</sup> The theory Ferenczi puts forward in "The Confusion of Tongues" is the result of the intense mutuality of his analysis techniques, but in fact argues against the possibility of true mutuality—that is, reciprocity—between adults and children. Children, he argues, are tangled in complex, interdependent relationships with adults, in a kind of "oppressive love" (164) and can be the targets of adult sexual desire, but

cannot reciprocate in the same terms.<sup>136</sup> This is not to suggest that children are without sexual fantasies, only that these fantasies are normally a “child’s game.” Van Haute and Geyskens write:

The erotic oedipal phantasies of the child are “realized” by the adult...The source of the confusion of tongues between the language of passion and the language of tenderness lies at precisely this “realization” of the child’s wishes. What should have remained a game and imagination becomes deadly serious. (94)

Rather than reject the fantasy component of the Oedipus complex, Ferenczi suggests that the trauma of sexual abuse results when adults misinterpret the child’s tenderness—potentially as the result of a fantasy of adult sexuality—and treat the child as a fully-formed sexual being.

But does the Ferenczian model also do an injustice to (or even erase) the sexuality of the child or adolescent? Angelides critiques models of child sexuality that diminish the child’s sexual experiences as merely play or experimentation, suggesting that these models only serve to reinforce the strong binary of child/adult. In the book *The Secret Lives of Girls*, Sharon Lamb relates stories of sexual experiences and fantasies as told to her by both girls and adult women, suggesting that early experiences with sexuality (and aggression) are a necessary part of girlhood, one that is frequently unacknowledged—or punished or pathologized—by parents, educators, and other adults who work with girls. She is concerned about the construction of categories like “oversexualized” and “normal sexuality” and the damage these terms can do to girls and young women through self- and other-assigned feelings of guilt, shame, and abnormality. In particular, she sees a link between shame and later exploitative—or simply unpleasant—sexual experiences.

Though Lamb's prior work focused on child victims of sexual abuse—which could make her part of the “child sexual abuse feminists”—she is frequently in agreement with Angelides. She argues that “adults need to let girls explore the range of human potential even when it means letting them play sexually... [t]his is practice, this is experimentation, and it is also ‘real sex’—real to the children who play it” (135). As a way to mitigate this split between play/real and child/adult, Angelides argues for an approach to child sexuality that includes an interrogation of the age stratification inherent in normative models of child/adolescent/adult development.<sup>137</sup>

One must also keep in mind the larger network of relations out of which sexual assault/abuse/experience arises. Examinations of sexual assault frequently focus on one person, and this person's role as “victim” or “perpetrator,” and fail to account for the relation between the individuals involved—often a deeply affective mutuality that extends across developmental or age boundaries—that does not necessarily map onto easy binaries of adult/child and perpetrator/victim.<sup>138</sup> As Melinda's story demonstrates, sexual assault rarely happens in a vacuum—the individuals involved frequently have prior and/or future relations to one another, and the very act of narrating the experience has consequences for the larger community in which they interact.

Ferenczi's work in “Confusion of Tongues” as well as Fonagy's recent work on sexuality and subjectivity suggest that self-making *and* the relation to others are intimately tied to the experience of sexuality. Though these connections are most frequently explored in pathological and/or traumatic instances, Fonagy argues that “[s]exual excitement *per se* has complex developmental links with the emergence of subjectivity” (17).<sup>139</sup> Though sexual assault/abuse may frequently result in traumatic outcomes, Melinda's narrative illustrates the way in which trauma—particularly the negotiation of intolerable affects—profoundly

influences both self-awareness and one's relation(s) to others. To paraphrase Laplanche and Pontalis on trauma,<sup>140</sup> adolescent life is marked, in many ways, by events that are intense, difficult to respond to, and which cause upheaval and long-lasting changes to psychic organization. It is by negotiating these experiences that one comes to experience mutuality and pass between the boundaries of intra- and inter-subjectivity.

**BUT WHY DOESN'T MELINDA JUST *TELL* SOMEONE?**

In the *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault lays out an account, going back to the Middle Ages, in which confession becomes “one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth” (58). He cites the evolution of the word “avowal” as particularly “emblematic of this development,” as it shifts from “being a guarantee of the status, identity, and value granted by one person to another” (i.e. an individual's ties to the community), to being “someone's acknowledgement of his own actions and thoughts” (i.e. the individual's account of him- or herself) (58). It was during this period, Foucault writes, that “the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth.” The West, he argues, “has become a singularly confessing society,” with confession serving a key role in “justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites” (59). He continues:

[O]ne confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. One confesses in public and in private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell anyone else, the things people write books about. One confesses—or is forced to confess. When it is not spontaneous or



dictated by some internal imperative, the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat; it is driven from the hiding place of the soul, or extracted from the body. (59)

The adults in Melinda's world consistently urge her to speak—and even threaten her when she doesn't. They want to drive her "truth" from "the hiding place of the soul." But it's not clear whether or not they are genuinely interested in what she might say.

In "Why Won't Melinda Just Talk about What Happened? *Speak* and the Confessional Voice," Chris McGee critiques scholarship and reviews that suggest *Speak* is an "empowerment narrative." Echoing a Foucauldian understanding of the imbrication of power and confession, McGee writes:

Melinda's awareness of power—how it works, how it positions the individual in response to authority, what it asks the individual to do and be—is sophisticated and profound. In a very revealing passage early in the book, she notes: "It is easier not to say anything. Shut your trap, button your lip, can it. All that crap you hear on TV about communication and expressing feelings is a lie. No body really wants to hear what you have to say" (9). This statement becomes Melinda's mantra and the deepest insight of the book: power demands that you speak, but it demands that you speak its truth rather than your own. (175)

In asking questions about to whom one confesses and why, Anderson, through Melinda, challenges the ideas that a "stable identity [...] can be voiced through language" (176) and that the incitement to confession, to borrow Foucault's term, can lead to empowerment. McGee reflects on the difficulty Melinda has in both naming and narrating the events of the

rape that is ostensibly the cause of her silence, and the ways in which the text goes beyond the usual neat conclusions of the problem novel. He notes:

Melinda's inability to name what has happened to her as well as her overall silence after the rape is not purely a psychological mechanism of repression, which is where many other young adult novels on the same subject might choose to stop. Her trouble with language, rather, is deeply connected to the power around her, particularly the power expressed by the many adults in her life. (178)

In the structures of power that permeate *Speak*—and perhaps the lives of many adolescents—the confession is a trap. Or even if it is not a trap, exactly, the confessional mode certainly relinquishes power to adults. And yet, at the end of *Speak*, Melinda is finally prepared to tell someone about her experience.

Highlighting the frustration of his students when they read the novel, particularly their impatience with Melinda's fractured narrative and the late reveal of the rape, McGee tries to argue that the end of the book is a capitulation to the narrative tropes of the young adult novel: the weight of genre conventions ultimately force Melinda to confess. The novel ends with Melinda beginning to tell her art teacher, Mr. Freeman, the story of what happened to her. Yet, at this point, she has in many ways healed from the trauma of the rape through her own form of narrative refashioning of the self. This "confession" is made to the reader through the conceit of the novel, but it is not witnessed by any of the characters in the novel. Nor does the confession to Mr. Freeman occupy the space of the novel, so we, as readers, cannot know what it contains or how it affects Melinda. Does she tell Mr. Freeman because she feels compelled to reveal the "truth" of her experience? Must one narrate an experience to others—with another person, whether a friend, a priest, or a psychiatrist,

bearing witness—in order to make sense of that experience? McGee’s analysis refuses Melinda the agency to artfully craft a narrative of becoming, instead seeing the conversation that closes the novel as a forced confession, “driven from the body” by the power imbalance between adult and child.

As I discuss earlier in this chapter, much has been made of the use of first-person narrators and diaries in Young Adult fiction. Scholars are quick to point out the ways in which the first-person account offers the illusion of unmediated access to an individual’s inner thoughts and feelings and “authentic voice,” and the irony inherent in the adult author’s attempt to speak “authentically” through the voice of a teenage protagonist. I find this discourse of failed authenticity highly problematic, particularly given the history of arguments in literary studies over identity categories, and who has the right to speak for whom. Writers of fiction must always occupy subject positions other than their own. Yes, the dynamic between adult authors and child readers is unique, but there is nothing to suggest that the space that separates an adult author from a child or adolescent character and a child or adolescent reader is any larger than the space separating a female author from a male character and a male reader—or any other reductive identity categories. As far as I know, no contemporary author has actually witnessed the U.S. Civil War or Elizabethan England, and very few authors can claim the experience of being embodied as multiple genders. At the very least, however, all authors were once children and adolescents.

## CHAPTER 4: The Girl-as-Patient: Illness, Disability, and the Vocabulary of Pain

The organizing principle for this chapter is the figure of the patient—specifically a girl or young woman who addresses a medical crisis in the course of a narrative. This medical crisis often takes the form of an illness or injury that results in temporary or permanent disability. As disability studies scholars of literature and culture such as Rosemarie Garland Thomson, David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, Tobin Seibers, and Paul Longmore have noted, disabled figures have long populated literature, visual art, and other narrative forms as repositories of negative affect and as representations of non-normative bodies and minds. Disability almost always carries a negative connotation, if not a one-to-one correspondence to wickedness, impairment, and suffering. In this chapter I examine a particular type of disability representation—the illness/disability narrative—as a way to probe specific changes to both girlhood and children’s literature that took place over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I also turn to the topic of pain, and its communicability or lack thereof, as an important but relatively absent aspect of scholarship on disability.

In children’s literature, the illness or disability narrative has been and remains a popular schema for the figuration of the transition from girlhood to womanhood, where girls experience the passing of the freedoms and self-assurance associated with childhood as a loss of health, wellness, and/or ability. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in America, a lengthening of late childhood occurred, particularly for middle-class girls. Though many girls experienced a remarkable amount of personal freedom during this longer childhood, autonomy was quickly curtailed in adolescence as girls began to adopt the roles and responsibilities of womanhood.

In this chapter, as elsewhere in this study, I examine a group of thematically-linked texts that span a large chronological period. Though I follow both Perry Nodelman and Beverly Lyon Clark in referring to most of these texts as “children’s literature,” I recognize that this is a broad category of texts defined primarily by their audience: non-adult readers. Though I may also make additional distinctions—for example “domestic fiction,” “family literature,” or “young adult literature”<sup>141</sup>—I consider these to be more specialized and historically contingent categories that overlap and/or reside within the larger group of texts that constitutes literature for children and youth. I return in this chapter to “the girls’ book,” an important subset of “children’s literature,” and one that troubles the current delineation of “children’s” and “young adult” texts.

Anne Scott MacLeod offers a list of defining characteristics of the girls’ book (or “girls’ story”) in her essay “American Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century: Caddie Woodlawn’s Sisters”: the narrative almost always has a heroine of 12-16 years old. Both the physical setting and the emotional tenor are “intensely domestic and interior,” and the narratives are focused on the primary character and her relationships and moral development. The narratives nearly all feature a dramatic transition from childhood to adult womanhood, and the texts contain explicitly didactic messages about the obligations and limitations of an adult woman’s future (14). In many girls’ books, this dramatic transition, as well as the didactic lesson, take the form of an experience with illness and/or disability. Illness and disability serve both literal and metaphorical roles in teaching young women about the need for patience and cheerfulness in the face of pain and suffering, as well as the need to find a healthy balance between love for others and love of self.

Building on scholarship by MacLeod and Lois Keith, I begin by examining several classic American children's texts written or set during the late nineteenth century that feature prominent episodes of illness and disability as their young protagonists approach womanhood, and how these representations participate in larger patterns of disability in literature. In addition, I trace the ways in which these disabled figures and narratives persist, often in unexpected ways, in contemporary Young Adult novels. I argue for the ongoing presence and power of these narrative tropes in girls' negotiations of adult roles and expectations, and the problematic assumptions about wellness, disability, and "cure" that continue to haunt writing for children and adolescents.

In selecting texts for this chapter, I have focused closely on a small number of novels, first published in the United States, that are notable for the quality of the writing, as well as their ongoing popularity with young readers, parents, teachers, and librarians. The "classic" girls' books I examine in this piece include *Little Women* (1868-9) by Louisa May Alcott and *What Katy Did* (1872) by Susan Coolidge. To represent the "problem novel" of the 1970s and 1980s, I have chosen *Deenie* (1973) by Judy Blume and *Izzy Willy-Nilly* (1986) by Cynthia Voight. My selections from contemporary YA include realist fiction: *Speak* (1999) and *Wintergirls* (2009), both by Laurie Halse Anderson; *Homeroom Exercise* (2002) by Jana Striegel; and two from the popular sub-genre of YA dystopia: *Gathering Blue* (2000) by Lois Lowry, and *Feed* (2002) by M.T. Anderson.

Both *Gathering Blue* and *Feed* include strong female characters who are central to the plot—though *Feed* features a male adolescent protagonist—and the books are marketed to readers of both genders. Although this breaks from the tradition of the "girls' book," I have chosen these texts because they offer a glimpse of the tropes and conventions of the girls' book as transformed into contemporary narratives for a wide audience of young people.

All of the texts, classic and contemporary, present narratives that explore the movement from childhood to adulthood, the crisis of adolescence, and the acceptance of responsibility for one's self and others in adult society. The settings are varied, but most often include both home and school, and focus closely on the protagonists' relationships to peers, siblings, and adult authority figures. Romance plays a role in each of the texts, though some more centrally than others. In addition, and most importantly, every text includes a depiction of disability, generally in the form of a chronic illness and/or mobility impairment due to a damaged spine or limb. Though the character with a disability is not always the protagonist, disability plays a central role in the narrative and in the psychic development of the protagonist. In all of these texts, illness and/or disability can be seen as a metaphor for the transition from childhood to adulthood, specifically from girlhood to womanhood.

By examining disability and illness narratives that were published across a broad span of time, I illustrate that the conventions of the "girls' book"—which are in many ways inseparable from the conventions of the sentimental or domestic novel<sup>142</sup>—did not "disappear" in the early twentieth century, but persist in contemporary young adult fiction. These conventions, which include the use of disability as metaphor and narrative device, are often a double-edged sword, giving the texts a certain kind of affective power over their readers while also undermining the author's attempts to offer a positive narrative of disability<sup>143</sup> that escapes the didactic framework embedded in classic books for girls. Though many of these conventions and tropes surrounding disability are troubling, I ultimately focus on this group of texts to highlight the productive discussions of embodiment and pain that can emerge despite the constraints of the genre.

## GIRLS' BOOKS AND THEIR READERS

The nineteenth century introduced a number of significant changes to American culture. Many of these changes stemmed from the economic prosperity that came with industrialization. This prosperity enlarged the middle class and led to more opportunities for additional schooling—as well as leisure time—for the children of the middle class. This extended schooling, in turn, lengthened childhood for many individuals, allowing them to put off many adult responsibilities until the completion of their studies. Though most children of the middle class were expected to help around the house by assisting with chores and household upkeep, middle-class homes often included servants or a “hired girl” who undertook many of the chores and tasks that would otherwise have been the responsibility of the children of the household.<sup>144</sup> Obviously many children— particularly those who lived on farms or those who were part of working-class families, both native-born and immigrant—continued to shoulder significant responsibilities, both at home and in the workplace. But the increasing prosperity and subsequent lengthening of childhood in the middle class created new forms of culture for those individuals in the period between childhood and adulthood. Though this period would not officially be christened “adolescence” until the publication of G. Stanley Hall’s two-volume tome, *Adolescence*, in 1911, the elements of this unique period were already emerging much earlier—in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—as youth found themselves with more time and money than ever before.

In “American Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century: Caddie Woodlawn’s Sisters,” Anne Scott MacLeod outlines what she calls the “Caddie Woodlawn Syndrome.” This syndrome takes its name from the protagonist of Carol Ryrie Brink’s Newberry-winning *Caddie Woodlawn* (1935), which is the fictionalized story of Brink’s grandmother’s childhood in 1860s Wisconsin. In the tradition of *Little Women*’s Jo March, twelve-year-old Caddie is a



tomboy. After her younger sister died from a childhood illness, Caddie was allowed to grow up strong, wild, and unladylike. The exact nature of the illness that had caused Caddie and her sister, “Little Mary,” to become “frail,” “pale and delicate” (15), and, in Mary’s case, to die young, is never specified in the text. Instead it serves as an explanation for Caddie’s father’s “experiment” to bring up a girl who preferred “running wild” to “making samplers and dipping candles” (15). An early conversation (which Caddie overhears) between Caddie’s father and a visiting circuit rider lets the reader know that Caddie’s days of freedom are numbered. In the course of the narrative, Caddie is urged by her father to give up her wild ways, learn discipline, and begin the process of becoming a proper lady, which means teaching “men and boys gentleness and courtesy and love and kindness” (240). Now that she has made it through childhood with her health, Caddie’s job is to learn to become a wife and a mother.

In *Caddie Woodlawn*, Brink presents Caddie’s experience as unusual, contrasting her adventures and pranks with her brothers to the ladylike behavior of her two sisters, who cling to her mother and enjoy tasks like cleaning, sewing, and cooking. MacLeod draws on autobiographical writing as well as journals kept by girls and young women from Caddie’s generation to make the compelling argument that Caddie’s experience was, in fact, much closer to the norm than the novel might have one believe. MacLeod writes that Victorian parents “expected a good deal of their children in many ways, including a sensitive awareness of right and wrong,” but that they “tempered their expectations with a sympathetic tolerance and a feeling for child nature that we (rather arrogantly) think of as wholly modern” (11).

In addition to parents’ sensitivity to the feelings of their children, MacLeod offers other surprising details about Victorian childhood. She provides examples to suggest that domestic chores were not necessarily divided based on gender, and that many children felt

an exhilarating physical and psychic freedom through a sense of “wholesome neglect” in their hours outside of home and school.<sup>145</sup> She also suggests that childhood as a whole was much less gender-differentiated than a text like *Caddie Woodlawn* would imply. Lucy Larcom, author of the autobiography *A New England Girlhood* (1889), offers further support of this theory when describing her experience of growing up not as a movement between girlhood and womanhood, but as “[t]he transition from childhood to girlhood”—the two were *not* the same thing, but also not adult womanhood. Larcom writes that she “clung to the child’s inalienable privilege of running half-wild,” which is contrasted with the new, narrow confines of being a “girl” (12-13). Though there was not yet a term for adolescence, it is clear from Larcom’s description that this transitional period had its own qualities and expectations, distinct from childhood—most of which were not particularly pleasant for the girls who experienced them.<sup>146</sup>

Though Caddie’s illness and the death of her sister take place outside the immediate narrative of *Caddie Woodlawn*, these events—and Caddie’s struggle with her wildness—place the novel neatly in the category of the “girls’ book” and bring to mind the classic novels that precede it, including *Little Women*, *What Katy Did*, and Louisa May Alcott’s lesser-known later novel *Jack and Jill* (1880).

## **DISABILITY/THEORY**

In *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, disability scholars David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder offer an overview of the methods employed in humanities research on disability. They note that with the emergence of disability studies in the 1990s, scholars began to locate an “impressive array” (15) of depictions and characterizations of disability in filmic and literary texts. This “dependency” on disability, Mitchell and Snyder

argue, “establishes the pervasiveness” of a phenomenon they refer to as “narrative prosthesis” (15). Narrative prosthesis describes the ubiquitous presence of disability and people with disabilities in literary texts, where they tend to serve two distinct roles: “first, as a stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device” (47). Most dismaying, Mitchell and Snyder suggest, is the negative impact of narrative prosthesis—especially the “materiality of metaphor” (47)—on the actual lives of people with disabilities.

The flourishing of scholarly work around issues of disability has provided a number of different lenses through which to interpret representations of disability. Mitchell and Snyder “divide this scholarship into five methodologies: studies of negative imagery, social realism, new historicism, biographical criticism, and transgressive reappropriation” (15). They suggest that these methodologies invite revision and addition as disability studies expands and encounters new and novel texts while also revisiting texts of the past.

In *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*, Lois Keith offers incisive readings of *Little Women*, *What Katy Did*, and other classic books for girls, and highlights the role that disability (spinal paralysis and wasting diseases in particular), plays in these texts. For the most part, Keith is interested in what these books have to say about broader cultural understandings of disability, and the disjuncture between fictional disability narratives and the historical realities of illness and disability during the same time period. We might say that Keith’s analysis exemplifies two of the methodologies described by Mitchell and Snyder in *Narrative Prosthesis*: studies of negative imagery and of social realism.

