BETSY WAS AN AUTHOR: MAUD HART LOVELACE'S CONSTRUCTION OF GIRL AUTHORSHIP

by

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LIST OF TITLE ABBREVIATIONS

BT	*Betsy-Tacy*
BT&T	*Betsy-Tacy and Tib*
B&TBH	*Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*
B&TGD	*Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*
HB	*Heaven to Betsy*
BSH	*Betsy in Spite of Herself*
BWJ	*Betsy Was a Junior*
B&J	*Betsy and Joe*
B&GW	*Betsy and the Great World*
BW	*Betsy's Wedding*
CHP	*Carney's House Party*

Prologue

I am not entirely sure how I was introduced to Maud Hart Lovelace and Betsy Ray, but I'm glad I was. I have some vague memories of our local public children's library and being drawn to the cover of *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*, but beyond that my recollections of Betsy from my youth are not entirely based on fact. Instead, like many other people and places from childhood, they are surrounded by a general sense of fondness and belonging. My mother recently asked me how I found Betsy without her. She decided to read the Betsy-Tacy series as I became more and more involved in this project, because, unlike most of the other books I read before the age of ten, she didn't read these with me. Instead, she has been experiencing Betsy's growing up after mine is pretty much over. I will admit I was delighted when she confirmed something I have long believed, and hoped, to be true: "She's you, Molly."

I didn't have Betsy's characteristic brown braids and parted teeth, but I liked to write, to make up stories, and to be much too silly for my age. When I was eight or nine and reading the whole series, I imagined that my high school friends would be like Betsy's "crowd." I didn't have nearly as many boy friends as Betsy, and there was a disappointing lack of singing around the piano in my high school days, but when I reread the books in my teens I still saw myself in Betsy's energy and persistence. I also saw my family in Betsy's stories; I had a father that liked to joke and a redheaded mother whose laugh delighted all my friends. I, too, liked to sit on my sister's bed late at night to hear what it was like to be three years older.

Lovelace's stories impacted me more than just by giving me a girl whose lifestyle and tastes were similar to my own, although I believe I was unaware of some of the most important ways Betsy's life was both similar to my community and encouraging to my psyche. Lovelace creates Betsy not just as a happy child and a loveable and silly adolescent; Betsy is an author. Even in the earliest of the Betsy-Tacy novels, Betsy tells stories and makes up songs. By the age of twelve she writes her stories down and sends them to magazines to seek publication. Betsy takes her authorship seriously and seeks private spaces in which she can write undisturbed and protect her art. As Betsy grows older, she discovers other things she likes to do in addition to writing: singing, dancing, and being involved in all sorts of school activities. Writing, however, remains an ever-present passion, as she cherishes her hope of becoming an author.

Betsy showed me that, not only could my own youthful pursuits and plans merit worth and dedication, but that others should and could support me as well. Betsy's family, friends, and teachers give her nearly unwavering encouragement from the beginning. They acknowledge her passion and confirm her destiny by recognizing her authorial identity. Betsy faces very little discouragement in her pursuit, and the negativity she does encounter comes from some of the least likable characters in the series and Betsy, therefore, disregards it. Those closest to Betsy enthusiastically support her; Betsy's parents treat her like a professional author even as a child by sponsoring biweekly trips to the library so she may study the classics and good writing. Betsy's friends confirm her talent repeatedly, and her school acknowledges her as an unofficial writer-in-residence.

When I read the Betsy-Tacy series as a child, I wanted to be an author as well. I saw in these books a girl I could emulate, partly because Betsy's goals and successes did not seem unattainable when they were accompanied by everyday fun and friendship. My deep attachment to and personal identification with Betsy, her family, and friends, allowed me to claim the encouragement she receives from her community for myself. Betsy never considers that she is not talented enough to be an author, and she refuses to believe a *girl* cannot reasonably have such an aspiration. Meanwhile, although Betsy attains only mild publishing success in the series, the semi-autobiographical nature of the series demonstrated to me that Maud Hart Lovelace's success could be interpreted as Betsy's as well.

I don't think I uniquely identify with Betsy and her aspirations, either. Anna Quindlen, in a speech given to the Twin Cities chapter of the Betsy-Tacy Society in 1993, notes that no one tells Betsy she cannot be a writer. Quindlen then asks, "Can anyone possibly appreciate the impact that made on a child like me, wanting it too but seeing all around me on the bookshelves the names of men and seeing all around me in my house the domesticated ways of women?" (x). Quindlen shares the delight and identification she found in Betsy's story, but she also attests that Lovelace's novels do more than simply please: they inspire and empower.

My authorship does not look quite how I imagined it would when I first encountered Lovelace's series, but I was entirely unaware of academic writing in those days. Although I currently write literary criticism instead of stories, I still find Betsy's authorship useful and empowering. I may find my graduate studies somewhat daunting at times, and I often doubt my ability to seriously engage with theory built upon

centuries of minds much greater than my own, but my study of Betsy's story has reminded me that, just as Betsy always was a writer, I have always been a scholar. Many of the ideas here began when I was eight, although I did not recognize them as textual analysis until recently. Lovelace gave me a text that appealed to my childhood sensibilities and preferences, but also evoked critical analysis. Thus, Betsy's belief in her own authorship has inspired both my critical thinking and my belief in my capabilities as an author.

Betsy and I both come from privileged backgrounds: neither of us regularly face discrimination based on our races, religions, or sexual preferences, and we both come from households with enough money to support a semester or two abroad. But, as my contemporaries in girls' studies continue to demonstrate, even privileged girls struggle through adolescence, and the prevalence of eating disorders and depression prove that many do not make it through their early adulthoods unscathed. I do not propose that Betsy's story can cure mental illnesses or can make up for the objectification and early sexualization of girls in modern society, but I believe, based on my experience and the testimonies of others like Anna Quindlen, that Lovelace's narration of Betsy's story can provide hope and inspire girls to find new joy in their own passions.

Introduction

The fourth novel in Maud Hart Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy series, *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* (1943), begins with a description of Betsy Ray, age twelve, sitting in a tree, looking downtown, and writing stories. Betsy, a twelve-year-old growing up at the turn of the twentieth century in a small Minnesota town, longs to be an author. While the image of Betsy perched in her tree usefully creates a tangible picture of Betsy's authorship, such an occurrence is not an anomaly within the series, and, in fact, captures only a single moment within the development of Betsy's agency and authorship. Throughout Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy series, the author draws on the genre patterns of children's series and the *Bildungsroman* of progressive maturation to track the development of her main character, Betsy, while also emphasizing Betsy's early subjectivity and the significance of her girlhood. By focusing on authorship as Betsy's specific avenue to identity formation and empowerment, Lovelace cultivates her protagonist's agency. Betsy uses this agency not only to write, but also to reconcile her femininity with her authorship and to move successfully between the public and private spheres to which her writing will bring her.

Maud Hart Lovelace (1892-1980) began writing the first Betsy-Tacy novel in 1938, inspired by the stories she had been telling her daughter about growing up in Mankato, Minnesota.[1] Lovelace, like Betsy, felt a passion for writing from a young age

[1] Sharla Scannell Whalen has carefully chronicled Lovelace's life as it correlates with the Betsy-Tacy series in *The Betsy-Tacy Companion*. Throughout the *Companion*, Whalen cites Lovelace's letters, one of which reveals the book's oral origins, including how

and began writing and publishing stories in her youth. Lovelace wrote about her home state of Minnesota and its history in her previous novels, *The Black Angels* (1926) and *Early Candlelight* (1929). *Early Candlelight*, a historical romance set at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, was easily her most successful work before Betsy-Tacy and built her initial reputation as an author. In fact, when the first of the Betsy-Tacy books, *Betsy-Tacy*, was published in 1940, reviewers noted that this book came from and could be held to the standards expected of the author of *Early Candlelight*, although Lovelace had published other novels, including *Petticoat Court* (1930) and *The Charming Sally* (1932), more recently (Nolte 65). *Betsy-Tacy*, however, was Lovelace's first book explicitly for children.

Lovelace based the *Betsy-Tacy* series on herself and her youth, but she did not create a completely factual account of her childhood. Instead she crafted a narrative that merges historical fiction, children's literature, and the *Bildungsroman*. The distance between Lovelace's real life and Betsy's fictional one gives Lovelace the room to construct a compelling narrative and highlight Betsy's progress while rewarding the reader through satisfying plot twists more easily. For example, Lovelace casts her husband, fellow author and collaborator Delos Lovelace, as Joe Willard and arranges for Betsy to meet him before high school, whereas Lovelace and Delos actually met in their mid-twenties. Joe's presence throughout the series supplies tension as he and Betsy cross paths and each other's tempers, while Lovelace obviously intends them to be a romantic pair. Joe also serves to demonstrate Betsy's eventual acquisition of confidence in herself and her femininity, as she first struggles with maintaining loyalty to herself

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Lovelace began calling herself "Betsy" and her best friend, Bick, "Tacy" (466). From then on, Betsy and Tacy were inextricably linked.

and her authorship and must learn the importance of each before she is rewarded with Joe's affection, which values both her identity and her vocation.

While my limited access to Lovelace's letters and journals prohibits my (or possibly anyone's) ability to know for certain why Lovelace based the series on her own life and experiences, I can propose a few speculations.[2] First of all, because we do know that Lovelace began writing the series after she told the stories to her daughter, she likely had some desire to share her life with her only child. That impulse seems fairly obvious and requires little analysis. Secondly, and more hesitantly, I would propose that Lovelace, a successful author who also balanced her roles as a wife and mother, may have desired to share the story of her success with others. The fact that Betsy's trials and triumphs mirror Lovelace's own experiences gives validity to the series and its messages of constructive feminine agency. Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, noting the prevalence of autobiography and semi-autobiography within girls' literature, offer another interpretation. According to Foster and Simons, "Children's literature, as an approved outlet for women's publication, functions as a perfect vehicle for the 'alienated' woman writer to work through her own dilemmas and preoccupations via imaginative constructs within a conventional format" (27). Perhaps, then, Lovelace constructs Betsy's focused development as a way of coping with her own disappointments and frustrations along her own path to authorship. I will not attempt to advocate any of these interpretations because I do not think I have enough evidence

[2] I hope to travel to Minnesota and study Lovelace's letters and other artifacts in the near future to further enlighten my studies and assertions, but such a trip was not possible within the constraints of this particular project.

to properly validate any of them definitively, but I offer them as lenses through which to view Lovelace's personal relationship to the series and to Betsy.

Regardless of why, specifically, Lovelace wrote a fictional children's series rather than a pure autobiography, I believe her choice of genre perfectly supports a narrative which analyzes and validates the agency and subjectivity of a girl while also showing the development of a young woman's authorship. Other scholars have noted that children's literature performs significant cultural work through both its textual complexity and its subjects (primarily children or adolescents),[3] and I will add that the children's series particularly and uniquely positions itself to showcase the cultural significance of the emerging adult and the agency of the child.

The protagonists of children's literature tend to be in adolescence, a stage that Catherine Driscoll describes as "in transition or in process" (6). The transitional nature of adolescence simultaneously forces and allows the child to refashion her or his agency in adult spheres and social structures. Driscoll contends that adolescence "functions as an explanation of the indispensable difficulty of becoming a subject, agent, or independent or self-aware person" (6). I agree with Driscoll's identification of the difficulty involved in this process, but I disagree with her assertion that the child, and she and I both exclusively examine girls, *becomes* a subject during adolescence. Rather, I believe the girl already possesses agency, but she must reevaluate her social and

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[3] Children's literature has not always enjoyed its position of interest within the academy and society. Beverly Lyon Clark has recounted how the predominately masculine academy of the early twentieth century excluded children's literature from the canon based on gender and age biases (*Kiddie Lit*). Other scholars, including Maria Nikolajeva and Peter Hunt, have lamented the lack of theory specific to children's literature. Peter Nodelman makes a compelling response to Jacqueline Rose and her contention of the "impossibility of children's fiction" by describing the power of children's literature regardless of its difficulty, aesthetics, or intended audience (235).

cultural position relative to normative femininity and womanhood during the liminal period of pre-adulthood. Children's series can focus within each novel or volume on the girl in a particular stage of her adjustment and evaluation, and thus acknowledge her present subjectivity while showing in subsequent volumes how she continues to evolve and grow.

Lovelace captures Betsy's adolescence over the course of the series, which chronicles Betsy's life from the ages five to twenty-five, and carries Betsy through her first years of marriage. Lovelace describes Betsy as a self-determined author actively pursuing her goal throughout the series, not just after her adolescence. Through Betsy's early and consistent self-identification as an author, Lovelace demonstrates the child as a capable agent in her own life; meanwhile, the liminality of girlhood and adolescence allows Betsy to experiment with the multiple spheres and roles authorship will eventually incline her to participate in. Lovelace's series reveals, therefore, not only an adult woman who has agency, but also a girl discovering and cultivating her agency.

Furthermore, the balance the children's series provides between showcasing the child's subjectivity and her or his future maturity demonstrates the middle path Lovelace seeks to illustrate in her depiction of Betsy's girlhood. This genre perfectly fits Lovelace's larger goals of describing a moderate socio-cultural perspective: Betsy demonstrates a middle path in terms of femininity, feminism, relation to the separate spheres, and professionalism. Just as the children's series allows an author to explore both children's agency as well as the emerging adult's developing sense of identity and empowerment, so also Betsy's authorship allows Betsy to discover her femininity alongside her professional aspirations. I believe it is important to keep this middle path

in mind as we read Lovelace so as not to assume any single instance within the series is overly radical or traditional; when read together, as a series, Betsy's story shows a middle path for depictions of adolescence, access to agency, and women's roles.

A look at how Betsy-Tacy compares with other children's series helps us see that all do not function identically, and some series are less likely to demonstrate a character's progression. The novels in the Nancy Drew series, for example, are each built around separate mysteries. Together, the series is episodic and could be read in almost any order without creating much confusion in terms of either plot or character development. The books in the series connect to each other through recurring characters, but these characters do not develop significantly over time. Nancy's age, for the most part, does not fluctuate, and when it does, it is because the syndicate producers are responding more to cultural influences than a commitment to Nancy's development.[4] With the publisher's focusing on reader-appeal and sales, Nancy, as a character, is not provided with an opportunity to develop or mature in a meaningful way.

In other series, however, the books follow each other chronologically, the characters age and change, and the plot relies on past occurrences. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series and Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House series are both examples of this kind of *Bildungsroman* series. In each of these examples, most of the characters undergo development and change. For example, in the Harry Potter series, the young characters develop obviously through their accumulation of knowledge and magical skill. In

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[4] Anne Greenberg, who works for Nancy Drew's publishers, Simon & Schuster, says for the new editions published in the 1980s, the publisher's goal "was to appeal to as many readers as possible and make the books as widely available as possible" (67).

addition, many of the characters clearly mature or develop in other ways that reflect a variation in personality or moral fiber. One of the clearest examples may be Neville Longbottom, who, at the beginning of the series, forgets most things he's trying to remember, tattles, and fears authority and punishment more than the principal characters. By the last novel, however, Neville stands up to evil bravely, endures many hardships and sufferings, and wins the respect of his fellow students and his hard-to-please grandmother. Additionally, Harry's identity as "the boy who lived" and "the chosen one" somewhat parallels Betsy's identity as both an author and one developing her authorship. Harry is, even in his youth, uniquely empowered, gifted, and brave, but he also must further mature and develop his wizarding skills to be the subject capable of defeating Lord Voldemort and saving the wizarding world. The series format allows Rowling to demonstrate Harry as an active agent as a child (he battles and beats Voldemort even in the first novel) and as a developing person who needs time and experience before he can meet his ultimate destiny.

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House series also shows the development of characters over time as it recounts both the adventures and the everyday of the Ingalls family and the series' protagonist, Laura. Ann Romines argues for the significance of Laura's development to the series and notes the difficulties Laura faces as a girl growing up in a patriarchal culture: "Much of Laura Ingalls's story is about a girl's discovery of the voice in which she may speak and, eventually, write" (4). Romines explains how, "[t]hroughout the series, in winter, months of fictional time pass without a single depiction of Ma's leaving the house, although Pa is out every day, by choice and necessity"; Romines asserts that the women's seclusion in their little house compels

their silence (5). Thus, Laura's path to the development of her voice and the cultivation of her agency includes some resistance from her surroundings. Laura finds a career before marriage as a schoolteacher, but even this dream comes from external expectations, not as Laura's personal vocation. Romines summarizes Laura's perspective on her future: "Laura's emerging sense of maturity … comes with a crushing sense of responsibility to a *female* tradition. Now and in the future, Laura thinks, she must share and perpetuate her mother's work [caring for the family and teaching school]" (146).

