

Inheriting the Iowa Diary:

Little Women and Their Audiences on the Prairie



Kaitlyn Goss-Peirce

Grinnell College

Fall 2019

Diaries are literary sirens, enticing readers to open them through the opportunity to find a connection with the writer on the other side of the page, to learn all their secrets and understand them as deeply as the diary does itself. However, despite popular conception, diaries are not meant to be secret and left unread; for if someone took the care to save the moments of a life and protect them across time and distance, perhaps they deserve to be read.

Thomas Mallon, a diary scholar and diarist himself, did not think of his father as a diarist. Yet, after his father's death, he "came across thousands of [cancelled checks] in perfect order" that his father had saved (Mallon xv). Among them, the receipt for the doctor who delivered him – "they didn't audit you for 1951 in 1980; [his father] kept those checks for another reason" (xv).

I have never considered myself a diarist – the only times I have kept a journal were for class assignments and by instructor encouragement. However, I have always compulsively saved schoolwork, filched scraps of memories to be stored in boxes and scrapbooks, preserved digital imprints of myself in Google Drive and my email. So perhaps I am a diarist anyhow, a diarist with a nontraditional form of journaling; you certainly can learn the shape of me through these scraps of writing and records just as I learned the shape of Eliza Ann Bartlett, Lucile Hink, and Elizabeth Biggar through their more traditional diaries.

## SURVEYING DIARY THEORY

Diaries are unique in that they have few rules or guidelines; there is no "wrong" way to write a diary. Jessica Wilbur, as quoted in Suzanne Bunkers' anthology, decisively depicts the freedom of diaries: "Remember that there are only two rules for keeping a diary: '(1) Date every entry, and (2) Don't make any more rules'" (*Diaries of Girls and Women* 10). Philippe Lejeune agrees, adding the caveat that after you record the date, "you write whatever you're doing,

thinking, feeling” (Lejeune 169). Then, the only guidelines to diary-keeping are to track time and connect the diary to yourself. So, if there are no real rules, what *is* a diary? We all think we know what a diary is, but often mistake it to be “a self-portrait,” instead of the “discontinuous, full of gaps, allusive, redundant and repetitive, non-narrative” text that it is (Lejeune 153, 170). Diaries are not meant to recreate a person through stories and memories, like a memoir or autobiography; diaries “sculpt life as it happens and [take] up the challenge of time” (Lejeune 173). To be honest, the borders between diary, memoir, and autobiography are permeable, but this temporality is one of two points that are decisively separate: diaries absorb the dailiness and duty of a life, while autobiographies and memoirs highlight specific eventful moments in a life to create the person. The second impermeable difference is time. As established, passing temporality is integral to the diary; entries are written alongside a life, recording it one day at a time, full in all its monotonies and moments of note. Meanwhile, memoirs and autobiographies are reflective, written about a held past and composed of key memories. They are not constructed from the little daily tasks that created the author, but the big memories and events that changed or defined their lives going forward. These moments establish their power in their longevity: time has a chance to sink its roots into the stories recounted in a memoir or autobiography. They are a reflexive history: they do not share what you hope and wish to remember, but what you already have successfully stored in memory. Diaries are fresh and sharp in their details, refusing to allow nostalgia and other revisionist emotions to blur their edges into something softer.

In this second key difference, diary becomes “first and foremost an activity,” a “way of living before” a “way of writing” (Lejeune 153). Diary is built into a life, a choice made every day to continue writing (Lejeune). It is not one grand endeavor, but countless small actions to

create one whole once all is over. The unique aspect of diaries as a genre is that diaries are, in a sense, unconstructed. There are no anticipated endings, or even middles; the only certainties are the beginning and the death of the author (Lejeune). Even if a diary halts years before the diarist dies, there is still the potential for them to return up until the moment they are no longer capable of writing, making death the only true end to a diary. Lejeune is quite literal in his conception of a diary's end; for him, "a diary is not a text" when the diarist is alive, for too is the diary living and incomplete. It can "only become a text once the author dies" – when there is no more potential life to be added, so the diary also 'dies' and becomes complete (Lejeune 154).

Being so tied to life, complete diaries cannot be plotted in their entirety– they can only be fragmentarily contrived, due to their temporal foundation. Every diary entry is complete unto itself (Juhasc as cited in Wink), compiling into a completed work not unlike a novel within a series: recurring themes, events, and people thread throughout the whole to tie the pieces together. Yet each entry can stand alone and implies a sense of the future unwritten entries. Alongside temporality, it is vital to also note the crucial dailiness of the diary. Yes, the archetypal diary is a daily undertaking with time set aside every evening to record, but more specifically, diaries chart the foundations of a daily existence (Wink). Focusing on the mundanities and recording the menial responsibilities of a day help shape the diary into something so intrinsically temporal that the two cannot be divorced, as we shall see within the discussion of Lucile Hink's diary. This focus on the evergoing, present needs and deeds of a life makes diary-keeping a key attraction to less- and dis-enfranchised populations throughout the world; in Western society, this concept has caused the diary to be increasingly ascribed to the female populations that so commonly picked it up.

While it cannot be said that diary-keeping is “inherently female,” it is believed to be “a characteristically female form” of autobiography, largely due to the high prevalence of female diarists (Blodgett). The daily and piecemeal nature of diaries reflect the responsibilities that women’s feminine roles traditionally demanded in the home and social spheres. The fragmentation increasingly mirrored the “women’s ‘multidimensional, fragmented self-image’” (Jelinek, as quoted in Wink xii-xiii), while the “dailiness counter[ed the] attack on female identity and self worth,” allowing the diary to suit and support a woman’s specific needs (Blodgett 5). It is crucial to consider that the diary was one of the few genres of writing women were historically permitted, especially working class women. This reduced independent space is only heightened with the concession that “writing [diaries and letters] was virtually the only activity women could call their own,” being the only outlet that was free and belonging only to them (Hampsten ix).

