Expanding the Map
An Introduction to the Second Edition
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We organize information on maps in order to see our knowledge in a new way. As a result, maps suggest explanations; and while explanations reassure us, they also inspire us to ask more questions, consider other possibilities.

To ask for a map is to say, “Tell me a story.”

Depending on their field, readers and scholars of children’s literature may see the word *keyword* as a search term, or a designation for the limited-vocabulary words of a British reading primer from the 1960s, or perhaps an entry in a scholarly dictionary. The word *keyword* is itself a keyword in Raymond Williams’s sense: a commonly used term that people assume has a shared meaning but in fact lacks this shared meaning. Because they are words about which there is some debate, keywords reveal conflicts. They are words that, in Williams’s phrase, “involve ideas and values” (1983b, 17).

The essays in *Keywords for Children’s Literature* offer a cartography of fissures in meaning and the etymological and ideological tensions they produce. Each keywords essay explains where a critical idea came from, what it means, and why its meanings shift. It offers expository theory, charting a constellation of connotations, and striving for a balance between several elements: an account of the word’s origins, the different and conflicting ways that the word figures in discussions of children’s literature and culture, and diverse examples from creative work and criticism. All of this needs to fit in an essay of roughly 1,500 words.

The keywords essay’s intricate structure can make it feel more like writing a poem or assembling a puzzle. It is not a typical thesis-driven critical essay, and yet it does have an implied thesis communicated through its structure and the particular critical debates illuminated therein. Though it is compact like the encyclopedia entry, it is not within that informational genre because its emphasis is on the tensions in the term rather than on information. Indeed, though this book’s alphabetical organization might suggest a reference work, *Keywords for Children’s Literature* is not a reference work. As Williams said of his project, we say of ours: It is “not a dictionary or glossary,” nor is it “a series of footnotes to dictionary histories.” Instead, it is “the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary” (1983b, 15)—in this case, a vocabulary related to children and children’s literature. These essays offer speculative, particular, subjective mappings of key questions that circle around a term. They provide not a definition but the beginning of a conversation. In this sense, our book strives to be not definitive but rather generative, launching scholars (whether beginning or advanced) on to new fields of inquiry.
This second edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* expands its own field of inquiry. Unlike the first edition, the second is explicitly international. When, in his *Keywords*, Williams gestures toward and ultimately defers the possibility of internationalizing his own book, we sympathize. As he writes,

I have had enough experience of trying to discuss two key English Marxist terms—*base* and *superstructure*—not only in relation to their German originals, but in discussions with French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Swedish friends, in relation to their forms in these other languages, to know not only that the results are fascinating and difficult, but that such comparative analysis is crucially important, not just as philology, but as a central matter of intellectual clarity. It is greatly to be hoped that ways will be found of encouraging and supporting these comparative inquiries, but meanwhile it should be recorded that while some key developments, now of international importance, occurred first in English, many did not and in the end can only be understood when other languages are brought consistently into comparison. (1983b, 20)

We understand why he settled on the aspirational “It is greatly to be hoped that” and an affirmation of cross-cultural, transnational, multilingual work. Such “comparative work” is, as he says, “crucially important,” “fascinating and difficult.” More difficult than we at first realized. We thank our Keywords 2.0 International Advisory Board for helping each essay meet this edition’s international mandate. The advisory board was an invaluable resource, guiding us to literary works and scholarship beyond our own narrowly national knowledges.

Our own efforts toward internationalizing these essays often reminded us of how deeply children’s literature and its scholarship are rooted in national traditions. For most of us, knowledge of children’s books begins growing within the national context of our own childhoods, and then we graft on shoots from foreign plants. During the process of editing these essays, the contours of an unofficial transnational canon of children’s literature has emerged, including authors such as Astrid Lindgren, Tove Jansson, Erich Kästner, Charles Perrault, J. K. Rowling, Hans Christian Andersen, and Lewis Carroll. Each essay references some works in this widely translated Western canon and introduces works that are indispensable and well known in specific national, geographical, or cultural contexts. In this way, the essays can expand our knowledge of children’s literature that originates outside of our own linguistic context.

