

**COMPLIANT CIRCULATION: CHILDREN'S WRITING, AMERICAN
PERIODICALS, AND PUBLIC CULTURE, 1839-1882**

by

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In this dissertation, I survey the children's writing that was published in American periodicals across the mid-nineteenth century to understand how children came to develop a voice and a purpose in American public discourse. Though writing is one of the main artifacts that records children's historical presence, the existing scholarship focuses on the way young people have received and responded to their cultures. This dissertation works to understand how children's writing contributes to cultural change through the large-scale circulation of print. To do so, I bring forward an understudied body of material to analyze children's presence in nineteenth-century America's print public sphere; I integrate theoretical insights from children's literature studies, literacy and composition studies, and childhood studies to interpret children's writing as a historical artifact; and I combine materialist approaches from book history and the digital humanities to develop methods for reading large archives of children's writing as well as singular examples.

Ultimately, I theorize children's collective cultural influence and rhetorical agency by showing that their writing for periodicals allowed them to shape the forms of thinking and being that undergirded American subjectivities. I work with youth writing published in periodicals between 1839 and 1882: letters authored by children and circulated in newspapers because they

provided eyewitness accounts of important events, amateur newspapers printed and circulated by mostly white, mostly male youths in the 1870s, and the school newspapers printed at the Carlisle Indian Industrial school in the early 1880s. These periodicals, I argue, evince a form of creative compliance, by which I mean that they give young writers a platform for subtly refiguring dominant ideas within gestures of obedience. Because children were less powerful and had less easy access to literacy and publication in the nineteenth century, they tended to write in ways that affirmed the expectations of powerful others. However, simply because children's writing is compliant does not mean it is not revealing or influential. I nuance the understanding of compliance and its effects by showing that children's choices within compliance allow them to influence the transmission and reproduction of ideas, beliefs, and ways of being.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	X
1.0 INTRODUCTION: CHILDREN'S WRITING IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE	1
2.0 THEORIZING COMPLIANCE: CHILDREN'S LITERACY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA.....	12
2.1 MOVING OUTSIDE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE STUDIES	13
2.2 LITERACY AND CHILDHOOD.....	18
2.3 COMPLIANCE AND RESISTANCE.....	22
2.4 SELF-FASHIONING.....	25
2.5 A LARGER ARCHIVE.....	32
2.6 CHILDREN'S AGENCY AND CHILDREN'S WRITING.....	36
3.0 CONJOINED AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S PUBLISHED LETTERS.....	46
3.1 APPLES, MOTHERS, AND ROLLO'S LETTER WRITING	52
3.2 READING MEDIATION IN VIRGINIA REED'S DONNER PARTY LETTER	63
3.3 COMPOSING THE <i>AMISTAD</i> REBELLION	76
4.0 AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS, YOUTH PUBLICS, AND THE PRE-HISTORY OF ADOLESCENCE.....	91

4.1	AMATEURDOM AND ITS HISTORICAL MOMENT.....	93
4.2	SELF-REPRESENTATION IN AMATEURDOM	107
4.3	CHANGES IN AMATEURDOM	111
5.0	GRAPHING THE ARCHIVES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS.....	117
5.1	ARCHIVES AS DATA	121
5.1.1	Graphing the Interarchive	126
5.1.2	Quantifying the Textual Features of a Sample Set	128
5.2	GRAPHING THE INTERARCHIVE OF AMATEURDOM.....	130
5.3	QUANTIFYING A SAMPLE	142
5.3.1	Rationale.....	143
5.3.2	Method	145
5.3.3	Findings	148
6.0	DATA, CHILDHOOD, AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS.....	157
	APPENDIX A.....	169
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	172

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Comparison of Reed’s Manuscript and Published Letter	72
Figure 2. Third Comparison from Figure 1	73
Figure 3. Comparison of Kale’s Manuscript and Published Letter	85
Figure 4. Amateurs’ ages as listed in Frank Cropper’s <i>The Amateur Journalists’ Companion for 1873</i>	98
Figure 5. Recorded Amateur Newspaper Titles Per Year: Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ) and American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Catalogs, 1870-1890	134
Figure 6. The Interarchive of Amateur Newspapers, 1870-1890	136
Figure 7. Comparison of R.W. Burnett’s Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1876-1886	138
Figure 8. Comparison of Walter E. Perkins’ Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1870-1880.....	139
Figure 9. Samples of Criticism Types from 1879 Amateur Newspapers from Missouri and Massachusetts	147
Figure 10. Criticism Categories	148
Figure 11. Criticism Types Classified by Amateurs’ Class Backgrounds	150

Figure 12. Distribution of Type of Criticism by Fathers' Occupations.....	152
Figure 13. 1840s Amateur Newspapers Listed in Major Catalogs.....	171

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: CHILDREN'S WRITING IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In 1729, while an apprenticed youth of sixteen, Benjamin Franklin penned and submitted fourteen letters to his brother's paper, the *New England Courant*. James Franklin had refused to publish any of Ben's pieces that he submitted openly and so, in assuming a writerly disguise, Ben Franklin was able to overcome James' prejudice against publishing the writing of a young apprentice, one with whom James had regular and sometimes violent disagreements. In assuming the identity of a young and unusually well-educated minister's widow, however, Franklin did not seek to convince James or the readers of the *Courant* of the authenticity of this identity. This guise was obviously a guise. James Franklin and the readers of the *Courant* assumed that one of the usual kind of well-educated and well-connected men who contributed to the paper was writing under the Silence Dogood pseudonym.¹ To support this performance, Franklin devoted his first two letters to describing Silence Dogood's personal history and establishing her character. Franklin justifies this exposition in the beginning of the first letter, writing famously:

And since it is observed, that the Generality of People, now a days, are unwilling either to commend or dispraise what they read, until they are in some measure informed who or what the Author of it is, whether he be *poor* or *rich*, *old* or *young*, a *Schollar* or a *Leather Apron Man*, &c. and give their Opinion of the Performance, according to the Knowledge which they have of the Author's Circumstances, it may not be amiss to begin with a short Account of my past Life and present Condition, that the Reader may not be at a Loss to

¹ Even the note James Franklin included after the first Dogood letter, which gave instructions for delivering letters that would preserve the writer's anonymity, confirms this perspective.

judge whether or no my Lucubrations are worth his reading.²

As a performance of a patently fictional establishment of character, Dogood's is a particularly good one, and a particularly transparent one. Franklin was neither rich, nor old, nor a "Schollar"—all qualities that would have granted him access to publication more readily. In assuming a mantle of anonymity, he was able to convince James Franklin that he was the right kind of anonymous person, the kind with the right to write for publication, the kind that James assumed would have something worth saying.

Franklin's youth and his status as an apprentice worked against his efforts at publication. It was only when he was able to "bracket" his identity, in the language of Habermasian public sphere theory, only when he was able to lay aside the particulars of who he was that he was given permission to publish, to engage in public discourse. That laying aside, so necessary to Habermas's notion of rational public discourse, lessened in nineteenth century America. As the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth century gave way to the raucous and multifarious publics of the nineteenth century, and as the print public burgeoned in the early nineteenth century, so too did the number and type of people writing for publication. But when those people wrote from outside white, male, propertied privilege, they had to develop strategies for assuming the privilege to publish, for producing writing that engaged the interests and desires of power. Finding a place for the writing of those outside the usual identities of privilege required the development of strategies for writing that engaged meaningful social, cultural, or ideological purposes. The differentiated voices that emerged through this process were not, and are not, wholly natural or authentic—they were the result of complex and massively dispersed

² Silence Dogood [Benjamin Franklin], "Sir, It may not be improper in the first Place to inform your Readers...", *New England Courant* 35, March 25-April 2, 1722. 1-2, "Silence Dogood: Benjamin Franklin in the New-England Courant," Massachusetts Historical Society, accessed 18 May 2015, http://www.masshist.org/online/silence_dogood/img-viewer.php?item_id=661&mode=large&img_step=1&tpc=&pid=6#page1.

negotiations of competing interests and desires, repeated and developed over long periods of time, which enabled writers and readers to be legible to one another and, through that process, ordered the larger expectations that composed American culture.

The story I will be telling here is the story of how children came to take a place within the panoply of voiced identities that make up American public culture. This is not a story only about print publics, or only about the evolution of children's literacy, though it spends significant time on both of those things. This is a story about the movement of discourse from the individual, through her context, to publication, to circulation, and back to individual readers again. This is a story about the massive circulation of print matter over time. And this is a story about what it means for children to have a meaningful part in those processes. I write about children's role in the print-based publics of nineteenth-century America because they did have a role in it and because that role has long been unacknowledged. What's more, the particular kind of role children had then in print publics, much like the one they have today, reveals a great deal about the process of making a "voice" for a less powerful sector of the nation, about what it means to write and publish from a position of dependence and a lack of authority, and about how the writing of the less powerful contributes powerfully to processes of cultural formation and change. In the case of children, subjects who are at the center of projects meant to enable the continuation and growth of a society, culture, and nation, their engagement in writing for publication reveals how the subjects who are the objects of social reproduction engage, support, and subtly alter those processes. Though many arguments have recently been made for the importance of children's socio-historical agency, and though this study counts itself among them, this project does not argue only that children have agency, that they affect the social and cultural contexts around them, and that they do so both deliberately and without intending to. This

project argues that children's agency very often contributes to the success and continuation of the processes of social reproduction to which they are subjected.

The question of children's influence on their cultures remains a live one in childhood studies. Though writing is one of the main artifacts that records children's historical presence, and though Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Laurie Langbauer, Marah Gubar and others have recently investigated historical children's writing, the scholarship mainly identifies the way young people have received and responded to their cultures, stopping short of saying how children's writing might also influence those cultures. This dissertation works through a way to understand how children's writing contributes to cultural change through the large-scale circulation of print. I work with youth writing published in periodicals between 1839 and 1882: letters authored by children and circulated in newspapers because of they provided eyewitness accounts of important events, amateur newspapers printed and circulated by mostly white, mostly male youths in the 1870s, and the school newspapers printed at the Carlisle Indian Industrial school in the early 1880s. These periodicals, I argue, evince a form of creative compliance, by which I mean that they give young writers a platform for subtly refiguring dominant ideas within gestures of obedience. Because children were less powerful and had less easy access to literacy and publication in the nineteenth century, they tended to write in ways that affirmed the expectations of powerful others. Though scholars often look to children's writing for moments of resistance, I argue that their writing is most commonly a compliant form of historical evidence. However, simply because it is compliant does not mean it is not revealing or influential. I aim to nuance our thinking about compliance and its effects by showing that compliance is never simple, nor does it simply reproduce wholesale the ideas or expectations of more powerful individuals. Children's *ways* of writing compliance, their choices *within* compliance, allow them to influence

the transmission and reproduction of ideas, beliefs, and ways of being.

Children's compliant circulation depended on the development of both the American common school system, which gave early literacy education to a much broader segment of American children, and the significant expansion of American print culture, which developed rapidly after the 1830s. Before the 1830s, relatively few children received writing instruction and had access to the relatively expensive materials that would enable them to write on a regular basis. Many, in fact most that were living in New England, learned to read, but relatively few learned to write. What's more, as Jennifer Monaghan and Tamara Plankins Thornton point out, writing instruction in this period was often specifically a matter of *handwriting* instruction: handwriting masters would give lessons in multiple highly embellished scripts for girls, while they gave boys training in the both the scripts and the mathematical ciphering required for business. Letter-writing instruction and rhetorical training were generally reserved for older students who had access to advanced education, while the language training of the very young was focused on reading, grammar, and spelling. In this period, the very young were not frequently asked to use writing to express themselves or to develop ideas.

In the 1830s and 40s, the common school movement expanded literacy education to a wider segment of the public, and writing instruction for the young began to include what we would refer to as composition. Lucille Schultz attributes this shift both to the influence of Romantic pedagogues like Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and to a belief in the importance of training citizens who could participate as full members of a democracy. As children's written literacy rates began to rise and American print culture began to rapidly expand, as techniques for accounting for the self through writing rose alongside a greater ideological investment in knowing and recording selves, so too did children's writing begin to see regular publication in

popular periodicals. The regular publishing of children's writing in professional periodicals began in the 1830s, according to my survey of early American juvenile periodicals, and increased to a steady stream by the 1850s in titles such as *Merry's Museum* and Forrester's *Fireside Companion*. But newspaper editors got in on it too—by the 1840s, for example, they would print the occasional child's letter to capture particularly poignant perspectives on newsworthy events. As I explain in chapter two, letters penned by a survivor of the Donner Party tragedy and by a boy who participated in the *Amistad* slaveship rebellion, for example, were aggressively edited for publication in newspapers in 1841 and 1847, respectively, and privileged as emotionally affecting representations of these events.

After the Civil War, the wider availability of printing presses and the increased emphasis on early professionalization for young people encouraged significant growth in the creation of periodicals that featured youth writing and/or that were edited and/or printed by the young. I open this piece with the example of Benjamin Franklin in part because his Silence Dogood letters helpfully exemplify the problem of writing with a young voice, but his example as a youth who brought himself up in the world through writing and printing also provided a potent touchstone for parents, youths, and press manufacturers after the Civil War. Mark Twain pokes fun at this attitude in "The Late Benjamin Franklin" (1870), a satirical memoir in which Twain argues that Franklin harmed future generations of boys by setting an example parents love and boys despise. He writes that with "a malevolence which is without parallel in history, [Franklin] would work all day and then sit up nights and let on to be studying algebra by the light of a smouldering fire, so that all other boys might have to do that also or else have Benjamin Franklin thrown up to them. Not satisfied with these proceedings, he had a fashion of living wholly on bread and water, and studying astronomy at meal time—a thing which has brought affliction to

millions of boys since, whose fathers had read Franklin's pernicious biography.”³

Though people had been writing and publishing small, non-professional periodicals since at least the early nineteenth century, school papers and amateur papers increase dramatically in number after the 1860s. By the turn of the twentieth century, large universities would begin opening journalism departments and high schools would begin incorporating the publishing of school newspapers into their curricula, but in the 1870s school newspapers for mainstream high schools and for universities were still largely run and funded by students. Amateur journalism was a similarly independent, youth-run sphere. Small affordable printing presses that were developed during the Civil War and subsequently marketed to businessmen and to young boys made possible the burgeoning of amateur journalism in the 1870s and 80s. These presses made it possible for mostly white, mostly male youths to write, edit, and print their own amateur newspapers, to create local, regional, and national organizations, and to circulate thousands of issues which brought into being a uniquely youth-run public, as I explain in chapter three. The widespread notion that printing was a useful, educational, and thoroughly American occupation for youths led also to the establishment of printing offices and school papers at schools for Native American children on and off reservations in the last fourth of the nineteenth century. These papers, as I explain in my coda, represented the collective presence of Indian youth in the nation's periodical imagination in the late nineteenth century.

³ Twain ends the piece by writing that he desires “to do away with somewhat of the prevalent calamitous idea among heads of families that Franklin *acquired* his great genius by working for nothing, studying by moonlight, and getting up in the night instead of waiting til morning like a Christian, and that this programme, rigidly inflicted, will make a Franklin of every father's fool. It is time these gentlemen were finding out that these execrable eccentricities of instinct and conduct are only the *evidences* of genius, not the *creators* of it. I wish I had been the father of my parents long enough to make them comprehend this truth, and thus prepare them to let their son have an easier time of it. When I was a child I had to boil soap, notwithstanding my father was wealthy, and I had to get up early and study geometry at breakfast, and peddle my own poetry, and do everything just as Franklin did, in the solemn hope that I would be a Franklin some day. And here I am.” “The Late Benjamin Franklin,” *Galaxy* v. 10, July 1870-January 1871 (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1870), 138-140.

This large amount of printed children's writing poses particular methodological and theoretical problems. How ought scholars to interpret published children's writing while bearing in mind their subordinate social and cultural position, their constrained relationship to literacy, and their limited access to publication? How should the mediation of their published writing by adults be conceptualized? And how can large archival corpora containing many examples of similar pieces of children's writing be usefully and meaningfully studied? As the chapters of this dissertation follow the historical trajectory outlined above, they also develop a methodological trajectory that develops these three key questions.

In chapter one, "The Rising Visibility of Children's Writing," I bring together historical literacy studies, childhood studies, and the history of nineteenth-century American childhood to theorize the interpretation of children's writing as a historical artifact. I argue that children's writing most readily reflects the influence of powerful others because of children's limited abilities and power, because literacy itself is something adults extend to children, and because in nineteenth-century America adults exerted significant control over children's scenes of writing. Using the journals of the Kuhn children written at Amos Bronson Alcott's Temple School (1836-39) as an example, I thus contend that the meaning of children's writing is more dependent on its context and on the influence of powerful others than the writing of adults. This perspective significantly advances the growing body of scholarship on children's writing which is currently aiming to capture the voices and agency of children but as yet has no strong central theory of what children's writing from the historical past evidences.

In chapter two, "Conjoined Agency in Children's Published Letters," I use Jacob Abbott's *Rollo's Correspondence* (1839) to theorize a notion of what I call adults' and children's "conjoined" rhetorical agency as it produces and circulates children's letters. Most children's

published writing is mediated by adults during the act of composition, in the process of selecting pieces to publish, and, especially in the nineteenth century, in the process of editing and otherwise altering the writing itself before printing it. *Rollo's Correspondence* provides a particularly elaborated scene that conceptualizes Rollo's writing of letters as an act carefully structured and supported by his mother while also emphasizing his consent and his own choices within her structure. I use this representation of enabling dependence, "conjoined" rhetorical agency, to understand the perspective of editors and readers of two historical children's letters that were published in newspapers. These letters, one penned by a young Donner Party member named Virginia Reed and the other by a young member of the *Amistad* slaveship rebellion named Kale, were published because they contained eyewitness accounts of events of national importance. Their historical importance has also ensured that their manuscripts have survived, allowing an unusual window into the editing processes that preceded their publication. Using these letters, I show that while the contemporary understanding of conjoined rhetorical agency for children may have enabled adult editors and readers to believe that children's expressions became more authentic and powerful thanks to adult intervention, the sponsors of these letters capitalized on the ideological weight of the child's voice as they edited these letters in support of their own ideological purposes.

In chapter three, "Amateur Newspapers, Youth Publics, and the Pre-History of Adolescence," I take up the large, underexplored archive of post-Civil War amateur newspapers to argue that the amateur journalists created what should be understood as a youth public sphere. I have used the writing of the amateur journalists as the central, anchoring example for my theorization of children's public writing because it allows me to show how young people who control the circumstances of publication can use their writing to create a nationwide peer culture.

In this chapter, I historicize Amateurdom (their name for their public sphere) within the social and institutional changes that would eventually produce adolescence at the turn of the twentieth century. I show that the amateur journalists developed writing styles that engaged and affected the changing terms of youth identity. I then show that although the amateur journalists' work is both playful and bombastic, they worked hard to gain and maintain respectability and adult approval. Their work is thus deeply compliant even while its surface features contribute a particularly adolescent sense of style.

In chapter four, "Graphing the Archives of Amateur Newspapers," I develop a method for surveying a large corpus of undigitized texts in order to argue that previous scholarship on the amateur newspapers has overlooked a significant contingent of lower middle-class youths who participated in the hobby to gain a more secure foothold in the middle class. I use the material histories of seven major archives of amateur journalism to estimate the original output of all North American amateur journalists between 1870 and 1890. Using a sample of 72 papers, I link the amateurs' critical writing to demographic data from the 1880 U.S. Census to show how their investments in amateur journalism correlate to their socioeconomic backgrounds. Overall, I demonstrate that large-scale methods are particularly relevant to archives of children's writing which often contain many examples of the same kinds of items.

Lastly, in the coda, "Data, Childhood, and the Native American Boarding School Newspapers," I bring together the methodological insights from the previous chapters in order to interpret selections from two of the first papers published at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, *The School News* and *Eadle Keatah Toh*. Recent scholarship on these periodicals tends to seek out examples of student resistance to these adult influences in order to show how Native children agentively contended with the school environment. I use quantitative methods with these papers

to capture the much larger amount of compliant writing in the papers. I argue that their compliance was a meaningful and agentive response to the school environment and identify the common types of compliance that these papers highlight. More importantly, however, these materials and my methods raise questions about what it means to treat children as quantifiable subjects, which has so often been a dehumanizing move against racial minorities. I conclude by gesturing towards new questions about the history of data and the history of childhood and future work with large archives of children's writing.

Altogether, the materials I study gained their power by representing "authentic" young voices. The child's voice, especially when written, has a particularly powerful ability to naturalize ideology and to reinforce the ways of thinking and being necessary to the continuation of a society and culture. At the same time the act of publishing children's writing gave weight to the forces of social reproduction that would shape young people and make real the expectations of adults, that very writing embodied in print young peoples' modes of contending with those expectations. Their contributions, their minor alterations within larger gestures of obedience and compliance, allowed them to participate in the creation of their culture at the largest scale in the service of the larger forces around them. What does it mean for the young to be complicit in the forms of social reproduction to which they are subjected, but which are beyond their control—what kind of evidence about childhood or youth, class privilege or aspirations to it, whiteness or non-whiteness, civilization or savagery does their writing provide to a reading public, and how can we understand the affective or ideological labor their writing performs? Children's published writing for periodicals, as part of larger American print culture, reveals their complex role in producing the forms of personhood that undergirded American subjectivities. It remains an underexplored venue for understanding children's participation in and influence on mass culture.

2.0 THEORIZING COMPLIANCE: CHILDREN'S LITERACY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Though children's literature studies has recently turned towards children's writing as a way to understand children's lived experience and contributions to their cultures, the field lacks a strong central theory of what children's writing represents. What's more, because children's writing is typically less skilled than that of adult authors and because children write in non-literary genres most often, children's writing as an object of study requires interpretive strategies and theoretical assumptions different from those typically used in literary studies. In this chapter, I present a theory for interpreting children's writing from the historical past that brings together literacy studies, book history, feminist theory, and childhood studies. I begin by illustrating the limitations of dominant children's literature studies paradigms for interpreting children's writing through a close look at recent work by Laurie Langbauer on Marjorie Fleming's diary. I argue that theories which posit the child's subjectivity as radically other and inaccessible to adults inhibit interpretations of children's writing because the material requires scholars to access, albeit cautiously, some element of a child's subjectivity. I then use several frameworks from literacy studies and childhood studies to theorize the relationship between children's writing and their official and unofficial lifeworlds. Children's writing, I posit, is usually a part of their contact with adults and the official cultures of school and family life. It thus typically displays significant compliance. This is especially true in nineteenth-century America, my focal area,

because children's access to literacy was particularly constrained in that time and place. I then argue that children's compliant writing in official contexts is a significant site of self-fashioning and suggest that scholars may understand its impact more fully by tracing the compliant forms of self-fashioning that circulated in published writing. I conclude that in nineteenth-century America children exerted agency through their writing by disciplining themselves and presenting a written self that complied with the desires and expectations of adult gatekeepers to literacy and publication.

2.1 MOVING OUTSIDE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE STUDIES

What we are left with in this case, are some children's words, and we need some way of interpreting them that is both helpful and uncondescending.

Carolyn Steedman, "The Tidy House"⁴

What's become interesting about children's writing as a subject of scholarly study in the humanities is its new cachet as a source of the ever-elusive voices and agency of children, particularly from the historical past. This dissertation is a result of that rising interest, but it takes a cautious stance on what exactly can be recovered or known through the study of children's writing. Though it seeks to give voice, or respect to the written voices of, young people from the past, it does not take such writing to be evidence of the unveiling of an authentic, stable subjectivity. Rather, it understands writing to be the result of a complex process of negotiation among competing desires and expectations, both those coming from within the writer and

⁴ Carolyn Steedman, "The Tidy House," in *Past Tenses: Essays on Writing, Autobiography and History* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), 87.

without. In this way it capitalizes on the insights of literacy scholars, whose conceptions of acts of reading and writing are, as Brenda Glascott argues, particularly well-suited to conceptualizing writing as both self-directed and other-directed.⁵ Jacqueline Jones Royster's examinations of the literacy practices of African American women in *Traces of a Stream* and Anne Ruggles Gere's recovery of the cultural work performed by women's clubs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in *Intimate Practices* both demonstrate the rich rewards of intensive historical recovery work on the literate practices of a group of people who share either an identity or a social connection.⁶

Such work, as Jennifer Sinor puts it, requires scholars to ask not "what the *writing* does (whether it is coherent, valuable, literary, readable)," the type of question typically generated by literary analysis, but rather "what the writer is *doing*," a distinction that requires scholars to imagine and research the act of composition, to treat the text as evidence of that act, rather than to investigate the potential meanings present in a text.⁷ Many of the scholars who are currently turning their attention towards children's writing as a means of recovering their historical agency and experiences are moving from literary studies to something between literary studies, book history, and historical literacy studies in order to study children's writing. Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Anna Redcay, Sara Lindey, Angela Sorby, and Laurie Langbauer move, to varying degrees, between multiple frames of analysis and multiple rhetorical exigencies to work with children's

⁵ Brenda Glascott, "Constricting Keywords: Rhetoric and Literacy in our History Writing," *Literacy in Composition Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 3, 6.

⁶ Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁷ Jennifer Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 7, emphasis added.

writing from nineteenth and early twentieth century America.⁸ While the literary background of scholars like Sánchez-Eppler and Langbauer enables them to contextualize children's writing within their larger cultural moment, their readings often falter for precisely the reason Sinor identifies. Because children's writing is typically (though not always) less skilled than that of older writers, asking what the *writing* is doing is much less generative than asking what the *writer* is doing would be.

Laurie Langbauer's piece on Marjory Fleming's journals "Marjory Fleming and Child Authors: The Total Depravity of Inanimate Things" is a useful example of this disciplinary difference because it illustrates the difficulties posed by the theoretical perspective that has dominated children's literature studies over the past twenty years. Langbauer's piece highlights the incompatibility of this perspective with the attempt to study children's writing. Children's literature studies' post-structuralist theorizing of "the child" as represented by literary texts and other cultural productions has made it difficult to move towards research that includes children. Such a move requires a methodology for articulating the complex ways in which subjects inhabit discourse, the ways in which each person's subjectivity is shaped by an idiosyncratic "weave of constituent discursive threads."⁹ The influence of theorists like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, who seem to emphasize what Perry Nodelman calls the "the apparent self-enclosedness of discourse," led to skepticism about the possibility of work that accounts for the places where

⁸ Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Practicing for Print: The Hale Children's Manuscript Libraries," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 2 (2008); Sarah Lindey, "Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late Nineteenth-Century American Story Papers," *American Periodicals* 21, no. 1 (2011); Angela Sorby, "A Visit from *St. Nicholas*: The Poetics of Peer Culture, 1872-1900," *American Studies* 39, no. 1 (1998); Laurie Langbauer, "Marjory Fleming and Child Authors: The Total Depravity of Inanimate Things," *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 56 (2009); Anna M. Redcay, "'Live to learn and learn to live': The St. Nicholas League and the Vocation of Childhood," *Children's Literature* 39 (2011).

⁹ David Rudd, qtd. in Perry Nodelman, "The Precarious Life of Children's Literature Criticism," *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse* 33, no. 2 (2007): 4.

texts and life intersect—such places might seem not to exist, one might say, or to be thoroughly discursively constructed. Nodelman argues that it would be worth our while to develop methods for research that self-consciously try to avoid reinscribing power relations inherent in our existing ways of talking and writing about and to children, but that also “do not accept the apparent self-enclosedness of discourse, that never forget the real existence of real children and other human beings and seek continually to come into contact with those real, embodied beings outside it, in ways that honor their otherness to oneself.”¹⁰

Langbauer struggles with this legacy and its ramifications for the study of writing done by child subjects. She cites Jacqueline Rose’s field-defining *The Case of Peter Pan, Or, the Impossibility of Children’s Literature*, writing that as “subjects constituted in language, [critics] are implicated in paradoxes of representation,” wherein they may fall prey to projecting their vision and desires onto the child in their analysis, rather than recovering an objective reality.¹¹ Though all who write history face this problem, it is an issue of greater import for scholars who write about children because of the way in which Western culture has “evacuated” childhood, to use James Kincaid’s term, to make it a repository of adult desire and objectification. Langbauer attempts to interpret Fleming’s writing by regarding Rose’s influence “not so much as rebuke but encouragement...by reassessing notions like ‘objectification’” and taking it to one of its extremes.¹² She uses thing theory to describe the way in which Fleming’s journals seemed to speak as they circulated in the nineteenth century after Fleming’s early death, suggesting that Fleming is best understood as a “thing,” albeit one that troubles the subject-object (subject-thing) distinction.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹¹ Langbauer, “Marjory Fleming and Child Authors: The Total Depravity of Inanimate Things,” para. 10. “Really there” is my formulation, not Langbauer’s.

¹² Ibid., para. 11.

This approach is a way for Langbauer to deal with the contradiction posed by coming to children's writing through a children's literature perspective, and though it allows her to bridge the gap between child-as-object and child-as-writer, it ultimately does not afford her much insight into Fleming's writing itself. By arguing that the circulation of Fleming's journals made her into a sort of "thing" for her adult readers she avoids the problem of intersubjectivity, a question for which Rose's paradigm does not offer a solution. She pushes the notion of thing to one of its limits, applying it to a human being, in order to circumvent the necessity of addressing Fleming's subjectivity, of imagining the motivations, pressures, expectations, experiences that informed her writing. Because Rose's perspective on children radically undermines the notion that adult scholars can access children's subjectivity (instead they are unable to "escape fantasies of childhood and reference"), Langbauer avoids inquiring after Fleming's subjectivity.¹³ This results in a strange, thematic reading of Fleming's writing for its discussion of "things" that feels unnecessary to the intellectual work of the article and comes only in the last section. And ultimately, the peripheral importance of Fleming's writing is sort of the point, as Langbauer spends significantly more time contextualizing the *reception* of Fleming's journals and other children's writing than she does describing the context within which Fleming wrote the journals, which receives only three paragraphs in one fifteen paragraph section. Though she works hard to construct a theoretical perspective that both accepts the "apparent self-enclosedness of discourse" *and* enables the analysis of children's writing, the very structure of her essay seems to push Fleming's writing to the side.

Langbauer's struggle starkly illustrates the way in which Rose's perspective, while generative for considering adults' fictional representations of children, makes it difficult to write

¹³ Ibid., para. 10.

about children's writing, an object of study the field values precisely because it was produced by subjects who are so often objectified by adults. The materials themselves resist the idea of children's objectification because they are a physical manifestation of children's thoughts and actions, however constrained by adult influence. As an artifact, children's writing holds out the promise that children can indeed speak and scholars in the field are currently eager to hear them speak and to resist their own impulses of objectification. This willingness to humbly hear and learn is perhaps one of the requisite conditions for overcoming the communicative aporia generated by subalternity that Gayatri Spivak describes, and which she finds insurmountable. Though children are a different case than the subaltern people Spivak theorizes, children's literature scholars have projected a divide between children and adults that is nearly as impassible.

2.2 LITERACY AND CHILDHOOD

Children's writing as an object of study requires a theoretical perspective that can account for children's subjectivity while acknowledging the pressures of adult objectification. Scholarly approaches to the literacy of other subaltern groups are useful here. Though the parallels between the literacy of adult African American women, to use Jacqueline Jones Royster's example, and that of children are uneven and change depending on the race, gender, and class affiliations of the child, the principles underlying Royster's analysis theorize literacy generally and are modifiable for the particulars of individual situations. To understand children's writing while acknowledging the difficulties posed by their social position, one could consider, as Royster puts it, how "what human beings do with writing, as illustrated by what African American women

have done, is an expression of self, of society, and of self in society.”¹⁴ This tripartite frame, elegant in its simplicity, accounts for the overlapping meanings of a piece of writing. The first two elements, expressions of self and of society, are familiar; scholars are typically comfortable saying either how a text expresses the thoughts of an individual or how it represents the cultural context and historical moment. Her third term, however, blurs the line between an individual and her context, demanding attention to the way in which self is neither separate from nor determined by society.

Such blurring is, for the young, a particularly visible element of their writing because their subordinate social position has significant effects on the way they write. When performing peer-sponsored uses of language, children often invert the values and meaning-making systems of adults, but when performing adult-sponsored uses of language, children express extreme awareness of their subordinate position. Allison James’ “Confections, Concoctions, and Conceptions” investigates children’s use of the term “ket” to describe cheap candy, the consumption of which for children “represents a metaphoric chewing up of adult order.”¹⁵ “Ket,” in northeastern England in the late 1970s meant “rubbishy or useless,” literally garbage, and the candies children avidly consume(d) actively resist the category “food” (think pop rocks and ring pops) and thus adults’ regimenting of what children take into their bodies. James’ configuration of children’s food culture is a useful framework for considering child-sponsored uses of language because it articulates children’s

creative process of interdependence: children construct their own ordered system of rules by reinterpreting the social models given to them by adults. [...] Hence, the true nature of the culture of childhood frequently remains hidden from adults, for the semantic cues which permit social recognition have been manipulated and disguised by children in

¹⁴ Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, 5.

¹⁵ Allison James, “Confections, Concoctions, and Conceptions,” in *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. Henry Jenkins (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 404.

terms of their alternative society.¹⁶

James' framework describes the culture children share with one another through daily contact, the interactions that produce and preserve the "rites and rhymes, jokes and jeers, laws, games and secret spells" that Iona and Peter Opie record in *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*.¹⁷ Childlore inverts many of the pleasures of proper adult culture by emphasizing extreme repetition, relative simplicity, nonsense, parody, lowbrow productions (such as advertisement jingles), and ribald sexual and scatological humor. Writing in the 1950s, the Opies trace one contemporary rhyme through archival sources back to 1725, a version of which was recorded by eight year old Samuel Wesley in 1774.¹⁸

Such playful uses of language illustrate the range of children's language use, which is anchored at the other extreme by adult-sponsored school writing such as that performed by George Kuhn in his journal for A. Bronson Alcott at the Temple School in Boston, 1834-1839. The journal was written in almost daily, as a part of schoolwork, and regularly contains sentences that mush compliance and resistance together, like this: "To day is the day mr Alcott reads to us I expect the reading will be very interesting to me as it almost every day is though some times not."¹⁹ Or this: "Alcott said those who like the fas ones [pearls] might go out I went out because I like the falts ones best not best but some though not so well as the others."²⁰ Interesting almost every day, though sometimes not; I like the false ones best, not best, but some not so well as the others—Kuhn struggles to fit his mixed feelings into sentence form. Goodenough, Heberle, and Sokoloff, co-authors of the introduction to *Infant Tongues: The Voice*

¹⁶ Ibid., 394-5.

¹⁷ Iona A. Opie and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (New York Review Books, 2001), back cover.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Alfred G. Litton and Joel Myerson, "The Temple School Journals of George and Martha Kuhn," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1993): 72.

²⁰ Ibid., 67.

of the *Child in Literature*, insist on the importance of children's status as new to language and the possibility that their thinking might exist in forms not understandable through it. They conceive of the child as radically other and their collection of essays sets out to examine "the uniquely difficult accessibility of children's consciousness to the adult imagination."²¹ They might characterize these written utterances as evidence that Kuhn is experiencing thoughts and feelings that are not compatible with the sign system of his language, but if we accept the notion that scholars *can* (carefully!) access the subjectivity of young writers, we may also see these statements as the mixed feelings of a boy who does not yet know the written conventions for expressing mixed feelings and who is not in a situation within which he can openly express disagreement or displeasure.

His displeasure finds other ways of expressing itself, especially in one unusual entry where he includes a description of the way his body is feeling.

when we had done analysing Mr Alcott told those who were for the spirit might sit on one side and the body on the other side all but one went on the spirit side Mr A said that we must give up chees butter all but a little and meet and pies and all god things except pure watter and they might have bread and milk a good many went on the body side for they did not want to give up those things. I staid on the spirit side Mr Alcott got pure for the spirit and unclean for the body we went home after this as it was one o clock I went home I had the headache in school and when I came home I laid down I got up after a while and felt rested and I was better.²²

The detail of this entry suggests that this conversation made a large impact on Kuhn, and his inclusion of the headache afterwards suggests that the two are related. Kuhn bravely determines to stay on the spirit side (only a short time in Alcott's classroom would reveal which side Alcott prefers), even when it means he must, if only in imagination, commit to giving up "all god

²¹ Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi B. Sokoloff, "Introduction," in *The Voice of the Child in Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 2.

²² Alfred G. Litton and Joel Myerson, "The Temple School Journals of George and Martha Kuhn," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1993): 65.

[good] things.” He comforts himself by laying down and feels better, but this kind of moral ultimatum, a commonplace in Alcott’s classroom, demonstrates the intensity of Alcott’s moral demands on his students, and the way in which male students like Kuhn, who Alcott disciplined much more severely than his female students, attempted to navigate Alcott’s competing demands for complete honesty and perfect moral rectitude.²³ In sum, Kuhn’s journal, as a sample of school writing performed under the intense scrutiny of a teacher, represents Kuhn navigating significant adult-imposed constraints. If we had access to the rhymes, jokes, or songs circulating among Kuhn and his child friends, we would get a very different representation of his identity.

