How to Put Away Childish Things:
Children's Cultural Production and the Hermeneutics of Care

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It is always a pleasure to be in community under the American Antiquarian Society's "generous dome," and it is a particular delight to be here today at the start of this symposium, so full of friends, collaborators, and people whose work I have long admired. Most of all it is simply thrilling to celebrate the launch of "The Historic Children's Voices" website, and all the research, collecting, cataloging, and curatorial work that has enabled this project. The wonderful Ashley Cataldo, Lauren Hewes, and Laura Wasowicz will have more to share about this project with those of you attending the symposium tomorrow, but it is an extraordinary effort to identify the materials in the AAS collections that were produced by young people, to describe them, in some cases to transcribe them, to digitize them, and to make them widely, easily, and freely available online. All the images and materials I will discuss today refer to items in the Antiquarian Society collections, many are now available through the Historic Children's Voices website. This project, like so much AAS does, is engaged in fostering a truer and more inclusive narrative of early America, and one piece of that process is acknowledging that we stand here today on Nipmuk land, and to recognize all the labor, free and enslaved, over generations, that has enabled this gathering.

A brief account of my own intellectual journey into Childhood Studies offers, I think, a convenient gauge of the value of this project and of the resources and experience the American Antiquarian Society brings to this work. I first visited AAS in 1991. Laura Wasowicz was working here, having been hired just a few years before as Senior Cataloger for a National Endowment for the Humanities funded American Children's Book project with the goal of

producing rare book level computer cataloging for the 19th century children's books in the collection. Many of these books bore no imprint date, or only pseudonymous authorship, and no prior work had been done to identify the genres or subject matter of the American Antiquarian Society's children's literature holdings. Thirty years ago AAS—and Laura!—were doing foundational work in shaping the possibilities of access and study for early American children's literature. I was thinking about reform movements and had come to AAS to write an essay on temperance fiction, and the array of temperance holdings I encountered here demonstrated the surprising role that children played in the fictional reformation of drunkards. That essay turned out to be the starting point for my book *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*.[1] With Laura's help and the new capacity to search for "Juvenile" in the AAS database, the collection provided materials for a chapter on Sunday School stories and missionary work, and I was half way through writing this book about how child figures functioned in nineteenth-century reform discourses when I realized that all my scholarship focused on writing by adults and so on adults' ideas about childhood. There was not a single actual child voice, perspective, or trace of cultural agency recorded in any of the materials I had studied. I had written my first book on the rhetoric of the abolitionist and feminist movements, and knew I could never have responsibly written such a book using only white, male sources, yet here I was not even trying to find children's voices!

I was not alone, indeed what Jacqueline Rose posed as the "impossibility" of children's literature, largely rests upon a sense of childhood as inevitably inaccessible, an unattainable site of nostalgic longing and desire.[2] This is a salutary critique that I understand, and to some degree

[1] Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[2] Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

share, but nevertheless I went back to AAS and comparing birthdates and manuscript dates for every diary in the collection I was able to compile a rich array of children's diaries (and went on to find many more, as well as other sites of childhood writing at AAS and in other collections). Child authored texts likely exist in most archives, stored among family and institutional records preserved for adult reasons, but it is hard to know they are there unless librarians notice them and develop cataloging practices that identify them.

My scholarship in the decades since has significantly focused on locating child-made things and child-authored texts, and in developing models of interpretation for materials that can often seem too simple or trivial—too childish—to be culturally meaningful. Allison James describes the core paradigm for Childhood Studies scholarship as the double recognition of children as social actors and childhood as a social construction.[3] Accepting that model the challenge remains of how to hold those two recognitions together, so as both to honor children's agency and to acknowledge all the ways that it is circumscribed. Marah Gubar notes that Childhood Studies scholarship too often ricochets between these poles, between inflated claims for child agency and repressive accounts of childhood as a time of intensive socialization, and she urges a middle ground in what she proposes as a "kinship model" of Childhood Studies.[4] In *Dependent States* I similarly asked what it might mean "to claim voice, agency, or rights for a figure who is not, cannot, and indeed should not be fully autonomous" and noted that answering that question carries far wider implications for how we think about agency at all. Children's dependent state, I wrote

> 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

[3] Allison James, *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice* (New York: Red Globe Press, 2004).
[4] Marah Gubar, "The Hermeneutics of Recuperation: What a Kinship-Model Approach to Children's Agency Could Do for Children's Literature and Childhood Studies," *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 8, no. 1 (June 2016): 291–310.

> autonomous individual of liberalism's rights discourse ever has….in the difficulties of disentangling the experiences of children from the discourses of childhood[,] childhood may prove one of the most lucid places for understanding the relation between individual identity and cultural discourses…. As the real and imagined site of becoming human, of entry into the social world, childhood is the time during which we must each first discover how we are and are not 'part." (xxv-xxvii)

