



## The Women's Print History Project

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### The Queen of the Disciplines (feat. Lisa Shapiro), *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*

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# The Queen of the Disciplines (feat. Lisa Shapiro)

*Kate Moffatt and Kandice Sharren*



Throughout the month of March, the WPHP has been posting Spotlights about women philosophers in print as part of our “[Women & Philosophy Spotlight Series](#)” to celebrate Women’s History Month. Contributors to the series include research assistants Angela Wachowich, Belle Eist, Isabelle Burrows, Tammy T., and project director Michelle Levy, who wrote about the anonymous ‘[Sophia, a Person of Quality](#),’ [Margaret Cavendish](#), [Harriet Martineau](#), [Anna Laetitia Barbauld](#), and [Ann Williams](#).

Finding women philosophers in the WPHP is not necessarily a straightforward task: we don’t include philosophy as a genre, as research assistant Angela Wachowich, organizer of the Series, discovered during some of her work on early feminist writing last year. Turning to Lisa Shapiro’s *New Narratives Bibliography of Works by Women Philosophers of the Past*, Angela identified a number of women philosophers who we do, indeed, have in the WPHP—but that she had to use the *New Narratives Bibliography* to find them illustrates how the WPHP data model does not (and cannot) render visible every genre. It also, however, demonstrates how digital humanities projects from different disciplines can speak to each other.

And that is precisely what we did for this month’s episode: we invited Lisa Shapiro, director of the *Extending New Narratives Partnership Project*, to chat with us about women philosophers, the difficulty of genre, the narratives in entrenched canons (and the cross-disciplinary urge to name a canon), and the importance of discipline-specific recovery efforts.

**Guest**

**Lisa Shapiro** is Professor of Philosophy at Simon Fraser University. Her research is focused on accounts of human nature in the 17th century, along two general tracks. She has been interested in the place of the passions in accounts of the relations of human beings to the world around them, and their understanding of that world. And she is currently the PI of the SSHRC-funded *Extending New Narratives Partnership Project*, which aims to retrieve philosophical works of women and individuals from other marginalized groups and sustain the presence of these figures in the history of philosophy, and part of that project includes *The New Narratives Bibliography of Works by Women Philosophers of the Past*.

## WPHP Spotlights Referenced

"Cataloguing Catharine Macaulay" (Kate Moffatt)

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*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (title)

Wollstonecraft, Mary (person, author)

Macaulay, Catharine (person, author)

Hays, Mary (person, author)

Hume, David (person, author)

Wordsworth, William (person, author)

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (person, author)

Lord Byron, George Gordon (person, author)

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (person, author)

Blake, William (person, engraver)

Astell, Mary (person, author)

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### **Further Reading**

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00:00:00	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Well, that's an interesting question. So, the first thing I want to say is those disciplinary divides are historically contingent.
00:00:11	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Absolutely.
00:00:12	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So there is a long tradition—I'm not sure when it got started—I would probably guess in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century is when literary studies really started to define itself specifically. And philosophy is often called the 'queen of the disciplines' because almost all disciplines started as species at some part of philosophy [Kate and Kandice laugh].
00:00:41	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah [laughs].
00:00:42	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	And then somehow got separated into their own distinctive discipline—we just talked about histories, right?
00:00:51	🎵	[music playing]
00:01:00	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Hello, and welcome to <i>The WPHP Monthly Mercury</i> , the podcast for <i>The Women's Print History Project</i> ! The WPHP is a bibliographic database that collects information about women and book production during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My name is Kandice Sharren—
00:01:15	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	and I'm Kate Moffatt—
00:01:17	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	and we are long-time editors of the WPHP, and the hosts of this podcast. This is the finale of Season 2, and we have one last special guest to interview who has some fascinating stories to share. We'll be back the third Wednesday in June.
00:01:33	🎵	[music playing]
00:01:42	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Happy Women's History Month! This month on the WPHP, our team has been running a series of spotlights, or short informational posts, organized by research assistant Angela Wachowich and focused on women philosophers in print. As Angela's introduction to the series points out, women's philosophical writing was "Unfettered by the formal limitations of academic discourse, and took a variety of forms, including treatises and histories as well as novels and poems, and topically


ranged across many subjects, from education, to political theory, to natural history, to early feminist thought.”