*Keywords for Children’s Literature* does not mark the first time that a book in NYU Press’s Keywords series has a chapter title in more than one language. (Vargas, Mirabal, and La Fountain-Stokes’s *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* [2017] may hold that distinction.) But the essays do explore how linguistic variation creates variant understandings. Vanessa Joosen’s “Fairy Tale / Märchen” indicates how different etymologies gesture toward different histories. The English *fairy tale* and French *conte de fées* denote “stories about fairies,” evoking the tales’ emergence from eighteenth-century French salon culture and offering a description of the genre. As Joosen says, “Many of the most popular fairy tales today—think of ‘Snow White,’ ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ or ‘The Ugly Duckling’—do not contain any fairies.” In contrast, both *Märchen* and its Dutch counterpart, *sprookje*, are diminutives (perhaps, she says, “an indication of the belittlement of fairy tales by the literary establishment”) and refer to the contested issue of whether these tales originate in oral narratives. In its
venture into divergent etymologies, Charles Hatfield’s “Graphic Novel / Comics” essay points out that *comics* abbreviates *comic weeklies* and thus “highlights the medium’s links to jokes.” However, the “term for comics in Danish and Swedish are, respectively, *tegneserie* and *tecknade serier*, which literally mean ‘drawn serial,’ emphasizing the seriality of the medium.” In writing about *Boyhood*, Eric Tribunella notes that “Scandinavian languages—Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish—share the word *barn*, a term for childhood that can apply to both boys and girls, but lack an exact term for *boyhood* and *girlhood*.” Differences in languages not only point to distinctions between (and similarities among) national traditions but—in showing how words’ histories establish the parameters of inquiry—suggest how etymology shapes ontology. Even the best translation cannot fully convey the nuances of the translated term.

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas’s “Diversity,” Debra Dudek’s “Multicultural,” and Katharine Capshaw’s “Race” illuminate the variance in conversations surrounding difference. If Canada and the US conceive of national identity as inherently multicultural, European countries traditionally imagine national identity as more monocultural: as a result, in North America, diversity discourse emphasizes respecting differences between people within national borders; in Europe, imagology discourse advocates respecting different people beyond national borders. However, as indicated by that *if*, the previous sentence’s apparently tidy distinction bumps into a messier history. In North America, citizenship has typically depended on one’s proximity to the shifting boundaries of Whiteness,1 an elision of the colonizer’s theft of Indigenous land. In a comparable effacement of its own racialized past, the European tendency to consider multiculturalism (when acknowledged) as a relatively recent (post–World War II) phenomenon ignores both the legacy of colonialism and the long history of Black Africans and other non-White populations in Europe. Many laborers arriving in Europe after the Second World War were citizens or ex-citizens of a colonizing European power (Chin 2017).

One of the most important global problems today is the mistreatment of children of different ethnic groups, cultures, religions, and nationalities. In both literature and the world, children are refugees, migrants, and members of diasporic communities. In the English-speaking world, attempts to understand their experiences are reflected in terms like *authenticity*, *diaspora*, *Indigenous*, and *race*. In a European context, the word *race* had all but disappeared from serious or scientific contexts, since during World War II, Germany’s Nazi government (and its allies) used the term to justify the murder of six million Jews, up to half a million Gypsies, and many others it deemed “genetically” inferior. Recently, it has begun to return as a way of naming and diagnosing the surge in legal, social, and physical violence directed at racial and ethnic minorities. While we were editing this book, the European immigration crisis that began in 2015 and the rise of right-wing movements in many countries have underscored the necessity of a transnational language for addressing these issues and for children’s books that promote multicultural democracy and international understanding.

The second edition of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* began in international conversation. Invited by

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1 In our introduction and in some essays, the *B* in *Black* and the *W* in *White* receive capital letters when they refer to races. Capitalization distinguishes race from color (since race is not color) and echoes the US Census, which capitalizes all racial and ethnic categories, including White. In recognition of the fact that this is an international volume (and that capitalizing is not yet standard), we have respected authors’ preferences, allowing for variance in capitalizing these (and variants of these) words.
Nina Christensen and Kristin Ørjasæter, Phil and Lissa gave a talk on the first edition at the conference Nordic Children’s Literature—a New Research Question? (Nordisk barnelitteratur—et nytt kunstforskningsspørsmål?) in Oslo, Norway, in August 2012. Nordic scholars of children’s literature asked Lissa and Phil to explain why our map of keywords in the field did not include more examples beyond Anglo-Saxon traditions. The simple answer is that we had deliberately planned it that way. As the first edition’s introduction notes, we anchored it in “traditions in English” in order to keep the volume manageable and increase the likelihood of particular works of children’s literature cropping up repeatedly. However, like two-dimensional Mercator projection maps, Anglocentrism in children’s literature criticism distorts the global picture. While access to nonanglophone primary works of literature may impede those of us who do not speak the language, the fact that significant critical terms vary from culture to culture and from language to language requires that we make the effort. A term such as African American, though completely intelligible and even expected in North American contexts, reads as obliquely insulting in its neglect of African diasporic literatures and cultures. And though Indigenous is understood as an essential term in the “settler” cultures of Australia and the Americas, its relevance is not always clear to people from other parts of the world.