2.3 COMPLIANCE AND RESISTANCE

A mixture of compliance and resistance is commonplace in children’s writing of this period, as it is, I suspect, in children’s writing from the present moment. This mixture is what Karen Sánchez-Eppler finds in the children’s diaries she surveys in *Dependent States* (though she characterizes it as a fluctuation “between presenting literacy as a discipline and finding in the act of writing an invitation to imagine and play”), and it is what Lucille Schultz identifies in the children’s letters she examines in *The Young Composers*.²⁴ Schultz extends this idea further by considering how scenes of writing inflect the kinds of compliance and resistance young writers’ texts exhibit. Texts composed in school reflect most closely adult instruction and the evolution of composition textbooks across the century, while “extracurricular texts that students composed,

²³ See pages 29-30 below and Ken Parille, *Boys at Home: Discipline, Masculinity, and “The Boy-Problem” in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (University of Tennessee Press, 2011).

²⁴ Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child’s Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, 19; Lucille M. Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition’s Beginnings in Nineteenth-century Schools* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 134.

either outside of school or at the edges of school, reveal that in these peripheral spaces, students wrote in ways that went beyond textbook directives.”²⁵ Schultz surveys writing done within classrooms (like essays), writing done at the “edges” of school (school newspapers), and writing done at home (family letters), and records the lowering of textbook writers’ influence as distance from the classroom increased. Other kinds of authority take their place (particularly parental authority within the home), but these varying spaces encourage different kinds of writing and different expressions of the self, different kinds of resistance and compliance.

Because the writing done by children in nineteenth-century that has been preserved was usually adult-sponsored, it provides a narrow and particular kind of window in to children’s lives and experiences. Compliance far outweighs the moments of resistance; the researcher must wade through large amounts of obedient text in order to identify moments, like Kuhn’s above, when something else seems to be happening. This is an effect of the place of adult-sponsored writing within children’s lifeworlds, and Anne Haas Dyson, a literacy scholar who studies children’s writing ethnographically, insists that children’s writing cannot be fully understood without accounting for the way in which it weaves between the official and unofficial worlds in which a child circulates. “As in child cultures more generally,” she writes, “unofficial composing practices often entail transformations of official ones, reworked to allow children control, relevance, and meaning in their lives together (not to mention fun).”²⁶ She cites examples in which children’s writing during an open writing period at school furthered the “war games” that had been happening on the playground for some time, and in which multiple children wrote (secretly fictional) accounts of attending the same imaginary birthday parties for a school

²⁵ Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-century Schools*, 108.

²⁶ Anne Haas Dyson, “The Case of the Missing Childhoods: Methodological Notes for Composing Children in Writing Studies,” *Written Communication* 30, no. 4 (2013): 411.

assignment.²⁷ Dyson argues that the meanings these texts had for the children who wrote them, and the way in which those texts displayed their social and literate abilities, would not be fully visible without the kind of immersive knowledge anthropological field work provides. Because unofficial peer cultures are largely oral, they are usually lost to history.

Though the particular way in which the writing Dyson investigates was positioned between children's school and peer cultures may be specific to the current formation of elementary schools in the U.S. and contemporary writing pedagogy, she insists that the "unit of analysis—the form of a written product—is inappropriate" as a means for understanding how children become "participants in the social practices mediated by texts."²⁸ Such an insistence articulates precisely the problem that scholars working with children's writing from the historical past must face. How can the full context of a piece of child writing be recovered when that context in much of its minute particulars has passed into history? How can scholars recover writing that largely appears to record official adult culture while always remembering that unofficial peer culture might be invisibly informing the texts at hand too? Though Allison James conceptualizes children's culture as an inversion of the values and pleasures of adult culture, other examples of peer culture have a more indeterminate relationship to adult culture. The amateur newspapers which are the focus of a later chapter of this dissertation are evidence of a peer culture that re-made, rather than inverted, the values of adult newspaper culture. Though their emphasis on play and companionship mark their shared endeavor as youthful, their ruthless attacks on and bombastic defenses of reputation amplify, not invert, similar attacks and defenses in adult professional periodicals. Likewise, the pre-professional seriousness with which many engaged in the hobby shows a deliberate emulation of an adult value. The amateur newspapers

²⁷ Ibid., 407, 11.

²⁸ Ibid., 415.

may have a less adversarial relationship to adult culture because the amateurs were significantly closer to adulthood than the young Kuhns, for example, who were 8 and 10 years old. Lucille Schultz's spectrum of more or less school-influenced writing is a useful model here for understanding the influence of adult culture and peer culture on children's writing. The metaphorical distance of the scene of writing from either adult- or child-sponsored institutions cultivates a particular network of values for the young writer.

2.4 SELF-FASHIONING

Carolyn Steedman demonstrates another approach to (re)constructing a context for children's writing. Dyson's context is confined to the social life present at the elementary schools in which she does her field work. Carolyn Steedman, however, whose *The Tidy House: Little Girls Writing* is an early landmark example of humanities scholarship that considers children's writing as a serious object of study, extends the immediate context of the schoolroom in which "The Tidy House" was written by three of Steedman's young working class female students, Carla, Melissa, and Lindie (and Lisa, who joined near the end). Steedman's text is conflicted about what constitutes the authoritative text of "The Tidy House," offering a facsimile of the handwritten copy, a typed "transcription" for which she serves as "translator," and a transcription of audio recordings of one day of the girls' collaborative composing. This representation of the text suggests that in some ways it is lost to those who weren't present at its writing, or perhaps lost even to those who didn't help to write it. Reconstructing it multiply allows Steedman to understand it as best she can within the girls' own processes of meaning making while at the same time linking it to several larger contexts—that of the history of girls' writing and of the

psychological life of working class girls. Steedman positions the girls' writing against the tradition of middle and upper class girls' diary writing, in which the "[a]utobiographical domestic narration was confining, the possibilities for analysis, for rejecting the order of events and the inevitability of chronology, severely limited. The construction of a story, on the other hand, offered more scope for children to reject the dictates of chronology."²⁹ She argues that the girls who composed "The Tidy House" were speaking back to the conditions of their existence. She suggests that by commenting on those conditions through story, these girls were able to imagine that there were other possibilities, that the future they articulate in "The Tidy House" did not have to be their future.

Steedman creates a more extensive context than Dyson, suggesting that there are other contexts besides the very immediate that illuminate children's writing, even as she pays very close attention to the girls' acts of composition. As their teacher, she does not claim access the kinds of underworlds that Dyson deliberately seeks to access and record. But by positioning their writing within a long tradition of girls' diary writing, Steedman argues that these girls' writing has a tradition, that it belongs to a larger category against which it can be compared, and that it can be understood through that comparison.

The substance of Steedman's argument ties the act of composing this story to Carla, Lindie, and Melissa's evolving senses of self. Through their writing, she avers, these girls reflected on their status as working class female children who were something of a burden to their parents and who would be likely to face a future of restraint and childcare similar to that of their mothers. Furthermore, she insists that writing fiction amplified this process of reflection, unlike the diary writing of nineteenth century middle class girls, which tended to simply affirm

²⁹ Carolyn Steedman, *The Tidy House: Little Girls Writing* (Virago Press, 1982), 81.

their place within the social order.

By writing, particularly by their use of dialogue, the children were able to move outside the confines of play-acting, where the rules of the reality that they are exploring dictate investigation of only one viewpoint at a time. In their story, Carla, Lindie and Melissa were able to be male babies and irritated mothers both at the same time. Holding together and synthesising two opposing views in their narrative, they were able to articulate their contradictory feelings about their future in a way impossible for children who cannot use written language.³⁰

Steedman's conclusions about the self-reflection and even nascent self-fashioning that was constituted by the writing of this story are the most precarious yet tantalizing elements of *The Tidy House*. Though reflecting on and reconstituting the circumstances of their lives was necessary in order for Carla, Lindie, and Melissa to compose this story, Steedman does not reflect on what exactly constitutes evidence of self-reflection. Her assumption is that the writing itself and the conversations she recorded and witnessed as it was being written are evidence of a "deliberate attempt to take hold of the conclusions and contradictions with which they were being presented and to synthesize them."³¹ For her, "The Tidy House" is a singular example of children's writing *because* it is evidence of such self-reflection, of girls fictionalizing the material of their experience.

But what if self-fashioning through writing wasn't rare, singular, or precious? What if it were mundane? What if it did not require "deliberate attempts" to understand the conditions of one's life? Saba Mahmood's work on the development of *habitus* emphasizes the effects of daily acts of religious devotion in shaping the self, as I explore in greater depth below.³² But even those acts are deliberately undertaken with self-fashioning in mind, and are thus privileged if small, repetitive, and banal. What about the truly ordinary? Jennifer Sinor's argument about

³⁰ Ibid., 129.

³¹ Ibid., 31.

³² Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001).

ordinary writing, writing that is cast off, treated deliberately as not-special, is that even the writing of a grocery list is a moment in which self, the subject, and, through self and text, culture gets composed.

Of course the question becomes, is ordinary writing still ordinary when it is saved? Literally speaking, no. Something cannot be both ephemeral and saved. But this very paradox points to a third attribute of ordinary writing—it was not supposed to be here but it is. That is what makes it an opportune site for contemplating the ways in which ordinary choices by ordinary writers at ordinary moments reveal the complex set of negotiations constantly undertaken by writers, by people living in the world. As a document not meant to last—not meant to stand in or withstand a public—it demonstrates more readily—less craftedly—the work of the writer and the inadequacies of writing. We glimpse what we should not be able to see and, as a result, we learn how individuals make texts, make subjects, and ultimately make culture every single day.³³

Sinor argues that ordinary writing, writing which was not meant to be kept, circulated, seen, treasured, provides a privileged window into individual processes of self-fashioning and culture-making precisely because it was not meant to be seen, because its writer's guard was down. The diary at the center of her book allows Sinor to see that its author was writing "in the days rather than of the days," that she was writing the experience of her life as it happened, rather than consciously molding it into a plot with a story.³⁴ Sinor's argument is that this kind of writing is as much an act of self-fashioning as the "deliberate" act Steedman investigates, and that these small, repeated acts of self-fashioning literally compose culture on a daily basis.

Martha Kuhn's Temple School diary supports Sinor's argument about daily writing and in particular demonstrates that diaries evince acts of self-fashioning even if they do not evidence self-reflection, as Steedman argues. Martha Kuhn's diary wears the influence of Alcott's pedagogy differently than George's does largely because Alcott treated girls and boys quite differently. In three arenas, conversation, journal writing, and school government, Alcott

³³ Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary*, 183-4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17, 18.

solicited students' statements on their perceptions, feelings, and beliefs. To put it generously, one might say that he took students' personal revelations very seriously and disciplined or praised their statements in order to, as he believed, help them become better people. To put it less generously, one might say that Alcott continuously demanded that students tell him what they thought, and that he held them to sometimes impossible moral and spiritual standards. His pedagogy appears at times to be invasive and a little cruel. As Ken Parille points out, Alcott directed most of this intense personal scrutiny at his male students. *Record of a School*, an account of Alcott's pedagogy and a journal of several-months' worth of classroom time and conversations with students, records numerous incidents wherein Alcott chastises, corrects, and punishes, sometimes physically, his male students. Alcott does not direct such attention at female students, believing them to be less in need of chastisement in order to learn of spiritual realities. Parille writes that "since Alcott's project of 'spiritual culture'...is fully invested in asserting the primacy of the 'realities in the mind,' he teaches boys about those realities by inflicting pain on their bodies. Because boys inhabit the world of 'outward things,' Alcott disciplines them by speaking directly to their interest in the corporeal. Girls, on the other hand, are inherently more attuned to his sentimental project of 'spiritual culture' and therefore can be reached with communal and intellectual petitions."³⁵

This difference in treatment of the male and female students at the Temple School resulted in distinctive differences between George and Martha Kuhn's journal writing. While George's journal contains repeated struggles with the moral and spiritual dictates of Alcott's teaching, as in the piece cited above, Martha's journal contains no such struggles and feels almost glib by comparison. George's journal voice records deep ambivalence about Alcott and

³⁵ Parille, *Boys at Home: Discipline, Masculinity, and "The Boy-Problem" in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, 35.

his teaching, while Martha's voice by comparison appears relatively carefree. Though both journals often seem to contain entries that simply list the school-related activities of the day, George and Martha deviate from that norm in very different ways. Martha, on occasion, will pen a digression that illustrates her interest in the natural world. In her entry for Tuesday, June 13, 1837, the first half of the entry contains the usual rundown of events of the day, the things that happened before and during school time. The last paragraph, however, contains an account of her experience looking through a microscope at her aunt Ann's house:

Tuesday June 13

I ironed, a few minutes before breakfast. After breakfast I ironed a little while and then did my usual work after which I played till it was time to prepare for school.

In School.

I wrote my journal and then studied my Geography lesson which was on Rain. I then wrote the following copy.

Beauty and money many admire.

After reciteing our lesson we had a recess. after which we analysed from Harry and Lucy which we do not do very often. At the usual time we went home.

In the afternoon I came to school and got my French lesson. After school I went with my brother up to Aunt Ann's we played with two little rabbits which were in the yard. A little before teatime Fanny's the dog came home we shut the rabbits up and played with him till tea time. I did not mention that I carried a dead dorbug with me that I found in the mall which I look at through Aunt Ann's microscope. It had a mane like a lions its legs were like a lobsters claw with claws like a bird we looked at a barbary flower which was very curious and at clover, and chickweed leaves which were covered with little bugs. the bud of the chickweed was covered with pricklers. At about 9 o clock father came for us. When we got home we went to bed.³⁶

Martha's diary entry is mundane in many of its particulars, and it adheres to the day-recounting format that Steedman believes dampens the possibilities for inventive self-fashioning or for the resistance of cultural norms. It also doesn't quite fit into Sinor's schema because it is a piece with an audience, self-writing for another. Though this piece was not written for publication, it

³⁶ Litton and Myerson, "The Temple School Journals of George and Martha Kuhn," 114.

was written for the eyes of two teachers, and with the knowledge that it might be read before the class, as Alcott commonly did.³⁷ It is a self-conscious being-in-days, a writing of a self meant to stand up to Alcott's scrutiny, though Martha would have been aware that she would receive less remonstrance than her male peers. In fact, Martha avoids self-revelation in this entry and throughout her journal, suggesting that she desired to avoid Alcott's severest criticisms.

In the midst of Alcott's heavy expectations, is it possible to see that Martha is not just capitulating but also engaging in a process of self-fashioning? This question is a fraught one, for if the answer is no, then it is not possible to use children's historical writing to recover much more than the dictates of adults. But if, as Anthony Giddens would have it, structure and agency are two sides of the same coin, if individual subjects remake their culture and themselves by capitulating to social norms while creating their own methods of capitulation, then Martha *is* writing herself here.³⁸ Her self is, as her writing is, a combination of self, context, and self-in-context. If Martha is imagining herself as a person who looks with wonder at "dorbugs," she is also presenting herself as a student who can show that she can be like Harry and Lucy, who can perform eloquent wonder at the natural world for her teacher. She is writing at the intersection of Alcott's expectations and her own.

³⁷ See Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Record of a School: Exemplifying the General Principles of Spiritual Culture*, 1 ed. (Boston: J. Munroe, 1835), 97.

³⁸ Allison James and Alan Prout, "A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems," in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, ed. Allison James and Alan Prout (London: Routledge, 1990), 27.

2.5 A LARGER ARCHIVE

Martha Kuhn's journal illustrates how children's self-fashioning occurs in the midst of controlling adult expectations, how their writing reflects both the expectations of powerful others and their active negotiation of those expectations. But so far, this chapter has largely conceptualized children's writing as self-fashioning through the use of examples that only circulated because someone else published them. Fleming was published after her death; Steedman transcribed and published "The Tidy House"; Peabody published portions of other students' journals, and twentieth-century scholars Alfred Litton and Joel Myerson published the Kuhns' work. These pieces were charming, useful, or otherwise interesting to readers as artifacts of the childhoods, the identities, the learning, or the historical contexts of their authors. They circulated and had influence beyond their immediate situations through the actions of adult others. But if scholars are committed to investigating the historical agency of children in its largest, most powerful sense, there are other materials, some of which have recently entered the scholarly conversation, that showcase children's historical influence on a broader scale. These materials were written by children for publication, not published after the fact by adults. I am speaking of periodicals, texts that were varied and capacious enough to include much writing by children alongside the writing of adults. Periodicals containing children's writing circulated among adult readers (newspapers), among child and adult readers (juvenile periodicals, school periodicals), and among young readers (amateur newspapers).

The age stratification that increased across the nineteenth century combined with the increasing availability of print meant that while children's writing appeared sporadically in

periodicals in the first third of the century, it increased gradually from that point on.³⁹ The letters of Virginia Reed and Kale which are the focus of chapter two appear in professional newspapers in 1847 and 1841 respectively; the *Lowell Offering* (1840-1845) published the writing of mill girls as young as 15 years old. The 1840s saw a significant growth in the publishing of young peoples' writing, both in amateur publications and in professional. Amateur newspapers, which number in the hundreds in the 1870s and 80s, trace their history back to the *Juvenile Port-Folio, and Literary Miscellany* (Philadelphia, 1812-1816), edited by thirteen-year-old Thomas Condie, Jr., and even further back to the *Microcosm* (1786-7), written at Eton by future Prime Minister George Canning (age sixteen), Charles Ellis, Hookam Frere, and John and Robert Smith.⁴⁰ According to the catalogs of the major collections of amateur newspapers, only three of which hold papers from this decade, at least thirty-six amateur newspapers were published during the 1840s, most from large cities in the Northeast (see Appendix A). Periodicals associated with secondary schools began to increase during this time as well, according to Lucille Schultz, who traces the earliest preserved example to Boston Latin in 1837 (though the Eton paper is clearly an early British example). She explains that by "1854, so many school newspapers flourished that a writer in the *Pennsylvania School Journal* announced that 'the rapid increase of periodicals...designed to give publicity to compositions by pupils in the schools' was, in his words, 'remarkable.'"⁴¹

The periodicals devoted to the writing of the young grew in number alongside the professional periodicals that gave space to the same young writers. Though children's work

³⁹ See Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old Are You?: Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

⁴⁰ Martin Horvat and Truman J. Spencer, "The Early Pioneers of Amateur Journalism (before 1876)," <http://www.thefossils.org/horvat/aj/pioneers.htm> 7 Feb 2014. The *Juvenile Port-Folio* (and its successor, the *Parlour Companion* [1817-1819]) have been digitized as part of ProQuest's *American Periodicals* series; a digital copy of the *Microcosm* is available in *Google Books* and *Hathi Trust*.

⁴¹ Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-century Schools*, 137.

appeared in newspapers on occasion, it appeared more regularly in juvenile magazines and educators' journals, such as the *American Annals of Education*. These periodicals had a stake in producing the writing of children in order to validate a worldview, whether that was a religious one or a pedagogical one. Children's letters in juvenile periodicals from the first half of the century often just voiced their enthusiasm for the periodical itself or wrote of their sincere piety, particularly in the more pious titles.⁴² In educators' journals, samples of children's writing proved a pedagogy's worth: Bronson Alcott published samples of his students writing in the *American Annals of Education* to demonstrate the value of his innovations at the Temple School.⁴³ While their use of children's writing began as relatively instrumental earlier in the century, at least in juvenile magazines, children's writing took on an increasingly participatory character in the mid and late century. *Merry's Museum*, as Pat Pflieger documents, created a lively community of correspondents, and after the Civil War, as Paula Petrik and I have both written, the amateur journalists used their hobby to construct a large youth public.⁴⁴ Alicia Brazeau analyzes this phenomenon in *Forrester's Fireside Companion* in the 1850s.⁴⁵ Sara Lindey and Anna Redcay have documented the increased opportunities for peri-professional

⁴² See especially *The Youth's Companion* (1827-1929).

⁴³ See A. Bronson Alcott, "Principles and Methods of Intellectual Instruction Exhibited in the Exercises of Young Children," *American Annals of Education*, Jan 1832; A. Bronson Alcott, "Principles and Methods of Intellectual Instruction, as Exhibited in the Exercises of Young Children," *American Annals of Education*, Nov 1 1832; A. Bronson Alcott, "Principles and Methods of Intellectual Instruction Exhibited in the Exercises of Young Children," *American Annals of Education*, May 1833.

⁴⁴ Paula Petrik, "The Youngest Fourth Estate: The Novelty Toy Printing Press and Adolescence, 1870-1886," in *Small Worlds: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992); Jessica Isaac, "Youthful Enterprises: Amateur Newspapers and the Pre-History of Adolescence, 1867-1883," *American Periodicals* 22, no. 2 (2012).

⁴⁵ Alicia Brazeau, "'I must have my gossip with the young folks': Letter Writing and Literacy in *The Boys' and Girls' Magazine* and *Fireside Companion*," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (2013).

writing that the story papers and the St. Nicholas League afforded young people in the 1870s and at the turn of the century as well.⁴⁶

If this history outlines a kind of trajectory, that trajectory is an ambivalent one. While young peoples' opportunities to see their writing get published by both professional and amateur publications increased across the nineteenth century, the effects of that writing appear multivalent and mixed. Such opportunities certainly afforded a chance to improve their literacy, potentially gain recognition, and to learn the modes of self-presentation that would afford them greater access to privilege as they aged. But this interaction with print was inevitably an interaction with adult culture, an interaction that positioned the young as outsiders because of their inexperience, their lack of social and cultural power, and because literacy and publishing are monitored and controlled by adults. Children write as outsiders, heavily influenced by the expectations of the adults who control access to the spheres of literacy and publication (teachers, editors), adults who had the absolute authority to use children's writing as they preferred—reading it in class, publishing it for adult readers, editing it before publication (as Virginia Reed and Kale's newspaper editors did). This dissertation shows that this position profoundly informs all the writing children did for periodicals. Writing as an outsider, writing to gain entrance, requires requesting permission, locating sponsors, and constraining the self—in a word, compliance. It requires capitulating to many of the expectations of adult gatekeepers, just as did the writing the Kuhn siblings performed for Alcott at the Temple School.

Children thus exerted agency through their writing by disciplining themselves, by presenting a written self that complied with the desires and expectations of adult gatekeepers. The archive of their writing for periodicals demonstrates how pervasive their presence was in

⁴⁶ Lindey, "Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late Nineteenth-Century American Story Papers"; Redcay, "'Live to learn and learn to live': The St. Nicholas League and the Vocation of Childhood."

nineteenth-century public culture, at once broadening the scholarly understanding of their influence and calling the nature of that influence into question. If they were writing so very much for periodicals, but writing compliant versions of themselves for those publications, then the representations of young selves that circulated effectually reinforced the notions about children that young writers had been trained to display. Their writing represents a positive feedback loop that intensified the shared notions about children that were already circulating. In that sense, children seem to have very little agency at all through their writing, even that which was published and circulated. If all they were doing was reinforcing the notions other people had about them, then they were only nominally the authors of their identity. The problem of agency in relation to children often reaches this impasse, making it seem as though children are only the vehicles for others' agency, or others' desires, or objectification, as Langbauer's struggle with Jacqueline Rose's legacy illustrates. Because children are in part dependent because of their young age and relative inability, they force a consideration of the way in which subjects who are unusually dependent, whose dependence stands out from the norm, do have agency and an effect on their surroundings. Though that agency can be washed away in an analysis that focuses too forcefully on the power others exert through such subjects, it can also be recognized and explored by a perspective that reconceptualizes agency as a quality which individuals can have within dependency, within compliance.

2.6 CHILDREN'S AGENCY AND CHILDREN'S WRITING

This understanding of children's agency adds a significant new perspective to the debates in childhood studies, while also drawing on the tradition in women's studies for considering the

agency of subjects who are heavily constrained or dependent. As Karen Sánchez-Eppler points out in the “Introduction” to *Dependent States*, children are beings whose agency and identity can only ever be partial and contingent and thus “offer a more accurate and productive model for social interaction than the ideal autonomous individual of liberalism’s rights discourse ever has.”⁴⁷ Such a claim takes up the work of Gender Studies scholars like Saba Mahmood and Wendy Brown who have been trying to sever the conceptual link between agency and liberal notions of the fully autonomous individual for a while now, but to little avail.⁴⁸ As Mahmood points out, much of politically-oriented feminist scholarship still relies implicitly on the narratives of agency made available by liberalism, despite the fact that those narratives obscure other ways of having agency. A significant amount of childhood studies scholarship relies implicitly on those narratives as well. As the field has coalesced over the past twenty years, recovering children’s agency has served scholars well as a means of moving past the notion that children are simply passive and dependent. Sánchez-Eppler’s claim, however, asserts that scholars of childhood need to refine their thinking about child agency by taking into account this critique of the liberal subject. Recovering moments of child agency does not resolve the fundamental difficulties that children pose for the question of agency; writing as though it does

⁴⁷ In *Dependent States* she writes that considering “children as historical actors entails coming to terms with this status of the partial subject. As critics of the contemporary state have noted, independence may generally be overrated as a desideratum of civic society; interdependence or partial independence may be far more accurate terms for understanding civic life. Recognizing childhood as part of cultural studies presses us to examine what it might mean to claim voice, agency, or rights for a figure who is not, cannot, and indeed should not be fully autonomous. Children’s dependent state embodies a mode of identity, of relation to family, institution, or nation, that may indeed offer a more accurate and productive model for social interaction than the ideal autonomous individual of liberalism’s rights discourse ever has.” Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child’s Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, xxv.

⁴⁸ Saba Mahmood argues that our deeply felt connection to narratives of liberal agency obscures the kinds of agency Egyptian women participating in the revivalist movement exhibit in their seemingly self-effacing religious practices. Wendy Brown asserts that there can be no liberal feminism because liberalism itself relies conceptually on the lack of autonomy of figures like women and racial others. See Mahmood, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival”; Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

obscures the fact that “the set of capacities inhering in a subject—the abilities that define its modes of agency—are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power but are themselves the product of those operations,” as Mahmoud reiterates following Foucault and Butler.⁴⁹

Because children are dependent subjects who often have limited access to literate forms of self-assertion, scholars who wish to recover children’s agency most frequently come from the social sciences, where their research agendas and training allow for them to work with children in the present in order to recognize and record the actions that would otherwise be lost to history. As I explained above, the problem of historical children’s writing is partly the problem of recovering how children were intervening in a context that was only partially recorded and in which much of their actions, experiences, and peer culture were not recorded. Sánchez-Eppler despairs of recovering much from child-created historical artifacts in “Marks of Possession: Methods for an Impossible Subject,” even though her analysis recovers quite a bit.⁵⁰ Robin Bernstein turns back towards adult-created toys and other objects in *Racial Innocence* in order to show how adults “scripted” culture for children by offering them toys that presented scripts for use. Though children could respond by playing with or against such scripts, their presence

⁴⁹ Mahmood, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival,” 210.

⁵⁰ Her ambivalence surfaces in her conclusion: “There remains a great deal that this unusual archive cannot tell about the children’s meanings and intentions. Indeed, the very notion of intention, agency, or purpose remains the largest stake of my inquiry. Children’s literature serves as a powerful mechanism of socialization; produced and marketed for children and consumed by them, it offers a prime instance of cultural reproduction. The Dickinson children’s scrap work and scribbles clearly carry commercial, national, familial, and emotional implications. Moreover, how the children treated their books, the evident intimacy of their engagement with pictures and stories, suggests their avid awareness of the role of print culture in their lives. But if the Dickinson children understood themselves as literally living in a house of print, what should we finally make of these marks of possession? Did these books belong to these children? Or were the children possessed by their books?” Karen Sánchez-Eppler, “Marks of Possession: Methods for an Impossible Subject,” *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (2011): 159.

communicated cultural logics around race and thus confronted children with the necessity of negotiating them.⁵¹

I'm proposing a different mechanism by which we can understand the widespread influence of children—not just through objects adults created, and not just through individual sociological field-work analyses. In doing so, I am building on a conversation about children's agency that reaches back to the early 1990s when sociologists defined a new paradigm for the study of children, one that imagined children as “beings not becomings,” eschewing the Piagetian developmental framework that had governed the sociological study of children for decades.⁵² This conversation assumes that children ought to be “understood as social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances. [It] represents a definitive move away from the more or less inescapable implication of the concept of socialization: that children are to be seen as a defective form of adult, social only in their future potential but not in their present being.”⁵³ This conversation arrived at a time when theories that articulate the relationship between structure and agency were receiving new attention—or, better put, this conversation is a result of a new attention to the interdependent, co-determinate natures of agency and structure, as the humanities and social sciences emerged from the heavily deterministic influence of French post-structuralism as it had been taken up in Anglo-American scholarship.

William H. Sewell's widely-circulating article “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1992 channels that renewed interest into an attempt to clarify the relationship between structure and agency using

⁵¹ Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

⁵² James and Prout, “A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems,” 8.

⁵³ Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (New York: Columbia Teacher's College Press, 1998), 6.

the work of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu. Sewell defines agency as “the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts,” a capacity that he links to competence:

I would argue that a capacity for agency—for desiring, for forming intentions, and for acting creatively—is inherent in all humans. But I would also argue that humans are born with only a highly generalized capacity for agency, analogous to their capacity to use language. Just as linguistic capacity takes the form of becoming a competent speaker of some particular language...agency is formed by a specific range of cultural schemas and resources available in a person’s particular social milieu.⁵⁴

Sewell’s approach, by defining agency according to competence, calls upon Lockean, rationalist notions of subjectivity in potentially damaging ways: children’s agency is easily denied through an emphasis on competence, just as it is easily denied through an emphasis on autonomy, as Sánchez-Eppler argues.⁵⁵ Their presence as active members of a social system is also easily denied through an emphasis on development, of attaining a competency as one attains language, as Prout and James show. But objecting to any theory of agency that might minimize children’s agency blocks a recognition of the smallness of children’s agency, which *is* partly a result of their dependence and relatively limited abilities. To reiterate Sewell, “agency is formed by a specific range of cultural schemas and resources available in a person’s particular social milieu,”

⁵⁴ Willian H. Sewell, Jr., “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 18, 20.

⁵⁵ Sewell’s remarks here echoes closely John Locke’s understanding of the latent freedom of children in the *Second Treatise on Government*.

Children, I confess, are not born in this full state of equality, though they are born to it...The law, that was to govern Adam, was the same that was to govern all his posterity, the law of reason. But his offspring having another way of entrance into the world, different from him, by a natural birth, that produced them ignorant and without the use of reason, they were not presently under that law...he that is not come to the use of his reason, cannot be said to be under this law; and Adam’s children, being not presently as soon as born under this law of reason, were not presently free: for law, in its true notion, is not so much the limitation as the direction of a free and intelligent agent to his proper interest.

Locke labors in the *Treatise* to explain the mechanism by which children are transformed into adults with the full use of their reasoning faculties. In order to become free, they must learn to regulate themselves according to law and reason, and thus parents must shape their children to enable this outcome. John Locke, “The Second Treatise of Civil Government,” <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2/locke2nd-a.html>, February 7, 2014, February 18, 2014, Section 55, 57.

and thus is co-produced with the social and cultural structures of which an individual subject is a part.

For the Egyptian women Mahmood studies, this co-production results in forms of agency that are directed inward (self-molding) rather than outward (world-molding) because of the limitations of their social structures. For children living in nineteenth-century America, something similar appears to be true. For those privileged enough to experience an extended period of dependence, education occupied much time and energy, and thus while they would have had social agency exhibited in peer cultures and in interactions with adults, they also had self-structuring agency whereby they exerted their energy and multiple competencies towards accumulating habits of mind and feeling, a *habitus*, that suited their social and cultural position. Though adults share this kind of agency, I argue that for children, beings who are undergoing significant physical, social, and psychological changes, working on the self occupies a larger portion of their time and energy.⁵⁶

In cultures that scrutinize the child subject and link her health to the health of the nation, those *habitus*-forming efforts receive extra scrutiny and pressure. James, Jenks, and Prout argue that the “rise of childhood agency” in academia “is embedded in and related to a much wider process through which the individual voices and presence of children is now being recognized and accounted for.”⁵⁷ They describe the “individualization” of children (Nasman 1994), a process that follows the pattern of modern states to extend individuality to an increasingly wide group of subjects. This individualization has risen at the same time as astonishingly pervasive

⁵⁶ Marah Gubar’s recent work offers a useful corrective to theories that posit a radical difference between adults and children. She argues instead that children are “akin” to adults, somewhat like and somewhat unlike them. That notion was useful to me here, as I worked through an understanding of how children’s agency is like or unlike adults.’ See Marah Gubar, “Risky Business: Talking about Children in Children’s Literature Criticism,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2013).

⁵⁷ James, Jenks, and Prout, *Theorizing Childhood*, 6.

apparatuses of surveillance have been constructed around the young. Nickolas Rose's thesis that this intensive governing of children rises out of a link between children's health and welfare to the destiny of the nation

suggests that the parallel trends towards increased autonomy *and* increased regulation are not so contradictory as they might first appear. Furthermore, it highlights the extent to which children are now at the center of political strategies in late modernity, but strategies designed to govern the individual through the capture of the inside, rather than constraint of the outside. So doing, it illuminates the subtleties of new forms of power-knowledge (Foucault 1977) in which children are enjoined to speak, make themselves visible and to regulate their own behavior, as well as to be controlled by others.⁵⁸

The increasing incidence of children's writing across the nineteenth century, and the growing emphasis on first-person writing or writing from personal experience in nineteenth-century schoolbooks, suggests that the development of mechanisms of power which discipline the individual by asking her to articulate herself, developments which Foucault locates in the Age of Revolution and the initiation of liberal democracy, are linked to the growing mechanisms for getting the child to speak herself, for measuring her, for charting her growth and development.⁵⁹ Carolyn Steedman locates the historical beginning of the concept of human interiority as a conception of inmost-selfhood as one's past child self in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century, charting the development of cellular theories of growth (smallness preserved within largeness) and the eventual emergence of the child study movement at the end of the century, along with psychology.⁶⁰ I would argue that Steedman misses the place these discourses have within the larger growth of mechanisms of power-knowledge, of self discipline, that emerge in the movement away from a society hierarchically governed by the divine right of kings towards a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

⁵⁹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1977); Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-century Schools*.

⁶⁰ Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

society ostensibly organized by the collective decision-making of individuals. Just as socially distributed power requires all individuals to internalize the mechanisms of discipline, it also requires that children, those within whom the reproduction of the state and society happens, produce evidence of their complicity with this system.

The evidence of this complicity made material and tangible is their writing, and its circulation and the expectation that it would circulate produced a normative understanding of the written child voice. This voice took two forms in written texts: it produced conventions for representing children's speech in writing, and it produced conventions for representing children's writing. As a stable sense of the child self on paper developed, it became more and more of a source of knowledge or inquiry. Marah Gubar charts this development in a chapter on child narrators in *Artful Dodgers* in which she argues that the

Victorian age was marked by a new interest in the child's perspective and voice. For the first time, as Hugh Cunningham notes, children's testimony was sought out and recorded; disseminated in government reports and journalistic accounts of city life; it helped drive reform on a variety of fronts and affected literary representations of children. *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), which Peter Coveney identifies as the first English novel centered around a child (127), was followed by a host of fictions, such as *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *David Copperfield* (1849-50), in which characters reflect back on their earliest memories, as well as books like *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897), in which omniscient narrators describe a young protagonist's reaction to the surrounding world.⁶¹

Sally Shuttleworth investigates the same trend, beginning with "the 1840s, which saw an extraordinary flowering of the literature of child development as well as the first steps towards establishing the child mind as an area of medical investigation: the first journal of medical psychology...[and the publications of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Dombey and Son*, and

⁶¹ Marah Gubar, "'Our Field': The Rise of the Child Narrator," in *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford, 2009).

David Copperfield] as well as various autobiographical accounts of early childhood memories.”⁶²

These are histories of British interest in the child self and mind, however; Lucille Schultz traces the interest of American schoolbook authors in encouraging children to write from their own perspective to the influence of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. “Like Emerson, Pestalozzi was also a conduit for principles of romanticism to move from philosophical treatise and belletristic writings into the American educational system for beginning students and ... into the composition classroom.”⁶³

The growth of these discourses which asked the child to produce herself for examination provide a volatile context for the writing of children. Composing a young self on paper meant hazarding an attempt to satisfy these expectations, or to flaunt them satisfyingly. Writing was not a safe space, or a space of freedom, or a space free from adult government, certainly for children writing pieces that would never be published, and especially for young people writing for publication, like the amateur journalists or the young people who wrote in to *Merry’s Museum*. It was a space in which they had to create a version of themselves that would play well with adult editors and readers. It was in this sense a site where children’s agency was produced by the system of which they were a part, a system that increasingly demanded to see the child self, to understand it, to regulate it, but nevertheless a system in which children had agency through the choices they made in representing that self. Choosing a kind of self-representation that would make it into print meant satisfying those who stood between writers and publication, but even within such constraints, children made choices, selected selves. If children have agency, then the cumulative effect of their choices in writing exerted a significant pressure on the discursive

⁶² Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

⁶³ Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition’s Beginnings in Nineteenth-century Schools*, 57.

system within which they wrote. The question this dissertation asks is *how* they wrote, and what kind of effect their manner of writing had on the culture to which they belonged.