The materials assembled by the Historic Children's Voices project affirms children's capacities and the value of children's voices, but it also illuminates all the ways that their voices are contained by the expectations of schools and families and by the childhood discourses of children's literature. Adults frame the possibilities of childhood. **SLIDE** The professionally printed Almanac produced by nine-year-old Truman Safford Jr. cannot be self-validating; it requires certifying statements and a biographical sketch authored by adult men, who detail their own credentials as ministers, teachers, and doctors, and attest that they witnessed Safford executing these astronomical calculations.[5] Once validated by these adult voices Safford's youth can become a ground of celebrity, and images of the prodigy circulated far beyond Vermont.[6] **CLICK CLICK**. **SLIDE** There is probably no more stultifying emblem of the social construction of childhood than 19th century copybooks: where penmanship skills were honed by the repetitive replication of set sentences, usually moral dictums. This pedagogical practice makes it absolutely explicit that the child's proper formation depends on copying. Esther Evans could have quite elegant penmanship when she chose—she clearly enjoyed practicing flourishes, and look at the word penmanship itself! But **CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK** most of her writing book pages are extremely sloppy, even ones that intone that "youth is the time to improve the mind." The Esther Evans papers consist of four of Evans's writing books bound

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[5] See Truman Henry Safford, *Youth's Almanac, for the Year 1846* (Bradford, Vt: Published by A. Low. A.B.F. Hildreth, printer, Bradford, Vt, 1845) and; *The Young Mathematician's Almanac, for the Year 1847* (Boston: Published by B.B. Mussey. A.B.F. Hildreth, printer, Bradford, Vt, 1846).

[6] Ephraim W. Bouvé et al., *The Young Vermont Mathematician: Yours Very Truly T.H. Safford Jr*, graphic ([Boston: E.W. Bouvé, 1846).

together into one volume in which these dispiriting copy-texts are chaotically intersperse with **SLIDE** exuberant, colorful paintings of flowers, fruit, shells and especially portraits of elaborately dressed young women with wild black curls.[7] I don't know whether Esther had gorgeous dresses and abundant hair or only wished for them, but in a kind of agentive wish-fulfillment her paintings disrupt her penmanship lessons.

Children are never just passive receptors of culture shaped by school assignments or didactic readings. **SLIDE** Some nineteenth-century children's books do seem to recognize the oppositional complexity of moral instruction—*The Good Boy's Soliloquy* provides readers with an entertaining illustrated list of things NOT to do:

> I must not ugly faces scrawl,
> With charcoal on a white-wash'd wall

The author's introductory note to this volume, urges readers to "seriously practice the advice which I give you: doing all that I command, and avoiding all that I censure; as, otherwise, […] I shall […] be accused of putting a number of naughty things into your head, which it is most probable you never think of yourself." **CLICK, CLICK** So is it compliance, rebellion, or just plain fun for Polly or Yetter Amelung to copy the drawings done by that bad boy on the end pages of their book?[8] Although "juvenile" and "annotations" are searchable paired terms in the AAS database, marginalia is not yet included in the Historic Children's Voices website, neither are letters, nor school lessons, nor are the kinds of hybrid, mixed use, generically unstable texts Esther Evans created. Which is only to say that there will long be room for this project to grow. The transformative thing is to have that structure in place and through the work of creating the

[7] "Esther Evans Papers, Mss Folio Volumes E," manuscript (1848), American Antiquarian Society.
[8] *The Good Boy's Soliloquy: Containing, His Parents' Instructions, Relative to His Disposition and Manners* (New-York: Published by Samuel Wood & Sons, no. 261, Pearl-Street; and Samuel S. Wood & Co. no. 212, Market-St. Baltimore, 1819) "To the Reader," poem and illustration 17, and drawings on the endpapers in copy held by the American Antiquarian Society.

Historic Children's Voices project AAS is developing systems, nomenclature, and metadata, that provide categories and rationales for the preservation of items created by children, in ways that begin to name these generic modes and that already make it much easier to address a wide array of theoretical and interpretive questions. Also funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities—who wins elections matters!—the Historic Children's Voices project is figuring out how to "put away childish things" in the literal sense of how to archive children's cultural production.

Of course, the title of my talk echoes First Corinthians 13's dismissive attitude towards the ways of children: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things," that's the New King James Version. This text recognizes children as possessing particular identifiable and unique ways of speaking, understanding, and thinking even as it traces a progress narrative that valorizes rejecting those modes of expression and insight, and presents such putting away of the childish as a metaphor for the transformations of divine love. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." Interestingly, this dismissal of childhood is spoken by a speaker who understands himself to be, as he speaks, still in the position of the child, in the now that comes before love's transformations. It seems often to be the case that the very act of insisting on the insignificance of children entails an identification with and deep attachment to this life stage. I will come back to love, and to the yearning to know and be known, that grounds what I am calling a hermeneutics of care. But to start I want to think about this odd double impulse of disregard and investment in valuing childish things. It has, I suspect, a deep connection to the contingent, limited notion of child agency.

SLIDE The story of Isaiah Thomas and the founding of the American Antiquarian Society epitomizes questions of child agency and of the dismissal, keeping, and cherishing of things made for or by children. I presented a more detailed version of this argument in both my and the AAS's first-ever Zoom lecture in the Spring of 2020, but I had begun that project intending to give it in this room and I can't resist sharing a little bit of it now, before turning to material featured in the Historic Children's Voices project. Most of you probably know the outlines of Thomas's history, but I have provided a brief chronology here. We are gathered in this place because in 1812 **CLICK CLICK** Thomas founded a society to, in the words of the Antiquarian Society's historian, Philip Gura, "collect all things that pertained to American history, no matter how slight or insignificant they might seem at the moment of their acquisition."[9]

SLIDE This is the document that bound Isaiah Thomas as an apprentice to Zechariah Fowle and his wife.[10] I have typed the language of the standard printed indenture in white, the handwritten specifics in yellow. In New England during this period most apprentices were bound in their early teens—at thirteen or fourteen years of age—but the Overseers of the Poor were charged with organizing care for children at risk of destitution and so were often willing to bind far younger children. Accounts of Thomas's trajectory appropriately stress his capacity for self-making, but it is useful to note that his early relation to print shops was in no sense his choice. Indenture is a potent instrument of social replication. The terms of Isaiah's apprenticeship required that

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[9] Philip F. Gura, *The American Antiquarian Society, 1812-2012: A Bicentennial History* (Worcester, Mass: American Antiquarian Society, 2012), xiii.