Hampsten adds that, to fully actualize history, “one must read letters and diaries, for the thoughts of working women are [historically] recorded nowhere else” (vii). Yet, despite millions of such women recording diaries throughout history, the majority of published and preserved autobiographical work are men’s (Franklin xiv). Because “historical value” was required for preservation, men’s writing was generally preferred over the mundane, ‘trivial’ diaries of women (Hampsten). This perspective fostered a presumption and default of the male subject, in turn forming the “universalization of [the] male existence” (Long 15-17).

Worse, the tenets of men’s writing became “the criteria for evaluating women’s narratives” which could only “contribute to the[ir] invisibility” and further their classification as not being art (Long 18). Hampsten explains, “Art is judged by how long it lasts, whereas the

most common artistry of women is occasional and impermanent: food cooked, clothes sewn, letters written” (Hampsten 2). So, diaries are stuck: men defined art by their own criteria as established by their own writing, refusing to permit women’s works in the process. Thus, because women’s work was temporal and not long-lived, it was not art; because it was not art, women could not publish their diaries and create longevity and permanence. This continuing cycle categorically locked women’s diaries outside the artistic and literary academy, relegating them to a lower status and functionally permitting them to be disregarded for centuries (Podnieks 46). However, this removal from the academy is functionally what allowed women access to writing in the first place: because diary “made no grand claims to high artistic achievement,” women were allowed to “write in this genre without threatening male hegemony” (Marcus 120). So, even while the diary was barred entry to the academy for its ‘feminine’ qualities, these same qualities opened up a space for women to create.

Historically, many of the traits here attributed to women are paralleled in other minority communities. Racial, low economic, queer, and linguistic minorities have frequently been kept out of the classification of art, forced into impermanence and loss of control. The diary potentially allows these communities to have a space of domain, longevity, and rebellion from the external societal regulations that forced them into minority statuses. The dailiness of the diary focuses on the differences from the elite – the wealthier, White men who claimed default status and determined the academy – recording the fundamental pressures and truths of an oppressive existence. As such, the diary cannot be merely a feminine genre. Like Marcus, I consider the diary to be the “genre of the oppressed” (Marcus 116). Yet, for the purpose of this research, analyses are premised upon the lens of historical white female existences in rural

settings under economic constraints. The remaining discussion of theory functions under this frame of womanhood.

The ‘disciplinary exclusion’ of diary-keeping from what was deemed the literary academy ultimately permitted women to take up this “marginal” genre (Langford). The diary developed into a genre that does not belong entirely in the literary field nor the historical; it becomes “an uncertain genre uneasily balanced” along the margins, for “margins, after all, are [the] places where distinct domains meet” (Langford 7-8). Additionally, the diary’s exclusion from the artistic academy granted it marginality as an art form, which functionally permitted its use at women’s leisure. This exclusion culminated in giving women authority and control in the margins by creating “a space reserved for them,” where “women [could] create ideologies and symbol systems ... in codes not understood by men” (Huff 124).

These women-centered spaces also crucially allowed women to use the diary to create a sense of selfhood and identity. Women’s self-referential writing draws much inspiration from their world without external control and determination of who they are, so they are driven by “desire to be known,” to assert their *selves* in a space both within and beyond gender expectations (Long 28). Diaries allow not only the “explor[ation of] the varieties of female selfhood provided in preexisting models,” but also “promote an alternative series of identities for themselves that can counteract those models” (Simons 257). However, these identities are no less real for their literary constructions: “the longer a diary is kept, the harder it is for the diarist to conceal herself. ‘A succession of poses’ cannot fool a reader for long ... [and] the diarist comes, more and more, to express herself just as she *is*” (Franklin xxiii). The identity developed across diary entries is not how she performs herself in public, but who she is beyond the gendered

straits of existence; who the diarist would be if allowed a voice and freedom, both of which the diary provides.

This concept is complicated when considering the posturing that is required for the diarist's intended audience, but still may hold some value. The intended readership of a diary is generally intimate, and as such would hold a view of the diarist that is less constrained than her public face; this is the self she expresses within the diary, an extension of the private self she portrays to her loved ones. Podnieks does add the caveat that the diarist is not one, stagnant identity; no, she is "a self in process," in the act of living and developing (Podnieks 33-34). This continual development is vital, because women "locate themselves in their immediate circumstances," which are constantly shifting and changing (Hampsten 40). Writing and saving a diary forges these selves and identities into permanence, validating the women's existence and permitting them a future. But journaling also fastens that identity into truth and unchangeability, limiting the diarist's construction permanently.

There are many practical elements that limit a diary: the lack of time, energy, desire, or happenings to discuss will naturally curtail an entry. However, there are also social limitations of diary-keeping that function to reduce the range of potential content: the "cultural prescriptions" and "feminine constraints" that limit a woman's maneuverability and subjectivity in her daily existence likewise extend into her diary (Long 8). Long is decidedly explicit in her interpretation of the limits of women's writing: "Women's self-writing is animated by the tension between external control of women and the assertion of female subjectivity" (Long 27). In other words, female subjectivity that is unwelcome in the "social and symbolic world" shapes women's self-writing by limiting what can be said but necessitating that women create and express

ownership over themselves in their self-writings (Long 43). This contradiction can be difficult to reconcile with the authority and control women are given in their diaries. Women's diaries were free from external control in that they were viewed as harmless and lesser; this derision allowed women the opportunity to vent their lives. However, as their lives were shaped by gender expectations, so were the diaries: they cannot escape something they had been so contrived within and defined by. Thus, women were free to write, but had to act within their internalized social parameters, which creates a dissonance and silence between what they perhaps would like to confide and what they were socially permitted to write.