3.0 CONJOINED AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S PUBLISHED LETTERS

In order to contend with the public, published writing of the young, to consider its common qualities in order to understand its role in American public discourse, scholars must contend with the question of mediation. Editors' reworking of children's writing and their selection of pieces to print, and before that, parents', guardians', and teachers' interventions in the creation of children's manuscripts profoundly affect the style and content of children's writing, often in similar ways. This chapter analyzes two children's letters that were published in newspapers in the 1840s and whose publication history has been preserved and studied because of the importance of events experienced by the children writing. I use this rich archive to make visible the interventions of editors and other interlocutors. Though the differences in meaning introduced by this mediation are complex, I contend that it does not erase the communicative actions of the child writer. Instead, I theorize a notion of conjoined authorship, using a commonplace idea from nineteenth-century literacy narratives that children's writing was not just sponsored by parents or teachers, but that it represented the intertwined and mutually sustaining efforts of both adult and child. The ideological weight of the child's voice generated by children's symbolic function as representatives of the natural, their ability to function as a source of confirmation for beliefs and attitudes because they were as yet "unlearned," made

children's writing valuable to literacy sponsors.⁶⁴ As I shall show, adult editors frequently framed children's writing as poignant, as operating on an affective level prior to or separate from thought, and desired for it to function as a support for belief, or attitude, or socio-cultural practice. Together, child writers and their sponsors created pieces of writing that gave voice, poignancy, and affective support to ideas that sponsors hoped would be or become familiar, thus using children's writing to shape forms of identity important to the nation.

Much of this dissertation pushes against notions of exceptionality in favor of the commonplace. Though exceptional young writers existed and published their work in literary venues, as Laurie Langbauer has recently pointed out, I pursue instead questions of what many or most were capable of, how they represented themselves in writing, how they tended to orient themselves vis a vis publication and professionalization.⁶⁵ Despite this difference in orientation, I have come to some similar conclusions: Langbauer and I, as well as Karen Sánchez-Eppler have produced generalizations about the ways being young affected the writing of young people, how that subject position tended to encourage the young to write. However, the question for me extends beyond recovering the work of young writers or situating that work within a longstanding tradition of youth writing. I pursue also the question of the use to which the writing of the young was put, or, said differently, how the writing of the young influenced cultural change. I see that question as the necessary result of imagining young people as historical actors while simultaneously acknowledging that, as Paula Fass puts it, some of "the most important

⁶⁴ Deborah Brandt coined the term "sponsors of literacy" first in an article with a 1998 article with the same title in *College Composition and Communication*. She describes literacy sponsors as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way." Deborah Brandt, "Sponsors of Literacy," *College Composition and Communication* 49, no. 2 (1998): 166.

⁶⁵ See Laurie Langbauer, "Prolepsis and the Tradition of Juvenile Writing: Henry Kirke White and Robert Southey," *PMLA* 128, no. 4 (2013): 888–906.

kinds of human activities are defensive, preservative, un-self-consciously conservative.”⁶⁶ This history of childhood foregrounds the fact that much of the human activity that creates change is not done with intentional awareness, that the activities of individuals cumulatively contribute to new developments that no single individual would have anticipated. I use this perspective to ask how we can account for the collective presence of children as it was represented in print by widely-circulating periodicals and how we can understand the relationship of their print presence to larger changes in American culture.

Though I pursue that question using large archives and quantitative methods to engage a wide scope in later chapters, in this chapter I turn to smaller examples that are useful because they are unusual, because the circumstances of their creation were remarkable enough to ensure their more careful preservation. These examples are single letters, attributed to children, that document events that held the nation’s interest in 1839-41 and 1847. One is a letter written by an eleven-year-old African boy named Kale (Ka’-lè) who was among the group of Africans that overcame their captors on the slave ship *Amistad*. They subsequently sailed up the east coast of the U.S., were captured, awaited trial in a New Haven jail for almost a year, and won before the Supreme Court where they were defended by John Quincy Adams, a victory that represented a significant symbolic blow to the ideologies of African American non-personhood that supported slavery. Kale’s letter was sent to Adams to help convince him to take on their case and, after the victory, was published and republished among other documents related to the trial. The remarkable genesis of this letter led to the preservation and digitization of its manuscript as well as the preservation of other manuscripts Kale produced while learning English in jail; it also ensured the continued interest of scholars studying the *Amistad* case. Similar circumstances

⁶⁶ See Paula S. Fass, “Social History and the History of Childhood,” *SHCY Newsletter*, no. 13 (2009): para. 3.

ensured the preservation of a letter penned by Virginia Reed who at thirteen had survived the starving winter suffered by the Donner Party in 1846-7. Writing from safety in California the following spring, Reed described the journey to a cousin back in Illinois, deflecting the suggestion that she had engaged in cannibalism while offering a compelling narrative of their desperate experience. Her letter was published along with other Donner Party documents in a Springfield newspaper; a Photostat of the manuscript with her father's emendations has survived. Reed garnered sufficient notoriety from the letter to publish an account of that winter many years later in *The Overland Review*.

Both of these examples capitalize on the ideological power of the child to naturalize assumptions about identity that adult sponsors hoped would help define the nation. Their engagement with deep questions of American identity raises questions that have been explored in part by a significant and growing body of scholarship, starting with Caroline Levander's *Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. Du Bois* and continued by Karen Sánchez-Eppler in *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, Lorinda B. Cohoon in *Serialized Citizenships: Periodicals, Books, and American Boys, 1840-1911*, Robin Bernstein in *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, Courtney Weikle-Mills in *Imaginary Citizens: Child Readers and the Limits of American Independence, 1640-1868*, and Anna Mae Duane in *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim*.⁶⁷ All

⁶⁷ Caroline Levander, *Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. Du Bois* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Lorinda Cohoon, *Serialized Citizenships: Periodicals, Books, and American Boys, 1840-1911* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006); Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Courtney Weikle-Mills, *Imaginary Citizens: Child Readers and the Limits of American Independence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim* (University of Georgia Press, 2011).

of these works seek to unlock the mechanism by which children and childhood make possible the constitution of liberal-democratic states and their accompanying ways of inhabiting the self using the cultural history of eighteenth and nineteenth century America. In particular, these scholars elaborate the notion that the child plays a potent role in naturalizing racial hierarchies and in justifying the social contract of liberalism because the child herself represents the pre-social, the state of nature, the “truth” of human nature as yet unsculpted by schooling or social interaction. As Karen Sánchez-Eppler puts it, “Recourse to the imagery of childhood usually masks the institutional and structural forces at work—the evocation of childhood making proscriptions appear ‘natural.’ Studying the double role of children as subjects and objects of socialization therefore reveals how structural and institutional power is enacted in individual lives.”⁶⁸ Sánchez-Eppler studies this double role by looking at children’s manuscripts alongside literary depictions and photographs, Robin Bernstein by studying children’s engagements with the “scripts” of the material objects of childhood, and Anna Mae Duane by studying the metaphors that reference children “because the conceptual force of the child was often intimately related to what the child was actually doing in the New World.”⁶⁹ These approaches allow these scholars to link the “conceptual force” of the child to the child’s actions as a “subject ... of socialization” in a manner that deals with profound forms of mediation, the kinds of mediation that occur between the writing or actions of a child and the writing of an adult about children in the same period, or that of material objects that suggest the scripts children might have used in their play.

How might we consider, instead, artifacts more directly mediated by adults and their relationship to the conceptual and actual power of children? As Duane argues, “scholars remain unsure how to read the heavily mediated voices of many early American authors. Underlying

⁶⁸ Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child’s Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, xviii.

⁶⁹ Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim*, 12–13.

these debates is a powerful, if unstated, desire for affirmation of an autonomous subject whose voice reflects an unmediated glimpse into a self-authored identity... Because children do not allow for the illusion of an unmediated voice, a focus on their presence means rethinking who is worth listening to, and how we might best listen."⁷⁰ Working with the writing of children, particularly with their published writing, requires a robust consideration of the processes and effects of mediation, the coexistence of multiple voices or visions within a single text, and the dynamics of power and ideology that amplify certain ideas while dampening others through the revising and editing process. I contend here that nineteenth-century cultures of literacy, instruction, childcare, and womanhood contain their own theory of mediation, that, in fact, literacy instruction and mothering dealt centrally with the conceptual difficulties of creating the subjects who could fully participate in commerce and politics as autonomous, rational, white male subjects, but who began life as wholly dependent, unschooled children. Within nineteenth-century cultures of literacy, authors of instructional texts and literacy narratives very clearly depict the interdependence of adults' and children's literacy, the structuring work that mothers and fathers (but especially mothers) do to enable their children to participate in the world of letters and to exert social influence through writing. I build here on Sarah Robbins' work in *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*, where she describes the intertwining of mother and child's literate activity in nineteenth-century American literacy narratives that granted mothers "indirect" political power through the "guidance of others" (her children's, and primarily her son's) literacies."⁷¹ Robbins' argument deepens and complicates Linda Kerber's longstanding notion of Republican motherhood through examples like Lydia Sigourney's *The Faded Hope*

⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁷¹ Sarah Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America: Women's Narratives on Reading and Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 3.

(1853), a “memoir of her [son Andrew’s] literacy development” that blends Sigourney’s “biographical narration with edited entries from his voluminous journals.”⁷² “Throughout the biography,” Robbins argues, “Sigourney uses Andrew’s own writing and her sentimental anecdotes about him to emphasize that their shared literacy molded his character.”⁷³ As I argue here, *Rollo’s Correspondence* provides an especially useful depiction of such mutually sustaining literacy instruction.

3.1 APPLES, MOTHERS, AND ROLLO’S LETTER WRITING

Jacob Abbott’s *Rollo’s Correspondence* (1839), the eleventh text in the widely read and reprinted *Rollo* series, depicts the intertwined relationship of mother-child literacy particularly clearly and takes the question of the circulation of children’s writing into consideration by addressing the delivery of their letters. *Rollo’s Correspondence* begins with Rollo receiving his first letter from his mother, left at his bedside while he is recovering from a minor illness. The following day, Rollo writes his mother a brief letter in return that makes many of the mistakes common to new letter writers. She confesses she does not know how to respond to it because she does not know whether he most desires “praise or improvement,” and when he asks what she means, she says

⁷² Ibid., 4. Kerber’s *Women of the Republic* defines Republican Motherhood. She writes that “[t]he Republican Mother integrated political values into her domestic life. Dedicated as she was to the nurture of public-spirited male citizens, she guaranteed the steady infusion of virtue into the Republic...[She]...came to be seen as the custodian of civic morality.” *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: Norton, 1986), 11.

⁷³ Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America: Women’s Narratives on Reading and Writing in the Nineteenth Century*, 4.

“Why, if you have written this letter only to be praised for it, and are in such a state of mind as to be satisfied, yourself, with this first attempt, and wish to find me satisfied with it, then I must praise it; and I can praise it very easily and honestly, for, considering that it is the first attempt, it is really very well. But, on the other hand, if your mind is more intent on future improvement than on present praise, then I must look over the letter and find out all the faults, and tell you of them, so that you may improve, and become a good letter-writer.”⁷⁴

Rollo’s mother gives him the choice, and Rollo decides to ask for both, first the praise that he might feel proud, and then the criticism that he might begin to improve. The emphasis here is on Rollo’s deliberate request for his mother’s guidance and his consent to her instruction within the pedagogical context she constructed, thus figuring his entrance into the world of letters as one he controls, regulates, and consents to even as his mother initiates, structures, and enables that entrance by writing to him first. This opening scene thus initiates a complex depiction of mother-child conjoined agency that insists on the child’s consent and positions him as proto-independent.

This episode sets the stage for the text’s attention to the shared responsibility that Rollo and his mother, and eventually several others, have for the literate abilities that allow him to participate in his family’s social life. Abbott takes the issue further by addressing the delivery of one of Rollo’s letters to the young man named Jonas who lives with the Holiday family and helps with child care and farm labor. As Rollo is finishing the letter to Jonas, his mother brings three apples to the fireside to roast. One is for Rollo, one is for his brother Nathan, and when Rollo asks who the third is for, his mother replies, “O, that is a secret.” He guesses that the apple is for his father, for Jonas, for himself or Nathan, but she tells him, “No, you haven’t guessed exactly,” and encourages him to go on with his letter writing.⁷⁵ When he is finished, he

⁷⁴ Jacob Abbott, *Rollo’s Correspondence* (Philadelphia, Hogan & Thompson; Boston: Gould, Kendall, & Lincoln, 1841), 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

persuades his brother to deliver the letter to Jonas outside, and to do so immediately, by offering him a bite of his apple, “paying him in advance,” as his mother says. Nathan undertakes the delivery, but does not want to venture too far into the wind and snow, and so when he is in sight of Jonas, he shows him the letter and places it on a bench for him to retrieve later. Jonas, not quite being able to hear what Nathan said and remembering that Nathan liked to give him pretend letters that were only blank pieces of paper, does not retrieve Rollo’s letter, which gets blown off the bench and covered in snow. Nathan then returns indoors, and after he and Rollo eat their apples, their mother reveals that she intended the third apple for both of them to share.

The sharing of the apple echoes the sharing of the responsibilities involved in writing and delivering the letter, which the mother has managed, to use Sarah Robbins’ term, but has not taken part in herself.⁷⁶ This scene recalls the use of apples as a representation of children’s social responsibilities to each other and, as Courtney Weikle-Mills argues, their responsibility within a democratic society. Sarah Fielding’s *The Governess, or The Little Female Academy* (1749; first American edition 1791), “an English text that was one of the first storybooks to be read by the children of the early American republic,”⁷⁷ opens with a violent, “pigtail-pulling” fight over a basket of apples the teacher left for her pupils to share with each other in her absence.⁷⁸ The conflict is resolved by Jenny Peace, an older pupil who appeals to the students’ affection for their teacher to inspire their obedience to her rules and thus teaches the girls to give up personal liberty not simply through appeals to reason but through appeals to their affection. “Fielding reveals the loss and restraint that the choice [of society over individual desire] entails for the individual subject, hinting that reason is frequently not enough to justify sacrificing one’s liberty

⁷⁶ She is the only one whom Rollo does not even guess that the third apple could be intended for.

⁷⁷ Courtney A. Weikle-Mills, “‘Learn to Love Your Book’: The Child Reader and Affectionate Citizenship,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 1 (2008): 46.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

for others. Through its depiction of the tearful resolution of the apple fight and the girls' subsequent expressions of affection for each other, the text makes the argument that the sacrifice of individual liberty is an act that results from the child's outpouring of love."⁷⁹ As the sacrifice of individual liberty and obedience to an (abstract) authority is fundamental to the social contract that enables a republic to function, creating a basis for it in children's affection is a profoundly important element of social reproduction.

Unlike *The Governess*, *Rollo's Correspondence* is concerned with the production of literate male citizens who know how to employ their literacy to support their social position. Rollo uses his letter-writing abilities to maintain relationships to both of his parents, to Jonas, and to a female cousin who lives in a neighboring town. And though his mother trains him to exchange goods for services, even in regards to his letter, again and again Abbott foregrounds how Rollo and his brother are able to accomplish things because adults enable them to. What's more, by mid-century, children's literature had begun to take on the task of working through children's relation to commerce that Weikle-Mills argues was central to emerging questions about citizenship in a nation that was moving from civic-minded republicanism to a society and government that drew its model from self-interested economic interaction. "Nineteenth-century children's literature was instrumental in these attempts to resolve the tensions between civic and economic life. Imaginary versions of children's economic participation helped Americans to claim that social goods could result from economic growth... The perception that the market could generate the interests of society provided a political ideology to accompany economic

⁷⁹ Ibid.

expansion: a model of capitalist citizenship in which the multiple interests of citizens could be combined to create greater individual and social returns.”⁸⁰

Lorinda B. Cohoon argues that Jacob Abbott’s depictions of boyhood in the Rollo series represents a mid-point between the “gentleness” and “tolerance” linked to earlier narratives like *The Governess* and the “inquiry and experimentation and interest in property laws and possessions” that would continue and increase in later series books for boys by authors like Oliver Optic.⁸¹ Abbott was drawing on Heinrich Pestalozzi’s theories of education, which gained significant attention in the U.S. in the 1830s and 40s, particularly through Bronson Alcott’s experimental Temple School. Pestalozzi “encouraged the use of dialogues to teach and to provide a gentle means of maintaining discipline,” thus eliciting conversation with children in order to teach them, discipline them, and enable them to learn to participate as rational interlocutors in civil society.⁸² Pestalozzi’s influence, which emphasized imagining the perspective of the child in order to engage her in learning, actually played an important role in early composition instruction in American schools which in the 1830s began moving in earnest from what was largely handwriting instruction to what we now recognize as composition instruction, the writing of pieces that develop an independent and coherent perspective.⁸³ Lucille Schultz refers to this as a “democratization” of writing pedagogy, as it trained children to believe

⁸⁰ Weikle-Mills, *Imaginary Citizens: Child Readers and the Limits of American Independence*, 136.

⁸¹ Cohoon, *Serialized Citizenships: Periodicals, Books, and American Boys, 1840-1911*, 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸³ On the influence of Heinrich Pestalozzi on early American composition instruction see Lucille Schultz, “ ‘No Ideas But in Things,’ ” in *The Young Composers: Composition’s Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 56–84. On the focus of colonial writing instruction, E. Jennifer Monaghan writes that rather “than teaching a child to express himself, the writing masters focused on those aspects of writing instruction that looked to its form, its purely visual properties. The job of the writing master was to teach a variety of scripts, and the fundamental task of the student was to learn how to represent the words of others in these scripts.” *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 275. Tamara Plakins Thornton offers a detailed history of handwriting instruction and its relationship to print in “The Lost World of Colonial Handwriting,” in *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 2–41.

they had a perspective worth sharing. I maintain that this democratization of writing pedagogy, as it was occurring at the start of the educational awakening and the common school movement, trained a great many more children to participate in discussion as rational, eloquent, independent discussants. This so-called democratization occurred *alongside*, in tandem with the move toward capitalist citizenship Weikle-Mills describes. Apples in particular are a rich and persistent symbolic element of nineteenth-century writing for and about children, and are a resource that Abbott himself returns to in several of his other works. They often facilitate the depiction of economic citizenship by standing in for money, or serving as goods that children can labor for and sell.⁸⁴ They thus reinforce the conceptual link between knowledge (as in the Biblical representations of apples in the Garden of Eden) and the ability to exchange knowledge for monetary gain that Weikle-Mills discusses.

These mixed meanings of Rollo's correspondence come across in Abbott's slightly confused presentation of Nathan's delivery of the letter and the subsequent parable-ization of it by his mother. Unlike the basket of apples which must be divided equally among a class of girl students by the girls themselves in *The Governess*, Rollo's mother carefully distributes one apple

⁸⁴ There are, for example, other interesting uses of apples in Jacob Abbott's works for and about children. *The Apple-Gathering* ([1857], 1864), part of the "Rollo's Storybooks" Series, depicts an apple gathering as an occasion for Rollo and two of his male friends to learn how to work together under a "head," or supervisor. They leave with a wagon of apples, one box of which is for Rollo's cousin Lucy, and the others they get to split amongst themselves, thus earning compensation for their labors without engaging the market economy. Other interesting mid-century works that put apples at the center of a childish shadow economy include *The New-Jersey Apple Girl* (1832) and *Grand-Papa's Arithmetic, A Story of Two Little Apple Merchants* (1868). In *The New-Jersey Apple Girl* the narrator (an adult woman) meets a poor girl who sells apples to steamer passengers as they disembark. She visits the girl's home and hears the story of how an ailing apple tree, which hung into their yard but was owned by their landlord, was given to the family to care for because of the industriousness of the girl. She and her father nursed it back to health and it is now producing the best "belle-flower pippins" in the state, which they sell to support the family. Here again, apples are the commercial fruit of joint labor between adults and children and they give this girl a reason to enter the marketplace, which she does in a very winning, feminine manner that attracts people to buy her apples. In *Grand-Papa's Arithmetic*, orphaned children learn to count the apples they gather from an orchard given to them by their fairy godmother. An older sister uses the occasion of apple gathering to teach her two younger brothers arithmetic. Jacob Abbott, *The Apple Gathering* (New York: Sheldon & Company, [1857], 1864); *The New-Jersey Apple Girl* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1832); Jean Macé, *Grand-Papa's Arithmetic, a Story of Two Little Apple Merchants*. (New York: P. S. Wynkoop, 1868).

to each boy before then giving them a shared apple. This happens after Rollo employed his own apple as a kind of currency, “paying” his brother “in advance” for his labor in delivering the letter. This payment was necessary because Rollo had trouble convincing his brother to take the letter right away, as he wished him to:

Rollo wanted Nathan to go then [to deliver the letter] very much, but Nathan could not consent to postpone the eating of his apple. Rollo began to complain of him in an impatient tone, as if he had a right to require him to go and deliver the letter. His mother reproved him. She said that Nathan must do just as he pleased about going, as he was under no obligation to go at all.⁸⁵

Rollo attempts to exert his will over Nathan, “as if he had a right to,” and his mother steps in to suggest a marketplace exchange as a solution to his frustrated will. Unlike the girls in *The Governess*, who tearfully remember their affection for Mrs. Teachum and willingly decide to sacrifice their individual desires for the good of the group, Rollo’s mother encourages him to gratify his desires through the free exchange of goods and services which position both him and his brother as independent agents. Their mother is, importantly, outside these exchanges of goods for services. She has a right to exert her will in order to guide her children and she supplies the currency (in this case, apples) with which they barter. Their mother serves as a benevolent source of primitive accumulation, a source of resources that cost little to acquire but can be exchanged for great value.

However, while Rollo’s mother serves in part as a representation of the market (her will guides the actions of the boys, she provides their wealth), she also serves as a representation of benevolent civil society. Though she encourages Rollo to pay his brother to deliver his letter, she also gives them an apple to share. That apple seems to evoke their shared responsibility for the writing and delivery of the letter, a sharing that exists alongside their exchange of a bite of apple

⁸⁵ Abbott, *Rollo’s Correspondence*, 34.

for Nathan's immediate delivery of the letter. The subsequent parable of the apple, as told by the mother to Nathan and Rollo, is essentially a retelling of Nathan's failure to deliver the letter properly as a parable of the sower.⁸⁶

Once there was a little boy, about as big as Nathan. He was playing around upon the floor. He found a little black thing, and he asked his mother what it was, and she said it was an apple-seed. And the boy asked his mother what it was good for; and she said, it would grow and be a little apple-tree.⁸⁷

To try to help the seed become a tree, the boy first puts the apple-seed outdoors on a bench, and when it doesn't grow his mother informs him that he must plant it in the ground by digging a hole and placing it in the hole. And because he doesn't understand that he must also cover the hole, a bird comes along and eats his seed. This is what follows.

The rest of the story is this. The little boy got another apple-seed, and his mother told him she would show him how to plant it. So she took a little flower-pot, and put some earth in it, and then she made a little hole, and put the seed in, and covered it up. "There," said she, "now I will put the flower-pot in the sun, by the window, and by and by it will grow." The seed grew into a little apple tree, and when it outgrew the flower pot, the boy's father took it up and set it out in the garden; and after some years it began to bear apples. They were large, red, rosy apples, and very sweet and good.⁸⁸

Much like the apples in *The Governess*, which represent a bounty that can only be shared equitably when each girl restrains herself, the apples here are the results of a shared enterprise. Because this is a narrative about raising boys, subjects who must function in the market as well as the public sphere, who must produce in order to prove their value, apples function as a currency and, in the parable, as a product of their labors. However, even as apples function in *Rollo's Correspondence* as currency and as the fruits of labor, they also signify how very deeply the boys' labors are a product of the shared responsibility born by others. The apple seed would

⁸⁶ This is a device common to Abbott's works. After an important event, he often includes a parable of the event told by a wise character in order to impress the significance of the event on the child reader.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 56.

not have grown into a tree without the cultivation of the boy's knowledge about raising plants or the literal cultivation eventually performed by his parents, just as Rollo's letter would not have reached its recipient without the cultivation of Rollo's literacy provided by his mother and the physical delivery of the letter, performed by Nathan.

I argue that, just as especially democratized forms of composition education were emerging alongside models of capitalist citizenship that deeply threatened the equal participation of citizens in commerce, public deliberation, and government, a strong notion of what I will call children's "conjoined" agency existed and developed alongside an increasing emphasis on the independent, rational liberty of the adult citizen. That is to say, the idea of adult male citizenship that conceptualized propertied, educated men as freely able to participate in government and public discourse required an ideological origin story. Because adult male citizens do not spring into existence fully formed, they must come from somewhere. And because they come from a state of childish dependence, their adult independence must have its origins in childhood. The emphasis in *Rollo's Correspondence* on Rollo's consent to his mother's instruction thus builds in the seed of Rollo's adult literate independence.

The intertwined agency of Rollo and his mother brings together Kerber's thesis about Republican motherhood, that mothers are able to influence extra-domestic spheres through the influence they have on their sons within the home, with Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's argument that women's privacy supports men's public-ness, that the domestic figure of the woman was necessary to the idea that men could circulate as free agents in public spheres of commerce and rational deliberation.⁸⁹ Dillon writes that

⁸⁹ Dillon writes, "The privacy of women is the product not of women's seclusion within their homes, but of a public articulation and valuation of women's domestic position." *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 4.

the figure of the prepolitical woman serves as an ideological foil to enable the emergence into intelligibility of the autonomous liberal male. In material terms, the distinction between male and female bodies serves as the basis of a crucial division of labor in which women perform domestic work that, in turn, provides the economic support for the production of masculine autonomy.⁹⁰

In the parable, the mother plants and waters the seed within the home, until it grows so large that the father takes it out of the home and plants it in the yard, in full view of the public. Rollo's epistle, which allows him to reach out of the home to have contact with the young man who labors on his family's farm, is enabled by his mother. As both Kerber and Dillon argue, a female figured as domestic enables the entrance into the public of a male. Rollo's age and dependence, however, highlights the degree to which his first textual move outside the home depends on his mother's support.

The conjoined agency of the mother-child dyad or parents-child triad served as conceptual support for citizenship by providing a temporal narrative that explained the emergence of the fully capable adult male citizen. This narrative would be taken to its extreme logical conclusions by late-century American anarchists whose political theories present a radical form of liberalism. J. William Lloyd, writing for *Liberty* in 1888, an anarchist periodical that ran from 1881 to 1908, posits the child as a part of the parent until the child can care for itself by earning a living. In "Liberty and Responsibility in Babyland," part of an extended conversation within the journal regarding children, he writes,

A child belongs to a parent very much as an apple belongs to the tree on which it hangs and from which it draws nourishment. When the apple falls, it begins its independent career, and is no longer part of the tree. While the child hangs upon the parent for support, it belongs to the parent, and is really *a part of the parent*, and is rightfully directed by the parent's intellect, just as the arm and foot of the parent are ... Until the child becomes self-supporting,—*the age of self-support is the Anarchistic age of majority* in which the child becomes socially a man, free, and equal with his fellows,—it is to be reckoned an appendage and part of the mother, is merged in her individuality, and is

⁹⁰ Ibid., 14–15.

rightfully subject to the providing care of her intellect, just as her other organs and appendages are subject to it; it being the office of the intellect to preserve the equal liberty of the organs, that is, the self-liberty, or ‘health,’ of the organism”(emphasis in the original).⁹¹

Lloyd, deploying the metaphor of an apple tree to describe the way in which children can be a part of yet not identical to their mothers, posits that the mother’s intellect protects and even animates the child, guiding its actions in order to promote its own best interests. Within this understanding of the child as part of the mother, however, Lloyd still maintains room for consent, arguing that the child consents to its state of dependence by consenting to being born: “Still more, so far as the child has any existence prior to conception, *it does consent* [to be born]. Does not the sperm-cell agitate the whole nervous system of the man for union with the germ-cell?—and is not the germ-cell equally passionate in its clamor to receive it?” (emphasis in original). Lloyd thus employs the material evidence of children’s physical existence, along with metaphors referencing bodily materiality, to conceptualize children as able to consent from their very earliest moments of existence *even though* they must remain dependent until they are of the “age of majority,” acting all the while through the benevolent guidance, support, and impetus of their mothers.

I call this conception of children’s ability to act *because of* their dependence on their parents a state of “conjoined” agency, where the child is understood to be part of the parent and acting through and because of the care, cultivation, and guidance that adult provides. In the first half of the nineteenth-century, “conjoined” was used to describe several kinds of enabling dependence, including that between husband and wife, between Christians and their God, and

⁹¹ J.W. Lloyd, “Liberty and Responsibility in Babyland,” *Liberty (Not the Daughter but the Mother of Order)* (1881-1908), July 21, 1888, 4, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/90995941?accountid=14709>.

between children and parents.⁹² The wife was able to do much because of her dependence on her husband, as the devout are able to do much because of their dependence on God, and children are able to do much because of their dependence on their parents. Texts like *Rollo's Correspondence* represent, I argue, much more than the role of the parent in nurturing and developing her child's literacy. They also represent a conception of the child and his literate actions as a part of, an extension of, that parent's own abilities while still maintaining a sense that the child had consented to this dependence, to his mother's desire to cultivate his literacy, and to her efforts to enable the circulation of his writing.

3.2 READING MEDIATION IN VIRGINIA REED'S DONNER PARTY LETTER

The idea that mothers sponsored the literacy of their male children, circulated by domestic literacy narratives, established a narrative that explained the relationship of a child's writing to

⁹² The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines conjoin as "to join in action, relation, purpose, feeling, etc.; to combine, unite, ally" in "physical," "non-physical," marital, substantial, heavenly, sexual connections as well as more general co-operative and united relationships. By the nineteenth-century, the term may have carried the weight and formality of antiquity, as many uses of the term from canonical authors date from the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries. "Conjoin" and "conjugal" come from the same Latin root, *con-* (together) + *jungere* (to join, yoke). From *A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (1853): "in proportion as there is no dissent and disagreement, man is conjoined by the internal to the Lord; and this is effected in proportion as he is in love and charity, for love and charity conjoin." From Thomas Hoccleve's "Moder of God" (1386) (attributed erroneously in the *OED* to Chaucer): "God...of his noblesse Conjoyned hath you...As modir and sone." From *Six Nights with the Washingtonians: A Series of Original Temperance Tales* (1842) at the end of a speech from a dying father to his son: "Do not mourn for me, for I shall not be altogether separated from you. They who truly love each other are ever spiritually present, though they may be absent as to body. I shall no longer be encumbered with a gross body, and shall therefore be, in affection, more intimately conjoined to you. Think often of this—think often of me, and this very thought will bring a degree of presence." "Conjoin, v.". *OED Online*. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/39248?rskey=dlyf58&result=2> (accessed May 13, 2015); Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (Boston, Crosby and Nichols; New York, C.S. Francis and Company; Philadelphia, Lippencott, Grambo, and Company, Cincinnati: Truman and Spofford, 1853), 34; T.S. Arthur, *Six Nights with the Washingtonians, A Series of Original Temperance Tales, Night the Fourth, The Drunkard's Wife* (Philadelphia: L.A. Godey & Morton McMichael, 1842), 132.

his own intent, asserting the authenticity of the child's prose despite adult intervention. This section will take up the questions of authenticity, mediation, and conjoined authorship as they are inflected by Virginia Reed and Kale's published letters. The editors who published the letters I will discuss here were men, as were the other adults who played a role in the writing, editing, and submitting of these letters. And they were not enabling simply the writing and mailing of children's correspondence; they were enabling the publication and widespread circulation of these children's letters. This distinction recalls the division of labor in the parable of the apple-seed from Rollo's correspondence: the mother helped plant and nurture the seed indoors, within the physical limits of the domestic sphere, and once it grew large enough, the father, a male figure, transplanted it outdoors. Yet, the careful depiction of Rollo's consent to and self-determination within his mother's encouragement and instruction, the conjoined nature of his authorial agency still resonates with these letters and may well explain what they signified to the reading public. Though adult interventions significantly changed the content and import of these children's letters, amplifying certain ideas while dampening others, a sense that children's agency as writers was conjoined to that of adults could have encouraged readers to understand these letters as authentic, as deeply formed by the child's feelings, experience, and thinking. From this perspective, adult interventions *enabled* a more authentic representation of the child's expression by removing the communicative hindrances caused by children's errors and unfamiliarity with the conventions of expression and then amplified the reach of the child by introducing their writing to the reading public. I argue, however, that adult writers engaged rhetorically with children's writing, not necessarily amplifying the "true" thoughts or feelings of the child writer, but rather amplifying the elements of their writing that supported larger ideological projects meant to form American ways of thinking, feeling, and being.

In the winter of 1846-7, thirteen year-old Virginia Reed along with a party of approximately ninety immigrants hoping to settle in California took a risky shortcut and, because of unusually early winter snow storms, were trapped in cabins in the Sierra Nevada mountains from October 1846 to the end of February 1847. Of the 81 stranded in the mountains, 36 died and, as was widely reported at the time, some resorted to eating the bodies of the deceased in order to survive. The following May, from the safety and warmth of her new home in California, Virginia Reed penned a letter to a cousin, Mary, still living in her hometown in Illinois. This letter offered a first-hand account of the starving winter. Her father sent a copy of her letter along with his own journal about the events to the *Illinois Journal* of Springfield for publication. Reed's letter was edited first by her father who added his emendations to the manuscript, and then by an editor at the *Illinois Journal*. The *Journal* published Virginia Reed's letter the week after it published her father's journal, and because he was expelled from the party early on for brawling with and killing another member, his narrative recounts the rescue attempts he led rather than the experience of starvation in the cabins as Reed's does. Reed's letter appeared in the *Illinois Journal* on December 17, 1847, a full year after her experience in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

The publication of Reed's letter and her father's journal make more sense within the larger contexts of mid-century newspaper culture, the Mexican-American War, and the *Illinois Journals'* position on the latter. Mid-century journalism was polyphonic and partisan, mixing a large number of different genres representing many different voices. Letters, field reports, transcriptions of speeches, narratives about newsworthy events, official proclamations, and anecdotes were presented often with little or no framing material, co-existing within a single issue and energetically representing a mixture of perspectives. The emergence of scientism and

professionalism after the Civil War would eventually lead to the kind of journalism that dominated the twentieth-century: journalism focused on achieving “objectivity,” the centrality of the “report” as a representation of who, what, where, when, and why without overt commentary or narrative elaboration provided by the journalist.⁹³ At mid-century, before those changes, newspapers were a representation of the many perspectives within a larger public discussion. Reed’s letter was published in an issue that contained a reprinted editorial on whether new states should be allowed to determine whether they permitted slavery, a report by Lt. Col. P. St. George Cooke on the difficulties the California Battalion faced while marching two thousand miles to the west coast, an anecdote about horrors reportedly visited upon American soldiers by Mexicans, and another more humorous story about General Wool trying to find a Spanish interpreter and failing due to the literalism of one of his soldiers. Reed’s letter was the lead article, granting it a place of privilege after a column of advertisements, and it took up slightly more than two columns, making it the longest article in the four-page, seven-column sheet. Her letter thus came before a number of pieces written by more powerful figures and took precedence over a significant number of articles offering commentary on and descriptions of the process of forcibly annexing Mexican territories.

The *Illinois Journal* was a Whig Party paper and, in 1847, the Whigs were divided over the question of annexation. The Mexican-American War (1846-48) had followed a decade of struggle over Texas, which proclaimed itself a republic in 1836 but was annexed by the U.S. through diplomatic negotiations in 1845. Because Texas entered the Union as a slave state, it upset the even division of slave and free states in Congress. The prospect of adding more states through the Mexican-American War raised the concern that even more slave states might enter

⁹³ See Kathy Roberts Forde and Katherine A. Foss, “ ‘The Facts—the Color!—the Facts’: The Idea of a Report in American Print Culture, 1885–1910,” *Book History* 15 (2012): 123–51.

the Union and upset the balance further. The Whig Party opposed granting centralized power to the president, instead favoring Congress as representative of the peoples' desires, and was unified by its desire for the federal government to intervene in the economy to support bank credit, infrastructural improvements, public education, and morality in public life.⁹⁴ These interests spoke to the desires of many in both the North and the South. The party was divided, however, by the question of slavery, a division that eventually led to the party's dissolution. The 1846 Wilmot Proviso, an amendment proposed by David Wilmot to a bill funding the Mexican-American War, would have ensured that any territories gained from Mexico would not allow slavery. The *Illinois Journal* printed an argument in support of the Proviso one column over from Reed's letter. Though the paper voices support for the Mexican-American War and westward expansion of the United States, it is anti-slavery.

The paper's choice to publish Donner Party documents, then, signifies an investment in a particular kind of westward expansion and settlement, and investment that is highlighted by the kinds of changes an editor made to Reed's letter for publication. The editor at the *Illinois Journal* fleshed out her broken sentences, corrected her spelling, and improved the narrative pacing of her letter. He also incorporated narrative details written in the margins of the letter by Reed's father, giving greater specificity to the dates of the ordeal, the party's geographical movements, the interactions with other members of the party, and their interactions with the environment. Perhaps most telling are the editor's changes which dampen the drama and trauma of her narrative and, combined with all the other clarifying and normalizing changes he made to the

⁹⁴ *Concise Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History*, eds. Michael Kazin, Rebecca Edwards, and Adam Rothman (Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 2011), accessed May 18, 2015, ProQuest ebrary, 1: 883. Jonathan Earle calls the Wilmot Proviso the "most significant piece of legislation never enacted in U.S. history" because it illuminated the fault lines within the two major parties, Democrat and Whig, over the issue of slavery. "Wilmot Proviso," in *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007), accessed May 18, 2015, http://search.credoreference.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/content/entry/abcs/slavery/wilmot_proviso/0.

letter, serve to cast her experience as extreme but not impossible, a circumstance illustrating the heroism of Americans emigrating to the territories, a narrative encased within larger expectations of safety and security. This reframing is powerfully supported by Reed's claim that she and her family did not consume human flesh. Though the letter is poignant, as the editor's headnote emphasizes, Reed does not lose any member of her family. Her connections were stretched and tested, not broken.