Growing up in small-town Minnesota at the turn of the century, Betsy faces a different set of patriarchal restrictions than Laura, who came of age in the Minnesota and Dakota prairie in the 1880s, but her community, and even her own belief-system, are likewise decidedly patriarchal. Girls' studies, through the recovery of girls' experiences assisted by culturally based analysis, shows how societal norms and pressures frequently impede the development of girls like Laura and Betsy by inhibiting or denying their agency. Girls' studies thus provides a method for interpreting Laura's and Betsy's struggles with development as normative for girls in a patriarchal society. These studies demonstrate how girls throughout history and to the present day often lack a voice in society and must struggle with and against the messages they receive from the media, their peers, and adults, especially during the formative years of adolescence. Mary Celeste Kearney explains the various causes of the marginalization of girls in youth research, including an argument that "the reproduction of patriarchal ideologies via the historical male dominance of academia contributed to the persistent construction of males as normative in all forms of research, including those that were

youth-based" until the 1970s (4). While Kearney usefully describes the impediments to the growth of girls' studies, she also convincingly argues for its cultural and ethical significance. She writes, "Girls' Studies scholars must keep in mind that our work has significant political effects both within and outside the academy. At the heart of our scholarship is a demographic group that has been consistently marginalized, trivialized, and exploited throughout the ages" (21). Girls' studies, therefore, not only provides a tool for assessing the historical, daily and social reality of girls, but also makes a potentially powerful political statement.

Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos assert the magnitude of girls' acquisition of agency through their compilation of studies that seek to uncover the voices of girls around the globe. In Helgren's and Vasconcellos' collection, Jackie Kirk, Claudia Mitchell, and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh point out how although the presence of girls in the media and the attention given to girls' issues (such as educational opportunities) have increased in the twenty-first century, "the girl child remains voiceless." They attribute girls' lack of voice to society's tendency to view children as future adults, and girls, particularly, only as future mothers, as opposed to individual citizens with rights and opinions (21). When girls are viewed only for the prescriptive roles they will fulfill, their diverse ambitions, accomplishments, and identities are ignored. Although Betsy's identity and the use of her agency develop throughout the series, Lovelace also shows that Betsy, as a girl, already identifies herself as an author from an early age, and her community, especially her family and friends, accept and endorse this identity from the beginning. Unlike the subjects of the girls' studies Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh cite, Betsy does not remain voiceless, either in Lovelace's text

or in her own life. Rather, Lovelace supports Betsy's agency by endorsing her authorship from childhood.

In addition to advocating for girls' agency and giving attention to girls' voices, girls' studies provides evidence that girls exist in a particularly precarious position during adolescence. While adolescence may serve as a time for great development, it also can become an opportunity for identity and activity to be lost. In *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher analyzes case studies of girls from the late twentieth century and argues that girls uniquely experience social pressure to split into two separate selves—an authentic self and a false self: "Adolescence is when girls experience social pressure to put aside their authentic selves and to display only a small portion of their gifts" (22). Although the society to which Pipher refers has been separated by fifty years from the one in which Lovelace was writing and over eighty from Betsy's experience, Betsy does exhibit behavior and thoughts that reflect some pressure to conform to norms of femininity and reject her hobbies, as she temporarily neglects her writing after entering high school and meeting girls with more traditional ideas of women's roles. I argue, however, that Lovelace showcases one possibility for girls' resistance to the social pressure to abandon one's authentic self through the depiction of Betsy's fledgling role as an author. Betsy's moments of doubt and the times when she falters add to her development as she learns more about herself and who she wants to be from each experience.

I believe this study adds to the ongoing discussion of girls as cultural and social agents by outlining how Lovelace provides her protagonist with a middle path through adolescence. Studies such as Pipher's that depict girls primarily as the victims of their

society, unable to combat constricting gender norms and roles, can send the message that traditional norms of femininity can only be interpreted as destructive and therefore must be resisted to preserve the girls' subjectivity. Girls may feel polarized between oppressive, traditional gender roles and a sense that feminist perspectives blame femininity as the root of gender inequality. Lovelace's depiction of Betsy's girlhood somewhat resembles the third-wave movement and the resurgence of "girly" amongst feminists who believe that women can take back femininity as part of their truly liberated identities (Baumgardner and Richards). Of course, Betsy cannot fit into this model, since third-wavers note that they are the direct beneficiaries of the second-wave of feminism, which did not even begin for several decades after Lovelace wrote the series. Lovelace does not portray Betsy, therefore, as an active twenty-first century feminist purposefully celebrating her femininity as a form of resistance, but she does describe Betsy as a proactive author and feminine girl, who accepts and rejects gender roles and norms as they are fitting.

Although I argue that authorship serves as a tool in Betsy's ability to exercise her agency, Betsy is not unique as a children's literature heroine with authorial ambitions. Victor Watson notes the links between maturity and authorship in children's literature. Watson asks, "Why is becoming a writer such a consistent theme in so many novels, from Louisa May Alcott to Dodie Smith? An obvious answer is that their authors see maturation in terms of their own lives, in which writing was important" (27). Watson focuses on fictional girl-authors who write primarily in journals recording the events of their daily lives. While he does note a significant trend in the recurrence of girl-authors as protagonists, his theory that these characters originate from authors'

autobiographical tendencies is a plausible, but fairly simple, solution. Although the larger trend of girl-authors in children's literature deserves extensive notice and explanation, for my purposes of examining Betsy's authorship, development, and acquisition of agency I will briefly examine only a few central girl-authors who provide background and insight to Lovelace's narrative.[5]

Jo March, perhaps the best known example of a fictional girl-author in American literature, showcases the difficulty a girl faces in understanding and reconciling traditional gender roles and the compulsion to write during adolescence. Although Jo feels passionately about her authorship and tries to pursue a professional career, she cannot ignore her other gendered obligations and society's expectations for her femininity. According to Jill P. May, "The subtext [of *Little Women*] carries the bite of realism. In the end, the sisters are a reflection of Alcott's own society's constraints. Their artistic talents must fit within their married lives" (25). Such a reading of Jo's narrative argues that even the most determined girl-author might be forced to make compromises to appease societal expectations. Beverly Lyon Clark interprets the text as representing Alcott's conflicting attitudes towards her own writing, and thus aligns with Watson's theory of girl-authors. Clark explains how Alcott endorses Jo's writing initially as a means of self-expression of masculine urges that cannot be expressed in other socially acceptable ways, but the novel eventually teaches that Jo must outgrow her writing and accept her feminine role. Clark surmises, "Writing is . . . double-edged, enabling expression or repression, or both. . . . Alcott remains ambivalent—about

[5] I hope to closely examine the narratives of other girl-authors further in a later project, but here I will only engage with those most pertinent to Lovelace's narrative.

writing, about self-expression, and about gender-roles" (*A Portrait of the Artist As a Little Woman* 87).

Betsy displays a similar passion for her authorship and also encounters conflicting gender expectations from society, but her circumstances are not the same as Jo's. Betsy grows up decades after Jo, after the birth of the New Woman and at the eve of the final push in the suffragist movement. In Betsy's time, white, middle-class women much more frequently attended college and could pursue reform work outside of the home through clubs. Perhaps due to these changes in opportunity for women, Lovelace maintains a positive view of authorship. Rather than out-growing her authorship, Betsy grows into her professional pursuit as Lovelace continually links Betsy's authorship with her maturity and education. Even after Betsy marries she continues to write, and as she collaborates with her husband, she publishes more frequently than before. Furthermore, Lovelace portrays Betsy's authorship over a more extended period of time than Alcott, and, therefore, Lovelace has more narrative space to explain Betsy's development.

Although Alcott may have expressed ambivalence about women's authorship, other authors, such as Louise Fitzhugh—the creator of the Harriet the Spy series (1964)—relish and celebrate the girl-author in their fiction. Lissa Paul argues that Harriet Welsch, of *Harriet the Spy,* embodies many of the traits of the feminist author, such as balancing her role in society with her role as an author and finding gossip to be a true form of fiction (67). Unlike Jo March, Harriet does not feel inhibited in her authorship by her gender. As Paul says, "Harriet wins" at the end of the novel when she regains her friends and finds a socially acceptable outlet for her writing as a gossip

columnist (69). Paul contrasts Harriet's victorious writing career with an adult novel published in the same era, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*. Unlike Harriet, the female author in Lessing's novel does not win; she has to abandon her authorship for traditional female roles. Paul explains, "The difference between the two novels is characteristic of the difference that often shows up between children's literature and women's literature—of that period, anyway: children win, women don't" (69).[6] Harriet's ability to "win" and fulfill her desires for both acceptance and authorship shows the unique possibilities open to some girl-authors, especially those coming after trailblazing female authors.

Fictional authors, such as Jo March, and real authors, like Alcott, precede both Betsy and Harriet, and enable the latter to claim more freedom and empowerment in their authorships. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar highlight the importance and power of female precursors to women authors when they note that a preceding female author, "far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible" (292). Female authors rely on precursors who first proved that femininity could be reconciled with writing. Without such precedence, a woman may suffer from an "'anxiety of authorship'—a

[6] Paul writes in 1989, over twenty years after the publication of either *Harriet the Spy* or *The Golden Notebook*, and I believe her reference to time period implies that, on her side of second-wave feminism, women *can* win as well. Paul does not, however, give a thorough explanation of why girls win when women do not. I do not intend to make a comparison between women's authorship and girls' authorship in this study, but Paul's assertion that Harriet *can* win, that she can maintain her authorship despite periods of disapproval from society, influences my suspicion that this may be a trend across children's literature, although not a universal truth, as March's authorship attests.

radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor' the act of writing will isolate or destroy her" (291).[7]

Betsy, then, seems to be in a privileged position. She was fortunate enough to write (both fictionally in the books and literally as Lovelace's lived experience) in the twentieth century when women wrote, were published, and read at a previously unimagined magnitude. Susan Coultrap-McQuinn analyzes the careers of five American female authors from the nineteenth century to create a "composite picture of women's literary professionalism" (195). Coultrap-McQuinn says their professionalism was "expressed in their literary expertise and business skills, in their deep commitment to their career, in their expectation of self determination as a writer, in their acceptance of moral and interpretive roles for their work, and in their understanding of the professional behaviors expected between authors and publishers" (195). Coultrap-Mcquinn proves that by the time Lovelace was growing up, prestigious and serious levels of authorship were open to women. Lovelace, as an author forming another's authorship, had women (including Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott) to show her that professional authorship was possible for both herself and Betsy.[8] Therefore, Lovelace could create an empowered consciousness for Betsy, built upon the

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[7] Gilbert and Gubar, in their assertion, are responding to Harold Bloom's identification of an "anxiety of influence," which they summarize as an author's "fear that he is not his own creator and that the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings" (290). Women do not need to fear these male precursors, and instead they regard female precursors as empowering.

[8] Lovelace reveals her familiarity with Alcott by noting how frequently Betsy and Tacy borrowed *Little Women* from a neighbor (*B&TBH* 94), and much of the plot of *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* revolves around the girls' earnest desire to see a performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because Betsy enjoyed Stowe's book (24).

belief that she may attain practically any level or interpretation of authorship she desires.

Anne E. Boyd, in *Writing for Immortality*, makes another distinction about female authorship in the nineteenth century that would affect later authors. According to Boyd, before the Civil War women usually considered their authorship to be secondary to their feminine nurturing roles, while some post-bellum female authors began to write for themselves as "a central part of their identities" and to see themselves as artists engaging in high literary culture (2). Boyd seeks to discover how and why these women began to view their authorship differently through an examination of four women authors of the period (Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Elizabeth Stoddard, and Constance Woolson). From the experiences of these authors, Boyd concludes that some women found their ambition to be authors from a combination of a Transcendental belief in the possibility of genius, the *Atlantic Monthly's* acceptance of high literary work by women, a sense of American individualism, and literary families who could provide support (61). Betsy, through Lovelace, indirectly benefits from these contexts as well. Although she may not have grown up in, for example, the Transcendental, literary family that Alcott had, she has Alcott as a precursor of feminine authorship. Betsy develops her identity and her authorship in an environment in which she can pursue writing and literature solely for her own pleasure if she wishes; she can prioritize herself and her own goals over feminine obligations or roles.

Lovelace creates Betsy in an environment already somewhat amenable to her development as an author, but Lovelace's narrative also shows that Betsy does not have a completely easy journey to adulthood and professional authorship. Lovelace does not

create an author with a fully developed, fixed identity; Lovelace, instead, creates a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman* to formulate Betsy's agency through her authorship. My aim is to track this progression through the series and to demonstrate the key components of the girl-author, or at least the primary tropes according to Lovelace. I hope my analysis of Lovelace's progressive model will help explain the difficulties the girl subject faces in adolescence and the ways authorship can aid the girl as both a means of expressing and expanding her agency. In Chapter One, I will argue that Lovelace uses Betsy's personal writing and public authorship to grant Betsy autonomy and self-driven focus in her own development as both an individual and an author. Lovelace shows how Betsy, as she gains a sense of purpose from her vocational calling to authorship, can use her empowerment to reconcile her desires and her dreams to norms of femininity, which I will discuss in Chapter Two. Lovelace argues Betsy must, through trial and error, learn how to navigate her patriarchal culture while maintaining her selfhood. I assert that Betsy does not desire to cast off her femininity entirely for her authorship, but instead ardently seeks her own personal fulfillment. In Chapter Three, I will explore Lovelace's assertion of Betsy's professionalism in authorship and chart how Lovelace includes Betsy's familiarity with both the public and the private spheres as a central aspect to her *Bildung*. Combined, these chapters and this project contribute to women's and children's literature studies by demonstrating how a piece of children's literature can teach us about the cultivation of agency in the face of gender-based resistance.

Chapter 1: The *Bildungsroman* and the Acquisition of Agency through Authorship

> "We'll all grow up someday, Meg. We might as well know what we want." (Amy, *Little Women*, 1994)

Louisa May Alcott uses Paul Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* to frame the March sisters' development into pious and ladylike women in *Little Women*. As the girls struggle with their burdens and strive to be good pilgrims, they give ample consideration to the ladies they will become. Although the 1994 film version of *Little Women* does not follow Alcott's pilgrim motif, the late twentieth-century interpretation portrays the girls' conscious struggles with their maturity through lines such as Amy's. Amy's observation and Alcott's spiritual allegorical structure highlight the importance of developing with purpose; whether that may be to fulfill youthful desires or to become ideal Christian pilgrims, "know[ing] what we want" gives the *Bildungsroman* structure and hope for a desired outcome. Correspondingly, in Lovelace's series, Betsy's authorship structures and creates the path for Betsy's development. Betsy desires to be an author from childhood, and although she would have aged without this vocation, her authorship provides the *Bildung* to her *Bildungsroman*. In this chapter I will track how Betsy's private writing and public authorship, united under her primary goal of becoming a professional author, help her mature, formulate her own identity, and act as her own agent.

As briefly explored in the Introduction, Betsy's narrative functions as a *Bildungsroman*, enhanced by the liminal space of childhood and the prolonged amount of time and pages given to the series. The precise definition of *Bildungsroman* can differ based upon the literary and/or national allegiance of the scholar in question. For example, Michael Beddow, a Germanist, concerns himself with the archetypal *Bildungsroman*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and other German novels which Beddow contends prove that in a true *Bildungsroman*, "the representation of the hero's development is a means to a further end" and not an end in itself (2). Susan Fraiman notes that in English literary studies, Susanne Howe's *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsman: Apprentices to Life* definitively outlines the genre (4). Fraiman highlights the significance of Howe's reckoning the *Bildungsroman* an "apprentice novel" through several features an apprenticeship implies: youth and inexperience, eventual mastery, the need for mentors, and finding one's talent and choosing to cultivate it (5). Jerome Buckley meanwhile describes the *Bildungsroman* as "the space between" childhood and maturity, while also identifying traditional stages of development (including self-education, encounters with society, the pursuit of vocation) (18). Lovelace's narrative, chronicling Betsy's early childhood to young adulthood, encompasses this "space between" while also clearly outlining Betsy's apprenticeship as both a woman and an author. Lovelace's story also includes many motifs of the genre, including the need for mentors, the journey from the provincial into the cosmopolitan, and, of course, the cultivation of talent.[9]

[9] I am distinguishing Betsy's narrative as a *Bildungsroman* and not a *Künstlerroman* because Betsy seeks professional authorship, not artistry. According to Randolph P. Shaffner, the protagonist of the *Künstlerroman* develops "predominately

Betsy's authorship in various instances abets, steers, and enables Betsy's development as an individual. Therefore, I believe Betsy's narrative extends the discourse around the *Bildungsroman* as the series illustrates how authorship can function as a focalizing tool in the development of the individual. Additionally, I believe Betsy's authorship may help define a distinctive sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman* as it exhibits an alternative pathway to development: one in which authorship provides unique opportunities to develop voice and independence for the child and emerging adult.