Such silences pervade the diary. An entry cannot account for an entire day, nor a diary for an entire life, so countless details must be omitted. Yet, "it is crucial to interpret these silences," for "what is not said in a diary entry can be every bit as important as what is said" (Wink xxi, Bunkers 18). Silences commonly result from what diarists perceive as too dull or too difficult to record. As such, sensitive topics, pain, and emotional turmoil go unmentioned in most women's diaries (Baer 216). Historically, the "good woman" was "defined by her absence," with her sphere "out of sight and sound" (Long 27). This theory suggests that women were socially trained to internalize pain and turmoil to the point of not even sharing with their diaries. In other situations, writing would only exacerbate the pain, so it was easier to not discuss the topic at all. Frequently, these omissions are masked by the unusual or unexpected happenings or hidden within daily routines. While it is tempting to only pay attention to the former, Hampsten cautions us to not dismiss the repetitive themes but "value them especially" (4). It is not the exceptional occurrences that make up a daily existence, and through the repeated recording of the tasks she routinely performs, we find the material that constitutes that diarist's life.

As previously discussed, women flocked to diary-keeping because of its unique positioning that allowed them an outlet to which they otherwise would not have had access. Each woman used her diary slightly differently, but major themes for the overall motives of a diary were established across a wide array of diaries collected across decades of research (Franklin, Moffat and Painter, Bunkers, Blodgett, Podnieks, Mallon). Diaries were used as a 'safe space,' as a confidante, as a refuge, as a 'testing grounds,' for record-keeping, and as a place for reflection and commentary, venting the pressures women couldn't release anywhere else in their lives (Franklin, Long, Bunkers, Lejeune, Wink). Specific categories of context and need nuanced the specific purpose for the diary; Wink collects and discusses three key subgenres of pioneer and immigrant diaries, abuse sanctuary-diaries, and family record diaries, all of which utilize combinations of the motives in order to establish their diary's purpose (Wink). It is also important to note that diaries can be multi-purpose, accounting for multiple needs and desired ends, especially over time.

However, determining the motive and purpose for a woman's diary can be tricky: most diarists do not explicitly record why they are writing or what they hope to accomplish in their journals. By piecing together contexts and comments within the diary, scholars can establish a tentative conception of what motivated the diaries they selected. Unfortunately, the temporal distance between the reader and writer magnifies this nebulosity, making the query of audience key to addressing this question.

#### THE MATTER OF THE READER(S)

It can hardly be contested that the diary is kept with the intent to be read. Yet Elizabeth Podnieks does partially contest it, arguing that to be 'authentic,' diaries must "be written with no

consideration of an audience *beyond the writer*” (Podnieks 18, emphasis mine). Her such determination stands alone in diary scholarship, as scholars commonly agree that diaries are written to and for an imagined audience, fundamentally shaping the diary (Bunkers, Hampsten, Franklin, Long). In fact, the entire diary is an endeavor of sharing and publicizing: taking the private and internal workings of a life and exposing them on the page. Every diarist writes to fulfill their own motives and imagines their own audience, and this audience will mostly likely shift over time and throughout the diary. The intended audience is an intimate readership, loved ones of the diarist or even the diarist herself; to them, the diary is over and above their interactions with the person they already know, so it can never be equivalent to the diarist herself. Jane Marcus adds that “the intended audience for women’s memoirs was other women,” creating an entirely feminine literary realm (Marcus 120). However, diarists write only for their intended audience, tailoring their entire diary to this readership and forcing other readers to format themselves to the space of the initial group.

This intimacy both frees and limits the diarist; she has no need to provide the context of the main people in her life, and her intended audience requires no explanation of social or political background. All these details are understood implicitly, through their temporal and emotional proximity. However, the diarist is pressed to extend her social roles into the diary – she seldom can demonstrate actions or thoughts that would be out of the character her intended readers perceive her to embody. Neither can she include any information that is confidential, shocking, or implicating, which admittedly aids in maintaining her character for her intended reader, but also functions to protect her in the case of the unexpected reader. This unexpected reader is most often someone who exerts upon the diarist the very pressures and expectations she

is writing to release. In other words, the unexpected reader is someone who she does *not* want to write for, but there is a very real risk or practice of them surveying her diary. Although the diarist does not intend for them to read her diary, they exert a significant amount of pressure and limitation onto the diary, akin to the intended readership.

As the initial, intended readership is lost – whether the diary is mislaid or the readers pass away – a secondary readership usurps their place, formatting themselves into the space of the former, with their close relation to the diarist. But the secondary reader is less or dis-connected from the writer, spatially, temporally, and/or socially, causing a loss of implicit understanding that only grows with distance and time. Additionally, the loss of the intimate relationship with the diarist only causes further distance between the diarist and the secondary readership, who must piece together the personal details that were excluded from the diary because they would have required no explanation for the intended readers. All of these gaps only complicate the secondary audiences' reading of the diary. They find themselves attempting to fill in the gaps stemming from temporal and spatial distance, to arrange a personhood around the routines included and dull trivialities excluded, and to read beyond the text to find what is being left out for fear of the intended *and* unexpected readers. Ultimately, the secondary readers create their own context and, because no amount of research can fully substitute the contemporary knowledge drawn from experience, they must settle some of the gaps as a loss.

In the case of unpublished diaries, this work is placed on the reader alone. Published diaries, on the other hand, have the added complications of intermediaries: usually the publisher and the editor, though occasionally writers appropriate a diary as base material for a work of fiction. Here, the novelist turns the diarist into a fictional character, overwriting the diarist

entirely with their own interpretations, intentions, and motives. Even when the base material holds true to the content of the diary, the reading of this fictional work must be done with caution so as to not mistake imaginary detailings for true fact of the diarist's life and emotions.

Unlike fictional writers, editors – and to an extent, transcribers – do not add intimate details but generally append explanatory information for the contents of their publications. Yet they still fundamentally change the diary, acting as content managers by determining what is kept and what can be excised. While readers can choose to simply not read any supplemental material provided in published diaries, there is no way for readers to read content that has been excised; as such, editors' selections mold the diary into a new situation, argument, and purpose – reconfiguring the construction of the diarist herself by modifying her words and inscribed self to suit their own priorities.