The editor highlights this way of reading Reed's letter in his headnote:

The artless manner in which this child details the sufferings of the party, and especially her own family—the joyful meeting of her father after his absence of five months—can scarcely be read without a tear,—while her notice of the country, which she had reached with untold tribulation, will cause a smile. 'It is a great country to marry. Eliza is to be married; and this is no joke!'⁹⁵

His comments here emphasize Virginia Reed's youthful "artlessness"; "this child" presents a poignant narrative for readers' consumption. The emotions meant to be stirred in readers are those that adhere to their affection for their families. Her sincere, because "artless," because voiced by a child, description of her family's separation "can scarcely be read without a tear." Her reward in California, "a great country to marry," actually signifies one of the main points of tension between the way Reed wrote herself and her experience and the way the editor re-wrote her. Reed makes several attempts to write herself older in the letter by positioning herself as one of the women, not one of the children. She does this most memorably at two moments when the children had to be left behind because they could not travel quickly or easily. Reed and her mother, older sister Eliza, and Milton Eliot left the cabins to try to cross the mountain "& had to leve the childrin o Mary you may think that hard to leve them with strangers & did not now

⁹⁵ "Deeply Interesting Letter," *Illinois Journal* (Springfield, IL), December 16, 1847, *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections*, accessed May 18, 2015, <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/illinois?a=d&d=SJO18471216&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-----#>, 1.

wether we would see them again or not we could not hardle get a way from them but we told them we to bring them Bread & then thay was willing to stay”.⁹⁶ Reed includes herself in the “we” that is struggling to leave the children with strangers, positioning herself as a mother/caretaker figure rather than a child who must be left behind.

Reed positions herself as an older caretaker rather than a child again when, after the rescue party has reached them, the children “give out” and must be returned to the cabins while Reed and a few others travel to safety. They “said it was better for all of us to go on for if we was to go back we would eat that much more from them,” meaning that more people would deplete the supplies at the cabins more quickly. O “Mary,” Reed writes, “that was the hades thing yet to come on and leiv them thar did not now but what thay would starve to Death Martha said well ma if you never see me again do the best you can the men said thay could hadly stand it it maid them all cry”.⁹⁷ Reed’s father, James Frazier Reed, and then the editor of the newspaper change this portion substantially in a way that lessens the drama Reed has created.

There were twenty-one of us who left with them [the rescue party], but after going a piece, Martha and Thomas gave out, and the men had to take them back. Mother and Eliza and I came on. One of the party said he was a Mason, and pledged his honor that if he did not meet father he would go back and save his children. O ! Mary, that was the hardest thing yet—to leave the children in those cabins—not knowing but they would starve to death. Martha said, well Mother, if you never see me again, do the best you can. —The men said they could hardly stand it: it made them cry. But the men said it was best for us to go on and the children to be taken back. ... Mother agreed to leave them upon

⁹⁶ Twentieth-century historians discovered a Photostat copy of the original letter and carefully reprinted it with all its misspellings, lack of punctuation, and incoherencies. This version, they insisted, was one of the most moving documents in all of American history. They are, however, somewhat unreliable in their transcriptions, sometimes correcting Reed’s errors and other times incorporating her father’s corrections. I have relied on the transcription from the North American Women’s Letters and Diaries database, which reprints that in Dale Morgan’s *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail*. This copy marks Reed’s father’s emendations in brackets. I imported that digital copy into *Juxta*, a textual editing program that allows side-by-side digital analysis of two texts, to generate comparisons between that transcription and a transcription of the newspaper article, which the *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections* interface automatically generated and I corrected. Virginia E. B. Reed, “Letter from Virginia E. B. Reed to Mary C. Keyes, May 16, 1847,” in *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), North American Women’s Letters and Diaries Database, 284.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.

the pledge of Mr. Glover that he would return for them if we did not meet father,—which we did in five days.⁹⁸

This description of events contains one major piece of information that Reed left out and excludes a detail that Reed included. Both the inclusion and the exclusion serve to make the situation seem less dire in the published version than it did in Reed's original version. The extra inclusion concerns the information about the Mason pledging to save the children, which Reed's father had written in the margin of Reed's manuscript. This assurance that an honorable man would return to save the children greatly diminishes the sense that Reed and her mother and sister were potentially leaving the children to their deaths, a moment which Reed clearly works to great emotional effect by including Mary's statement, "well Mother, if you never see me again, do the best you can" and a description of all the men present barely containing their tears. By the same token, the editor excludes Reed's statement of the reason that it was better for them to go on: because "if we was to go back we would eat that much more from them." This small description of material circumstance is one of many that the editor excludes, and the cumulative effect of their exclusion is a much safer feeling letter. Instead of imagining the harsh material realities of the experience through its details, the reader is encouraged to imagine the difficulties on an emotional level, as a trial of bonds of affection, commitment, and endurance.

Here is a list of the material details that the editor excludes, along with other major changes that lighten the tragedy of the letter:

Manuscript	Published
1. "we seldom thot of bread for we had not had any since [word or two obscured]"	Excluded
2. "that night I froze one of my feet verry bad"	Excluded
3. "o my Dear Cousin you dont now what	Changed to "My dear cousin, you often

⁹⁸ "Deeply Interesting Letter," 1.

trubel is yet many a time we had on the last thing a cooking and did not now wher the next would come from but there was awl wais some way provided	say you can't do this and you can't do that; but never say you cant do any thing--you don't know what you can do until you try. Many a time had we the last thing on cooking, and did not know where the next meal would come from; but there was always something provided for us."
4. "and had not eat anything 3 days"	Father crossed out, editor excluded
5. "and we had only half a hide" [to eat]	Excluded
6. "we went over great hye mountain as steap as stair steps in snow up to our knees litle James [her younger brother] walk the hole way over all the mountain in snow up to his waist"	Changed to "We went on over a high mountain as steep as stair steps in snow which was up to our waists. Little James walked all the way."
7. She reports that Bears ate the provisions they the rescue party had cached to eat on the return trip	Her father emends to Cacadues or Fishers, and the editor to Martens (a kind of ferret)
8. She reports staying in the mountains until March	Father changes to February 20, editor follows
9. She said they had not seen their father for 6 months	Father emends down to 5, editor follows
10. She reports that her father travelled in two days "what took us 5 days"	Excluded
11. "they raped [wrapped] the children up and never took them out for 4 days & thay had nothing to eat in all that time"	Excluded
12. "those that thay brought from the cabins some of them was not able to come and som would not come Thare was 3 died and the rest eat them thay was 10 days without any thing to eat but the Dead Pa braught Thom and pady on to where we was none of the men was abel to go there feet was froze very bad so they was a nother Compana went and braught them all in thay are all in from the Mountains now but five they was men went out after them and was caught in a storm and had to come back thare is another compana gone thare was half got through that was stoped thare"	Excluded
13. "I have wrote you anuf to let you now what truble is"	"I have told you enough to let you know that you don't know what trouble is yet, and I hope never will such as we have seen
14. "Dont let this letter dishaten anybody never take no cutofs and hurry along as fast	"But don't let this letter dishearten any from coming here. Don't take any Cut

as you can”	Offs, and bring nothing but provisions and just enough clothing to last till you get here.”
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Figure 1. Comparison of Reed’s Manuscript and Published Letter

The editor excludes her descriptions of frozen feet, her quantifications of hunger (“had not eat anything 3 days,” “half a hide,” etc.), and dampens the moments when she is attempting to heighten the tragedy of her narrative. According to the changes made by her father and the editor, she is actually exaggerating in some places in order to increase the drama of her experience. She reports that bears ate provisions the rescue party had cached, which her father and then the editor change to different kinds of ferrets, a much less frightening type of wild scavenger. She reports staying in the mountains until March, which her father changes to February 20; she writes that they had not seen her father for 6 months, which her father changes down to 5. These little alterations suggest that Reed was attempting to communicate her sense of the extremity of the situation, while her father and the editor are, at the least, attempting to record the situation accurately for the public, and at most are deliberately ratcheting down the drama of her narrative. The elaborations in change 13 in the table above likewise point to the editor’s efforts to soften her commentary on the experience. Changing “I have wrote you anuf to let you now what truble is” to “I have told you enough to let you know that you *don’t* know what trouble is yet, and I hope never will such as we have seen” (emphasis added) breaks the imagined communication between Reed and her cousin of the true tragedy of the experience. Rather than passing along “anuf” information to let Mary “[k]now what truble is,” the editor emphasizes that she has only told her enough that Mary knows she *doesn’t* “know what trouble is,” and may “never” experience herself. This new emphasis on Mary’s being protected from such experiences, as only knowing she doesn’t know what real trouble is, echoes change 3 in the table.

<p>3. “o my Dear Cousin you dont now what trubel is yet many a time we had on the last thing a cooking and did not now wher the next would come from but there was awl wais some way provided</p>	<p>Changed to "My dear cousin, you often say you can't do this and you can't do that; but never say you cant do any thing--you don't know what you can do until you try. Many a time had we the last thing on cooking, and did not know where the next meal would come from; but there was always something provided for us."</p>
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Figure 2. Third Comparison from Figure 1

This earlier sentence in both letters follows Reed’s description of having to kill and eat one of the dogs, Cash, and Reed’s exclamation, “o Mary I would cry and wish I had what you all wasted.” Though here Reed does write that Mary doesn’t “[k]now what trubel is,” here Reed’s reference to “trubel” serves to emphasize the trouble of having the “last thing on a cooking” without knowing where the next would come from, with the reassurance that “there was awl wais some way provided” coming only at the end of the sentence. The editor inserts an entirely new sentence, “you often say you can’t do this and you can’t do that; but never say you cant do any thing—you don’t know what you can do until you try,” a statement that assures Mary that she *would* be able to endure hardship, that she does not know the extent of her own abilities. The following sentence about the “last thing on cooking” then comes as a bit of a *non sequiter*, having little to do with ability and more to do with having faith that a solution would make itself apparent, implicitly through the grace of God. Either way, the tension around “trubel” that builds from the opening of Reed’s sentence and is intensified by the “last thing thing a cooking” and only released at the end by “there was awl wais some way provided” is entirely removed from the published letter.

Carey Voeller argues that Reed’s letter participates in a tradition of textual omission cultivated by women on the Overland Trail.

Nineteenth-century diaries and letters written by women bound for the West on the Overland Trail represent grief in [a] ... ritualized fashion. These writers repeatedly

suppress and minimize grief over the deaths of husbands, children, and friends in order to construct an image of westering women as tough, durable, and forever moving forward. However, this ... ritualized ... pattern of textual mourning becomes apparent only when we read the gaps and silences of these women's narratives.⁹⁹

He includes Reed's letter in his analysis, but argues that it contrasts somewhat with this tradition of omission. "Reed proves different from either [adult writers] Smith or Belknap in that she reveals much more explicitly the death and trauma she witnessed. She voices more grief than the others do, yet at the same time she employs rhetorical strategies of silencing and omission that align her with" them.¹⁰⁰

Like Smith and Belknap, whenever Reed reveals something in her text, she also pulls away from it. Terrible in its own degree, her description of the family pet's fate is more precisely detailed than that of the family's fellow travelers: 'we had to kill littel cash the dog & eat him we ate his head and feet & hide & evry thing about him o my Dear Cousin you dont now what trubel is' (78). In having to delineate degrees of hardship and horror, Reed's closer focus on consuming the dog rather than humans allows her written persona to maintain its civilized dignity."¹⁰¹

Though I agree that Reed insists on the "civilized dignity" of her own persona and of her family, both through assuring Mary that her family did not consume human flesh and by staging the return of her father as a sentimental scene of family reunion, I would add that though Reed pulls back from much of the horror of the experience, she also does a great deal to emphasize its extremity, to tell a dramatic story of her experience. Though she includes reassuring remarks throughout, "dont let this letter disha[r]ten anybody," "there was alw wais some way provided," she also narrates the experience in a way designed to rouse her readers' emotions and in a way that communicates the physical extremity of the experience more explicitly than the editor of the newspaper will allow. His redactions are the more striking when her letter is compared to the

⁹⁹ Carey R. Voeller, "'I Have Not Told Half We Suffered': Overland Trail Women's Narratives and the Genre of Suppressed Textual Mourning," *Legacy* 23, no. 2 (2006): 148.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

account of the Donner Party drawn from the journals of Reed's father and another adult male published the previous week. It contains gruesome descriptions of frostbitten toes exploding and leaving trails of blood in the snow and starving Party members gnawing on the bones of their loved ones.¹⁰² This piece was republished from another newspaper, which might explain some of the differences in editorial choice, but their publication in the same newspaper suggests that the reasons for the changes in Reed's letter have more to do with her status as a female child. While Reed may have, as William Decker writes, "meant for this letter to present her as one unclaimed by the moral darkness of this experience, and to clear her of any imputations of barbarity," I argue that the editor does more than Reed to "assert a measure of normality that encompasses both Reed and her Cousin Mary" in the published version of the letter.¹⁰³ Recasting Reed more fully than she does herself as a domestic subject, one whose experience has stretched but has not exceeded the bounds of domestic life, whose experience is more properly emotionally difficult than physically so, the editor of the letter calls on her status as a female child to support a rewriting of the Donner Party experience as survivable and normalizable within the nation. The changes created by the editor highlight the way in which she was working to create drama while he and her father were working to contain the extremity with which a girl was publicly allowed to voice it.

Reed's letter reveals the deep investments that children's writing inspired in parents and publishers and provides an opportunity for recovering those investments after the fact, through a kind of methodological reverse engineering. More importantly, her letter provides evidence of

¹⁰² "Narrative of the sufferings of a company of emigrants in the mountains of California, in the winter of '46 and '47 by J. F. Reed, late of Sangamon County, Illinois," *Illinois Journal* (Springfield, IL), December 9, 1847, *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections*, accessed May 18, 2015, <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/illinois?a=d&d=SJO18471209.2.2&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->, 1.

¹⁰³ William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 89.

the wide gap between the idealized notion of conjoined agency represented in *Rollo's Correspondence* and the type of conjoined agency that existed in practice when children's writing was considered for publication. The narrative of literacy acquisition and emergence into the public sphere implicit in Rollo's experience would have colored readers' perceptions of how and why Reed's letter came to be written and published, but the history of Reed's letter tells a very different story. Reed's consent is nowhere to be found, nor can it be assumed. Because her father wrote his changes over the manuscript sent to the editor, she may not have even been aware that he made them. She may not have wished for her letter to be published or known that it had been, at least not right away. Conjoined agency takes on a different meaning in this context. While Reed's father and the editor at the *Illinois Journal* enabled her writing to circulate through publication, they took away much of her right to self-determination, significantly altering her depiction of the ordeal in the mountains. While conjoined agency in literacy narratives conjured up an idealized domestic fiction, conjoined rhetorical agency in practice gave very little power to the child writer even though it allowed her writing to influence her culture through mass distribution.

3.3 COMPOSING THE *AMISTAD* REBELLION

The archive that has preserved the writing of Kale, the boy who was part of the *Amistad* slaveship rebellion and spent a year in a New Haven jail with the other rebels, offers a significantly different vantage point on the effects of adult intervention and mediation. The *Amistad* saga, much like the furor around the Mexican-American War, played an important role in the conflict over slavery that led to the Civil War because its court case very clearly raised the

question of whether slaves were people or property. The events leading up to Kale's imprisonment were as follows. Forty-nine men and four children had been sold to plantation owners and were being transported onboard the *Amistad* from Havana to the plantations of Puerto Principe, Cuba. On the night of July 2, 1839, one managed to break a padlock on the chains holding them together, and four men, Cinque, Faquorna, Moru, and Kimbo, came aboveboard, killing the ship's cook, himself a slave, and the ship's captain, scaring the ship's two sailors into jumping overboard, and capturing Jose Ruiz and Pedro Montes, the two men who had purchased the Africans in Havana. The rebels tasked Montes with steering, and though he obeyed their orders and sailed east by day, he "had the sails kept loose and flapping in the wind to slow the *Amistad*'s progress. By night he steered the vessel back to the west and the north, hoping to stay near the islands of the Caribbean and North America in order to be intercepted and saved."¹⁰⁴ They sailed along the North American coast eight weeks and were captured finally by a U.S. Navy ship off Long Island, which took them to port in New London, Connecticut.

It has long been assumed that Montes, as their captive navigator, tricked the Mendi rebels into sailing to the U.S. rather than helping them return to West Africa. In his recent re-examination of these events, however, Marcus Rediker argues that the Africans knew they did not have enough water and supplies to cross the ocean again. He suggests instead that they sailed as far north as they could to avoid landing in a slave state where they would be recaptured and sold back into bondage. Rediker's work, like much of the scholarship that relies on Kale's letter, uses that letter as evidence of the Mendis' (as they came to call themselves) self-determination. Rediker uses this line to support his argument that the Mendis deliberately sailed up the east

¹⁰⁴ Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Viking Adult, 2012), 2.

coast: “If court ask who brought Mendi people to America? We bring ourselves. Ceci hold the rudder.”¹⁰⁵ He translates that statement of agency and choice into a larger emblem of the Mendis’ heretofore downplayed part in these events.

The larger archival record, however, when read with the question of mediation in mind, introduces inconsistencies that trouble Rediker’s use of this letter. Though the Mendi rebels may well have “brought themselves” to America, they do not seem to be the sole authors of letters published in newspapers that were attributed to them. Much as their ability to succeed in the courtroom and to interface with the American public was enabled by the sponsorship of Lewis Tappan and other members of the the Amistad Committee, Yale students who volunteered their time teaching the Mendis how to read and write, and the legal acumen of the men who defended them in court (including, notably, John Quincy Adams), their ability to form their experience and desires into eloquent and persuasive prose depended on the intervention of others, most likely Tappan and his colleagues from the Amistad Committee. The first draft of Kale’s letter to John Quincy Adams does not survive; instead, a fair copy of his letter as well as a letter written to Adams by Cinna have been preserved.¹⁰⁶ These letters are housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society because of their connection to Adams, while the other Amistad papers, including other letters composed by Kale, Cinna, and their fellow Africans, are housed at the Amistad Center at Tulane University. While the letters to Adams have been made digitally available online, the letters at the Amistad Center have been transcribed and published by John Blassingame in *Slave Testimony*. I rely on those two sources here.

¹⁰⁵ “The Amistad Captives,” *The Emancipator*, Thursday, March 18 1841.

¹⁰⁶ They are housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society and are available digitally on their website at “The Amistad and John Quincy Adams,” <http://www.masshist.org/objects/cabinet/january2003/january2003.htm>, accessed 18 May 2015.

Letters written in Kale and Cinna's hand before and after they composed the letters to Adams contrast significantly in literate ability with the letters written to Adams. Though the speed with which the Mendis improved their literacy is remarkable and speaks both to their motivation and intelligence as well as to the resources made available to them by others, they did not yet have the ability to write independently with the eloquence and rhetorical ability that the letters to Adams show. What's more, the letter from Cinna is significantly less compelling than the letter from Kale and was not published in newspapers as Kale's was. Though Kale may have been more eloquent than Cinna, the way in which Reed's letter was used by her father and editors at the *Illinois Register* suggests that Kale's letter may have received greater interventions from Tappan and others, that it may have served as a more fertile ground for their rhetorical aims. Increasing the eloquence of Kale's letter harnessed the dual power of his position both as an African and as a child to naturalize abolitionist discourse about human rights. "Think of this lad," the framing material reads, "less than two years ago, a naked savage in Mendi!" Tappan published this letter and not Cinna's because it more powerfully articulated the ideas of the *Amistad* case; it articulated those ideas more powerfully because of Kale's age, race, and tribal origins, three factors which perhaps motivated Tappan and others to invest more energy in helping Kale write the letter.

First published in the *American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter* on March 15, 1841, the earliest published copy of Kale's letter that I have accessed is from *The Emancipator*, March 18, 1841.¹⁰⁷ In *The Emancipator*, Kale's letter is only part of a lengthy article titled "The Amistad Captives" which details the end of the Amistad Supreme Court trial and efforts afterward to retrieve the three African girls from the jailor's family that had been hosting them,

¹⁰⁷ John W. Blassingame, editor of *Slave Testimony*, reprints the letter from the earlier newspaper edition.

and discussion about what would be done for them next. In keeping with the character of mid-nineteenth-century journalism, newspapers had been publishing many kinds of material to give their readers access to the events of the case—commentaries, legal analyses, transcriptions of opening and closing arguments, etc. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery papers had all been covering the case, but offered significantly different perspectives on it. Variant versions of “The Amistad Captives” were published in a smattering of anti-slavery papers after the end of their trial before the Supreme Court in March and April; several carried the article, “The Amistad Captives,” in truncated form, but include Kale’s letter in full.¹⁰⁸

Lewis Tappan, identified by initials L.T. as the author of “The Amistad Captives,” provides a headnote to Kale’s letter that encourages readers to have a strong emotional response to the letter, based in part on its authenticity, much as the headnote for Reed’s letter does. After listing various emotional responses to the verdict, Tappan explains that

The *hostility* is felt by those who have a deadly hatred to the colored man, and to every effort for his freedom and improvement. The *apathy* is on the part of those who have given the subject of human rights, or the condition of these Captives, but slight attention. The *joy* springs from the hearts of those who are naturally humane and benevolent, or who have interested themselves deeply respecting the wrongs inflicted by foreigners, and the late administration, upon these Africans, and have contributed to their defense, and prayed for their deliverance.

Most readers of *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* and *The Emancipator* would have seen themselves in the last category. Once Tappan interpellated his readers as joyful members of his audience, and, more generally, as emotionally responsive to this article and receptive to Tappan’s views, he continues in the next paragraph to describe the Mendi captives, and then introduces the letter itself:

¹⁰⁸ “The Amistad Captives,” *Farmer’s Cabinet*, Friday, April 9 1841; L. T., “The Amistad Captives,” *New York Evangelist*, March 27 1841; “From the American Anti-Slavery Reporter. Reception of the News by the Captives,” *The Colored American*, Saturday, March 27 1841.

Mr. Booth, the teacher, assures me that [the letter] is wholly the composition of Ka-le and the other Africans who sat around him and made suggestions while he was writing the letter. The simple pathos of this letter cannot but touch the feelings of every reader. Think of this lad, less than two years ago, a naked savage in Mendi!

All five versions of this article that I have found either include Mr. Booth's assertions about the authorship of this letter verbatim, or somehow paraphrase his explanation of the captives' literacy attainments. Tappan goes on to emphasize here, however, the "simple pathos" of this letter, an assertion quite similar to the characterization of Reed's tear-inducing "artless manner." Tappan's emphasis on Kale's previously savage state, however, in combination with his differentiation of those "who have given the subject of human rights ... little attention" from those who are "naturally humane and benevolent" serves to launch this letter as a powerful statement on human rights from a subject uniquely positioned to comment on them and, as Levander, Sánchez-Eppler, and others argue, to naturalize them.

I argue that there are two identifiable layers of intervention in Kale's letter from Tappan and possibly from others (perhaps the Mr. Booth named above) who were teaching the Africans how to read and write. These layers of intervention reveal Tappan et al.'s investment in Kale's simultaneous appearance in print as both foreign and natively heir to human rights, eloquent but not perfectly literate. At the same time, these layers of intervention do not exclude the possibility that Kale (and "the other Africans who sat around him and made suggestions") played a significant, even leading role in the composition of the letter. The Africans were able to communicate both in English and in their native Mendi, thanks to the efforts of James Benjamin Covey, previously known as Kaweli, a formerly enslaved young sailor who served as interpreter.¹⁰⁹ It seems plausible that just as Virginia Reed's father and an editor at the *Illinois*

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin N. Lawrance, " 'Your Poor Boy No Father No Mother': 'Orphans,' Alienation, and the Perils of Atlantic Child Slave Biography," *Biography* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 672-703.

Journal altered her prose in order to polish it and to modulate its voicing of Overland Trail horrors, Kale's literacy sponsors helped him put his feelings and ideas into prose that gave them fuller expression than he could generate on his own but that, at the same time, put them firmly within a human rights frame that supported their own larger ideological agenda. The composition and subsequent publication of this letter was an importantly conjoined effort.

The first layer of intervention is visible only in relief. For two other letters written by Kale in September and October of 1840 suggest that in January of 1841, the date of the published letter, Kale had not acquired the kind of literacy skills that would have enabled him to compose the published letter on his own. The published letter, though it employs broken English, has a kind of unity and argument that bespeak significantly advanced literacy skills. The two earlier letters, though they show significant achievement for a young boy learning to read and write a second language in jail over the course of a year, are much simpler. As the following excerpts demonstrate, both contain many repetitions of the same phrases, and the first copies the "Our Father" and the Bible.

Mr. Tappan I going write you letter I want tell you something I bless you because I love you I want pray for you every night and every morning and evening and I want love you too much I will write letter for my thing for you from that time Jesus began to preach and to say repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand my friend I write this paper for you because I love you too much Love us pray our father who art in heaven hallowed be (September, 1840)¹¹⁰

Dear Sir Mr tappan

I will write you a few lines my friend I am began to write you a letter My Dear Sir I am going to write you a letter My friend I want you tell your friends I give him my good loves. My Dear friend I am very well to write you a letter [...] my Dear Sir I want tell you Some thing when we in Havana vessel we have no water to drink

When we eat rice white man no give us to drink when Sun Set white men give us little water when we in Havana vessel white men give rice to all who no eat fast he take

¹¹⁰ John W. Blassingame, ed. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, [1977] 1989), 30.

whip you a plenty of them died and Havana men take them put in water (October 30, 1840)¹¹¹

Both of these earlier letters, addressed to Lewis Tappan, employ copying and repetition in order to communicate. The first letter contains more copying and repetition, and copies religious texts, while the second seems to open with repeated efforts at learning (perhaps through copying or while receiving verbal instruction) how to begin a letter. The second letter includes independent narration, a significant step forward that indicates both that Kale was improving rapidly and that he felt comfortable sharing painful experiences with the white people who were visiting him, teaching him, and managing the trial.

The letter published within “The Amistad Captives,” however, performs a rhetorical eloquence that seems to be out of Kale’s reach, even two months after the October 30 letter.

Dear Friend Mr. Adams,

I want to write a letter to you because you love Mendi people and you talk to the grand court. We want to tell you one thing—Jose Ruiz say we born in Havana, he tell lie. We stay in Havana 10 days and 10 nights, we stay no more...What for Americans keep us in prison. Some people say Mendi people crazy, Mendi people dolt, because we no talk America language. Merica people no talk Mendi language; Merica people dolt?... (January 4, 1841)¹¹²

While Kale’s earlier letters vacillate between untutored English and standard English, not always following a clear train of thought, this letter uses a consistent and only somewhat broken form of English with a very clear train of thought. The sentence structures are complex, even in this short excerpt. And the rhetorical turn at the end is not only complex, it is also a strategy common in abolitionist writing of the time. To name just one example, Lydia Maria Child’s *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833) similarly turns a suggestion about African inferiority back onto Americans: “Is it asked why Hayti has not produced any examples

¹¹¹ Ibid., 31.

¹¹² This is only a portion of the letter, transcribed from *The Emancipator*.

of splendid genius? In reply let me inquire, how long did the Europeans ridicule *us* for our poverty in literature?" (160). Other evidence also suggests that an abolitionist writer had a hand in penning this letter. Later in "The Amistad Captives," Tappan recreates scenes from the trial, complete with dialogue between the Mendi captives. He puts imperfect English into their mouths.

To the quiry whether they wished to remain in America or return to Africa? They replied "Ask Cinque." Cinque said, "I think—can't tell now. I think. We talk together and think—then I tell." So that they will hold a council among themselves and decide. I think it very probable that many of them would prefer to remain in America. They say, "America country good country—America people good people—set we free."¹¹³

Tappan creates dialogue for Cinque here using rough English, but what's more, he creates a sort of Greek chorus out of the rest of the captives, putting praise for the U.S. in their collective mouth in similarly imperfect English.

So, while the major differences in ability between the published letter and Kale's other manuscript letters suggests that he worked extensively with someone to compose the letter, the differences between the manuscript of the published letter and the published version highlight Tappan's efforts to perfect a particular kind of untutored eloquence as well as possible moments where Kale expressed his own emphasis in the manuscript. The following list is not exhaustive but highlights the main types of differences between Kale's manuscript and the published version.¹¹⁴

Manuscript	Published
1. "you talk to the Great Court"	"you talk to the grand court"
2. "Jose Ruize Say we born in havanna he tell lie we stay in havanna ten days and ten nights we stay no more we all born in Mendi..."	"We want to tell you one thing--Jose Ruiz say we born in Havana, he tell lie. We stay in Havana 10 days and 10 nights, we stay no more. We all born in Mendi..."

¹¹³ "The Amistad Captives," *The Emancipator*.

¹¹⁴ I again used Juxta to compare the two versions and created transcriptions from *The Emancipator* and the Massachusetts Historical Society's digital copies of the manuscript.

3. "...we talk America language a little not very good."	"We talk American language little, not very good;"
4. "Some people Say Meni people crazy dolt because we no talk American language Americans no talk Mendi. Americans people Crazy dolt?"	"Some people say Mendi people crazy; Mendi people dolt, because we no talk America language. Merica people not talk Mendi language; Merica people dolt?"
5. "but Mendi feel bad O we can't tell how bad. Every day and night we think about our Country. Bad men say[ing crossed out] Mendi people no have souls. why we feel bad we no have no souls."	"But Mendi people feel sorry; O, we can't tell how sorry. Some people say Mendi people got no souls. Why we feel bad we got no souls?"
6. "Americans not take us in ship we were on shore and Americans tell us slave ship catch us."	"Americans no take us in ship. We on shore and Americans tell us slave ship catch us."
7. "...if they make us free they tell truth if they not make us free they tell lie..."	"If they make us free, they tell true, if they no make us free they tell lie."
8. "...if America give us free we glad--if they no give us free we sorry--we sorry for Mendi people little--we sorry for America people great deal because God punish liars. we want you to tell court that. Mendi people no want to go back to Havanna we no want to be killed."	"If they make us free we glad, if they no give us free we sorry--we sorry for Mendi people little, we sorry for America people great deal, because God punish liars. We want you to tell court that Mendi people no want to go back to Havana. we no want to be killed."
9. "Dear friend we want you to now how we feel. Mendi people think think think no body know. Teacher he know we tell him some..."	"Dear friend, we want you to know how we feel. Mendi people <i>think, think, think</i> . Nobody know what he think; teacher he know, we tell him some."
10. "if court ask who bring Mendi people we bring ourselves CiCi hold the rudder."	"If court ask who brought Mendi people to America? We bring ourselves. Ceci hold the rudder."
11. "all we want is make us free not send us to Havanna Send us home give us Missionary we tell Mendi people Americans spake truth we give them Good tidings we tell them theirs is one God you [a?] must worship him make us free and we will bless you and all Mendi people will bless you Dear friend Mr Adams"	"All we want is make us free."

Figure 3. Comparison of Kale's Manuscript and Published Letter

Kale tended to leave punctuation out of his letter, and Tappan, when creating the version that would be published, used punctuation to give emphasis and clarity without correcting the imperfections in Kale's prose. In fact, there are several instances in the table above where

Tappan makes Kale's prose less perfect. Entry 3 and especially 6 and 7 show Tappan altering phrasing to make Kale's English less correct. He changes "Americans not take us in ship we were on shore ..." to "Americans no take us in ship. We on shore...". Though he adds clarifying punctuation, he removes the verb "were," converting the sentence into the "zero copula" form, the exclusion of *to be* verbs, that has been present in African American Vernacular English since the seventeenth century.¹¹⁵ The other two changes I cite here may or may not be hearkening specifically to AAVE, but they nonetheless alter some of Kale's relatively standard phrasing into less standard English. Likewise, unlike the editor of Reed's letter, who goes to great lengths to smooth out the non-standard moments in her sentence structures, aside from adding punctuation, Tappan preserves the deviations from standard English in Kale's letter. This choice emphasizes the letter's authenticity because of Kale's presumed status not just as a second language learner, but also as a person of African descent writing English.

There are, however, important moments where Tappan revises Kale's use of punctuation from the manuscript to the published version. If Kale was creating a fair copy from a jointly created draft, his punctuation choices in the manuscript may well signify his desired emphasis. Entries 8 and 9 contain significant differences in punctuation. In 8, Kale's manuscript reads "...if America give us free we glad—if they no give us free we sorry—we sorry for Mendi people little—we sorry for America people great deal because God punish liars. we want you to tell court that. Mendi people no want to go back to Havanna we no want to be killed." The period after "we want you to tell court that" puts the emphasis on telling the court that the Mendis will be sorry for Americans a "great deal" if they don't let them go free "because God punish liars."

¹¹⁵ Geneva Smitherman, "From Africa to the New World and into the Space Age: Introduction and History of Black English Structure" in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 9.

Tappan's published version elides "We want you to tell court that" with the following sentence, "Mendi people no want to go back to Havana. we no want to be killed." Telling the court that the Africans do not want to go back to Havana to be killed positions them as fearful, as pleading with the court to protect their survival. Telling the court that they will feel sorry for Americans if they don't set the Africans free because God punishes liars positions the Africans as scornful, as inhabiting the moral high ground, as valuing their own safety less than they value moral correctness. This one piece of punctuation creates a powerful difference, one that either speaks of Kale's own sense of authority in his manuscript (and Tappan's desire to downplay that in the published letter), or that speaks of Tappan's desire to play down the African's moral superiority in the published letter (though he may have supported it or even helped Kale achieve it in the manuscript). Entry 9, which shows a change from "Dear friend we want you to now how we feel. Mendi people think think think no body know. Teacher he know we tell him some..." to "Dear friend, we want you to know how we feel. Mendi people *think, think, think*. Nobody know what he think; teacher he know, we tell him some" alters the emphasis from the Mendis' loneliness to an emphasis on the Mendis' ability to think, again thanks to the alteration of punctuation and Tappan's subsequent addition of a clarifying phrase. The rhetorical emphasis shifts then from an expression of loneliness to an argument for the Mendis' status as humans able to think. Again, if this does indeed represent a disagreement on emphasis between Kale and Tappan, it suggests that Tappan wanted the letter to reflect greater humility on the part of the Africans while also emphasizing that they deserved to be treated as humans rather than chattel, while Kale wanted to use the letter to express the Mendis' moral strength and their loneliness. Since Kale used periods sparingly in other parts of the letter, as can be seen in entry 2 and others, these differences in punctuation seem all the more significant.

Despite its status as a fair copy that hides its composition process, Kale's manuscript still highlights differences in Kale's desired emphasis and Tappan's. These differences are fine-grained, at a level small enough that suggests Tappan exerted exacting control over Kale's letter because he understood its potential impact. Tappan emphasized a gentler perspective on the part of the Mendi and played up the letter's ability to provide evidence to support Africans' human rights in the published version. Unlike the editor of Reed's letter, who smoothed Reed's prose to produce a thoroughly domesticated subject of the nation, Tappan increased certain kinds of errors in Kale's prose. He changed "America" to "Merica," "they tell truth" to "they tell true," all the while standardizing his capitalization and punctuation. Tappan was working to achieve a kind of legible difference, a difference of identity that could be contained within the grammatical structures of English and the presuppositions the American public had about Africans. He presented Kale as a subject who wanted to be free but took out Kale's plea at the end of the letter to be returned home. Here again the question of consent is a live one. Kale presumably consented to produce the fair copy that was sent to Adams, but may not have had a say in the changes made to his letter for publication. Much like with Reed, he had the most control over his writing when producing a manuscript; the changes for publication happened outside of their presences. Though publication was the means by which these children were able to reach a large public, it was also the moment when they had the least control over the form their writing would take.

So where does Kale's rhetorical agency fall in all this? Or Reed's? Or Rollo's? Raising the question of mediation seems to raise the distinct possibility that children's rhetorical, historical, social, and cultural agency can be washed away or at least submerged within that of adults. Adults seem to be the agents in these situations as they structured literacy experiences for children, altered their writing, and sent it out into the world through publication. Politically it

seems hazardous to highlight children's dependence within this situation, and in Kale's case especially, detracting in any way from his power to write, express ideas, and determine his identity threatens to repeat the dehumanizing moves of American slavery and racism. The question of dependence, however, and the difficulties it raises for adult scholars who are culturally situated within discourses of liberal individualism is one of the richest contributions of childhood studies scholarship. What is compelling and important about these letters and their archive, as well as the model offered by *Rollo's Correspondence*, is clarity with which they reveal the effects of adult sponsorship and mediation of children's writing. This kind of adult mediation is not an unusual aberration rising from the unusual contexts surrounding these letters—it is a common, though often not as well-documented, feature of children's writing for publication. Though the adults who had a hand in publishing Reed and Kale's letters may have been motivated to amend these letters more because there was more at stake in the public presentation of the Donner Party and *Amistad* events, it seems highly likely that this kind of alteration took place to greater or lesser degrees in many if not most of the cases where children's writing was published by adults. Far from displacing the child writer as an agent, the interventions of adult interlocutors flesh out the picture of what it means for children to intervene in public discourse. Though some had access to the means of publishing their own writing, as I recount in my next chapters, most did not, most had to go through adults. The compliance children exhibit in their writing, as I explained in chapter one, grows out of their subordinate social and cultural position. The compliance they exhibit in their published writing (a significant amount of which is added by adults at the moment of publication), and the ways in which that writing colludes with adult sponsors' desires and beliefs, I have shown in this chapter, is a direct result both of their subordination within the scene of composition and the conjoined efforts of

adult and child to bring forth a piece of writing that is meaningful for each of them and for imagined readers.