Lovelace's narration of Betsy's authorship, encompassing both private writing and writing done consciously for public consumption (which I am calling her "authorial" or "authored" writing), helps develop Betsy's agency in three ways. First, the practice of personal writing and reflection allows Betsy to evaluate her present, past, and future selfhoods. Through this writing she tracks her own development and sets goals for her future progress; meanwhile she acts as her own agent by charting her path to development. Secondly, the practice of writing and verbalizing her thoughts helps Betsy literally develop her own voice. As she comes to know herself through her writing, she gains conviction in her ability to write and to articulate her ideas along with a firmer belief in her personhood. Finally, Betsy's authorship gives her a sense of purpose and a goal for her development. Rather than allowing her protagonist to

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aesthetic[ally]," and Marianne Hirsch describes the *Künstlerroman* as a novel in which the male hero becomes dissatisfied with reality and withdraws into the inner life, where he finds his artistry as a solution to his spiritual crisis (13, 28). Not only are such descriptions male-focused, but also they do not satisfactorily describe Lovelace's series because Lovelace clearly focuses on Betsy's personal and professional development, not on her artistry. Lovelace rarely reveals the content of Betsy's actual writing, and what she does share with the reader comes mostly from Betsy's personal journals and not her artistic or professional texts.

develop aimlessly into an adult with outside pressures or voices forming her and her future, Lovelace focuses Betsy's growth on the goal of becoming an author. This focus empowers Betsy by convincing her of her worth, while also granting her greater control over her future and identity.

Even before Betsy writes down her stories, Lovelace has Betsy use story-telling as a tool for emotional labor that otherwise might be beyond the grasp of Betsy's development and past experiences. The series begins when Betsy meets Tacy, and soon after Betsy starts regularly telling Tacy stories. Betsy often begins a story, with Tacy providing occasional contributions, simply for entertainment; however, even Betsy's earliest stories often serve another purpose. For example, Betsy invents a series of tales about a milkman to provide comfort and distraction for the long, bitterly cold walks home from school (*BT* 42). Betsy also creates an imaginative description of heaven and the experiences of Tacy's baby sister, Bee, to comfort Tacy after Bee's death (*BT* 61).

Sarah Robbins demonstrates how Lovelace works within a long-standing tradition of narrative and language teaching the child how to "read" meaning in real-world situations. Robbins argues that Anna Aikin Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* shows the mother in a simultaneously empowered and constrained position as she remains in the home but teaches her son lessons he will carry into the public sphere through stories in which she controls the interpretation: "Shaping her son's consciousness and therefore his behavior, the mamma of the *Lessons* exemplifies a middle-class woman's indirect route to cultural power" (141). Lovelace, in relation to Barbauld, acts as the mother while also inverting the adult-child roles. Lovelace simultaneously mothers her readers and shows Betsy as the empowered mother figure: Lovelace interprets Betsy's *stories*

by putting them in the larger framework of Betsy's *story*, while also granting Betsy the agency to interpret and "read" her world through storytelling without an adult interpreter. Significantly for Betsy's subsequent development, these stories additionally set the precedent that Betsy maintains and exercises her voice even in difficult circumstances.

Lovelace also shows how Betsy can use her story-telling abilities for personal gain. When Betsy, Tacy, and their best friend Tib are young, Betsy convinces the others they should all learn how to fly. Under her direction, each girl jumps off of the hitching block and the porch. Betsy then suggests they jump from a tree branch, and Tacy and Tib do so, readily. Once perched in the tree herself, Betsy gets scared, but she tells a story that both distracts Tacy and Tib by inciting their tears and also cleverly requires Betsy to demonstrate *climbing* down from the tree. Betsy, therefore, understands early in life that the storyteller can create her own opportunities. L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* similarly shows, if not the power of storytelling per se, certainly the possibilities created by imaginative narration of places and events, which may or may not be shared with others. Anne, for example, negatively sees the real-world implications of the stories she tells herself and her best friend Diana when she becomes so frightened by her own descriptions of "The Haunted Wood" by her house she nearly cannot bring herself to walk through it at night (Montgomery 1000). Generally Anne's imagination produces more positive effects, from simply allowing her to more thoroughly enjoy her surroundings to potentially reconciling her strained emotions in a new home (such as her assurance she could "imagine" Marilla to be her aunt, and not a stranger, 943).

Montgomery indicates, however, that Anne must learn *not* to use her imagination. After Anne ventures through the woods at Marilla's insistence, fearing bats and wails she thinks she hears the whole way through, she tells Marilla, "I'll b-b-be cont-t-tented with c-c-common-place places after this" (Montgomery 1001). According to Foster and Simons, as Anne "progresses to maturity, learning to control her impulses so as to harmonize more closely with her social environment" she abandons her romance writing, which Foster and Simons interpret as stemming partly from an "authorial recognition that in a world dominated by patriarchal and rationalist values the productions of the female literary imagination must be obliterated or suppressed" (169). Significantly, Lovelace does not teach Betsy this lesson. Lovelace reinforces the positive uses of storytelling and authorship through Betsy, rather than eventually training her to reject imaginative practices. Authorship allows Betsy to express what otherwise might be inexpressible while also allowing her to constructively use her agency when she would otherwise lack control or determination.

Betsy's storytelling becomes written authorship in the fourth book of the series, *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*. In the picture on the title page, which I described at the beginning of the Introduction, Betsy looks like the girl from the first three novels, and even the picturesque background of hills and small houses shows the familiar, natural scenes of her childhood. As the title suggests, however, in this book, Betsy and Tacy will go downtown. Lovelace marks this as a departure from the earlier novels in which the girls had thoroughly, but exclusively, explored the surrounding hills; particularly she creates an interesting juxtaposition with the most recent book, *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*. The title of the fourth novel, therefore, emphasizes Betsy's physical

movement to the town, while the accompanying illustration highlights Betsy's development as an author as she wields her pen and paper. The rest of the novel emphasizes how both of these changes are markers of Betsy's maturity.

Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown reveals, for the first time, Betsy's goal of becoming a professional author. Early in the novel, Betsy receives her first lesson in professional authorship: authors need to read "good" books. Betsy and Tacy have been reading romance novels belonging to Betsy's family's hired girl, and the subject matter and racy titles influence Betsy's own writing. Betsy's mother discovers the genre of Betsy's stories when she glimpses some of Betsy's most recent work (with titles such as *Hardly More than a Child* and *Lady Gwendolyn's Sin*). Mrs. Ray's remonstrance does not focus on the danger of the romance novels, but instead on developing Betsy's authorship. She says of the books, "There's no great harm in it, but if you're going to be a writer, you need to read good books. They train you to write, build up your mind" (*B&TGD* 75). The discussion of what, exactly, Betsy has been writing sparks a conversation in the family about her present and future identity as an author. For the first time, her family acknowledges that Betsy will write professionally. Her parents also suggest she may go downtown, alone, to visit the library and check out books. This permission clearly marks a new stage in Betsy's maturity and independence; her father notes she is "old enough now" and that her sister, Julia, likewise goes downtown for music lessons, which are also "important" (*B&TGD* 78). In this instance, Betsy's authorship serves as both a catalyst for and a marker of her maturity. She is old enough for her authorship to be taken seriously, and its seriousness incites additional moves towards maturity and independence, including educating herself and going into the town alone.

With her family's reinforcement of her authorial identity and belief in her maturity, Betsy takes it upon herself to destroy her old stories by putting them in the furnace. While every critic may not agree with the Rays about what is and what is not a "classic" or what kinds of books aspiring writers should be reading, Betsy's initiative in this situation shows her maturity as she takes responsibility for her education and development as an author. Meghan Sweeney, furthermore, notes the contrast between the fiery end of Betsy's story and that of Rena's book, which Tacy's father burns after he discovers it. Sweeney argues, "In contrast to her friend Tacy, whose father rashly tossed her borrowed novel into the flames (3), it is Betsy who makes the decision here, in an act of purification that prepares her for the 'good books' promised to her by a judicious father" (*Checking Out America* 48). Tacy lacks the authority to save her borrowed book while Betsy's father does not likewise destroy Betsy's stories; Lovelace implies writing your own stories gives you the right to determine their fate.

Betsy soon after makes her first solitary journey into town. Meghan Sweeney contends that Betsy's visit to the library is part of her development into a proper citizen as libraries and librarians serve to shape the girl "into an appropriately American subject" (*Checking Out America* 44). Likewise, Betsy derives resolution from her quest to educate herself and refine her writing; for example, her sense of purpose and belonging enables her to speak boldly to the librarian that she may, in fact, want to read *not* just in the Children's Room. Sweeney cites a survey of public libraries from 1893 which reveals that 70 percent of libraries at that time had a minimum age requirement of twelve years for library patrons; Sweeney notes that children gained acceptance in the library, or at least the children's room, in the new century, "but they were expected

to show appropriate deference for the space" (43-44). Betsy asserts her right to move beyond her appropriated space in the Children's Room because she feels she has a meaningful, adult purpose in her visit. Betsy also declares she wants to read the classics, and she shows the trust she places in her own judgment when she adds, "I hope I'm going to like them" (*B&TGD* 84). Betsy's authorship provides both the means for her independent venture to the library and the conviction to assert herself and her interests in an unfamiliar, adult sphere. Throughout *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown* both Betsy and adults treat Betsy's authorship as a serious vocation, and in doing so they activate her engagement with her own development while solidifying her determination.

Betsy undergoes another significant development in the next novel, *Heaven to Betsy*, in which she starts high school. Betsy's move from primary school to high school appropriately accompanies her family's move across town, and Betsy's focus on her authorship shifts in tandem with these other changes. Betsy, whom Lovelace depicts as somewhat sentimental and nostalgic throughout the series, struggles with the move to the new house, and her melancholy causes her to alter her writing habits. During this transitional time period, Betsy appears to grapple with the feelings of inferiority and "madness" suggested by Gilbert and Gubar some twenty years after Lovelace wrote the series as characteristic of many female authors, even imprisoning her authorship in the attic. Betsy suggests that her writing desk, which actually is her uncle's old theatrical trunk, not be put in her bedroom in the new house, although she kept it in her room in the old house. Instead, the desk goes to the attic, but Betsy expresses her misgivings and uncertainties about her decision by occasionally "climb[ing] to the attic and stuff[ing] smudged, scribbled papers furtively into the trunk, standing forlorn in a dark corner. On

such occasions she often cried a little; never much, for it always occurred to her how romantic it was to be crying about her trunk" (*HB* 32). The hesitation Betsy expresses over her authorship through the displacement of her trunk shows that Betsy's development cannot be entirely smooth; she will have to overcome some obstacles along the way.

The alignment of Betsy's temporary rejection of her authorship with the other changes she experiences demonstrates that Betsy's development as an author progresses in tandem with her development as a maturing individual. Upon entering a new house and a new school, Betsy has entered a new stage of development, and she must reconcile how her authorial aspirations will incorporate into her new lifestyle. Lovelace tells the reader at this point that, physically, Betsy is no longer a little girl; her looks "had certainly changed enough in the last two years" (*HB* 2). Although in previous books Betsy and her friends show some interest in Herbert Humphreys, decidedly the cutest boy in school, they have minimal interaction with any boys, and are happy to fantasize about marrying the Prince of Spain. As Betsy enters high school, however, boys suddenly significantly impact Lovelace's plot and Betsy's daily life. As Betsy worries more about her social life and her romantic interests, she stops writing regularly. While the previous book in the series, *Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown*, was full of examples of Betsy writing and developing her authorship, Lovelace hardly mentions Betsy's writing for over one hundred pages in *Heaven to Betsy*.

Eventually Betsy writes some poems while walking home from school. Betsy then puts them, not in her desk, but in a handkerchief box where she has been keeping notes from the boy she likes, Tony. This placement symbolizes Betsy's confusion

regarding the new interests of adolescence and her previous devotion to her authorship; unsure of how to reconcile these two allegiances, Betsy half-hazardly jumbles together these seemingly divergent texts. Betsy expresses her thoughts on her writing:

> Writing didn't seem to fit in with the life she was living now. Carney didn't write; Bonnie didn't write. Betsy felt almost ashamed of her ambition. The boys teased her about being a Little Poetess. She felt that she would die if anyone discovered those poems in the handkerchief box, and the bits of stories she still wrote sometimes when she was supposed to be doing algebra. (*HB* 144-145)

Clearly, some of Betsy's doubt about her writing and identity as an author stems from gender norms; she desires to be popular with boys like other girls, and her female friends' lack of professional ambition causes her to question her own plans. I will more closely examine how Betsy struggles to establish her identity against societal norms of femininity in the next chapter, but for now I would like to note that when Betsy neglects her authorship her development becomes passive. Instead of actively seeking her own maturity, Betsy allows her friends' interests and boys' affection to determine her actions and her feelings about herself. Lovelace shows Betsy fall away from the middle path between normative gender roles and professional aspirations when she entirely neglects her authorship; she loses her balance and slides into social expectations of femininity and adolescence.

Although Betsy questions her authorial identity, her teachers see her potential and encourage her authorship. After Betsy has spent a full semester of high school neglecting her writing, one teacher chooses Betsy to write an essay for the school-wide

rhetoricals. The teacher's confidence in Betsy's abilities, combined with Betsy's desire to forget an unrequited crush, inspires Betsy to devote herself to this writing project. The assignment requires her to write a factual essay on Puget Sound, but Betsy cannot resist making her essay into a story, full of friends and humor. When Betsy reads the essay to the school, the audience responds with enthusiastic applause and laughter. Betsy's teachers remark that her essay is unconventional and less factual than they had imagined it would be, but they also do not deny their amusement.

This essay helps Betsy develop her authorship and establish her public writing style, while her skills as an author additionally grant her autonomy within pre-established school structures and expectations. The excellence of her writing and her oral, public performance of the essay free her from only utilizing traditional forms and styles. After Betsy reads her essay, the school principal remarks, "Betsy certainly surprised us. . . . She left out a few important facts about the Sound, I must admit. . . . But she certainly made us all want to take that trip, didn't she?" (*HB* 223). Betsy scrapes past the academic expectations of what an essay should do through her rhetorical skill and talent. Her authorship allows her to exercise her agency within and despite an existing social structure that dictates acceptable and preferred writing styles. Such a structure would restrict Betsy as an author and a participant in her school community, but Lovelace shows that Betsy has the tools to fight these expectations and retain a positive position amongst both her peers and authority figures.

The student response to Betsy's essay demonstrates the power of Betsy's voice amongst her peers and that her authorship allows her to act as an agent in the positive construction of her own identity. Lovelace describes Betsy frequently as smiling and

laughing and shows that Betsy values humor and the ability to make others laugh. Many of Betsy's earliest poems and songs were meant to amuse herself and Tacy, and Betsy continues to value silliness in both speech and action throughout the series. The laughter of her peers mirrors Betsy's self-identification as a humorous person and helps cement her authorial identity as a humorist. In another publicly performed piece, Betsy's writing proves to make the audience not only laugh, but to repeat, enthusiastically, her own words. In Betsy's sophomore year of high school, she collaborates with her sister to write a humorous song about the girls of their high school, and when Julia sings it at the fall rhetoricals, the audience begins to sing along, and the words resonate as "[i]t was sung over and over. After school, it was hummed in the cloak rooms, in the halls, and along High Street" (*BSH* 82). Betsy can captivate her audience and put her own words into their mouths, while casting an image of herself in the public consciousness that accurately reflects her own self-image and values.