While editors can effectively fill the void left between the intended and secondary readerships by supplying extra content, they intrinsically change the intended readership. In preparing for publication, no matter how small-scale, the diary is “opened up” and the work receives a new intended audience: the *editor's* intended audience, primed for the lesson or argument the editor has prepared and not predicated upon connections to the diarist. Yet, the editor's intended audience typically has a longer shelf-life than the diarist's; generations of readers can take up the contextualized edited version with little to no loss, while for the original unpublished diary, the gap between the diarist and her secondary readership only grows deeper with time.

The editors of a published diary do not act maliciously – sometimes they do not even appear aware of their power. The usual motives for diary publication are diary scholarship and

historical preservation, both cast as benevolent endeavors. However, their selections are constrained by their own agenda as well as the publishing company's mandated limits (Bunkers, "Whose Diary Is It, Anyway?"). This process is no different from the ways other genres of literature are used; every thesis extrapolates and manipulates its source text to follow its argument and every published piece of literature needs to follow a publisher's limitations. Yet, the publication of a diary gives rise to a sense of loss and apprehension stemming from the interjection of the editor and the ensuing loss of a direct connection between the diarist and her secondary reader.

#### ANALYZING THE IOWA DIARY

In the process of amassing diaries, I located over a dozen published and unpublished diaries in five main sites and collections, primarily centered in Grinnell, Iowa. Originally, we intended a focus on any Iowa diaries, but, overwhelmed by sources, we soon narrowed our scope to the central region of the state. It became necessary to whittle down our list further in order to focus upon a small selection, so I composed a few necessary tenets for our diaries. Focusing on gender, place, and audience, I only looked for diaries written by rural women near or in Grinnell, Iowa. Furthermore, the diaries could not be travel diaries nor medical or farm logs, and needed to be previously transcribed due to time constraints. These eliminations left me with three diaries: Eliza Ann Bartlett's pioneer diary, Elizabeth Biggar's college diary, and Lucile Hink's Great Depression diary. Despite my eagerness to include Biggar's, her diary was too dissimilar to the other two for it to be kept. While the other two were sparse entries framed upon the rough dailiness of farm life under relative economic constraint, Biggar's diary was rife with social commentary, inner reflection, and lengthy detailings of her thoughts and complaints as a college

student at Iowa College (now Grinnell College). Thus, her diary was reluctantly dismissed in favor of the Hink and Bartlett diaries.

Despite over a half-century distance between them, Lucile Hink and Eliza Ann Bartlett have many strong similarities. Both women's families subsisted on prairie farming but had some wealth in comparison to their neighbors and peers, which immediately set them up as parallels in the harsh contexts of pioneer and Great Depression life. Their diaries chronicle the household and farm routines they needed to complete in order to survive, bending traditional gender roles in the face of hardship and limited options. Aside from the repetitions of daily labor, their entries are sparingly completed with other news or events – more often than not a list of injuries, deaths, marriages, and births. Finally, both women left behind significant literary legacies: Eliza Ann's diary is heavily used in Grinnell history and provided the base material for her grandson's novel about her life, while Lucile and her sister donated their estate to fund a library in a town near Grinnell.

Both diaries passed through the hands of intermediaries to create the transcriptions that I utilized. Each of the Eliza Ann Bartlett transcriptions had their own transcriber, but one version shared the same transcriber as Lucile Hink's diary: Karen Groves. As previously mentioned, Ralph Longley used his grandmother, Eliza Ann's, diary as the principal source for a novel derived from it. Longley transformed his grandmother's event-oriented, somewhat-distant diary into an emotional depiction of the hardships, joys, and sacrifices of pioneer life on the prairie. Groves, when asked about the excisions and formatting choices she made in her transcriptions, repeatedly said "I just typed it," but the extra details and reference charts she included undermine her claim to lacking authority and ownership of the transcriptions (Groves). Both Groves and

Longley had more power than they were willing to acknowledge and both fundamentally changed not only the shape of the diary but the intended audiences of their source material.

Lucile Hink was born on November 11th, 1914, the younger daughter of John Hink and Elizabeth Ann Hink née Jepp. She kept her diary in a composition notebook from August 16th, 1931 to March 28th, 1934, starting when she was sixteen and ending when she was nineteen. Her diary was transcribed by her distant relative Karen Petersen Groves in February of 2013; being unable to locate her original diary, this transcription is the main source of information on Lucile. During a brief interview, Groves also provided copies of family photos and a newspaper article about the Louise and Lucile Hink Tama Public Library, but could not point to further sources about Lucile's life and legacy. However, Groves did include, at the end of her transcription, a lengthy chart of all the marriages, birthdays, and deaths mentioned throughout the diary, allowing for easier navigation of the text. Lucile's average diary entry included the date, day of the week, and one or two lines of information; the longest entry had ten lines, but the average "long" entry was 5-6 lines.

Unlike most diarists, Lucile does not drop first person pronouns in her entries. Because diaries are first and foremost documents of identity and selfhood, most passages simply drop the "I" from their sentences on the presumption that readers will understand the writers were the ones who completed the actions. This typical entry format would say "Washed the laundry" instead of "*I* washed the laundry." However, Lucile chooses to instead utilize her "I"s and "We"s in her diary, albeit not for every sentence: "Saturday: **We** are finishing the butchering. **Sent** for eye preparations" (Hink Feb. 20, 1932, emphasis mine). By selectively employing first-person pronouns, she takes explicit ownership of her activities, especially those where she acted beyond

a traditionally feminine role. It was not the men alone who did the farm chores; *we* slaughtered the cattle, *we* harvested corn, *I* stained the footstool (Hink 1932).