4.0 AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS, YOUTH PUBLICS, AND THE PRE-HISTORY OF ADOLESCENCE

In the 1870s, hundreds of youths printed their own newspapers. Calling themselves “amateur journalists” and the sphere in which their papers circulated “Amateurdom” (or, affectionately, “the ‘Dom”), these young people wrote, edited, printed, and circulated thousands of issues. I spent a week with the American Antiquarian Society’s collection of these papers in 2009, and what surprised me more than their vast numbers or their remarkable writing was the cohesiveness of their sense of audience.¹¹⁶ The amateurs wrote for each other more than for anyone else and together they imagined the ‘Dom to be a complex, vibrant, and important place. They used their newspapers to reach out to one another, but they also used their papers to imagine a new kind of age-based identity. The idea of adolescence that was taken up by social scientists, institutions, and the popular imagination of the twentieth century was articulated most powerfully by G. Stanley Hall in 1904, but the category had already begun to emerge decades earlier. As Kent Baxter explains in *The Modern Age*, a large number of social, cultural, and structural changes led to, what he calls, the “invention” of adolescence at the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ What I would like to point out here is that the young people living through

¹¹⁶ I read multiple available issues of approximately sixteen papers and twenty or so ancillary amateur texts (directories, guides, histories, constitutions, commemorative publications, distribution lists, etc.).

¹¹⁷ See Kent Baxter, “New Kids on the Block: School Reform, the Juvenile Court, and Demographic Change at the Turn of the Century,” in *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 21-43. Gabrielle Owen also excavates the shifting uses of the

those changes experienced an emerging version of adolescence as real, as a state produced by their social and cultural conditions. Since that state was new in historical terms, it had yet to accumulate traditions, behaviors, expectations, and precedents. The amateur journalists of the 1870s used their newspapers to develop adolescent traditions and to speak from an adolescent perspective. They used their papers to figure out what an adolescent perspective might be.

As my first section discusses, the amateurs' papers were made possible by new toy printing presses produced in the late 1860s, but the amateurs' desire to use the presses to create a public community of youths was motivated by changes in education, age stratification, and work that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. They defined amateur as an age-based category and amateur journalism fit well into the growing expectation that middle-class youths should spend their time in study or leisure, but not serious labor. This section concludes by suggesting that the amateurs collectively developed a peer culture that functioned as a public, and that the amateurs' ability to create a public youth culture ought to alter our understanding of the kinds of collectives young people can create.

The second section describes a few of the characteristics of the amateurs' self-representations in the youth public that was Amateurdom. To be clear, the amateurs themselves do not use the term "adolescent," nor do they explicitly articulate their project as one of identity negotiation. Newspapers, however, were thought to be a reflection of their editor's character and the amateurs spent a great deal of ink proving, disproving, commending, and insulting one another's reputations. They were very concerned about how they represented themselves, and how others represented them, on paper. In the service of this concern, they adopt the gestures of

term "adolescence" in American newspapers of the nineteenth century, performing an elaborate search for the beginnings of adolescence as both a category and way of talking about youthfulness. See Gabrielle Owen, "Adolescence as Narrative," in "Queer Theory and the Logic of Adolescence" (doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2011), 16-31.

formality and respectability, but they over-deploy them. The amateurs defended their reputations so vigorously as to almost seem ironic, as though they are parodying defenses of character. I argue that this over-defensiveness characterized the style of the amateurs' youth public and that it was a response to the ill-defined social and cultural status of young people in the 1870s.

The final section considers the end of the period in which Amateurdom was a site for the development of age-based modes of written self-representation. The presence of aging amateurs seems to have motivated a new perspective on amateur style as well as arguments that Amateurdom ought to function as an "Educational Institution." Though education was already becoming the "work" of young people, and printing one's own paper had all the trappings of educational value, conceptualizing Amateurdom as a belletristic educational institution where politics were unwelcome seems to have discouraged the style of self-representation that had formerly been so prominent in the papers. Concurrently, changes to the postal code in 1879 increased the circulation cost of amateur papers significantly, which further altered the character of participation in amateur journalism. Though Amateurdom would persist for three more decades, its character had fundamentally changed.

4.1 AMATEURDOM AND ITS HISTORICAL MOMENT

Though young people have been printing their own amateur periodicals since at least the first decade of the nineteenth century, the newspapers printed after Benjamin O. Wood's invention of a reliable toy printing press in 1867 introduce a new purpose and meaning for the pursuit. Before 1867 amateur newspapers had been relatively rare, but after 1867 "the number of amateur

newspapers in existence increased from fewer than 100 to almost 1,000.”¹¹⁸ In part, this is due to the technological affordances of the toy press itself. While earlier amateurs had struggled with home-made presses, paid a professional printer, used large professional presses, or, as in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s case, “printed” their paper by writing it out to mimic newsprint, the “Novelty” press allowed young people to print papers with relative ease and, priced at only a few dollars, it dramatically widened the group of people who could afford to produce a paper.¹¹⁹ As this essay argues, however, the popularity of amateur newspaper-publishing in the 1870s was fueled by more than just the availability of a toy press. White middle-class Americans who found themselves teenaged in the 1870s experienced that age much differently than the generations that preceded them.¹²⁰ Middle-class young people of the 1870s found themselves held out of the

¹¹⁸ Dennis R. Laurie, “Amateur Newspapers,” American Antiquarian Society, last modified September 2, 2004, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/amateurnews.htm>.

¹¹⁹ See Laurie, “Amateur Newspapers,” n.p., and Paula Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate: The Novelty Toy Printing Press and Adolescence, 1870-1886,” in *Small Worlds: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 126-7.

¹²⁰ A note on terminology. Middle Class: Burton Bledstein, in his introduction to *The Middling Sorts*, presents evidence that middle class began to emerge from notions of the “middling classes” in the 1830s and 40s, when industrialization, technological advances, economic transitions began to allow Americans to characterize themselves according to profession, something which changed across a lifespan, rather than character or station (the latter being an eighteenth-century notion linked to monarchical rule). Lydia Maria Child “strenuously identified with the middle classes,” Bledstein argues, citing a letter she wrote to an author of a housekeeping manual in competition with her own: “I smiled to see you class yourself and Mrs. Barrow, and Mr. Curtis, with the *middling* class. Certainly none of you have aristocratic airs, but all of you have luxurious habits, and are unaccustomed to wait upon yourselves. If you were to find yourselves suddenly in the surroundings of the middle class, you would be like fishes out of water” (10). Child’s remarks here emphasize an emerging identity around the term middle class that, in contrast with the older term “middling classes,” foregrounds a kind of independence and self-maintaining labor that would continue to be sources of pride for the middle class person. By 1861 the term middle class is developed enough that John Stuart Mill can refer to the “lower middle class” and in 1885 or so M. Darwin refers to the “upper middle class” (*OED*, middle class).

Teenage: In my attempt to foreground the historicity of adolescence as a term whose current structures of feeling are being expressed by the amateurs decades before the term itself would acquire its present meaning and use, I have chosen to employ the anachronism “teenage.” The word adolescent has been in use since the fifteenth century, but our current use of the term to refer to a very specific period of life and a very specific kind of identity makes it difficult to use the term to write about earlier contexts without implicitly calling up those newer meanings. Scholarly work on the dating of twentieth century adolescence has made earlier use of the term a glaring mis-usage. Teenage is actually a much newer term, occurring first in the 1920s. It is, it would seem, a new term that rose to name the new period of life termed adolescence, but to do so less formally, though in sometimes light contexts (clothing advertisements, for example) as well as the weighty (working with teenage orphans or gangs). The term is useful because it embeds a reference to a group of age years within which most (though not all) of the amateurs fell. It is

workforce and inhabiting an emerging life category that had yet to be anchored by high school as it is today. They were a new peer group around which institutions and social expectations had yet to be totally formed. These circumstances made printing and circulating an amateur newspaper a labor-intensive hobby worth pursuing. The amateurs could connect with others in their situation, and debate (implicitly and explicitly) the qualities that people of their age and station should possess. The amateur newspapers of the 1870s thus not only allow us a window into the experience of the newly age-conscious young people of that decade, but also provide an example of a youth-controlled public peer culture that shaped, at least for a while, the parameters of what would come to be called adolescence.

Let me begin with some description of amateur newspapers, Amateurdom, and the amateurs themselves. The newspapers produced by the amateurs of the 1870s largely include the same kinds of written material and use a standard structure. Of a four-page issue (one large sheet folded in half), the first page or two usually exhibits fiction (short stories or serials) and poetry. The creative work of the amateurs, as Paula Petrik points out, frequently emulates Oliver Optic's work and other popular fiction of the period, sometimes nearly reproducing it.¹²¹ The middle pages of most issues contain a mixture of less elevated departments: the editorials, the "exchange" column, possibly a puzzle or two, and notices or announcements. These pages show the amateur's collective sense of their peer culture most clearly and will be my main focus here.

more specific, and references the future-looking trend, of the amateurs without using the term adolescent. It is misleading because it uses a newer equivalent to adolescence to refer to an older group that did not know the term. It is, however, more specific than youth or young person which have always, as they still do, referred to an expansive and relative period of life. To compound the problem, "young person" also, according to a citation in the *OED*, comes to be equated with adolescent by 1918: "The expression 'young person' means a person under eighteen years of age who is no longer a child."

See Bledstein, "Introduction: Storytellers to the Middle Class," in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class*, edited by Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2001); *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "middle class," "teenage," and "young," accessed June 7, 2012.

¹²¹ Petrik, "The Youngest Fourth Estate," 127-30.

The last page of these issues was usually filled with advertisements from local businesses and from other amateurs, frequently advertising cheap consumer goods, writing or printing materials, other amateur papers, and the affordable printing services of industrious amateurs. The advertising section, like the middle pages, communicates a sense of life within Amateurdom by making visible the connections between papers and the connections between amateurs and their local communities.

The larger contours of Amateurdom are more difficult to ascertain. In part this is the difficulty of the archival record, which is always partial, but the ephemeral nature of the amateur papers increases the possibility that the archive is more patchy than usual. Many young people who participated in the 'Dom only published one or two issues before losing interest. The circulation of the less ambitious or less wealthy amateurs' papers was probably quite small as well, making it less likely that their papers would be preserved. The large number of papers that we do have is a result of the amateur's own archiving. The American Antiquarian Society's collection holds 50,000 issues from more than 5,500 titles stretching from 1805 into the twentieth century, published in every state except Alaska and Hawaii, and including examples from fifteen foreign countries. The Library of Amateur Journalism, assembled and preserved by active amateurs and former amateurs, was given to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Special Collections Library in 2004, and contains 38,000 amateur periodicals, 29,000 of which were printed before 1915, and a few thousand of which are foreign.¹²² Geographically, Amateurdom reached all corners of the continental United States, and even included a bit of transatlantic interchange.

¹²² Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., "Passion, Controversy and Vision: A History of the Library of Amateur Journalism" (unpublished manuscript, Memorial Day, 2003), PDF file, http://www.thefossils.org/laj_hist.pdf, 5,10, 23.

Though the scope of Amateurdom was national (even international), its regional ties were particularly important. The amateurs formed amateur press associations at the local, regional, and national levels, but the local and regional associations seem to have provided the most face-to-face contact among amateurs as well as the strongest connections amongst papers. These A.P.A.s (amateur press associations), as they were called, hosted meetings, elected their own officials, and usually chose the paper of a prominent member to be the “official organ” of the association. The annual meetings of the National Amateur Press Association (N.A.P.A.) were highly anticipated and thoroughly discussed throughout the ‘Dom, but not many amateurs could afford to attend. Fifty or so was a good turnout for the 1870s. A *St. Nicholas* article from 1882 which profiles Amateurdom devotes a significant amount of space to discussing the N.A.P.A.’s meetings and detailing the mixture of business and pleasure that those meetings entailed.¹²³

Amateurdom reflects its age-consciousness and the changing circumstances of middle-class young people through its understanding of its members. The amateurs of the 1870s seem to have always conceived of themselves as amateurs by virtue of their age. R.L. Zerbe, in his *Guide to Amateurdom* (c. 1883), explains that an amateur is “a boy editor, or boy journalist,” though “there are also ladies who are engaged as editresses,” and so an “amateur editor is a young person who publishes, monthly or semi-monthly (usually the former), a small newspaper.”¹²⁴ These young persons tended to be in their mid- to late teens. Frank Cropper’s *The Amateur Journalists’ Companion for 1873: An Interesting and Concise Guide for all Amateur Editors, Authors, and Printers*, published in Louisville, Kentucky, includes a 20-page list of amateurs which identifies each by name, nickname, age, paper title, and location. Of the 155 I recorded

¹²³ Harlan H. Ballard, “Amateur Newspapers,” *St. Nicholas* 9, no. 9 (1882), 718.

¹²⁴ R.L. Zerbe, *A Guide to Amateurdom: Being a Complete and Accurate Synopsis of Amateurdom and its Manifold Phases* (Cincinnati: Am. Book Publishing Co., c. 1883).

(about half the list), two are 11, four are 12, two are 13, six are 14, twenty-five are 15, twenty-nine are 16, thirty-two are 17, twenty-seven are 18, sixteen are 19, nine are 20, two are 21, one was 22, and one was 23. See Figure 3. Amateurdom writ large also initially excluded its aged members. In the mid-1870s, when the first group of post-1867 amateurs began aging into young adulthood, the amateurs began calling them “fossils” and debating their place in the ‘Dom. In the early 1880s, the fossils would become the most active members of Amateurdom, thus changing its character as an age-limited group (a development linked to the changes I address in the final section).

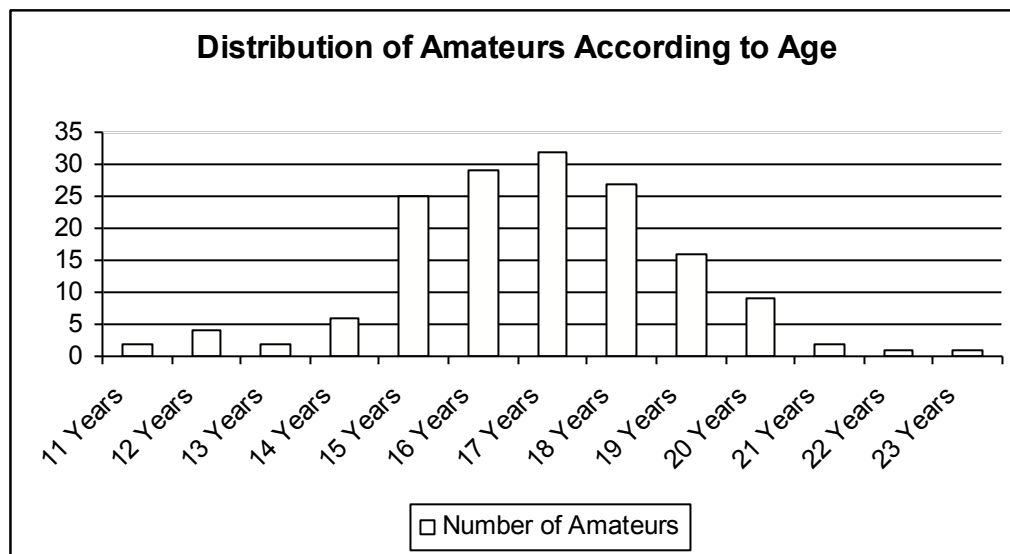


Figure 4. Amateurs’ ages as listed in Frank Cropper’s *The Amateur Journalists’ Companion for 1873*

By claiming the term as their own, the writers and publishers of amateur newspapers of the 1870s were refining the meaning that “amateur” had in the culture at large. The term “amateur” itself begins to take on its current conception, the opposite of professional, in the 1820s. The older connotation of amateur as one who does something because they love to do it, starts to slip away in the 1860s or so, as the use of the term as the opposite of “professional”

gains prominence.¹²⁵ By that definition, anyone who produced a non-professional paper at any age could be called an amateur, and the amateur journalists adopt that sense of the term again in the 1880s. For these young people in the 1870s, however, the term “amateur” came to mean something more than one who does something because they love to, or one who does something as a non-professional. Thinking of amateurs as “boy editor[s]” or “young person[s] who publish ... a small newspaper” aligns amateur with “young person” and silently elides professional and “adult.” The title of the *Youthful Enterprise* and other similarly named newspapers emphasizes this distinction by suggesting that an “enterprise” is an adult endeavor unless marked by the adjective “youthful.” By re-defining the term “amateur,” the amateur journalists conjured up a life trajectory which assumed that entry into the professional work force accompanied entry into adulthood. To say that one is now an amateur because one is not old enough to be a professional imagines the structure of a work life according to age in a particular and relatively new way.

That middle-class amateurs invented this conception of themselves is not surprising given the changing understanding of age in the second half of the nineteenth century. Howard Chudacoff argues that the 1870s were the decade in which age-consciousness as it is experienced today by those who have protected, privileged childhoods was taking root because of several large-scale social changes. He contends that “the age stratification of American society began to become more complex in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and ... the age consciousness and age grading that resulted intensified in the first three decades of the twentieth century.”¹²⁶ The gradual entry into the workforce made possible by apprenticeship systems and other less-

¹²⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “amateur,” accessed March 29, 2012. The *OED* entry for amateur happens to use the title of the *St. Nicholas* article “Amateur Newspapers” as one of its quotations for this entry, but under the definition “Done by amateurs.”

¹²⁶ Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 5.

professionalized forms of labor during the first half of the nineteenth century was disappearing thanks in no small part to the industrialization that followed the Civil War. The gradual move towards universal common (elementary) school education and the development of secondary education led schools which had welcomed wide age ranges within the same classroom before 1850 to begin dividing students into age-based groups. These changes pre-date G. Stanley Hall's work, as well as some of the recent periodizations of adolescence. Chudacoff outlines in particular the changes in the process of entering the workforce and changes in educational institutions as factors that both reflected and promoted a growing sense that populations ought to be sorted by age, and thus the idea that people in the same age group (rather than people from the same community, or with similar interests or needs) ought to identify with one another.

The rise of age-consciousness particularly affected teenaged peoples' relationships with work and school. While the young's opportunities for employment actually increased a great deal after Civil War-induced industrialization increased the availability of job openings for unskilled laborers, mandatory schooling laws proliferated at the same time. "By 1885, sixteen out of thirty-eight states had compulsory education laws, and by 1900, thirty-one states required school attendance from age eight to fourteen."¹²⁷ So while the number of people under age 15 working for pay swelled after 1870, by 1914 those numbers had dwindled thanks to the "minimum-age legislation linked, in most cases, to education requirements" passed by all states but one.¹²⁸ Debates over the relationship of childhood to paid labor are partly responsible for the reduction of young laborers, as are the increasing number of working class immigrants entering the country

¹²⁷ Alec Fyfe, "Coming to Terms with Child Labor: The Historical Role of Education," in *The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey*, ed. Hugh D. Hindman (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 51.

¹²⁸ Fyfe, "Coming to Terms," 51.

at the same time.¹²⁹ The number of high schools in the nation was relatively low during these decades, however, and only a small percentage of American youths attended high school. “The number of high schools in the United States had increased from 325 in 1860 to 800 in 1870, but they served a small minority of the public-school population. In 1875, high school enrollment was below 25,000.”¹³⁰ By 1890, only about seven percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds were enrolled in secondary schools, public or private, and by 1900 only eleven percent of that age group were enrolled in secondary schools, with only ten to twenty percent of those enrolled graduating.¹³¹ The move away from child labor for the working class that began in the 1870s and the moves toward universal secondary education for the middle and upper classes highlights the degree to which attitudes about the teenage years, education, and work had changed. Middle and upper class amateurs would have been among the earliest to experience the effects of these changes, including the increasing incidence of secondary education or at least the expectation that the teen years should be spent in study.

L. Frank Baum (1856-1919), author of the *Wizard of Oz* series, is a telling example. A member of a prominent Syracuse family with a very successful entrepreneurial father, Baum encountered amateur journalism at a moment in his teenage years when he was not attending a school but was still expected to be learning. He was sent to Peekskill Military Academy at age twelve after having been kept home because of a heart condition only to return home two years later after experiencing a heart attack. At fourteen then, while being privately tutored at home, Baum saw a toy press in a printer’s shop which his father purchased for him. Baum biographer Katharine M. Rogers estimates that the press and equipment would have cost between \$15 and

¹²⁹ Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 63-4.

¹³⁰ Catharine Reef, *Education and Learning in America* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 62.

¹³¹ Reef, *Education and Learning*, 101.

\$50. Baum and his younger brother began producing the *Rose Lawn Home Journal*, named for the family estate east of Syracuse, in October 1870.¹³² L. Frank Baum and his brother Harry C. Baum appear in the listing mentioned above in Frank Cropper's *The Amateur Journalists' Companion for 1873* for a subsequent paper, called the *Empire*:

Baum, Harry C. "Fritz." Age 14. *Empire*. Syracuse, NY
Baum, L. Frank. "L'Auteur." Age 17. *Empire*. Syracuse, N.Y.¹³³

That same year, the Baum brothers were enrolled in Syracuse Classical School, however, and according to Katharine M. Rogers they collaborated on the *Empire* with a schoolmate, Thomas G. Alvord Jr., "a son of the lieutenant governor, who grew up to be a distinguished newspaperman."¹³⁴ The toy press seems to have functioned as a respectable, educational hobby for these boys while they moved in and out of secondary schools, one which was supported by their father (who even contributed "the first installments of a 'History of the Oil Company,' describing the beginning of the petroleum industry in Pennsylvania" of which he was a prominent part).¹³⁵

On another end of the economic scale, but motivated by similar circumstances, the Lukens sisters of Brinton, Pennsylvania began a paper in 1870, first hand-writing it, then printing, then selling subscriptions, until in 1873, when the girls sold their subscription list, they had over 1,000 paying readers. Louisa May Alcott, whose *Pickwick Papers* in *Little Women* had inspired the Lukens's literary efforts, even wrote a story that she allowed the girls to publish

¹³² Katharine Rogers, *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz* (New York: St. Martin's, 2002), 4.

¹³³ Frank Cropper, *The Amateur Journalists' Companion for 1873: An Interesting and Concise Guide for all Amateur Editors, Authors, and Printers* (Louisville: Frank Cropper, 1873), 49.

¹³⁴ Rogers, *L. Frank Baum*, 5.

¹³⁵ Rogers, *L. Frank Baum*, 4.

exclusively in their paper.¹³⁶ For a *St. Nicholas* article about the Lukens sisters and their newspaper in 1920, Carrie Lukens Smith explained the genesis of their periodical:

[Brinton had] no public High Schools and not very satisfactory elementary schools. We two older girls were accustomed to attend the Academy in a nearby town. Tuition was high and one year found us without enough funds...to cover food, clothes, *and* school for the five little girls so school had to be dropped and lessons at home substituted. We faced a lonely Winter. There was little or no congenial social life in the neighborhood and we missed school-life.¹³⁷

The Lukens sisters were kept from school by lack of funds, but their amateur paper had a function similar to that of the Baum brothers' papers. It was an educational pastime that allowed them to both fill their idle hours and supplement the kind of social life they had experienced at school. The Lukens sisters were even involved in the A.P.A.s, attending the 1871 convention of the N.A.P.A. in Pittsburgh.¹³⁸

Though the Baum brothers and Lukens sisters are only a few among many, the circumstances that led to their engagement with amateur journalism suggest that people in their age group had needs and desires that required a new pastime. Expecting, and expected, to associate with others of the same age, not yet enveloped by compulsory high schooling but now considered too young to begin an adult career, the amateurs made use of the newly available toy presses to serve the social and educational needs that their new age-based identity created. The nature of their collective response to this situation, however, supports the idea that the material and social conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century made peer-to-peer communications on a mass scale possible. Scholars have begun to address the ways in which the

¹³⁶ Daniel Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*: Louisa May Alcott and the Lukens Sisters' Family Newspaper," *Resources for American Literary Study* 30 (2005): 173.

¹³⁷ Qtd. in Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*," 161-2.

¹³⁸ Mentioned by Thomas G. Harrison *The Career and Reminiscences of an Amateur Journalist, and a History of Amateur Journalism* (Indianapolis: Thos. G. Harrison, 1883), 33-34, and Shealy, "The Growth of *Little Things*," 166.

young communicated with one another, particularly through periodicals, in the late nineteenth century, but they have yet to appreciate the scope of those cultures, a scope which the depth and breadth of Amateurdom makes clear. Robin Bernstein, for example, argues that children communicated their understanding of race to one another by writing about their play for periodicals (she cites a group of disturbingly cheerful letters published in a Minneapolis newspaper in which white children describe their lynching play).¹³⁹ Older children and young people also wrote in to magazines like *St. Nicholas*, communicating with one another within the rising generationism that Angela Sorby identifies, and responding to the professionalization of childhood that Anna Redcay documents.¹⁴⁰ The amateurs, however, took the construction of peer culture to an entirely different level, creating what we might call a youth public that functioned as a forum within which the amateurs could connect to one another and try out new modes of self-representation.

The only full-length article on Amateurdom to date articulates the amateurs' relationship to the adult public sphere during the 1870s but does not fully explore the amateurs' use of their public to formulate and experiment with self-representation. Instead, Paula Petrik structures her discussion of the amateur journalists' writing through its connections to adult writing and debate by considering how the amateurs borrowed and remodeled Oliver Optic's plots and by linking the amateurs' discussions of race and gender parity to those topics' importance in adult publics of the time. She concludes, much as I do here, that "the literary tyros of the 1870s showed themselves to be active participants in their own socialization as they confronted the issues of

¹³⁹ Robin Bernstein, "Children's Books, Dolls, and the Performance of Race; or, The Possibility of Children's Literature," *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 166-7.

¹⁴⁰ See Angela Sorby, "A Visit from *St. Nicholas*: The Poetics of Peer Culture, 1872-1900," *American Studies* 39, no. 1 (1998): 59-74, and Anna M. Redcay, "'Live to learn and learn to live': The St. Nicholas League and the Vocation of Childhood," *Children's Literature* 39, no. 1 (2011): 58-84. Sarah Lindey also speaks to this issue in "Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Story Papers," *American Periodicals* 21, no. 1 (2011): 72-88.

their time.”¹⁴¹ However, in highlighting the amateurs’ debates of topics common to adult publics of the time, Petrik overlooks the debates unique to the ‘Dom which distinguish its discourse from debates within other groups. By emphasizing their relationship to the concerns of the adult public sphere, Petrik neglects the amateurs’ relationship to their own needs and desires at a historical moment that was putting particularly acute demands on their abilities to reconcile their ages and their identities.

Karen Sánchez-Eppler chooses a surprising archive with which to argue for a youth public in “Practicing for Print: The Hale Children’s Manuscript Libraries.” The Hale children produced small handmade books of fiction and a newspaper publicizing their books as well as pieces that laid out the rules governing their circulating library. Though I do not dispute that these children instantiated a kind of public for their work, this archive seems to be an example of what Nancy Fraser calls a “weak public”: a public “whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation and does not also encompass decision-making.”¹⁴² Though the Hale children’s library was unusual in that it solicited works from readers, the Hale children governed their library themselves—their public did not participate.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Sánchez-Eppler’s exegesis of the Hale children’s books highlights the thematic touchstones which contributed certain ideas to their reading public, such as their position on the role of fantasy, or their remarkable conception of the interanimation of autonomy and dependence.¹⁴⁴ These activities constitute opinion formation, in Fraser’s terms, an activity of publics that can be powerful, but only indirectly.

¹⁴¹ Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate,” 142.

¹⁴² Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 2004), 534.

¹⁴³ Karen Sánchez-Eppler, “Practicing for Print: The Hale Children’s Manuscript Libraries,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 2 (2008): 191-192.

¹⁴⁴ Sánchez-Eppler, “Practicing for Print,” 201-202, 204.

“Strong publics” on the other hand participate in both opinion formation and decision-making, and “as the terms ‘strong public’ and ‘weak public’ suggest, the force of public opinion is strengthened when a body representing it is empowered to translate such ‘opinion’ into authoritative decisions.”¹⁴⁵ Amateurism resembles a “strong public” in that its editorials focus much of their energy on forming opinions that then influenced the decisions made by the local, regional, and national A.P.A.s. The A.P.A.s could not create rules with the force of law, of course, but by creating these organizations the amateur journalists created a youth public within which their opinions could exert a more significant amount of force. I do not wish to erect a false hierarchy here, however, by suggesting that the ‘Dom and strong publics are more authentic or more important than something like the Hale children’s library or other weak publics. In fact, one could say that older youths had more resources at their disposal from which they could assemble a peer public and thus that something like the Hale children’s circulating library is all the more important or impressive. What I would like to suggest instead is that the amateurs illustrate that our understanding of public youth culture can be much more ambitious than the example of the Hale children or Petrik’s conceptualization of Amateurism allows. Imagining Amateurism as a public which came into existence because of the needs of young people allows us to understand it as a youth public that existed to define some of the terms through which the new age-based identities of young people would be constructed by young people themselves.

¹⁴⁵ Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 535.

4.2 SELF-REPRESENTATION IN AMATEURDOM

In her December 1876 issue of the *Youthful Enterprise*, “editress” Libbie Adams displays a particularly acute anxiety about her readers’ belief that she can indeed publish her paper. The *Youthful Enterprise* itself is impressive. Running to ten pages, it includes a broader range of materials than most. In particular the “Boys and Girls’ Corner” (which reprints the letters and literary efforts of her readers and is mediated by Adams’s pseudonym “Nettie Sparkle”) makes clear that she has a wide and enthusiastic readership. In this December issue, however, Adams reprints an affidavit attesting to her age and abilities in response to an accusation from another paper, *Our Free Lance*, that someone else was publishing her paper for her. “Girls of fourteen are not supposed to ‘[sic]print, edit and publish an amateur paper as large as the *Enterprise*. Queer, isn’t it?”¹⁴⁶ The accusation initiated a string of correspondence between Adams and the editor of *Our Free Lance*, which she reprinted alongside the following affidavit:

1st. *BE IT KNOWN*, that L. LIBBIE ADAMS, of the City of Elmira, Chemung County, and State of New York, on being sworn, *depose*th, and *saith*, that she is the editor and proprietor of a ten(10)pp., thirty(30)column publication, entitled “*The Youthful Enterprise*,” now published at No. 400 High St., Elmira County and State, aforesaid.

2nd. That *all* the *Composition Work, Revising, &c.*, of said paper is performed by her, unaided or assisted by any other person or persons.

3d. That from January 1st., 1874 up to May 1st. 1876, the press work also, was performed by herself, on an eighth medium, hand-inking Star press; and since that date, on a quarter medium Job Press (Gordon) by assistants.

4th., That her exact age is fifteen (15) years, nine (9) months and twenty-six (26) days.

5th., That she started said paper on Jan. 1st., 1874, in the city of Carbondale, Luzerne Co., Pa., and removed to Elmira, April 1st, 1876, where said paper is now issued in the manner above recorded.

To all of which she now subscribes and makes oath this 20th. day of November, 1876.

Signed, L. LIBBIE ADAMS.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ *Youthful Enterprise*, December 1876, 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Youthful Enterprise*, 6

Adams also included “A Testimonial” signed by six prominent adult men which testified to her abilities and her editorship of the *Enterprise*. In the correspondence between Adams and *Our Free Lance*, it is clear that Adams’s ability to do the print composition and press work is in question, but in her affidavit Adams takes the opportunity to defend *all* her activities. She is “editor and proprietor,” performs “*all the Composition Work, Revising, &c.*” and used to do all the press work, though now she has assistants. She confirms the run of the paper and “her exact age” of “fifteen (15) years, nine (9) months and twenty-six (26) days.” In short, in response to a rude comment in *Our Free Lance*, Adams not only writes back—she marshals all the official and legal resources at her disposal to prove that someone of her age and gender is capable of putting together a paper as impressive as the *Youthful Enterprise*.

In one way, Adams’s vigorous response is unsurprising. As a girl participating successfully in a mostly male public, she faced significant openly-voiced opposition, as Petrik documents.¹⁴⁸ In another, however, Adams’s mode of response highlights the way in which the amateurs tended to assert their ages and identities with heightened vigor and defensiveness. The amateur papers are endlessly preoccupied with reputation, honor, and self-presentation, and they frequently reference (or refute) age as an index of ability. In other words, the amateurs were preoccupied with constructing a convincing age-based *ethos* in their writing. They not only demonstrate their abilities through the act of putting together a respectable paper, they also insist on and inflate the strength of their characters by using highly formal language (and genres) as well as polemic to represent themselves. The contemporary concerns about the character of newspaper editors, about the reading of newspapers, and about the reading habits of the young partly produced a situation in which young newspaper-writers might feel defensive about their

¹⁴⁸ Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate,” 135.

reputations.¹⁴⁹ It stands to reason, though I do not address this here, that the practices of self-representation utilized by adult newspaper-writers would have influenced the amateurs' writing too. However, the particularly polemical and even aggressive quality of the amateurs' representations not just of their ideas, but of their imagined selves suggests that in the 1870s amateurs had another reason to cultivate bombastic or officious self-representation. Michael Warner articulates the notion that publics not only host or foster discussion, but they also ask their members to write or behave in certain ways—that collectively the members of a public imagine a world for themselves and imagine the identities possible within that world.¹⁵⁰ The style of the amateurs' public discourse was a response to their experience of the historical moment when middle-class youths were being increasingly infantilized by the growing length of the “idle” years of dependence. Adopting and over-deploying professional modes of self-representation and showing keenness to defend one's ability or assert one's identity helped them use their public to imagine a world where they were not so infantilized and where their activities enjoyed as much importance as adult professional work.

An editorial dated the same month as Libbie Adams' affidavit in Richard M. Truax and J. A. Fynes Jr.'s paper, *Idle Hours*, displays a concern about *ethos* similar to Adams' and illustrates the kind of polemic common to amateur defenses of reputation. Truax had apparently been recently criticized by “innumerable fly-by-night sheets, who with vituperative tongue spent their malicious spite upon” him. The co-editors returned their “thanks to those gentlemen who have continued to favor [them] with their journals, even after [they] had been blackmailed and ‘trod

¹⁴⁹ See Yale President Noah Porter's *Books and Reading; Or, What Books Shall I Read and How Shall I Read Them?* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871) for an influential contemporary articulation of the influence a newspaper editor's character had on his paper, and thus on his readers.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” in *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002), 114-124.

upon.” After pledging to adhere to “the principles of Truth and Honesty in every sense of the word,” Truax and Fynes attack those amateurs who value the reputations of others too lightly.

The injustice which certain ‘amateurs’ do their brethern [*sic*] is unaccountable. If one amateur unknown to another be pronounced dishonest, or if the slightest whisperings be heard in regard to his character, then those petty traffickers take up the cry and hail it through the fraternity, bartering the reputation of the (supposed) offender. The progress of such unheard-of maliciousness should be impeded, ere it prove disastrous. For because of a brief delay in payment (sometimes of a debt not amounting to 10 cents) shall an honest person’s reputation be impaired to satiate the morbid appetite of some puppy? No! most emphatically, *No!!* An instance occurred recently when a prominent amateur was foisted through the columns of several diminutive, ink-besmeared sheets, and what for? Simply because a ten-cent debt was neglected for a couple of days. Let us have no more of this, we say. The reputations of such amateurs as Barler and Truax are beyond reproach. Mark you, Bertron, and Hallock.¹⁵¹

Truax and Fynes exhibit an anxiety about reputation similar to Adams’s while at the same time communicating a sense of the kind of amateur they believe one ought to be. They imagine that instead of capitalizing on rumor, amateurs should suppress it, and that when rumor arises, they should ignore it rather than feed it, thus constructing a gentlemanly respect for and reluctance to sully the reputations of others. They also mention honesty twice and dishonesty once in these lines, suggesting both that honesty was the character flaw at issue in these attacks and that honesty is part of the honor code of the amateurs.

Implicitly, Truax and Fynes’ editorial communicates other expectations as well: that one ought to vigorously defend one’s reputation and that such defenses ought to represent the battle over reputation as high drama. This quality of Truax and Fynes’ response, as well as of Adams’ response, speaks powerfully to the amateurs’ sense of their collective enterprise and to their sense of who they were, and could be, in writing. Their defensiveness and officiousness comes across so strongly that it seems to suggest intentional irony, that the amateurs meant to send up this sort of obsession over reputation, though it is unclear to what degree the amateurs

¹⁵¹ *Idle Hours*, November 1876, 4.

themselves were aware of this potential. What appears certain is the sense that these papers are highly performative, that Amateurdom was brought into being in order to provide a space for the performance of identities that insisted on their own importance and that borrowed from professional adult (and thus sanctioned and important) means of self-representation. Warner articulates the issue of world-making as an issue of style. The fact that public discussion is often understood as rational discussion obscures the degree to which public discourse imagines and sets out to actualize a social entity with specific characteristics: “Public discourse says not only ‘Let a public exist’ but ‘Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way.’”¹⁵² The amateurs’ style articulates a vision of the world as they would like it to be, a vision of themselves that they find satisfying. That this style is bombastic, simultaneously petty and ambitious, and deeply defensive suggests that the conditions of their historical moment put them in a position which made these characteristics meaningful and satisfying. The composition of amateur self-representations speaks to the amateurs’ class position (professionalism and officiousness are particularly tied to being middle-class), but also to the way in which they were negotiating the demands of what would soon come to be called adolescence.