Keith focuses on both the metaphorical role that illness and disability play in these texts, as well as the medically incoherent information and impossible cures that are present

in the texts. Yet these elements—the cure, in particular—are so widespread in the genre of classic girls’ books that we as readers fail to notice them, even as they are shaping our perceptions and preconceptions about people with disabilities. Keith writes:

This cure is somehow so central to the outcome of the story, so expected, that I and generations of readers and countless commentators have failed to notice it or remember it as significant. But even as we failed to take account of it, we were storing up enough perceptions and ideas about disability to last a lifetime. (7)

These perceptions and ideas tend to emphasize five specific assumptions about disability:

(1) there is nothing good about being disabled; (2) disabled people have to learn the same qualities of submissive behavior that women have always had to learn: patience, cheerfulness and making the best of things; (3) impairment can be a punishment for bad behavior, for evil thoughts or for not being a good person; (4) although disabled people should be pitied rather than punished, they can never be accepted; and (5) the impairment is curable. If you want to enough, if you love yourself enough (but not more than you love others), if you believe in God enough, you will be cured. (7)

These somewhat contradictory lessons that Keith has culled from books for girls highlight the role of narrative prosthesis that disability plays in these texts: disability can teach pity and compassion, yet it can also represent evil; disability teaches patience and goodness, and if one is patient enough and good enough, disability can be cured.

Keith’s observation that commentators and “generations of readers” have failed to notice the pervasiveness of disability reflects the ways in which genre conventions serve to normalize what might otherwise be surprising or undesirable elements of certain kinds of books. As Perry Nodelman suggests in *The Hidden Adult*, the notion of genre, especially as

described by Frederic Jameson,<sup>147</sup> suggests a kind of structure that persists in texts even when their authors intend, or would prefer, to construct a more progressive narrative. Certain ideological foundations become embedded in the genre in a way that makes them persist, sometimes beyond their wider cultural acceptance. Nodelman writes: “The idea that genres have ideological power suggests another important dimension of them. That power might represent a resistance to change” (114). We do not see the persistence of the narrative prosthesis of disability in books for girls because it is such a key component of the genre itself. And, I would argue, we fail to see the same “perceptions and ideas about disability” (Keith 7)—particularly those about punishment and cure—in contemporary books for young readers for exactly the same reason. Meanwhile, we persist in the idea that the best one can do, if one is ill or disabled, is to learn the traits of “patience, cheerfulness and making the best of things” (Keith 7).

### **LITTLE (ILL) WOMEN**

Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* is the first bestseller of the early publications designed specifically for an audience of girls. It is notable for its depiction of the as-yet-unnamed transitional period between childhood and adulthood. *Little Women*—and many books like it—clearly belongs to the category of the domestic or sentimental novel, which stretches back to the eighteenth century;<sup>148</sup> *Little Women* might also be considered a “family story,” for the emphasis on the family and the book’s suitability for all members of the family to read/hear. However, it also marks one of the first publications in the U.S. designed specifically for a readership of girls. The success of *Little Women*<sup>149</sup> likely led to more publications, by Alcott and others, designed to educate and entertain a specific audience of middle-class American girls.

*Little Women* offers numerous possibilities for analysis through multiple disability studies methodologies. The autobiographical nature of *Little Women* is well known to many readers, including child readers, particularly those who read Cornelia Meig's biography of Alcott, *Invincible Louisa*. A number of biographies of Alcott and her milieu have been published in the last fifteen years,<sup>150</sup> and a documentary focused on the differences between Alcott and her fictional counterpart Jo aired on PBS in 2008.<sup>151</sup> Though spirited, unconventional Jo March forms the heart of the novel<sup>152</sup>—and her antics, adventures, and moods shape much of the plot—it is her sister Beth's illness and death that readers often remember most vividly. Alcott drew many of these details directly from the illness and death of her sister Elizabeth ("Lizzie") in 1858, and the letters and journal entries Alcott wrote during that period.<sup>153</sup>

Alcott has been accused by many commentators—particularly contemporary feminist critics—as manipulative and sentimental in her handling of Beth's initial illness and recovery, and her later decline and death.<sup>154</sup> From the very beginning, Beth is suffused with goodness and patience, and plays the foil to impulsive, tomboyish Jo. Her death seems destined, even as readers cry with Jo—again and again—over its injustice. Keith is particularly bothered by Beth's death for three reasons. First, it contributes to the unrealistic expectations set for people with disabilities:

The presentation of Beth's illness...plays on the stereotypical idea that what ill or disabled people need most is the pity and kindness of others. But in order to deserve this treatment, they must not burden those around them with strong emotions such as rage or disappointment. (54-55)

Beth's goodness and selflessness both set an example that is nearly impossible to replicate in real life, yet this unrealistic example is repeated throughout novels of the period. Second, Keith argues that the deathbed scene, a common feature of the nineteenth-century novel, becomes more and more sentimentalized in books like *Little Women*, which tends to make the characters' illnesses "sanitized and clean, their suffering spiritual rather than physical" (55). And finally, Keith focuses on the metaphorization of the disabled characters and their experiences, their parable-like nature, suggesting that "[a]bove all, they must be self-effacing, leaving plenty of space for the non-disabled character to develop and learn" (55). In *Little Women*, as in many other books for girls, the illness or disability of a secondary character serves to help the protagonist develop qualities of compassion and sympathy, and an appreciation for life. Characters like Beth also underscore the dire opposition that these texts enforce: when one is ill or disabled, there are only two options—cure or death.

### **WHAT KATY DID (OR DIDN'T) DO**

The novel *What Katy Did*, by Susan Coolidge (pen name of Sarah Chauncey Woolsey), provides one of the clearest examples of the figuration of girlhood-as-disability in nineteenth-century girls' books.<sup>155</sup> As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues in *Extraordinary Bodies*, the Western philosophical tradition has marked women's bodies as less-than or mutilated, as compared to men's bodies, since Aristotle, if not before. To be female and disabled is to be doubly marked.<sup>156</sup> *What Katy Did* offers two central narratives of disabled womanhood, both shaped by the moral, social, and medical frameworks of its time. Illness and disability serve to both propel the plot of the novel and to provide an explanatory framework, both literal and metaphorical, to illustrate the transition from childhood to womanhood.

Published in 1872, *What Katy Did* reflects a certain kind of girls' book that incorporates the moral and religious values of the Victorian middle class as well as the genre conventions of the sentimental or domestic novel of the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Like *Little Women*, the story revolves around the home and activities of a middle-class family, focalized through the point of view of a daughter who happens to be headstrong, adventurous, and somewhat wild, much like Jo March. Though we meet Jo when she is 15, a chronological point much closer to adult womanhood, Katy is only 12 at the opening of *What Katy Did*, providing Coolidge ample opportunity to describe Katy and her younger siblings (there are five: three girls and two boys) as they attend school, participate in family life, and develop highly creative forms of games and play.

Like many protagonists of children's literature, Katy is a quasi-orphan: she has a physician father who is frequently absent and a dead mother, whose dying wish was for Katy to take care of her father and younger siblings as a surrogate mother.<sup>158</sup> In the meantime, since Katy is clearly not yet up to the task, the children's stern and authoritarian Aunt Izzie has taken over the running of the household, and much of the conflict of the story is driven by Katy's inability to follow Aunt Izzie's instructions or to honor her authority in the house. In fact, after a series of scenes that show Katy's extraordinary imagination, as well as her absentmindedness in matters like neatness and propriety, it is her unwillingness to blindly obey Aunt Izzie that leads to the climactic accident that shapes the narrative.

One morning, Katy decides she is going to try out the new swing that has been installed in the shed-cum-playhouse in the backyard of the Carr home. Aunt Izzie has forbidden the children from using the swing, and, expecting (perhaps illogically, given the children's standard behavior) compliance, she has not shared with them the reason—the swing is not properly anchored due to a damaged staple, and is therefore unsafe to use. So



Katy heedlessly jumps on the swing and it holds, at least at first. She swings higher and higher, but as she approaches the highest point, the swing gives way and she falls to the ground, injuring her spine and losing consciousness.<sup>159</sup>

When Katy awakens, she is bed-bound, groggy, and in a great deal of pain. She will remain in more or less this same state for the next four years. When Aunt Izzie dies suddenly of pneumonia partway through Katy's convalescence, Katy insists that she will learn to run the household from her bed—and, with the assistance of the family's loyal household servants, she does so successfully. This mastery of the household, it is suggested, comes directly as the result of Katy's own self-mastery—the “gift” of her accident, illness, and disability—which also enables her eventual recovery and cure.

*What Katy Did* includes three disabled figures: Katy, who is injured through her own impulsive actions and eventually cured through her care of others and self-will; Katy's Cousin Helen, whose permanent disability requires (in the logic of the novel) that she must forgo marriage and adult sexuality and care for others; and Mrs. Spenser, an “invalid”<sup>160</sup> woman (45) who Katy visits as a child, and who is notable for her absent and slightly sinister husband, as well as her unkempt house and general unhappiness. Mrs. Spenser appears early on; she is described by Aunt Izzie as one of Katy's “queer acquaintances” (44), and her character is used to demonstrate Katy's curiosity and good-heartedness. Perhaps, however, Mrs. Spenser is also meant to illustrate the fate of dependency that Cousin Helen avoided by dissolving her engagement. Each character represents a specific angle of the moral model of disability,<sup>161</sup> and the secondary characters offer a kind of narrative prosthesis to Katy's story, guiding Katy to acceptance and compassion and illustrating her innate goodness and ability to overcome her illness and disability.

Katy is assisted in her acceptance of her invalid status, and her new role as absentee housekeeper, by her cousin Helen. Helen, who is somewhat older than Katy, claims she was once a wild, self-centered girl herself. However, after an accident where she was thrown from a horse, she had to come to terms with the fact that she would never walk again. This included giving up her engagement and taking over the running of her father's household. Helen speaks fondly of her ex-fiancé, his new wife, and their young daughter, who bears her name. Helen appears in the text as a paragon of patience, thoughtfulness, and goodness—in stark contrast to the sometimes-willful Katy we meet before the accident. Though Katy is confined almost entirely to bed during her period of illness and paralysis, Helen is able to travel and sit up on a sofa, and the narrative never makes it clear whether Helen is physically unable to walk due to paralysis, or if she is too weak to walk as the result of a chronic illness. Though it causes Helen pain to be moved, she endures it stoically.

In *Take up Thy Bed and Walk*, Keith analyzes *What Katy Did* through the lens of social realism and examines the role of disability as “narrative prosthesis”—suggesting that Katy's accident and recovery not only provide a metaphor for her transition to womanhood, but also serve as the engine of the plot of the novel. One of Keith's primary criticisms of *What Katy Did*—as well as of other children's books from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that rely on spinal injury as a narrative element (like *Pollyanna*)—is the lack of medical realism. Paralysis as the result of trauma to the spine, like that experienced by Katy and Cousin Helen, was nearly always irreversible and often resulted in death after a few months as a result of infection.<sup>162</sup> Even now, full recovery from traumatic spinal injury is rare to impossible, and the risk of succumbing to a secondary infection is high.<sup>163</sup> Using the character of Dr. Carr, Coolidge describes the effect of Katy's accident as a kind of “spinal fever” which resulted from the trauma of her fall:

“the spine is a bone. It is made up of a row of smaller bones—or knobs—and in the middle of it is a sort of rope of nerves called the spinal cord. Nerves, you know, are the things we feel with. Well, this spinal cord is rolled up for safe keeping in a soft wrapping, called membrane. When you fell out of the swing, you struck against one of these knobs, and bruised the membrane inside, and the nerve inflamed, and gave you a fever in the back. (78-9)

Though he begins with a rather straightforward description of the spine, by the end, his explanation has become medically incoherent.<sup>164</sup>

But the point of Katy’s illness and recovery is not to realistically document the experience of a spinal injury. One can hardly imagine offering *What Katy Did* to a child with a spinal injury, given the unlikely cure that Katy experiences. Her cure is not about medical intervention, but about self-improvement. Keith writes:

Despite the fact that from the very first, the reader has been led to expect that in time Katy will walk again, her recovery is presented as an act of will, rather than a medical development. Katy is given responsibility for her own recovery, as if her disease was caused by a state of mind, rather than a physical fall. (92)

Katy must be transformed—improved—by her illness. She must find a new, “less-selfish kind of strength” in order to walk again (Keith 73). Once she has learned the lessons the accident was designed to teach—lessons in docility, compassion, and patience—she is free to recover and resume life as an able-bodied person.

During Katy’s convalescence, Cousin Helen teaches her the lessons of the “School of Pain,” echoing the moral model of disability that suggests illness and disability are punishments for misconduct. Katy’s cure through self-improvement only serves to reinforce

this link. Early on, during Katy's period of depression and despondency following the accident, she receives a visit from Cousin Helen, who is horrified by Katy's ill-kempt appearance and the disarray of her room. She suggests to Katy that perhaps she might learn something from her experience:

“It is called the School of Pain,” replied Cousin Helen, with her sweetest smile ...

“The rules of the school are pretty hard, but the good scholars, who keep them best, find out after a while how right and kind they are.” (82)

The lessons that Helen describes are the very ones that reinforce the expectation that in order for sick or disabled persons to have any place in the world, they must “strive to be better, more cheerful, and more patient than anyone else, otherwise they will be alone and miserable” (Keith 87).

### **LEGACY OF THE GIRLS' BOOK**

Few would argue with the assertion that children's literature is designed to instruct, as well as entertain. Victorian didactic literature took this charge very seriously, ensuring that novels contained explicit moral lessons for their young readers. Though this kind of explicit didacticism is no longer the norm for children's literature, the texts frequently play an instructional role in the lives of child readers. Children's publishing in the second half of the twentieth century saw a significant increase in texts about illness and disability that might be called “bibliotherapeutic,”<sup>165</sup> rather than didactic, meaning that the authors took a somewhat realistic perspective in narrating stories about young people with illnesses and disabilities. These books were often designed to help children understand illness or disability—either their own, or the experiences of friends and family members.

In a similarly bibliotherapeutic mode, disability was often featured as one of the primary “problems” in the teen problem novel<sup>166</sup> of the 1970s and 1980s, spawning informal subgenres like “sick-lit.” Sick-Lit is “a genre of adolescent fiction that fused illness and romance narrative to reinforce the interdependent norms of able-bodiedness, heteronormativity, emotional management, and maturity among American youth” (Elman 175). In addition to the narratives that address disability head-on, disability itself also continued—and continues—to serve many of the roles that it played in earlier books for girls. In keeping with medical realism, these more contemporary texts rarely provide a “miracle cure” for physical disability, as in the example of *What Katy Did*, but there are other troubling components to their treatment of disability. This includes using secondary disabled characters to enable an able-bodied protagonist’s transformation; correlating illness and disability with poor choices or lack of morals; suggesting that if one is “good” enough, illness and disability confer a kind of privileged moral status; and focusing almost exclusively on recovery and cure, particularly in the case of mental illness and disability.

As Keith illustrates in the final chapter of *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*, the “second fiddle story,”<sup>167</sup> remains a common trope in books for young people. In this kind of narrative, an ill or disabled secondary character serves as a catalyst for the personal growth of the protagonist. One can also see the legacy of the girls’ book in contemporary texts’ emphasis on cure through self-determination, particularly in the case of chronic and mental illness. Though on the one hand these texts encourage girl-readers to take responsibility for self-care and to negotiate their relationship(s) to agency and dependency, they sometimes offer a simplistic model of “cure,” where one must only, like Katy, be good enough and want badly enough to be well and able-bodied again. These threads suggest the ongoing impact of larger cultural narratives about illness and disability, as well as qualities of self-

reliance and independence and many Americans' ambivalent relationship to disability and death.

Judy Blume's *Deenie* (1973) and Cynthia Voight's *Izzy Willy-Nilly* (1986) offer a late-twentieth-century update to the model of the girls' book established by texts like *Little Women* and *What Katy Did*. Both books feature protagonists who are beautiful, friendly, and popular, but suffer an "unlucky" tragedy from which they must recover. The recovery or "adjustment" period reveals familial tensions, tests friendships, and offers the girls a transformative experience. The narratives rely on many of the same elements: both girls exhibit negative attitudes toward disability, particularly visible markers of disability, both in others and in themselves; they each experience social rejection as a result of their disabilities and befriend girls whom they would not have considered in their previously popular, able-bodied lives; and they undergo an emotional and psychological transformation that makes them more perceptive and compassionate as a result of the trauma they endure. Compared to Izzy's experience of surviving a car accident caused by a drunk driver and having part of her leg amputated, Deenie's diagnosis of scoliosis—and the brace she must wear for it—are considerably less disruptive to her life, though you wouldn't know it based on Deenie's mother's constant tears and self-pity.

In a move both strange and somewhat disappointing, neither Deenie nor Izzy is offered any sort of role model for living with a disability. Since it is assumed that Deenie's scoliosis will be cured by her four years in the "Milwaukee brace," having a role model is perhaps less important for her development into an adult. However, Izzy has no model for how to live with a permanent disability, and her constant abusive self-talk— "Who would want to go out with a cripple?" (61) —remains unchallenged by any counter-examples or authorial voice. Izzy's struggle to find herself again after the accident is also a struggle to

manage the pity her family and friends feel for her, and to make them see her as a whole person again.

In contrast to the family dynamics in *Deenie* and *Izzy Willy-Nilly*, Jana Striegel's *Homeroom Exercise* (2002) offers a more hopeful view of chronic illness and disability, though the primary conflict still centers on the protagonist's struggle to accept her changing body. Twelve-year-old Regan is a dancer, and she is both disciplined and successful. In one of the first scenes, she auditions for and is chosen to lead a weekly morning dance class on her middle school's closed-circuit TV channel. In the midst of this success, Regan notices that the minor joint pain in her knee has gotten worse. She puts off telling her parents, afraid they will prevent her from dancing, until the knee swells up so much that she can't hide it anymore.

Several trips to the doctor and some blood work suggest that Regan might have cancer. However, after several weeks, and a terrifying bone marrow biopsy with the aptly named Dr. Krueel, Regan is diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA). She tries to push through, but a flare makes her sick enough to end up in the hospital. While she is there, a chance encounter with a significantly disabled boy who also has JRA convinces Regan that her career in dance is over. She returns home depressed and miserable, certain that she will have to give up everything she loves. The two popular girls (also dancers) who had taken Regan under their wings are brought in as "back-up" dancers for the show and begin scheming to take it over. Regan tries to get her best friend Mel to spend time with them, but Mel is a soccer-playing tomboy and has no patience for their petty manipulation of Regan. Ultimately it is Mel who introduces Regan to other kids with arthritis, and shows her that living well—and even dancing well—is still possible.

Though *Deenie* and *Izzy Willy--Nilly* focus on disabilities that are primarily physical and visible, YA authors have begun to tackle more internal or invisible forms of disability—especially experiences of trauma and mental illness. Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1998) and *Wintergirls* (2009) offer two striking examples of this shift, narrating the recovery of adolescent girls who experience sexual trauma and disordered eating, respectively. The narratives rely heavily on the concept of cure through confession and self-narrative. In *Wintergirls*, protagonist Lia can only begin to envision her recovery when she takes control of her own story:

I spin and weave and knit my words and visions until a life starts to take shape. There is no magic cure, no making it all go away forever. There are only small steps upward; an easier day, an unexpected laugh, a mirror that doesn't matter any more. (277-8)

Though the narratives of both novels are compelling and emotionally wrenching, the girls' disdain for—and outright refusal of—professional psychological assistance is troubling for the assumption it reinforces: that pain and disability happen for a reason, and that recovery or cure is somehow more authentic when it is initiated from inside, rather than outside, the self, and does not include professional or medical intervention.

### **DISABILITY AND DYSTOPIA**

Nearly all of the texts I've examined so far are set in the present or near-past of the time in which they were written, and feature realistic settings. However, in more recent writing for young people, one of the places where nineteenth-century ideas about illness and disability appear most evident is in recent Young Adult dystopian fiction. The dystopia offers an interesting case study because of its popularity across genres, ages, and other identity categories. Many of the dystopian texts published for young readers focus on issues like



government and social control, access to knowledge and information, and the absence of creativity and expression in totalitarian regimes. Disability frequently plays a key role in unraveling the secrets of the ruling regime, presented as something that stands in the way of the illusion of a perfect society.

Though the settings in dystopian fiction for teens are futuristic, the treatment of disability in these books is anything but. Rather than illustrating disability realistically or progressively, the texts instead present disability and the experiences of disabled characters as a kind of moral shorthand, as they are frequently used in girls' books like *What Katy Did*. M.T. Anderson's award-winning novel *Feed* (2002) offers a particularly striking example of the disconnect between the progressive aims of the author and its almost-Victorian depictions of illness and disability. *Feed* offers the vision of a terrifying techno-corporate near-future, where computers have moved off of our desks and directly into our brains through the "feed," or transmitter of the book's title, which can be implanted at birth. The protagonist Titus takes his world at face value, seduced by the ease of allowing the feed to think and decide for him, oblivious to the increasing decline of his culture and world. Then he meets and falls in love with Violet, whose eccentric parents waited to have her feed installed later in her childhood, and have brought her up with a wariness toward the feed and the forms of social controls it enables.