Lucile never explicitly reveals her intentions or imagined audience for her diary. There are no references to an imagined readers, no “you”s or “dear readers.” She does not mention her purpose for recording her daily existence. The way that she kept her diary in a composition notebook, starting and ending abruptly on random dates with no passing comments on the beginning or end, offers the possibility that this was not her only diary, but that she was a chronic diarist throughout her life. A diarist does not decide to keep a diary on a whim; it takes motivation to continually create entries, so the abrupt transition into and out of this composition book makes more sense if there were others beyond just this one. Where the possible other diaries went after her death, and why only this one was transcribed, is not knowable by the secondary reader. All we know is that Lucile did write, and she wrote at least to remember the events and details of her life; we know through the fact that she kept up a diary that she anticipated that someone, possibly herself, would read it.

It is also key to notice the lack of explicitly emotional passages and ornate sentences. Lucile regularly places shocking news beside daily mundanities, writing in similar tones across the entire entry and inarguably building the diary into her life (Lejeune). This can be quite jarring for the reader, placed in this role of intimate confidante but given tragic news abruptly. We can propose three main hypotheses for why Lucile chooses to minimize emotions in this way. First, the conflicting demands of prairie farming and particularly strenuous eras like the Great Depression pushed women to focus on more practical hobbies and use writing as a brief reprieve between chores (Fairbanks and Sundberg, Wink). As such, the diary helps to release the tensions

of her daily duties, but did not necessarily vent her emotions alongside the laundry-list of chores and events. Second, the absence of emotionally-driven entries may stem from the unplanned but imagined voyeuring reader that hovered on every page: in such close quarters, it would have been difficult to hide a diary from others who may have stolen into the room and read the passages inside. This anxiety over snooping readers may have pushed Lucile to avoid writing anything too daring or potentially harmful. Third, Lucile would have internalized many social conventions, and, having been raised on a farm and taught to be practical, it is more than likely that she would have valued straight-to-the-point and honest writing over flowery language. For her, entries were a list of happenings in a day, so all the main events of the day must be recorded in that entry, no matter how dissimilar they are. This abrupt change creates a very jarring effect for the reader, especially when tragedies are placed next to mundane farm matter: “Tuesday: Dr. Moore tested the cattle this morning. Yesterday big Frank Lacina shot himself. It [is] just like spring” (Hink Feb. 9, 1932). Altogether, despite the almost aloof tone, the fact that Lucile chose to record and preserve each tragedy demonstrates the importance she clearly assigned to the fates of her neighbors.

As stated before, what is included and repeated in the diary is vital to understanding the diarist: whatever she opted to keep would become the ultimate record of her life and existence. Lucile carefully focuses on certain regularities in her life: her daily chores and farm labor; family purchases; social events; orchestral radio shows; the ill health and recovery of her family; news of births, deaths, marriages, and scandals; her artistic endeavors; and her hair styling appointments and hair care. These were the details of her life that she valued, the events that she viewed as constituting her existence.

While most of Lucile's regularly noted activities are easily made sense of within her laborious farm life, the care and detailing of Lucile's hair appointments seems unusual. The family photos Karen Groves shared with me depict a young woman with pristinely waved and styled hair cropped short around her ears, partnered with delicate earrings or necklaces and practical blouses. While portraits are formal affairs and beget particular attention to physical appearance, the fact that Lucile went to the effort to regularly set her hair in permanent waves reveals an ongoing desire to maintain a beauty standard. However, running a farm includes heavy labor and getting dirty, neither of which leads to a natural focus on physical appearance. But Lucile was a teenager: it was likely important to her to focus on her grooming in order to demonstrate femininity and attractiveness. Many of her friends were 'going steady' with men from the area, pairing off into couples while she remained single. Throughout the diaries, Lucile never mentions going out on a date herself; Karen Groves shared that Lucile never married. If she had no care or opportunity to date or marry a man, Lucile may have performed beauty routines in order to fit in and not draw attention to herself, and she may have enjoyed styling herself. There also may have been a secondary benefit as well. Dressing and styling herself well would allow Lucile to symbolically elevate above the dirty farm labor that marked her daily existence, giving her a higher, more feminine sense of herself.

Yet the unanticipated interruptions to the dailinesses and patterns of Lucile's life matter just as much in the reading of her diary as the standard routines. The big moments are given the same consideration as her daily activities. Even when she was swept up in a nationwide drama, Lucile simply remarks: "Friday: .... It has been misting all day. *Lindbergh's baby was kidnapped the first of the week*. Ethel Foley birthday is on the 29th" (Hink Mar. 4, 1932, emphasis mine).

Despite its stoic reporting, the fact that Lucile weaves this national news in between her mundane notes makes it seem almost as if she has some connection to the family. The intended reader would be aware of the national news, but the secondary readership does not necessarily have this context. They would be more likely to perceive this event as local news due to the way Lucile shares the information as if she were discussing a neighbor; there is no indication that she heard this story on the radio or read it in the newspaper to make it apparent that this was knowledge shared on a national scale. The episode is outside her normal inclination to record only personal and regional news, so the kidnapping must have filled her with a sense of urgency and need to share for her to have recorded it alongside her daily labors and notes. It becomes clear that she was deeply affected by the kidnapping when Lucile takes the care to close the story when the baby's body was located – in surprising detail compared to many other, personal stories she shares: “Sunday: The Lindbergh baby was found dead last week. He laid about 3 miles from the Lindbergh estate. He was found by a negro” (Hink May 15, 1932). As such an anomaly to Lucile's average tendencies in the diary, it is tempting to willfully overlook this thread. However, anything Lucile took the time to share with her diary was clearly meaningful and important to her. Thus, despite the stark dissimilarities to the majority of her diary, the Lindbergh baby episode is equally vital to the reading of the diary and ignoring this event would not do Lucile justice.