Betsy finds a new opportunity to practice and stretch her authorship in the annual Essay Contest at school. The students of Betsy's high school individually join one of two academic clubs, which compete annually in debate, athletics, and composition. In Betsy's freshman year, the faculty sponsor of her club chooses Betsy to compete in the Essay Contest. Betsy begins with characteristic confidence in her writing; her success from the Puget Sound essay remains fresh in her mind, and, as Lovelace narrates, "There was nothing she would have hesitated to write from an epic poem to an advertisement" (*HB* 229). Yet Betsy's assurance in her ability, or perhaps her cockiness, proves to be her downfall. She procrastinates researching the assigned topic until she cannot catch up to the knowledge of the other participants. Betsy learns from this

experience a valuable lesson about the importance of study and dedication to her authorship. Although she has talent, of which she is, perhaps, overly aware, writing well also requires study, planning, and concentration. Betsy's disappointment in the Essay Contest causes her to reflect on the past year, in which she disregarded her authorship in favor of social activities and fun. She comes to realize if she neglects her authorship she may lose it: "The thought appalled her. What would life be like without her writing? Writing filled her life with beauty and mystery, gave it purpose . . . [sic] and promise" (*HB* 258). Betsy connects the loss of her authorship to the loss of her purpose and therefore determines to dedicate herself to the development and practice of her authorship. She immediately determines to move her writing desk back into her bedroom, symbolizing the daily presence of the task set before her.

The Essay Contest causes Betsy to assess her development and her goals through the crisis of a public failure. Lovelace demonstrates the significance of this revelation as Betsy continues to reflect on this and other situations throughout the series through her personal writing. The first chapter of *Betsy Was a Junior*, titled "Taking Stock," presents Betsy venturing out alone in a boat during summer vacation as she writes in her journal about her first two years of high school. As she addresses her loss in the Essay Contest her freshman year, she notes that the experience transformed her priorities and her perspective on authorship: "One of the great lessons she had learned in high school had come after that defeat. She had learned that her gift for writing was important to her and that she must never neglect it" (*BWJ* 4). Through the personal, constructive writing in which Betsy makes these observations, Betsy actively develops her skills and her

authorship. Comparably, Christopher Burnham believes that journal writing and development align because:

> [W]riting which is thoughtful, informative, challenging, and evocative—requires a complete range of cognitive skills, especially synthesis and evaluation. Good writing requires a depth of thinking—an awareness of context, relevance, and implication—which is unavailable to the cognitively immature. Keeping a journal provides students opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills while also encouraging self-awareness and psychological growth. (148)

Betsy's journal writing functions according to Burnham's description: it requires intellectual, cognitive skills, and in the habitual practice of journal writing Betsy develops the ability to evaluate herself and her writing with greater depth and precision.

Betsy's journal reifies her development and her devotion to her authorship in the act of writing, but she also returns to these lists and resolutions later for reflection, and in these moments she assesses the progress she has made and what it means to mature and grow up. At the end of her junior year, Betsy thinks of her resolutions from nearly a year before and notes, "How they had been smashed to smithereens! She wondered whether life consisted of making resolutions and breaking them, of climbing up and slipping down. 'I believe that's it,' she thought. 'And the bright side of it is that you never slip down to quite the point you started climbing from'" (*BWJ* 272). Betsy imagines herself within a narrative of development, and her writing and reflection allow her to construct an idea of what it means for her to grow and mature, and to establish future goals for herself. In this way, her narrative reflects other

Bildungsromane that depict, not just one protagonist's specific development, but discourses about the fundamental meaning of development. However, her conclusions are reached through the practice of her personal writing, and therefore these conclusions may not be attainable, or at least not attained by the same means, for the *Bildungsheld* who is not an author.

Betsy also notes specifically how her goals and the content of her lists have changed: "At first they had been mostly about brushing hair and teeth. Then she had reached out for charm. . . . Last summer's resolves to be thoughtful at home and to excel at school, had shown a sort of groping after maturity" (*BWJ* 272). As Betsy looks toward starting her senior year, she realizes, once again, she has a list of goals. This time, however, none of them are about her own self-improvement and, to her own surprise, she has not written any of them down. As she emphatically notes, "I've just realized definitely that there were things I wanted to do . . . Gosh! . . . I must be growing up,"(*BWJ* 273). Betsy thinks for a moment she has developed beyond some of her writing habits; perhaps written reflections and goals aren't necessary anymore. Just moments later, however, Betsy is writing resolutions for her authorship and developing a plan to get stories published. She laughs at her own quick return to list-making and then thinks, "But maybe people who liked to write always made lists! Just for the fun of it!" (*BWJ* 274) Betsy's self-consciousness of her development almost causes her to give up one of the tools aiding her, but she returns to her journal writing because she knows it is linked to her authorship. I would disagree, however, that her lists are just for "fun;" I believe her reflections on her old lists and goals prove that all of her journal writing has a major impact on her development and her agency within her development. She shows

the "synthesis and evaluation" Burnham alleges comes from journal writing in her very assessment of the value of her journal. Thus, her argument that she does not need her journal proves the value of her journal writing.

Around this time, Betsy receives outside encouragement to continue to strive for progress. Betsy's community has encouraged and supported her authorship consistently since she first began writing her stories, but in her junior year of high school, for the first time, a teacher begins to take a more concentrated interest in helping Betsy develop her authorship. Miss Fowler, Betsy's new English teacher, intensely critiques Betsy's writing for class, despite Betsy's best efforts. Miss Fowler eventually explains to Betsy that she grades both Betsy and Joe Willard more severely because they are the best writers in the class and she wants to help them reach their potential. Miss Fowler's plan works immediately: Betsy assures Miss Fowler she will work hard, and Lovelace's narration tells us, "[a]fter this Betsy worked harder than ever on Foundations of English Literature" (*BWJ* 138). Miss Fowler's comments also make Betsy "[blush] like a freshman," revealing the emotional, in addition to the psychological, impact Miss Fowler's belief makes on Betsy (*BWJ* 138).

Miss Fowler's faith in Betsy's abilities as a writer gives Betsy the motivation and confidence to work hard in her class and to improve her authorship in general. Miss Fowler, along with Betsy's other teachers, in some ways fulfills the traditional *Bildungsroman* role of the mentor; Miss Fowler's belief in Betsy's ability empowers Betsy to seek her own development and perfect her craft with a refreshed vitality. According to Jerome Buckley, the mentor enters the *Bildung* after the protagonist loses his father and is left to forge his own path (19). Similarly, Miss Fowler aids Betsy's

agency by reinforcing Betsy's confidence that she is capable and independent. Miss Fowler will not "fix" Betsy's writing for her, but will challenge her to improve herself. Betsy has not actually lost either of her parents, and because she is female, she presumably does not rely on her father in the same way Buckley describes his protagonist, yet Lovelace still emphasizes that Betsy needs sources outside of her family and her tight-knit community to not only encourage her in her talent but also to challenge her to strive for improvement.

Betsy Was a Junior ends and *Betsy and Joe* begins with the beginning of Betsy's and Joe Willard's relationship, which commences through letters and post-cards. The last lines of *Betsy Was a Junior* set the stage for the relationship and create an interesting contrast between Joe and the other boys Betsy has liked in the past. When Betsy liked Tony, for example, she was embarrassed by her writing and kept poems she wrote with mementos of her affection for him in a small box, not in her writing desk. Betsy puts her first postcard from Joe, however, in her writing trunk, which previously has held only her own writing. The union Betsy creates between Joe and her authorship is prudent; Betsy and Joe have always provided mutual support to each other's writing and ambition, and their eventual marriage also permanently unites their authorships as they create a collaborative partnership. Betsy's placement of Joe's letter with her writing demonstrates the increased confidence and sense of self Betsy brings to her new relationship. Lovelace shows that Betsy knows she no longer needs to hide her authorship from boys to obtain their affection and that Betsy has gained the wisdom to choose a boy who will support her authorship.

The summer before her senior year in high school, Betsy starts pursuing professional authorship with more vigor than ever before. She writes many stories and sends all of them out to magazines. Lovelace emphasizes Betsy's tenacity and professionalism in her efforts: "If a story came back in the morning from one magazine, it went out in the afternoon to another" (*B&J* 322). Betsy's professional attitude reflects both her maturity in not taking rejection personally and her positively constructed agency and position in society that enables her to actively seek publication rather than passively wait for an opportunity.[10]

Lovelace illustrates the significance of Betsy's efforts by contrasting them with Joe's. Though he's almost always beaten Betsy in English class and the Essay Contest, and although he has had professional writing experience working for a newspaper, Joe reveals to Betsy he does not send his fiction to publishers because he's afraid it is not good enough. Although Betsy occasionally notes that a story is not very good and that her next one will be better, she does not fear that her skills or her stories in general are not good. Betsy has struggled for confidence that reigns over doubt and fear. Lovelace uses Joe as a foil for Betsy; although Joe has been paid as an author, he does not have the confidence to fully pursue the publication of his authorship across various mediums. I do not want to make a divergent argument about Joe's authorship here and the various factors that differentiate his development from Betsy's (including his gender, family background, and socio-economic status), but instead I view Joe as a marker, like the ventures to the library, of Betsy's development. Lovelace emphasizes that this progression is not a given for all authors, as seen by Joe.

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[10] I will discuss Lovelace's ideas of professionalism and Betsy's development as a professional author more closely in Chapter 3.

At the end of *Betsy and Joe*, Betsy asserts writers need all the education they can get, so she will be attending the University of Minnesota. Betsy, however, does not finish college. After two years she tires of taking classes that do not interest her or help her formulate her authorship, and her father recommends a year abroad as an alternative educational experience, one that he and Betsy both feel will more directly benefit her authorship. Betsy's parents' encouragement of a trip abroad mirrors their earlier sponsorship of her bi-weekly trips to the library. Once again, they declare their assurance that Betsy is an author, and they show their support by giving her experiences in the world. Initially Betsy's father wants her to travel with a group, but Betsy insists an author must live in cities independently to really know them. Betsy's father takes her beliefs seriously, reminds her that he and Betsy's mother have confidence in her, and eventually agrees to let her travel independently to cities where they have some acquaintances. Here Betsy's authorship literally propels her independence as it both opens up the world and the quintessential *Bildungsroman* experience of travel to her through the necessity of cultivating her authorship. Additionally, Betsy's authorial ambitions inspire her to take charge of her education and voice her opinions; rather than passively finishing college like her friends and as would be expected of her (unless, perhaps, she married), Betsy asserts what will be best for her and what kind of education will best foster her goals.

Almost immediately after her return from Europe (hastened by the beginning of World War I and encouragement from Joe), Betsy and Joe marry. While Betsy becomes a housewife, this role in the family actually aids her authorship as she has more time, and privacy, in which to write. Betsy writes during the quiet days at home alone, and in the

evenings she collaborates on stories with Joe (*BW* 118). Betsy does subscribe to some patriarchal views of marriage that may inhibit her agency (such as allowing Joe to be the final decision maker in their family), but her relentless pursuit of authorship proves she will maintain herself and her agency in adulthood. She has taken control of her own development repeatedly and brought herself to a personal relationship and position in society through which she can hold onto her identity and her passions. In the past Betsy's agency has manifested itself in her determination to pursue her interests and her ability to assert herself and her opinions to others; within her marriage, her authorship provides a means for expressing herself and maintaining focus on her own interests, not just on domestic duties. Lovelace still does not reveal the content of Betsy's stories, but I believe once Betsy has reached maturity her authorship transfers from enabling her development of self and agency to being the means of expressing herself. Betsy's life as a housewife with no children could be lonely and monotonous, but her authorship gives her meaningful work. Just as her storytelling as a child allowed her to express things she otherwise might not have the means or the tools to comprehend or formulate, her authorship now enables her to explore and articulate parts of her consciousness that do not have a natural outlet in domestic duties.

In many respects, at this point Betsy has reached not only the end of Lovelace's novels but also the end of her *Bildung*. According to Sharla Scannell Whalen, Lovelace seriously considered following *Betsy's Wedding* with *Betsy's Bettina*, about Betsy's and Joe's child (469). Lovelace wrote in letters that the book never came naturally and she could not force it, so it was never written. Instead, Lovelace ends the series just before the joys and cares of youth are over. *Betsy's Wedding* ends at Tib's wedding, after Tacy

and Betsy, the two matrons, have feverishly sought a husband for their last single friend. Lovelace's last images of Betsy include her joyfully united in friendship as she and Tacy serve as Tib's bridesmaids, and Joe enlisting into the military at the outbreak of World War I. Betsy, Joe, and their friends are ready to take on adult responsibilities and have attained many of the goals they set for themselves as children. Betsy has long been a published author, and now regularly publishes stories, both individually and with Joe. *Betsy's Bettina* would not add to the *Bildungsroman* because Betsy has reached maturity. She has fashioned a space for herself in which she receives continued support and encouragement along with the time and privacy to write, and she has the confidence in herself and her writing to pursue publication wholeheartedly. By the end of *Betsy's Wedding*, Lovelace has shown how authorship can make a girl with dreams and talent into a woman with the control, focus, and ability to direct her own path and form her own future.

Chapter 2: Navigating Patriarchy: Gender Reconciliation in Adolescence

> Betsy certainly had no wish at all to settle down, but just the same she hoped she would see Tony's face if she walked down the cellar steps backward holding a mirror tonight (*HB* 132).

Lovelace uses Betsy to model the possibilities authorship provides for the *Bildung*, but societal expectations for a mature, developed woman complicate Betsy's life and authorship. The assumption that a girl will "settle down" early in adulthood, combined with Betsy's own desires for masculine faces lurking in her future, cause Betsy to question her plans. Betsy perseveres through the trials of adolescence, however, because the agency she cultivates through the development of her authorship helps her navigate gender norms and roles. Lovelace ultimately shows Betsy reconciling cultural feminine expectations with her personal beliefs, impulses, and goals by learning to work both with and against the prevailing patriarchal system throughout her development.

Over the course of the series, Lovelace constructs a protagonist who cares much more about becoming a successful author than about fulfilling her domestic responsibilities. Lovelace does not define Betsy by the role of what some might view as the dichotomous counterpart to the traditionally feminine girl, however: Lovelace does not cast her as the tomboy. Instead, Betsy simply refuses to resist her "feminine" impulses, such as discovering the mysteries of male affections or admiring the

allurements of a new, fashionable hat. Betsy's reflections cited in the epigraph typify her motivations and concerns throughout her high school years. She finds herself enthralled by the equally romantic possibilities of a career as an independent, world-travelling author and the prospect of living in her own passionate love story. The four books that cover Betsy's years in high school (*Heaven to Betsy*, *Betsy in Spite of Herself*, *Betsy Was a Junior*, *Betsy and Joe*) focus on how Betsy explores the natural conflicts within her desires and how she reconciles those conflicts. Lovelace also illustrates the girl-author's unique struggles and opportunities as Betsy experiences both the benefits of her vocational confidence and the challenges of defying gender roles. Furthermore, Lovelace focuses Betsy's development through her path to professional authorship, demonstrating how a professional goal enables a girl to make intentional decisions about her identity. A girl's cultivation of agency would be far more difficult if she were solely at the mercy of society's expectations for her and if her only future roles were wife and mother. Ultimately, Lovelace's narrative of development illustrates an important aspect of the female *Bildungsroman*—one of the tasks of the developing girl within a patriarchal culture is to create an identity both congruent and, often, in opposition to the social norm. A gender-oriented reading of Lovelace can contribute to feminist theory and literature by creating a model that demonstrates both the difficulties of a specific, marginalized group and an outlet for such individuals.

Because Lovelace based the series, and the protagonist, on her own girlhood at the fin de siècle but wrote and published the series forty years later as her own daughter grew up, both of these time periods provide insights into the cultural context of the series and its critique of gender roles. I will use cultural studies of women and

girls from these two eras to develop an understanding of how social forces imparted normalizing ideas about class, race, and gender to middle-class, white girls. Lovelace and her daughter received these messages, and they guided Lovelace as she constructed her middle-class, white girl-protagonist, Betsy. I will rely upon both fictional accounts from girls' novels and real-life narratives explored through girls' studies for context. Both types of sources attest to the mixed, and often contradictory, concepts of feminine identity, appearance, and roles available to girls in the two relevant time periods. Additionally, I believe the studies on girls from the last two decades can be helpful, for although society has changed vastly since Lovelace wrote the final Betsy-Tacy novel, some of the truths these studies have uncovered about the development of girls can be seen clearly in the novels as well.

