

Approaches and Challenges in Children's Literature: An Interview with Lissa Paul

Zhang Shengzhen & Lissa Paul

Abstract: Lissa Paul has authored, edited or co-edited seven books, including *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* (2005) and *Keywords for Children's Literature* (2011), has chapters in another nineteen and publishes and speaks widely internationally. She edited the *Lion and the Unicorn* between 2002 and 2009 and inaugurated the “*Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in North American Poetry*” in 2005. Her research is generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada and her new monograph, *Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist* was published by the University of Delaware Press in 2019. She is currently working on an edition of Fenwick's letters, and as an outgrowth of her research, Lissa is also working on projects related to the fugitive slave ads in the *Barbados Mercury Gazette* (1783-1828). As Lissa was a co-applicant on a winning British Library Endangered Archives Programme grant to digitize the papers, she is now doing archival research using the digitized versions of the *Gazette*. A second, more international edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature*, co-edited with Philip Nel and Nina Christensen, is scheduled for publication by New York University Press early 2021. Zhang Shengzhen, a Fulbright visiting scholar at New York University (2019-2020), interviewed Lissa Paul on a wide range of topics in the field of children's literature, including critical approaches and new challenges in children's literature, Canadian children's literature, her editing career in children's literature, and her original research in *Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist*. Prof. Paul also argues the challenges arising from “education gone bad,” as well as the importance of developing a global community of scholars in the field.

Key words: approaches, development and challenges, children's literature

Authors: **Zhang Shengzhen** is Professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Beijing Language and Culture University (Beijing, China 100083). Her areas of research include children's literature, British and American literature, and comparative literature (Email: zhangshengzhen@blcu.edu.cn); Lissa Paul, Professor at Brock University in the Niagara region of Ontario, Canada, is a literary scholar specializing in children's literature, particularly in children's poetry, as well

as in cultural studies and more recently, in the eighteenth century and Caribbean literary studies (Email: lpaul@brocku.ca).

标题：儿童文学批评方法、发展与挑战：丽莎·保罗访谈

摘要：丽莎·保罗独立出版过数本著作，此外还编辑并与他人合作出版了数本书，包括《诺顿儿童文学选集》（*The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*, 2005）和《儿童文学关键词》（*Keywords for Children's Literature*, 2011）。此外，丽莎在国际学术交流领域著作等身，撰写了十九本书中的部分章节。2002至2009年间，她担任《狮子与独角兽》杂志的编辑，并在2005年创立了“狮子与独角兽：北美最佳诗歌奖”。受惠于加拿大社会科学及人文研究理事会（SSHRC）的资助，保罗教授新著《伊莉莎·芬威克：早期现代女权主义者》（*Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist*）由美国特拉华大学于2019年出版。目前，她致力于研究芬威克书信集。基于此项研究，丽莎还参与了《巴巴多斯水星报》（*Barbados Mercury Gazettee*, 1783-1828）上涉及逃亡奴隶追缉令的相关项目。丽莎还与他人合作申请了大英图书馆濒危档案项目，旨在将文献资料数据化。由菲利普·内尔和尼娜·克里斯坦森合作编辑出版的第二版《儿童文学关键词》更加国际化，将由纽约大学出版社在2021年初出版。张生珍利用从事富布赖特学者项目（2019-2020）之机，对保罗教授进行了访谈，内容涉及儿童文学领域的诸多问题，包括儿童文学批评方法、国际学术合作、儿童文学研究前沿问题、以及保罗教授新著等。此外，保罗教授对“教育变糟糕”所造成的文学教育窘况甚为担忧，呼吁国际儿童文学领域形成共识和合力，以期走出困境。