[10] There are two copies of the June 4 1756 indenture binding Isaiah Thomas to Zechariah Fowle one in the Collection of the American Antiquarian Society the other in a volume in the Boston City Clerk's Office. Scans of both are available online at https://patriotprinter.org/becoming/doc-ms.html.

> "the said Apprentice his said Master & Mistress well and faithfully shall Serve, [….] in all Things and at all Times, he shall carry and behave him self towards his said Master &c and all theirs as a good and faithful Apprentice ought to do to his utmost Ability"

In return Fowle agreed to house, feed and clothe the boy and:

> "to teach or Cause the said Apprentice to be taught by the best way and means he Can the Art and Mistery of a Printer also to Read write & Cypher…."

SLIDE Fowle ran a small and not very accomplished print shop, mostly producing chapbooks or popular, bawdy, and satirical broadside ballads like this one, which notes it should be sung to the Beggar's Opera tune "Polly is a sad slut." Such broadsides are the epitome of print ephemera, a cheap entertainment to be enjoyed and thrown away. This particular ballad, "The Lawyer's Pedigree," has something of a "House that Jack Built" structure. It begins:

> A Beggar had a Beadle
> A Beadle had a Yeoman
> A Yeoman has a prentice
> A prentice had a Freeman
> The Freeman had a Master
> The Master had a Lease
> The Lease made him a Gentleman and Justice of the Peace […]

And concludes

> And so it came to pass,
> A Beggars Brat, a scolding Knave,
> A crafty Lawyer was.[11]

The satiric trajectory from the beggar of the first line to the lawyer of the last, ridicules the status claims of the law; in this topsy-turvy structure the poor and young can become the clever and powerful. There are only two known extant copies of this broadside and both are annotated by Isaiah Thomas to document his role in its printing **CLICK CLICK CLICK**: Printed from pica type first set by Isaiah Thomas at six years of age

[11] *The Lawer's [Sic] Pedigree: Tune, Our Polly Is a Sad Slut* (Boston: Printed and sold [by Zechariah Fowle] below the Mill-Bridge, 1755).

We don't know precisely how, why, or when the adult Thomas re-encountered and annotated these texts he had set as a child. But it is clear that he immediately recognized this broadside and wanted to preserve it both for itself—as a bit of popular culture—and as material evidence of his own childhood labor. That Thomas noticed and saved this bit of print ephemera, and annotated it in these ways, suggests the importance to him of preserving this record of his childhood labor and precocious induction into his craft (even if he left the "y" out of lawyer). As Ruth Herndon's survey of indentures demonstrates "Binding out was not intended to give poor children opportunities 'above their station.' It was not a progressive system but one designed to maintain the status quo."[12] It is only because of the exceptional shape of Isaiah Thomas's career, his extraordinary, uncharacteristic "rise"—coupled with his interest and investment in preservation—that his juvenile labors and his agency as a juvenile actor remain legible. Indeed, he would insert references to his apprenticeship experiences—both the learning and the exploitative labor—throughout his *History of Printing in America*, not just in the sections devoted to Fowle's shop or to his own career.[13]

SLIDE In an autobiographical fragment he never printed, Thomas writes about his apprenticeship and the setting of this ballad.

> My Mother then was left with 5 children to bring up, without any means of her own for their support. In this extremity she did the best in her power [….] myself the youngest was at the tender age of 6 years at her request brought home and at the earnest request of Mr. Zechariah Fowle, a printer and seller of ballads and pedlar's small book[s] placed in his care [….] After I was bound and he had absolute power over me, he put me to all the servile employments in his family that I could perform, and when business of that kind was wanting, he placed me at the type cases. In order that I might reach the boxes of both capitals and lower case he had a bench made of sufficient height, and of the length of a double frame, that I might traverse when necessary from Roman to Italic and from Italic to Roman. I soon learned the type boxes. The first Essay I made was on a ballad called the Lawyer's Pedigree. I set the type, which was double Pica, for this ballad in two days,

[12] Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray, eds., *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 51.
[13] Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America* (New York: Weathervane Books, 1970).

> tho' I then only knew the letters, but had never been taught to put them together and spell [….] His office was the only school I ever had [….] I soon learned by practice to set types, and to read tolerably, and obtained some knowledge of punctuation. [14]

This account is not, of course, evidence of Thomas's own childhood perspective, his "Historic Child Voice." This document is produced by Thomas as an accomplished adult printer, and it forges a satisfyingly heroic narrative of his becoming. Still there is no reason to question the accuracy of his account of the construction of the bench that enabled his juvenile presswork, his lack of formal schooling, or his childhood capacity to accurately set type before he could read. I am struck by the care Thomas takes here to explain and sympathize with his mother's situation, and of course by the detailed description of his press work: the double sense this narration gives of exploitation and skilled accomplishment. The many terms of trade in this brief account—like the "Pica" of his inscription on the broadside itself—assert expertise. There was much child labor in print shops and we know even more in rag-picking and paper-making. So, I want to prod us to pay attention to this silenced aspect of book history and childhood history. The labor of setting type is one rarely noted way that children may well be present in the archive of children's literature.