Violet begins to try to manipulate the feed itself and fight its algorithms. As she does, she becomes ill, her body rejecting the prosthetic "after-market" feed that her parents finally consented to. As Violet gets sicker, Titus pushes her away, unwilling to take responsibility for loving her. It is only later, as she lies dying and his world devolves deeper and deeper into brutality and disarray, that he can come to terms with the vapidness and violence of his culture—and his love for her. In her final message to him, after their break-up, she writes:

“*We both said mean things, dumb things, things we didn’t mean. But there’s always time to change. There’s always time. Until there’s not*” (276, italics in original). He returns one final time to tell a mute Violet “the story of us,” insisting that as long as he tells the story, as long as he can remember her, she’s still there (297). Titus is transformed, but only through the narrative prosthesis of Violet’s illness and death.

Despite the incisive and even subversive satire of *Feed*, Violet’s narrative reads like something directly out of a nineteenth-century sentimental novel. She is too good and smart to be allowed to survive the ugliness of the world *Feed* conjures. Violet is dying Beth March all over again, ravaged by a wasting disease that no one can fully explain as she teaches the rest of the characters a lesson about persistence, compassion, and loss.

*Gathering Blue* (2000), the second book in the *Giver* series by Lois Lowry, also utilizes the disability of its protagonist, Kira, in disconcerting ways. Though *Gathering Blue* is set in the same future world as *The Giver* (1993), the society in which Kira grows up is closer to a medieval tribal society than the regimented antiseptic world of Jonah and *The Giver*. The novel opens shortly after the death of Kira’s mother from a mysterious sickness. Now orphaned, “lame” Kira is attacked by cruel neighbors who have burned her small home and come to take over her land. They argue that she should be killed, as a result of the birth defect that gave her a misshapen leg, as there is no room for the weak or disabled in their hardscrabble world. However, at the hearing to decide her fate, Kira is saved by her skill as a weaver and embroiderer: it is decided that she will take over the job of mending and remaking the cloak that is worn at the annual ceremony of remembrance.

Kira represents the stereotype of the disabled person whose disability is accompanied by an extraordinary gift, a common trope in stories of “overcoming” disability.

In addition, she has an elevated sense of compassion, as evidenced by her relationships with others who are marginalized or unhappy. When she struggles with both physical and emotional pain, Kira often recalls the words of her mother: “‘Take pride in your pain,’ her mother had always told her. ‘You are stronger than those who have none’” (22). This message sounds eerily similar to Cousin Helen’s extolling the “School of Pain” in *What Katy Did*; Kira must try twice as hard and exhibit her exceptional giftedness if she wants to survive in her culture. Moreover, Kira frequently laments the fact that she is unlovable because of her disability. For example, thinking of her future, she muses:

No one would desire Kira. No one ever had, except her mother. Often Katrina had told Kira the story of her birth—the birth of a fatherless girl with a twisted leg—and how her mother had fought to keep her alive. (4)

Unfortunately there is little in the way of counter-narrative or authorial voice to suggest that Kira may in fact find love, other than a vague reference to a “boy with blue eyes” in a far-away place. Despite its futuristic, post-apocalyptic setting, *Gathering Blue* inherits antiquated expectations about disability where people with disabilities are less valued than able-bodied people unless they are artistically gifted or otherwise extraordinary, and where having a disability—despite the person’s capacity for kindness and empathy—makes one unworthy of love.

\* \* \*

Though many of the depictions of disabilities in the texts I have examined in this chapter are disturbing in their assumptions about the lives of people with disabilities and the possibilities for living a full and happy life with a chronic illness or disability, they do offer an important contribution, of which little has been written. While novels like *What Katy Did* appear almost shockingly retrograde in their moral pronouncements and treatment of female characters—

and the narrative tropes of girls' books persist, somewhat perniciously, in contemporary novels for children and young adults—there is one area in which these books make a unique and important contribution: in documenting and representing the physical and emotional pain that accompany chronic illness and disability.

Disability scholars in the humanities, as well as disability activists, have documented the powerful and damaging ways that the stereotype of the “happy cripple” has shaped our expectations for how people with disabilities are treated,<sup>168</sup> and it's true that these texts can reinforce that stereotype. It's also true that the texts, at least as far as their protagonists are concerned, participate in a narrative of morality that suggests that if one is good enough, tries hard enough, and wants it badly enough, one can be cured of almost any disability or illness. Yet characters like Cousin Helen in *What Katy Did* offer a striking point of comparison to this narrative. On the one hand, she is the “second fiddle” character, using her experience of disability to instruct and comfort Katy, as well as being an example of the “happy cripple,” pleased by the attention she receives from family and friends as a result of her goodness, kindness, and neatness despite her ongoing pain and disability. On the other hand, Cousin Helen also offers an important lesson, one that is buried beneath Katy's cure: the idea that one can live a happy, fulfilled life with a chronic illness or disability, despite the pain and sorrow that often accompany these experiences. She is not subjected to the logic of “cure or death” that often appears in these kinds of stories, and while she may appear docile and meek by twenty-first-century standards, her story supports the argument that there is a distinction between pain and suffering, and that it is possible to control one's experience of pain in such a way that it mitigates some suffering.

Despite a century and a half of advances in medicine, pain—in its infinite varieties—still remains difficult to treat and difficult to represent in language, even though it is an

almost-universal component of the human experience. Though we now have “Pain Scales” and various kinds of analgesics that were unavailable in the nineteenth century, the project of communicating pain in a way that another person can understand is still tenuous at best. One need look no further than the current legislative movements to restrict access to painkillers and require patients to “fail first” before they are offered stronger medication to see that the treatment of pain is a complex and messy business, and that there is often a disconnect between an individual’s experience of pain and what his or her doctors, family, and others think that experience of pain should be.

The novels from the “sick lit” sub-genre of Young Adult Fiction that narrate adolescent—and mostly female—experiences of illness and disability offer unique vocabularies for physical and emotional pain. By highlighting the representations of pain in texts like *Deenie*, *Izzy Willy-Nilly*, and *Homeroom Exercise*, I hope to suggest ways in which pain can be given voice, and to examine the complex intersections of pain, illness, embodiment, and economics that shape discussions of disability rights and healthcare access in contemporary U.S.-American culture. Though on the one hand these texts encourage girl-readers to take responsibility for self-care and to negotiate their relationship(s) to agency and dependency, on the other hand they do sometimes still offer a simplistic model of “cure,” where wanting to be well and able-bodied again is enough. This emphasis on self-cure reflects larger cultural narratives and anxieties about illness and disability. However, both readers and critics have overlooked the primacy of pain in these texts, preferring instead to focus on the literal and metaphorical trauma suffered by the protagonists and secondary characters as part of the narrative. Perhaps this is because pain is at once both resistant to metaphorization and yet also impossible to represent *except* through metaphor.

In Blume's *Deenie*, Deenie's untreated scoliosis isn't painful, but her treatment relies on the assumption that she must be returned to "normal" so as to avoid the pain and disability that might result later from untreated scoliosis of the spine. The pain that Deenie experiences is the result of medical intervention and the ways in which she experiences disfigurement as a result of having to wear her back brace. In the doctor's office, she reacts violently to the pain of the brace during her initial fitting:

"It's too tight around my neck." I tried to pull it away.

"It has to hold your neck in place," Miss Harrigan said. "The whole idea of the brace is to keep your spine in one position and your spine begins at the base of your neck."

"It hurts!" I told her. "Please take it off!" (88)

After surrendering to medical intervention and the pain of the brace, Deenie attempts to put on a brave face for her family, but almost immediately fails:

"I guess I'm okay," I said. "I guess I just can't bend my head with this brace on." As soon as I said that, I started to cry. I cried the way I wanted to when I first saw the brace, loud and hard until my throat hurt." (90)

For Deenie, the pain of the brace is two-fold: it is physically painful to wear because of the ways it stretches, pinches, and rubs against her body, and it is painful in the ways it draws attention to Deenie's disability and difference, making what might be termed an "invisible disability" visible to everyone she encounters.

Though Deenie's disability is assumed to be curable, Izzy, in *Izzy Willy-Nilly*, must manage her physical and emotional recovery from a near-fatal car accident and a resulting

amputation. The early pages of the novel are filled with Izzy's fragmented visual and kinesthetic perceptions in the hospital, many focused on her experience of pain:

The other day, the soap opera day, I was in the same bed, in the same room, and it was morning. There was a blue sky out one window. I had an IV attached to my left arm, only one that dripped blood. I didn't feel like moving because the only part of me that didn't hurt was my right hand and my mother was holding on to that with both of hers. (3)

During this section of the novel, as Izzy's pain gets worse, she finds another kind of (self-inflicted) pain to distract herself:

I was beginning to feel terrible, pains all over my body, and my head throbbed, and I tightened my grip on my mother's hand. I liked the way her engagement ring cut into my fingers. (4)

Once she returns to full consciousness, Izzy must grapple with recovering from the amputation surgery, as well as accepting the fact that she has lost part of her leg. While the former is primarily a cause of physical pain, the latter causes Izzy—as well as her friends and family—a great deal of emotional pain. Izzy describes her sensations upon looking at her amputation site for the first time:

All of my body trembled, my heart and stomach jiggling inside my ribcage, my shoulders going back and forth like a guitar string. I was cold and afraid. I held up my hands and looked at them, to see their shaking, but it didn't look like they were shaking. It just felt like they were shaking.

I tried to swallow but I couldn't. (52)

Her emotional symptoms—of shock, of disappointment, of terror—are translated into

physical symptoms of a quivering stomach and shoulders, trembling, a dry mouth. The emotional and physical registers are mixed and combined: “cold” and “afraid” become interconnected and combined.

Izzy attempts to compartmentalize her experience by imagining a “little Izzy” in her mind who can have the emotional responses that Izzy herself is afraid to reveal in front of her family, friends, and peers at school. After an episode where she is knocked over in the hallway at school, Izzy attempts this form of imaginative coping, but is overcome by painful sensations:

Inside my head, the little Izzy was still collapsed onto the floor in a miserable puddle. She was weeping away, and I was weeping too, leaning on the crutches. “I want to go home,” I said. Wailed. (258)

In the narrative, Izzy’s break from stoicism is seen as a positive sign of her recovery—her weakness is actually a form of strength. However, the weeping that occurs in this scene is also one of the first times in the novel that she allows another person to bear witness to her pain.

In *Homeroom Exercise*, Regan’s pain from Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis is also represented in both physical and emotional registers, often using simile or other figurative language. When the pain of her sore knee abates for a bit at the beginning of the narrative, she uses a comparison to another, more common kind of pain, and describes it as being “like when a really bad headache finally goes away and you realize how good you feel without pain” (91). During the flare-up of illness that leads to her diagnosis, Regan’s pain is at once sonic and tactile, interior and exterior:

That night Regan turned over in her bed. ‘Ohhh...’ A straitjacket kept her from moving her arms and legs, and firecrackers exploded in her joints. What a weird



dream.

‘Owww...’ Regan forced herself to roll to her back and open her eyes to a slit. A stiff, achy feeling pressed her down. She was burning hot and dripping with sweat. She must have the flu. She tried to curl up on her side, but a noise that sounded like [a] whimpering new puppy escaped from her. (98)

Like Izzy, who wails with frustration and pain, Regan expresses her pain through verbalizations that are not entirely under her control, echoing Elaine Scarry’s assertion that pain both resists and destroys language.<sup>169</sup> Yet in all of these cases, the form of the novel allows authors to put their characters’ pain into language. Sometimes the descriptions tread a line clumsily close to cliché, but these authors are offering their readers access to a vocabulary of emotional and physical pain, one that can be used to convey the experience of pain. Pain may resist words in its worst moments, but that does not make it somehow outside communication or language.

In the context of theories of embodiment, pain—in the abstract—is often used to represent a kind of liberatory resistance to social norms. Yet this metaphorization of pain often comes at a cost: the invisibility of those who experience chronic pain—which frequently means people with disabilities. In his 2010 book *Disability Theory*, Tobin Siebers argues that “the greatest stake in disability studies at present moment is to find ways to represent pain and to resist models of the body that blunt the political effectiveness of these representations” (61). The texts that comprise “the girls’ book” and sick-lit genres—texts that narrate experiences of chronic illness, disability, and pain—provide their readers entry into an already-existing discourse of pain. This discourse might be a productive resource that can be drawn upon to resist and expand the social-constructionist models of pain-as-liberation that Siebers identifies.

As Siebers argues in the essay “Tender Organs,” it is by telling stories that we forge connections with one another:

If we cannot tell our stories because they reflect badly on our personalities or make other people queasy, the end result will be greater isolation. For human beings make lives together by sharing their stories with each other. There is no other way for our kind. (47-8)

By even attempting to represent pain in language, the authors of texts like *Izzy Willy-Nilly* and *Homeroom Exercise* offer a model of a discourse of pain to their readers through a shared language and a narrative insistence on living, despite the persistence of pain.

In *The Hidden Adult*, Nodelman suggests that nearly all books for younger readers follow a similar pattern of home-away-home, where the protagonist must leave the comfort of home, either literally or metaphorically, in order to return with a greater understanding of the value and comfort of the home he or she left.<sup>170</sup> In the disability and illness narratives I have examined in this chapter, there is sometimes a literal loss of home when a character spends an extended period of time in the hospital. However, there is also a more subtle metaphor at play in many of these texts, where “home” is not simply the physical and/or emotional space of the family, but also one’s sense of being comfortable in one’s body. As Striegel describes Regan’s capitulation to pain in *Homeroom Exercise*:

It didn’t look as if positive thinking and working through the pain, as she had always done with her dancing, would work for this. She was no longer in control. Her body had betrayed her. (140)

Each of the characters in the texts I have examined in this chapter starts out in a body she knows and understands, one that blends seamlessly with her sense of self. Through the

experience of illness and/or disability, these characters' bodies become strange and other, unreliable and seemingly unknowable, and often painful, in much the same way that the adolescent body becomes strange in its transformation to adulthood. Just as in the time of Katy and Caddie, adolescence remains a fraught period, particularly for girls. The process of adjustment and acceptance—whether of disability or adulthood—provides a hard-won return to the “home” of the self and the body; perhaps, it even offers a shared vocabulary to cross the threshold of communicating the experience of pain.

## Chapter 5

### The Tourist

*At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.*

—Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*<sup>171</sup>

*...Betsy and Tacy, like Jo March, like Jane Eyre, like the precious few of our vivid girlhood heroes, are neither ahead nor behind their times. Their time is all time because they are about the inner pulse of desire, about the life of feelings and hope, they cannot go out of fashion unless longing itself does.*

—Patricia Hampl, *Keynote Address, Betsy-Tacy Convention, 1992*<sup>172</sup>

Though less widely known than other classic books for girls like *Little Women*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and the *Little House on the Prairie* series, Maud Hart Lovelace’s *Betsy-Tacy* series has a small but devoted following of women and girls. Written in the 1940s and 1950s, the *Betsy-Tacy* books tell the story of three girls’ shared childhood and entrance into adulthood, and are set primarily in the fictional town of Deep Valley, Minnesota, between 1897 and 1917. The books, and specifically the character of Betsy, are based closely on Lovelace’s own childhood and her high-school era journals. As I describe in earlier chapters, Lovelace’s texts provide a particularly useful look at girlhood, the transition that occurred with the emergence and consolidation of the figure of the “teenage girl” in the 1930s and 1940s<sup>173</sup>, and the role of journaling in autobiographical fiction. In this chapter, I place Lovelace’s texts in the context of the memorial culture that has sprung up around them in order to offer a unique focal point for a discussion of literary tourism and nostalgia.

Beginning with a “Betsy-Tacy” day in 1962, there has been a small but active group of *Betsy-Tacy* fans, several of whom have published guidebooks and supplementary materials for the novels.<sup>174</sup> Since the early 1990s, readers of the books have found one another through two separate appreciation societies: the Betsy-Tacy Society, and the Maud Hart Lovelace Society. Both groups have worked to commemorate the life of Lovelace,

undertaken advocacy and fundraising to keep her books in print, and helped restore and maintain Lovelace's childhood home in Mankato, MN, the primary setting of the first four *Betsy-Tacy* books. During their lifetimes, Lovelace and Lois Lenski, the illustrator of the first four books in the series, visited Mankato, donated materials related to the events depicted in the books and the creation of the books themselves, and corresponded with readers and appreciators of the books. Many of these objects and materials are on display in various locations in Mankato and attract a not-insignificant number of "literary tourists" each year.

Using the *Betsy-Tacy* series as a case study, I end my study with the figure of "The Tourist." I use the term "tourist" both to describe characters in the texts—for example, Betsy-as-tourist in Little Syria, Milwaukee, and Europe—as well as to describe participants in the culture of literary tourism in North America. In *Tourists of History*, memory studies scholar Marita Sturken writes:

The tourist is a figure who embodies a detached and seemingly innocent pose. In using the term "tourists of history" I am defining a particular mode through which the American public is encouraged to experience itself as the subject of history through consumerism, media images, souvenirs, popular culture, and museum and architectural reenactments, a form of tourism that has as its goal a cathartic "experience" of history. (16)

The ongoing popularity of books like *Little Women*, the *Betsy-Tacy* series, and *Anne of Green Gables*—and the remarkable memorial and consumer cultures that have sprung up around the books and their authors—speak to the continuing desire on the part of both child and adult readers to "take a trip" into the past.<sup>175</sup> By probing one example of this kind of literary tourism, we may come to understand this desire as more than just a simple longing for an earlier time. The deep connections formed between readers and texts that power literary

tourism offer insights into the relations of the self—to history, to experience, and to the passage of time. This is especially true with texts that address childhood and young adulthood, and the literal and figurative passage from innocence to experience. Readers return to the texts, and to the lives and physical locations that inspired the texts' authors, because they allow access to experiences that are nearly impossible to express: certain affective states that reflect a longing for longing—a nostalgia for desire.

### **MEMORY STUDIES AND NOSTALGIA**

One way to begin thinking about the complex relationships between readers, texts, and sites of literary tourism is to turn to the insights of memory studies. A number of historians and theorists have noted the “boom” in memory studies that began in the 1980s and continued into the succeeding decades, both globally and specifically in relation to American history and culture.<sup>176</sup> Marita Sturken's *Tourists of History* examines American culture in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Sturken situates these events in a larger context of American memorialization and commemoration, examining what she sees as specifically American investments in innocence and authenticity (4). One particularly troubling dynamic Sturken observes is the “disavowal of the role played in world politics by the United States, not simply as a world power, but as a nation with imperialist policies and an aspiration to empire” (7). This disavowal and its accompanying pose of innocence act as a means of shutting down discussion about the complicated causality behind traumatic events. Instead, traumatic events are mediated through consumer goods, museums, and reenactments, and one is encouraged to “experience history” through a cathartic form of tourism, predicated on a discourse of authenticity.

The concept of “nostalgia” appears frequently in texts on memory and culture, though often as an aside or as an unexamined category of remembering. Many analyses of nostalgia are negative; for example, Sturken describes something called “nostalgic kitsch,” which “is a form of remembrance that smoothes over the intensity of the experience of loss, selecting the ‘acceptable parts’ of an event and consolidating them into a memory that can forget the original intensity of a traumatic experience of loss” (20). Though sites of literary tourism are rarely the sites of national trauma, they are part of this larger practice of historical tourism and the smoothing over or shutting down of discussions of complicated historical causality. The innocent pose of the tourist offers a provocative connection to the innocence of the child readers and protagonists of children’s literature; however, an examination of tourism in the *Betsy-Tacy* series later in this chapter will illustrate that the position of child readers is complicated and, as Nodelman argues, suggests a certain kind of self-awareness or complicity in playing at innocence on the part of the reader. The tourist experiences depicted in the *Betsy-Tacy* series, as well as the protagonists’ contact with immigrants (as described by Claudia Mills and examined later in this chapter), may offer a more nuanced analysis of history and experience than that offered by Sturken in her examination of contemporary American tourism and nostalgia for the past.

As Nicholas Dames writes, in his explanation of the consistently negative invocation of nostalgia in critical theory: “A strong hermeneutic of suspicion, one with an excellent intellectual pedigree (from psychoanalysis or Marxism), refuses to succumb to the blandishments of nostalgia, and prefers instead to detect the manipulations of power behind those potential seductions” (270). And yet, if a recent special issue of the journal *Memory Studies* in which Dames’ article appeared is any indication, nostalgia is experiencing a renaissance of sorts.<sup>177</sup> As the guest editors of the summer 2010 issue of *Memory Studies* point

out, there is actually a sizable history of productive work on nostalgia and cultural memory dating back to the 1980s.<sup>178</sup> More than 15 years ago, Kathleen Stewart and Stuart Tannock both offered compelling evidence for the ways in which nostalgia can be used as a lens of inquiry, and how claims about the problems of nostalgia often hide a different kind of nostalgia that is either ignored or denied. Yet despite this history—Stewart’s “Nostalgia—a Polemic” was originally published in 1988—there exists little in the way of sustained studies of nostalgia. Svetlana Boym’s 2001 monograph, *The Future of Nostalgia*, is one of the only examples of a text devoted entirely to the concept of nostalgia, inside or beyond an American context.

For Boym, nostalgia has both positive and negative valences. Her vision of nostalgia does include “a utopian dimension,” but one that is “not directed toward the past... but rather sideways” (xiv). This utopian dimension also allows one to see the potential in the past, “unrealized possibilities, unpredictable turns and crossroads” (xvi). She argues that certain kinds of forward-looking nostalgia have both ethical and collective elements:

Consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales...

Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory. (xvi)

Boym, like many others, offers a typology for discerning the difference between two different kinds of nostalgia, something she hopes will “illuminate some of nostalgia’s mechanisms of seduction and manipulation” (xvii). Her typology includes two different kinds of nostalgia: the restorative and the reflective. The former is problematic. It sees itself as “truth and tradition” and is related to nationalism and religiosity, the return to origins and conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, puts truth into question, and is a kind of



“social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory” (xviii). Ultimately, *The Future of Nostalgia* is a deeply ambivalent look at the phenomena of nostalgia. As Boym suggests, with an echo of the pharmakon<sup>179</sup>:

Nostalgia can be both a social disease and a creative emotion, a poison and a cure. The dreams of imagined homelands cannot and should not come to life. They can have a more important impact on improving social and political conditions in the present as ideals, not as fairy tales come true. (354-5)

Perhaps the “sideways utopia” generated by nostalgia can serve as a bridge between personal and collective memory, cemented by the emotional experience of reading a text, like the *Betsy-Tacy* series, that impacts a reader’s understanding of both culture and memory.

### **BETSY, JO, AND LAURA: GUIDES TO AN INACCESSIBLE PAST**

At first glance, it might be easy to discount the *Betsy-Tacy* books as sentimental stories about girls set in a remote period of innocence, stories accessible only through the restorative nostalgia of adult readers who yearn for “simpler times.” In an article for *Victoria Magazine*, Perri Class describes the books as creating “the glow of a happy girlhood, happily remembered. A lovely turn-of-the-century world full of sleigh rides, fudge-making, and dance cards” (120). A similar charge—or praise?— could perhaps be leveled at nearly any book from the list of classic children’s books with a female protagonist. Little Laura Ingalls or Caddie Woodlawn may not have had the middle-class comforts of Betsy’s Deep Valley upbringing, but the privations of their settler lives are presented alongside and eclipsed by experiences of joy, wonder, personal growth, and, most importantly, the strength of family and the home. The March family struggles financially in *Little Women*, but theirs is a genteel poverty, caused in part by Mr. March’s commitment to service during the Civil War. In each

of these texts and many others, at least on the surface, home is a safe, happy space—even when the events taking place outside the home are frightening, dangerous, or simply confusing.

Lovelace's books have not reached the same level of popularity as other mid-century girls' books. They stand in contrast to a series like Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books. Adapted for film and TV and embraced by the contemporary home-schooling community, the *Little House* books have achieved a kind of cultural penetration that Lovelace's *Betsy-Tacy* books have not. I suspect there are a number of reasons for this. On the one hand, the events that unfold in the *Betsy-Tacy* books are quotidian in nature. While Betsy, Tacy, and Tib have adventures, they are the kind of fun, ordinary adventures that one expects of middle-class girls living in a small city. From ten-year-old Betsy's trips to the library on her own and appearance in a local play, to her high-school days of Shakespeare, Biology, and crushes on boys, Betsy's life is not especially different from the lives of suburban middle-class girls everywhere—even now—down to her frustration over stick straight hair and the gap between her front teeth. Ten-year-old Laura Ingalls, on the other hand, has to grapple with a different world. Though only a few decades removed from Betsy's comfortable Minnesota childhood, Laura lives in a way that is both more exciting than and further removed from the experiences of her reader. Perhaps this explains some of the appeal—Laura's life is still recognizable enough to be comforting, but foreign enough to be thrilling to girls reading from the comfort of their suburban (and urban) bedrooms and schools. In episodes like those from *The Long Winter*, Laura confronts life or death situations. Betsy, on the other hand, has to make decisions about which boy she will accompany to the winter dance, and whether or not she will participate in the annual essay contest. And yet, it is Betsy's clear-eyed self-analysis and perceptive observations that set her apart from her peers and from

protagonists like Laura Ingalls. She feels the passing of time keenly, and worries that she is squandering her time and talents. She gets caught up in crushes and social life, and then worries that she has allowed herself to be led away from what she perceives as a more authentic self, her writer-ly self.

Yet there must be more at stake than just Betsy's curls, or even Laura's struggle to survive at the edge of the frontier. Readers' passion for these texts, and their memories of reading (and re-reading) them, suggest a depth of longing that accompanies the reading experience. Is it simply a longing for the past? The term "nostalgia" is a neologism, combining two Greek roots in order to suggest "homesickness."<sup>180</sup> Originally used as a description for an illness that struck soldiers who became sick while stationed away from their home countries, the term has come to stand in as a kind of uncomplicated longing for the past.<sup>181</sup> And certainly the women who read the *Betsy-Tacy* series as children and now belong to the Betsy-Tacy Society experience a deep nostalgia through their interactions with the texts and their characters. But this particular nostalgia is not simply a longing for the Victorian setting of the books, for their own childhoods, or even for the innocence of childhood itself. A quick read of any of the *Betsy-Tacy* books, particularly those set during Betsy's teens and early 20s but also those set during her childhood, suggests a world rife with complications and the steady erosion of innocence.

In a page of undated notes from Lovelace's papers, she describes a key moment from her early life as a writer and her friendship with Bick Kenney, the model for the character "Tacy":

One of my early memories of [Bick] ties up with writing. We collaborated on a letter to God. When we met one evening, as had become our custom after supper,

Bickie's blue eyes did not have their usual sparkle. They were darkly tragically fearful as Irish eyes can be and I'm sure my own were popping.

Each of us, at her own supper table, had received the same impression. The world was going to pot. This was in the gay nineties, but they weren't always gay, and there must have been something in the evening paper which disturbed our fathers greatly. It could have been more of the Jacob Riis revelations or hot news from the Spanish American War but Bick and I had gathered that the world was wicked. Not of course Mankato, but the wide world beyond our circling hills. It was full of wicked people doing wicked things.<sup>182</sup>

Though "Deep Valley" offers a representation of idealized small-town life—complete with picnics, sleigh rides, and a quaint downtown—the texts grapple with the conflict between the seeming goodness of "Deep Valley" and the "wickedness" of the events occurring in the world beyond. This dynamic is complicated in the texts by Betsy's trips to Milwaukee and, later, Europe, as well as her relationship to the Syrian immigrants and "Little Syria" within "Deep Valley."

Yet despite the historical context of the stories, ultimately the deepest conflict in the series emerges from within Betsy herself: her struggle to define her own identity in relation to others, her love of writing and her efforts to be disciplined, and her sense of longing for the past and acknowledgement of its utter inaccessibility. She is not simply "Betsy Ray: Poetess,"<sup>183</sup> but also "Betsy Ray: Philosopher." Many of the adult women who treasure these books are cognizant of these elements of the text. They describe re-reading the texts periodically (even annually); they pass the books onto their friends, daughters, nieces, and granddaughters. The books serve both as models for their own self-narrative and as a kind of temporal marker for the years of their lives. And they speak unselfconsciously, even

reverently, about the texts' ability to make them *feel* and bring them to tears.<sup>184</sup> They are quick to point out that they are not necessarily crying tears of sadness, but tears of revelation and acceptance, about the beauty and possibility of experience and reflection.<sup>185</sup> Remarkably similar stories and testimony are featured in studies of other girls' classics, especially *Little Women*.<sup>186</sup> These readers see and feel their own experiences of subjectivity reflected in the protagonists of these texts.

Adult readers have written about their relationships to these girls' books in both scholarly works and popular media. These accounts frequently describe a practice of reading and re-reading these texts and the emotional response to certain kinds of highly-charged realizations that accompany their readings: the fleeting nature of life and youth, the necessity of recognizing and staying true to one's authentic self, the inevitability of certain life experiences, particularly the bittersweet or ambivalent emotions that accompany "growing up." Passing these books onto a new generation becomes a way both to pass on a narrative structure for how to become a woman and to offer the potential for an experience of deep affective power. In this way, girls' books are a creative (and) ideological apparatus for transmitting narratives and social practices—of girlhood in particular and of American culture in general.

#### **"THE WINDING HALL OF FATE"**

In order to investigate the draw of the *Betsy-Tacy* books, and the phenomenon of literary tourism, I attended a Betsy-Tacy Convention—titled "The Winding Hall of Fate"<sup>187</sup>—held in Minneapolis and Mankato, Minnesota, in July of 2012. This convention, a semi-annual event that began in 1992, celebrates the life and work of author Maud Hart Lovelace, and focuses on the *Betsy-Tacy* series and related novels like *Emily of Deep Valley* and *Carney's House*

*Party*. Attendees of the 2012 convention included children, teenagers, young women, older women, mother-daughter and grandmother-granddaughter pairs, and a few husbands and boyfriends. The Betsy-Tacy convention is not a scholarly conference. But many of the attendees are careful readers of Lovelace's work, and the panels and presentations that are interspersed between social activities and historical sightseeing feature authors and academics. In addition to the main events at the Mankato convention center—author talks, scholarly presentations, meals, games, and historical photographs—optional activities included tours of the Minneapolis neighborhood where Lovelace and her family lived, and trips to locations near Mankato and Minneapolis that appear in the *Betsy-Tacy* series.

The conference began, perhaps surprisingly, at the end: the first day's activities in Minneapolis took place in locations related to the final two books in the series, *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*. Conference attendees met at the Doubletree Hotel near the Mall of America early Thursday morning. We each received a name tag and boarded one of three coaches that would take us to sites in the Minneapolis area and then, later that night, to Mankato—or “Deep Valley.” The first stop was the neighborhood near 25th and Lake Streets, near Lake Harriet and the Lake of the Isles in southwest Minneapolis. This is the neighborhood the Hart family—Maud, her sisters Helen and Kathleen, and her parents Stella and Tom—moved to after leaving Mankato. This is the same neighborhood where the Ray family lives after leaving “Deep Valley,” as well as where Betsy and Joe begin their married life in *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*. Several volunteers led us around in small groups to see homes that had belonged to members of the Hart family. We each received a small booklet entitled “Take a Walk on the Maud Side.” Inside the book, under the heading “Maud's Neighborhood,” were images of homes on Bryant Avenue, Colfax Avenue, West 25th Street, and Aldrich Avenue. These homes were each correlated with the

homes presented in the final two books of the *Betsy-Tacy* series. We were led to the home at 2533 Colfax, which had belonged to Maud Hart's uncle Jim Hart, and was used as the model for the home in which Betsy and Joe are married in *Betsy's Wedding*. On another page the booklet lists the Hart/Lovelace homes in Minneapolis, which include 905 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street—known as 909 Hazel Street in the books—which was the Hart family home in Minneapolis. Lovelace herself grappled with the disconnect between the “reality” of 905 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street and the needs of the narrative, writing in her notes for *Betsy's Wedding*, “...pictures of 905 show: trees still have leaves although there are some leaves on lawn; daddy's vine; the little porch wasn't built yet but I'll pretend it was and cover it with morning glories which could still be in bloom” (2).

On Aldrich Avenue South there is the apartment building at 2400, known in the books as the “Bow Street apartment”—the first apartment that Betsy and Joe live in after their marriage, and also Maud and Delos Lovelace's first apartment. The current resident of this apartment on Aldrich, a young woman, was kind enough to let numerous attendees of the convention tour the interior of her apartment. While it was much the same as in *Betsy's Wedding*, nearly everyone remarked on its small size. We had not imagined it had been as tiny as the apartment we visited; however, everything else was just as Maud (or Betsy) had described.

Under the title “The Canoe Place House” was an image of the home at 1109 West 25th Street. This page included a quote from *Betsy's Wedding*:

The brown and yellow cottage was set on a very small lot. It didn't have a barn or garage. At the back rose the back of a tall apartment building, but there were only

houses on Canoe Place itself. There were maple trees along it, and the cottage had a neat lawn, cut into by a walk leading to the porch. (155)

Though this home is in actuality located on 25th Street between Emerson Avenue and Dupont Avenue South, the description that Maud provides in *Betsy's Wedding* places it closer to Lake of the Isles, possibly on Lake Place; also, the exterior and interior description of this home on West 25th are identical to the “Canoe Place House” that Betsy and Joe rent and then purchase in *Betsy's Wedding*. The tour also included several other homes that play important roles in *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*, including the Wakefield house—home of Lillian Hammons and Harry B. Wakefield, who introduced Maud to Delos—as well as the Buhl home on Lyndale Avenue—home of Marietta and Earl Buhl and the violent study club, a writing group that plays an important role in Betsy’s development as a writer in *Betsy's Wedding*.

The tour guides took great pains to point out the differences in location between the actual houses and their fictional counterparts. However, they also stressed the similarities, and the way Lovelace had captured the homes in her writing, particularly in *Betsy's Wedding*. The Bow Street apartment was a special highlight for many convention attendees, even though they had to wait to enter the apartment in small groups. I heard many comments about the thrill of being able to see the interior of the apartment, and how closely it resembled the descriptions in the text. The current resident of the apartment was on hand to witness the many *Betsy-Tacy* fans passing through her hall. In the tiny entryway to the apartment, above a rack holding her shoes, she had placed a framed print of the covers of the first four *Betsy-Tacy* books. I asked her if she had been a fan of the books as a child, or if she had known about her apartment’s history prior to moving in. She said she had not, but



after being contacted by the Maud Hart Lovelace Society she had visited the Betsy-Tacy Houses in Mankato and purchased the print to reflect her home's history.

The final stop on the walking tour was Mueller Park, located on 25th Street between Bryant and Colfax, and also the location of the heart family home at 905 West 25th Street. This home was torn down in the 1960s in order to build Mueller Park. More recently the Maud Hart Lovelace society had a stone and a plaque placed in the park at the location of the Hart family home. The sky was gray and the mood solemn as convention-goers passed the memorial plaque on their way to pick up boxed lunches and continue on to the next scheduled event.

#### **LITERARY DETECTIVES AND THE HAUNTING OF HISTORY**

The nostalgia and literary tourism surrounding the *Betsy-Tacy* books is in no way an isolated phenomenon. In fact, other texts, such as the *Little House* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, have a much longer history of literary tourism. In her memoir/travelogue *The Wilder Life*, writer Wendy McClure documents what she calls her “adventures in the lost world of *Little House on the Prairie*.” In the wake of her mother’s death from cancer, McClure returns to Laura Ingalls Wilder’s books seemingly accidentally. She is swept up in the experience of re-reading the books as an adult, which leads to a minor obsession with the physical locations where the books are set, and the “real life” events that shaped Wilder’s fictionalized narrative.

McClure’s memoir of her pursuit of “the Laura experience” is suffused with palpable nostalgia—a longing for the past. Yet it is not nostalgia simply for an earlier time—it is also longing that is tied up in a tangled web of childhood, history, narrative, and the imaginary world of the *Little House* books. McClure, much like the attendees of the Betsy-Tacy Convention, is not necessarily nostalgic for the historical period depicted by the books, nor

is she particularly nostalgic for her own childhood, though she takes great pleasure in remembering the feeling she got from reading the books as a child. In remarking on the books' influence on her childhood, McClure focuses on two notable elements. One is what she calls the "thing-i-ness" of the books—the sort of zoom effect that leaves one with a clear memory of particular details from the texts: Laura's corncob doll, the leeches in Plum Creek, the latch on the door of the sod house. The other quality McClure describes is one that is difficult to pin down in language. She calls it "Laura World," and describes it as a place of heightened awareness—a sense of the "now" that is about space, place, self, the passage of time, and the weightiness of experience. McClure is nostalgic for the historical-imaginary world she created through her experience of reading the books. It is nostalgia for a world that exists solely in her own mind—an inseparable mixture of Wilder's stories and McClure's imaginative re-creation of those stories. This is not the colloquial nostalgia for an earlier, simpler time, but rather the nostalgia of which Svetlana Boym writes: "a longing for a home ...that never existed" (xiv).

Whereas scholars of memory and nostalgia, like Boym and Frederic Jameson, seem to fixate on binaries of authenticity and inauthenticity that suggest there might be a neutral (rather than ideological) reading of the past, literary tourists have a much more capacious view of what constitutes "authenticity." Their vision of the past is informed by their understanding of the historical specifics that produced the text, the author's re-presentation of that history, and their own imaginative world-making based on the details the author provides in the text. Though on the surface this appears to be a nostalgia for "the past," it is not simply for the past as it occurred, but for a past that is mediated through two (or more) re-presentations. Much enjoyment is derived from visiting sites that have been restored to a particularly important historical period—for instance, "Betsy's" home on Center Street in

Mankato has been restored to appear much as it might have during the years that Maud and the Hart family lived there (1895-1906) and visitors delight in the tableaux that curators have created by using Lenski's illustrations for the first half of the *Betsy-Tacy* series. But *Betsy-Tacy* readers who visit Mankato and Minneapolis also take great pleasure in finding the disconnects and lacunae in "Betsy World." For example, the story of Maud and Delos's meeting is no less interesting or romantic to them, despite the fact that it diverges sharply from Betsy and Joe's story as high-school sweethearts. There is satisfaction to be found in tracing the edges of Lovelace's inventions, and seeing where fact and fiction intersect and diverge.

From Mueller Park, the location of the absent yet memorialized Hart family home, conference attendees picked up their box lunches and returned to the coaches to be taken to Minnehaha Falls for a picnic lunch. Following lunch we were bussed to the University of Minnesota's Walter Andersen library for presentation by two authors of works related to Lovelace and the *Betsy-Tacy* books. In addition to the convention presentation, the exhibit space in the Anderson library was devoted to works of children's literature from the Kerlan collection. Several shelves of a large case were dedicated solely to Lovelace and the *Betsy-Tacy* books. These included first editions, handwritten and typed notes by Lovelace, and other ephemera, including personal photographs and promotional materials related to the publication of the books.<sup>188</sup>

The speakers that afternoon were Heather Vogel Frederick, author of the *Mother-Daughter Book Club* series, whose latest novel features *Betsy in Spite of Herself*, and Amy Dolnick Rechner, author of *Between Deep Valley and the Great World* and *Future in a Hand Basket*. Vogel Frederick spoke of coming to the *Betsy-Tacy* books late in life. She had somehow missed reading them as a child and it was not until later, at the urging of friends

(who included librarians and children's authors), that she read the *Betsy-Tacy* series and decided to feature them in her own series of novels. Rechner's presentation, comically entitled "Betsy's Vampire Wedding: Sucking the Life Out of Autobiographical Fiction," focused on the futures and unwritten history of some of the individuals who became characters in the later books in the *Betsy-Tacy* series.

In *Between Deep Valley and the Great World*, Rechner outlines the connections (and lapses) between Lovelace's experiences in Minneapolis and the story she tells of Betsy's early 20s. During her talk, Rechner suggested that this kind of historical work—finding the discrepancies between the historical record and the literary narrative—actually amplifies readers' pleasure as they note the details that Lovelace likely intentionally omitted or changed. She spoke of the differences between Bick Kenny and her fictional counterpart "Tacy Kelly," citing the fact that her marriage occurred much later than the novels suggest. She also carefully noted some of the less-happy circumstances of the real-life members of Betsy's crowd. This included bad and unhappy marriages, the loss of loved ones in World War I, the death of children, and economic and professional failures and uncertainty. For example, the happy marriage of Julia to the musician Paige, depicted in *Betsy's Wedding*, was based on Kathleen Hart's second marriage to Frohman Foster, not her difficult first marriage to Eugene Bibb. In a letter to her cousin Marjorie Austin Freeman about her writing career, Lovelace writes: "Many, although not all, of the characters [in the *Betsy-Tacy* books] are based on real people. In making plots, I have invented freely but usually the invention sprang from fact" (iv). It is this very space between invention and fact that fans of the books (who sometimes take the appellation "Maudies") so delight in exploring at an event like the Betsy-Tacy Convention. Toward the end of her talk, Rechner remarked on the humorous title of her presentation, and the ways in which knowing too much about the real-

life characters who inspired Lovelace's fictional world might have a negative impact on one's enjoyment of the texts. Ultimately, however, she concluded that she and other fans felt that their reading was only enriched by the additional layer of knowledge that studying the "real lives" of Maud's characters could bring. Knowing about the real-life stories of Bick Kenny, the inspiration for Tacy, or Midge Gerlach, the inspiration for Tib, could never destroy the magic of Lovelace's invented world.