关键词：批评范式；发展与挑战；儿童文学

作者简介：张生珍，北京语言大学英语学院教授、博导，主要从事外国儿童文学研究、英美文学和比较文学研究。丽莎·保罗是位于加拿大安大略省尼亚加拉半岛的布鲁克大学的文学教授，主要研究领域为儿童文学。保罗教授在儿童诗歌和文化研究等领域颇有造诣，最新研究聚焦十八世纪文学和加勒比海地区文学。本文是2017年国家社科基金重点项目“英国儿童文学中的国族意识与伦理教诲研究”【项目编号：17AWW008】和2019年国家社科基金重大项目“《世界儿童文学百科全书》翻译及儿童文学批评史研究”【项目编号：19ZDA297】的阶段性成果。

Contributions on Editing

Zhang Shengzhen (Zhang for short hereafter): Let's get started with your work in editing. You and Philip Nel edited the 2011 version *Keywords for Children's Literature*, which is very helpful for those interested in this field. What is the

motivation for this work? What are the differences between the 2011 version and the new version?

Lissa Paul (Paul for short hereafter): Keywords for Children's Literature was Phil Nel's idea. He'd gone to a presentation on Keywords for American Cultural Studies edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler in, I think, 2007, around the time of its publication by New York University Press. Predicated on the idea of a specific, discipline-driven updating of Raymond Williams's groundbreaking *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), Phil recognized instantly that a keywords volume specific to children's literature was an inspired idea. Phil, incidentally, is always awake to timely good ideas, and he also has the organizational skill and insight to make them happen.

In keeping with Williams's original, "keywords" concept of mapping "conflicted or contested" terms in a field, Phil says that he immediately started jotting down potential "keywords" used in studies in children's literature. Not long after beginning to think about the viability of a volume of keywords for children's literature, Phil and his wife Karin Westman, were in Toronto (where I live) for a conference and we'd gone out to dinner together. Phil slipped me the bit of paper with his initial thoughts on what a volume of keywords for children's literature might look like and asked if I'd be interested in co-editing. At the time, I was trying to write what became *The Children's Book Business*, but Phil's idea was so compelling that I knew from the first that I wanted to do the project with him.

I loved working with Phil. In the initial stages, we just tried to figure out what words were potential keywords, words with conflicted or contested meanings in the field or words that were used in difficult or interesting ways. We also thought through our potential lists of authors for the essays. We knew that we'd need established scholars, people with a clear grasp of the breadth and depth of their subjects, people who could write clear and coherent prose. That's how the first edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature* came into existence in 2011, with forty-nine entries, written by an extraordinary range of American, Canadian, British and Australian scholars in literature, information studies, education and psychology, people well-known in studies in the field: Peter Hunt, Sandra Beckett, Richard Flynn, Marah Gubar, Michael Joseph and Katherine Capshaw Smith among others. We were also thrilled to have Philip Pullman's essay on "Intention" in our volume.

Phil and I worked well together, and we gradually got better at understanding how to optimize the relatively short (roughly twenty-five-hundred-word essays) of the first edition. We learned how to focus on the "cartography of fissures in meaning, and the etymological and ideological tensions they produce," and the

explanations of “where a critical idea came from, what it means and why its meanings shift.” We didn’t quite know how to express the essence of a keywords essay that precisely when we started. The definition I’ve just quoted comes from the introduction to our second edition (which won’t be published until the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021). But even as we completed the first edition, we understood that putting together a keywords essay was much like assembling a particularly complicated jigsaw puzzle—though without the help of the complete picture typically displayed on the box. Fittingly, when the first edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* came out, the cover was a little puzzle, a primary-coloured rebus: an image of a key, the number four, a silhouette of a person speaking, a graphic of a boy and a girl (divided by an apostrophe) and a stack of books. It was a perfect little graphic spelling out the title, *Keywords for Children’s Literature*. We loved that the rebus was printed over a yellow on yellow background of some of the words in the volume including “childhood,” “innocence” “picture book” and “class.”

Zhang: I believe almost all the essential key words are included in the first version, though some words are hard to define, especially for a special group of people. There must be creative ideas in rewriting the second edition.