SLIDE When in 1812 Isaiah Thomas donated his personal library to the American Antiquarian Society to form the basis of this new institution, he accompanied it with a meticulous manuscript catalogue of 2,650 titles. About half the materials donated were items he had collected, and the second half of the catalogue lists books printed by him, his business partners, or his son.[15] **CLICK** The alphabetical list of Thomas titles includes many children's books **CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK**.

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[14] "Autobiographical Fragments" "Isaiah Thomas Papers" (n.d.), American Antiquarian Society; see also Isaiah Thomas, *Three Autobiographical Fragments* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1962).
[15] For the Catalogue of Thomas's private library see Octavo Vols. T, vol 17 "Isaiah Thomas Papers."

SLIDE The section of the catalogue devoted to Isaiah Thomas imprints ends with a short list of his "Books for Children" organized somewhat differently—by price and size rather than alphabetically by title. As you can see the books listed here were generally reprints of English titles or anthologies of well-known pieces. Thomas frequently re-issued these little books, producing multiple editions; they were what book historians call "steady sellers." These books were small in size, cheap (4 cents, 8 cents, 10 cents, 17 cents, and the most expensive at 20 cents), and plentiful. Many of his advertisements list these titles individually or by the dozen. Thomas notes at the bottom of his list of "size No. one, 4 cents books" "several others of this size not recollected." In his highly detailed catalogue, these children's titles appear to be more generic, and in many ways, Thomas treats these books as essentially interchangeable. Yet Thomas's children and school books mattered to his business, indeed they seem to have generated over a quarter of his press profits.

> Clarence Brigham (AAS Librarian/Director for fifty years from1908-1959) writes:
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> > There is every reason why the American Antiquarian Society should emphasize the collecting of children's books. Isaiah Thomas, the founder of the Society, was the most noted publisher of children's books of his day, and issued more of these little volumes than any other American publisher of the eighteenth century. Yet, strangely, he did not deem them worthy of preservation in the comprehensive library which he bequeathed to the Society. [16]

Why not? Are children's books good enough to sell but not good enough to archive? Too "slight and insignificant"? Or do these enduringly popular children's titles continuously fly off the shelf, selling too well to donate? I would suggest that both these reasons pertain, that these early American children's books are durable and ephemeral at once—both too unimportant culturally

[16] Clarence S. Brigham, *Fifty Years of Collecting Americana for the Library of the American Antiquarian Society, 1908-1958* (Worcester, Mass: American Antiquarian Society, 1958), 42.

and too valuable commercially to be archived, a perfect instance of the dynamic dance of significance and insignificance in the treatment of childish things.

SLIDE Brigham goes on:

> When the present Director came to the Library in 1908, he did not find a single Thomas juvenile except for eleven volumes which Thomas had had beautifully bound in leather, with elaborate tooling, and labeled on the spine "Youth's Library." Every other volume in our collection of over ninety editions of Thomas juveniles has been acquired since 1908. (42)

Here is that gorgeously bound "Youth's Library." The pages themselves are the inexpensive pamphlets Thomas printed in the 1780s and 90s—although not the cheapest, the library consists of his size 4, 17 cent books. The decision to put such ornate bindings on his own copies of cheap juvenile pamphlet publications is itself a mark of ways that Thomas cherishes juvenilia—in the "Youth's Library" the small appears as precious jewel: ephemera enshrined.

SLIDE Thomas not only preserved some of his ephemeral publications for children in these beautiful bindings, he also retained the press on which he first set type as an apprentice. In this way his commitment to preserving the nation's early print history enfolds the preservation of his own early childhood history as a printer's apprentice. Thomas acquired this press in 1770 when he bought out his old master Zechariah Fowle, thus purchasing the instrument to which he had been indentured. He continued to use the press in his print shop at least into the 1790s. This press ("old no 1," as Thomas called it) is now displayed right up there above the reading room in Antiquarian Hall. When the American Antiquarian Society restored the press in the 1980s a scrap of printed material was found pasted to it—this Monkey. It comes from *Food for the Mind*, one of the titles that Thomas included in his list of "Books for Children" as a size No

1, 4 cent book.[17] Someone who worked this press at the very end of the 18th century apparently appreciated this children's book—this riddling monkey—enough to use it to decorate this workplace. Like most of Thomas's children's books *Food for the Mind* was first printed in London by John Newbery in 1778.[18] **CLICK CLICK**. While the text is the same, Thomas's edition of this riddle about the competitions of mimicry sports a far better, and obviously New World, monkey! Here is the whole riddle **SLIDE**.