4.3 CHANGES IN AMATEURDOM

There is evidence to suggest that the amateurs’ perspective on their bombastic style of self-representation began to change in the early 1880s. Prominent amateurs and prominent amateur publications began voicing criticism of the earlier amateurs and their mode of writing. One

¹⁵² Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 114.

important amateur in particular, as I will show, suggests that such modes of writing, often in the service of amateur campaigns for office, “cast[] a shade of ‘boyishness’” on Amateurdom, thereby connecting overly earnest defenses of reputation with immaturity and undesirable youthfulness. This change in perspective comes about during a period when amateurs were remaining active in, or at least connected to, Amateurdom longer into their early adulthoods. These older amateurs tended to have more success winning positions in the amateur press associations because they were older, more experienced, and had more disposable income, and they thus exerted a significant influence over amateur debates. Within this new dynamic, the prevailing sense of the purpose of amateur journalism changed and with it the amateurs’ modes of self-presentation. The amateurs of the 1880s begin to describe their purpose as one of education through self-cultivation and literary achievement. Concurrently, they begin adopting more elevated modes of writing. “The only thing that brings Amateurdom into repute as an Educational Institution,” writes the author of the “boyishness” line, “is the facility it affords for the promulgation of literary tastes among the youth of the land.”¹⁵³ This new, clear purpose and its elevated style supplanted what had been a much less clearly stated, more multifarious purpose in the previous decade. The amateurs of the 1870s, though they probably learned many things from publishing their papers, had not characterized their efforts as educational, nor had they given so much emphasis to literary taste. They seem to have participated for the pleasure of participating, of having an audience, of asserting themselves on paper. Their style of self-representation supported this purpose by demonstrating the importance of identity, reputation, and ability in Amateurdom. The new regime of older amateurs in the 1880s, however, and their

¹⁵³ *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881, 1.

new purpose for amateur publishing initiated a change in amateur style and a negative attitude towards youthful displays of irreverence and overwrought self-assertion.

The career of one prominent amateur, Thomas G. Harrison (b. 1860), illustrates these changes particularly well. Harrison was a prolific and well-known amateur journalist; his paper, the *Welcome Visitor/Visitor*, ran from 1876 to at least 1882, and he was elected president of the N.A.P.A. in 1880. In “A.P.A. Typical” (1878), an editorial published in the *Welcome Visitor*, Harrison advocates the kind of writing performed by Adams and Truax and Fynes above, particularly when it is in the service of amateur campaigns for office (e.g. “politics”). He writes:

Without our A.P.A’s we would be without Politics, and without Politics our little ‘Dom would amount to but little. No, no; we doubt not in the least that if by a spontaneous move politics were banished from our ranks, the ‘Dom would truly to “all to pieces.” Why there is one thing which proves our assertion alone. Where would our idealess brother editors obtain the subjects for the [c]ompilation of their editorials, if we were without Politics? Their readers would undoubtedly be deprived of this pleasure or, worse yet, be inflicted with such soul-harrowing themes as “Spring,” “Degeneration,” “Swearing,” etc. It may be that they (the readers) would relish this better, but for our own part we advocate the discussion of politics if only for the purpose of giving our go-ahead youngsters a chance to spread themselves, or in fact, as Lord Dundreary saith, “make infernal athes of themselves.”¹⁵⁴

Harrison’s remarks here are particularly interesting for their articulation of the identity of Amateurdom, for the way in which they encourage a particular amateur style, and for the way they oppose amateur writing and school writing. Harrison articulates an identity for Amateurdom and implies a sense of purpose for it by insisting that “Politics” and the A.P.A.s are the glue that holds Amateurdom together. The ‘Dom “would amount to but little” or “would truly ‘all to pieces”” without its politics—without its sources of common conversation, without its most important reason to continue writing. His final sentence encourages a style for engaging in politics: “youngsters” ought to “spread themselves,” or even ““make infernal athes of

¹⁵⁴ *Welcome Visitor*, June 1878, 1.

themselves.’” Lord Dundreary was the lisping, malapropism-prone British fop of the popular play *Our American Cousin* (1858). Dundreary’s disapproval registers a kind of out-of-touch adult disapproval of youths’ self-assertion or intervention. By referencing Dundreary, Harrison supports the kind of style Adams and Truax and Fynes adopted. He contrasts this kind of writing with “soul-harrowing” themes, naming a kind of writing assignment common to the period (and which, it bears mentioning, educators themselves were beginning to criticize as well).¹⁵⁵ Though Harrison’s mention of theme-writing references an idea of education distinct from the belletristic, literary cultivation that amateurs of the 1880s would advocate, the tension between amateur journalism and school in these lines suggests that the amateurs imagined that their newspaper writing was beyond or above what they would be asked to do for school and that school-writing would not prove nearly as stimulating as their discussions of politics.

By 1881, Harrison’s perspective on these issues had changed drastically. In that year, Harrison would turn twenty-one. He was also occupied enough with work to have only nights and weekends open for pursuing his amateur journalism.¹⁵⁶ At that point, Harrison writes in his paper that his “views upon amateur politics [had] undergone a radical change.” He declares, “we think it would be for the welfare of Amateurdome were Politics entirely eschewed from its column. The only thing that brings Amateurdome into repute as an Educational Institution is the facility it affords for the promulgation of literary tastes among the youth of the land; that which commends it to the views of a discriminating public is its literature.”¹⁵⁷ He goes on to detail the pernicious effects of politics, arguing that they “cast a shade of ‘boyishness’” on the ‘Dom, and

¹⁵⁵ Insisting that students should write from their own experience, textbook writers like Albert Raub, author of *Practical Rhetoric and Composition* (1887) told students to leave “such subjects as Evolution, Freedom of the Will, and the like to such as understand them more thoroughly” (qtd. in Lucille Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition’s Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 31-32).

¹⁵⁶ “Once More,” *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881.

¹⁵⁷ *Welcome Visitor*, December 1881, 1.

that “hot-blooded” teens’ love of political furor causes them to lose sight of their literary pursuits. In these lines, Harrison articulates a new identity for Amateurdom, valorizes literariness as an object in writing, and shows that this new notion about amateurs has changed his own style of writing. Amateurdom ought to be an “Educational Institution,” he argues—a starkly different view from his earlier notion that it ought to be held together by politics. This new conception of Amateurdom celebrates “the promulgation of literary tastes” and the writing of “literature,” where earlier he had advocated “youngsters ... spread[ing] themselves.” And his earlier, slightly flamboyant tone, illustrated by his use of commonplaces, of sensational descriptors like “soul-harrowing,” and his reference to Lord Dundreary, had been replaced with seriousness and formality in word choice and sentence structure. What’s more, as I pointed out in above, he links politics to “boyishness,” thereby suggesting that he understood “making [an] infernal ath” of oneself to be a mode of writing particularly prevalent amongst boys and not suited for older amateurs like himself. By arguing that all of amateurdom ought to orient itself toward more staid literary pursuits, he implies that teenaged amateurs ought to be guided away from such writing as well.

There is evidence to suggest that Amateurdom did indeed move in this new direction, and changes to the postal code in 1879 which increased the cost of circulating an amateur paper from one penny a pound to one penny a paper surely played a part in the rise of older amateurs and widespread changes in amateur writing.¹⁵⁸ Arguments for a more reserved mode of amateur writing like Harrison’s, however, register a very early version of the antagonism towards

¹⁵⁸ The *Typo*, an amateur paper from Boston, provides the basis for these sums as well as several revealing editorials on the effects of the rise in postage on amateurdom. See the *Typo*, May 1879.

adolescents which persists into the present.¹⁵⁹ Though adolescence appears more as a structure of feeling than a well-defined identity category in the 1870s and early 1880s, the large structural social changes that would eventually produce that category were already impacting the way middle-class American youths spent their time and understood themselves. For those who chose to publish an amateur newspaper, the conditions of teenaged existence seem to have encouraged a mode of writing and self-representation that favored the highly assertive, nearly ironic defense of one's character. This bombastic style, and the move in the 1880s away from that style, suggests that the teenaged amateurs of the 1870s were engaged in a project of world-making, and even of self-making, that linked self-assertion to youth and defensiveness to being young. Their style suggests that the particular circumstances of youth in that period made these kinds of writing and self-representation desirable, satisfying, and sustainable. That they managed to bring a youth public into being with this character and to sustain it for over a decade opens up the possibilities for understanding the way young people responded to the conditions of their age group in the post-Civil War period and for examining the kinds of collectives young people are capable of producing.

¹⁵⁹ Gabrielle Owen locates the earliest negative connotations for the word in the 1860s and 70s. See Gabrielle Owen, "Adolescence as Narrative," in "Queer Theory and the Logic of Adolescence," 16-31.

5.0 GRAPHING THE ARCHIVES OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS

Amateur newspapers were small periodicals printed and circulated first by youths after the Civil War, in a public they named “Amateurdom,” and later by an increasingly aged group of active amateur journalists. Small in size, printed by aficionados within a community of their own making, amateur newspapers constitute a rich repository of the reading and writing practices of mostly white, male youths in late nineteenth-century America.¹⁶⁰ These materials have been preserved in an undetermined number of collections, many of which are listed on the website of The Fossils, the organization devoted to preserving the history of the pastime. David Tribby, a prominent member, has uncovered 12 large collections holding between 1,000 and 5,500 titles and 11 other smaller collections in the U.S. and New Zealand.^{161,162} This project deals with seven

¹⁶⁰ I have used this archive to explore the literacy practices of late-century youths and the creation of nineteenth-century youth publics, Lisa Gitelman has contextualized the archive in relation to late century job printing, and Lara Langer Cohen has recently used the amateur newspapers to demonstrate that Emily Dickinson’s poetry was read and reprinted in the 1880s, much earlier than had been previously understood. See Jessica Isaac, “Youthful Enterprises: Amateur Newspapers and the Pre-History of Adolescence, 1867-1883,” *American Periodicals* 22, no. 2 (2012): 158-177; Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Lara Langer Cohen, “Emily Dickinson’s Teenage Fancub,” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 23, no. 1 (2014): 32-45.

¹⁶¹ Originally a name for those who had aged out of the hobby but still took an interest in its organizations, “fossil” as a term dates from the mid-1870s. The Fossils was officially established in 1904 and “is a non-profit organization whose purposes are to stimulate interest in and preserve the history of independent publishing, either separate from or organized in the hobby known as “Amateur Journalism,” and to foster the practices of amateur journalism.” See <http://www.thefossils.org/index.html> and Truman Joseph Spencer, *The History of Amateur Journalism* (New York: The Fossils, Inc., 1957), 98.

¹⁶² My own searching has turned up a few additional collections as well. Until the last year or so, knowledge of their existence was scarce though many have recently come online. Even so roughly a fourth of those listed on The

collections, a majority of those that focus on the nineteenth century “golden age” of Amateurdome. In what follows, I use these multiple collections, what I call the *interarchive* of amateur newspapers, to develop methods that reframe selection as a process of data creation.¹⁶³ These methods intervene in book history’s longstanding materialist approach to archives in order to offer alternative methods for understanding the relationship between an archive or a set of archives and the historical textual field that they were assembled to represent.

Calls to understand archives, databases, and data as constructed, not transcendent, are well established in both book history and the digital humanities. This essay works through the methodological ramifications of those calls in order to draw attention to the problems of selection inherent in humanist studies of material objects. This problem is endemic to literary studies, book history, and historical literacy studies, where the close reading and historical contextualization of individual artifacts can so easily obscure the question of selection—why these artifacts and not others? Without accounting for selection, the relationship of artifacts to the field of examples from which they were drawn remains vague at best.¹⁶⁴ Franco Moretti’s criticism of literature scholars who have been working with a “minimal fraction of the literary field” in order to generalize about literature and culture as well as the proliferation of digital repositories have motivated a number of projects that deal with large corpora in order to

Fossils’ website are uncataloged or still in process. Many more are listed on the Fossils’ website here: <http://www.thefossils.org/collections.html>.

¹⁶³ This project deals with the Library of Amateur Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Special Collections, the Amateur Newspaper Collection at the American Antiquarian Society, the Hyman Bradofsky Collection at the Bancroft Library at the University of California-Berkeley, the Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology, the Amateur Newspaper Collection at the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Amateur Newspaper Collection at the National Library of New Zealand, and the Perkins Collection at the McArthur Public Library in Biddeford, Maine.

¹⁶⁴ Simon Eliot defines the problem of “individual studies” well when he writes that any number of them “would not be sufficient, because you could never be certain that you had assembled a reliable sample that did justice at large to the particular period or area that you were studying.” Simon Eliot, “Very Necessary but Not Quite Sufficient: A Personal View of Quantitative Analysis in Book History,” *Book History* 5, no. 1 (2002): 284.

characterize a large textual field. These projects, while exciting, only bring more sharply into focus the need for methods that critically assess the influence of the selection practices that created their corpora.

Data is a useful term for re-thinking selection because it directs attention to its own constructed nature. Daniel Rosenberg traces the rhetorical origins of the word “data,” “the plural of the Latin word *datum*, which itself is the neuter past participle of the verb *dare*, to give. A ‘datum’ in English, then, is something given in an argument, something taken for granted.”¹⁶⁵ Data do not aspire to the truth claims of fact or evidence—data are instead rhetorical, an aggregation of “little bits” of information assembled expressly to serve as the grounds for an argument.”¹⁶⁶ Data are always constructed, always accumulated through processes that render them more or less suitable to the argument at hand. If archives are a source of data, then that data’s creation story deserves attention in the scholarship built upon it. Put another way, treating archival research as data creation is a powerful heuristic for articulating the “representativeness” of a sample, its relationship to the larger historical textual field of which it is a part.

To work with the archives of Amateurdom, I created methods that focus on the archives themselves as material, constructed objects and that used their construction as a guide to creating research data. To represent the large scale, I graphed the holdings of multiple collections together. Using the “biographies” of the collections, to use Simon Eliot’s term, and comparing multiple collections to one another, I determined that these graphs roughly approximate the changing size and shape of Amateurdom between 1870 and 1890. Then, after initial sampling and reading throughout the collection, I developed a method for classifying a sample of amateur

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Rosenberg, “Data Before the Fact,” in *“Raw Data” Is an Oxymoron*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013), 18.

¹⁶⁶ Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson, “Introduction,” in *“Raw Data” Is an Oxymoron*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013), 8.

newspapers, reading every issue of every paper published in Massachusetts and Missouri in 1879 that was included in the Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ) held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Special Collections.¹⁶⁷ I selected those states and that year carefully, using my graphs of the collections and particular strengths in the LAJ. These methods are particularly suited to the amateur newspapers because these materials resist representativeness; they demand to be understood together as a whole. The history of Amateuerdom also provides a rich arena for questions of selection because its textual field is large, unusually well-defined, and multiply represented by many extant archives. These characteristics made it especially generative for methodological innovations that would travel well to other objects of study.

In the first section below, I provide the theoretical basis for my approach to archival work and book history. In the second section, I describe the process of graphing Amateuerdom as a whole and I use collection histories to interpret those graphs' relationship to the original textual field. In the third section, I explain how, by employing procedures that lightened the influence of my own expectations on the outcomes of my reading, I uncovered an alternate understanding of amateur journalists' motivations for engaging in the hobby. I show that the use of representative examples chosen for their prominence in important conversations and controversies within Amateuerdom has obscured the range of the amateurs' investments in publishing a paper. Using the 1880 U.S. Census and the sample of amateur papers from 1879, I show that lower-middle class amateurs participated in the hobby to gain a more secure foothold in the middle class and that their motivation has been overlooked because of the assumption that amateur journalists tended to be more privileged. In sum, by alternately constructing archival data to approximate

¹⁶⁷ I began working with archives of amateur newspapers by visiting the largest known collection at the American Antiquarian Society in 2009; I published an article based on that trip in 2012 (see note 160). In 2013 I returned to the archive, spending a month with the Library of Amateur Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I also visited, very briefly, the collection held by the Library Company of Philadelphia in 2013.

the original textual field and choose and interpret a sample of texts, I allowed a different narrative about who the amateurs were and why they participated in Amateurdom to emerge.

5.1 ARCHIVES AS DATA

[U]ntil we have a better theory of how to manage our superabundant evidence, we ought to make our practices and methods of selection more clear.

Maurice S. Lee, *J19* Forum, "Evidence and the Archive" ¹⁶⁸

The epistemological and methodological questions raised by digital archives have turned many scholars' attention towards historiography and "the archive" writ large. Recent scholarship on digital archives and databases has enabled scholars to see physical archives anew and to reconsider the kind of evidence that they represent. This turn towards materiality and method, however, has raised concerns among literary scholars in particular who insist on attention to the mediated nature of historical evidence and the use of hermeneutic interpretation alongside "flat" forms of quantitative data.¹⁶⁹ However, quantitative book history and the digital humanities have long acknowledged the interdependence of data and interpretation, the large scale and the small, demonstrating the possibilities for scholarly work that pays attention to both. In this section, I contend with the difficulty of integrating these approaches in order to develop methods that

¹⁶⁸ Maurice S. Lee, "Falsifiability, Confirmation Bias, and Textual Promiscuity," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 2, no. 1 (2014): 171.

¹⁶⁹ On the mediated nature of evidence, see Brian Connolly, "Against Accumulation," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 2, no. 1 (2014): 172–79. On the use of hermeneutics alongside data, see Carrie Hyde and Joseph Rezek, "Introduction: The Aesthetics of Archival Difference," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 2, no. 1 (2014): 155–62.

attempt to represent a large scale while critically interpreting the data that makes that representation possible. I address two parallel limitations of data creation: the losses produced by archive creation and the losses produced by sample or corpus creation. I argue that these losses must be and can be accounted for in large-scale work with textual fields. I then briefly outline the methods I developed to account for and ameliorate these losses in order to represent Amateurdom at scale.

As sources of data, archives present challenges unlike, for example, a flowing stream or a set of research subjects.¹⁷⁰ Archives are complex assemblages of texts, objects, catalogs, and finding aids, mediated by librarians, archivists, and collectors with a range of investments, created sometimes all at once, but more often piecemeal over a long period of time. Creating data from an archive to support a research project requires creating usable data from near data, creating a quantifiable representation of an already mediated representation of a historical phenomenon. This crucial middle step of recognizing and contending with the multiple layers of mediation put into play by an archive is often minimized, both in projects that focus on a few selected examples and in projects that quantify large-scale databases of archival materials. Lev Manovich writes that data do “not just exist, ... they have to be 'generated.' Data need to be imagined *as* data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base.”¹⁷¹ An archive, an assemblage of texts and objects organized by one or several archival librarians, functions already as a data set, a selective representation of historic events that has been imagined *as* a representation. Making data from that data creates a double remove between

¹⁷⁰ I use the more capacious term “archive” here, rather than the technical term “collection,” because of its currency in discussions of method and to highlight the abstract, conceptual work that the term performs. “Collections” are discreet and nameable, while archives are both actual repositories and the larger set of materials preserved to represent a historical phenomenon that weighs on the researcher’s imagination.

¹⁷¹ Qtd. in Gitelman and Jackson, “Introduction,” 2.

scholarship and its original object (a culture, a historical moment, a textual field). The challenge of data creation in this context is the challenge not just of assembling data from incomplete archival sources, as Alexis Weedon and Jonathan Rose point out, but of accounting for the inflections produced by the creation of the archive itself.¹⁷²

Transforming anything into data always entails a loss of detail, and digital humanists who study database aesthetics have richly explored this loss. Alan Liu writes of databases that the

more he learned about [their] workings, the more he woke to the fact that the great, digitally sharp massifs of detail they rendered only set off by contrast all the presence not there—whatever could not be cut up and cut down to fit the granular structures of databases, whatever could appear only as a ghost limned in the ceaseless froth of redundant or contradictory entries, overlapping dates, null values, and other database noise attesting to the pressure of the unstructured and unknown.¹⁷³

Creating a database requires excluding “the unstructured” and unknowable in order to fit each data entry into a chosen schema. Databases are massive, endlessly malleable mediations of an existing field of examples, much like archives. Indeed, composition and rhetoric scholars interested in digital historiography have contributed a significant body of scholarship on the creation of digital archives (usually formatted as databases) and the problems of mediation that such projects open up.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Alexis Weedon describes the difficulties of quantifying the archive this way: “The chief problem for the book historian wanting to use quantitative methods is the quality of the data. The sample is often small, selected for preservation or significance rather than at random, and the information on how the data were compiled or what they measured is sometimes lost. Primitive administration, book-keeping, and reporting procedures have created pseudo-statistics in the historical record; even published government figures are not necessarily clear or reliable. Nevertheless, they are all the book historian has and, though we may distrust them, we can also offer a guide to how they should be interpreted through stated degrees of uncertainty, ranges of confidence, and levels of significance.” Similarly, Jonathan Rose writes, “uncertainties are built into everything we find in archives and published records. We can minimize those uncertainties if we use these sources with some awareness of their limitations, and if we check the, against other kinds of documents.” Alexis Weedon, “The Uses of Quantification,” in *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Maldon, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 39; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁷³ Alan Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 240.

¹⁷⁴ See especially the recent special issue in *College English* edited by Jessica Enoch and David Gold, as well as Michael Neal, Katherine Bridgman, and Stephen J. McElroy’s recent piece in *Kairos*. Jessica Enoch and David

To describe a sizable textual field, one must simplify in order to represent. To study an archive as a representation of a textual field, one must account for prior layers of mediation and selection. Lev Manovich, Kathryn Hales, James J. Brown work to understand the practices and possibilities opened up by what Brown characterizes as “living between” database and narrative in the way that algorithms and other meaning-making machines do.¹⁷⁵ To live between database and narrative means being able to move between large, messy data sets and linear, selective stories about that data. It means being able to understand data as constructed, as mediating that which it represents, and understanding narrative (or scholarly argument) as a selective interpretation of that already mediated data set. Data drawn from archives “set off ... all the presence not there,” to use Liu’s phrase, necessarily losing much of the detail and rich texture communicated by the objects. However, such data also present a large-scale view unavailable to studies of individual writers or texts. Individual studies are “necessary,” but “not sufficient,” as Simon Eliot has written.¹⁷⁶ Some questions require using data, and using it well requires accounting for its inescapable losses.

I draw on the work of quantitative book historians and digital humanists to bring forward the archive as a unit of analysis and data creation as a heuristic for creating critical awareness of the limitations and interpretive nature of archival work. This method stands as part of a tradition that defines a textual field bibliographically or quantitatively and as a descendant of longstanding

Gold, “Seizing the Methodological Moment: The Digital Humanities and Historiography in Rhetoric and Composition,” *College English*, Literature Online, 76, no. 2 (2013): 105–15; Michael Neal, Katherine Bridgman, and Stephen J. McElroy, “Making Meaning at the Intersections: Developing a Digital Archive for Multimodal Research,” *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* 17, no. 3 (May 15, 2013), <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/17.3/topoi/Neal-et-al/index.html>.

¹⁷⁵ James J. Brown Jr., “Rhetorical Devices, Narrative, Database, and the Work of Robot Writers” (lecture, University of Pittsburgh, January 23, 2014); N. Katherine Hayles, “Narrative and Database: Natural Symbionts,” 122, no. 5 (2007): 1603–8; Lev Manovich, “Database as Symbolic Form,” *Millennium Film Journal* 34 (1999): n.p.

¹⁷⁶ See Eliot, note 4.

approaches to quantitative book history.¹⁷⁷ Book historians know intimately the problems of archival work and the extra difficulties introduced by quantification. As Sarah Werner writes, the “desire to catalog and to count and to sort means that book historians have been long involved in digital humanities, whether it has been called by that name or no.”¹⁷⁸ The movement “between” data and narrative, archive and scholarship occupies Priya Joshi in her work on the print archives of the British Empire in India and her later response to Robert Darnton’s statistics in “Literary Surveillance in the British Raj.” Citing Fernand Braudel’s caution that statistics “are contributions, not solutions,” Joshi argues that statistics are a way to begin but the endeavor to understand statistics “brings us squarely to the domain of literary analysis. The statistics have simply indicated the question, but only close textual reading” can answer it.”¹⁷⁹

Moretti agrees that statistics require turning to other evidence. In the “Graphs” portion of *Graphs, Maps, and Trees* (the chapter he describes as “book history”) he explains that “to make sense of quantitative data, [he] had to abandon the quantitative universe.” Rather than turning to close reading, however, he turns to more distant reading, using other scholars’ work on novel sub-genres (evangelical novels, military novels, etc.) to characterize a large literary field.¹⁸⁰ More recently, Katherine Bode cites a range of scholars doing quantitative work with texts,

¹⁷⁷ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (New York; Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2004); M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Rosenberg, “Data Before the Fact”; Eliot, “Very Necessary but Not Quite Sufficient: A Personal View of Quantitative Analysis in Book History”; Weedon, “The Uses of Quantification”; Katherine Bode, *Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field* (New York: Anthem Press, 2012); Robert Darnton, “Literary Surveillance in the British Raj: The Contradictions of Liberal Imperialism,” *Book History* 4, no. 1 (2001): 133–76; Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*.

¹⁷⁸ Sarah Werner in Matthew Kirschenbaum and Sarah Werner, “Digital Scholarship and Digital Studies: The State of the Discipline,” *Book History* 17, no. 1 (2014): 410.

¹⁷⁹ Priya Joshi, “Quantitative Method, Literary History,” *Book History* 5 (2002): 273.

¹⁸⁰ Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (New York; London: Verso, 2005), 24.

articulating its value not as a replacement for close analysis but as a means to answer questions that close reading cannot answer:

Any reading of statistics is, like any reading of a text, a subjective process of selection and decision-making; and in both cases, there are readings that are more accurate and enlightening than others. But for identifying literary trends over time, quantitative analyses enable a broad, historical and comparative perspective not achievable based on studies of particular texts or publishers' records.¹⁸¹

In short, most who practice quantitative analysis of archival materials are especially sensitive to the value of movement between the large scale and the small, data and interpretation, and the necessity of using both in order to fully understand the objects of study in book history and other allied fields. However, because of the diversity of archival objects and the purposes of researchers, scholars often must invent their own methods of movement between data and interpretation. I offer a model here for articulating processes of selection and interpretation. In doing so, I hope to encourage more scholarship that proposes similar methods in order to make explicit the conversations informing our work and to offer methodological models that others might readily take up.

5.1.1 Graphing the Interarchive

In order to contend with the mediation of the archives of amateur newspapers, I developed a method for using the archival catalogs of multiple collections as data. I draw on the practice of using multiple physical archives as a sample from which to draw statistics; however, rather than treating the materials held within multiple archives as one large *combined* data set, I treat

¹⁸¹ Bode, *Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field*, 22.

multiple collections as *individual samples* of the same larger pool.¹⁸² I argue for a new term, *interarchive*, to describe large, geographically distributed archives composed of several individual collections that sample the same materials from the same time period.

The key move that I made was not simply to graph the catalog of one collection (number of titles on the y-axis, year on the x), but to graph the catalogs of multiple collections of the same materials and to compare them to one another. A graph of an individual catalog's holdings is almost inevitably idiosyncratic, but a graph of multiple collections of the same set of items, particularly very large collections, can reveal the idiosyncrasies of individual collections. Comparison of multiple catalogs can generate a remarkably informative quantitative representation of the growth and decline of a textual field from year to year. Considering graphs of catalogs in relation to the histories of collections reveals whether those catalogs represent trends in collecting practices, trends in numbers of production of items, or both. Interarchives tend to exist in hard copy, but their metadata (catalogs, finding aids, etc.) is often now available digitally. Graphing the interarchive does not require visiting each collection, just acquiring a digital copy of each collection's catalog.

This approach emerged out of my efforts to make sense of this particular interarchive, and as a method would travel well to other archives that share at least one of these three characteristics: 1) decentralized practices of production, as opposed to collections where one or a few entities controlled production; 2) imperfect records, where the field cannot be accounted for in its entirety; and 3) arrangement around particular interests that reflect specific commitments and have an uncertain relationship to the larger textual field, as in collections assembled because

¹⁸² M.O. Grenby's *The Child Reader* is a nice recent example of this practice, which Alexis Wheedon cites as common to quantitative book history. See Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840*; Weedon, "The Uses of Quantification."

of their relationship to a person or an event, rather than collections assembled to capaciously represent a specific textual formation. A number of scholars have done foundational work with collections that share these characteristics: dime novels, scrapbooks, schoolbooks, first-person literacy narratives, eighteenth-century children's books, and cards.¹⁸³ This work makes possible further investigation using the approach I describe.

5.1.2 Quantifying the Textual Features of a Sample Set

In order to preserve some of the richness of the texts themselves, I created a sample using the graphs of the interarchive as a guide and I then read, classified, and quantified my sample according to an axis I identified through initial reading and sampling. Put another way, I “coded” my reading of a set of texts selected for features that allow me to articulate their relationship to the larger whole. I draw here on models that employ researcher-created coding strategies to characterize a large body of texts.¹⁸⁴ This approach does not depend on the interpretation of individual texts to generate insights, but instead identifies trends among the entire set that would be invisible otherwise. By linking those trends to Census information, I interpret the relationship

¹⁸³ See Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (New York; London: Verso, 1987); Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press New York, 2012); Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen L Carr, and Lucille M Schultz, *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005); M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). See also the Florida State University Card Archive at <http://fsucardarchive.org/>. *Archives of Instruction* in particular also addresses the question of what can be gained by reading a textual field as a whole with attention to material distinctions in its discussion of textbook traditions.

¹⁸⁴ Weedon writes that coding “qualitative data for quantitative use is a recognized practice in statistics for social sciences and can be a useful tool. However, once qualitative values are brought into quantitative descriptions, readers have to judge the rigor of the researchers' methods ... for themselves. As with much statistical analysis, there is a tendency to discard things that do not fit the pattern. A clear statement of how the statistical exercise was conducted and monitored is vital. ... [C]are must be taken when applied to historical data.” Ibid., 40–41.

between amateur journalists' class backgrounds, the textual features of their writing, and their motivations for participating in amateur journalism.

This method is not incidental to its textual field, the large set of texts called amateur newspapers by their makers, but rather born of the conditions of writing and production that created it. It is important that we know this archive in its collective form because that is how its creators experienced it and that is how they preserved it. They insist on the value of each amateur newspaper as part of what makes Amateurdom itself interesting, vibrant, and an important remnant of youth culture. Creating a method to represent all the pieces of the whole at once honors their perspective and experience as young writers. I proceeded from the assumption that processes of selection that single out texts for their intrinsic qualities (like outstanding or unusual writing) or their idiosyncratic relationship to external phenomena (to people, events, institutions of interest) risk generalizing based on examples that are not representative, but are instead outstanding, unusual, or idiosyncratic. Breaking out of that tautology requires reconceiving of the textual field as a complex system and creating processes of selection that more actively correspond to it.¹⁸⁵

I also emphasize the importance of choosing how to select items to read and code. I chose 1879 because of its interest as a cusp year according to my graphs from section two, and because the Library of Amateur Journalism contains two amateur directories for 1879, one for Missouri and one for Massachusetts. Remarkably, all of the papers listed in the Massachusetts directory are preserved in the Library of Amateur Journalism, and though the same is not true of the papers listed in the Missouri guide, that guide is a particularly detailed repository of information about

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Carr seeks to define “textual field,” a term gaining currency in recent large-scale studies but as yet to be clearly defined, as a “set of texts linked by some material as well as discursive repetition (or informational redundancy).” Stephen Carr, e-mail message to the author, November 29, 2014.

the amateurs of Missouri and their papers. The geographic orientation of these guides is also significant, as it allows for comparison of the “hub” state of amateur journalism (Massachusetts consistently has the highest number of amateur newspapers across the 1870s and 80s) with a state outside the eastern seaboard that contained both a significant rural population and St. Louis, a powerful urban center closely linked to cultural centers in the northeast. The amateur papers of Massachusetts and Missouri as a sample thus represent two sizable amateur networks from different regions but with significant cultural and geographic similarities. Using the 1880 U.S. Census to collect demographic information about the amateurs editing these papers, and linking that information to the “critical” classification from my reading, I identified commonalities that span both states and that may very likely characterize the larger body of amateurs in the late 1870s and early 1880s.¹⁸⁶

5.2 GRAPHING THE INTERARCHIVE OF AMATEURDOM

Amateur newspapers, published sporadically from the beginning of the nineteenth century, began to increase in number in the 1840s, and then to accelerate prodigiously after the Civil War thanks to the widespread availability of small, affordable printing presses.¹⁸⁷ According to catalog data from the two largest repositories of amateur papers in the U.S., the archive shows a growth from

¹⁸⁶ The U.S. Census is, of course, yet another selective and constructed document.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth M Harris, *Personal Impressions: The Small Printing Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston; London: David R. Godine, 2004); Dennis Laurie, “Amateur Newspapers,” last updated September 2, 2004, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/amateurnews.htm>.

three or four known amateur papers in 1865, to about 80 in 1870, to 445 in 1878.¹⁸⁸ In the previous chapter, I argued that the popularity of the practice of amateur journalism among American youths increased significantly after the Civil War because of the social, cultural, and structural changes during that period which led to the “invention” of adolescence at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁹ The historical moment is one where past modes of acquiring adult authority and professional acumen through apprenticeship are being replaced by credentials earned through post-secondary education.¹⁹⁰ In the period before secondary education became standard in the U.S., periodicals played an important role in mediating these multiple paths to literacy and a professional identity, particularly for young people interested in writing.¹⁹¹

Amateurs used small presses to both write and print themselves into positions of middle-class professionalism as amateur papers rose in concert with amateur printers. “Amateur,” for them, seems to have meant one who does something for the love of it as well as simply operating

¹⁸⁸ The first two figures are from the catalog of the Library of Amateur Journalism and the last is from the catalog of the American Antiquarian Society’s collection. The latter catalog is available online at <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Inventories/amateura.htm>.

¹⁸⁹ See also Kent Baxter, *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008); Gabrielle Owen, “Queer Theory and the Logic of Adolescence” (University of Pittsburgh, 2011).

¹⁹⁰ Alger’s fiction is an iconic representation of the attitudes, desires, and anxieties brought on by these changes, and in one case he captured them in a narrative centered on boys and printing. *Risen from the Ranks, Or, Harry Walton’s Success* (1874) depicts a youth rising gradually from the rank of printer’s devil to newspaper editor and owner. Walton’s path is set alongside that of Oscar Vincent, a youth attending the local high school academy, who is from a wealthy Boston family and is making plans to attend Harvard. The two friends make their way into adulthood through very different means determined in large part by their families’ social, cultural, and economic capital, illustrating how the new elite routes to professional, middle-class adulthood coexisted with older, apprenticeship-based routes. See Horatio Alger, Jr., *Risen from the Ranks; Or, Harry Walton’s Success* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates & Co., 1874).

¹⁹¹ During a period when youths faced changing standards for professionalism, and when there was a strong sense, supported by technological innovation and intensely expanded access to published writing, that anyone could become an author, young people were invited by adult makers of printing presses and editors of periodicals to become published writers themselves and to use the scene of publication to educate themselves into middle-class professionalism. For examples similar to amateur journalism, see Anna M. Redcay, “‘Live to Learn and Learn to Live’: The St. Nicholas League and the Vocation of Childhood,” *Children’s Literature* 39 (2011): 59; Sarah Lindey, “Boys Write Back: Self-Education and Periodical Authorship in Late Nineteenth-Century American Story Papers,” *American Periodicals* 21, no. 1 (2011): 74, 75.

as a moniker to distinguish their activities from those of adult professionals.¹⁹² One was an amateur because one was too young to be a professional; one was an amateur because one was still learning the requisite skills and doing so through self-instruction alongside other amateurs rather than through apprenticeship or schooling. This condition of production profoundly shapes the archive of their output. Their newspapers did not circulate through a centralized mediating agency; instead, they circulated from amateur to amateur and individual amateurs collected the papers they received and occasionally bought collections from one another.

The amateur journalists approached their papers with the kind of fondness and, later, nostalgia that characterizes fraternities and sororities today, and that nostalgia motivated significant preservation efforts. At the turn of the twentieth century, those efforts led to the creation of the Library of Amateur Journalism, a collection that exists largely due to the herculean labors of Edwin Hadley Smith. Smith had become an amateur in 1892, and began collecting amateur papers in earnest in the late 1890s, purchasing batches of papers from amateurs who had saved their collections.¹⁹³ By 1902, according to Truman Spencer's *The History of Amateur Journalism*, his collection contained over 20,000 papers, and he devoted eighteen months to cataloging them while living in near penury.¹⁹⁴ Smith produced a card

¹⁹² See my discussion of the evolution of the term "amateur" in chapter three as well as Ronald and Mary Zboray's and Ann Fabian's analysis of mid-to-late century cultures of amateur authorship. Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass Market Book* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Ann Fabian, "Amateur Authorship," in *History of the Book in America*, ed. Scott E. Casper et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 407–15.

¹⁹³ Spencer, *The History of Amateur Journalism*, 103.

