

INTRODUCTION TO THE EDITOR'S COLUMN: SURVEYING OUR SPACIOUS FIELD

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FROM TIME to time, readers of this journal will encounter an Editor's Column: a selection of short papers written around a single theme. Typically the theme is set, and the papers invited, by an editor, typically the Guest Editor of a Special Issue. In this way Rachel Conrad gathered together the papers that constitute the Editor's Column that opens our Special Issue on Juvenilia, Trauma, and Intersectionality (*JJS* 4.1, 2021); in this way Rebecca Welshman is gathering together the papers that will constitute the Editor's Column on "Wonder, Wellbeing, and the Environment" that will lead off our upcoming Special Issue on The Creative Child and the Natural World (*JJS* 8.1, 2026 forthcoming).

Sometimes, however, it is an editor who gets invited, who finds herself a grateful one of many gathered together by someone else. Such was my case in June 2025, when I participated in Laurie Langbauer's interdisciplinary symposium, "Discovering, Working in, and Creating Collections," held at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. There, scholars of all stripes gathered to share with and learn from one another on the challenges and opportunities we might meet when we set out to explore collections or to create anthologies that foreground the creative work of young people. The conversations were playful, purposeful; exploratory, goal-directed; affirming, unsettling; and always stimulating. So many expert practitioners of so many quite different methodologies, all in one place! The field of juvenilia studies was expanding before my eyes—it had never seemed so spacious, so varied. What could I do but try to convey to our readers some sense of the range of insights and possibilities that those of us attending had been so challenged and energized by?

In this Editor's Column, accordingly, I bring together six short essays based on talks given over the course of the symposium. The first three essays come from the event's opening panel on working definitions: my own "What Do We Mean by *Literary Juvenilia?*"; Victoria Ford Smith's "En Plein Air: Examining Child Art in Our

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Open Field”; and Sarah Schaefer Walton’s “Catching Young Writers in the Act of Becoming.” It is from Smith’s celebration of “Our Open Field” that I gratefully derive the title of this Editor’s Column. David Hanson’s “Marking Up the Weirdness; or, TEI Is for Grown-Ups,” comes from the panel on approaches to editing anthology texts; Sara Danger’s “History *through* Children’s Writing” comes from the panel on locating and considering pre-twentieth-century material by young people; and Anna Redcay’s “Authenticity and Artificiality: Juvenilia in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries” wraps up this Editor’s Column just as it wrapped up our symposium. If we left resolved to ponder our scholarly practices, we left equally resolved not to do so too ponderously. Because there is always room for one more chicken joke. Enjoy!