Both Lovelace's actual girlhood and Betsy's fictional one occurred decades before teenagers gained a separate culture and almost a century before scholars began studying girls and girlhood in earnest. Because of the dearth of scholarly attention paid to girls before the second half of the twentieth century, historical accounts of the daily lives of girls from Lovelace's day are scarce. Fortunately, the emergence of the New Woman and the clubwomen's movement at the turn of the century has been chronicled, and analysis of these women's histories provides insights into the lives of girls as well. Middle-class girls in the "naughts" (1900-1909) were primarily expected to become wives and mothers, and any role they took outside of the home also should have served domestic or moralizing purposes. Even though recent technological advancements made housework easier for Americans who could afford amenities like electric lamps and sewing machines, white, middle-class women were still expected to spend their

time fulfilling domestic roles, according to Nancy Woloch. Many white, middle-class women transferred the time gained from new household technologies to joining clubs that promoted moral social reform. These women exemplified the New Woman of the Progressive era who, according to Woloch, "integrated Victorian virtues with an activist social role," a role that Woloch characterizes as "social housekeeping" (269, 296).

Although these women found they had more time for their own pursuits and the opportunity to work outside the home in clubs and reform organizations, the guidelines for the work they should do remained strict. Anne Ruggles Gere describes how clubwomen could be attacked if their work was thought to be "selfish" or "self-promoting" since women were expected to fulfill their duty to the home and the moral-uplift of society. Gere explains how the clubwomen skirted derision by means of skillful rhetoric: "Appropriating the ideology of selfless womanhood, clubwomen constructed themselves as carrying out projects of public service, thus creating political cover for their self-improvement projects" (12). The tension between women's increased freedom and persistent, traditional gender roles transferred to the younger generation as well. Gwen Athene Tarbox, in her analysis of the Progressive era girls' series that sprang from the Clubwomen's movement, quotes a child psychologist from 1905 who worried girls should not read stories hinting at opportunities for women that girl-readers never could actually obtain (46). His comment implied either girls' opportunities at the beginning of the twentieth century remained limited or he (and presumably others as well) wanted girls to continue on the domestic path worn smooth by previous generations. In either case, girls clearly did not receive universal encouragement to expand their roles and increase their opportunities outside the

home. While the psychologist might have correctly surmised that most girls could not expect to live like the adventurous girls in series such as *The Motor Girls* (Margaret Penrose) or *The Outdoor Girls* (Laura Lee Hope), many girls and women experienced an increase in opportunity and mobility in the Progressive era. Tarbox argues that the girls' series that sprang from the clubwomen's movement of the nineteenth century, along with the examples found in the clubwomen themselves, provided middle-class girls with examples of women embracing the freedom to move into public life and enter the work force. She explains, "The young girls who came of age during the Progressive era were reaping the benefits of a century of struggle waged by their mothers and grandmothers" (42).

While turn-of-the-century girls benefitted from the new girls' series, many girls' stories written before the Progressive era argued that girls needed reformation and tomboyish impulses must be stifled before a girl became a woman. Tarbox mentions *Little Women* and *What Katy Did* (Susan Coolidge, 1872) as primary examples of this "taming narrative." Jo March's "taming" makes an especially interesting comparison with the Betsy-Tacy series because of Jo's authorial aspirations. While Tarbox notes, in accordance with Jill May's analysis of *Little Women* which I have already explored, that Jo must tame her temper and her tomboyish ways to become a "little woman," she also argues that Jo's dreams of authorship forestall her capitulation to a demure, domestic life far from the public sphere. Instead, as Betsy eventually does as well, Jo makes a wise choice in her husband; Professor Bhaer supports her writing and treats her as an equal (41-42). *Little Women* attests to the nuanced discourse involved even in the so-called "taming" narratives. Like the New Women and the clubwomen, Jo balances her limited

freedom of expression with societal expectations of femininity, and she must work within the system to maintain her identity and stay as true to her goals as possible. Lovelace illustrates how girls may read *Little Women* without necessarily being "tamed." Lovelace makes multiple references to *Little Women* in the Betsy-Tacy series, including one note that Betsy read the book "to tatters," but Betsy does not compromise either her childhood dreams or, unlike Jo, her independent personality to become a woman (*B&TBH* 94). Betsy's supportive parents, her best friends, and the mentors she finds at school all focus her development on refining her authorship, not on her feminine character. Middle-class girls from the naughts likely received mixed and nuanced messages from the books they read and from their community. Betsy and her contemporaries could balance their reading between taming narratives and girls' series, viewing a montage of images of the girls, and women, they could be. These mixed narratives confirm that girls in the naughts may have had more opportunities and freedoms than their mothers, but they still were expected to become feminine, domestic women, whose primary allegiance was to hearth and home.

The cultural context in which Lovelace wrote the novels additionally enhances her presentation of Betsy's understanding and acceptance of femininity. Not only was Lovelace likely thinking of and inspired by her daughter, growing up before her eyes contemporaneously as she wrote the series, but, as Meghan Sweeney argues, Lovelace appears to be responding to contemporary cultural trends in other ways as well. Sweeney recounts the developing big-wedding culture in America during the 1950s, citing pop-cultural evidence from movies such as Disney's *Cinderella* and *Father of the Bride*. Sweeney writes, "Entitling her [1955] book *Betsy's Wedding* and making it the

culmination of the series reinforce the notion of wedding as triumphant endpoint. In this sense, then, the book seems very much a product of the mid-century marriage mystique" (3).

If the focus on Betsy's nuptials stems from the wedding culture of the mid-century, then the four high school books—in which Betsy struggles the most with her identity as both a woman and an author—also reflect the teenage culture of the 1940s and 1950s. Over those two decades, teenagers became visible in the public imagination, linked not only by age, but also by "distinct dress, habits, music, and culture" (Schrum 2). Kelly Schrum argues that marketers, manufacturers, and advertisers essentially created teenage culture by recognizing the potential dollar value of the young adult consumer and designing products and marketing campaigns specifically for teens. Schrum counters the traditional argument that the teenager and teenage culture emerged in the 1950s by noting that many marketers began targeting teenage girls as early as the 1920s. As Schrum explains, "The development of the concept 'teenager' was inextricably linked to girls and to the marketplace. As girls entered high school from 1920 to 1945, they exhibited strong interest in commercially defined ideals of fashion and beauty" (170). Although Betsy's narrative takes place a few decades before this era, Betsy and her friends' ardent participation in high school and all its corresponding forms of consumption (clothes, movies, dancing, ice cream parlors) suggests they are a part of a unique and separate culture akin to the teenage culture of the forthcoming decades, when the series was first read and when Lovelace's daughter was a teenager.

In order to portray Betsy positively and with serious ambitions, Lovelace defied the contemporary culture's image of the teenage girl, who primarily tantalized and

frustrated men. Ilana Nash summarizes how the 1940s fascination with teenagers and youth typically portrayed the teenage girl as an irrational and untamed sexual force:

> Teen heroines of the 1940s tend to be slangy, sarcastic, disobedient to authority, aggressive, and determined. … [They] enact their aggression in self-pleasuring pursuits, usually to the detriment of their father's (or their community's) peace of mind. Sass and aggression did not imply self-sufficiency or maturity; bobby-soxer texts often show their protagonists as silly creatures who cause astronomical, if accidental, damage to their fathers' stability. (124)

Lovelace's daughter, and her readers, would have received these messages from movies, novels, and short stories published in magazines, such as Sally Benson's *Junior Miss* series (1941).

Nash further explains, however, that texts created intentionally and specifically for girls could portray their young subjects more favorably. While "mass-cultural texts, produced for a more general audience and without the explicitly inspirational goals of some producers who exclusively addressed children" viewed girls' interiority only through a literal, sexual lens, the texts written specifically for girls could portray interiority "as a symbol of inner personhood . . . [which] could inspire a developing sense of inviolable personhood in young readers, and could thus assist some in developing a nascent sense of agency" (Nash 216). Lovelace, therefore, was not alone in portraying a girl, in a text for girls, whose self-reflection and awareness of her development fostered agency and identity. Lovelace's series participates in pop-cultural discourses regarding the image of the young girl, and that an acknowledgment of the dominant negative portrayals of teenage girls shows how Lovelace's depiction of

Betsy's agency, contrasted against such images, could be empowering to Lovelace's readers.

Girls in the 1940s witnessed the mass exodus of women from the home and into the work force during World War II, as well as the subsequent return of many of those women to the domestic sphere at the end of the war. Woloch describes the revival of domestic ideology after the war and its impact on middle-class women. She cites excerpts from letters to magazines in which women seek advice regarding whether or not they should quit their jobs; such letters reveal the conflict women felt between a desire to work and the messages they received about their roles. Woloch also cites Betty Friedan's summary of women's experience of such ideology: "In 1949, nobody had to tell a woman that she wanted a man, but the message certainly began bombarding us from all sides; domestic bliss had suddenly become chic, sophisticated. . . . It almost didn't matter who the man was who became the instrument of your feminine fulfillment" (474).

Woloch synthesizes the pressures and conflicts many women (and girls planning their futures) faced in mid-century America: "Within the growing middle class, women reacted to two forces. . . . One was a search for domestic security. . . . Another was a thrust toward wage earning, once again fostered by family need and expanding employment opportunities" (474). Betsy faces these conflicts in her marriage, as she seeks to create a domestic haven for her new family (despite not having sought domestic training prior to her marriage) and also continues to pursue her career as an author. In the final novel, Betsy and her husband determine she should, and will, make a decent wage for her writing, which will allow them to acquire such middle-class

amenities as hired help and store-bought dresses. While Lovelace likely faced similar conflicts decades earlier, when she was a newly married, ambitious author, her description of the conflict between home and work would especially resonate with girls and women of the '40s and '50s, and that resonance creates a more complete context for the series.

The historical and cultural contexts taken from the two eras in which Lovelace separately set and wrote the series reveal the contradictory, yet hopeful, position of women and girls in these times. Although white, middle-class women may have discovered more opportunities in the public sphere through either reform work with clubs or factory work during the war, society still held relatively strict and oppressive views of femininity and girlhood. These observations provide meaningful context for Lovelace's portrayal of Betsy's girlhood, as they demonstrate both the social constrictions acting upon Lovelace's (and Betsy's) agency and how Lovelace subtly defies some aspects of normative girlhood. Additionally, I believe analysis of the experiences of girls from the end of the twentieth century can provide significant insight into the struggles and triumphs of girlhood. While society, the media, and gender norms have changed drastically since the 1950s when Lovelace published the final Betsy-Tacy novel and it would be erroneous to assume our contemporary cultural observations perfectly reflect Betsy's or Lovelace's experiences, I would like to examine more closely Mary Pipher's analysis of contemporary girls' lives as she seeks to understand the fundamentals of girlhood that extend beyond individual generations and distinct cultures because her observations reflect the perspectives and struggles of girls from previous eras and Lovelace's characterization of Betsy.

Reviving Ophelia only examines girls living at the end of the twentieth century, but Pipher attests that many of the pressures placed on girls are relatively timeless. She quotes Simone de Beauvoir, who recognized in the 1950s that women learn in their girlhood what it means to be feminine, and this foresight directly impacts their identity and independence. Pipher explains, "Adolescent girls experience a conflict between their autonomous selves and their need to be feminine, between their status as human beings and their vocation as females" (21-22). Pipher argues that adolescence marks a critical passage through which girls put away their independent childhoods in exchange for societal standards of femininity. Her descriptions of modern girls, along with the few historical accounts she cites, echo the taming narratives present in girls' stories in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The persistence of narratives in which girls learn they must exchange the selfhood they knew from childhood for womanhood—from fictional taming narratives like *What Katy Did* to the real, struggling teenagers in Pipher's accounts—testifies to the nature of female adolescence. In adolescence, girls learn how to be women, and if feminine womanhood conflicts with the interests and pursuits of childhood, girls must make compromises.

Pipher's analysis of girls who navigate adolescence with their health and self-esteem intact interestingly coincides with Betsy's adolescence and development process. Pipher asserts:

> Strong girls know who they are and value themselves as multifaceted people. They may see themselves as dancers, musicians, athletes or political activists. These kinds of identities hold up well under pressure. Talent allows girls some

> continuity between past childhood and current adolescent lives. Being genuinely useful also gives girls something to hold on to. (265)

Betsy ardently begins to refine her talent at the age of twelve, before she enters adolescence and encounters the pressures to be beautiful, graceful, and popular with boys. While Betsy's passion for writing wanes when she enters high school and submerges herself in social affairs, Lovelace demonstrates that belief in her talent ultimately pulls Betsy through romantic disappointments and provides purpose when her social ambitions fail. The similarities between Pipher's descriptions and Lovelace's narrative of Betsy's experience illustrate that some truths of female adolescence are sustained across time and cultural context.

Betsy does not perfectly or effortlessly transition through adolescence, however. At times she struggles with the temptation to compromise her principles and her authorship to accommodate patriarchal standards of femininity and acceptance among her male peers. But ultimately, she learns how to incorporate societal norms of femininity (and her own enjoyment of feminine activities) with her identity as an author. While the narration of Betsy's progressive maturation and development makes the series a *Bildungsroman*, Betsy's gender and her struggles with her identity as a female designate the series as a distinctively feminized *Bildungsroman*. Susan Fraiman explains the inherent gender differences in the genre when she distinguishes the *Bildungsroman* as "but one among many narrative models;[sic] attractive but problematic for female protagonists" (*Unbecoming Women* 13). Instead, Fraiman claims female development is inherently controversial and cannot follow a neat, linear path, because various "incoherent and class-specific notions about girls becoming women"

create “a larger, cacophonous discourse about female formation” (12). Fraiman believes several developmental narratives exist within any one novel, and they “can tell us about competing ideologies of the feminine” (12).

While Fraiman advocates a new discourse and ideology for the female *Bildungsroman*, other scholars note the foundational conflicts between the established genre and the feminine experience. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland describe how female development complicates the *Bildungsroman* by “reflect[ing] the tensions between the assumptions of a genre that embodies male norms and the values of its female protagonists. The heroine’s developmental course is more conflicted, less direct” (11). For Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, the developing female protagonist faces conflicts not only from society and her experiences, but also within the form of the genre itself because the male experience inspired its formation. Fraiman, Abel, Hirsch, and Langland all note inherent differences between the female and the male developmental novel based on the greater conflict between the female and society than her male counterparts and society.

Some feminist scholars have also argued that female and male experiences are inherently different and that women and men cannot be judged or compared using only masculine standards of normalcy. For example, Carol Gilligan hypothesizes that, in accordance with Freud’s concept of the Oedipal complex, “masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment” in response to the mother being the primary caregiver (201). Although Gilligan’s theory essentializes women and the feminine experience, she nevertheless shows that a generalization of all experiences based solely on males leads to false conclusions. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland

agree with Gilligan's assertion of the female's need for community. They write, "A distinctive female 'I' implies a distinctive value system and unorthodox developmental goals, defined in terms of community and empathy rather than achievement and autonomy" (10). Abel, Hirsch, and Langland warn that heroines forced to fit into masculine definitions of achievement within a male-based genre often die, not due to developmental failures, but rather "refusals to accept an adulthood that denies profound convictions and desires" (11).

This fatal destiny may explain why Lovelace creates a different, and as I have previously described, middle pathway for her heroine. I disagree with Gilligan's ultimate assertion that all women fit necessarily any single, definite adjective, either relational or competitive. But Lovelace shows that Betsy, whether due to social forces or her biological makeup, thrives in relationships. The title of the first book, by which the series came to be collectively known, *Betsy-Tacy*, chains Betsy to Tacy through a hyphen and reveals the communal nature of both Betsy and the series. Susan Fraiman synthesizes scholarship on the traditional, masculine, *Bildungsroman* and notes its "preoccupation with the solitary, ever more inverted self" (*The Mill on the Floss* 138). By prioritizing and emphasizing Betsy's community and her relational nature, Lovelace's narrative breaks from the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

Lovelace shows Betsy continuing to immerse herself in community, through both intimate relationships and involvement with public groups. Because Betsy values relationships and attachment, she does not reject the patriarchal culture in which she develops, despite the limitations it may try to place on her. Lovelace's construction of Betsy's development illustrates how the female *Bildungsheld* can develop agency and

successfully mediate between divergent messages about her identity and her roles, both in society and in her personal life. For Betsy, this means accepting some terms of patriarchy but also re-appropriating gender roles to serve her purposes and aid her independence and selfhood. Although Betsy receives some messages that her authorship is unfeminine and encounters other ideals of femininity with which she does not identify, Betsy does not entirely reject femininity or participation in feminine culture. Instead, she finds ways to work within the patriarchal system and to reconcile her femininity with her authorship. As Betsy moves from her childhood into her adolescence, socially constructed concepts of femininity and gender roles repeatedly test her allegiance to her authorship. The series culminates with perhaps her greatest test in the battle between gender roles and her vocation—marriage and the selection of a husband. The series shows that Betsy's previous experiences readied her for this challenge, and the perspective and determination she brings to romance and marriage prove her ability to incorporate femininity into her authorial identity. Her ability to make a good choice in a husband, and the fact that she chooses, rather than chases, her husband, confirms the strength of her ability to act as her own agent to the benefit of her professional authorship.