Paul: Encouraged by the success of the first edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature*, we began to plan for a second edition almost as soon as the first edition was in print. In fact, it was on probably our first outing with the book at a conference in Oslo that we became aware of a need for a new more international edition, though we were initially a little taken aback by the reaction. We’d defined our original volume in the context of Anglophone children’s literature, but in Oslo, we were criticized—sharply—for not addressing an international audience. Although we had deliberately skewed our original volume towards Anglophone, especially American interests, we realized how narrow some of our original terms were. We’d included African-American for example, rather than, say, African-Diasporic. For the new edition, we decided instead on a single essay on “Race,” though we also have a—much revised—essay on “Multicultural.” In the context of other ways in which we rethought the table of contents, you should know that we also revisited terms we had initially decided to leave out. When Phil and I first considered “Fairy Tale” and “Poetry,” we felt that they didn’t meet our “conflicted or contested” requirement. We were wrong. Both are in the new edition. My point is that almost as soon as the first edition was in print, we invited formal criticism personally and at conferences over the next couple of years. We took all the

suggestions about possible revisions seriously.

In 2015 we received the go-ahead for a new edition, partly because of the success of our book, but also because of the success of the other “keywords” volumes published by what became a series for New York University Press. There are now eight volumes, including Keywords for Disability Studies and Keywords for Media Studies. In the process of becoming part of the series, we lost our distinctive rebus cover. We got over it, especially as we realized that our original volume had a broader reach than we’d originally imagined.

Zhang: Could you share with the readers the most important updating of the new version?

Paul: The first thing we did in planning for a second, more international edition, was to decide to invite a third editor to work with us, someone who could help us break out of our North American bubble. We asked Nina Christensen from Denmark to join us, and it was the best decision we could have made. It’s taken us three years of intense work to put together the new edition of Keywords for Children’s Literature. There are now fifty-nine essays in the volume, and though the essays are shorter than the ones in the first volume, they all address our new international mandate. We retired some essays (though they will be available online), had the remaining original ones substantially revised and invited new essays. We also created an international advisory board to help us broaden our mandate. By the end of 2020, if all goes well, the new and much improved second edition of Keywords for Children’s Literature will be in print.

Zhang: That’s great news! I always consult Keywords for Children’s Literature, other dictionaries and encyclopedias, when I need clarification or multiple perspectives. It’s been so helpful and illuminating!

Paul: We’re delighted, especially—as is typically the case when designing a new project—there is no way of knowing how it will be received. You’ll be pleased to know that all three of us think that the new edition of Keywords is distinctly better. The process of writing—and editing—keywords essays was tricky, as each word has its own set of criteria. A keywords essay on “Fairy Tale” for example (a word with a long complex, multilingual and multicultural history), does not look the same as a keywords essay on “Trans” (a word that has only recently come into use). My own new essay is on “Archive.”

In the new edition, Phil Nel’s updated essay on “Postmodernism” includes references to the use of the word in China, to the way it “carries strong connotations

of post-revolutionary” (Phil cites a 1997 by Arif Dirlik and Zhang Xudong from boundary 2 for the reference). Phil also sent me a reminder note, confirming that in the new edition of Keywords, there are references to China or Chinese in the essays on “Affect,” “Audience,” “Authenticity,” “Boyhood,” “Children’s Literature,” “Classic,” “Culture,” “Family,” “Fairy Tale,” “Gender,” “Identity,” “Multicultural,” “Postmodernism,” “Race,” “Story,” “Trans” and “Translation.”

Zhang: That sounds very internationalized. We have a large body of readers and researchers in children’s literature in China. More voices are to be heard, and more understanding and cooperation will arise.

Zhang: Besides this new book, The Norton Anthology of Children’s Literature (NACL) (2005) which you worked on with Jack Zipes, Lynne Vallone, Peter Hunt and Gillian Avery, is a very influential handbook across the world. If there is updating, what might be changed? And what might be added?