Questions of speech and silence, enslavement and independence, mimicry and status ricochet through this riddling verse in a way that is suffused with racial and class hierarchies, and that makes a fitting emblem of the issues I am tracing. A picture of a monkey, printed by Isaiah Thomas in a cheap book for children, whose text was pirated from an English original in the years after the American Revolution, was pasted as an unruly joking decoration onto the printing press where six-year-old Isaiah Thomas learned to set type as an apprentice, and that he later owned as master. As Henry Jenkins observed, "If politics is ultimately about the distribution of power then the power imbalance between children and adults remains at heart a profoundly political matter."[19] Once you attend to childhood it is not difficult to locate children in the archives, indeed childhood runs from Roman to Italic through every line of Pica type.

The library holds Isaiah Thomas's childhood cultural productions, his apprentice print work, including some plates he engraved as an apprentice that I didn't discuss today, but it contains no record of his own child voice.

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[17] *Food for the Mind: Or, A New Riddle Book: Compiled for the Use of the Great and the Little Good Boys and Girls of America* (Worcester, Mass.: Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts by Isaiah Thomas. Sold wholesale and retail at his bookstore, 1794).
[18] "John the Giantkiller," *Food for the Mind; or, A New Riddle-Book;* (London, Printed for the Booksellers of Europe, Asia, Africa and America, 1759).
[19] Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: Childhood Innocence and Other Modern Myths," in *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. Henry Jenkins (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 31.

The AAS does contain words written by **SLIDE** Lizzie Stalker born in 1853 in Ipswich Massachusetts and Hattie Foster born in 1854 in Derby Lane Vermont.[20] Both girls kept diaries during the civil war years. One of the great advantages of the Historic Children's Voices website is the way that it facilitates comparisons, revealing, for example, encircling title page conventions for girls' diaries of this period. In both diaries the daily tasks of school and home, interactions with family and friends, the pleasures of favorite activities, concerns about health and the weather, and moments of self-reflection, combine with entries that register the lived intensity of the war.

SLIDE Lizzie Stalker's diary was a gift from her cousin Ella Hardy. The volume itself was not produced for this purpose, but rather it was intended as an account book, so the familial gift inscription appears on lines set to record financial relationships. The accounts Lizzie writes in this book are not financial accounts but they run across column lines printed to register dollars and cents. Thus, the very material form of this diary demonstrates the contingent scavenger conditions of so much childhood cultural production, how much it depends on repurposing structures and materials meant for adult uses, a condition that exemplifies both agency and constraint.

In starting this diary Lizzie Stalker explicitly rejects and resists the volume's account book structure. In addition to the flower-encircled name she creates as a title page, she draws sprigs of flowers atop the first 17 pages of her book. Such floral decorations are a frequent feature of the most expensive, purposefully designed, girls' diaries of the period. Even before she begins

[20] Elizabeth Boynton Stalker Jeffers, "Diary, Mss Octavo Volumes J," manuscript (1863-1864), American Antiquarian Society; Harriet Foster Hawes, "Diary, Mss Octavo Volumes H," manuscript (1865), American Antiquarian Society both diaries are included in the Historic Children's Voices website.

writing in it she is re-making the contours and possibilities of this volume. Stalker starts her diary:

> June 28th 1863. With pleasure I begin to write in my little pink book a present from cousin Ella. It is Sundy and I feel very grateful that I could go to meeting and sabbath school. How beautiful nature looks in her summer dress.

Calling it her "little pink book" Stalker ignores the Counting House Almanac and printed slogans—"Large Sales and Small Profits" "Prompt Pay Insures Bargains"—to focus on the color of the little book's pink paper wrapper. She likes pink and will with her mother make a pink and white dress for a new doll. Her opening observations demonstrate too her familiarity with the conventions and etiquette of feminine diary writing, describing writing itself as a pleasure, affirming faith, and appreciating natural beauty. The personification of nature, "how beautiful nature looks in her summer dress," does however seem to reflect something of Stalker's attitude toward the world around her, an appreciation of and detailed attention to nature that is not simply conventional, but that seems rooted in religious feeling and appears most often in her Sunday entries: "Al nature looked as if it had washed her face for the sabbath" she writes one morning after a rain (August 14, 1864).

The pink paper cover of Lizzie Stalker's diary was later professionally bound with a marbled board cover **CLICK** and on the new front pages that accompanied this binding an index to the diary has been added **CLICK**. At the very bottom of the page the index is signed "LRJ – Fall 1899." Elizabeth Stalker married Charles Jeffers and they had three children. Leroy, the oldest and only one whose first name begins with an L, would have turned twenty-one in 1899, and seems a likely person to have taken on the task of indexing his mother's childhood diary. Elizabeth Stalker Jeffers died in 1888, the same year her youngest child, Julien, was born so it is probable that she died from childbirth. Leroy would have been eleven or twelve at her death, two

years older than his mother had been when she started writing in her "little pink book." If turning an account book into a diary was initially a transformative appropriation, evidence of the precarity of children's cultural production, its preservation by this family, and later indexing and binding, like Isaiah Thomas's binding of the *Youth's Library*, entails a retrospective cherishing. There surely are child made things that are preserved by chance and inattention—scraps stored among other more consequentially "adult" papers, (Trudy Williams if you are here, I am thinking of that wonderful cornstalk fiddle letter you found stuck between the pages of a Hadley Town Meeting record book) but many child-made things are preserved by love, and intergenerational care. One thing I consider part of a hermeneutics of care is the practice of attending to the dynamics of relationship and preservation in the act of interpretation. Leroy put effort and care into memorializing his mother.