Tracking this developmental process, I will begin with some of Betsy's earliest encounters with feminine expectations from society and how she deals with these pressures. As Lovelace moves Betsy from childhood into adolescence, Lovelace demonstrates how Betsy becomes increasingly aware of standard prescriptions of feminine beauty and fashion and does her best to emulate them. Although the first four books in the series, which relate Betsy's adventures from the ages five to twelve,

describe Betsy and her friends generically in terms of their hairstyle and a few details of their clothing, once Betsy is about to enter high school Lovelace provides detailed descriptions of Betsy's skin, hair, and dresses. Lovelace also repeatedly shows the importance of feminine beauty to Betsy. From the earliest descriptions of fourteen-year-old Betsy in *Heaven to Betsy*, Lovelace recounts how Betsy rubs creams into her face at night and reflects how her skin is "the only pretty thing about [her]" (*HB* 3). Betsy worries her hair is not curly enough, her teeth are parted, her smile is too big, and she is not as curvy as the local beaux-stealer, Irma.

Betsy's concerns detail her acceptance of racially defined and class-inflated terms of beauty and femininity, as she notably idolizes her own pale skin and longs for softly wavy hair. Additionally, the remedies Betsy seeks to perfect her supposed flaws all come with a price tag and in various bottles and tubes, demonstrating that attaining standards of beauty as they are conveyed to girls requires a certain socio-economic status. According to Joan Jacobs Brumberg, "In the early twentieth century, adolescent acne was seen . . . as a marker of 'dirtiness' and low social class" (68). This assertion reveals that Betsy's pride in her skin may stem from the testament clear skin gives of her affluence and hygiene. Furthermore, as accounts from the early 1900s reveal, girls in Betsy's time and of her background were preparing to be wives and mothers, so Betsy's concern with her physical appearance demonstrates her knowledge of what an adult woman should be, and her practice with new clothes and beauty routines illustrates her attempts to understand how her previous identity can comfortably adapt to new standards and expectations.

Betsy's interest in her feminine appearance additionally reflects her wish to be desired and sought by men and her compliance with the heterosexual norms of her society. Lovelace demonstrates the relationship between accepting feminine beauty ideals and desiring romantic, male attention by contrasting those who do not desire either to attain idealized femininity or to have romantic relationships with Betsy's attribution of success in one area to achievement of the other. Not all of Betsy's friends follow the popular beauty trends. Lovelace shows that girls who lack an interest in romantic relationships can remain indifferent to beauty regimens and fashion. For example, Betsy's best friend, Tacy, refuses to fix her hair into the fashionable pompadour worn by the other girls in high school, despite repeated requests from her friends to see how it would suit her. Not only will she not submit to their definition of normalcy and beauty but also Tacy is Betsy's only friend who expresses disinterest in boys beyond strictly platonic friendships. Betsy, meanwhile, agonizes over new boys with the same intensity that she tries the newest variation of poofs and twists in her hair.

Martha Vicinus provides one way of interpreting the relationship between hairstyles and crushes on boys in her examination of society's historically based fixation on visible markers of gender and sexuality. While Vicinus focuses on contemporary performances of lesbian eroticism, the questions she raises apply to the connection Betsy and her friends draw between visible performances of gender and heterosexual normativity. For example, Vicinus asks what the "insistence on visibility do[es] to notions of both femininity and feminism" (224). Vicinus voices her concern that limiting gender and sexual definitions to explicit and visible signals causes us to

misunderstand the full spectrum of both lesbianism and heterosexuality. Vicinus' argument shows how Betsy and Tacy are bound to, and not freely choosing, the visible representation of their claimed sexual identification. For Betsy, her unnatural curls define her desire for male attention; for Tacy, her unfashionable coronet braids mark her refusal to conform to heterosexual roles. Neither girl, in selecting her hairstyle, really chooses anything for herself.

While Betsy conforms to feminine standards of beauty and appearance, she also defies some messages she receives about femininity and gender roles. From Betsy's first expression of a professional interest in authorship, her parents encourage her without regard to gender. For example, when Betsy is only twelve, her mother recognizes her need for a special, solitary place to write and offers a family keepsake, an uncle's trunk, as a desk. Some of Betsy's peers, however, value more traditional gender roles and do not have such ambitious, professional dreams. For example, at the beginning of high school, Betsy befriends two older girls, Carney and Bonnie, both of whom exude domesticity and feminine hospitality. Betsy immediately admires the neatness of their appearance, a marker of cleanliness and domesticity that she fails to emulate. Lovelace later notes:

> [Betsy] had been almost appalled, when she started going around with Carney and Bonnie, to discover how fixed and definite their ideas of marriage were. They both had cedar hope chests and took pleasure in embroidering their initials on towels to lay away. Each one had picked out a silver pattern and they were planning to give each other spoons in these patterns for Christmases and

> birthdays. When Betsy and Tacy and Tib talked about their future they planned to be writers, dancers, circus acrobats. (*HB* 131)

Perhaps not coincidentally, Bonnie and Carney also achieve better success with boys than Betsy does. Bonnie temporarily wins the heart of Betsy's first crush, and Carney has a steady beau. Despite their romantic triumphs, however, Betsy declines to emulate Bonnie's and Carney's attitudes toward marriage, and she refuses to consider giving up her own plans. Still, Betsy does admire their neatness and expresses a desire to obtain their perfect and poised appearance. She loftily predicts that, once she is their age, she will keep her waists tucked in as well. But Betsy reveals her lack of any lasting dedication to mimicking their appearance when she jumps on the back of Carney's horse and pretends to be a cowboy, to Bonnie's and Carney's amusement and the destruction of her hair-do and neat waist (*HB* 66, 76). In that moment, as in many others throughout the series, Betsy does not deny her self, her personality, or her plans at the altar of femininity. In her puzzlement over the domestic appearances and attitudes of Bonnie and Carney, Betsy begins to determine what is important to her and what is not.

Lovelace further shows us how her protagonist aligns social norms of femininity with her professional aspirations as an author through Betsy's resistance to sewing and other domestic skills. Betsy's friends frequently form sewing parties and take on similar projects, like making jabots or sewing mottos onto pillows, and while Betsy sometimes joins in, she often looks for ways to excuse herself from the actual sewing by reading to the group. Lovelace reveals that Betsy's participation in the sewing gatherings stems solely from the enjoyment of the society, not from a need to develop domestic skills.

While Betsy may refuse sewing as a performance of femininity, she, and her friends as well, do not actually need to learn many domestic duties, like sewing, because they are middle-class and can afford to hire seamstresses. Betsy's reading to other women is not, in and of itself, unfeminine; in this context, however, Betsy rejects the feminine norms of her class. Additionally, when Betsy takes domestic science at school, Lovelace uses the situation primarily to demonstrate Betsy's ineptitude when she proves to be the only student in the all-girl class who does not know how to baste a chicken (*BWJ* 144). Again, Lovelace emphasizes Betsy's distinction as an unusual, and mildly defiant, girl of her socio-economic background while also downplaying the threat of Betsy's ignorance by casting her lack of skill as humorous. However, in creating an unconventional heroine, Lovelace defies the norm. As Gwen Tarbox demonstrates in her analysis of Progressive era girls' series, girls in the early twentieth century were not usually encouraged to plan on a life outside of the home. Even the clubwomen's activities were domestic in nature, and most girls would have been encouraged to pursue domestic activities like sewing and cooking.

Betsy's parents, however, repeatedly encourage her authorship and Betsy's disinterest in furthering her domestic abilities does not alarm them. Not only do they finance and encourage her trips to the library in childhood and her grand tour as a young woman, but also they verbalize their assurance of her identity regularly. When Betsy talks to her father about dropping out of college, he verifies her calling. He tells her, "You're going to be a writer. . . . No doubt about that! You've been writing all your life" (*B&GW* 23). Betsy's parents assist her in incorporating society's standards into her identity. They may tease her about her inability to cook or sew well, but in moments of

crisis, such as in her desire to leave college, they affirm her ability and identity as an author. When they make it acceptable for Betsy to ignore domesticity and pursue her authorship, they teach her to forge her own path through patriarchy.

Lovelace also exhibits Betsy's ability to assert herself, her agency, and her authorship by showing Betsy refusing to accede to men who disapprove of her writing. In her first two years of high school, Betsy's English teacher is Mr. Gaston, an unpleasant man who wishes he taught science, traditionally a masculine subject, rather than English. Mr. Gaston recognizes Betsy's natural talent for writing (he nominates her to compete for her club in the annual Essay Contest her freshman year), but he does not approve of her "flowery" style, particularly in her fictional pieces. He critiques her summary of *Ivanhoe* for containing too much romantic detail rather than methodical summary, and he frequently criticizes her stories for their factual inaccuracies.

The semi-autobiographical nature of the series enables us to read this instance as a possible critique by Lovelace of literary standards that deny the legitimacy of feminine writing. Although Mr. Gaston's public criticism and the insinuations he makes about Betsy's arrogance embarrass and anger her, she continues to write in her natural style, which she knows to be good. Mr. Gaston's derision of Betsy's style escalates until he tells the class he will not finish reading Betsy's most recent story because the first sentence describes apple blossoms as rosy, whereas he insists they are white. Betsy defends her story and insists apple blossoms are pinkish, until Betsy's fellow-writer, Joe, ultimately agrees with Betsy, and Mr. Gaston drops the subject. Betsy's insistence signifies her belief in her own ability as a writer and her refusal to acquiesce to male authority figures. Betsy defends her creativity and her "flowery"—which seems to

imply feminine—writing. Here Lovelace shows the dual potential of feminine agency; Betsy refuses to mask her identity for either domestic ideals or masculine writing aesthetics. If we read this episode as Lovelace's reflections on her own experiences (whether a single instance that actually mirrors these events or the accumulation of various encounters with male literary gatekeepers), we can see that Lovelace may be making an intentional critique with implications beyond Mr. Gaston and Betsy's high school. Lovelace, in her insistence on the validity of Betsy's (and her own) style, acts as an agent against established academic discourses while also emboldening her protagonist and recognizing the girl's potential to create her own delineations of literary merit.

Betsy faces a different kind of masculine opposition from the boy she "goes with" in the same year as the apple blossom dispute, Phil Brandish. Betsy attains Phil's attention and affection through the mysterious, yet false, persona she develops in a misguided pursuit for popularity with boys. The new Betsy (or "Betsye," as she would prefer), wears something green with every outfit, too much perfume, and starts rumors that she has been having dreams about certain boys. This Betsye also tries to maintain an air of mystery, which does not allow her to sing, dance, or joke with the enthusiasm characteristic of Betsy. Although Betsy always has been feminine and enjoyed primping and beautifying herself, for Phil she must go to even greater lengths, because she "couldn't imagine him liking her with her hair uncurled or when she was having a riotously good time" (*BSH* 216). Betsy also declines participation in an activity that interests her for Phil's sake; she does not join the Girls Debating Club because Phil thinks it sounds "intellectual, unfeminine" (*BSH* 216).

However, Betsy will not give up her authorship for Phil. When Betsy's teachers select her for the second year in a row to compete in the Essay Contest, she feels torn because she knows Phil will disapprove, yet, "there was something in her stubborn nature which would not let her turn the Essay Contest down" (*BSH* 217). Betsy "braves Phil's displeasure" and studies for the Essay Contest with interest and enthusiasm. Betsy and Phil then break up the day before the Essay Contest over a silly song Betsy wrote about Phil, which is much like the silly songs Betsy has been writing with Tacy since childhood. Betsy performs poorly in the Essay Contest because of her turbulent feelings about the break-up, but the lesson Betsy learns from the experience solidifies her conviction in the importance of following her own passions and interests and prizing her writing above men. She soon after reflects, "I'm darned glad I did my best on the Essay Contest. The Essay Contest was more important than he was. It belonged to me, not to some person I was pretending to be" (*BSH* 258). Betsy's acquiescence to patriarchy, exemplified by changing her appearance and seeking a relationship with the "desirable" male (handsome and rich), potentially could lead to her total submission to patriarchs and the loss of her agency. But Lovelace shows how Betsy, and potentially other girls, can learn from Betsy's relationship with Phil that development of one's passion and one's talents requires authenticity.

Through trial and error, Betsy learns to prioritize loyalty to herself and her writing above popularity and romance. The year before Betsy's tumultuous relationship with Phil, when Betsy first enters high school, she struggles to understand how she will incorporate her writing with the social life she desires and the image of femininity she encounters through her peers. Betsy's first male friends in high school dub her "The

Little Poetess" and use her writing as something to tease her about and a way to flirt with her. Betsy enjoys the attention, but her desire to be popular, and especially to be thought feminine and fetching to boys, also causes her to hide her writing and feel embarrassed about her passion. Betsy does not reprioritize her writing over fitting in until Bonnie begins to go with her crush, Tony, which leads Betsy to agree to write the essay on Puget Sound to take her mind off her despair. When the crowd laughs, cheers, and applauds for the essay, Betsy regains some of her confidence in herself and her authorship: "She was happy. She was proud. Let Bonnie have Tony if she wanted him! 'The pen is mightier than the sword,' she thought" (*HB* 223). For the first time, Betsy has seriously doubted herself and her authorship and, after a somewhat painful lesson, renewed her devotion to her writing and to herself. Lovelace shows through Betsy's repeated mistakes and doubts that the path to agency and confident selfhood consists of lessons learned through mishaps and revelation.

Betsy demonstrates her ability to work within patriarchy and maintain her identity as an author through her choice in a husband. Joe understands Betsy's ambitions partly because he is an author himself. In high school, Joe continually outscores Betsy in their English class, and he beats her in the Essay Contest two out of the three years they compete against each other. Joe also succeeds in publishing his writing, even before Betsy does. He begins working for the local paper in high school, and one summer when he follows an important trial, a much bigger paper, the *Minneapolis Tribune*, picks up his stories. Betsy and Joe's early relationship revolves almost exclusively around their mutual interest in writing and authorship. Until they begin going together at the start of their senior year, they hardly talk to each other

outside of English class or when preparing for the Essay Contest. It is fitting, then, that when Betsy and Joe finally do launch a romantic relationship it begins through correspondence.

In the relationship between Betsy and Joe, Lovelace demonstrates how Betsy has learned to respond to the social call for femininity and allurement within romantic relationships while maintaining her sense of self and her allegiance to her own authorship. Betsy copies all of her letters to Joe onto scented paper and seals the envelopes with green sealing wax. The use of perfume and her signature color, green, mirrors Betsy's earlier attempts to create a mysterious, feminine persona, but Betsy does not need to feign dreams or subdue her silliness for Joe. In fact, Joe's letters arrive just as Betsy begins to take an important step in her authorship by persistently sending out her stories for publication. Yet "Betsy found time for stories in spite of the time she gave to letter writing" (*B&J* 321). The time Betsy "finds" signifies the balance she also has discovered between feminine roles and the pursuit of her authorship. Joe's romantic interest in Betsy does not alter her authorship, neither in these early stages of their relationship nor later on in their marriage.