Paul: The NACL was Jack’s idea, and I was thrilled when he invited me to be one of the editors. Part way through the process, as Jack began working on the Oxford Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature (2006), he asked Lynne Vallone and me to take over as the Associate General Editors, though he remained as General Editor.

From the first, all five of us as editors, knew that in making a Norton Anthology of Children’s Literature we would be essentially defining what was canonical in the field. We were honored and delighted to be involved and also deeply conscious of the fact that our decisions would define the contours of the discipline. One of our first problems involved figuring out how we were going to organize the volume because we knew that the standard chronological approach that typically structured Norton anthologies (of English Literature or American Literature for instance) wouldn’t work. It was Jack’s idea to organize the volume by genre and then try, at least as far as possible, to organize chronologically within genres. As editors, we each had responsibility for shaping a set of the (eighteen ultimately) genre clusters that made up the volume (my sections were Primers and Readers, Verse, Adventure and Books of Instruction), though Lynne and I also took general editing responsibilities for the whole volume.

We loved working with Norton and appreciated the care, attention and support we received at every level. The composition of headnotes for sections and individual works was an exacting exercise in being able to set up the chronological and critical arc arcs. When the NACL was published in 2005, we were thrilled to have it positively reviewed in the New York Times Review of Books.

The world has, of course, radically changed in the fifteen years since the publication of the NACL. Many of the historical texts we made available are now online, and the full texts of children's books that may have been hard to access in print are now available in cheap—essentially weightless—digital editions. Peter and Jack are now more or less retired, and Gillian has, sadly, died.

About two years ago, however, Lynne Vallone and I were approached to think about what a new kind of Norton Anthology of Children's Literature might look like, something for the twenty-first century. With the support of our terrific Norton editors (our original editor, Julia Reidhead is now the president of the company) Lynne and I have been developing a volume to be called, tentatively, *Norton Approaches to Children's Literature*. It will be very different, essentially a core text that could be used for teaching children's literature, though it will have the character of a Norton in that it will define critical elements in the field. We're aiming for publication in 2023, which will be the hundredth anniversary of the W. W. Norton company.

Zhang: I do believe *Norton Approaches to Children's Literature* will be of great interest and value to worldwide researchers as well as general readers of children's literature. Working with different journals and periodicals, how do you evaluate the co-operation in the field of children's literature?

Paul: From the early to middle 1970s, the rise of scholarly journals in children's literature really marked the first steps into creating the field as a discipline of its own. *Signal*, *Children's Literature*, *Children's Literature in Education*, *The Children's Literature Association Quarterly* and *The Lion and the Unicorn*, all date from that period. It was in those journals that scholars beginning to do research in children's literature were able to find venues for their work. Without the scholars nurtured in those journals, the scholarly apparatus that has grown around the discipline—including the NACL and *Keywords for Children's Literature*—would have not been possible. There would be no discipline as we know it today.

I've been very lucky. As a young, beginning scholar, I was fortunate enough to have Nancy Chambers of *Signal* (1969-2003) in the UK, take an interest in my work. While still a graduate student, I'd written what was essentially a fan letter to Nancy, as I'd found in *Signal* exactly the kind of writing I wanted to do. It was elegant, precise, scholarly, original and yet, as Nancy later described it to me, pitched to the "general interested reader." I always read the journal cover to cover. Nancy edited my first published essay. It was on Ted Hughes. My second published essay, "Enigma Variations," was a finalist for the Children's Literature Association's

essay award. I'm always careful to credit Nancy and her husband, author Aidan Chambers, for teaching me to read, write and edit. They also introduced me to other scholars—including Peter Hunt—from whom I've learned a great deal, and to whom I owe a lot of my own academic credibility.

