Compliant Circulation: Children's Writing, American Periodicals, and Public Culture, 1839-1882


Abstract

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.
The American Missionary Association (AMA) was established in 1846 as an interdenominational missionary society devoted to abolitionist principles. This collection consists of his own writings and those associated with the nascent communist movement named after him. These documentary materials, originally dispersed among various French archives, are at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow. The collection includes the private papers of Babeuf.


Overview of the events of 1839 in literature. List of years in literature. (table). 1829. 1830. 1831. 1832. 2.2 Children and young people. 2.3 Drama. 2.4 Poetry. 2.5 Non-fiction. 3 Births. 4 Deaths. 5 Awards. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Jump to navigation Jump to search.