Rechner's title was also in part a jab at the popularity of books like *Twilight* with YA readers, but her recourse to the supernatural hints at a useful way of imagining these spaces between invention and reality. If we are to borrow from this realm of the supernatural, the figure of the ghost (and its central activity of haunting) provide us with a productive metaphor for thinking through the relation between the reader, collective memory, and the text. Re-released in 2008, Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting in the Sociological Imagination* (1997) offers an interdisciplinary engagement with issues of collective memory and absence. The book begins with Gordon's assertion that "life is complicated," a statement that insists on offering "complex personhood" to others, an ethical practice that she seems to suggest is missing from most sociological methodologies (an analysis that might easily be extended to other disciplines).<sup>189</sup> Though the texts Gordon examines take as their subject fin-de-siècle Vienna, 1970s Argentina and the Desaparecidos, and the history of slavery and its aftermath in the southern United States, she sees her project as one that is engaged in a specifically American project of cultural analysis:

[That life is complicated] is a theoretical statement that invites us to see with portentous clarity into the heart and soul of American life and culture, to track events, stories, anonymous and history-making actions to their density, to the point

where we might catch a glimpse of what Patricia Williams calls ‘the vast networking of our society’ and imagine otherwise. (5)

Though Gordon’s training is as a sociologist, in *Ghostly Matters* she turns to literary texts and textual analysis to try to understand how loss and absence continue to haunt the present. At the heart of Gordon’s inquiry is the interrogation of both method and epistemology. In the opening chapter, she describes the work of haunting, suggesting it is a “constituent element of modern social life” and that it is part of the functioning of cultural or collective memory, “neither pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis; it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great import” (7). Studying social phenomena, Gordon suggests, requires a certain kind of confrontation with the “ghostly aspects” of these phenomena. And, Gordon continues, the “confrontation requires (or produces) a fundamental change in the way we know and make knowledge, in our mode of production” (7). Gordon tackles the question of knowledge-making throughout the text, searching for a way to escape fixed notions of “truth” and what she calls “the limits of the already understandable” (195). She borrows the phrase “sympathetic magic” from Michael Taussig to describe the position that allows for the collapse of the representation and the thing represented. She writes: “a kind of sympathetic magic is necessary because in the world and between us as analysts and the worlds we encounter to translate into world-making words are hauntings, ghosts, and gaps, seething absences, and muted presences” (21). Without this kind of change of position, one cannot see the marginal and absent as they are still present; one cannot “approach the intermingling of fact, fiction, and desire as it shapes us and the public knowledge we create” (195). While not a full turn away from representationalism, Gordon’s observations line up both those of other scholars in the field of memory studies, as well as those in certain areas

of feminist theory who argue for a reevaluation of representations and/or a move away from the modernist obsession with representation and the mediation of so-called “reality.”

Though on the surface it might seem like “Maudies” are seeking some exhaustive excavation of the past, where the details of the *Betsy-Tacy* books line up neatly with the details of Lovelace’s life, I think it is a reductive reading of the work of memory and nostalgia that takes place. They are not looking to “prove” that the events of the texts actually took place; they are instead trying to come in closer contact with the intense feelings that the texts produce. They are attempting to access the “sympathetic magic” of Lovelace’s world-making; one way to do this is to see, and touch, and experience the real life places and objects that inspire the texts. When readers join with other fans of the texts, this project becomes one of public, shared, world-making. The magic of “Betsy World” (and the deep emotions it triggers) are no longer the solitary experience of a single reader, but an experience shared by many readers, as they traverse the spaces and places of the texts together and explore the “intermingling of fact, fiction, and desire” (Gordon 195) that occur in these locations, as in the books themselves.

Like Sturken, Gordon comments on contemporary political and social life in the United States, while also offering careful readings of both historically close and distant events and phenomena. Sturken and Gordon are not simply trying to excavate the way memory functioned in the past; they are commenting on the ways the past is being used to explain the present and to imagine the possibilities for the future. It is this same process of using the past as explanation and inspiration, albeit in a slightly different form, that brings women and girls to Minneapolis and Mankato to visit the Betsy-Tacy Houses and other sites depicted in the books.

## BETSY VS. EMILY

Following the presentations and, of course, a book signing, we returned to the coaches for our trip to Mankato, roughly 90 minutes southwest of Minneapolis. We were left to our own devices for dinner that evening and reconvened with other conference attendees for an ice cream social at 7 PM. An introduction to the convention followed shortly thereafter, with a welcome by conference organizer Barb Fecteau. Barb's opening speech was interrupted by a *Betsy-Tacy* flash mob, wherein about 20 convention attendees donned hats and boas and marched to the stage to dance to "In the Good Old Summertime." As a first-time attendee, I found it a little overwhelming. All these women and a few men already knew one other, and—other than my own mother, who was attending with me, and a few people we met on the bus that day—I didn't know anyone there. I had no idea what was coming next. As Barb left the stage, Jennifer Davis Kay was introduced to begin icebreaker activities. But before she began the first activity, she regaled us with a story of her encounter with one of the "Steiner Boys," a grandson of Jab Lloyd, the figure who served as inspiration for Cab, and member of Betsy's crowd in the high-school books. Davis Kay described seeing Pete Steiner in the parking lot of a local steakhouse and running up to him shrieking "A Steiner Boy! A Steiner boy!" She noted that she is happily married and probably in his 60s. But that did not dim her enthusiasm at seeing a real-life descendant of Maud's fictional world.

After Kay Davis' breathless introduction, I was a bit terrified of what might be expected of me during the icebreaker activity. Luckily, we simply moved to different tables to begin a discussion about which *Betsy-Tacy* character we most identified with. Here again, I was surprised by the Maudies, and their complex reading and identification practices. The occupants of my table were all women, though we ranged in age from roughly late teens to early seventies. Some of us had grown up with *Betsy-Tacy*; others had discovered the books



when they were parents or teachers; still others found them simply by happenstance. When the moderator asked everyone to name the character we felt closest to, I fully expected most of the women to name Betsy. After all, she is the heroine, and Maud's literary alter ego. While there were a few Betsys, and a few Tacys and Tibs in the room, the majority of attendees chose Emily, the heroine of *Emily of Deep Valley*, a book in which Betsy appears only as a minor character. When I asked why, they were quick to answer that there is something about Betsy that is too perfect—despite her sometimes harsh self-evaluation, she's popular, and smart, and glamorous. Emily, on the other hand, is bookish and plain, prone to melancholy, and burdened by her family responsibilities. Many agreed that Emily's outlook and struggles more closely resembled their own.

Lovelace recognized that Betsy was a more glamorous version of her younger self, and said as much in letters to friends and family. In a 1964 letter to Marjorie Austin Freeman, Lovelace writes: "Betsy is like me except that, of course, I glamorized her to make her a proper heroine" (iii-iv).<sup>190</sup> While this doesn't make the reading experience any less profound for Maudies, it does make Betsy, with her polished edges, a harder character with whom to identify. Emily, on the other hand, was based on Lovelace's high school friend Marguerite Marsh, an iconoclastic figure who served for 16 months in France with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division during World War I and charted her own path in New York City before dying young.<sup>191</sup> Yet Lovelace doesn't romanticize Marsh-as-Emily; she uses the text to present a deeply thoughtful, sometimes melancholic heroine, while also offering a story that highlights the need for compassion and tolerance toward Middle-Eastern immigrants, a story that resonates with many of Lovelace's child and adult readers.

The remainder of the Mankato portion of the conference was devoted to three major activities: visits to *Betsy-Tacy*-related sites in Mankato, nearby, social and philanthropic events,

and a series of conference-style presentations on topics related to literary reception and publication. For me, the conference-style presentations were one of the most interesting parts of the convention. Topics included Betsy-as-feminist, immigrant and minority perspectives in Lovelace's work, and notable writer-ly heroines in other classic children's books. Interspersed between these talks were slideshows by local historians and author talks by several of the writers who wrote introductions to the new HarperCollins editions of the *Betsy-Tacy* series. Though the audience consisted primarily of non-academics, the presentations—extremely well-attended—offered complex readings of Lovelace's works, and sparked animated discussions in the question-and-answer periods.

#### **OTHERNESS AND THE TOURIST IN BETSY'S WORLD**

Dr. Claudia Mills' presentation, "*Deep Valley is Not My Native Heath: Immigrants in Mankato*," focused on two immigrant groups presented in Lovelace's texts: "Syrian" and German. In her presentation, Mills noted that the Syrians of "Little Syria" were in fact a sizeable population of Lebanese Christians who immigrated to Mankato and settled in an area south of Downtown Mankato. The early *Betsy-Tacy* books feature a number of scenes where Betsy, Tacy, and Tib interact with the younger residents of Little Syria, delighting in their customs and inviting them to social events, often to the consternation of their parents and older siblings. *Emily of Deep Valley* offers a more nuanced portrait of the families living in Little Syria, highlighting the social struggles of the school-age children, and the challenges faced by the adults who wished to learn and master English. German immigrants also play an important role in the texts, most notably in the figures of Tib Muller's maternal and paternal grandparents. Again, we are introduced to these characters twice, first from the

childhood perspective of Betsy when she first meets Tib, and then again, when she spends Christmas with Tib's extended family in Milwaukee as an older adolescent.

In her talk, Mills argued that while Lovelace had provided an accurate look into the customs and practices of these two immigrant groups, she had, unfortunately, perpetuated a myth that is not supported by the historical record, by suggesting that both the Syrians and Germans had immigrated to the U.S. primarily to escape political and social persecution. The real reason, Mills argued, was the chance to improve their economic standing, not to escape persecution. By focusing on the religious and political aspects, Lovelace offered a consistent view of the positive freedoms associated with the United States and American citizenship that was not necessarily supported by the actual motives of the immigrants themselves.

This mismatch between historical evidence and Lovelace's texts is surprising. As evidenced by her notes and letters to friends and relatives, Lovelace was a meticulous researcher, utilizing the resources of the Blue Earth Historical Society, interviews, and publications from the period to ensure that every detail down to song titles and fashions was appropriate to the setting. In fact, in preparation for writing about the cultural practices of "Little Syria," Lovelace did a great deal of research, and spent time with several Lebanese children and their families in the New York area (these experiences also became the basis of the stand-alone book *The Trees Kneel at Christmas* [1951]). In a series of letters from 1942, letters now housed at the Blue Earth Historical Society, Lovelace corresponded with Howard Williams about the history of Syrians in Mankato in preparation for *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*. In one letter, she notes her own confusion about their history and culture and her desire to include the correct details in her text:

I have found out ... that they are Syrians, and not Armenians, as I used to think; also that they are Catholics (I should think they would be Moslems). What I want especially to know is what language they spoke, what part of Syrian they came from, what native customs, if any, they brought to Mankato.<sup>192</sup>

In his reply, Williams stresses the Syrian's economic incentive for moving to the U.S.: "Like most immigrants, these people came to the United States upon hearing of the free land and the opportunity for greater wealth than that to which they were accustomed to."<sup>193</sup> Clearly, then, Lovelace understood that the Syrians had primarily come to Mankato because of a desire to achieve economic mobility and own land. Was her decision to focus on religious and cultural freedom a vestige of her childhood perceptions? Was it supported by later interviews conducted by Lovelace with Syrian immigrants? Or was it an intentional choice to shift attention from the economic to the personal and religious freedoms that the United States represented?

Lovelace focuses on a similar theme of political and religious freedom in her treatment of the family of Marjorie "Midge" Gerlach ("Tib Muller"), first in *Betsy-Tacy and Tib*, and later in *Betsy in Spite of Herself*. The Gerlach/Muller Family moves back to Milwaukee before Betsy, Tacy, and Tib begin high school. During her sophomore year, Betsy is invited by the Mullers to stay with them in Milwaukee over the Christmas holiday, where she is introduced to Tib's extended family, and the customs of a German Christmas. Mr. Ray describes Milwaukee as "so German that it's like a foreign city" (463) and goes on to tell Betsy that she must learn about the city before she visits:

It was built by Germans, mostly...Germans and Austrians and Bohemians and Poles... who didn't like the old country ways. They had the good sense to come to America.

The Germans brought a lot of Germany with them, but it was mostly the good part. Singing societies, and coffee cake, and Christmas trees. (464)

On the train on the way to Milwaukee, Betsy reveals the research she has done, noting Milwaukee's founding by a French Canadian and the subsequent arrival of European immigrants:

In Europe, through those years, a great hope had swelled that the people could rid themselves of despotic rulers. Starting in France in 1848, a series of revolutions had gone off like a string of firecrackers. But in Germany and Austria the revolts had been quickly crushed, and many of the brave men who had started them had fled to the new world, to Milwaukee in Wisconsin. Forty-eighters, they were called.

More men followed from Germany, and Austria (including Bohemia, an unwilling part of Austria), and other European countries. They were very industrious, skilled in many trades; and they made Milwaukee a prosperous, well-governed city. But more than most immigrants, they had clung to homeland ways. (480-1)

In her letters and interviews, Lovelace frequently returns to the fact that the *Betsy-Tacy* books are based on her childhood and youth. She describes her process as “frank borrowing”<sup>194</sup> and using “the actual facts just as a springboard.”<sup>195</sup> In a letter to Marion Willard (“Carney,” in the books), Lovelace describes her approach: “all the characters with any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, will be handled with loving kindness.”<sup>196</sup> But was her treatment of immigrants a white-washing of history? Is Lovelace intentionally crafting a narrative that goes against the historical record? On the surface, one might accuse Lovelace of indulging in what Boym calls “restorative nostalgia”: bolstering a vision of a patriotic yet accepting past-America that privileges personal freedom above all else. One way to achieve

this aim might be to change facts to support an overarching ideology of America as the land of opportunity and acceptance.

But what if there is something more complicated at stake? What if Lovelace is engaging in a kind of active reframing of history in the context of current events, and perhaps even commenting on contemporary attitudes through a kind of “restorative” nostalgia? It is important to note that *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill* (where the Syrian immigrants of Deep Valley are first introduced in detail) was first published in 1942, and *Betsy In Spite of Herself* (where Betsy visits Milwaukee and is introduced to German immigrant customs) was published in 1946. This means that both texts were written during World War II, and Lovelace had to find a way to provide a nuanced vision of Syrian immigrants in a climate of deep distrust toward many immigrant groups, and to make the German immigrant families of Milwaukee sympathetic to an American audience that considered Germany to be the enemy. During the 1940s, the policies of the 1921 immigration quotas and the 1924 National Origins Act continued to limit the number of immigrants who entered the U.S. These policies, which were in place until 1965, prevented many immigrants from Eastern Europe from entering the United States during World War II. Moreover, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, FDR suspended naturalization proceedings for Japanese, German, and Italian immigrants, and Congress refused to raise quotas to allow additional German and Jewish war refugees entry.

By understanding the social and political context in which she was writing, it is perhaps easier to see why Lovelace focused on the political and religious freedom that immigrants to the U.S. sought, rather than emphasizing the economic opportunities (or other motivations) that the U.S. represented. By describing German immigrants as those who had been punished for attempting to “rid themselves of despotic leaders” in their home

country, Lovelace makes German culture more palatable for an American audience, and presents a consistent picture of the U.S. as a place where immigrants are offered access to the same freedoms that native-born citizens enjoy.

Children's author Mitali Perkins spoke at the convention about Lovelace's treatment of immigrants, and the texts' ability to transcend time, geography, and ethnicity. In her foreword to a new edition of *Emily of Deep Valley*, Perkins describes her experience reading the *Betsy-Tacy* books on loan from the Flushing branch of the New York City Public Library shortly after her family's arrival in the U.S.:

It didn't take me long to find Maud Hart Lovelace's concoctions. Her classic novels served as a superb orientation for a newcomer eager to understand the history and heritage of a new world. They took me back to the early 1900s, a time when America shared many of the values that resonated in my old world home, but they also sparkled with timeless humor that made me laugh out loud on the fire escape.

I was starting to see that the best stories blended three main ingredients: people, place, and plot. Mrs. Lovelace's books had all three, but her characters easily danced off the pages into my friend-hungry heart. (vii)

She goes on to describe her identification with Emily and with the Syrians of *Emily of Deep Valley*:

The dilemma of the Syrian families in Deep Valley is intertwined with Emily's internal transformation in the novel's plot. Persecuted in their home country for religious beliefs, these newcomers are struggling to make a living and to become part of the Deep Valley community. ...Maybe that too explains why I love *Emily of Deep*

*Valley* so much. Yes, I was Emily, like every girl, but I was also Yusef, Kalil, and Layla, longing for a warm American welcome. (xi)

\* \* \*

The convention ended formally in Mankato with a question-and-answer session with descendants of the real-life figures who inspired the characters that populate “Deep Valley.” The joy and gratitude they expressed—at being invited to attend the conference and at being asked to share their memories—was moving in its depth and intensity. To the convention attendees, these individuals served as literal emissaries to an inaccessible past: inaccessible in its historical distance, but also in its fictionalization. This was nostalgia for a past that never existed, except in the space between historical fact, Lovelace’s text, and the reader’s imagination—a space where history, culture, and memory overlap.

In trying to describe the relation of culture to memory, Kathleen Stewart offers the following metaphor, suggesting the ontological confusion that nostalgia can create: “This ‘culture’ is not a realm of collective discourses to mediate between us ‘in here’ and the world ‘out there’ but more a kind of tension on the surface of the water that both keeps us afloat and binds us to the surface. We see it as it is when we see it not as a symbolic system but as structures of feeling that have the quality of a wake that comes after a movement” (231). Offering a similar analysis, Susannah Radstone describes the work of nostalgia in terms that bring it very close to Gordon’s “sympathetic magic.” Radstone writes:

Nostalgia constitutes a transitional phenomenon. As both cultural materiality and affect and desire, it troubles the boundary between “inside” and “outside.” As both a sociological perspective and an object of study it muddles the borders between subject and object, and in its most straightforward sense as homesickness and longing for times past, it melds time with space. (187-8)



Rather than becoming mired in the problem of representation (and/versus reality), nostalgia may offer a compelling way to interpret the “structures of feeling” that permeate American life and culture and spill into the broader world. Particularly when it comes to literature for children, using nostalgia as a lens of inquiry may offer insight into the hopes and desires that adult writers—and society at large—hold for their child readers, the uncomfortable relationship between innocence and knowledge that emerges in the figure of the child reader, and the kinds of stories about that past that are deemed worth remembering by future generations.

Tourists who come to Mankato seeking Betsy and Tacy are not only tourists of place, they are also tourists of time and of history. Yet their goal is not the flattening or uncomplicating of history, as Marita Sturken argues in *Tourists of History*. The literary tourists who come to see the Betsy-Tacy Houses, and to overlay their memories of Lovelace’s books with the geography of modern Mankato, are attempting to grasp a past—part historical, part imaginary—that is equally inaccessible to all of us due to the sheer fact of chronology. Lovelace’s texts provide a primer that offers a shared history for life in a small city at the turn of the twentieth century and through to the First World War. But the texts do not simply record what readers know to be true; in addition, they shape individual and collective memory of events, social and political configurations, and civic and family traditions. Lovelace’s painstaking work to recreate the historical reality of her young life makes the novels historical. But Betsy’s story, and Emily’s as well, offer lessons glimpsed through the hindsight of half a century, and two World Wars. These are books about recognizing the passing of time. They are also stories that offer a method for appreciating tradition while simultaneously grappling with innovation and social change; no tradition is worth keeping if it cannot grow to accommodate that which follows. A visit to Mankato, and

the Betsy-Tacy Houses, allows one to touch the past while still longing for the moments yet to come. To be haunted by the past is also to be deeply invested in the future.

## Epilogue

*To please adults, you must pretend to a childish innocence you no longer possess. You must, in effect, enact childhood for an audience of adults who, the story has suggested, expect and want you to do so.*  
 –Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*<sup>197</sup>

The bulk of this study focuses on texts that are produced and consumed as products of mass culture. And for the past 150 years, American mass culture has predominately, and often unreflexively, offered narratives set in the culture of white, middle-class Americans. This is particularly true in the case of literature for young people. As a result, there is a notable absence of narratives about the experiences of poor children, immigrant children, children with disabilities, or children of color. And when the lives of these children are represented, they are almost always done so in a way that is deemed appropriate for an audience of white, middle-class children, and in narratives that privilege assimilation and acculturation to hegemonic norms. Though I turned my attention to narratives of illness and disability in chapter 4, as well as non-normative sexuality and gender in Young Adult literature, particularly in chapters 2 and 3, and devoted a section of chapter 5 to representations of immigrants, I have not had the time or space to address the meager presence—and often remarkable absence—of race/ethnicity and socio-economic status in children’s literature at any length. I hope to return to this issue in future scholarship.