Lucile tended to include sparse but telling details that seem to outline most of her life, but her diary also contains odd omissions. For example, while she mentioned her approaching birthday in both 1931 and 1932, in 1933 there was no explicit mention of her birthday at all: “Saturday: Armistice day. Nice but not as good as yesterday. This year mother gave me dress

goods, I think I will make a blouse” (Hink Nov. 11, 1933). If readers did not know Lucile intimately, or did not remember the date of the last entry she marked as her birthday, they most likely would not be able to tell it was that day from this passage! The only hint was ‘this year’ in connection with a gift, but this can be misinterpreted through the fact that Lucile regularly received gifts. Furthermore, the heading caption of ‘Armistice day’ increasingly redirects readers from interpreting the passage as a birthday. Lucile did include potential clues that may explain why she avoided direct reference to her birthday; in February of that year, she noted that “the ‘depression’ is getting hard” (Feb. 18, 1933), and in March the banks shut down for a full week (Mar. 9-16, 1933). So Lucile may have chosen to minimize her birthday in light of the deeper economic hardships of the year. Additionally, 1933 was the fifteenth anniversary of armistice, so perhaps it provided an easy excuse to transfer attention away from her. A third tension may have contributed to her willingness to waylay attention to her birthday: Lucile may have felt anxious about turning nineteen and pressure to shift into ‘adult mode’ as she approached legal adulthood. In an effort to leave childish behavior behind, she may have hidden the truth of her birthday to make it more of a mature event.

The details that perhaps tell us the most about Lucile’s personality are the moments where she breaks her distance and includes opinions, superstitions, or more intimate details. These additions are few and far between, but create enough of a pattern to elicit a tentative understanding of her morality and humor. For example, in 1933, Lucile specifically mentions two superstitions that are still commonly understood by American readers today. The first discusses Friday the 13th and danger, “Spent the day at home so I did not meet any misfortune,” (Hink Jan. 13, 1933), while the second mentions groundhog day and the disappointment of six

more weeks of winter, “Maybe the groundhog won’t see his shadow and we will have a nice spring,” (Feb. 1, 1933). Whether these are wry allusions to American folklore or her true beliefs, the fact that she chose to preserve them establishes a sense of either belief or humor that humanizes Lucile in the gaze of her readership. Most of the conclusions readers draw about Lucile comes from her *actions*; farm labor, appearance changes, and shopping lists especially. So in these moments where Lucile records something she was *thinking*, readers connect with her more directly. In these particular instances, Lucile seems to speak directly to us, her secondary readership, developing our relationship in this space of common knowledge and American folklore, and thus closing a gap that may otherwise require an editor to fill.

Alongside their lifestyle similarities, Lucile also shares many stylistic components in her diary with Eliza Ann Bartlett, despite the two diarists living about eighty years apart. Stemming from the similar tensions and constraints of their difficult economic realities, both women used simple language and unemotional prose to record the chores they dutifully carried out every day in order to carve out an existence in the Iowan prairies, ultimately revealing the events and trends that they considered essential to their lives along the way.

Eliza Ann Bartlett was born on September 18th, 1828, the eldest daughter of parents Stephen and Theodotia Bartlett, New Hampshire residents. Eliza Ann began her diary in the spring of 1855, when she was 25. She started the diary as her family set off on the journey to take them to their pioneer home in Grinnell, Iowa; her first entry related the journey at length, in a one-and-a-half-page passage that dwarfs her usual entries of one to two lines. Frequently, pioneer families selected a wife or eldest daughter to record their passage and settlement onto

their new land (Wink); it is possible that the journey from New Hampshire to Iowa prompted Eliza Ann to take up this responsibility for her own family. She kept her diary up until her untimely death in the fall of 1864, leaving a remarkable woman's account of pioneer life on the Iowan prairie and vivid vignettes of early life in Grinnell.

There are three different transcriptions of her diary available; I relied primarily on the version stored in the Grinnell College archives, but supplemented the reading with the copy kept at Drake Community Library. As such, all quotations are taken from the former. Both transcriptions include extra material: the former, a list of all purchases Eliza Ann made, broken down by price and year; the latter, a short biographical introduction to the diary and a thorough index of all the people mentioned in the diary. Both transcriptions note that the original diary has since been lost. Additionally, all three of the transcripts admit to being abridged, with their excisions all being nearly identical. In any case, the original instructions from the Longley siblings or decisions made by the first transcriber has continued to affect the more recent transcriptions of Eliza Ann's diary, as the same content was cut out and the remainders all tell the same stories. The editors and transcribers effectively reshaped the reading her diary by removing the passages that they considered too dull or too personal to be included, controlling the view we have of Eliza Ann.

Although Eliza Ann died young, her brother Emory and sister Philomelia made certain to preserve her in memory and through her diaries for her daughter, Alice. Upon Emory's death, Alice's daughter Ethel Longley inherited his family records and took up maintaining the family history, which culminated in her brother Ralph publishing a fictionalized rendition of Eliza Ann's diary in a novel titled *Cabin on the Second Ridge*. The novel further details main stories

recorded in Eliza Ann's diary, adding in further explicit emotional reactions and turning the passing mentions into full events. However, we do not know how much Ralph drew from family lore and how much information he invented to round out his novel, so we must be very cautious in how we interpret his novel. Ultimately, due to our inability to discern where Ralph found his extra details about how Eliza Ann felt about the life occurring around her in this prairie town, we erred with the side of caution and refrained from utilizing *Cabin on the Second Ridge* as supplemental information to Eliza Ann's diary.

Like Lucile, Eliza Ann never explicitly explains why she chose to keep a diary. However, we have more insights into Eliza Ann's life through other family documents, so we can hypothesize more about her motives. As noted, Eliza Ann began her diary with the story of her family travelling to Iowa, written once they arrived in one long passage. This initial entry points to the trend mentioned earlier of wives and daughters chronicling family history in order to leave a record of pioneer life. This also explains the more sparse and largely external purview the first portion her diary takes up; her entries become more centered around her own life around the time Eliza Ann becomes engaged to Benoni Howard. Her diary-keeping becomes more frequent following her marriage, alongside comments that belie her loneliness in her marital home. The increased pace possibly underlines a shift in her purpose from family record keeping to a sanctuary where Eliza Ann can chronicle her daily existence and release some of her tension.