CLICK As a girl, Lizzie Stalker, frequently worried about how well she was living up to her mother's expectations. At the bottom of the very first page she notes, "Mother left me to keep house while she went and she told me not to go out doors and sorry to say I disobeyed her and got a bad cold." A month later she would chide herself for never sufficiently valuing her mother, "How I ought to love her while I have her. I do love her very much but I don't half so much as I ought" (July 19, 1863). Two 1864 entries in a row contain only these brief records of shame: "May 8, I have today deceived dear Mother. May 17, Disobeyed my dear Mother." The phrase "dear Mother" may be a sentimental convention, but in writing it here Lizzie intensifies her confession. For all her floral decorations and her assertions of the pleasures of writing, she clearly understands her journal as a means of moral correction—which is to say she experiences her own acts of cultural production as doing disciplinary socializing work. That is, to put it in Allison James's terms, her roles as social actor—both disobedient girl and self-reforming

commentator—are actively engaged in the functions of subject creation and social construction. "I have something that I must record with pain" Stalker writes,

> but I want to record it so as to remember it as long as I live. Yesterday, some girls called for me to go over to Miss Hewman's store and there was a little piece of pink tape hung on the counter and I took it and I feel very sorry about it and dear Mother gave me two sents [cents] to pay for it. I hope it will be the last time and I mean it shall. (September 10 1863)

It seems Stalker loves pink enough that she is tempted to steal a bit of it! Here the pink diary in which she "must record" her actions seems to be more stern than "dear Mother" herself, who upon learning of the misdeed requires a public admission of the theft, but provides the pennies to pay for this bit of ribbon.

The horrors of the Civil War offer no such easy resolution. Stalker's word for it, repeated in every mention, is "dreadful" **CLICK**:

> How very dreatful [dreadful] this war is. When will it come to a close and there are so many that favour the south, even of little girls in my school and they try to make me hate the poor slaves. I pity them very much. (June 30, 1863)

> Poor Father's grass is spoiling in this wet weather. Again I say how dreadful this war is and mobs are all through our land those that favor the south. (July 18, 1863)

> O I dread to say anything about this dreadful war. It is still rageing [raging] very furious. O when will it come to an end. We are living in dreadful times. Our beautiful flag is up half mast every day for some poor soldier fallen. There has been dreadful fires that have distroyed [destroyed] cities and cause great suffering. (July 31, 1864).

She knows many specific things not only about the Northern political divisions between the girls at her Ipswich Massachusetts school, and the Northern "mobs" of the draft riots, but also about the destruction of Southern cities. The dreadfulness of the war passes this affect into the act of writing about it: "O I dread to say anything about this dreadful war." This July 1864 entry is the only time in her diary that Stalker reaches for the poetic exclamation O, **CLICK** "O I dread," **CLICK** "O when will it come to an end." O is a wail of despair, that expresses the inadequacy of

any response, and of language itself to the dreadfulness of war. I am feeling that too today—feeling like all I can do is at least acknowledge that we are gathered here today in pleasure and celebration while dreadful wars are raging. What Lizzie can do in the face of all that is dreadful is make comfort bags, which are evidently a comfort to her as well as to the soldiers who receive them. She sews and assembles them not only for herself but also for both her parents—in that way taking civic actions for the adults of her household. In her accounts of this activity, she depicts the letters she writes to soldiers as at least as important as the soap and pins she puts into each handsewn bag:

> I made Father comfort bag for the soldiers and I made mine a good while ago. … I made mother's comfort bag last week and today I have been writing my letter to the soldiers. (July 22 and 26, 1863)

> I shall have the pleasure to go and carry my comfort bags this afternoon. I filed [filled] mine with a piece of soap, a pencil, 2 tracts, 2 mesengers [messengers], a letter, some cloves, some yarn and thread, white and brown tape, red white and blue cotton, and pins knedls [needles], buttons for shirts panse, some cards, and a needle book, a wellspring, and a picture of a bad heart. (August 1, 1863)

> The sabbath school is about getting another box of comfort bags for the soldiers. I have made mine and I am now helping make Mother's and Father's. We are filling them with the same kind of things that we did before. I have written a letter and put into mine and I hope it will do the poor soldier who gets it good. I wrote one before and put it in my first bag. I am now reaping the fruits of it. I have received a beautiful letter expressing his thanks for the things that I sent and telling me how he gave some of them away among his companions and how glad they were for them. (April 10, 1864)

The limited impact and self-consoling structure of this charitable care for union troops, like Stalker's "pity" for the "poor slaves," reveal the constraints on meaningful social action available to this ten-year-old girl, but they are not different in-kind from the constraints on agency that hem us all, however adult and autonomous we may consider ourselves to be.