¹⁹⁴ Here is the remarkable description of Smith's cataloging given in Spencer's *History*: "In June, 1902, Smith rented an unfurnished apartment of three rooms on Joralemon street in Brooklyn, and moved his entire collection there. Every evening, far into the night, and on Sundays and holidays, he worked, sorting and arranging his thousands of publications. This task proved so immense that in February 1903, Smith resigned his clerkship in the statistical branch of the Fidelity and Casualty Insurance Company in order to devote his entire time to sorting and cataloging. He had saved a little money, and he estimated that six months would be sufficient to complete this work, but it actually took a year and a half. His funds became exhausted, he fell into debt, his rent was in arrears. But he toiled doggedly on, existing on one meal a day, sleeping on a packing box in an unfurnished room, working often 18 hours a day. Finally the work was done." Ibid., 104.

catalog to accompany the collection and had the papers bound by year in alphabetical order in inexpensive green covers. The bound volumes have survived, but the catalog has not. The PDF catalog that accompanies the Library now is a transcription of a catalog created most likely in the 1980s by a fossil caring for the collection. After moving from institution to institution for a century, the Library of Amateur Journalism was donated by the Fossils to the Special Collections Department at the University of Wisconsin in 2004, where it now resides.¹⁹⁵

The history of the collection matters because it is this history that signals how well the actual output of Amateurdom is represented by the issues that remain in the collection.¹⁹⁶ That history makes it possible to create an interpretation of and narrative history around quantified representations of Amateurdom. Taken together in a graph, the catalog data of the two largest collections (the Library of Amateur Journalism with 27,000 issues and the American Antiquarian Society's collection with 55,000 issues) present a suggestive picture of the size of Amateurdom as it changed from year to year (see Figure 4, "Recorded Amateur Newspapers Per Year...1870-1890"). To produce these graphs, I used Microsoft Excel to organize the catalog data, creating one row for each title represented by at least one issue in a given year. A title spanning three years would be listed three times, once for each year. I then used Excel to count how many titles were present for each year and used its chart function to graph the results. These graphs present very different information than that given by previous studies of Amateurdom, or the similar studies of large groups engaged in literacy practices that rely on the use of representative examples. Though Figure 4 has significant limitations as a quantification of the number of

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., "Passion, Controversy and Vision: A History of the Library of Amateur Journalism," (unpublished manuscript, Memorial Day, 2003), PDF file, http://www.thefossils.org/laj_hist.pdf.

¹⁹⁶ See again here Simon Eliot's emphasis on sources' "biographies." Eliot, "Very Necessary but Not Quite Sufficient: A Personal View of Quantitative Analysis in Book History," 289–90.

amateur journals circulating in a given year between 1870 and 1890, it also provides a bird's eye view of Amateurdom that is entirely new and that generates important new insights.¹⁹⁷

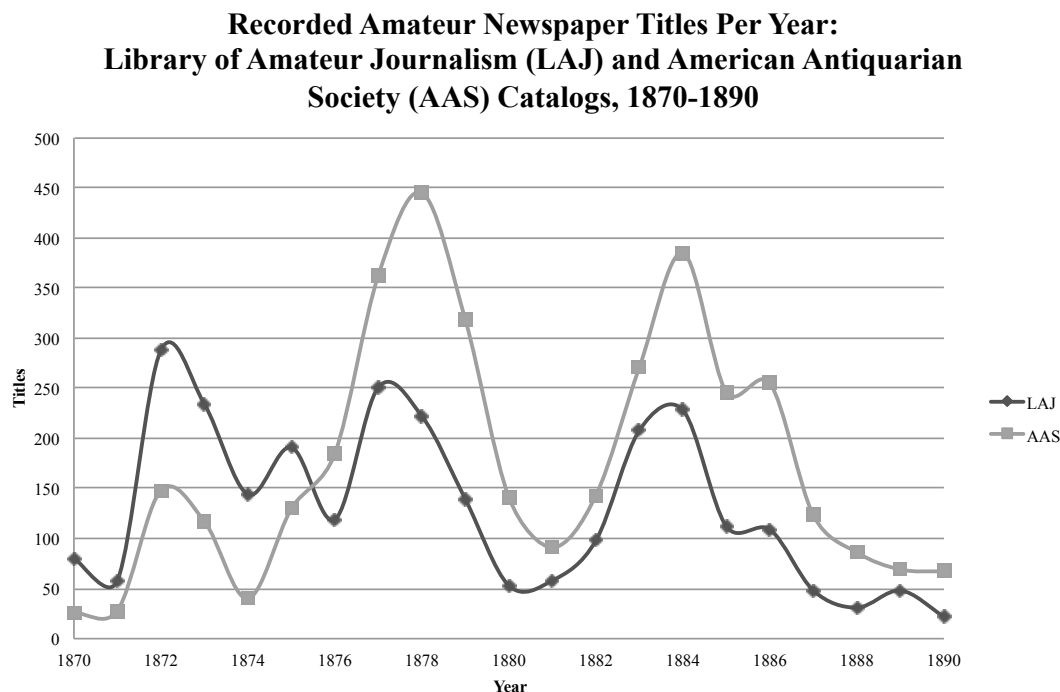


Figure 5. Recorded Amateur Newspaper Titles Per Year: Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ) and American Antiquarian Society (AAS) Catalogs, 1870-1890

¹⁹⁷ This graph selects only a portion of the catalogs to graph, the most active 20 years of Amateurdom. Graphs of the larger catalog show a long tail reaching back to 1800, with a bit of activity in the 1840s and 50s, and then the large output shown in this graph. The parallels between these graphs are even more remarkable given that the two catalogs represent two slightly different sets of data: titles with issues held in the collection for a given year (AAS) and the estimated first year of publication for titles held within the collection (LAJ). Though both catalogs may contain inaccuracies (these collections are large enough and their materials irregular enough to create significant difficulties), it is likely that the LAJ catalog significantly underrepresents and misrepresents its holdings. It seems to have been created by an amateur who flipped through volumes and estimated start dates by calculating backward using an issue's volume/issue numbers, rather than simply recording the dates of the issues he or she witnessed. Because the amateur journalists were notoriously inconsistent in putting out their journals, these start dates can only be taken as a very rough approximation. What's more, a quick sample that I performed using the volumes with which I worked showed that a significant number of titles were simply overlooked and confirmed that some estimated start dates are unreliable. The saving grace of this catalog is the short lifespan of most amateur newspapers: a majority of start dates were calculated using issues from the first volume because the journal did not survive more than a year. For these catalog graphs in color (and for the larger catalog graphs), for a chart analyzing the accuracy of the catalog dates of the LAJ for the titles from Missouri and Massachusetts for 1879, for a chart comparing archival holdings by title and issue for the same time period and states, and for my data sets, refer to jessicaaisaac.net/GraphingAmateurdom.

This graph is remarkable because it reveals that these two very large collections show roughly the same increases and decreases of the number of amateur newspapers over time. Though the numbers for each peak or valley tend to be quite different (except for 1881), the archives both include many titles for 1872, 1877-78, and 1884 while they include comparatively few titles for 1874, 1881, and the late 1880s. Quantifying these two collections as a pair transforms the idiosyncrasies of the individual collections' numbers into promising data about the history of Amateurdom's fluctuations over time. These graphs thus suggest that a collection's catalog can be used as a sample to create a preliminary approximation of the original field or of collecting practices. They also require interpretation. In this instance, the two catalogs' roughly parallel fluctuations suggest consistent changes linked to larger economic or social circumstances or the internal mechanics of the public. As I explain below, they appear to be linked to the size at which Amateurdom could sustain itself, beyond which it became too large to function properly. Finally, differences in the two catalogs raise questions about the processes that created the collections: can they be attributed to differences in the circulation of the titles or amateurs most represented in each archive? Or are they "noise" generated by the processes of collection? I address this question as well, in graphs that trace the collections of individual amateurs. But first, it's necessary to examine the comparison between all archives of amateur newspapers, both large and small (see Figure 5, "The Interarchive of Amateur Newspapers, 1870-1890").

The Interarchive of Amateur Newspapers, 1870-1890

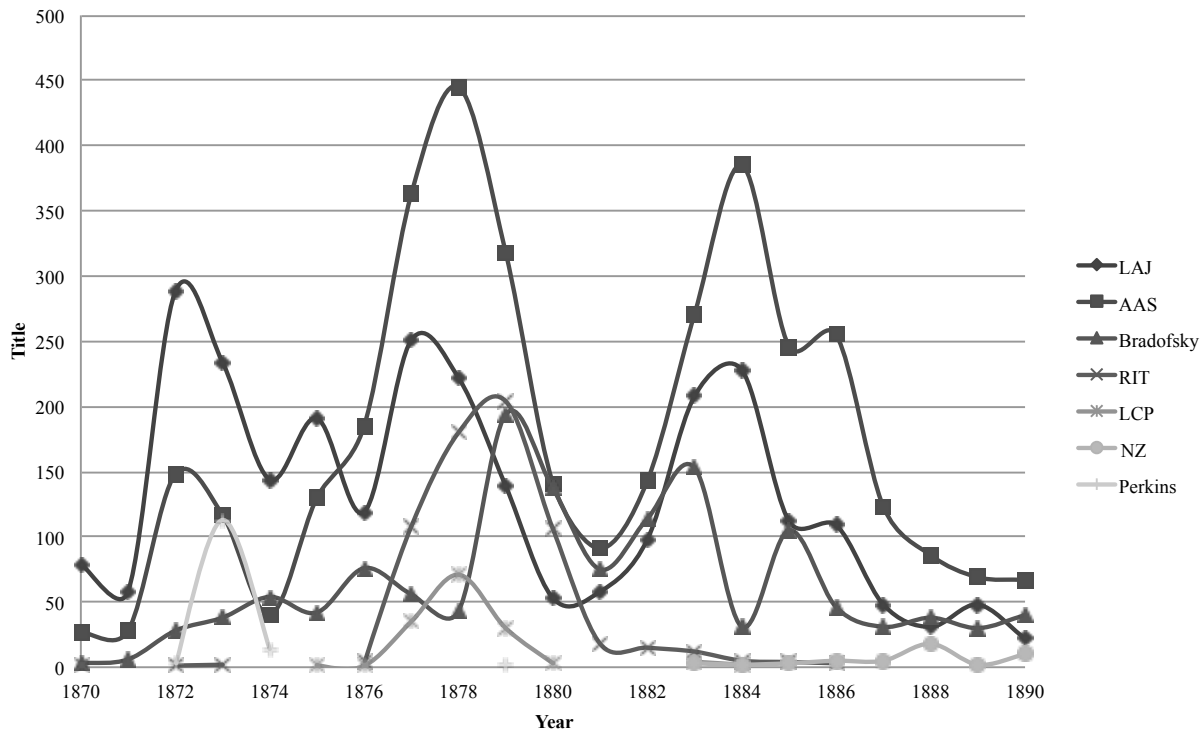


Figure 6. The Interarchive of Amateur Newspapers, 1870-1890

Key to abbreviations: Library of Amateur Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Special Collections (LAJ), Amateur Newspaper Collection at the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), Hyman Bradofsky Collection at the Bancroft Library at the University of California-Berkeley (Bradofsky), Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP), Amateur Newspaper Collection at the National Library of New Zealand (NZ), Perkins Collection at the McArthur Public Library in Biddeford, Maine (Perkins)

Even though the other collections of amateur newspapers are significantly smaller than the AAS and LAJ, the smaller collections tend to have their largest peaks in roughly the same time periods as the larger collections. Their peaks and valleys are more idiosyncratic, but they follow the same overarching trends. The Bradofsky Collection, for instance, which is the third largest collection, peaks in 1879 and 1883, in line with the AAS and the LAJ, while also very closely following their valley in 1881. All the collections with holdings in 1881, in fact,

represent that year as a significant valley, suggesting that Amateurdom experienced a particularly pronounced contraction that year.¹⁹⁸ The other three collections that show large peaks, Perkins, RIT, and LCP, show peaks that mirror those of the AAS and LAJ as well.

In two of the smaller collections, the catalogs allow for the titles collected by a single active amateur journalist to be isolated from the rest. That allows for the graphing of one amateur's participation over time in Figures 3 and 4. R. W. Burnett's collection is held within the RIT (Carey Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology) collection and is marked by a unique provenance code, while the Perkins finding aid collection (at the McArthur Public Library) describes it as the collection amassed by a single active amateur, Walter Perkins. I suspect that the LCP (Library Company of Philadelphia) collection similarly represents the work of a single amateur because of its size and shape, but the finding aid does not specify.

¹⁹⁸ There is evidence that this contraction was brought on not by the characteristics of Amateurdom as a public, but rather by changes in the postal code which greatly increased the cost of circulating an amateur newspaper. In the second half of the 1870s, amateurs regularly reference the postal service's efforts to classify amateur newspapers as first class mail (mailed at a penny per paper) rather than second class (mailed at a penny per pound). This change seems to have been enforced haphazardly by individual postmasters over several years but the pronounced contraction in 1881 suggests that the change finally took effect on a national scale around that time. The more advanced ages of amateurs in the 1880s and 90s as well as the smaller size of Amateurdom supports this notion—older amateurs would be more likely to have the funds to participate.

Comparison of R.W. Burnett's Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1876-1886

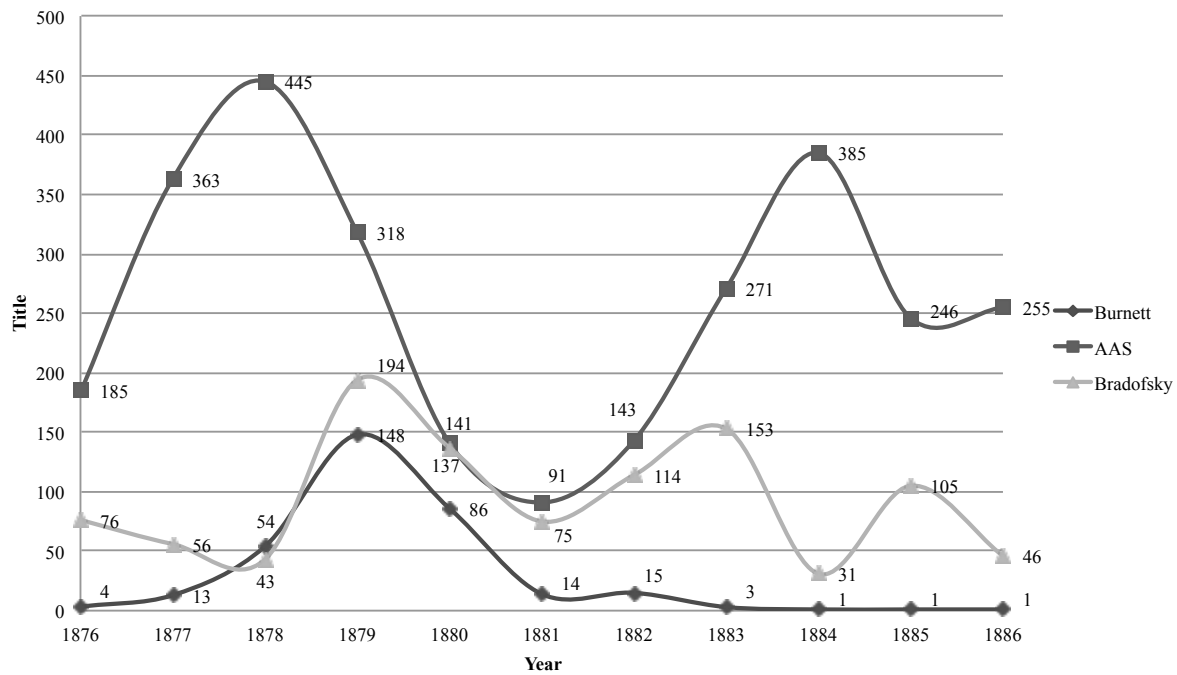


Figure 7. Comparison of R.W. Burnett's Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1876-1886

Comparison of Walter E. Perkins' Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1870-1880

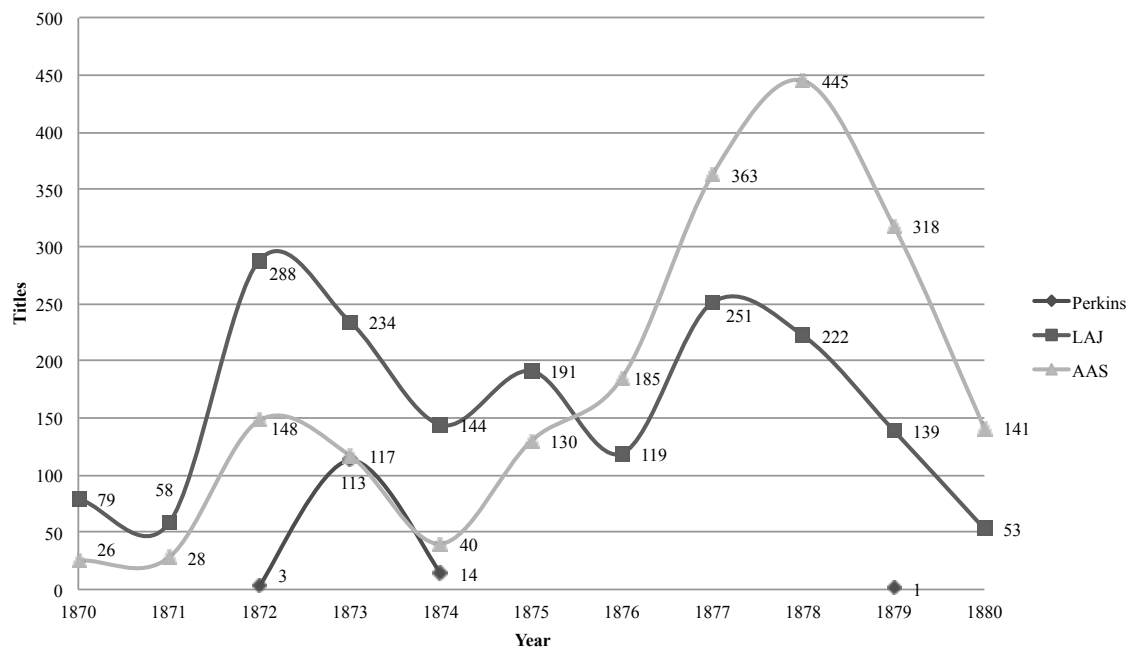


Figure 8. Comparison of Walter E. Perkins' Collection to Collections that Parallel its Growth and Decline, 1870-

1880

In these graphs, it's possible to see an individual amateur's footprint within Amateurdom. David Brewer uses the term "footprint" to describe the weight accorded to a text (in his example, late eighteenth-century novels) because of the extent of its circulation. Brewer accords "weight and visibility" to texts which many more people would have read judging by the number of editions as well as reviews or excerpts in periodicals. These texts circulated more widely, thus their footprint was larger, and thus they had a different "resonance" for readers.¹⁹⁹ The term footprint is useful for describing the output and circulation of individual amateurs as well. The collection of an individual amateur represents much more than the papers he or she received: because the amateurs relied mostly on exchanges rather than subscriptions, if one individual received an issue from someone, they most likely sent an issue of his or her own paper back to that person. These graphs thus represent not only how much Perkins and Burnett received and read of Amateurdom's output—they also represent how many other amateurs were reading Perkins' and Burnett's papers, in other words, their footprint. In Burnett's case, at his peak in 1879, about half (148 of 318) of the active amateurs recorded by the archive were receiving Burnett's paper and sending their own back to him. The following year, as Amateurdom contracted, his circulation reached even a bit more than half (86 of 141). Perkins' peak in 1873 has a similar size: he was exchanging with 113 other papers, while the larger archive records about 234 titles.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ David A Brewer, "Counting, Resonance, and Form, A Speculative Manifesto (with Notes)," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 24, no. 2 (2012): 167, 66.

²⁰⁰ David Tribby has been an active amateur journalist since the 1970s and reports that these exchange numbers would be a bit on the small side for a twentieth-century amateur. At this point, however, the ease of electronic printing and the use of a central mailing system organized by the National Amateur Press Association makes the larger exchange lists of 200-250 that he cites quite manageable. He notes that Thomas G. Harrison remarks in *The*

The footprints of these amateurs thus demonstrate the relative size and visibility of two individuals who showed significant investment in the pastime (enough to preserve and pass on their collections). They also show how an individual paper's circulation grew and declined and thus how quickly amateurs came and went. However, more importantly for understanding the public that was Amateurdom, the graphs of these two individuals illustrate how many degrees of separation existed between most amateurs at a given moment in Amateurdom's history. If an average amateur, editing a paper alone, could maintain a peak exchange list of between 110 and 150 papers, Amateurdom at its largest (445 in 1878 and 385 in 1884) would be so large as to limit any one amateur's direct contact with other papers to roughly one third or one fourth of the total number. Because Amateurdom was based on one-to-one contact through exchanges or in person through the amateurs' organizations, it seems very likely that its rapid expansions and collapses represent a contradiction inherent in Amateurdom itself. Though there was enough energy and interest in putting out amateur papers to quickly drive up the number of active amateurs, Amateurdom quickly became large enough that those participating no longer felt connected enough to the whole to remain invested. At those moments, the number of papers would shrink down to roughly the circulation size of one amateur (150 in 1874-5, 100 in 1881, and somewhere between 50 and 80 after the late 1880s), meaning that everyone in Amateurdom could conceivably have been in contact with almost everyone else, or that a handful of key members could maintain contact with the majority of active amateurs.

Furthermore, it is possible that each contraction of Amateurdom represents possible regime change among the prominent amateurs. Amateurdom always experienced significant and

Career and Reminiscences of an Amateur Journalist and a History of Amateurdom on circulation numbers which include exchange lists as small as 50 and as large as 150. David Tribby, email to the author, September 9, 2014; Thos. G. Harrison, *The Career and Reminiscences of an Amateur Journalist and a History of Amateur Journalism* (Indianapolis: Thos. G. Harrison, 1883), 103, 224.

rapid turnover; most papers lasted less than a year and the large number of guides to printing an amateur paper housed with the larger collections appear to be one way the amateurs attempted to combat that problem through recruitment. Such turnover is always a part of youth periodical culture, as David L. Greene points out, and is a persistent problem for youth publics.²⁰¹ It is difficult to maintain a community over time when members cycle in and out so quickly. Within Amateurdom, if each contraction brought the size of the public down to where the group of active amateurs could all conceivably know one another, then that group would be able to re-make Amateurdom together, re-establishing norms of writing and interaction that would have a strong influence over the next expansion. This is an important question that calls for further study, requiring a listing of the amateur journalists of the contraction years, a characterization of their shared sense of what amateur journalism should be and do, and then tracing their continued influence during the years of expansion. Did their influence largely characterize Amateurdom in the peak years that followed? My hypothesis would be that it did and that the contraction years mark significant changes in the rapidly changing character of Amateurdom between 1870 and 1888.

The graphs of this interarchive make possible a very different kind of shuttling between the large scale and the small, a very different vantage point on which years to examine and why. They make possible new insights into the interarchive's changing size and shape and the relationship of those changes to Amateurdom's internal factors (regime change, generational turnover, the limits of its ability to function) and external factors (economic, social, and cultural changes). As a method, the graphing of an interarchive prompts returns to histories in order to

²⁰¹ "Unlike adult periodicals, which may find loyal readers who will subscribe indefinitely, a children's magazine over the course of, say, five years loses almost entirely one group of readers and must replace it with another." David L. Greene, "The Youth's Companion," in *Children's Periodicals of the United States*, ed. R. Gordon Kelly (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), 511.

make interpretation possible. I drew here on the histories of collections to ascertain whether the graphs represent collecting practices, the changing size and shape of the textual field, or both. I turned to histories of contemporary literacy practices, print history, and social and cultural history to interpret the parallel peaks and valleys of each collection's graph. In other words, by treating individual archival collections as a unit of analysis, as a sample from the same textual field, and by treating their graphs as a heuristic for understanding the textual field, I ameliorated the losses introduced by archive creation. In the next section, I deal with the losses introduced by corpus creation.

5.3 QUANTIFYING A SAMPLE

This section develops a method for selecting, reading, and interpreting a set of amateur newspapers that builds on the possibilities opened up by the graphic representation of the interarchive. This method requires choosing texts to read based on qualities that are exterior to the texts themselves but consistent for a significant number of them (in this case, date and location of publication) and then developing procedures to read *all* available texts that fit those criteria. This is, in other words, a kind of sampling that refuses extraordinariness in order to more accurately represent the larger textual field.

This section presents the rationale for the method I used to analyze a sample of amateur newspapers, the method itself, and my findings. Briefly stated, my method was to categorize the 1879 amateur papers of Massachusetts and Missouri into three groups depending on the type of writing they contained and to link that classification to demographic information from the 1880 U.S. Census. My analysis of 190 issues from 52 titles, edited by 74 amateurs shows that there

were a few contingents of amateurs that differentiate according to class. The more affluent the amateur, the younger he tended to be, the more issues of his paper were published or preserved, and the “lighter” his writing tended to be.²⁰² Conversely, less affluent amateurs tended to be older, fewer issues of their papers were either published or preserved, and their papers tended to contain more “serious” or “advanced” writing. I conclude that amateur journalists employed amateur journalism more seriously when their socioeconomic background was less privileged, most likely as a way to groom themselves for middle class adulthood.

5.3.1 Rationale

In order to read the amateur newspapers it is necessary to become literate in the amateurs’ own methods of distinguishing themselves from one another. A quick glance at amateur newspapers could leave one with the impression that they are repetitive. They tend to contain the same kinds of material: amateur-authored poetry and fiction on the first one or two pages, editorials and exchange commentary in the middle pages, and advertisements on the last page. Most papers exist in folio format, with four pages for printed matter, and although they vary widely in size, most are about 6 x 8 inches. Their fiction, as Paula Petrik has shown, often imitates popular fiction of the period, in particular that published under Oliver Optic’s name.²⁰³ Much of it is adventure fiction, a great deal of it set at sea or on the frontier. Their editorials frequently discuss the same topics in the same terms—whether politics should be discussed in amateur papers, how

²⁰² I use the masculine pronoun advisedly here. Though many amateur editors give their first initial rather than first name in their newspapers, raising my hope that a large number of girls participated, my work with the Census demonstrated the scarcity of female amateurs. My sample includes only two female editors.

²⁰³ Paula Petrik, “The Youngest Fourth Estate: The Novelty Toy Printing Press and Adolescence, 1870-1886,” in *Small Worlds: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 127–130.

Amateurdom (or “the ‘Dom”) should be organized and run, whether schooling should be mandatory. Even their mottos reflect their tendency towards imitation rather than originality: an article from 1876 counts thirty-six papers between 1870 and 1876 with the motto “Tall oaks from little acorns grow,” forty-nine with “Multum in Parvo” [Much in Little].²⁰⁴ As new writers and editors, some of whom were more invested in printing or in socializing than in putting up a high-quality paper, the amateur journalists relied heavily on models that gave them a sense of what they could write and how it ought to look on the page.

The amateur newspapers vary based on factors external to the textual field itself, frustrating a lineage-based approach to their similarities and differences. I initially hypothesized that by reading the other papers that a given amateur was reading, identified through commentary in their “exchange” columns, I could roughly detect his or her influences. It became apparent, however, after much mapping of circulation networks and reading of connected papers, that the amateurs had a high tolerance for reading a variety of papers without altering their own style to match a particular one. Influence and lineage were poor predictors of the type of paper an amateur would produce.²⁰⁵ And because the shape of an individual paper was not determined by that paper’s relationship to other papers, I looked outside the texts to demographic information

²⁰⁴ These figures come from an editorial in the August 1879 issue of the *Olio* wherein editor Ralph M. Looney reproduces “some figures and facts from an old amateur journal (June 1876).” Given the number of repeated amateur newspaper titles (e.g. Sunbeam, Boys’ News, Amateur, Boys’ Herald, Young Americans, Eagles, Amateur Times, Gem, Novelty, Star) and recycled topics for editorials, and even reused phrases (“[w]e launch our journal on the stormy ocean of amateur journalism”) cited by this editorial, it seems clear that the amateurs understood their writing, and indeed the writing of journalism, in terms of imitation and repetition. It is possible that the 1876 editorial cited by Looney was written as a spoof, though my reading of the papers confirms the popularity of the two mottos cited above as well as the recycled nature of many journal titles. Ralph M. Looney, “[No Title],” *Olio*, August 1879, 3.

²⁰⁵ It also became clear that the amateurs read many more papers than they mentioned in their exchange columns, and that they chose papers to comment on for particular reasons. They tended to comment on well-known papers, which presumably made them seem well-connected and involved in the important parts of Amateurdom. They also tended to comment on papers of importance to their local amateur press associations. Their exchange columns are thus a partial and rhetorically-motivated representation of their exchange lists.

from the 1880 U.S. Census for mechanisms that influenced how an individual amateur would write, edit, and print his or her paper.

5.3.2 Method

I developed a classification schema by canvassing all amateur newspapers present in the Library of Amateur Journalism collection that were published in Massachusetts and Missouri in 1879. I chose 1879, as I state in section I, because of its interest as a cusp year—my graphs of catalog data indicate that it was a year of significant but falling output from the amateurs, and I hoped that it would give some indication of why the number of amateur papers was falling. However, there were other factors that made 1879 a particularly rich year for analysis. The Library of Amateur Journalism contains two amateur directories for 1879, one for Missouri and one for Massachusetts, and holds all of the papers listed in the Massachusetts directory. The directories give a sense of how the amateurs were organizing themselves, who the amateurs were, and how they wanted to represent themselves *as* amateur journalists. The geographic orientation of these directories also allowed me to create a sample of amateur newspapers produced within the “hub” state of amateur journalism and from another region much more recently settled but with enough population density to produce a significant number of amateur newspapers. St. Louis actually exceeded Boston in population in the 1870s and was a publishing and railway hub during this period that served as a real destination for and an imagined symbol of western migration.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ It is no coincidence that two unruly young men in Alger’s *Risen from the Ranks* land in St. Louis when they attempt to migrate west. See Alger, note 190.

The range of amateurs' writing falls into three rough categories that indicate three levels of investment in amateur journalism. My initial analysis indicated that the ages of editors seemed to have some relationship to the type of writing in the exchange column, which led me to investigate Census records, as I explain below. The writing in exchange columns ranged from very simple statements of praise for other papers ("puffery") to moderately complex commentary on other papers to highly elaborate textual analysis of other papers. The following are three examples (from the *Queen City Boys*, the *Monthly Blossom*, and the *Observer & Critic*) that characterize the range of exchange column writing that I identified:

Queen City Boys, Sedalia, Missouri, February 1879²⁰⁷

—The Ivory Independent is a good independent journal.

Monthly Blossom, St. Louis, Missouri, April 1879²⁰⁸

"Omaha: the best city of its size in the United States." —Omaha Chief

Verily, consistency is a jewel. The editorial pages of this journal are largely filled with manifestation of contempt against this city, its bad condition and inefficient management.

Observer & Critic, North Cambridge, Massachusetts, January 1879²⁰⁹

—An ably edited paper is the *Metropolitan* of Brooklyn. We have the Dec. number before us. The poetry, if such it may be called, is miserable. The first of the "Mackerelville Melodies" is a poor attempt at wit. It does not even jingle, as such productions should, in order to possess any merit. We would advise McSquilligan to compare his production with the famous "Babb Ballads" and then he will see wherein he former is defective. "Wallenstein's Death" is a dramatic episode of history well told by Ficke. The report of the F.A.P A. convention is full and interesting. The reporter speaks of something as a "true tact" [sic]; if it is a *fact* it is necessarily *true*, therefore the qualifying word is superfluous. The editorial on "Bismarck's Policy" is well considered and tersely written, while an interesting review department makes up the balance of the paper.

²⁰⁷ Edited by Charlie V. Worthington and Fred Houx.

²⁰⁸ Edited by George F. Pierrot.

²⁰⁹ Edited by Clarence E. Stone.

Figure 9. Samples of Criticism Types from 1879 Amateur Newspapers from Missouri and Massachusetts

The first example from the *Queen City Boys* is brief, written in simple language, and contains nothing more than a claim on the part of the editors that the *Ivory Independent* is “a good independent journal.” It is an example of “puffery,” an unsubstantiated statement of support for another newspaper. The second example from the *Monthly Blossom* is significantly more complex. It not only cites the *Omaha Chief* to offer criticism, it also uses more difficult language forms, namely elevated diction (“verily,” “manifestation”) and the passive voice. Through critique, it makes an argument about how editors should run their papers (with “consistency”). The third example from the *Observer & Critic* is even more complex. It presents a thoroughgoing, detailed review of all the major elements of the *Metropolitan*, using elevated diction and syntax, referring to another literary work (W.S. Gilbert’s “Babb [sic] Ballads”) for context and comparison, and closely analyzing a quotation—“true [f]act”—to test its redundancy.

The exchange columns thus offer a way to differentiate among the amateur newspapers. These three categories are rough, and there are difficult boundary cases among the papers I surveyed, but on the whole they characterize the three main levels of engagement with amateur journalism and roughly correspond to the complexity of an entire issue.²¹⁰ Here are the definitions I used to “code” the issues I read:

“Light”

Issues in this category offer brief commentary on other amateur newspapers (or no commentary at all). Their exchange columns contain either “puffs” or short responses to statements made in

²¹⁰ A significant number of amateur journalists hired others to do their presswork for them, oftentimes youths doing job print work under the title “amateur printer.” This separation between editor and printer adds a layer of complexity to the way in which a paper reflects an amateur editor’s investments. I thank Tracy Honn, director of the Silver Buckle Press, a working press museum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for bringing this to my attention. Lisa Gitelman sketches the history of job printing in the U.S. and briefly addresses the amateur journalists’ relationship to it in “A Brief History of _____,” *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 21-52.

other journals (about the reputation of other amateurs, or happenings in the ‘Dom). They tend to be smaller and more crudely printed, representing a smaller investment in time and money.
<p>“Serious”</p> <p>Issues in this category varied the most. The majority exhibit the kind of commentary that the <i>Monthly Blossom</i> contains: substantive but not overlong. These editors might make use of the term “criticism,” signaling their knowledge of or investment in it, even if the criticism they write is brief. They might include short reviews of amateur books, but those reviews tend to remark on the quality of printing and possibly the story. The papers in this category sometimes contain essays that offer evaluative commentary on social phenomena, but still stop short of in-depth analysis.</p>
<p>“Advanced”</p> <p>Issues in this category contain critical writing that seems highly schooled or professional, long sophisticated review essays, long detailed commentary on other journals in exchange columns, and/or substantial reviews of amateur books. These often quote the works they are analyzing and make references to the literary canon. These were the least common type of amateur paper, but also represented the most impressive amount of writing ability, printing skill, and investment in putting together an impressive amateur newspaper.</p>
<p>“Political”</p> <p>I had to create a fourth category, “Political,” to describe the issues that were entirely absorbed with reporting and editorializing on amateur politics and thus did not include material from which to make a classification into the other categories.</p>

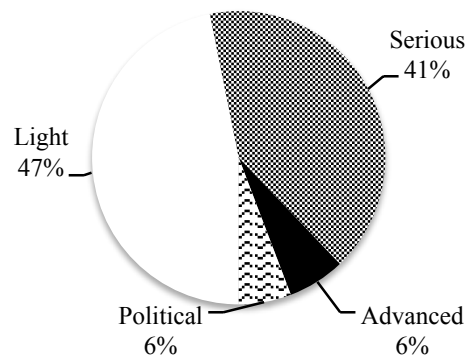
Figure 10. Criticism Categories

5.3.3 Findings

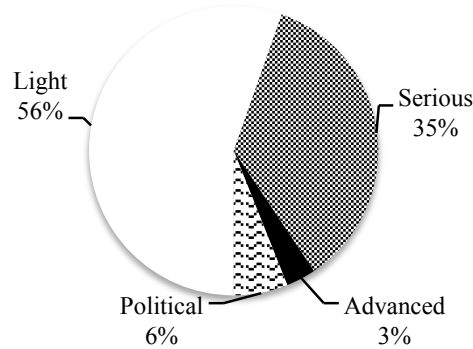
Based on the ease with which more affluent youths could access education, one might presume that more affluent amateurs would write more “serious” or “advanced” criticism. However, the opposite appears to be true and it appears to be so because of how the amateur journalists of different classes understood the hobby. Affluent amateurs more frequently treated amateur journalism as a social hobby, a way to make friends and amuse themselves. They did not tend to

take it as seriously as a kind of vocational or educational training because they did not need to— they had other avenues for that kind of learning. Less affluent amateurs, youths whose grasp on middle class prosperity, social standing, and education was more tenuous, were more likely to take advantage of the opportunity that amateur journalism afforded for learning to write, edit, and print. They used amateur journalism not only to learn profitable skills, but also to create meaningful social and professional relationships. They used the production of an amateur newspaper as an opportunity to groom themselves for middle class adulthood, to shape identities that would enable participation in spheres more privileged than those in which they had grown up.