Inspired by their conversations in Norway, Lissa and Phil assembled an international roundtable discussion on Keywords for Children’s Literature at the International Research Society for Children’s Literature conference in Maastricht in August 2013. They invited a critique from panelists based in four different countries—Nina Alonso (Luxembourg), Nina Christensen (Denmark), Francesca Orestano (Italy), and Emer O’Sullivan (Germany)—and from an audience composed of people from many more countries. Phil and Lissa invited all to respond to these two questions:

1. Are there well-known texts in your language or country that ought to be included in Keywords for Children’s Literature? Which keywords do these texts speak to? Offer an example of how a specific keyword might be applied to this text.

2. Are there missing keywords specific to your language, culture, or country? As per the book, we are interested in words that are crucial to the discussion of children’s literature but also that are contested or conflicted.

Lissa and Phil noted that they had already identified poetry, fairy tale, family, and genre as keywords to include in a second edition. They spent the rest of the session listening and taking notes. Those suggestions provided valuable insights and areas to consider pursuing, should sales of the first edition justify a second. When in October 2015 Eric Zinner told Lissa and Phil that sales did warrant a second edition, they invited Nina Christensen to join the editorial team.

Having editors from three different countries (US, Canada, Denmark) broadens our international range of knowledge, and one editor from a non-Anglo country helps make the book less Anglo-centric. We have contributors who are natives of twelve different countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and the US. We established an international advisory board to help internationalize both the words revised for and the words new to the second print edition. The international advisory board includes scholars who either are based in or were born in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Spain, Sweden,
and the US. In addition, we have included contributors for whom English is not their first language and who specialize in non-English children’s literature and culture. Yet we are also aware that covering a term’s history and use in the children’s literature of all 196 countries on this planet is well beyond the scope of what any of these essays can accomplish. Since our contributors could not be expected to internationalize to that extent, we encouraged them to seek interesting national or linguistic differences in use and to include examples from children’s literatures in different countries. Like Alice after her fall through the rabbit hole to Wonderland, we knew that there were undiscovered countries lying just out of sight. The second edition of Keywords for Children’s Literature does not claim to offer a complete map of the field. We have instead had as our goal a map with fewer blank spaces—a map that will, like all maps, need to be redrawn as the landscape changes. That said, our efforts to internationalize have made us more acutely aware of our omissions. We acknowledge the absence—both on our advisory board and among contributors—of Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Egypt, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Russia, among many others. We hope that colleagues—especially the emerging young scholars from Asia, Africa, and Latin America—will write the scholarship that fills these gaps, hold us accountable for our inadvertent elisions, and help the next edition of this book and our scholarly community become more truly international.

Since they necessarily omit, maps always raise questions of inclusion. Fortunately, NYU Press’s Keywords website allows the expansion of our map without losing any of the first edition’s cartography. All words omitted from the codex version of the second edition are available for free on the Keywords website in perpetuity. Reasons vary for their relocation from print to web. Some were too narrowly American and so did not fit our international emphasis. Reflecting the temporality of any such endeavor, other words seemed less central to the conversation than they were ten years ago. Finally, we wanted all returning essays to be updated for the second edition, but not everyone could commit to a revised version for various reasons, including other demands on their time, retirement, ill health, and death. Though June Cummins (1963–2018), David Booth (1938–2018), and Margaret Meek Spencer (1925–2020) have left the map, their intellect continues to illuminate: on the Keywords website, their essays on “Marketing,” “Censorship,” and “Reading” still guide us through three tricky areas of the field.