When Signal stopped publishing in 2003, I knew I'd particularly miss the Signal Poetry Award essays that had appeared annually between 1979 and 2001. It was really through reading the essays that I developed a critical vocabulary for talking about children's poetry as well as access to new poets. In some ways the award—as conceptualized by Nancy and Aidan—was almost a kind of excuse for writing about the year's work in children's poetry. In order to adjudicate the award, Nancy and Aidan invited three judges to consider the year's offerings, and then come together to decide on the winner. Then Signal would announce the winner and publish each judge's assessments of the volumes that had been submitted.

As it happened, just as Signal was ending in the early 2000s, Jack Zipes invited me to become one of the three new editors (the other two were George Bodmer and Jan Susina) of the *Lion and the Unicorn*, published by Johns Hopkins University Press. In the end, I served as an editor between 2002 and 2009. But almost from the beginning of my editorial tenure, I realized that I could reprise the Signal poetry award essays in a new form: a single essay composed by three author/judges. With Richard Flynn, Joseph Thomas (who later became the Poetry editor) and Kelly Hager as the first judges in the 2005, the "Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in North American Poetry Award" was born and it is ongoing. In 2010, Karin Westman, David Russell and Naomi Wood took over the editing of *The Lion and the Unicorn* and they've been doing a terrific job. For the 2018 issue, Richard, Joseph and I composed our final essay, called "A Last Word."

On the general question of co-operation in the field of children's literature, I would say that it is informed by generosity and co-operation of scholars in the field. There is also strong support for emerging scholars. Established scholars tend to be on the editorial boards of several journals, and we all serve as referees for a range of journals. We're also the ones typically asked to assess promotion and tenure files of scholars in the process of establishing their academic careers.

Zhang: All these are leading journals in promoting research and writing in children's literature. These journals are highlighted in China as well. Compared with the English circle, there are no specific journals specializing in children's literature in China, but some journals, such as *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature*, *Foreign Literature Studies*, sporadically publish insightful articles in this field. But there are

steady growing demands for publication from researchers and writers in China.

Paul: That's good news. Throughout our work on Keywords, we recognized that we didn't have enough representation from China—or Korea or India—or a host of other countries. As a way of consoling ourselves we tried to remind ourselves that our project was always going to be partial. The IRSCL journal too, incidentally, is explicitly dedicated to increasing the international reach of scholarly work in the field. Kim Reynolds is the current editor. We recognize the importance of developing a global community of scholars.

Zhang: That's fabulous! These years witness the growing voices of Chinese scholars working in the field of comparative literature, English literature or Chinese literature, internationally recognized. We are eager to be heard, to work with scholars across the world.

Critical Perspectives in Children's Literature and Literary Theory

Zhang: "Ethical literary criticism," put forward by Nie Zhenzhao, is a theory and methodology for reading, interpreting, understanding, analyzing and evaluating literature from an ethical standpoint. It argues that "literature is a historically contingent presentation of ethics and morality and that reading literature helps human beings to reap moral enlightenment and thus make better ethical choices. The mission of ethical literary criticism is to uncover the ethical value of literature" (Nie, 24&248). How do you elaborate on the application of ethical literary criticism to children's literature?

Paul: In Anglo-European traditions of children's literature, the transmission of "moral enlightenment" has been historically important, partly because the origins of the genre itself are typically traced to the late Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The historical tag line was, of course, "to instruct and delight." By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, with the rise of high fantasy (Alice in Wonderland, for example), literature of the earlier period was being dismissed as "didactic," and "imagination" became the desirable quality. F. J. Harvey Darton's 1932 monumental *Children's Books in England*, established that narrative historical line. It proved difficult to displace primarily because it fitted so well with the Romantic views of children and childhood as innocent: ignorance is, however, the unspoken dark side of innocence. By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with the Romantic innocent (and ignorant) child becoming a thing of the past, and the construction of the thinking, knowing, socially responsible child on the rise, morality and ethics are again in the ascendant. In

2014, Claudia Mills, an excellent children scholar, edited an essay collection, *Ethics and Children's Literature*, published by Ashgate. The opening section is, in fact, titled, "The Dilemma of Didacticism: Attempts to Shape Children as Moral Beings." Increasingly, as "didacticism" loses its historical bad rap, it is being reconsidered in the light of books for children that do wrestle with complex ethical issues. Clémentine Beauvais, for instance, does just that in her lovely essay on "Didactic" for our forthcoming edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature*. She concludes with reference to a terrific Cambridge-based scholar, Louise Joy, and her recalibration of the aesthetics of didactic children's literature in her new book, *Literature's Children: The Critical Child and the Art of Idealization*.