Although the last book of the series is *Betsy's Wedding* and not *Betsy's First Novel*, Betsy does not face the same end as other heroines of girls' literature who are reformed from free, independent spirits to demure domestic goddesses and mothers. Regina Puleo examines how *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (Kate Douglas Wiggin, 1903) defies most other girls' stories (such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women*) by not marrying off the protagonist in a sequel. Puleo argues that in marriage those protagonists "not only lose some of their childhood charm but also arguably their

agency and voices" (354). Betsy does not suffer the same fate, however; Joe continues to support Betsy's authorship, just as he supported her authorial creativity in high school. One could view Betsy's marriage as a concession to patriarchy, but as we've already seen, Betsy's authorship actually thrives in her marriage. Nevertheless, Betsy does accept some traditional, patriarchal elements of marriage. When Joe's aunt asks to come live with the newlyweds, Betsy wants Joe to say no, but according to Betsy, "One person in a family has to have the final word. I want it to be Joe, always" (*BW* 166). Therefore, Betsy does not disagree with Joe's decision, although she does agonize over it for a while. Betsy may uphold traditional gender roles within her marriage, but they do not conflict with her life-long goals of becoming a published author. Additionally, I think we can see an important distinction between Lovelace's and Betsy's agency. Betsy takes a somewhat passive position in her marriage and chooses to not take on a role as a social agent working for collective change for women, even though she enjoys personal agency in her career. Lovelace, however, as the author of Betsy's narrative, does perform some cultural, feminist work in her portrayal of Joe's support of Betsy's career. Lovelace may not create a radical picture of marriage, but her characterization of Joe as a professional who equally values his wife's vocation promotes a more egalitarian marital relationship.

Betsy was not a revolutionary, and the Betsy-Tacy series is not a proto-feminist text. Instead, Lovelace created a realistic girl in terms of the two time periods the series serves, with hopes and ambitions, both professional and personal. Betsy wants to be an author, but she also wants to be liked and accepted, to be the object of someone's affection, and to be fashionable and popular. Betsy needs time and practice to feel fully

comfortable with herself and to gain the confidence to pursue her authorship whole-heartedly. Lovelace's feminized *Bildungsroman* explores how a girl with ambition can thrive through even the turbulent years of adolescence—a time that tests our identity, no matter the era.

Chapter 3: The Professional Author, in Public and Private

> Those musicians think music is everything. Writers are the same about writing, and artists about painting. They live in a different world from the rest of us. No telling whether it's better or worse than ours. (*Carney's House Party* 121-122)

Thus far, I have explored how Betsy's authorship provides the means for the development of her agency and how Lovelace shows Betsy using that agency to reconcile her gender identity with her authorial aspirations within her culture. Betsy's agency extends beyond her interior development, however. Lovelace argues that Betsy lives "in a different world" from others who lack a vocation; she asserts that Betsy is a professional author, and therefore Betsy's authorship cannot be limited to the private sphere. Betsy's texts and voice reach the public, providing a platform for her to exercise her agency in a broader arena and to potentially contribute to public discourse. Additionally, the agency Betsy cultivates through her authorship, along with progressive exposure to and practice in both the public and private spheres, gives her agency both in and between the public and private spheres, enabling Betsy to balance her life and find fulfillment in her various roles.

The quote in the epigraph begins to illustrate why, for Lovelace, public presence is essential to professional authorship. In this scene, Betsy's good friend, Carney, and Carney's future-husband, Sam, discuss Carney's piano playing and her future. While Carney expresses frustration with the criticism she has received from her piano

instructors, Sam discovers that Carney does not desire to play professionally, and therefore he encourages her not to be discouraged by criticism since her lack of professional ambition makes her fundamentally different from other musicians. Carney, according to Sam, will play only for her husband and her family, be content with her domestic life, and have music "for the frosting on the cake." Sam's prediction asserts that Carney's life and that of the professional are demarcated by the lines between the public and the private (122). What frees Carney from worries about her critics is the location of her destiny: inside the home, and away from a professional career.

Lovelace expresses her agreement with Sam's assessment of professionalism by contrasting Betsy's authorship with Sam's description of Carney's future. Soon after this conversation, Betsy tells Carney how, while staying with family in California, she found a wishing well and wished upon it to sell a story. Carney expresses astonishment that Betsy would wish for something so "silly" and not for "something about Joe" (137). Carney actualizes Sam's prediction by promoting domestic dreams for her friends and revealing her own identification with private aspirations. Betsy, meanwhile, realizes her professional goals by hoping for, and finding, public acceptance; Betsy sells her first story after her encounter with the wishing well. Betsy has attained her farthest-reaching public audience yet, and Lovelace cements the "world" into which this places Betsy by narrating how Betsy's "silly" wish recalls Sam's words to Carney's mind: "Those musicians think music is everything. Writers are the same about writing . . . [sic]" (137). Lovelace shows that she has created Betsy to be a *professional* author, not a domestic writer pursuing her art only in her spare time and with only a private audience.

Lovelace's definition of "professional" needs some clarification due to the various ways both scholars and the general populace understand the word. For example, in an examination of female authors, Linda Peterson describes authorial professionalism as "show[ing] an interest in making money, dealing with publishers in a business-like way, actively pursuing a literary career, and achieving both profit and popularity in the literary marketplace" (1). Peterson defines professionalism, therefore, primarily in terms of attitude and profit: "professionals" act like they want and deserve to make money for their work. Her definition also resembles Coultrap-McQuinn's, as cited in the Introduction. James West, however, asserts that authorship in America has been neither a profession nor a trade as it does not share essential characteristics with other professions (such as medicine or law) including formal training, certification procedures, hierarchies, or associations (7-8). While West concedes that the literary marketplace with which, according to Peterson as well, the professional author interacts is quasi-professional, authors "occup[y] an anomalous and uneasy economic position in American society" (7).

Francesca Sawaya unpacks the late nineteenth century origins of a definition such as West's, and the ways it oppresses not just authors but also women and racial minorities who likewise find themselves in an "uneasy" place in society. According to Sawaya:

> By the end of the nineteenth century, a variety of social commentators agreed that what characterized modern 'civilization' was specialization. This agreement depended on assumptions about sexual and racial difference. . . . [T]hese professionals posed the undifferentiated work of 'primitive' against the highly

> differentiated work of 'moderns.' The untrained, unspecialized homogeneous work of racial others, they argued, was quite distinct from the trained, specialized, heterogeneous work of modern professionals. (1)

Sawaya's historical explanation allows us to see how limited definitions of professionalism, such as West's, are based on racial and gender biases. Such restrictive definitions, Sawaya argues, are based on separate spheres discourse, which may not accurately describe, much less prescribe, the lives of women and men in the nineteenth century and beyond.

As discussed in the Introduction, Anne Boyd explains how American female authors eventually found a way out of the private, domestic sphere. Due to several interweaving circumstances, after the Civil War women had greater opportunities to write for themselves and not out of a self-sacrificial duty to benefit their families. These women "did not confine themselves as writers to a so-called woman's sphere. They were clearly adopting models of authorship that previously had been considered available only to men" (Boyd 9). However, the authors Boyd discusses could not incorporate marriage and family life into their professional careers. While Boyd claims the authors viewed marriage as unfulfilling and that they were taking an active, empowered position by choosing their art over marriage and family, she also describes how the authors suffered loneliness and frustration in their private lives. Boyd explains how Constance Fenimore Woolson, who remained single, envied George Eliot for her loving relationship with George Henry Lewes and remarked late in her life that family "was 'the best thing in life'" (71). Meanwhile, Elizabeth Stoddard, who did marry and

have children, "seems to have felt fulfilled by neither her 'woman''s life nor her artist's life as each was to some degree neglected in her attempt to combine the two" (79).

Lovelace clearly enters a contentious discourse and a somewhat turbulent history by depicting an author who seeks both a professional career and a fulfilling domestic life. While I do not believe Lovelace necessarily meant to enter the debates of West and Sawaya in her use of "professional" to describe Betsy's authorship, Lovelace depicts her model of professional authorship as one based on movement beyond the domestic sphere and thus enters the public/private discourse. Although Lovelace does not designate separate spheres using the terms "private" or "public," her description of Carney's life at home with her family is obviously "domestic" and corresponds to the traditional private sphere to which women are supposedly allocated. Furthermore, Betsy's publication of her stories, in opposition to Carney's restriction of her art to the home, exhibits one of the primary differences between the public and the private spheres; once published, Betsy's stories will become theoretically accessible to anyone with purchasing power and communication with the publisher or retailers, while Carney's music will be barred from all who are not granted entrance to her home. Lovelace contrasts the two spheres by creating tension between Carney's choice to remain an unprofessional musician and Betsy's pursuit of professional authorship.[11]

Lovelace does not present the public and the private as entirely incompatible, however; Betsy moves between the public and the private spheres with more nuance

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[11] I am purposefully *not* using Jürgen Habermas's discussion of the public sphere because neither Betsy nor Lovelace engage in the Habermasian public sphere, or in a counter-public sphere as described by Rita Felski and others. Instead, I am drawing on the more generic uses of public and private as demonstrated by Monika Elbert and discourses of separate spheres for men and women.

and complexity than she would if the two spheres were absolutely separate. Despite the practical differences between the private and the public, I agree with Monika M. Elbert that the public and the private spheres are not necessarily as rigidly separated or defined by gender, even in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as is often asserted. In reference to nineteenth-century literature, Elbert argues, "There is often no clear demarcation between the male/public realm and the female/private realm" (1). This assertion allows Elbert and other scholars to see overlaps between the public and the private spheres and in the lives of men and women. Elbert's determination to highlight how male and female "interactions created a national culture in flux rather than to dwell on a separatist notion of the genders living apart without interaction" also enlightens Betsy's and many other women's experience. Betsy is not restricted simply to the private, or domestic, sphere without opportunities to enter the public sphere or public life. As Elbert notes, in the nineteenth century lower-class women were often working by necessity alongside men in the public sphere, and some middle-class women had access to the agency found in the public sphere through acting (6). Betsy, living at the end of the twentieth century when acting was not viewed as critically as previously, acts and performs from childhood along with her peers, and thus gains an early, and relatively easy, entrance to the public sphere without causing a social disturbance. The realization that separate spheres are actually somewhat fluid not only creates a clearer perspective of the reality Lovelace creates for her character, but also prevents an idealistic reading of Betsy as a feminist heroine breaking down barriers between the spheres.

Yet, the separate spheres are not a complete myth; some tension certainly has existed, and women have been kept from male domains. As Boyd's argument illustrates, women authors have not always or easily entered the man's sphere of professional authorship. Once there, some were dissatisfied with their private lives, indicating that the two spheres are not necessarily harmonious, as success in one area may inhibit fulfillment in the other. Lovelace, however, hints in Betsy's scene discussing the wishing well with Carney that Betsy may get all her wishes: success in the public sphere and satisfaction in the private sphere. When Carney expresses her surprise that Betsy did not wish "something about Joe" Betsy shows that her wish was, in fact, partly about Joe. Betsy displays her own wide-eyed surprise that Carney does not see how Joe would be involved in the wish and declares, "Why, when I sold my story Joe was as happy as I was. I telegraphed him and he telegraphed back. We nearly died with joy" (*CHP* 137). Betsy's remark shows how Joe's and her interests are intertwined and that she will have a partner in the private sphere who supports her pursuit of professional authorship.

As with all discussions of culture, the time period should be noted here as a factor in Betsy's ability to gain access to both the public and the private spheres. Boyd's analysis reflects the gender norms and social construction of the nineteenth century, both before the Civil War and in the following decades. As noted in previous chapters, Lovelace grew up in the era of the New Woman, which afforded women increased access to the public sphere through social reform and club work. Lovelace, as a girl in small-town Minnesota, may or may not have been fully aware of the New Woman, but she did attend the University of Minnesota, and therefore personally experienced the increased privilege of girls in her generation with greater access to education. Lovelace

also gained access to social movements not only in the United States but also abroad when she made her Grand Tour. Betsy's experience of this event, in *Betsy and the Great World*, explains how a girl abroad encountered the feminist movement in the first decades of the twentieth century. When Betsy stays in London, her visits to many of the various sites popular with tourists (such as Windsor Castle and the National Gallery) are impeded by demonstrating suffragettes. Lovelace reveals that "Betsy [is] in sympathy with their cause" (320). In London Betsy shows awareness of the movement and aligns herself with a side, even if she does not quite make herself out to be a suffragette. Interestingly, suffrage never comes up when Betsy is in Minnesota. Lovelace shows that she and Betsy are both aware of feminists and new possibilities for women in their era, but their location may also affect their engagement with larger social movements.

While the flexibility in the cultural climate of Lovelace's day would increase her (and Betsy's) access to the public sphere and ability to reconcile their presence in both, women were still expected to perform "domesticating" duties, indicating that women authors would still feel pressure to write out of a selfless desire to educate, not for personal achievement. Additionally, the tension between women's presence in the public and private spheres increased during the decades when Lovelace published the series with the return of post-war domestic ideology and middle-class workers to the home. Fundamentally, however, the difficulty any one woman faces in crossing between the public and the private must be unpredictable; multiple factors (socio-economic class, race, marital status, parental and spouse support, occupation, maternity) have a significant impact on a woman's access to the public sphere. Instead of focusing on how

Lovelace reflects the conditions of women in her time, I choose to examine how Lovelace gives Betsy, specifically, agency in both the public and the private and the ability to reconcile the needs of each to the other.

Lovelace's depiction of Betsy's authorship in light of Carney's ambition ultimately underscores two things: first, that Lovelace created Betsy to be a professional, public author, and secondly, that Betsy's roles in the public and private spheres will be mutually reliant on each other. To find satisfaction and fulfillment in both spheres, Betsy will have to develop agency in each. Betsy begins life in the private sphere as children usually do. As I have already shown, Betsy positively constructs her agency in the private sphere by focusing and analyzing her own development, but she also needs to learn how to incorporate her authorship in the public sphere. Lovelace develops Betsy's authorial identity in the private sphere in tandem with Betsy's increased exposure to the public sphere, with Betsy gaining empowerment with each successful venture. Betsy learns to move fluidly between the two spheres until she can assert the life for herself that she declares to Carney: one in which her private life supports her public achievement.

Lovelace begins Betsy's path to public agency through storytelling. As mentioned previously, Betsy first experiments with her authorial voice through stories she tells to a widening circle—first to Tacy, then to Tib, and eventually to more children and friends. Betsy, Tacy, and Tib also practice public performances early on through play; they dress up elaborately to "go-calling" on their mothers' friends and pretend to be beggars at their neighbor's house. Both Betsy's storytelling and the girls' imaginative performances give them the opportunity to explore their voices and capacity for public

presence through the cover of make-believe and by performing only before limited audiences.

As they grow older, the girls begin to participate in organized public performances, including community theater and school talent shows. These performances place the girls before an attentive audience and more intentionally before the public eye than any of their previous, imaginative performances. In their earliest performances, the girls are either silent or their voices are distorted. For example, at the school talent show, Betsy and Tacy perform "The Cat Duet," in which they dress like cats and sing harmonized meows. They gain the experience of performing in front of a large audience, but without placing their true forms before the public's gaze or speaking with their own voices. Tib also dances in this first show, maintaining her identity but not giving her voice. Seth Lerer calls girls on stage "one of the controlling themes of female fiction," but I contend that Lovelace does more than follow convention by giving Betsy and her friends audiences (228-229). Lovelace shows the child gradually exposed to public participation and visibility, and therein creates an argument for progressive development of public identity.

While Betsy gains practice in the public sphere through imaginative play and performance, Lovelace also instills the importance of private spaces during Betsy's childhood, establishing the need for both public and private agency early in Betsy's life. As Betsy begins to take her authorship more seriously, she seeks out private spaces and explores private genres. Previously, I have briefly discussed the opening of the fourth novel which showcases Betsy writing, perched in her tree; in addition to the symbolism of this image for the series as a whole, this instance also demonstrates Lovelace's

privatization of Betsy's authorship. The tree functions as Betsy's private office, for which even Tacy must ask permission to enter. Within this private space, Betsy writes romantic literature, stories with titles like "The Repentance of Lady Clinton." Lovelace proves that these stories are meant only for private consumption when, after Betsy's parents discover the stories, Betsy burns them. Despite Betsy's eventual rejection of the romantic genre, she clearly gains knowledge of the private sphere as a place for authorial experimentation and growth. She tries something new in her romantic stories, and although it does not quite work for her, the attempt pushes her to expand and explore her authorship independently.

Betsy also experiments in her childhood with sending her stories out for publication. With Tacy's and Tib's encouragement and assistance, Betsy sends one early story to *The Ladies Home Journal*. Lovelace shows the girls' childishness and ignorance of the publishing world through both their efforts to squeeze the whole story onto a single, pink sheet of paper and their dreams that they will earn enough money to buy silk dresses. Even in their immaturity, however, Lovelace acknowledges their ability to act as competent agents by conceding that Betsy, Tacy, and Tib don't "quite believe" their plans, either (*B&TGD* 116). The girls play make-believe with the publication of Betsy's stories, but in so treating the public realm they gain hesitant familiarity with it as they also become more comfortable with other realms they will encounter in adulthood through their playful experiments with cooking, making clubs, and exploring their landscape. They will eventually take such activities more seriously, but they will approach their adult roles with greater self-assurance and more constructive agency because of their sillier experiences.