SLIDE Hattie Foster's account of her daily activities is written in a blank paper-covered book that she titles not diary but "Scrap Book." It is a bit of a mixed-use volume, the diary

entries of the first half giving way at the end to a common place book where Foster copies out poetry, and the opening paragraph of the juvenile novel *Milly's Taper* **CLICK CLICK**, a book all about children's capacity to respond to world problems.[21] In this passage Milly is troubled by her Sunday School teacher's lesson that "Grown people ought to be like lamps, and even children ought to light their little taper at Jesus' feet" and worries "I am such a little girl, I am sure I don't see what good I can do." Hattie's copying ends here. In the novel Milly's affluent, self-satisfied parents, dismiss her concerns, but Milly dedicates herself to seeing what good she can do in her community, and not only ameliorates a variety of local needs and harms, but also gradually reforms her parents from their complacent ways. Like much 19th century juvenile literature, *Milly's Taper,* insists on children's peculiar power for doing good. It is useful to remember that, for better or worse, there are strands of 19th century American culture—including exploitative ones like child labor—that are grounded in a strong sense of child capacity and agency. **CLICK CLICK**

Our contemporary difficulties in maintaining such a posture is evident even in the Historic Children's Voices website, where traces of adult bias remain. This is the access page for Hattie's Scrap Book / Diary. For all sorts of good cataloging convention reasons, even though this book was produced by a nine-year-old girl named Harriet Foster, the dominant last name in this entry is her adult, married, name Hawes. AAS research has done excellent, very labor-intensive work collecting biographical information about all of these young authors. But here too, there is some adult bias. It is certainly useful to know the names of Harriet Hawes husband and children—this is similarly the clue that LRJ might be Elizabeth Stalker Jeffer's son Leroy Jeffers—but for reading these materials, knowing more about the shape of Hattie's childhood

[21] Harriet B. McKeever, *Milly's Taper: Or, What Can I Do?* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 9 Cornhill, 1863).

household would provide a far more relevant context. **SLIDE** Hattie Foster's 1865 diary entries were written right between the production of the 1860 census and the 1870 census.[22] Over this decade Harriet grew from 6 to 16, her merchant father's business grew sufficiently to hire and bring into the household a second clerk, and to replace the single domestic servant born in Ireland with two from just across the border in Canada—where Hattie's mother had been born. It is helpful in reading Hattie's scrapbook to know that she was the oldest child of four, though baby Stephen would only be born in 1867, two years after Hattie had stopped recording her life in this book.

SLIDE Hattie's diary entries are full of people and activities. There is much visiting with friends and relatives that in the rural distances of northern Vermont and Canada required staying at least a night or two. In sugaring season workers stayed at the sugar shack to keep it boiling. Hattie's favorite activity is dancing and she attends dancing school as often as possible. "I went to dancing school last and I am going this evening I think I am getting to be rather too fast for such a little girl as I am" she boasts (March 7, 1865). **SLIDE** Like the Stalkers, the Fosters also do what they can to support the Union troops, although Hattie presents her mother not herself as playing the central role in these efforts: "Ma has gone to the soldiers meeting" Hattie writes on March 9, 1865, and the next day records, "We packed a box for the soldiers today."

By April, as the war nears its end, just as her mother's engagement with "soldiers meetings" follows directly after details of Hattie's little brother Johnnies' birthday presents, Foster intersperses news of the war into descriptions of her own activities:

> Monday April 3 [she writes about quilting]
> I pieced up a whole square today and a half. Aunt Mary cut a lot of pieces for me I have 70 blocks. **CLICK CLICK** We have glorious news. Richmond is taken they are firing of cannons ringing the bell beating a drum.

[22] 1860 and 1870 United States Federal Census for Derby Vermont accessed through Ancestry Library.

> Thursday April 13
> Went out to the sugar place but they had got all done sugaring off before we got down there … General Lee and his army have surrendered.

Most of Hattie's daily entries cover a page or less, **SLIDE** but on April 15th her entry runs over three pages. That is the day Abraham Lincoln was assassinated and she records a great deal of detail that echoes coverage in the local press. Her entry begins not with family life, but with national news, that first reaches her family—probably due to her father's role as the proprietor of Derby's dry-goods store—via telegram.

> **CLICK** Saturday April 15
> We have terrible news we got a telegram this morning that President Lincoln was shot through the head last night at a theartere [a word she does not know how to spell] and died this morning a few minutes past seven **CLICK** O it is terrible. And a man went into Mr Sewards room and stabbed him three times and killed his son wounding four servants besides. It was in the paper that President Lincoln and Gen. Grant was to be at the Theatere but Gen. Grant was called away so he was not there. If he had been they would have killed him. Mr. Lincoln was un-ushaly happy chatting with Mrs. Lincoln and another lady who was with him when he came up behind him and shot him through the head. He was unconscious till he died. He was **CLICK** 57 the 12 of last February. We do not whether it was the same man that shot Mr. Lincoln was the one that stabbed Seward or not.

With no break the entry shifts to another killing

> **CLICK** Father had Cargoe taken of[f] today to be killed. Poor fellow he was very sick it seemed as though it hurt him to breathe. He would lift up his paw every time he breathed. He could not walk far enough to get in to the house. I took him up in my arms and brought him in-to the house. I brought the mat out from the porch and he laid down on it. We have had him two years this spring. **CLICK** He was born in the spring. Johnnie doesX not know that he is dead. He is two years this spring.