All Issues in Sample Classified by Criticism Type



More Affluent Amateurs' Issues Classified by Criticism Type



Less Affluent Amateurs' Issues Classified by Criticism Type

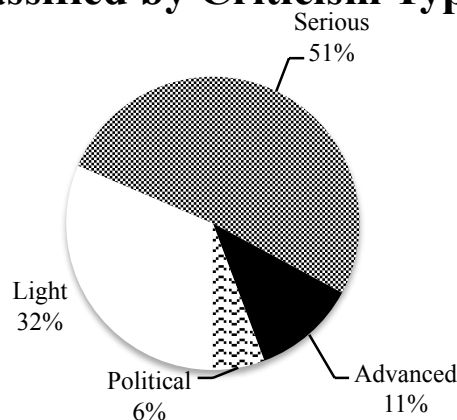


Figure 11. Criticism Types Classified by Amateurs' Class Backgrounds

This data accords strongly with Selwyn K. Troen's conclusions about the relationship between class and education for white St. Louis children identified in the 1880 Census. Troen analyzed the occupation of approximately 15,000 children and their parents, finding that parents' occupations largely determined how long children remained in school.²¹¹ To cross-check my

²¹¹ According to Troen, while 82 percent of all white children between the ages of six and twelve were attending school in 1880, only 43 percent of thirteen to sixteen-year-olds were attending. The employment of parents was decisive in determining who continued their education past the age of twelve. "There were 8,262 children of 'laborers', the major component in the unskilled [labor] classification, in the district schools, but there were only 23 in the high and two in the normal school. Similarly only one child of a 'laundress' was found in the high school and

analysis, I reclassified my sample using Troen's groupings of parents' occupations: professional, businessman or manager, skilled labor, clerk and minor white collar, and unskilled labor. Socioeconomic class in all its complexity is difficult to pin down, particularly in the United States, and my method, which analyzed not only parents' occupations but also the other information given on the Census's pages (the presence of servants and boarders in the household, age at which siblings were no longer in school, and the affluence of neighbors) is a fairly subjective one. Troen's was less subjective but also less sensitive to the nuances of economic success and education as they relate to occupation. For example, though printers fall into the category of skilled labor, and their amateur journalist sons tended be out of school by 17 or 18, their access to print culture provided an alternate avenue to acquiring advanced literacy. Thus their amateur newspapers were slightly more likely to contain "serious" or "advanced" criticism than "light."²¹²

none was preparing for teaching but 1,711 were in the district schools. ... On the other hand, 'professionals'... sent 113 to the high school, nine to the normal school, and 1,866 to the district schools." According to his analysis, the "disparity between children of different classes was most marked among the seventeen through twenty group. The higher the father's position, the greater the son's chance for schooling, the better his job, and the smaller the chance of unemployment." Even so, because secondary schooling was a nascent institution at this point in time, only a small percent of even the most privileged parents sent their children to high school. Selwyn K. Troen, "Popular Education in Nineteenth Century St . Louis," *History of Education Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1973): 27, 30, 32.

²¹² For color versions of these graphs and my data see jessicaaisaac.net/GraphingAmateurdom.

Distribution of Type of Criticism by Fathers' Occupations

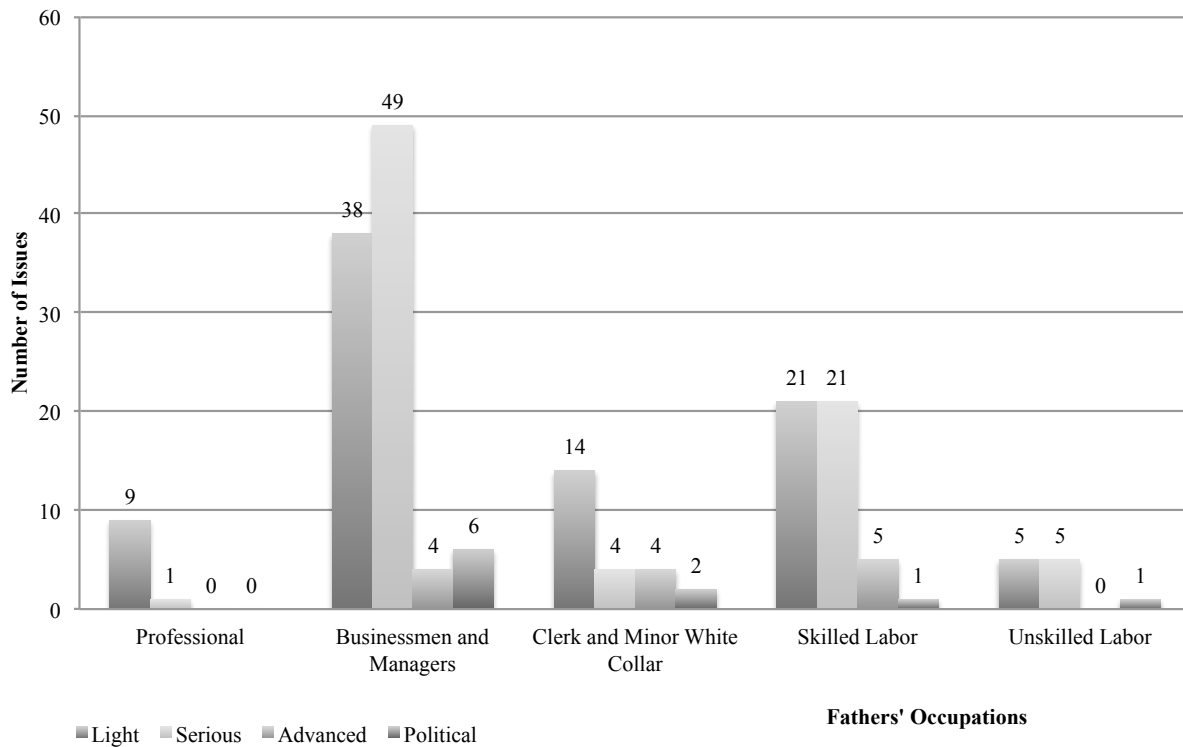


Figure 12. Distribution of Type of Criticism by Fathers' Occupations

This chart shows that the number of “serious” or “advanced” issues is higher for all occupation groups *besides* “Professional.” The fact that there is not a clear trend up or down except for the predominance of light criticism amongst the children of professionals clearly indicates that higher class background, higher cultural capital and a greater prospect of advanced schooling did not translate into more serious or advanced critical writing, nor even a greater amount of interest in amateur journalism at all. Furthermore, the popularity of amateur journalism among the children of businessmen and managers as well as of skilled laborers suggests that parents played a significant role in finding out about amateur journalism and very possibly in acquiring a press for their children, especially as the category of skilled labor

includes printers. As Elizabeth Harris documents, small presses were advertised to businessmen as way to do their own minor printing (receipts, business cards, etc.) and these advertisements simultaneously suggested that boys could use the presses as well. A flier for an 1882 Golding Press contains an illustration of a businessman doing his own job printing next to an illustration of a boy printing in front of the family hearth. The caption reads, “Every man his own printer, and every boy a Ben Franklin.”²¹³ This aspect of parental involvement, something the amateurs seem to avoid referencing in order to emphasize their own independence, may or may not play a role in the rising and falling numbers of amateur newspapers from year to year, but as of yet there has been little investigation of this issue (perhaps *because* references to parents are so oblique).²¹⁴ The vast majority of the amateurs in my sample lived at home with their parents, suggesting that parents made space within their homes, budgets, and schedules for their children to engage in this activity. Despite the amateurs’ resistance to writing about them, their parents’ affluence and occupations very largely structured amateurs’ outlooks and interests.²¹⁵

²¹³ See a reproduction of the flier in Harris, *Personal Impressions: The Small Printing Press in Nineteenth-Century America*, 9.

²¹⁴ “Bub’s Composition on the Amateurs,” a satirical piece reprinted from the *Make or Break* by the *Correspondent* in 1879, is an unusual exception. Written from the imagined perspective of an amateur’s younger brother, the piece pokes fun at the self-importance of the amateur journalists. The narrator writes, “I never found out why the amateurs laughed a regular horse laugh, nor why Will kicked me out of his old hen coop when I said Pa wrote his editorials, but I guess Will was ashamed of his own father. Pa is not extra good looking.” “Bub’s Composition on the Amateurs,” *Correspondent*, January 1879, 1–2.

²¹⁵ The one point raised by Troen’s analysis and not satisfied by my own is the disconnect between the age at which the amateurs left school and the age at which they became amateur journalists. Why were the less privileged amateurs entering the ranks at an older age if they probably left school earlier, especially if amateur journalism functioned as a replacement for school for many youths? Based on the numbering of issues and on occasional discussions of their history as amateur journalists (prolific amateurs were fond of narrating their experience), the amateurs in my sample fell anywhere from being completely new to the ‘Dom to having been associated with it for five years. The children of professionals and unskilled laborers were all completely or very nearly new to Amateurdome as of their first issue in 1879, but all of the former were still in school (according to the Census) while the latter most likely would have left school several years prior (according to Troen). Amateurs whose parents worked in unskilled labor thus were joining the ranks at an older age even though they most likely would have left school earlier than their peers. Given their economic position, it seems likely that these youths would have had to purchase their own presses with money they earned themselves, or that their families would not have been able to invest in a press very quickly. The material economic conditions of that group especially determined the age at which they became amateur journalists. For the middle three groups (the children of businessmen, clerks, and skilled

Though there are clearly visible trends within the data, individual amateurs do not easily represent them. This is partly a result of the variability of amateurs' writing (one paper may contain issues that fall into all four of the "critical" categories) and the intricacies of socioeconomic class and cultural capital. Methodologically, however, it points to the need for methods that support large-scale analysis and highlights the limitations of the use of representative examples. Of the small body of scholarship on the amateur newspapers, that which treats class status treats the amateurs briefly, and that which treats the amateurs in depth tends to use examples chosen for their extraordinariness and to assume they have a privileged middle class status.²¹⁶ The studies of individual examples are, as Eliot puts it, necessary but not sufficient for understanding the larger context of amateur journalists' writing practices and personal ambitions. By dealing more explicitly with the losses created by corpus creation and the creation of data from a corpus, I characterize a larger body of material while also ameliorating the losses produced through my methods. This approach enables an analysis of an entire portion

laborers) it is possible that they became amateur journalists not long after leaving school, according to their ages and Census records, and had easier access to the funds with which to support the hobby.

²¹⁶ Paula Petrik capitalizes on wide reading in the archive but focuses on prominent examples that exemplify discussions about race and gender in *Amateurdom*. She characterizes the amateurs as "the rising sons of the middle class" who spent their time at study, play, "typical boyish pranks, organized sports, and junior political and reform activities." Ronald and Mary Zboray treat the relationship of socio-economic class to amateur authorship of all kinds complexly in *Literary Dollars and Social Sense*, pointing out that amateur authors had multiple motivations for writing, only some of which were tied to making money. Their work treats the amateur journalists in a few pages, however, and does not speak specifically to their class background. Daniel Shealy's article on *Little Things*, a paper published by five sisters from the Lukens family of Brinton, Pennsylvania in the early 1870s, explains that the girls created their paper as an alternate means of education and socializing when they were unable to muster the funds to attend high school in a neighboring town. Shealy thus articulates their status as less-affluent middle class, but does not investigate their relationship to the larger body of amateur journalists. Elizabeth Harris's representation, in her printing history of small presses, is based on letters from boys to the press makers, and draws a similar portrait. She suggests that boys made a few dollars with their presses, but that their motivation was enjoyment, not training for professional advancement. Paula Petrik, "The Youngest Fourth Estate: The Novelty Toy Printing Press and Adolescence, 1870-1886," in *Small Worlds: Children & Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 125; Ronald J Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass Market Book* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Daniel Shealy, "The Growth of 'Little Things': Louisa May Alcott and the Lukens Sisters' Family Newspaper," *Resources for American Literary Study* 30 (2005); Elizabeth M Harris, *Personal Impressions: The Small Printing Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston; London: David R. Godine, 2004).

of the textual field—a portion more likely to be representative given its selection based on date and location of publication rather than on outstanding, unusual, or idiosyncratic features of the texts.

Judging by their degree of commitment to writing “serious” criticism, amateurs whose backgrounds were moderately privileged or just outside of secure middle-class status were most invested in using amateur journalism as a means of self-cultivation and self-promotion. [This is borne out by the writing in the papers themselves. The children of professional parents took amateur journalism least seriously, while the children of unskilled laborers showed almost as much investment in “serious” criticism as their peers from families headed by businessmen, clerks, and skilled laborers though they perhaps lacked the education required to write “advanced” work. Amateur journalism was clearly not just an amusing pastime, but also played into the desire to “rise through the ranks,” to use Alger’s phrase. The kind of self-promotion that editing an amateur newspaper demanded fit very neatly with youths’ (and their parents’) sense of what was required to enter middle-class adulthood in the 1870s and 80s. By connecting census data to a systematic classification of a relatively large sample of amateur newspapers, I demonstrate that the influences of the amateurs’ backgrounds played a significant role in the kind of writing they produced. I show the diversity of the amateurs’ investments in the hobby and that their investments were more likely to be high when their cultural capital and socioeconomic class status were low.

Working with the amateur newspapers provided a singular opportunity for rethinking methodological approaches to large textual fields and the people who produced them. I was prompted to reassess my thinking and my research by the particular conditions of this archive, which lends itself to scaled up, quantitative, and classificatory approaches. However, the insights

generated by my approach evidence the necessity of methods that use data creation as a heuristic, that employ the interpretive strengths of book history, literary history, and literacy studies to generate quantitative representations of a field of examples. Book history as a field is particularly equipped to support such work because of its attention to the materiality of archives and artifacts, because of its existing quantitative approaches, and because of its emphasis on evidence drawn from outside texts themselves. Finally, the rich interpretive possibilities opened up by the histories of the multiple collections in the interarchive of amateur newspapers, alongside the value of the existence of multiple collections themselves, highlights the importance of the material collections housed in libraries and museums around the world. They have a great deal to say about the contexts that enabled their creation. This research demonstrates the possibilities for working with archives as a unit of historical analysis at the same time that it emphasizes the importance of carefully creating metadata in digital archives. Creating a data-based representation always entails a loss; best practices must seek to ameliorate them.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ For models, see Shigeo Sugimoto's and Joanne Evans' recent work for discussions of the importance of preserving and making available metadata (and even "meta-metadata"). Shigeo Sugimoto, "Digital Archives and Metadata as Critical Infrastructure to Keep Community Memory Safe for the Future – Lessons from Japanese Activities," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 61–72; Joanne Evans, "Designing Dynamic Descriptive Frameworks," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 5–18.

6.0 DATA, CHILDHOOD, AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN BOARDING SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS

In 1881, a group of Native American students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School began editing and printing their own newspaper. It is small in size and contains a variety of student writing—some written for class, some written expressly for the paper. Its size and physical layout echoes that of the amateur newspapers, and indeed, the Library of Amateur Journalism at the University of Wisconsin Madison lists an issue among its holdings. The significance of this paper, however, is radically different from that of the amateurs' journals. Produced by indigenous young people undergoing a brutal process of cultural indoctrination in a setting far removed from their families, societies, and homelands, *The School News* stands as evidence of their response to that experience. It is "official" evidence of their response, a document that they created and circulated with the approval of their teachers and the school administrators, and is thus, as I emphasized in Chapter One, an especially compliant version of their response. Though there are moments where students challenge school policy or fantasize about "bad" Indian behavior, on the whole the paper does not reject or question the boarding schools' larger project of, in founder Richard Henry Pratt's oft-repeated phrase, "killing the Indian to save the man." It is a representation of Native students' official response *in situ*, an example of what they were able to do within the constraints of their context. It is thus, on the whole, unnerving. It is unnerving to read these students' apparent complicity in their own indoctrination; it is unnerving

to conceive of this paper as a public document that circulated not just among amateur journalists and, presumably, other editors of school newspapers, but also among government officials, interested Anglo-Americans, school donors, and others who had a stake in the success of the Indian boarding school movement. This paper harnessed the presumed authenticity of children's written voices, intensified here by the indigeneity of the students, and used it to sell the story of Carlisle's success to the American public.

This paper's status as an official but student-produced document that circulated publicly creates a delicate situation for scholars. How can we interpret this material without recreating or reinforcing the genocidal project of which the boarding schools were a part? This is the question that comes up when I discuss these materials with other scholars, and it is sometimes posed in a way that suggests that the answer is always already, "we can't." The cultural, social, and psychological trauma from the boarding school experience lives on for many Native Americans, including those who only experienced it second hand. Settler Americans who came after or descend from those who came after and whose culture exists in the space created by the destruction of Native American sovereignty are, when they are sensitive to the suffering of Native Americans, tremblingly, overwhelmingly aware of this trauma. This context makes critical discussion of the boarding schools difficult. Scott Lyons puts it this way:

No aspect of Native history has been more maligned in contemporary discourse than the boarding-school experience, or, as the historian David Wallace Adams names it, 'education for extinction.' ... This discourse is powerful. The narrative is unshakable. I remember a few years ago inviting three older Native women to speak to a class on their boarding-schooling experiences, thinking they would complicate the typical narrative of victimization. In fact, they reproduced it faithfully, to the point of breaking down into tears while recounting the awful abuses that they had to endure. Naturally, my class was horrified, as was I. Yet, during the Q&A it was revealed that the abuses the women had described did not happen to them. One who claimed she had been punished for speaking her language confessed that she actually never spoke that language, and another admitted to never having attended a boarding school at all ('but my brother did'). The narrative, it seems, had colonized the women's own personal experiences. Whether this was because

of a desire to produce a certain critical discourse in the Indian space of my classroom, or to the return of a repressed historical trauma, is impossible to say. In any case, despite new scholarship on boarding schools that complicates greatly the discourse of victimization ... as well as other recent histories describing the boarding-school experience as multiple, mixed, and diverse--it will probably be a while before the boarding schools receive more complex treatment in the realm of public memory.²¹⁸

In this coda, I reflect on the larger contribution of my dissertation by demonstrating what it would mean to read boarding school papers in such a way as to honor Native students' written compliance. Though memory and memoir are often privileged in discussions of the boarding schools because they allow adults to frame the experience within anti-colonial politics, these papers offer another window into Native students' experience, one that is necessarily colored by the compliance that allowed them to survive. Gerald Vizenor's term "survivance" might take on yet another new life in this formulation as survival through compliance. I have argued that compliance is a necessary strategy for children and that it plays a central role in the production or reproduction of societies; I have asserted that children influence social reproduction through their choices within compliance. These issues are heightened and refracted anew through indigeneity and colonization; indeed, the characterization of Native Americans as dependents of the U.S. in nineteenth century political discourse, and Native Americans' own characterization of the American president as the "Great White Father" highlights the ways in which the dependence of children and the dependence of colonized peoples' were conceptually intertwined in the nineteenth-century American imagination.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ He cites Tsianina Lomawaima's *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (1995), Brenda Child's *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (2000), and Amanda Cobb's *Listening to Our Grandmothers' Stories: The Bloomfield Academy for Chicksaw Females, 1852-1949* (2000). Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2010), 22-23. I would add a number of others.

²¹⁹ Scott Lyons describes the working out of this dependence in a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1830s. "In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), Chief Justice John Marshall's famous pronouncement of the Cherokees as a 'domestic dependent nation' constituted the United States' first major, unilateral reinterpretation of Indian sovereignty, one further tinkered with a year later by the same court in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832). In the former

Recent scholarship on these periodicals tends to seek out examples of student resistance to these adult influences in order to show how Native children agentively contended with the school environment.²²⁰ There are moments within the papers of obvious resistance, of students directly rejecting or reformulating school ideology, and of less obvious recuperation of values from tribal culture. However, in my close examination of issues of *The School News* and *Eadle Keatah Toh* from 1881-1882, most of the student writing is performing an extravagant compliance for teachers, administrators, and those invested in Native education who served as the papers' larger public. While the amateur journalists can be said to be ambivalently complicit in forms of professional development and authority, Native American students' writing shows them contending with a much more present and forceful sense of adult power that demanded their compliance.

A quantitative approach akin to the one I develop in chapter four would bring the ordinariness of this compliance forward. The writing in the Carlisle papers, like much of the archival material of this dissertation, invites a quantitative approach because it is repetitive, numerous, and not easily organized hierarchically; that is, it is hard to say that one or a few

opinion, Marshall deemed the Cherokees limited in their claim to sovereignty, seeing them as a nation not-quite-foreign, but suggested nonetheless that the Cherokees still formed a 'distinct political society'... In short, Indians are defined here as fellow nations requiring treaties. Yet in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, George Marshall wrote that 'the term foreign nation' *wasn't* quite applicable to Indian nations, suggesting instead that the Cherokee Nation's 'relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian.' This was because Indians—'savages'—newly arrived on 'civilization's' fresh path—were in a state of pupilage.'" In *Suffering Childhood*, Anna Mae Duane discusses how "national policy on Indian removal often touched on the question of whether Indians could behave as good children, good students, and good dependents or whether their independent nature would lead them to resist the 'civilizing' effects of education." Scott Richard Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?," *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 3 (2000): 451–52; Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim* (University of Georgia Press, 2011), 167.

²²⁰ See Lisa K. Neuman, "Indian Play: Students, Wordplay, and Ideologies of Indianness at a School for Native Americans," *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2008): 178–203; Jacqueline Emery, "Writing Against Erasure: Native American Students at Hampton Institute and the Periodical Press," *American Periodicals* 22, no. 2 (2012): 178–98; Cristina Stanciu, "'That Is Why I Sent You to Carlisle': Carlisle Poetry and the Demands of Americanization Poetics and Politics," *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 1–2 (2013): 34–76; Jennifer Bess, "More than a Food Fight Chilocco Indian School Journal," *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 1–2 (2013): 77–110.

examples are more important than the rest. They demand instead to be understood as a whole. This desire, born of much current scholarship in the digital humanities, to know the whole of a textual field in order to understand its influence, resonates uncomfortably with the larger impulse, which began in the 1830s, to treat children as a source of data, and even more uncomfortably with the treatment of racialized subjects as objects of data collection.²²¹ In the scientific and juridical settings that called on children writ large as a source of evidence, children become interesting as reiterative examples of the same thing. They *become* data, similar to the same way slaves became data, a quantifiable mass, as Ellen Gruber Garvey points out in “‘facts and FACTS’: Abolitionists’ Database Innovations,” where she describes Angelina Grimké Weld, Theodore Weld, and Sarah Grimké’s *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), the most widely read abolitionist text before *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.²²² “*American Slavery As It Is* compiled testimony from those who had lived in the South and from former slaveholders like Sarah and Angelina Grimké themselves, but it also relied heavily on materials from the Southern press, particularly advertisements for runaway slaves.”²²³ The Grimké sisters organized and classified ads for runaway slaves from a large number of newspapers “to compile the book’s ‘many thousand facts thus authenticated by the slaveholders themselves,’” and integrated them with the narrative testimony they had solicited.²²⁴ *American Slavery As It Is* was meant to quantify a quantification, to compile in one place as many advertisements as possible in order to demonstrate the scope of slavery and to repetitively emphasize the dehumanizing, monetizing language of the slave trade. When slaves became data, it was possible to use that

²²¹ See Chapter One, pp. 41-42.

²²² Ellen Gruber Garvey, “‘facts and FACTS’: Abolitionists’ Database Innovations,” in “*Raw Data*” Is an *Oxymoron*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013), 90.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 94.

transformation to illustrate how human beings had been reduced to something less. Slave narratives invert this problem, they resist the dehumanizing effects of treating slaves as chattel whose value can be expressed by a number, by granting a voice and a cohesive narrative to those subjects.

Children, however, are so much the same, or so we would believe, perhaps because, as Weikle-Mills points out, the social contract demands that we imagine children as free and equal, that to treat them as data actually affirms our sense of liberty and assures us that we all began this life on equal footing. Treating children as a quantifiable mass also allows them to “speak” (to signify, to communicate meaningfully) without requiring that children themselves can articulate their own significance. In other words, treating children as data acknowledges their usefulness as a source of knowledge about the human condition while simultaneously affirming their presumed inability to say what they know, to use language as adroitly as an adult presumably would, and to understand their own circumstances and themselves. Native American children have so lacked access to venues for voicing their own concerns on their own terms and have been treated so cruelly as the objects of Anglo-American scientific and social scientific scrutiny that quantitative treatment of their writing risks amplifying this problem. Quantitative methods, it seems, might doubly silence them, both as indigenous people and as children.

I would argue, however, that a quantitative approach has the potential to make visible Native students’ collective strategies for contending with overwhelming expectations. By recognizing compliance in the student writing in these papers, I emphasize the necessity of compliance as a survival strategy for children who find themselves living in a hostile environment. By identifying and quantifying students’ modes for responding to a situation that demanded their compliance, I would surface Native children and youths’ common approaches

for strategically engaging the will of their teachers. Further, the comparative methods from my second chapter can bring forward the influence of editors on the kind of youth writing that gets published. I have done a preliminary comparison that blends these approaches of *The School News*, edited by a series of Native American students, to *Eadle Keatah Toh*, edited in 1881-82 by Mariana Burgess, a white Carlisle teacher. The student writing published in the two papers shows significant overlap in students' dominant strategies of response, but significant differences as well. The writing chosen for *The School News* is more centrally focused on the ideology of Carlisle and students' success within Carlisle, while the writing chosen for *Eadle Keatah Toh* depicts students narrating their daily experiences more broadly with less of a focus on reproducing Carlisle's ideology. Though one might expect more diverse student writing in *The School News* because it was at least partially directed towards Anglo-American youths as well as Native American boarding school students, that paper seems to have been more tightly focused on Carlisle's ideology perhaps *because* it was directed towards the students of the school. The quantitative approach makes these differences clear and explicit.

More importantly, however, this work emphasizes what it means to read the whole of a body of children's writing. This dissertation has lingered over the question of a whole archive, a whole body of writing, and the movement of that whole throughout the culture. Too often, that whole is easiest to identify from the center. It is no accident that an archive of work produced by mostly white, mostly male youths is so large and has been so carefully and multiply, if sometimes haphazardly, preserved. I struggled to find a way to view more than one Indian boarding school's papers at once, ultimately heading to New York City and dividing my time between the titles at the New York Public Library and the Burke Library of the Union

Theological Seminary at Columbia.²²⁵ The Burke has many of these titles because of their connection to mission work—their library subscribed to these papers when they were in publication. These materials were produced *for* audiences living in cultural and commercial centers, rather than *from* the relative privilege of white male youth. Like Kale’s letter about the *Amistad* rebellion and Reed’s letter about the Donner Party tragedy, whose originals have both been lost, the boarding school papers have been preserved because they represent a significant national project. They demonstrate how American childhood had a cohesive enough ideology that it could be systematically imposed on Native children, even within a military-style school context.²²⁶ I have worked to reveal the mechanisms by which children’s immediate participation in the rituals of schooling and social reproduction, and, at a secondary level, in the published print circulation of the nation contributed to the construction, maintenance, and ongoing development of that ideology. Though many of the examples I have studied here are

²²⁵ I also viewed materials from the Gustavus Elmer Emanuel Lindquist Papers, which date from 1897-1955. Lindquist was a sort of missions middle manager, overseeing many missionary schools and projects around the U.S. as a member of the Home Missions Council of the Federal Council of Churches. His papers contain many issues of school newspapers collection, which he gathered as evidence of the schools’ success. These items are not listed in the finding aid.

²²⁶ Most of the papers I viewed devote significant space in their December and January issues to recounting the Christmas festivities held at the boarding schools: students busily finishing up gifts for one another, pageants and carol singing, feast-like celebrations on the day itself. At the Burke Library, I viewed and photographed sample sets from the *North Star* (Sitka, Alaska; 1887-1892), the *Red Man/Red Man and Helper* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania; 1892, 1899-1900, 1912, 1915), the *Chippeway Herald* (White Earth, Minnesota; 1902-1903), the *New Indian* (Carson City, Nevada; 1903), the *Indian Orphan* (Bacone, Oklahoma; 1913), the *Carlisle Arrow* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania; 1913-1916), the *Haskell Institute YMCA Bulletin* (Haskell, Lawrence, Kansas; 1915, 1924), the *Chimewa American* (Chimewa, Oregon; 1917-1918), the *Sherman Bulletin* (Riverside, California; 1921, 1924), the *Indian Leader* (Haskell, Lawrence, Kansas; 1925, 1926, 1930), the *Indian Outlook* (American Indian Institute, Wichita, Kansas; 1928), the *Santee Arrow* (Santee, Nebraska; 1929), the *Chapel News* (Riverside, California; 1930), the *Oklahoma Indian School Magazine* (Andarko, Forst Sill, Riverside Indian Schools; 1932), the *Century Mark* (Wheelock Academy, Millerton, Oklahoma; 1932?), *Indian Education* (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.; 1936-37), the *Year Book, Onandaga Reservation School* (New York; 1937-38), the *Ganado Bulletin* (Ganado Mission, Ganado, Arizona; 1942), the *Peace-Piper* (Oklahoma Presbyterian College, Durant, Oklahoma; 1944), and *Indian Highways: Cook Christian Training School* (Phoenix, Arizona; 1945). At the New York Public Library, I viewed and photographed sample sets from *The School News* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania; 1880-1883), *Eadle Keatah Toh/Red Man and Helper* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania; 1880-1882, 1885-1886), *Talks and Thoughts of the Hampton Indian Students* (Hampton, Virginia; 1891-94, 1895-96), the *Indian Helper* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania; 1891, 1895), the *Word Carrier of Santee Normal School* (Santee, Nebraska; 1900-1905), the *Native American* (Phoenix, Arizona; 1904-1906), the *Indian School Journal* (Chilocco, Oklahoma, 1904, 1919-21, 1925-26), and the *Indian Craftsman* (1909-1910).

extraordinary, children's participation (through face-to-face interaction or through writing and publication) is ordinary enough to form one of the basic constitutive elements that enables a culture to function and reproduce itself. My aim has been to highlight the power of children's compliance in serving this purpose.

My work with the boarding school papers has only begun, but what I have done suggests significant continuities with Kale and Reeds' letters from Chapter Two. Of the 160 articles I surveyed from 12 issues of *The School News*, about half express pride in adopting or excelling at some form of Anglo-American culture, but about 20% perform what I call "anxious" compliance, repeated insistence on loving what is clearly difficult for students to love, like doing domestic or manual labor, or what they have clearly been asked to love, like praying and being good. These forms of compliance rest uneasily alongside each other, the more anxious performances unsettling other expressions of proud confidence. About 10% register some form of mourning for classmates lost to distance or disease, or for family far away, but approximately the same number describe amusing mistakes in language or behavior on the part of students as a kind of knowing joke. Only about 3% openly refute school values, and usually do so in a way that resolves the conflict they initiated. This small percent is not insignificant considering the controlling pressure of the adults who supervised the paper's publication.

Comparison to teacher-edited *Eadle Keatah Toh* reveals marked differences in emphasis. That paper includes many more instances of students writing to narrate their experience, to share facts or quote something they heard or read, more instances of students expressing pleasure in social connections, more instances of students writing to self-advocate, make requests, express pragmatism, pride in being different, or to describe their feelings. Though Mariana Burgess was using student writing in *Eadle Keatah Toh* more transparently to drum up support for Carlisle

and the larger idea of the Indian boarding school, she also seems to have believed her readers needed or wanted to see a more expansive, confident, and tender portrait of her students than comes through in *The School News*. This editorial choice shares a great deal with those that framed Kale and Reed's letters; those letters are powerful because they are intimately expressive, because they give a full portrait of the young people writing, and because they provide their writers space to speak powerfully from outside citizenship, outside the common range of American experience.

Children's writing in nineteenth-century American periodicals has received more and less attention depending on its relationship to other important topics, but I want to make a strong argument here for its cohesion as a large body of material. There were common practices around selecting, editing, and publishing this material; there were common strategies that youthful writers used to make themselves legible in print; and there are today important and ever more prolific uses of children's writing in many kinds of media. These uses are as ordinary today as they often were in the nineteenth century. The children's writing that gets published and circulated is typically short and pithy rather than eloquent and developed, it typically reveals the limitations of its writer rather than exemplifying her prowess. It is *because* of those seeming limitations, *because* of children's writing's oppositional relationship to the forms of authorship that have traditionally been valued that children's writing packs a significant cultural punch.

Recently Kyle Schwartz, a third-grade teacher in a Denver public school with many impoverished minority students has made the news with "I Wish My Teacher Knew" assignment, where she asked her students to finish that sentence on a slip of paper so that she could understand them better. Schwartz is young, passionate, photogenic, and white, and her

students' responses, which she initially published on Twitter, are "heartbreaking."²²⁷ "I wish my teacher knew my reading log is not signed because my mom is not around a lot"; "I wish my Teacher knew I Dont Have Pencals at home to Do my homework"; "I wish my teacher knew how much I miss my DaD because he got DePorted to Mexico when I was 3 years old and I haven't seen him in 6 years." Her assignment and its media coverage have inspired a hashtag and teachers across the country have been implementing her assignment for students of all levels. The affordances of digital media have allowed photographs of the original writing to circulate, but only a handful appear again and again—those I quote above and one or two others. These are, one might safely guess, the most moving examples from one or two classrooms, the examples that most clearly articulated the secret suffering Schwartz hoped to access. These sentences confirm the nation's ideas about what it means to be a student at an inner city school and they seem to point to children's ability to articulate their suffering without knowing fully the weight of their own words. These pieces circulate because of what they allow their readers to feel and to continue believing and their careful curation and publication supports Schwartz's efforts to bring attention to her school's needs. Schwartz's students' compliance and her complicity in framing their work within the expectations of the reading public doubly amplify its power and reach, producing just the kind of children's writing that we have learned to read.

In this dissertation, I have surveyed the children's writing that was published in American periodicals across the mid-nineteenth century to understand how children came to develop a voice and a purpose in American public discourse and which have enabled the kind of compliant

²²⁷ Nicole Pelletiere, "Colorado Teacher Shares Heartbreaking Notes from Third Graders," *ABCNews.com*, April 16, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/colorado-teacher-shares-heartbreaking-notes-graders/story?id=30368103#.VTAXQ_h37gQ.twitter; David Gardner, "Kyle Schwartz: The Heartbreaking Tweets You Need to Read," *Heavy.com*, April 17, 2015, <http://heavy.com/news/2015/04/kyle-schwartz-the-heartbreaking-tweets-you-need-to-read-teacher-students-class-iwishmyteacherknow/>.

circulation Schwartz and her students have set in motion. I brought forward an understudied body of material (i.e. children's writing published in periodicals) to analyze children's presence in nineteenth-century America's print public sphere, integrated theoretical insights from children's literature studies, literacy and composition studies, and childhood studies to interpret children's writing as a historical artifact, and combined materialist approaches from book history and the digital humanities to develop methods for reading large archives of children's writing as well as singular examples. Along the way, I have challenged longstanding ideas about children and the public sphere. That is to say, I challenged the idea that children do not often have their writing published, the idea that their writing is discounted or unimportant when it is published, and the idea that small pieces of children's writing in periodical venues do not have a significant cultural impact. I have argued that children's writing had an important influence on mass culture in the nineteenth century precisely because it was small and ordinary and could thus capitalize on childhood's ability to make ways of thinking and being seem natural.

I opened the introduction with the question of what it meant to invite the young to participate in the American print public sphere, and I end by answering that it frequently and importantly meant modulating youthful voices to support the kinds of projects in which childhood was already deeply embedded. This is still the case. Whether in Kyle Schwartz's Twitter feed, or in the multiform youth publics that the technological affordances of the twenty-first century make possible, children's published writing has become only more common, more voluminous, and more ordinary. It thus remains a fundamental element of the systems of discourse and publication that originated in the early nineteenth-century and that continue to shape, support, and alter our thinking about who we most deeply are.

APPENDIX A

1840S AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS LISTED IN AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY (AAS), LIBRARY OF AMATEUR JOURNALISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN (WI), AND ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (RIT) CATALOGS

St.	City	Title	Year	Archive
MA	Boston	Monument	1840	AAS, WI
MD	Frederick	Moon	1840	AAS, WI
MI	Marshall	Great Western	1840	AAS, WI
NH	Nashua	Nashua Notion	1840	AAS, WI
MA	Fitchburg	Pioneer	1841	AAS, WI
OH	Columbus	Devil's Offspring and Columbus Literary Acorn	1841	WI
MA	Boston	Voice of Warning	1842	AAS, WI
NH	New Market	Ne Plus Ultra (The)	1842	WI, AAS
MA	Boston (?)	The Budget	1844	AAS
NY	Albany	Amateur Pensee	1844	WI

MA	Boston	Bedford Street Budget	1845	AAS, WI
MA	Boston	Bostonian	1845	AAS, WI
MA	Boston	Gleaner	1845	AAS, WI
MA	Boston	Monthly Rose [also titled Monthly Rose, and Literary Cabinet]	1845	AAS, WI
NY	Albany	Amateur Pensee	1845	AAS
NY	Buffalo	Buffalo Journal, The	1845	WI
NY	Buffalo	Olio, The	1846	WI
MA	Boston	Eagle	1846	AAS, WI
MA	Boston	Germ	1846	AAS, WI
MA	Boston	Sunbeam	1846	AAS, WI
MA	Enfield	Enfield Evening Star	1846	AAS, WI
MA	Worcester	Bee	1846	AAS, WI
MA	Worcester	Minute Gun, The	1846	RIT
NY	NY	New-York Gazette	1846	AAS, WI
OH	Savannah	Sunbeam	1846	AAS, WI
PA	Philadelphia	Satchel, The	1846	WI
MA	Dedham	Eagle, (The)	1847	WI
MA	East Boston	Young Idea	1847	AAS, WI
VT	Huntington	Vermont Autograph and Remarker	1847	AAS
MA	Boston	Boston Boy	1848	AAS, WI
ME	Bath	Eagle	1848	AAS

CT	Stonington	The Extinguisher	1849	AAS
KY	Frankfort	The Kentucky Spy and Porcupine Quill	1849	AAS
MA	Waltham	Waltham Domestic Advertiser	1849	AAS, WI
NY	Poplar Ridge	Gleaner	184?	AAS

Figure 13. 1840s Amateur Newspapers Listed in Major Catalogs

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