Parents and educators often speak about children needing books with protagonists to whom they can “relate,” or who “reflect their reality.” However, rather than ensuring a more diverse range of stories and characters, this assertion tends to be used to bolster negative conclusions like “boys won’t read books with female protagonists.” Furthermore, despite this perceived need that children’s literature “reflect reality,” the majority of books

published for children and adolescents continue to depict a reality that is solidly white and middle class. According to a recent study by the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin, of 3,200 books for children published in the United States in 2013 that were submitted to the center, fewer than 250 were about people of color. This means more than 90% of children's books published last year feature white protagonists. Despite the fact that "Non-Hispanic Whites" make up only 63.7% of the U.S. population, according to 2010 census data,<sup>198</sup> children's books continue to offer a vision of childhood that is almost entirely absent of people of color. As Caroline Levander and Carol Singley note in their introduction to *The American Child*, feminist, post-structuralist, and postcolonial scholarship has done an excellent job of "[challenging] the assumption of the generic child" and complicating the child's role as either personified innocence or deviance (5). Yet in spite of these developments, the "white middle-class fantasy" of an Enlightenment notion of "the pure or innocent child" (5) continues to dominate narrative texts for children. This leaves "poor, disabled, or orphaned children or children of color" to "occupy marginalized positions in relation to more idealized versions of childhood" (5)—consigned to historical fiction, or condemned to serve the "second fiddle" role. Meanwhile, publishers hide behind vague pronouncements about "the Market" to explain why so few books with non-white protagonists are published, producing what Christopher Myers describes in a 2014 *New York Times* essay as "the apartheid of children's literature."<sup>199</sup>

Myers mourns the "gap [...] in self-love" that is produced by the absence of books about children of color: the self-love that "comes from recognizing oneself in a text, from the understanding that your life and lives of people like you are worthy of being told, thought about, discussed and even celebrated," and the gap that results when children of color don't see themselves depicted in the vast majority of texts. Yet, Myers reflects, perhaps

this notion of books “as mirrors that affirm readers’ own identities” is too “grown up and self-centered,” too reflective of the desires of adults. The children he speaks with are less concerned with seeing themselves in the books they read than one might expect. He writes:

The children I know, the ones I meet in school visits, in juvenile detention facilities like the Cheltenham Youth Facility in Maryland, in ritzy private schools in Connecticut, in cobbled-together learning centers like the Red Rose School in Kibera, Nairobi — these children are much more outward looking. They see books less as mirrors and more as maps. They are indeed searching for their place in the world, but they are also deciding where they want to go. They create, through the stories they’re given, an atlas of their world, of their relationships to others, of their possible destinations.<sup>200</sup>

This outward-looking position has been common in many of the children I’ve worked with in creative writing classes. For the past few years, I’ve taught creative writing workshops for middle school students, often with a focus on science fiction and fantasy writing. When I ask what their favorite books have in common—books like the *Harry Potter* series, *Percy Jackson*, and *the Hunger Games*—and what separates these books from other, less-interesting books, my students reply that these books create believable worlds for them. When I press them, they tell me it is the details—the *thing-i-ness* of these imaginary worlds, if you will—that pulls them in and allows them to be swept away by a story. It’s not the gender, race, or socioeconomic status of the characters, but how real their world is, whatever that world may be.

While my personal example relies on the magical worlds of fantasy and sci-fi, for a child, I suspect there isn’t always a significant difference between fantastical worlds, future worlds, and historically distant worlds. All of these worlds are entirely inaccessible in the

present; the only difference is that one is grounded in historical events. However, the creation of these worlds relies on the author's memory and imagination in order to be represented, and then requires the imaginative leap of world-making on the part of readers. Harry Potter's butterbeer is no more or less real to a reader than Laura's maple syrup candy in *Little House on the Prairie* or the fudge in *Betsy-Tacy*, yet these things all remain vividly alive in readers' imaginations. Though readers of *Harry Potter* can visit Universal Orlando and "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter" to experience a certain kind of "real life" Harry Potter—and the literary tourism opportunities related to books like the *Little House* series or the *Betsy-Tacy* series offer the tantalizing opportunity to see, and even touch, the "real world" locations and *things* that were part of the author-protagonist's experience—ultimately these worlds first come alive in the interaction between reader, author, and text.

As I detail in chapter 1, for many years, American children's literature lacked—and even actively resisted—the fantastical in children's literature. In "The Apartheid of Children's Literature," Christopher Myers writes of his father's inability to get a book published—a book about a talking chimpanzee and a group of kids in Harlem who located pets for people based on their astrological signs, and the unspoken "injunction against the occult in children's literature." Though this injunction seems to have been lifted, at least as far as the *Harry Potter* books are concerned, parental concerns about children's access to "dark" materials—fantastical or otherwise—persist. These concerns, often cloaked in a discourse of "appropriateness," and almost always shrouded in nostalgia for a "more simple" time, are frequently invoked to restrict young people's access to the very books that offer them the maps they need to negotiate their way through what is an often dark and frightening world.

Much of the rhetoric wielded by parents and other adults against so-called “dark” or “inappropriate” books is reminiscent of what Gillian Brown describes as the “mythology of a past time of purer play and object relations,” where “play” is “a condition of life now threatened by industrialization” (28). In its modern form, this discourse—or mythology—began to take shape through the writings of childhood specialists of the nineteenth century. Ironically, these specialists were too historically myopic to see the ways in which industrialization and the ensuing economic mobility led to the lengthening of childhood, access to “play,” and the creation of their very specialty in the first place. Parents take up this discourse of purity and innocence as they determine which texts are appropriate for their own—and other people’s—children. Nostalgic for their own half-remembered childhoods, and fearful about the future, adults find themselves mired in Svetlana Boym’s restorative nostalgia, attempting to recreate childhoods they never had, conveniently forgetting the parts that do not fit with their visions of an idealized childhood or adolescence. As Gillian Brown suggests, regarding the relationship between adults and children in Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: “Far from being free of constraints, children [...] bear not only many of the same difficulties that plague adults, but also the burden of adult nostalgia” (33). In this case, the burden of adult nostalgia prevents young people from having access to the books—the maps—that might help them make sense of these difficulties, and cultivate the empathy necessary to thrive in a complicated world.

## Notes

### INTRODUCTION NOTES

1. Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," *Cultural Studies* 9.3 (1995): 456.
2. Maud Hart Lovelace, *Heaven to Betsy/Betsy in Spite of Herself* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 307.
3. For a discussion of the "family novel" and the contentious legacy of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, as well as other texts like *Catcher in the Rye* and *Last of the Mohicans*, which transitions from "Literary fiction" to "Young Adult Fiction," see Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003): "Kids and Kiddie Lit" (1-15) and "The Case of the Boys' Book" (77-101). See also Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), xxii.
4. As elaborated in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Ed (New York: Vintage, 1995) and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990) and the introduction to *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1990). See chapter 3 for further discussion of the so-called "repressive hypothesis" and "technologies of the self."
5. Maria Nikolajeva offers an accessible introduction to using the tools of narratology, literary aesthetics, and psychoanalytic theory with children's literature in her book *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005). These include theories, analytical methods, and vocabularies to discuss the elements of narrative and character, plot, authorial position, tone, voice, and the relationship between author, text, and reader.
6. *Speak* was a National Book Award Finalist as well as a Printz Honor Book in 2000. In her introduction to the 10-year anniversary edition of *Speak*, published in 2009, Anderson notes that she has spoken to over a million high school students since the book was published.
7. American Psychological Association, *Developing Adolescents: A Reference for Professionals* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002) <[www.apa.org/pi/pii/develop.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/pii/develop.pdf)>.
8. See chapter 2, pp. 71-75.
9. "How to Bring Your Kids up Gay" first appeared in *Social Text* in November 1991 and was later published in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's essay collection *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993).
10. See chapter 1, pp. 38-9, for a discussion of Hall and adolescence.
11. On June 26, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court declares Section Three of DOMA unconstitutional. GLAAD (formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), a U.S. non-governmental media monitoring organization notes that the "so-called 'Defense of Marriage Act,' or DOMA, was passed in 1996 by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. The part that was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court is called 'Section Three,' which prevented the federal government from recognizing any marriages between gay or lesbian couples for the purpose of federal laws or programs, even if those couples are considered legally married by their home state." GLAAD, "Frequently Asked Questions: Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)" <<http://www.glaad.org/marriage/doma>>.

As of March 2014, 17 states and the District of Columbia recognize same-sex marriage.



## CHAPTER 1 NOTES

12. A 2012 study, *Understanding the Children's Book Consumer in the Digital Age*, suggests that “55% of buyers of works that publishers designate for kids aged 12 to 17—nicknamed YA books—are 18 or older, with the largest segment aged 30 to 44. Accounting for 28 percent of sales, these adults aren't just purchasing for others—when asked about the intended recipient, they report that 78 percent of the time they are purchasing books for their own reading.” From “Young Adult Books Attract Growing Numbers of Adult Fans,” 13 Sept 2012, Press Release, Bowker Market Research <[http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press\\_room/2012/pr\\_09132012.shtml](http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_09132012.shtml)>.

13. Alexandra Alter, “See Grown-Ups Read,” *Wall Street Journal* (5 Dec 2013).

14. See Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 3-6.

15. See Chapter 2 for more on *I Am J* and the California Recommended Reading list and Stonewall Awards controversy.

16. Lauren Berlant, “Austerity, Precarity, Awkwardness,” (November 2011), from the “Sensing Precarity” panel presentation at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting, 25 November 2011 <<http://supervalentthought.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/berlant-aaa-2011final.pdf>>.

17. While it is difficult to come up with any definitive numbers of popular children's books actually written by children, one can be sure that the number is very small as compared to the over 5000 new books for children published every year in the United States. The Wikipedia entry “List of books written by children or teenagers” includes less than 100 authors of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction and includes Mary Shelley and Anne Frank among its young authors.

Victor Watson's essay “By Children, About Children, For Children,” in the essay collection *Where Texts and Children Meet* (London: Routledge, 2000) includes a list of 16 titles written by British children between 1919 and 1963.

18. I examine this shift further in chapter 4.

19. See Anne Scott MacLeod, “Children's Literature in America from the Puritan Beginnings to 1870” in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, edited by Peter Hunt (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995).

20. In *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood* (New York: Twayne, 1998), Carol S. Murray writes: “Most scholars seem to agree that J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) became the prototype for the problem novels that dominated juvenile writing in the 1960s and 1970s, although few of the imitators achieved the stylistic quality Salinger did” (185).

21. In her discussion of the impact of *The Catcher in the Rye* on children's literature, Murray notes that “[t]he altered construction of childhood that would permeate American culture by the end of the 1960s can already be seen in Salinger's classic.” She continues:

Originally Salinger's view of adolescence opened the way for a more frank discussion of teenage feelings and problems than had ever existed before. Writers embraced a new realism for a young adult audience, which publishers identified as readers between 13 and 20. However, this realism began to enter into the stories designed for preteen children as well, which featured protagonists from 8 to 12. Consequently a new construction of childhood emerged in the 1960s. It recognized that children could not always be protected from the dangers and sorrows of real life; they might be better prepared to cope with pain if adults did not try to protect them from it. (Murray 185)

22. See Murray, *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood*, 186.

23. For an overview of the emergence of “the girls book” from nineteenth century domestic (or “sentimental”) fiction, see Murray, 52-5 and 62-6; Lyon Clark, chapter 5, “The Case of the Girls’ Book,” especially p. 105. Alcott’s *Little Women* figures prominently in both.
24. See Lyon Clark 105-6; Quimby 7.
25. Nodelman writes: “To please adults, you must pretend to a childish innocence you no longer possess. You must, in effect, enact childhood for an audience of adults who, the story has suggested, expect and want you to do so” (27). See also Nodelman 77-9.
26. See *Little Women*, Chapter IV, “Burdens,” especially pp. 36-40.
27. See Quimby, especially note #3 (18) and Kent 47-59.
28. See Lyon Clark 124; Murray 65; Quimby 9-10.
29. See Nodelman, 106-117. For example:  
 ...the main generic markers of children’s fiction might turn out to be the nature of the social actions it performs and encourages young readers to partake in—ways in which its shared surface characteristics operate to provide readers with a reading experience that encourages them to feel and think specific thoughts and work to make them think of themselves and others in certain specific ways that will affect their relationships with others. (113)
30. The website for Orchard House and the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association is located at <<http://www.louisamayalcott.org/>>. The childhood homes of Maud Hart Lovelace and her best friend Frances “Bick” Kenney are maintained by the Betsy Tacy Society: <<http://www.betsy-tacysociety.org/>>. The Maud Hart Lovelace Society also exists as a separate entity to promote and preserve Lovelace’s work as well as the historic homes. In the 1990s the society worked—successfully—to get the Betsy-Tacy books back into print through HarperCollins. See their Mission Statement: <<http://www.maudhartlovelacesociety.com/mission/mission.html>>.
31. Official Orchard House Website: <<http://www.louisamayalcott.org/>>.
32. Official Website for the Maud Hart Lovelace Society: <<http://www.maudhartlovelacesociety.com/index.html>>.
33. The Betsy-Tacy Society and the Betsy-Tacy Houses: <<http://www.betsy-tacysociety.org/houses>>.
34. Judy Blume’s personal website: <<http://www.judyblume.com/>>; Laurie Halse Anderson’s personal website: <<http://madwomanintheforest.com/>>.
35. Laurie Halse Anderson, personal website, “Middle School Students”: <<http://madwomanintheforest.com/students-middle/>>.
36. Judy Blume on the Web, Judy’s Books, “Are You There God, it’s Me, Margaret?”: <<http://www.judyblume.com/books/middle/margaret.php>>.
37. Laurie Halse Anderson, “Mad Woman in the Forest Gets a Cottage,” 11 Nov 2009, YouTube Video, <<http://youtu.be/sxNkZzKmJl4>>.
38. This return to home could be a productive and unconventional place to explore nostalgia and children’s literature. See SventlanaBoym, *The Future of Nostalgia* on nostalgia, exile, and return. I take up these themes further in chapters 4 and 5.
39. Murray on the problem novel: 185-190.
40. See Nash, p. 86, on confusion over what constituted “adolescence” in the “post-flapper” era and into the late 1930s.

41. Nodelman writes that books for children often “work to encourage readers to consider what it means to see or think in ways usually considered to be childlike—ways defined by their relative lack of knowledge or complexity. They open a discourse about what children are, about how they are different from adults, and about the relative merits of different qualities” (22).

See also Nodelman, 77-79.

42. Carol S. Murray writes: “While presuming to instruct mid-century children on how to grow up, Alcott also seems to say that remaining childlike is ultimately more interesting and satisfying” (65).

43. Murray, 51-81.

44. Judy Blume, “Personal Things,” *Judy Blume on the Web*  
<<http://www.judyblume.com/about/questions/personal.php>>.

45. John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 2-3.

46. In the essay “Women, Girls, and the Unfinished Business of Connection,” Jane Victoria Ward and Beth Cooper Benjamin outline a short genealogy for contemporary Girls’ Studies. They link the emergence of Girls’ Studies to the publication of a body of scholarly and popular work in the early 1990s. They write:

This literature documented what was seen as a psychosocial (and subsequently academic) “crisis” faced by girls as they entered adolescence. These books and studies generated widespread public concern and led to a variety of reform and intervention efforts designed to address girls’ developmental challenges. (15)

While the study of girls and programs for girls have both increased in the intervening years, Ward and Benjamin express a concern that more recent Girls’ Studies work has lost the intergenerational focus on girls’ and women’s experience that defined earlier scholarship. “We are concerned that this absence represents a diminishment of the transformative political potential of Girls’ Studies and the girls movement” (16). In Ward and Benjamin’s history, Girls’ Studies begins with the publication of two major texts: Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan’s *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development* (1992), and the American Association of University Women’s report *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (1992). Both texts focused on loss of self-esteem in adolescence, one in the realm of general psychosocial development, and the other in the specific context of school.

In 1994, three more books appeared, still focused on the same developmental period and social environments: Peggy Orenstein’s *Schoolgirls*, Myra and David Sadker’s *Failing at Fairness*, and Mary Pipher’s *Reviving Ophelia*. All of these books continued to sound the alarm for the oppression of girls in a dangerous contemporary culture. *Reviving Ophelia* in particular was an extraordinary popular success, reaching far beyond an audience of educators and clinicians. It was the public attention that these books received that—Ward and Benjamin argue—led adult women to reflect on their own adolescent experiences and become involved in projects to mentor and improve the lives of young women.

47. In their essay “How to Study Girl Culture,” Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh outline a methodology they call “Girl-Method” (17). Under the heading “What is Girl-Method?” they write:

“Girl-method” as an overarching term for the “how to” of researching girl culture speaks to the politics of research and refers to the following:

1. Working *with* girls (participatory), *for* girls (advocacy), and *about* girls
  2. Taking into account who the researchers are (and what their relationship to girlhood is)
  3. Including the girls themselves as participants (so that they are agents and not subjects)
  4. Addressing the cultural contexts of the girls in terms of race and class: *whose* girlhood?
- As is obvious from the range of methodological issues raised in the various studies of girl culture, the notions embedded in ideologies of girls and young women choosing to research their own lives, or of researchers working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls, are complex.

- They cross generations, cultural contexts, and disciplinary boundaries, and interrogate lines between the researcher and researched. (17)
- In Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, eds., *Girl Culture: an Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008), 17-24.
48. Jon Savage writes: “In *Emile*, a tract so scandalous that it was burned upon its publication in 1762, Rousseau argued that puberty had such fundamental emotional and mental effects that it represented a ‘second birth’” (13). See Savage, *Teenage: The Prehistory of Youth Culture: 1875-1945* (New York: Penguin, 2007) 13-15 and 66-73.
49. In a 2002 guide to adolescent development from the American Psychological Association, the authors note:
- Despite the negative portrayals that sometimes seem so prevalent—and the negative attitudes about adolescents that they support—the picture of adolescents today is largely a very positive one. Most adolescents in fact succeed in school, are attached to their families and their communities, and emerge from their teen years without experiencing serious problems such as substance abuse or involvement with violence. With all of the attention given to negative images of adolescents, however, the positive aspects of adolescents can be overlooked. (3)
- This claim is supported by substantial evidence drawn from surveys and psychological studies that are presented thematically in the text. American Psychological Association, *Developing Adolescents: A Reference for Professionals* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002).
50. A great deal of recent work in neuroscience, enabled by innovations in functional MRI (or fMRI) technology, has focused on adolescent brain development. For an overview, and a discussion of the ethical implications, see Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, “Imaging Brain Development: The Adolescent Brain” *Neuroimage* 61.2 (2012): 397-406; and Laurence Steinberg, “Should The Science Of Adolescent Brain Development Inform Public Policy?” *Issues in Science & Technology* 28.3 (2012): 67-78.
51. Savage writes: “Although reduced by the Depression, the number of American seventeen-year-old remaining in high school had multiplied at least five- or six-fold since 1900” (*Teenage*, 285).
52. In *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000), Thomas Hine writes:
- What was new about the idea of the teenager at the time the word first appeared during World War II was the assumption that all young people, regardless of their class, location, or ethnicity, should have essentially the same experience, spent with people exactly their same age, in an environment defined by high school and pop culture. (11)
53. Nash glosses this as the way “individuals form their identity in relation to their culture’s dominant ideologies, which they absorb through institutions like the media” (12-13). She reads Althusser through media critic Meenaskshi Gigi Durham’s work on teen magazines, and their lessons for girls in normative sexuality and submissiveness which “play a strong symbolic role in constituting their subjectivities and identities” (Durham 369, quoted in Nash 13).
54. A recent example of this diffuse network of influences and censors can be seen in the spate of articles that followed two YA authors’ open letter about their agents’ and publishers’ insistence that they change certain characters’ behavior and/or sexual orientation to be more conventionally heterosexual. See *Publisher’s Weekly* (<http://blogs.publishersweekly.com/blogs/genreville/?p=1519>) for the text of the original letter and the Guardian UK for an example of the media coverage that followed (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/sep/14/ya-authors-gay-characters>).
55. For example, see Ilana Nash, *America’s Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth Century Popular Culture*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005), 101-105, regarding discourse about homeless girls during the Depression.

56. See Nash on these “crises of masculinity”: 92, 104, 169, 174-5.

57. Savage suggests that in Europe, following the Great War, “[y]outh had been betrayed by age, and it was time for reckoning. In the years immediately after the war there was a rapid increase in aggressive adolescence throughout Europe” (184). He offers examples such as the rise of the Fascist Party and literary movements that sought to break with the past, as well as the rise of jazz culture in Europe, Britain, and the United States. In his discussion of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise* (1920), Savage notes:

It was no accident that youth’s full arrival in Western society came at the point of historical discontinuity created by war: with its explicit age divisions, the generational idea enshrined the sensation of being lost [...] But this sense of being lost is inevitably endemic to adolescence: adrift in a world made by adults, not for you. (201)

58. See Carol S. Murray on the primacy of literacy and colonial laws to promote children’s literacy: *American Children’s Literature and the Construction of Childhood* (New York: Twayne, 1998), 9-13.

59. See Murray, 35-48. She explains that “[t]he rise of the Sunday school movement in early America produced a voluminous literature for children and left indelible impressions on secular children’s literature as well.” In addition, she suggests, “the evolution of children’s literature from the republicanism and didacticism of Noah Webster to the moral tales of William Taylor or Horatio Alger cannot be understood without reckoning with the powerful impact of evangelicalism” (35). See also Gillian Brown, “Child’s Play,” *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2003) 13-39.

## CHAPTER 2 NOTES

60. Jane H. Hunter glosses the work of several historians to describe the unique religious and moral changes that take place in nineteenth century American culture. Hunter writes:

Karen Lystra’s work demonstrates how the experience of romantic love in nineteenth-century America fostered an “ideal of an essential self, what we today call a personality,” which challenged a God-centered universe. Yet religious moralism made an equally important contribution to the Victorian idea of the self. Richard Rabinowitz’s history of religious experience notes the impact of an activist moralism in challenging Calvinist passivity. As orthodoxy crumbled, the characteristic narrative of the self changed from the conversion narrative to a daily diary that documented a route to salvation through good deeds and regular habits. (243)

See Hunter, “Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America,” *The Girls’ History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century*, Eds. Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 242-269.