Finally, after her daughter's birth, Eliza Ann takes care to detail components of her life that she had no need to before, such as keeping a record of Alice's growth and development. Alongside this, she tracks her own health more meticulously, revealing a potential final purpose for her diary: to remember her daughter's early years and trace out her own, slow end of life. Of

course, because Eliza Ann never explicitly reveals her intentions, we cannot definitively speak to any of these hypotheses being true, but all three intentions are ways her diary ended up being used and interpreted as after her death, as recorded in family records (Bartlett; E. Longley: R. Longley).

Overall, Eliza Ann minimized emotional episodes by couching her diary in practical prose, eliminating her “I”s and “we”s, and using plain language. The stoic presentation of information causes the few emotion-ridden entries in the diary to stand in stark contrast. Many of her emotional entries revolved around loneliness, but a few do hint toward sadness and grief, including this passage from 1856: “It is one year to day since little Sis died” (Bartlett Oct. 22, 1856). ‘Little Sis’ refers to Benoni’s daughter from his first marriage, who lived only six weeks; at the time of her death, she was of no relation to Eliza Ann. Yet her sadness over the infant’s death is evident in her decision to include the anniversary at all and especially in her use of the familial moniker ‘little Sis’ for the child.

These emotional entries demonstrate that she was willing to impart emotion for especially passionate news, which in turn highlights the moments where readers anticipate intense excitement but receive a very brief, stoic retelling of the event. Most women would be expected to show some sort of response to their engagement, but Eliza Ann is quite distant her conveyance of such news: “Mr. H came, – we engaged” (Bartlett Jan. 27, 1856). Her marriage receives similar treatment: “Was married. There was 70 attended the wedding.” (Bartlett Mar. 26, 1856). These are clearly turning points in Eliza Ann’s life, marking her movement from singleton life to married life and transition to her husband’s household, but her emotional distance masks her true feelings on the matter. It is discussed in other family documents that

Eliza Ann married widower Benoni Howard for the sake of his son, Charley, with whom she bonded when he boarded in the Bartlett home (Bartlett, E. Longley, R. Longley). Eliza Ann may have felt little toward Benoni himself, and as such her news about engagement and marriage may mean more to her because of the changes occurring in her life than due to any emotional attachment to him.

Because the majority of her diary was written after her marriage to widower Benoni Howard, its pages are hallmarked by loneliness and never-ending chores of subsistence. Benoni was often gone, either to the fields or for other work purposes, leaving Eliza Ann alone with the children and few to no other adults within a few miles' proximity. Even when Benoni was home, he seems to have been cold and indifferent to her; the diary contains no expressions of affection between the two. The diary only contains a corner of the true relationship between Eliza Ann and Benoni; as such, the tensions found within the diary could only have been thicker in her life. This probably lent to Eliza Ann choosing to minimize emotions and details in her diary; the constant risk of Benoni or another reader finding her diary and exacerbating the tensions in their relationship would cause her to reduce the trouble that could be started due to the content of her diary.

In the months where Eliza Ann faced more constraints on her ability to go to town or visit friends due to weather or illness, she turned to her diary increasingly as a source of companionship and perhaps as a way to maintain sanity and absolve just a bit of the loneliness that stalked her throughout the day. Although she never outrightly states that she was unhappy, Eliza Ann often remarks how many days or weeks it has been since she went to town or since she has seen another human being beyond her husband and the children. This trend began within

six months of her marriage that would not cease until her death, with her time alone only lengthening all the while: “I have been alone all the week,” rapidly extended to “Have not been to town but once for 37 days. That was to meeting” (Aug. 29, 1856; Jan. 1, 1857). It was not unlikely that, in such a forlorn existence, Eliza Ann came to imagine her diary as a mainstay and solace from her extreme loneliness.

Even with her diary occupying this space of a close confidante, Eliza Ann maintained some distance and secrets from her intended reader. Fairbanks and Sundberg theorize that “while prairie women talked freely about the kinds of tasks they performed,” few to none would speak to more intimate topics including illness, menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth (Fairbanks and Sundberg 55). The pioneer diarist was completely aware that she was most likely writing for an actual audience of her parents or children, who could stumble across her diary or would otherwise be expected to read it, but even if she had no intention to share her diary, she knew and was constrained by what would be socially appropriate to include in case another person did pick up her diary (Fairbanks and Sundberg). Eliza Ann definitively demonstrated such practices: she gives no mention or reference to her pregnancy until she records Alice’s birth. Even then, she refrained from discussing her experience of labor, saying only “The babe was born. She weighed  $8\frac{1}{2}$ . It is fast day” (Bartlett Apr. 22, 1859). However, she only half followed the unspoken rule against discussing illnesses; while she rarely gives any details of the illnesses she or her loved ones experience, if she recorded that the ill person missed prayer services, readers can conclude that the illness was dire. For example, she records that she “Did not attend meeting. Could not walk,” with no details as to whether it was weather or illness that caused her to miss the prayer meeting (Jan. 30, 1859). Though, as Eliza Ann often tracked how long someone was ill and

whether they were improving through mentioning their ‘meeting’ attendances, her following notes on missing multiple meetings in the next few months and capping off with Alice’s birth suggests that her pregnancy was the impediment for her attending religious services.