The second edition of Keywords for Children’s Literature arrives in what feels like a different world than the one in which the first edition appeared. As the postwar world order comes unraveled, so too has the post–Cold War hope in the historical inevitability of democracy and the consequent decline of totalitarianism. As the rise of the nativist right and xenophobia threaten democracies, a pandemic has killed 400,000 people (as of June 2020), and the pace of climate change endangers life on planet earth. Our impression is that this new edition emerges in a more perilous time for the planet and all who inhabit it. We realize that proximity to perilousness is not randomly distributed across age, race, gender, class, sexuality, gender identity, or region of the globe but is rather intersectional and concentrated in particular communities.

As an academic discipline, the landscape for studies in children’s literature has also changed dramatically from the one into which our first edition was published in 2011. At the time, some of the authors felt the need to remark on the “lower-class” status of the discipline and the struggle for acknowledged standing as a scholarly field. The need for that kind of statement has all but evaporated in this second edition, published just ten years after the
first. One reason is that there is now a second generation of scholars, many of whom hold PhDs in children’s literature. That is a new phenomenon. In the 1970s, when the scholarly apparatus for the field was just beginning to be established, the academic homes of the people teaching the courses and publishing in newly established journals (Barnboken, Children’s Literature, Lion and the Unicorn, Signal) had slipped into the field via a range of disparate disciplines: English literature, comparative literature, library and information studies, and education. The multidisciplinary origin of studies in children’s literature has proven to be one of its lasting strengths.

Another substantial change within the field is the increasing intersection among children’s literature studies, childhood studies, and media studies. In many countries, children’s literature studies emerged in departments of languages and literature, where literary history and textual analysis were at the core of research interests. Today, we see a shift from an interest in children primarily as implied readers toward interest in children as producers and users of texts. This development can be linked to the fact that childhood sociologists have underscored children’s right to having an influence on their own lives, including their texts and media. This attention toward children’s agency has been supported by the rapid development of media and platforms—smartphones, tablets, YouTube, and forums for fan fiction—which facilitate children’s access to transnational means of production. A Harry Potter fan of the twenty-first century will meet this narrative in transmedial contexts: through books, movies, computer games, internet sites, clothes, illustrated books, and drama. The story’s circulation in multiple media highlights the need for terms such as book, play, adaptation, media, and intermedial, all of which are included in this volume. All speak to the increasingly diversified ways in which young people access texts.

Within children’s literature studies, neither the current inclusion of visual texts, audiobooks, and transmedia narratives nor an interest in important aspects of their content has diminished a commitment to form. For as long as scholars trained in languages and literature have studied children’s literature, the field has paid close attention to how a text’s formal elements make meaning. Studying the literariness of children’s literature reminds readers that words not only impart information but evoke emotion, inspire reflection, and invite experimentation. Navigating the nonsense of Wonderland, Alice and the reader learn that language can be unstable, beautiful, powerful, and humorous. In the first edition of Keywords to Children’s Literature, explorations of formal elements emerged in essays on “Aesthetics,” “Nonsense,” “Story,” and “Voice” and in the current edition in the essays on “Poetry” and “Irony,” among others.

In the 1970s, in the early days of modern children’s literature studies, discussions on quests for (presumably) stable physical, national, or racial identities were standard subjects of scholarly interest. Today, in the age of LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual [or allied]), even the idea of stable identities seems quaint. At least twenty keywords essays, including Karen Coates’s “Identity,” speak to the ways that old identity categories have been dismantled and reassembled into a wide array of variations. Kelly Hager’s “Body” essay brings into its orbit the essays on “Animal,” “Posthuman,” “Disability,” “Gender,” “Boyhood,” “Girlhood,” “Queer” and “Trans.” Karen Sánchez-Eppler’s essay on “Childhood” resonates through discussions of “Innocence,” “Size,” “Liminality,” “Crossover,” and “Voice.” In this already crowded network of related ideas, Debra Dudek’s “Multicultural” essay engages others on “Race,” “Transnational,” “Diaspora,” and “Indigenous” in conversations about how
children develop within (and in spite of) racially embodied structures of power. Misuse of power has also shifted the book’s emphasis away from Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007). Although one of the most-cited works in the first edition, the novel appears less frequently in the second. One reason is that in meeting our international mandate, the second edition has less space for anglophone works. The other reason is that Alexie’s sexual harassment of many women—which became public news in March 2018—has substantially altered his esteem among scholars of children’s and young adult literature. The American Indian Library Association rescinded its 2008 Best Young Adult Book Award for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and the American Library Association, which had just announced Alexie’s *You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me: A Memoir* (2017) as the winner of its Carnegie Medal, gave no medal in 2018. Teachers are either changing their syllabi or changing the way they teach Alexie’s work. Instead of only discussing his writing, scholars now also ask whether it is ethical to teach a writer who used his success to harm others.