The basic point I'm making is that as the construction of the twenty-first century thinking, knowing, socially responsible child takes shape, both literature for children and scholarship in the field are increasingly concerned with the ethical dilemmas facing us at the moment: the climate crisis, as well as social inequities and injustices are at the top of the list.

Zhang: Yes. How to tackle with the ethical dilemmas facing us is one of the missions with the scholarship of ethical literary criticism. I remember you are greatly concerned with children's education recently, why do you think "Education Gone Bad" struck a chord?

Paul: My (relatively) recent work with Elizabeth (Beth) Marshall on "Education Gone Bad," was really a case in point of scholars of different generations working together. Beth is a terrific, innovative scholar, now working at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. She produced a wonderful essay on "Gender" for the new edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature*.

I was honored when Beth asked me to work with her to develop a proposal (based on an IRSCL panel from 2014 she'd organized) for a special issue in *Children's Literature in Education* (published in March 2018). Between proposal and publication, the world had changed radically: the "Trump effect" and "Brexit" had become part of a new vocabulary that hadn't even been on the horizon when we proposed the special issue in 2015. Although we initially thought we were addressing some of the issues related, for instance, to inequities in education and to school shootings, we realized that by 2018, the issues to which we'd pointed had been exacerbated. As I'm writing my responses to your questions in May 2020, in the midst of the global shutdown caused by COVID-19, no children—at least no children in North America—are in schools. Inequities in education are now even more obvious in that while middle-class children who live in relatively large and

comfortable spaces are likely to have computers of their own, access to strong internet connections, as well as dedicated space and time for education, the chances of poor children having those options are limited.

Zhang: That's true! Inequities in education has never been so painfully acknowledged as today. Would you like to share a bit of your concerns about the influence of the "badness" on children's literature?

Paul: Initially we had thought primarily about the deadening effects of test-driven schooling on the imaginative lives of children, and on teachers. In our original paper call we invited papers tackling "difficult or unsuccessful pedagogical relationships and on representations of schools that turn from the benign towards the dystopian, the violent, or the monstrous." My own concern—for a long time now—has been on ways in which literacy has pushed literature out of the curriculum. It breaks my heart to see the undergraduates I teach being indifferent to the idea that a children's book might make sense, that it might mean something, that it might have emotional or intellectual complexity—that it might be worth reading and remembering. Literacy education has reduced books for children to a series of constituent parts—the presence or absence of colour or morals or sight vocabulary words. Education in a time of COVID has become even more fractured, with online instruction increasingly removed from the possibility of discussion or the investigation of nuanced interpretive possibilities in any subject.

Zhang: What are issues related to "challenging the authority of texts"? How do you evaluate "Children's Literature and Literary Theory"? What are the critical perspectives including feminist theories, semiotics, post-colonial discourse, reader-response theories, new historicism and on cultural studies?

Paul: When I started teaching those courses—or variations of them—early in my career, the idea of using post-structuralist theoretical approaches being developed in literary criticism and applying them to children's literature was considered novel. Historically, when Leavisite or New Critical Approaches of the mid-twentieth century held sway, they provided few insights into the analysis of children's literature, primarily because they privileged the "authority" of texts (so the emphasis on theme, structure, setting and the like). The application of post-structuralist theories to children's books, however, initiated entirely new ways of looking and understanding, new kinds of analysis.