Eliza Ann and Lucile have both become immortalized in their diaries. The imprints of themselves that they inscribed onto the pages of their diaries have become crystallized, creating the lasting images of the women that are still remembered today. In the essentialized imaginings of their descendents and other ‘secondary’ readers, Lucile is remembered for her love of and practice in the arts, especially for her love of music, which can be a shock to her secondary readers who had only her diary to rely upon; her diary mentions music occasionally, but to an equal extent of her hair treatments, so it is difficult to discern her strong love within her diary. Meanwhile, Eliza Ann has been conceptualized by her loving spirit and her loneliness out on the prairie.

Both women have left ongoing legacies in these rural towns of central Iowa. Lucile, alongside her sister, left a significant portion of her estate to rebuild the library in Tama, creating a space of exploration, community, and learning for generations of readers. Eliza Ann, as discussed previously, left her greatest impact as the central figure in her grandson’s novel, but her story has been shared by dozens and placed within multiple libraries in the region. And, as one of the sole contemporary accounts of pioneer life in Grinnell and as one of the fewer women’s accounts of the same, Eliza Ann is remembered for her hardiness and courage. On important anniversaries and in commemoration of Grinnell’s history, Eliza Ann’s memory is revived; the most recent revival, using portions of her diary, ‘brings her back to life’ as an actress portrayed her in a ‘cemetery walk’ meant to celebrate Grinnell’s notable women (Thompson).

Autobiographical work keeps local history alive; both women's personal writings are kept relevant by their place in the history of small cities. Both Eliza Ann and Lucile are cherished by their communities, being safekept in local centers and libraries in order to preserve these women and remember their impact. In this way, Eliza Ann and Lucile are receiving what they, and all diarists, implicitly or unconsciously seek: their voices are being heard, their stories are being recognized, and they are being remembered long after their lives have come to an end and their diaries became a finished whole.

## Bibliography

- Baer, Elizabeth R. "Ambivalence, Anger, and Silence: The Civil War Diary of Lucy Buck." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, pp.207-219.
- Bartlett, Eliza Ann. "Diary of Eliza Ann Bartlett, Grinnell Iowa 1854-64." [diary transcript] 1854 Apr - 1863 Dec, archived in *Grinnell College Archives*, Grinnell College.
- Bartlett, Eliza Ann. "Diary, Bartlett, Eliza Ann–Grinnell, Iowa–1855-1864." [diary transcript] 1855 Apr - 1864 Nov, archived in *Grinnell Historical Museum*, Grinnell.
- Benstock, Shari. "Introduction" and "Authorizing the Autobiographical." *The Private Self*, edited by Shari Benstock, University of North Carolina Press, 1988, pp.1-33.
- Blodgett, Harriet. *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1988.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "'I Write For Myself and Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, pp.23-37.
- Bunkers, Suzanne L. "Whose Diary Is It, Anyway? Issues of Agency, Authority, Ownership." *a/b Auto/Biography Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2014, pp. 11-27.
- Bunkers, Suzanne L., editor. *Diaries of Girls and Women: A Midwestern American Sampler*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.
- Bunkers, Suzanne L. and Cynthia A. Huff. "Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, pp.1-23.
- Fairbanks, Carol and Sara Brooks Sundberg. *Farm Women on the Prairie Frontier: A Sourcebook for Canada and the United States*. Metuchen, The Scarecrow Press Inc, 1983.
- Franklin, Penelope. "Introduction." *Private Pages: Diaries of American Women 1830s-1970s*, Ballantine Books, 1986, xiii-xxvii.

- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Women's Autobiographical Selves: *Theory and Practice*." *The Private Self*, edited by Shari Benstock, University of North Carolina Press, 1988, 34-62.
- Goodfriend, Joyce D. "Introduction." *The Published Diaries and Letters of American Women: an annotated bibliography*, G.K. Hall & Co, 1987, xi-xiv.
- Groves, Karen Petersen. Personal interview. 2 October 2019
- Hampsten, Elizabeth. *Read This Only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880-1910*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Heehs, Peter. "The Self and History." *Writing the Self: Diaries, Memoirs, and the History of the Self*, Bloomsbury, 2013, 1-9.
- Hink, Lucile C. "Diary Entries Written in a Composition Book by Lucile Caroline Hink." [diary transcript] 1931 Aug - 1934 Mar, archived in *Grinnell Historical Museum*, Grinnell.
- Huff, Cynthia A. "Textual Boundaries: Space in Nineteenth-Century Women's Manuscript Diaries." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, 123-138.
- Jones, Alan. *Pioneering: 1846-1996, A Photographic and Documentary History of Grinnell College On the Occasion of its Sesquicentennial*. N.p., Grinnell College, 1996.
- Langford, Rachel and Russell West, editors. *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History*. Amsterdam-Atlanta, Rodopi, 1999.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *On Diary*. Edited by Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak. N.p., University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- Long, Judy. *Telling Women's Lives*. New York, New York University Press, 1999.
- Longley, Ethel. "Letters Mostly to Ralph from 'Sis.'" [Letter transcriptions] N.d., archived in *University of Iowa Archives*, Des Moines??.
- Longley, Ralph L. *Cabin on the Second Ridge*. New York, Vantage Press, 1976.

- Mallon, Thomas. *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries*. New York, Ticknor & Fields, 1984.
- Marcus, Jane. "Invincible Mediocrity: *The Private Selves of Public Women*." *The Private Self*, edited by Shari Benstock, University of North Carolina Press, 1988, 114-146.
- Martinson, Deborah. *In the Presence of Audience*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2003.
- Moffat, Mary Jane. "Foreword." *Revelations: Diaries of Women*, edited by Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter, Vintage Books, 1975, 3-12.
- Podnieks, Elizabeth. *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anaïs Nin*. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
- Simons, Judy. "Invented Lives: Textuality and Power in Early Women's Diaries." *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, 252-264.
- Thompson, Zainab. "Deceased Grinnellians Walk Again at the Hazelwood Cemetery Walk." *The Scarlet and Black*, 11 Oct. 2018.
- Wink, Amy L. *She Left Nothing In Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries*. Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2001.