61. Pitt Library Guides: “American Sunday School Union”  
<<http://pitt.libguides.com/content.php?pid=415062&sid=3393056>>.

62. See Christopher Myers, “The Apartheid of Children’s Literature” *New York Times*, 15 March 2014: Sunday Review. <<http://nyti.ms/1fzwc0>>.

63. The American Library Association describes the Stonewall Award as “[t]he first and most enduring award for GLBT books.” Sponsored by the American Library Association’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table, the award seeks to honor “exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender experience.” <<http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/award>>

64. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Axiom 2 reads: "The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry. But we can't know in advance how they will be different" (27). This requires rethinking and thinking separately about categories of *chromosomal sex*, which is the "group of irreducible, biological differentiations between members of the species *Homo sapiens* who have XX and those who have XY chromosomes" (27); *gender*, which includes "the far more elaborated, more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors—of male and female persons—in a cultural system for which 'male/female' functions as a primary and perhaps model binarism affecting the structure and meaning of many, many other binarisms" (27-8); and *sexuality*, which she defines as "the array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledges, in both women and men, that tends to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them" (29). See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 27-29.

65. For more background, several useful essays on queer youth subculture and female desire in adolescence are available in *Sexual Cultures and the Construction of Adolescent Identities*, edited by Janice M. Irvine (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1994).

66. See chapter 4 for a longer discussion of this topic as well as MacLeod's argument.

67. See chapter 4 for a lengthy discussion of this narrative trope.

68. In "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: the War on Effeminate Boys," first published in 1991, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explores the problematic notion, based on changes to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV), that "the depathologization of an atypical sexual object-choice can be yoked to the new pathologization of an atypical gender identification" (21). See Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 154-64.

69. Though it incorporates elements of the confessional mode throughout and particularly at the end, *Annie on My Mind* is told through a limited omniscient third-person point of view, rather than a first-person narrative. First-person narrators—often unreliable—were a fixture of the problem novel genre and remain the primary perspective in contemporary YA.

70. In *Lesbian and Gay Voices*, Frances Ann Day's review of *Annie on My Mind* notes: "This landmark book not only has a happy ending, it is also one of the few books for young people that actually captures the romance of two lesbians falling in love" (29). While Day makes Liza and Annie explicitly into lesbians, the text is more flexible, placing the emphasis more on their relationship, and less on identity. However, the adult characters in the book repeatedly emphasize that lasting happiness is impossible outside of partnering and family.

71. The "essentialist" view argues that gender and/or sexuality is inborn and immutable; the "constructionist" or "social constructionist" view argues that gender and/or sexuality are malleable and shaped by social and cultural forces. For a lengthy discussion, see Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 40-44.

72. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 40.

73. See Alaimo and Henkman's introduction to the anthology *Feminist Materialisms* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008), and especially pp. 5-8, on the reintroduction of "the material" into Feminist theory.

74. The "lifecycle" here does much to suggest the intended audience for the book: educated, middle-class parents and professionals. Since the publication of *The Transgender Child* in 2008, two additional guides for parents of trans children and trans teens have been published: *Gender Born, Gender Made:*

*Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children* by Diane Ehrensaft PhD (The Experiment, 2011); and *Helping Your Transgender Teen: A Guide for Parents*, by Irwin Krieger (Genderwise Press, 2011).

75. Over the past ten years, mainstream media coverage included Oprah episodes on transgender children and pregnant transman Thomas Beattie; Alix Spiegel's stories from All Things Considered, National Public Radio (May 2008); Isis King, a transgender contestant on the 11th cycle of America's Next Top Model; controversy surrounding Jared Leto's portrayal of a transwoman in the film *Dallas Buyers Club*.

76. See Fausto-Sterling, 66-71, for a discussion of Money's work, the John/Joan case, and Money's long-standing disagreements with Milton Diamond.

77. Some parents and social workers have also begun to use the term "gender creative" to offer a more positive descriptor for children who do not fit neatly into traditional gender categories.

78. There is also a small but growing number of picture books about gender-variant children. Tomboys have been a staple of books for girls since the nineteenth century, but more recent texts have focused on boys who enjoy activities and clothing that are frequently reserved for girls. See, for example, *My Princess Boy*, by Cheryl Kilodavis (Author), Suzanne DeSimone (Illustrator) (2010); and *10,000 Dresses*, Marcus Ewert (Author), Rex Ray (Illustrator), (2008).

79. Librarian Megan Honig's review of *Almost Perfect* outlines some of the major issues in YA texts that seek to promote "trans acceptance" without carefully examining the ways in which trans characters are treated in the texts and the resulting promotion of transphobia.  
<<http://www.meganhonig.com/libraries/2011/01/acceptance-is-the-wrong-goal-brian-katchers-almost-perfect-and-the-stonewall-book-award/>>

80. See Cynthia Leitch Smith's interview with Julie Ann Peters for more information about her choice to focalize *Luna* through Regan, the sister of Luna, a transwoman:  
<[http://www.cynthialeitchsmith.com/lit\\_resources/authors/stories\\_behind/storypeters.html](http://www.cynthialeitchsmith.com/lit_resources/authors/stories_behind/storypeters.html)>.

81. Developmental systems theory (DST) attempts to take a more subtle approach to these questions, allowing for a broad networked system of variables, rather than an easy split of nature/nurture. But while DST can provide a more complex view of individual development across time and resists the lure of nature/nurture, those who use it do not always interrogate the binary assumptions at the heart of most positions, e.g. self/other, human/nonhuman, male/female, and even nature/culture (for example, when physical characteristics are designated as "biological" and environmental "cultural," re-inscribing a nature/culture split). To think beyond these binaries, and the violence they enact, requires a radical shift in both ontological and epistemological positioning.

In *Sexing the Body*, feminist scholar Anne Fausto-Sterling borrows the image of a Möbius strip from theorist Elizabeth Grosz in order to imagine a DST-influenced model of moving seamlessly between the interior and exterior of the body: Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 24-25. See also: Susan Oyama, *The Ontogeny of Information: Developmental Systems and Evolution*, 2nd Ed (Durham: Duke UP, 2000).

82. Barad writes: "Matter and Meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder. ... Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance, most evidently perhaps when it is the nature of matter that is in question, when the smallest parts of matter are capable of being found to be capable of exploding deeply entrenched ideas and large cities." (1). See also Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 47-8.

83. After examining Saussure's notion of "value," Kirby argues that his system problematizes rather than reinstates the distance between real and representation, calling into question linear notions of time and the qualities of identity and discreteness. She writes: "The provocation is this: with no

‘outside the sign,’ there is no ‘outside the system’ that gives it value. Consequently, language bursts the boundaries of its conventional articulation, engendering a reality whose inscriptive production implicates the ideological with/in the physical” (*Telling Flesh* 52).

84. On agential realism, see also Barad, 32; 56-7; 132-41.

85. Barad on Niels Bohr’s analysis of quantum physics:

[T]here is something fundamental about the nature of measurement interactions such that, given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties *become determinate*, while others are specifically excluded. Which properties become determinate is not governed by the desires or will of the experimenter, but rather by the specificity of the experimental apparatus. (19)

86. From *Meeting the Universe Halfway*:

What is needed is an analysis that enables us to theorize the social and the natural together, to read our best understandings of social and natural phenomena through one another in a way that clarified the relationship between them. To write matter and meaning into separate categories, to analyze them relative to separate disciplinary technologies, and then divide complex phenomena into one balkanized enclave or another is to elide certain crucial aspects by design. On the other hand, considering them together does not mean forcing them together, collapsing important differences between them, or treating them in the same way, but means allowing any integral aspects to emerge. (25)

87. This text comes from Mayra Lazara Dole’s blurb for *I Am J*, which appears on the back cover of the hardback edition.

88. From “I Am J.” Title Information. Recommended Literature List. California Department of Education. Accessed 19 March 2014.

<<http://www3.cde.ca.gov/reclitlist/displaytitle.aspx?pid=40726>>.

89. See Amy Ashenden, “US: LGBT books in California Department of Education list are ‘raping the innocence of our children’ says radio show host.” 26 March 2013. *Pink News: Europe’s Largest Gay News Source*. <<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/03/26/us-lgbt-books-in-california-department-of-education-list-are-raping-the-innocence-of-our-children-says-radio-show-host/>>.

90. “17<sup>th</sup> Annual Banned Book Report.” 22 Sept 2013. American Civil Liberties Union of Texas. <<http://www.aclutx.org/2013/09/22/17th-annual-banned-book-report/>>.

91. Cris Beam, “My transgender novel is too personal to be propaganda.” 2 April 2013. *The Guardian: Books Blog*. <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/apr/02/novels-personal-propaganda-transgender>>.

### CHAPTER 3 NOTES

92. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. (New York: Vintage, 1990), 27.

93. See, for example, Don Latham, “Melinda’s Closet: Trauma and the Queer Subtext of Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak*,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 31.4 (2007): 369-82; and Chris McGee, “Why Won’t Melinda Just Talk about What Happened? *Speak* and the Confessional Voice,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 34.2 (2009): 172-187.

94. There is also, of course, a history of discourse on pathological or “deviant” sexuality in children and others. But my concern here is not about pathology or deviance, or determining what “normal” sexuality should or should not look like.



95. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's classic 1975 article "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," argued for a close-knit nineteenth century women's sphere that lacked the intergenerational conflict now present between adolescent girls and their mothers. Nancy Theriot's work on girls' psychosomatic illnesses during the same period ("Psychosomatic Illness in History: The 'Green Sickness' among Nineteenth-Century Adolescent Girls," first published in 1988) offered a critique of Smith-Rosenberg's picture of intergenerational harmony. The picture painted by Hunter offers an even more complex look at the ways in which young women navigated their personal desires and familial expectations. See Nancy M. Theriot, "Psychosomatic Illness in History: The 'Green Sickness' among Nineteenth-Century Adolescent Girls," *The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 179-98; and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 149-78.

96. Foucault defines techniques (or technologies) of the self as those activities that "permit individuals to effect, by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." See Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-84*, Volume 1. (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 225.

97. Gillian Brown even suggests: "Sentimental narratives of nineteenth century literature expressed, celebrated, and perhaps hastened the move from Calvinism to the "softer Christianity" that eclipsed it" ("Child's Play" 19).

98. This is not to suggest, however, that power relations between parents and children changed significantly during this period. Hunter writes: "The substitution of character-building for salvation-seeking as the goal of adolescent socialization was a change in vocabulary, rather than a revolution in parent child relations" ("Inscribing the Self" 249).

99. Mike Cadden notes: "While any novel is an ideal site for studying the different layers of narrative relationships, the young adult novel that features the consciousness of young characters is especially interesting because of the unique and ironic relationship between author and reader in this age-based genre. Novels constructed by adults to simulate an authentic adolescent's voice are inherently ironic because the so-called adolescent voice is never—and can never be—truly authentic." See Cadden, "The Irony of Narration in the Young Adult Novel," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 25.3 (2000): 146.

100. Maud Hart Lovelace, "The Books of Maud Hart Lovelace," Letter to Marjorie Austin Freeman, 19 May 1964, Vertical Files: Lovelace, Maud Hart. Blue Earth County Historical Society. Mankato, MN.

101. Maud Hart Lovelace, "Correspondences 3." Box MF 4595. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children's Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

102. Lovelace, "Correspondences 3."

103. "Just a few lines to open the record of my sophomore year. Isn't it mysterious to begin a new journal like this? I can run my fingers through the fresh clean pages but I cannot guess what the writing on them will be. It is almost as though I were ushered into the Winding Hall of Fate, but next day's destiny was hidden behind a turning." (*Betsy in Spite of Herself*, 345)

104. Lovelace, Maud Hart. "Correspondences 3." Box MF 4595. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children's Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

105. *Heaven to Betsy*, which is set during Betsy's freshman year of high school, concludes with Betsy thinking back on the ways in which high school social activities have had a negative impact on her writing:

She looked back over the crowded winter. She did not regret it. But she should not have let its fun, its troubles, its excitements squeeze her writing out.

"If I treat my writing like that," she told herself, "it may go away entirely."

The thought appalled her. What would life be like without her writing? Writing filled her life with beauty and mystery, gave it purpose...and promise.

"Everybody has something, probably. [...] ...something that's most important of all because it's their[s] to do." (323-4)

106. Lovelace, "Correspondences 3." Punctuation and spelling errors in original.

107. Lovelace, Maud Hart. "Notes 37." Box MF 4594. Kerlan Collection

108. In *Betsy in Spite of Herself*, Betsy briefly adds an extra "e" to her name—to make it "Betsye," just as Maud became "Maude" during her high school years.

109. Lovelace, Maud Hart. "Notes 37." Box MF 4594. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children's Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. (p. 3).

110. Lovelace, Maud Hart. "Notes 37." Box MF 4594. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children's Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. (pp. 6-7).

111. Lovelace, Maud Hart. "Notes 37." Box MF 4594. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children's Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. (p. 2).

112. Anderson *Speak*, 28. Emphasis added.

113. I deploy "unspeakability" here in two ways. First, in the rhetorical/general sense of that which cannot be represented, and second, as that which cannot be communicated to the self or to others in language—the absence of words.

114. In *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault makes a related observation:

The nineteenth century grouping made up of the father, the mother, the educator, and the doctor, around the child and his sex, was subjected to constant modifications, continual shifts. One of the more spectacular results of the latter was a strange reversal: whereas to begin with the child's sexuality had been problematized within the relationship established between doctor and parents (in the form of advice, or recommendations to keep the child under observation, or warnings of future dangers), ultimately it was the relationship of the psychiatrist to the child that the sexuality of adults themselves was called into question. (99)

115. Sabina Spielrein is also one of the historical "ghosts" that populates Avery F. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*. See Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 30-60; 195-204.

116. Though Melinda displays symptoms of what might be diagnosed as major depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, Anderson does not label her protagonist in that way, or include a therapeutic intervention in the narrative, instead focusing on Melinda's symptoms and behavior as they impact her experiences: she skips classes, she withdraws from her parents, she stops speaking,

she bites her lips and fingers until they bleed, she finds spaces where she can hide and feel safe, she gains weight, etc.

117. According to the American Library Association website, “The Michael L. Printz Award is an award for a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature. It is named for a Topeka, Kansas school librarian who was a long-time active member of the Young Adult Library Services Association.” (See <<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/printz>>) Printz award winners are selected from books published specifically for the young adult market and/or 12-18 age group.

118. These include an introductory letter and afterword by the author, a Q-and-A, a note on censorship, and a poem inspired by correspondence Anderson has received from readers.

119. When a teacher catches her trying to escape the cafeteria at lunch, Melinda observes, “It is easier not to say anything. Shut your trap, button your lip, can it. All that crap you hear on TV about communication and expressing feelings is a lie. Nobody really wants to hear what you have to say” (9).

120. I have tried to limit my use of “trauma” to the narrow sense as it is used in traditional psychoanalytic theory: “An event in a subject’s life defined by its intensity, by the subject’s incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization” (465). See Jean Leplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1988).

See page 107 (and note 133) for more on the definition(s) of “trauma” in Freud and Ferenczi, and for a more detailed treatment of Melinda’s trauma and the role of *nachträglichkeit*.

121. Though Ferenczi’s article “Confusion of Tongues” is concerned with pathological cases, his observations about “precocious maturity” (165) suggest a link between sexuality and subjectivity which, I argue, can be extended to a broader range of individuals. Also see, re: sexual excitement and the emergence of subjectivity: Peter Fonagy, “Psychosexuality and Psychoanalysis: an Overview,” *Identity, Gender, and Sexuality: 150 Years After Freud* (London: International Psychoanalytic Association, 2006), 17.

122. Fonagy suggests that sexuality is produced through what he calls *the alien self*:

Normal sexual excitement is by nature incongruent with the self, and it has therefore to be experienced in the other and as a consequence with the other. ... Psychosexuality is the internalization of a misreading, and attempt to grasp something that is excessive, asymmetrical, and strange. Sex can never be fully experienced alone, because it is only through the projection of the alien part of the self into the other and seeing it there that the individual can make full contact with their true constitutional self in a state of excitement. It is therefore, in my view, inevitable that any situation where the “enigmatic” is activated will also arouse sexual excitement. It is their reinternalization of the other’s excitement through identification that consolidates the intersubjective bond. (“Psychosexuality and Psychoanalysis” 18)

123. Or, in the case of the absurdly ineffective “abstinence only” sex education in the United States, that sexuality should only be present in long-term, committed, legally and religiously sanctioned relationships.

124. The Allen Guttmacher Institute reports the average age of first intercourse for girls as 17.4 years. This number is also cited by the Kinsey Institute. See “Sexual and Reproductive Health: Women and Men.” 2002. Alan Guttmacher Institute. New York: AGI. <[http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb\\_10-02.html](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_10-02.html)>.

125. While it would appear to be nearly impossible to come to a consensus on when “appropriate” sexuality emerges in children and/or adolescents, Sharon Lamb’s work on sexuality in girlhood

seems to suggest that girls experience a wide variety of sexual or sexually-charged feelings beginning at a young age, feelings which often lead to shame that is carried into and throughout adulthood. At the very least, Lamb's work suggests that many girls have sexual feelings long before the onset of puberty, and that many of them act on these feelings, in a wide variety of settings. Her work implies that sexual feelings are rarely experienced by girls without a sense of shame later, a sense either that they have transgressed a barrier of age appropriateness, or that they have behaved in a way that is opposed to the "good girls" they perceive themselves to be; that sexuality is somehow perverted or indulgent, something to be resisted.

126. Melinda develops a friendship with her biology lab partner, David, which she suggests holds the possibility for romantic interest. But when he invites her to his house for a pizza party, she feels torn by her desire to go and her fear of making herself vulnerable. Melinda remarks to herself, "I think it's some kind of psychiatric disorder when you have more than one personality in your head. That's what it feels like when I walk home. The two Melindas fight every step of the way. Melinda One is pissed that she couldn't go to the party...Melinda Two waits for One to finish her tantrum. Two carefully watches the bushes along the sidewalk for a lurking bogeyman or worse...If I kicked them both out of my head, who would be left?" (Anderson, *Speak* 132).

127. This is echoed in the scene at the party when Melinda calls the police, an image that suggests her inability to recognize herself is tied directly to her inability to speak:

The next thing I saw was the telephone. I stood in the middle of the drunken crowd and called 911 because I needed help. All those visits from Officer Friendly in second grade paid off. A lady answered the phone, "Police, state your emergency," and I saw my face in the window over the kitchen sink and no words came out of my mouth. Who was that girl? I had never seen her before. Tears oozed down my face, over my bruised lips, pooling on the handset. (Anderson, *Speak* 136)

128. See section epigraph.

129. She begins, "We were on the ground. When did this happen? 'No.' No I did not like this. I was on the ground and he was on top of me. My lips mumble something about leaving, about a friend who needs me, about my parents worrying. I can hear myself—I'm mumbling like a deranged drunk. His lips lock on mine and I can't say anything. I twist my head away. He is so heavy. There is a boulder on me. I open my mouth to breathe, to scream, and his hand covers it" (Anderson, *Speak* 135).

130. Performatively naming the experience as rape appears to be an important aspect of Melinda's recovery/resistance, as is revisiting the place of the assault during daylight hours.

131. In the essay "Melinda's Closet," Don Latham relies on the concept of performativity to describe Melinda's shattered subjectivity, and how it enables her to see the ways in which her high school classmates—and ultimately she herself—constitute their identities, gendered and otherwise. Latham writes, "Melinda's ultimate growth...is not toward any sort of 'integrated' self but rather toward an acceptance of the performative nature and inherent fluidity of identity" (375). Latham also focuses on the social construction of childhood and adolescence, and resulting problematic notions of childhood innocence. See Don Latham, "Melinda's Closet: Trauma and the Queer Subtext of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 31.4 (2007): 369-82.

132. Laplanche and Pontalis address the concept of *nachträglichkeit*, the deferred revision of unassimilated experience, in the entry "Deferred Action; Deferred" in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, (111-14).

133. In addition to a "return" to the seduction theory, Ferenczi also returns to an earlier model of trauma, one that does not rely on the primacy of *nachträglichkeit* as expressed in the Oedipus complex, but rather is closer to the one explicated in Freud's early work with Breuer. Laplanche and Pontalis

describe this view as follows: “the term ‘trauma’ is applied in the first place to an event in the subject’s personal history that can be dated and that has subjective importance owing to the unpleasurable affects it can trigger off. . . . For there to be a trauma in the strict sense of the word—that is *non-abreaction of the experience, which remains in the psyche as a ‘foreign body’*—certain objective conditions have to be met . . . the event in question derives its traumatic force from specific circumstances: the particular psychological state of the subject at the time of the occurrence (Breuer’s ‘hypnoid state’); the concrete situation—social circumstance, demands of the task at hand, etc.—which prohibits or hinders an adequate reaction (‘retention’); lastly—and most importantly in Freud’s view—psychical conflict preventing the subject from integrating the experience into his conscious personality (‘defence’). Breuer and Freud note further that a series of events, none of which on its own would have a traumatic effect, may, in concert, produce just such a consequence (‘summation’)” (c.f. “Trauma (Psychical),” 466-7, emphasis added).