In the courses I teach, I try to introduce students both to theoretical approaches (that might otherwise appear daunting), and to ways in which those approaches

illuminate works of children's literature. I might, for instance, use Louis Althusser's ideas about ideology and the ideological state apparatuses when teaching Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Or I might use some of my own early work on feminist theory (from *Reading Otherways*) to teach something about the power dynamics in *Snow White* in New York by Fiona French. Or I'd use semiotic theory (perhaps some Umberto Eco) in reading Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park*, in order to speak to the ways in which the red hat of the mother repeatedly "overshadows" her son. Or I might use post-colonial perspectives to contrast colonial poems from Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* with post-colonial *Come on into My Tropical Garden* by Grace Nichols. I also used essays from the first edition of *Keywords for Children's Literature* successfully in a cultural studies class a few years ago, and as an exercise, had the students compose their own "Keywords for Education" essays modelled on the published ones they studied. The essays the students wrote were terrific, and included "keywords" on "numeracy," "propaganda" and "innovation." They were published together with "keywords" essays produced by Phil's students in *Brock Education* 27, 2 (April 2018). Phil and I co-edited the issue of the journal (it's available online) and the students all received a publication credit.

Zhang: That's very impressive! But some scholars argue for an ethical turn in the field of children's literature, which means all the lens of society, such as gender, race and class issues should be included and interpreted from a certain literary theoretical perspective. How do you elaborate on this?

Paul: There is no question that issues related to gender, race, and class are now central to literary discussions, though they are often taken together and referred to as "intersectional." One of the reasons that these discussions are available at all is because there is so much more children's literature being published that no longer references a default white, Christian, middle-class Anglo-European construction of children and childhood. Questions of ethics in children's literature are interesting in that they implicitly reference concepts of "suitability" for children. That in turn makes us question what we think children are like and the issues which we deem might be beneficial or instructive—or interesting or entertaining or ethical. I think that the question isn't so much about applying a particular literary theoretical perspective to texts, but rather about recognizing the fact that when looking at a text through a specifically focused specialized "lens" it is possible to see interpretive possibilities that were invisible before. A random example. The *Paper Bag Princess* (1980) by Robert Munsch is typically celebrated because an "active" princess inverts the standard fairy tale trope: here the princess rescues the prince

instead of the other way around. But if looked at more closely through a feminist lens, the story doesn't quite work as a feminist text. The reason the princess drops the prince in the end is because he is vain and cares only about his clothes. That is, as his flaws are the ones gendered feminine (vanity and attention to clothes), he is rejected because he is too much like a girl.

Beyond Canadian Children's Literature

Zhang: In China, international books such as *Anne of the Green Gables*, are widely read. But other than this novel, many other Canadian classical works are still unfamiliar to Chinese readers. Who are the representative authors and what are the classical books you may recommend to Chinese readers?

Paul: *Anne of Green Gables*, and other books by L. M. Montgomery remain well loved by Canadians. But in terms of "classic" Canadian books that have sustained, I'd say that there is an entire genre of realistic animal stories, the best known being *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898) by Ernest Thompson Seton. There are a couple of other "wilderness" adventures that used to be well known but given the ways in which Indigenous cultures were represented, they now have faded. The two most important would likely be *Farley Mowat*, *Lost in the Barrens* (1956) and *Roderick Haig Brown*, *The Whale People* (1962).

It was really in the 1980s and 1990s that Canadian children's authors really hit their stride, supported by new and wonderful publishing companies, especially ones such as Kids Can Press, Groundwood and Tundra. *The Hockey Sweater* (1979) by Roch Carrier, published by Tundra, is a Canadian classic. From that period, I'd also recommend Tim Wynne-Jones, especially *The Maestro* (1995), a young adult novel, and *Zoom at Sea* (1983), a picture book. *The Root Cellar* (1981) and *Shadow at Hawthorne Bay* (1986), both young adult novels by Janet Lunn, also stand out. Four recent books will, I think, become classic: *Coyote Columbus* (1992), a picture book by Tom King; *Sidewalk Flowers* (2015), a wordless picture book by JonArno Lawson; *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) a young adult novel by Cherie Dimaline; and a quirky counting book, *Count Your Chickens* (2017) by Jo Ellen Bogart.