When such an author writes for young readers, reckoning with the ugly facts of his or her biography collides with many assumptions about childhood and its literatures, notably the specter that an adult’s moral corruption will—via a literary work—harm vulnerable young readers. After being convicted of eleven counts of assault against young girl fans, British fantasist William Mayne went to prison, and his works were removed from shelves and curricula. A member of the Danish Nazi Party and contributor to a Nazi newspaper during the occupation (1940–45), Harald Bergstedt spent two years in prison after the war, and his children’s songs (and other work) were banned from Danish national radio until 1963. Belgian artist Hergé’s characters remain beloved despite the fact that he published *Tintin* in fascist newspapers both before and during the Nazi occupation. There is an array of possible responses to artists who abuse their power or otherwise build their careers on the victimization of others, and in the spirit of the Keywords endeavor, our book catalogs the tension rather than insisting on a single answer. Some contributors separate art from artist, believing that a writer’s personal failings have no bearing the greatness of their art. Others feel that there is no legacy so important that we can look the other way. As the American author Roxane Gay writes in her essay “Can I Enjoy the Art but Denounce the Artist?” (2018), “I no longer struggle with artistic legacies. It is not difficult to dismiss the work of predators and angry men because agonizing over a predator’s legacy would mean there is some price I am willing to let victims pay for the sake of good art.” The decision to retain, revise, or replace an Alexie reference maps a moral debate.

We think of these essays as *mapping meanings* because the goal of *Keywords for Children’s Literature* is not to fix meanings in place but rather to delineate tentative boundaries of a shifting conversation. In this second edition, we have a more capacious sense of that conversation than we did in the first edition. Our book’s aims still depart from those of Göte Klingberg, who in 1970 began an ultimately unfinished “Nomenklatur-Project” in order to develop a common vocabulary for children’s literature scholars of different languages (Müller 2009). Where Klingberg hoped to “introduce genre concepts which can be strictly defined” (2008, 9), we strive not for strict definitions but cartographies of contested borders. However, we now include some “genre concepts” that we wrongly excluded from the first edition: “Fairy Tale / Märchen” and “Poetry.” These have fostered the necessary degree of critical debate and thus are included, as has “Didactic,” another term that can describe a genre.
Indeed, genre itself is the subject of a Keywords essay, in which its author, Karin Westman, notes, “Genre is an amorphous category whose definition shifts over time and context.” Or, as Betty Fussell (2016) writes in a different context, “our minds and imaginations shape geographical facts, and our differing expectations create different landscapes” (44).

In resisting the totalizing impulse, Keywords for Children’s Literature offers not a unified field theory but what Paul Saint Amour calls “weak theory.” As Saint Amour (2018) writes, “there are specific, non-totalizing ways in which weak theory can get to grips with bad totalities. The challenge here, of course, would be keeping one’s own theory weak rather than permitting it to drift toward doctrine, coherentism, triumphalism, and sovereign self-understanding.” Weakness, in this sense, creates spaces for questions, dialogue, and collaboration. In describing rather than defining, this approach renders ambiguity with clarity, inviting critical engagement without proscribing the terms of that engagement: “A field’s strength (in the normative sense)—its vitality, generativity, and populousness—may increase as the immanent theory of its central term weakens (in the descriptive sense). What I mean is that the less sovereign a hold the central term has upon the field it frames, the more ferment and recombination can occur within that field, and among more elements” (Saint Amour 2018).

Though Saint Amour makes these claims about modernism, their logics reverberate in the capacious and expanding world of children’s literature. In delineating the topographical contours of our weak-boundaried field, Keywords for Children’s Literature welcomes scholars—at any level—across its open borders. Ignore its alphabetical ordering and read the essays in any order you like, guided only by your particular interests. Bring ideas from your areas of expertise into this one, and carry ideas from here into your fields of inquiry. Pursue the connections that emerge when you find yourself interdisciplinarily intertwined. Listen to your doubts. Ask questions. Resist the comfort of easy answers. Challenge our map of the field. Shape the critical conversation. We look forward to seeing how you use this book and to learning from you, our readers.