134. One common explanation for this difference is that Ferenczi treated patients for whom accepted analytical practices were unsuccessful. He addresses the probable causes for this in the opening section of “Confusion of Tongues” (see 156-8).

135. In the article “Ferenczi’s Dangerous Proximities” Pamela Thurschwell summarizes Ferenczi’s understanding of trauma and psychosis: “Ferenczi’s theory of trauma suggests that the psychosis caused by a childhood sexual attack results in a collapsing of the body and the mind that can initiate clairvoyant or telepathic hypersensitivity. This collapsing becomes crucial, both as the content of the illness: the patient’s overproximate identification with the attacker, and the potential technique of the cure: the analyst’s overproximate identification with the patient” (171). See Thurschwell, “Ferenczi’s Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event,” *Differences* 11.1 (1999): 150-78.

136. See Sándor Ferenczi, “Confusion of Tongues between Adults and the Child,” *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1994), 156-67.

A typical way in which incestuous seductions may occur is this: an adult and a child love each other, the child nursing the playful fantasy of taking the role of mother to the adult. This play may assume erotic forms but remained, nevertheless, on the level of tenderness. It is not so, however, with pathological adults, especially if they have been disturbed in their balance and self-control by some misfortune or by the use of intoxicating drugs. They mistake the play of children for the desires of a sexually mature person or even allow themselves—irrespective of any consequences—to be carried away. (161)

137. In his conclusion, Angelides asks:

How, for instance, does the social axis of age inform our understanding of power and knowledge relations? How are age-stratified notions of subjectivity constituted through the power-knowledge nexus? What is the relationship between consent, power, and age-stratified concepts of subject formation? To engage [...] [these] kinds of questions, we ought to follow psychoanalytic and poststructuralist insights and examine child, adolescent, and adult subjectivities and sexualities not as fields of autonomous meaning but as mutually constitutive domains of meaning, both experientially and epistemologically, spatially and temporally. (“Inter/Subjectivity” 107)

138. While this is frequently the result of the desire not to blame the victim, in “Inter/subjectivity, Power, and Student-Teacher Sex Crime,” Angelides suggests that the relation and mutuality between the individuals is of primary importance. In order to trouble the victim/perpetrator binary, as well as normative sexual timelines, one must examine the intrapsychic and intersubjective dimensions of the interaction, an inextricable relation that Angelides refers to as “inter/subjective” (see 98-99). See Fonagy, “Inter/subjectivity, Power and Student-Teacher Sex Crime.” *Subjectivity* 26 (2009): 87-108.

139. Fonagy writes:

[P]sychosexuality is the internalization of a misreading, an attempt to grasp something that is excessive, asymmetrical and strange. Sex can never be fully experienced alone, because it is only through the projection of the alien part of the self into the other and seeing it there that the individual can make full contact with their true constitutional self state of excitement. ...It is the reinternalization of the other's excitement through identification that consolidates the intersubjective bond. ("Psychosexuality and Psychoanalysis" 18)

140. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, trauma is "[a]n event in a subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychological organization" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 465).

## CHAPTER 4 NOTES

141. For one argument for the inclusion of YA lit within the broader category of Children's Literature, see Nodelman, on production and imagined audiences, *The Hidden Adult*, 5.

142. For an overview of the emergence of "the girls' book" from nineteenth century domestic (or "sentimental") fiction, see Murray, 52-5 and 62-6; Clark, chapter 5, "The Case of the Girls' Book," especially 105. Alcott's *Little Women* figures prominently in both.

143. In *Disability Theory*, Tobin Siebers suggests that individual stories—about the experience of disability—are the way in which disability as a positive identity is constructed, and the way in which political and legal battles for disability rights can be fought and won: "For human beings make lives together by sharing their stories with each other. There is no other way of being together for our kind" (*Disability Theory* 48).

144. See Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 8-10.

145. MacLeod quotes Lucy Larcom from *A New England Girlhood*: "We were a neighborhood of large families, and most of us enjoyed the privilege of 'a little wholesome neglect.' Our tether was a long one, and when, grown a little older, we occasionally asked to have it lengthened, a maternal 'I don't care' amounted to almost unlimited liberty" (*American Childhood* 10).

146. MacLeod offers a few examples of women's writing on the painful and conflicted feelings many girls had about the transition to womanhood, and the sense of mourning they felt at the prospect of leaving the freedom of childhood behind for the constrained "women's sphere" of adulthood. See *American Childhood*, 10-16.

147. In *The Political Unconscious*, philosopher and literary theorist Jameson uses the term "sedimented content" to describe the workings of genre as an ideology of form. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 99.

148. For a discussion of domestic fiction and its relationship to children's literature, see MacLeod, "The Children of Nineteenth Century Children's Literature," *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), especially 148-9.

149. Beverly Lyon Clark notes that while *Little Women* sales were "brisk," they were small compared to later books by Alcott (104). See also Joel Myerson and Daniel Shealy, "The Sales of Louisa May Alcott's Books," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n.s., I (Spring 1990): 69-73.

150. Recent books on Alcott include Harriet Reisen's *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women* (2010), Susan Cheever's *Louisa May Alcott: A Personal Biography* (2010), John Matteson's *Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and her Father* (2008); and Madeline Stern's *Louisa May Alcott* (1996). A new book on Alcott's relationship with her mother is scheduled to be released this month.

151. *The Woman Behind Little Women*. See <<http://www.alcottfilm.com/>>.

152. Though *Little Women* is most frequently published in a single, two-part volume in the United States, British publishers often preserve the original form of publication, publishing the first volume as *Little Women*, and the second volume separately as *Good Wives*. Alcott published *Little Women* (volume 1) in 1868 and *Good Wives* (volume 2) the following year, which helps explain the role that reader correspondence played in the conclusion of the book, particularly Jo's marriage to Professor Bhaer. See Clark, 104.

153. See Harriet Reisen, *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women*. (New York: Picador, 2010), 174-9.

154. See Lois Keith, *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk* (London: The Women's Press, 2001), 59-60.

155. Though a *School Library Journal* review in 2000 accused the new audio edition of *What Katy Did* of being "dated" and offering "a limited vision of the roles of girls and women within the world and the family", the book remains popular. I suspect some of its continued popularity may be related to the multiple free and low-cost editions that are available for Kindle and other eReaders.

156. Garland-Thomson writes: "I want to suggest that a firm boundary between 'disabled' and 'nondisabled' women cannot be meaningfully drawn—just as any absolute distinction between sex and gender is problematic. Femininity and disability are inextricably entangled in patriarchal culture" (27).

157. Tompkins writes, "the popular domestic novel represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from a woman's point of view" (124). The domestic novel is "a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory, that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time" (126). Domestic fiction emphasizes an ethic of sacrifice, an understanding that social action is dependent on "the action taking place in individual human hearts," and that childhood is a naturally sanctified state (128-9). Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

158. Maria Nikolajeva suggests that "the abandoned orphan" is "the most typical character in children's fiction." She continues: "The degree of abandonment can vary from the parents' going off for work to their being away traveling or even dead... they may also be absent emotionally. We call children whose parents are alive but do not care about them 'functional orphans'" (148-9). See Nikolajeva, *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

159. Many editions of *What Katy Did* have a cover illustration that depicts the moment of joy and exhilaration on the swing right before Katy's fall. Keith chose a similar image for the cover of *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk*.

160. Keith and others have noted the ubiquity of the "bed-bound (or sofa-bound) invalid" as the opposite of the wild girl in nineteenth century stories (*Take Up Thy Bed* 82).

161. Pre-twentieth century models of disability are often referred to as the "moral model." K. Walter Hickel, in Longmore and Umansky, writes: "Until the late nineteenth century, disability and its economic effects of unemployment, poverty, and dependence were often regarded as a pre-ordained fate, a divine stigma incurred at birth, or a result of individual moral flaws and self-destructive habits... Reflecting this view, government agencies and private charities directed their attention to

disabled children” (241). This moral model also strove to distinguish the “idle poor” from the sick as well as those with disabilities (see Striker, 106). Garland-Thomson argues that this model persists, where “disability is most often seen as bodily inadequacy or catastrophe to be compensated for with pity or good will, rather than accommodated by systemic changes based on civil rights” (23).

162. See Keith, 25-7, on 19th century spinal injury and prognosis.

163. According to the *MedLinePlus* entry on Spinal cord trauma:

Paralysis and loss of sensation of part of the body are common. This includes total paralysis or numbness, and loss of movement and feeling. Death is possible, especially if there is paralysis of the breathing muscles.

A person who recovers some movement or feeling within 1 week usually has a good chance of recovering more function, although this may take 6 months or more. Losses that remain after 6 months are more likely to be permanent.

The entry also notes that possible complications include increased susceptibility to infection and loss of bladder, bowel, and lung function.

164. It is easy for us, after over a century of sustained research into the microbial causes of disease, to point out the inconsistencies in Katy and Cousin Helen’s medical diagnoses and treatments, and to scoff at the idea that someone with a paralyzing spinal injury could suddenly begin walking again after a year or more, or could live a long life as a paraplegic “invalid.” I would argue, however, for the importance of remembering that despite the prestige of Katy’s father Dr. Carr, medical science of the nineteenth century was often crude, violent, and superstitious, and that many people did not have a clear understanding of disease transmission or treatment.

165. Proponents of a bibliotherapeutic model argue that bibliotherapy can assist children in building confidence and self-esteem. After a child has a traumatic experience, bibliotherapeutic texts help normalize a child's world by offering coping skills, reducing his/her feelings of isolation, reinforcing creativity, and helping with problem solving.

166. Gail S. Murray identifies several key elements of the “Problem Novel.” These include: a protagonist who is alienated from the adult world, and often from peers as well; first-person narrative; colloquial and confessional writing; urban or suburban settings; open discussion of sexuality; absent parents, either physically or emotionally (186).

167. Keith quotes Pat Thompson in her description of the “second fiddle book”: “There is still a tendency for a book with a disabled character in it to be a “problem” book, and there is an infuriating genre which might be deemed a “second fiddle” book. In these, there is indeed a disabled character but they exist only to promote the personal development of the main, able-bodied character” (Pat Thomson, “Disability in Modern Children’s Fiction,” *Books for Keeps*, 75 (July 1992), as quoted in Keith, 209).

168. Keith describes this intersection of pity and overcompensation in *What Katy Did*: “What Katy is being taught is that for a ‘sick person’ to have any place in the world, they must strive to be better, more cheerful and more patient than anyone else, otherwise they will deserve to be alone and miserable” (87).

169. “Physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 4).

170. Regarding the space of “home” and “away” that dominate children’s literature, Nodelman writes:

Viewed in terms of sequence rather than in terms of the shape of the ideational world of meaning they flesh out, there are not just two main components to the structure of the texts,



but three: home and away, yes, but also 'home again.' And the home one returns to after being away is not and cannot be the home one left. (*The Hidden Adult* 65)

## CHAPTER 5 NOTES

171. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv.

172. From Patricia Hampl's Betsy-Tacy Convention Keynote Address, 11 July 1992. Reprinted in Amy Dolnick Rechner, *Between Deep Valley and the Great World: Maud Hart Lovelace in Minneapolis* (Aurora, IL: Middlethird Books, 2012), 55-60.

173. See chapter 1; also see Ilana Nash, *America's Sweethearts*, especially pp. 82-7.

174. While many of the guidebooks to Lovelace's Mankato and Minneapolis settings are self-published pamphlets, there have been several book-length publications, including: Julie A. Schrader, *Maud Hart Lovelace's Deep Valley, A Guidebook of Mankato Places in the Betsy-Tacy Series* (Mankato, MN: Minnesota Heritage Publishing, 2002), and Sharla Scannell Whalen, *The Betsy-Tacy Companion: A Biography of Maud Hart Lovelace* (Portalington Press, 1995).

Each volume of the new combined editions of the *Betsy-Tacy* series published by HarperCollins also contains historical background and explanatory materials in an appendix section of each book, as well as an introduction by a major contemporary writer (and Lovelace aficionado)—e.g. Anna Quindlen.

175. Alcott's Orchard House has been open to the public under the management of "the not-for-profit Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association since May 27, 1912" (<http://www.louisamayalcott.org/>). "Green Gables House," the Cavendish, Prince Edward Island home upon which L.M. Montgomery based the fictional home of her heroine Anne, has only been listed as one of Canada's Recognized Federal Heritage Buildings since 1985. However, the house "has been of interest to tourists since the publication [of *Anne of Green Gables*]" in 1908 (<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=11370>).

176. Sturken is one of many scholars—American and otherwise—to note an interest in memory beginning in the 1980s. In the opening pages to *Mystic Chords of Memory*, Michael Kammen also cites the beginning of a "trans-national phenomenon" (3) of collective remembering in the 1980s, coincident with a number of commemorations of national heritages, and subsequent broad critical attention to the ways "that societies in fact reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and that they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind—manipulating the past in order to mold the present" (3). In an essay on the intellectual history of memory studies, Kerwin Lee Klein writes:

The scholarly boom began in the 1980s with two literary events: Yosef Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) and Pierre Nora's "Between Memory and History," the introduction to an anthology, *Lieux de mémoire* (1984). Each of these texts identified memory as a primitive or sacred form opposed to modern historical consciousness. (127)

177. Commenting on the contributions to the *Memory Studies* special issue on nostalgia, Dames writes: Whereas the emphasis, in diagnostic work such as Jameson's, falls on inauthenticity – the falsehood of nostalgia's picture – the writers collected here emphasize instead the ways in which nostalgia registers loss, often in productive, surprisingly therapeutic ways. Furthermore, the incantatory repetition of 'loss' means that these writers no longer resist nostalgia with such firm determination to remain unswayed. *Despite – or perhaps because of – their functionalism, they are capable of entering into an affective relationship with nostalgia, describing how it feels rather than simply analyzing its epistemological errors.* (274, emphasis added)

Boym, quoting Kammen, offers the following analysis: “The word *nostalgia* is frequently used dismissively. ‘Nostalgia... is essentially history without guilt. Heritage is something that suffuses us with pride rather than with shame,’ writes Michael Kammen (*Mystic Chords of Memory* 688). Nostalgia in this sense is an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure.” (xiv)

178. See Atia and Davies’ introduction to *Memory Studies* 3.3.

179. In his essay “Plato’s Pharmacy,” Jacques Derrida draws his readers’ attention to Plato’s *Phaedrus* and the Greek word “pharmakon.” The word, particularly as it is used to describe writing in both the *Phaedrus* and “Plato’s Pharmacy,” offers a multiplicity of meanings that resist and disorient oppositional binaries. See Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 98-118.

180. See Boym: “Nostalgia (from *nostos*—return home—and *algia*—longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists, or that never existed” (xiii-xiv). Tannock writes: “Assumptions of the pathological nature of nostalgia stem from the term’s origins; the word was coined in 1688 as a medical diagnosis of the extreme homesickness suffered by Swiss mercenary soldiers fighting abroad. Nostalgia was considered in Europe to be a potentially fatal condition through to the middle of the nineteenth century” (463 n.4).

181. See Boym, 3-4.

182. Lovelace, Maud Hart. Writing and Living P1- Center Street. Box MF 4596. Folder 41: Notes. Kerlan Collection. Children’s Literature Research Collection, Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

183. Betsy’s high school friends rib her with this nickname in *Heaven to Betsy* after they find out her father had a book of her poems printed, a detail Lovelace plucked from her own life.

184. Literary theorists have suggested that sentimental and/or sensational fiction peaked and declined in the 19th century, with the two related genres all but invisible after World War I. And yet the romance genre has continued to be a lucrative—if not well-respected—niche for novelists. In addition, the hallmarks of sentimental and sensational fiction, particularly content which incites readers to tears, has remained prevalent in the so-called “weepies” or sentimental films designed for a primarily female audience. The other place sentimental and sensational modes have continued to be embraced are in novels for a readership of young women and girls. While the term “domestic” often describes the setting of these books—in and around the home, centered on family life—the other genre indicators, sentimental and sensational, refer not to the setting or subject matter of the text, but rather to the affective experience of the reader. And in the same way that readers choose “horror” out of a desire to be scared or horrified, readers frequently reflect on the value of sentimental fiction in its ability to elicit strong emotions, particularly tears. Note, however, that these tears are often tied to sadness in particular.

185. See Ilene Cooper, “Betsy, Tacy, and Me,” *Booklist* (1 Nov 1993): 522; Perri Klass, “Betsy, Tacy, and Tib,” *Victoria Magazine* (Apr 1998): 120, 117, 119; and Anna Quindlen, “Betsy Ray, Feminist Icon,” *School Library Journal* (Nov 1993): 26-31.

186. See Sicherman, “Reading *Little Women*” in *Well-Read Lives* (13-55).

187. In the opening chapter of *Betsy in Spite of Herself*, titled “The Winding Hall of Fate,” Lovelace has Betsy writing the following lines in her journal: “Just a few lines to open the record of my sophomore year. Isn’t it mysterious to begin a new journal like this? I can run my fingers through the fresh clean pages but I cannot guess what the writing on them will be. It is almost as though I were ushered into the Winding Hall of Fate, but next day’s destiny was hidden behind a turning.” The phrase is popular among Lovelace fans, and drawn from Lovelace’s own sophomore year diary.

Despite its popularity among fans, Lovelace described it as “a very stupid simile” in the original entry (see chapter 3).

188. Though Lovelace committed her papers to the Kerlan Collection in the 1960s, the Betsy-Tacy materials first went to her daughter Merian Lovelace Kirchner, and then to Merian’s literary executor after her death in 1997. In 2010 I discovered the online résumé of the librarian who had helped the executor digitize some of the materials. I reached out to her to find out if the materials had made their way to the University of Minnesota yet. They had not, but I decided to visit anyway during the summer of 2011. During my stay there, I got to know the Kerlan Collection Curator, Dr. Karen Nelson Hoyle, and explored the limited selection of Lovelace materials that the library had acquired. Though Dr. Nelson Hoyle retired in early 2012, she remained interested in my project and kept me abreast of the slow movement of the materials to the library. When I arrived in Minneapolis during the summer of 2012, the materials had been deposited and catalogued just weeks earlier.

189. Gordon explains the concept as follows: “At the very least, *complex personhood* is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people’s lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning” (5, emphasis added).

190. Maud Hart Lovelace, “The Books of Maud Hart Lovelace,” Letter to Marjorie Austin Freeman, 19 May 1964, Vertical Files: Lovelace, Maud Hart, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, MN.

191. See Schrader, *Maud Hart Lovelace’s Deep Valley*, 264-67; and Julia A. Schrader, “About Emily of Deep Valley,” in Maud Hart Lovelace, *Emily of Deep Valley* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).

192. Maud Hart Lovelace. Letter to Howard Williams, 13 January 1942, Vertical Files: Lovelace, Maud Hart, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, MN.

193. Howard Williams, Letter to Maud Hart Lovelace, 15 January 1942, Vertical Files: Lovelace, Maud Hart, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, MN.

194. Maud Hart Lovelace, “I Remember Mankato: Maud Hart Lovelace, ‘Betsy-Tacy’ Author, Says Memories of Mankato are Included in All Her Books; Novels Based on Childhood Days in City” *Mankato Free Press*, 10 April 1952 (Mankato, MN): 15, 18.

195. Maud Hart Lovelace, Letter to Marion Willard, 14 April 1948. Box MF 4596. Folder 41: Notes. Maud Hart Lovelace Papers. Kerlan Collection. Children’s Literature Research Collection. Andersen Library. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

April 14, 1948 letter to Marion Willard after completing *Betsy and Joe* and preparing for *Carney’s House Party*:

“I want to ask your permission to write such a story, because of course Carney is really you. And although I will embroider the tale and put in all sorts of fictional incidents, the outline of the plot will be true to your story, as I know it. From reading the Betsy-Tacy books, you know pretty well how I work. I use the actual facts just as a springboard. Nevertheless, Carney will be recognizably you, and I wouldn’t write the book unless you were willing.

I can assure you that...as in the previous Betsy-Tacy books ... all the characters with any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, will be handled with loving kindness.”

196. Maud Hart Lovelace, Letter to Marion Willard, 14 April 1948. Box MF 4596. Folder 41: Notes.

## EPILOGUE NOTES

197. Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008), 27.

198. See Lindsay Hixson, Bradford B. Hepler, and Myoung Ouk Kim. "The White Population (C2010BR-05)" *2010 Census Briefs*. United States Census Bureau. Sept 2011.

<<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>>

199. Christopher Myers, "The Apartheid of Children's Literature," *New York Times*, 15 March 2014: Sunday Review. <<http://nyti.ms/1fzwc0>>

200. Myers, "The Apartheid of Children's Literature."

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