Foster shifts from narrating the national shock of Lincoln's death to recording the home grief of the death of her dog, Cargoe. That President Lincoln was killed is "terrible news," a national tragedy, and a dramatic story. Father's decision to kill Cargoe is not a shock, the necessity of this death is understood and accepted, but Hattie's sorrow is expressed through detailed attention

to the dog's pain and precise descriptions of her own acts of care. Just two years old Cargoe was still something of a puppy and the repetitions of his age and spring birth, suggest her difficulty in quite believing this loss, and so function very differently from the factual information replicated from press notices detailing Lincoln's age and February 12th birthday that Foster similarly records. Foster's account of Lincoln's assassination clearly draws from the grown-up sources of press coverage and adult conversations. In the prominence she gives Lincoln's death in her diary, Foster demonstrates her interest in and sense of connection to this national tragedy, but her telling is necessarily distant and derivative. In narrating Cargoe's death Foster produces a very different kind of narrative structured by immediacy and intimacy, one in which her own observations are the source of knowledge. Watching his breath, noticing what hurts him and the markers of that hurt in lifted paw or difficult walk, describing her own tender acts of taking him in her arms or arranging his mat, Hattie's narration of Cargoe's death is structured by empathy, including concern for the little brother who does not yet know their dog has died. From an adult perspective Lincoln's assassination is enormously important and the death of this dog may be sad but surely lacks significance. In putting these two deaths together in this way, Hattie Foster, undermines such hierarchies of value. For her both deaths matter, and happening together they become linked.

The diary does not mention Cargoe again, but subsequent entries include scattered reports of developing news of the assassination, including the time of "~~Mr.~~ President Lincolns funeral" (April 19, 1865) and the identification of the killer: "I have seen a picture of J. W. Booth he is fine looking" Foster reports (April 21, 1865).

Death is one area where what it means to understand as a child or think as a child, may seem most distinct from adult attitudes. William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballad* "We Are Seven"

is among the most well-known 19th century meditation on that difference. **SLIDE** Hattie Foster includes "We Are Seven" in the collection of poems she copies into the back pages of her "Scrap Book. Almost all of the poems Hattie copies are explicitly focused on the representation of children and childhood. Foster does not record the authorship of these poems, obscuring sources and any authority they may carry, as she literally reproduces in her own childish, block-letter, hand the 19th century poetic discourse of childhood. "A Little Sister" and "My Baby Brother" mirror Hattie's position as the oldest child in the family. Other poems are further from her experience: the collection includes Felicia Heman's "The Heroic Boy" (that is the poem that begins "The boy stood on the burning deck…") and Hannah Flagg Gould's brave little matchgirl poem "Mary Dow." When copying Caroline Howard's "Idle Girl" Foster meticulously reproduces the verses where the girl tries to cajole sun and wind and water to stop and play with her—they all "say no!"—but she leaves out the concluding verse where the idle girl realizes "I must not be idle alone all the day." In Howard's poem only after the girl embraces her "tasks" will these elements agree to join her in play. In her selective copying Hattie conjures an alternate discourse of childhood that does not consider play and community contingent on labor and obedience.

In copying "We Are Seven" Foster leaves out three stanzas. Wordsworth's poem begins **CLICK CLICK**:

> A simple Child, dear brother Jim
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?

But Foster does not copy out this generalizing, philosophical, stanza and its question about the limits of childhood knowledge. Instead, she starts her version of this poem with the "little cottage girl" of Wordsworth's second stanza. She also skips his third stanza in which the adult male

speaker ogles the girl: "Her beauty made me glad."[23] With these omissions Foster lessens the poem's objectifying, even if idealizing, adult vantage on childhood and strips the poem down to the mutually uncomprehending words exchanged between man and girl: his obtuse insistence on counting only her living siblings and the girl's calm certainty about her unbroken intimacy with those who have died.

"We Are Seven" is a fairly long poem and, even with the missing stanzas, it runs over seven pages in Foster's "Scrap Book." The first three pages are very neatly spaced with some erasures (as in this recentered titling) to perfect the layout. **CLICK CLICK** The fourth page, shown here, begins in this tidy way with the speaker arguing that "if two are in the churchyard laid /then you are only five." This is the moment in which man and girl's differing understandings come into express conflict and in copying the girl's response, Foster can't seem to make it fit, even after erasures, and so she curls two of the lines onto the line above. On these later pages, Hattie keeps having problems maintaining the divisions between lines as she inscribes, and so in a sense accompanies, the little maid's refusal of a divide between the living and the dead. The little maid's insistence on her continuing intimate connection with the brother and sister buried in the nearby churchyard, in so many ways far closer and more available to her than the two who "at Conway dwell" or the two "gone to sea," expresses a hermeneutics of care. In playing, knitting, sewing, eating, singing by their graves she affirms their presence through her own. Her acts of attention maintain connection in a way that goes beyond a memory preserved to a felt and present presence.

Leaving a long expanse of blank page that could easily have accommodated

[23] See for example *The Child's Book of Poetry: With Beautiful Engravings* (Worcester [Mass.]: Published by J.S. Wesby, bookseller and binder, 1851), 1. It is certainly possible that Foster copied this poem from an anthology that omitted these stanzas, but every pre-1865 juvenile poetry anthology in the American Antiquarian Society's collection, begins with these adult-voiced stanzas.

Wordsworth's final verse, Foster does not reproduce the poem's last stanza in which the narrator complains that "the little Maid would have her will." In removing the three stanzas that emphasize adult desires for and judgements of the child, Hattie Foster enacts her own will. If we pay attention to the details, we can see even in the ostensibly docile act of copying, how this ten-year-old girl materially, self-consciously, textually adds her own child voice, and its distinct desires and perspectives to the discourses of childhood.

SLIDE We are here today to celebrate the launch of the Historic Children's Voices project. But in their own ways young people have been consciously preserving records of their thoughts and voices all along.