Zhang: Would you like to share with us your recent publication *Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist*. What is the motivation of your research of Eliza Fenwick? What are the contributions of Eliza Fenwick?

Paul: I've been working on what I've been calling my "Eliza" project for a number of years now. When I was still a professor at the University of New Brunswick I'd stumbled on *Visits to the Juvenile Library*, Eliza's 1805 product placement novel

on an upmarket London children's book shop, Tabart's Juvenile Library. Eliza's novel ultimately became the structural core for *The Children's Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century* published by Routledge in 2011. I'd also gone on to discover some of her other innovative books for children, including *Rays from the Rainbow*, a paint-by-number, parse by color grammar book (it was reproduced in a facsimile edition by the Osborne Collection) and a few others. I also found her 1795 novel for adults, *Secresy* (still in print in a modern edition) and a collection of letters she had written to author Mary Hays between 1798 and 1828, published as *The Fate of The Fenwicks* in 1927. When I arrived at Brock in 2005, I realized that although there was nothing definitive, there were hints (in the introductions to the letters and to *Secresy*) that Eliza had moved to Upper Canada (the colonial name for Ontario) in the 1830s. I realized that I loved Eliza's work and was intrigued by the fact that she'd moved from the intimate circle of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin in the radical London of the 1790s (she'd attended the birth of Mary Godwin—later Shelley—and the death of her mother Mary Wollstonecraft) and travelled via Barbados to North America. I wrote a grant application to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) more or less asking what Eliza, who had been so much a part of literary London life in the 1790s was doing in Upper Canada in the 1830s. At the time, I can now admit, I was worried that the question might have been rhetorical. I won the grant and got lucky, very lucky. I found an unreferenced, apparently unknown cache of manuscript letters Eliza and her granddaughter had written primarily from Niagara and Toronto to friends in New York in the 1830s—telling me exactly what she was doing in Upper Canada. The funding enabled me to do the research for my biography. What I ultimately discovered was an astonishing transnational story of “an early modern feminist.” Eliza was, for most of her adult life, a single working mother, then grandmother, supporting her family on her own. Her letters are riveting.

Zhang: It seems a long-time ago story. We know more of “her the intimate circle of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, and later Mary Shelley (Paul, 3)”, but we know so little of Eliza. What are your other findings?

Paul: I loved doing the research on Eliza, and it did require a huge amount of painstaking archival digging. In the context of children's literature, one of the things I was able to discover is that Eliza was the likely editor for Tabart's *Songs for the Nursery* (1805). One of the nursery verses, “Arthur O'Bower,” was, according to the Opies, first published in that volume. And there is a note, from

Charles Lamb, confirming receipt of the poems from Dorothy Wordsworth and saying that he had sent them to “the bookseller” (Tarbart), who had, in turn, paid Eliza for them. *Songs for the Nursery*, as the Opies explain, was one of the texts used by Halliwell for what became the definitive edition of English nursery verse.

One extraordinary outgrowth of my work on Eliza, was the research I did in Barbados, initially using crumbling microfilm copies of the Barbados Mercury Gazette. Eventually, I was a co-applicant on a winning British Library Endangered Programme grant to digitize the Gazette (1793-1828). The material on which I spoke in Princeton on the children of the fugitive slave ads, came out of the research I’ve done using the newspapers and it is part of an ongoing project.

Zhang: I have read *Eliza Fenwick: Early Modern Feminist*, which is illuminating, exhaustive and documentary. It is the painful but invaluable way of digging out those hidden but prominent writers. You did a tremendous job! Thank you for the interview!

Works Cited

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