Although the girls never hear back about the story on the pink parchment, Betsy does have a poem published soon after. Betsy writes a poem called "The Curtain Goes Up," and her friend Winona likes it so much she asks Betsy to give her a copy of it. Winona's father, who works for the local newspaper, publishes the poem on the same day Betsy, Winona, Tacy, and Tib all perform in *Rip Van Winkle* with a traveling show. Interestingly, Lovelace embeds the occurrence of Betsy's first published work with performance and playful ventures into the public sphere; the content of the poem alludes to Betsy's enjoyment of live performances, while its publication is linked to Betsy's performance in the play and her visibility to a large audience. In one day Betsy is exposed to both the glaring lights of the theater and the critical eye of the press. Furthermore, the only negative review comes from Betsy herself, who notes that it is not as good as it could be, but she hopes to write something better either on her desk or in her tree (*B&TGD* 180). Thus, in the midst of Betsy's triumphant public debut as an author, Lovelace reminds us that the major aspect of authorship, the actual writing, is best done in private spaces.

Betsy displays the professional attitude Peterson describes early on in her treatment of her private office, although her very first office seems like a playful experiment. Perched in a tree, this office feels more like a fort and a space for exploration and adventure than either a domestic or a public sphere. Once her mother validates her authorship and helps her set up her office inside, however, Betsy begins to see the value of a private writing space. Additionally, Lovelace shows Betsy's professionalism by linking Betsy's desk with the tools of an author. After both times Betsy sets up her Uncle's trunk as her desk in her bedroom, first after her mother's

suggestion, and later in her new house when she recommits herself to her authorship after a period of doubt, Betsy immediately seeks out new writing tablets. Lovelace indicates that the establishment of Betsy's office makes her ready to do serious work, and all else she needs are the necessary tools, which are easily accessible (both times Lovelace implies that they will be quickly acquired).

Betsy also establishes a pattern of making her private office mobile. When her family makes their annual trip to the lake for the summer, Betsy finds privacy by taking her writing with her out on the lake in a boat. There she makes sure to row out to a bay and face her boat toward a remote cove where "you might have thought that you were in a wilderness except for the fact that a green wooded point, jutting into the lake to the east, showed the rooftop of the Inn," which she makes sure to avoid (*BWJ* 2). On other trips Lovelace provides enclosed, private spaces for Betsy to write in, but Betsy comes prepared to work, bringing with her an assortment of supplies. When visiting her father's friends, "she set out her tablets, notebooks, and pencils, her pencil sharpener and her eraser and the ruler she had brought . . . goodness knew why! She added the Bible, her prayer book, and the dictionary. There!" (*B&J* 534). This professional preparedness allows Betsy to incorporate her authorship into a variety of settings. Although Betsy takes to private spaces to do her writing, by emphasizing the mobility of Betsy's authorship Lovelace makes Betsy more capable of functioning across spheres. I believe Betsy's escapes into nature to do her work symbolizes her fluidity between the private and public spheres because the outdoors serves as the space between the provincial and the city—the primary physical and literal medium between the two spheres

As Betsy moves into adolescence, she becomes more apprehensive of her role in both the public and the private spheres. When she removes her desk from her room she reveals her uncertainty concerning the proper "place" for her authorship, both figuratively as a priority in her life and literally within her home and outside it. Although, as discussed in chapter two, Betsy questions her authorship in relationship to her feminine identity, her youthful embrace of high school and all things related to it actually moves her authorship further into the public sphere. When Betsy writes her essay on Puget Sound for a public performance in front of the school, she uses the agency she's fostered in her writing to be herself and take risks. Instead of feeling intimidated by the crowd of people, almost all of whom are older than her, Betsy writes her unconventional story about Puget Sound and makes the audience roll with laughter. Here Lovelace connects Betsy's performance of authorship with her previous childhood performances: Betsy's previous experience making others laugh through the Cat Duet has prepared her to face an audience and to perform as a comedienne.

Betsy begins to pursue publication of her stories wholeheartedly before her senior year, after three years of reading her works to the school audience and receiving public praise for her work. By having Betsy wait until her senior year, when Betsy most consciously considers her future and how much she has grown up, Lovelace implies that Betsy has had to mature to be ready for this step. Additionally, while Lovelace identifies publication as professional through Betsy's discussion with Carney, Lovelace also shows Betsy's attitude regarding publication is "professional" as the word is perhaps more generally understood: "Betsy was stubborn. . . . She kept a record in a little notebook of how much postage each manuscript required, when it went out, and

when it came back" (*B&J* 322). Lovelace shows Betsy asserting herself in the movement of her writing into the public sphere; she takes an active, controlled, and authoritative role, and thereby displays her agency even in unknown territory.

Towards the end of the series, Lovelace takes Betsy most dramatically into public when Betsy travels through Europe for one year. While in Europe, Betsy views various interpretations of public, professional authorship, including famous and bohemian authors. Based on these options, Lovelace shows Betsy choosing the kind of public identity she wants to cultivate in her own authorship. Early in Betsy's voyage to Europe, she overhears someone asking about an author on board: "An author? . . . For a wild moment she thought they meant her" (*B&GW* 9). Betsy gets a taste of the life of an author who is not only professional, but also famous. The press treats Mrs. Main-Whittaker, the "real" author on board, like a celebrity, taking her picture and requesting interviews. Mrs. Main-Whittaker's authorship clearly departs from the public authorship Lovelace crafts for Betsy in that Mrs. Main-Whittaker, not her writing, are the object of newspaper stories. She has reached a level of publicity that Betsy never finds, or seeks, in the series.

Betsy also discovers authors writing in public communities in the coffee shops of Munich. These bohemenians, Betsy notes, signal their artistry through their hairstyles; she wonders why "women have to cut their hair in order to paint and men have to let theirs grow" (*B&GW* 172). Betsy knows she will not join this community: "she was too clean, and too systematic, and too orthodox . . . [she] liked to get the atmosphere, though" (*B&GW* 173). She does, however, express a sense of camaraderie with the bohemian authors, and when she sees a man pausing in his writing and fidgeting, she

"knew he was fishing for a word. She longed to lean over, fraternally, and suggest one" (*B&GW* 172). Lovelace's use of "fraternal" signals Betsy's realization of the androgynous nature of this public sphere. In addition to the ambiguous hairstyles, Betsy also notes that she sees women smoking, and, what's more, Betsy feels accustomed enough to it that she sees it "without batting an eyelash" (*B&GW* 173). Although Betsy feels free to visit, and even do some of her own writing in this public sphere, she will not permanently settle into a form of authorship which completely rejects the femininity to which she is accustomed. Instead, Betsy once again finds a middle way; she can visit and take inspiration from more radical visions of authorship, while remaining fairly traditional in her own practices.

Interestingly, Betsy decides to return home and commits to a private life partly based on the words of the famous, public author. When Betsy runs into Mrs. Main-Whittaker in Paris, the author takes Betsy and her occasional chaperone, Miss Wilson, for a day out on the town. When Betsy mentions that she believes Joe Willard interviewed Mrs. Main-Whittaker, Mrs. Main-Whittaker enthusiastically praises Joe and his writing, which then prompts Betsy to finally write to Joe after they have not spoken in many months. Mrs. Main-Whittaker shows Betsy the famous, public life she could have; she gives Betsy and Miss Wilson a luxurious Parisian experience, and emphasizes her freedom from American gender norms for middle-class women with her jeweled cigarette case. She also flatters Betsy by giving her pointers for creating plots, but instead of inciting excitement for this professional connection, Mrs. Main-Whittaker's attention and conversation gives Betsy hope that she can repair her relationship with Joe. On Betsy's return to her hotel that evening, Lovelace notes, "Here was her chance! It

was now or never, if she was going to write Joe" (*B&GW* 310). Betsy's chance renews an opportunity for a fulfilling private life, not an exciting authorial career.

Lovelace does not leave Betsy to a purely domestic life, however. *Betsy's Wedding* does not end with Betsy and Joe's ceremony; instead, their engagement, wedding, and honeymoon are just the inciting action. Lovelace shows that marriage itself is not Betsy's end-all, but just another step along her journey, like meeting Tacy or starting high school. The rest of the novel chronicles Betsy's adventures as a housewife, friend, and an author. Although Lovelace will show Betsy successfully incorporating her public authorship into her private life, Lovelace reveals that Betsy still feels some tension between her domestic responsibilities and her authorial identity. Interestingly, however, Lovelace has Joe reiterate Betsy's identity rather than Betsy insisting upon it herself. When Joe suggests that they should hire a woman to clean the house once a week so Betsy can have more time for her writing, Betsy tries to sacrifice her ambitions and her freedom for what she believes to be the good of her family; she declares she wants to be a good wife and a good mother more than she wants to be an author. Joe insists that the two desires are not mutually exclusive and that Betsy's authorship is non-negotiable. Joe says, "We'll put it this way. . . . You *are* a writer. You've always been writing stories, and the last few years you've been selling them" (*BW* 99). Joe's determination that Betsy prioritize her authorship signifies Lovelace's hope that Betsy will be able to reconcile her authorship with her marriage; Lovelace shows that Betsy will not have to fight her husband. Furthermore, Joe's insistence that Betsy fundamentally *is* a writer followed by his affirmation of her ability to publish her stories emphasizes Betsy's alignment with the professional authorship Lovelace outlined

through Carney and Sam. Joe essentially argues that Betsy is an author not only by habit and feeling, but also by profession.

Joe's encouragement of Betsy's professionalism also mirrors Linda Peterson's description of Mary and William Howitt's collaborative marriage and authorship. Like Betsy and Joe, Mary and William were both authors who did not feel that either should give up their profession for their family. Instead, they formulated an "ideology of collaborative work—in which each family member participates by contributing to the domestic economy, whether by writing or studying, providing domestic labor or professional work" (105). Lovelace shows Betsy and Joe also valuing authorship as domestic labor; Betsy's authorship not only provides funds but also literally enhances the domesticity of their home as it enables the Willards to hire someone more skilled at cleaning than Betsy to perform household chores.

Lovelace's descriptions of Betsy's writing habits after her marriage illustrate the mutually beneficial relationship between Betsy's public authorship and her private housework: "It was good for her writing to be alone all day in the quiet apartment. Sometimes there were frost patterns on the windows. . . . Sometimes a fierce, brilliant bluejay perched on their elm. . . . Betsy would stand looking out the window. Then she would get a tablet and some pencils and start a story" (*BW* 118). Lovelace shows that the privacy, quiet, and ambiance of Betsy's home inspire her authorship, while the money she makes from her stories pays the housekeeper. Lovelace also relates Betsy's current writing practices to those she established as a girl by highlighting Betsy's observation of nature as a motivation in her writing. Since Betsy's first office in her tree she has relished the outdoors as a source of inspiration and rejuvenation for both her

spirit and her authorship. Lovelace shows that Betsy maintains access to this semi-public sphere through her windows, and, additionally, Betsy has the time to enjoy these outdoor scenes because she can afford to pay someone else to do some of her housework.

Although Betsy spends much of her time in private after her marriage, Lovelace demonstrates that Betsy has matured enough as an author and as an individual to nourish her authorship with less consistent encouragement from her community. Lovelace also reinforces throughout the final novel that Betsy regularly publishes stories, and with Joe's encouragement to start a novel, Betsy pursues her professional authorship with as much passion, and even greater success, than in the past. I believe Lovelace establishes that Betsy's attainment of agency in both spheres enables her to be the successful, professional author she desires to be while also maintaining a happy, and balanced home life. Lovelace also indicates that in the future Betsy may not be as fortunate as to have a quiet home in which to work with the fairly limited responsibilities she currently enjoys. At the end of *Betsy's Wedding*, Joe prepares to leave for war while Betsy has to get a job and move home with her parents and little sister. Additionally, Betsy and Joe plan on having a baby when he gets back, ensuring that their newlywed routine is permanently disrupted. Betsy will have to continue to adjust her methods and means of authorship, but Lovelace's faithfulness to Betsy's aspirations and the careful development of Betsy's character and professional identity shows that Lovelace has made her capable of the task.

Coda

Maud Hart Lovelace complicates the traditional *Bildungsroman* in her narration of a girl's development through the professional medium of authorship. In her creation of a young girl with a strong sense of vocation, Lovelace challenges gendered adolescent expectations that dictate girls' disruptive self-consciousness and passivity throughout their development and their initial encounters with society. Although I have striven to show how Lovelace cultivates Betsy's agency through her authorship and extends her voice to her gender identification and interactions with public and private spheres, I have not been able to explore all of the questions surrounding the sub-genre of the feminized *Bildungsroman* which I believe Lovelace's series helps define. I would like to propose what I view some of those additional questions to be, in the hope that this project will extend into an on-going discussion of girl-authors.

As I have demonstrated, Lovelace creates a middle path for Betsy in her professionalism and in her femininity. I have pointed out how aspects of Lovelace's narrative mildly critique gender norms (such as women's professionalism both before and within marriage), while Betsy as a character positions herself as a driven, independent, yet traditional and feminine girl. I believe these aspects of Lovelace's writing open her and the series up to a more in-depth feminist analysis, one that I have not sought within this project. There are several lenses through which I believe we could approach Lovelace and the series to position her in relation to feminism. I would be very interested in a study of reader response to the series that would suggest how Lovelace empowers female readers. I have discovered several individuals, including

Anna Quindlen as quoted in the Prologue, who profess Lovelace's positive impact on their lives, but I believe a thorough study of the responses of girls and women could give meaningful insights into the possibilities for children's literature and girl-authors within feminism. Secondly, I believe a thorough reading of Lovelace's artifacts, including her available letters and scrapbooks, would give insight into her intentions regarding Betsy as an inspiring female figure. Did she create Betsy purposefully to show girls they need not question their ability to achieve their dreams? Do Betsy's opinions on marriage reflect Lovelace's? Although these questions may not be answerable, more knowledge of Lovelace herself would allow for a more precise placement of the series in dialogue with feminist theory and scholarship.

I also hope that this study opens up new avenues to discovery of and engagement with fictional girl-authors. Although I have already briefly compared Betsy to Jo March, I believe *Little Women* should be read and analyzed even more carefully as an authorial *Bildungsroman*. I believe Alcott's use of *Pilgrim's Progress* as a frame for the story and her engagement with drama, both in the plot and in the frame, will produce an important counter to Lovelace's series. Additionally, the religious motivation in Jo's development would likely give greater insights into alternative narratives of the formation of the girl-author. Many other girl-authors should also be examined as well; from Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet to Louise Rennisson's Georgia Nicholson, women writers continue to create girl-authors as heroines who have various levels of aspirations.

Also, I believe that an examination of boy-authorship would be a point of useful scholarship that could extend from a study of sub-genres of the *Bildungsroman* such as my own. I hope that a comparison between girl-authors and boy-authors would be

fruitful and produce new insights into discussions of authorship, youth, the *Bildungsroman*, and gender. As I have shown that Betsy's authorship helps her deal with gender norms by granting her agency, I would be interested to see if the same is true for boys. Can boys escape pressures of masculinity through authorial means of expression and attainments of agency? How does authorship affect male sexuality?

Through this study, I have sought to demonstrate how Lovelace's series brings insight into the variations of narratives possible within the *Bildungsroman*. I believe other fictions of authorship will prove rich resources for continuing to explore a genre with unique propensities for creating and illustrating agency and empowerment. I hope to pursue these questions and create a broader conception of girl-authorship in the future.

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ABSTRACT

BETSY WAS AN AUTHOR: MAUD HART LOVELACE'S CONSTRUCTION OF GIRL AUTHORSHIP

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In this thesis, I explore Maud Hart Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy series as a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman* in which Lovelace asserts how authorship helps cultivate the agency of a young girl. I argue that authorship allows Betsy to establish her voice and gives her a means of asserting her own desires and plans, even granting her the ability to defy some aspects of normative femininity, such as the development of domestic skills or the assumption that she must marry and not pursue a career. Additionally, Lovelace shows that Betsy must learn how to navigate between the supposed separate spheres, as her authorship puts her before the public while also requiring private study and labor. This thesis determines that Lovelace ultimately creates a middle path for Betsy and her authorship, one in which she embraces both her agency and her femininity, her public authorship and her private domestic fulfillment.