- 00:02:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) While many of these genres and formats are captured by the WPHP’s data model, some that are particularly important to philosophy in print, like ‘treatise,’ are not. This month’s series has given us an excellent opportunity to think critically, really, about what we classify as philosophy and why, and what philosophy looks like in our database.
- 00:02:33 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Contributing Research Assistants to this series are Angela Wachowich, Belle Eist, Isabelle Burrows, Tammy T., and Project Director Michelle Levy, who take up the anonymous ‘Sophia, a Person of Quality’, Margaret Cavendish, Harriet Martineau, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and Ann Williams, respectively. But before we go any further, we’re going to get Angela to tell us a bit about how and why she put the series together.
- 00:02:55 Angela Wachowich (RA) While I was researching Charles Geneviève d’Éon de Beaumont for a spotlight I wrote in June 2021, I became interested in her library, which was, at one time, the largest feminist book collection in Europe. Researching the titles in d’Eon’s library led me to a conversation with our Project Director, Michelle Levy, about why we don’t have a philosophy genre in the WPHP.
- 00:03:22 Angela Wachowich (RA) Our conversation made me realize that the way we, or at least I, think about philosophy as an academic discipline gets in the way of diversifying the field’s history. Eighteenth-century philosophers were not necessarily university educated and did not necessarily identify as philosophers. Women’s philosophical writing in particular appears in an eclectic range of forms and genres from political writing and letters to poetry and juvenile literature.
- 00:03:52 Angela Wachowich (RA) Eager to learn more, Michelle and I suggested a women and philosophy spotlight series to the rest of the team. To make it easier for interested writers to choose a topic, I compiled a list of eighteenth-century women philosophers on the WPHP, who also appear on Lisa Shapiro’s bibliography of works by women philosophers of the past. It’s been very rewarding to see how each Research Assistant interpreted the prompt and their subject, challenging my understanding of the field as a genre by drawing attention to its various styles and subject matters. I encourage you to check them out if you haven’t already.
- 00:04:28 Kandice Sharren (co-host) In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft claims the title of ‘philosopher’, but she was an exceptional case; not all women whose writing engages

with philosophical questions identified themselves so clearly—so trying to identify women to write about was our first hurdle. This was made even more complicated by the fact that we try not to write multiple spotlights about the same writer, and Wollstonecraft, along with other figures readily identifiable as philosophers, such as Catharine Macaulay and Mary Hays, were covered in spotlights for our Women and History series last year.

- 00:05:02    Kandice Sharren (co-host)    Thankfully, there's a different digital bibliography for philosophy: the *New Narratives Bibliography of Works by Women Philosophers of the Past*, which identifies works by early modern women philosophers and lists all their editions (including modern ones), with the goal of offering an entry point to reading and studying philosophy by women.
- 00:05:23    Kandice Sharren (co-host)    This bibliography is part of the *Extending New Narratives* in the *History of Philosophy* project, which is working to expand the philosophical canon by integrating women, such as Margaret Cavendish and Emilie du Chatelet, and to develop new connecting themes in the discipline of philosophy.
- 00:05:38    Kandice Sharren (co-host)    As their website states, "it is a project working to "[build] an international network of scholars, students, and academic institutions supporting research on non-canonical philosophers; [create] research tools including an open access website and a comprehensive annotated bibliography of primary sources; [develop] and [shape] curricular resources to enrich the teaching of philosophy; and [increase] awareness among the general public of long neglected aspects of our intellectual past."
- 00:06:05    Kandice Sharren (co-host)    Luckily for us, the Principal Investigator for *Extending New Narratives*, Dr. Lisa Shapiro, is *also* based at Simon Fraser University, and we were delighted to invite her onto the podcast to chat with us about bibliography and how recovering women philosophers *as philosophers* is different from recovering women writers more generally. Spoiler alert: we learned *so* much [Kate and Kandice laugh].
- 00:06:29    Kate Moffatt (co-host)    Lisa Shapiro is Professor of Philosophy at Simon Fraser University. Her research is focused on accounts of human nature in the seventeenth century, along two general tracks. She has been interested in the place of the passions in accounts of the relations of human beings to the world around them, and their understanding of that world.
- 00:06:56    Kate Moffatt (co-host)    And she is currently the PI of the SSHRC funded *Extending New Narratives Partnership Project*, which aims to retrieve philosophical works of women and

individuals from other marginalized groups and sustain the presence of these figures in the history of philosophy, and part of that project includes the *New Narratives Bibliography of Women Philosophers of the Past*.

00:07:04 

[music playing]

00:07:14 Kandice Sharren  
(co-host)

Okay, well, thank you so much for joining us this month, Lisa. It's really great to have a chance to sit down and chat with you about your project. So, on that note, this month our Research Assistants have been posting a series of spotlights that feature women philosophers that we have included in the WPHP.

00:07:39 Kandice Sharren  
(co-host)

However, since women writers aren't often classified as philosophers, we had initially a tough time generating a list of potential names for them to write on, and we ended up consulting your digital bibliography, the *New Narratives Bibliography of Works by Women Philosophers of the Past*, extensively. Can you start us off just by telling us a little bit about this bibliography and how it fits into the larger extending *New Narratives* project?

00:07:58 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

Sure. So, the bibliography actually started with the antecedent to the *Extending New Narratives Project*, the *New Narratives in the History of Philosophy Project*, which was focused on retrieving the work of women philosophers of the early modern period in Europe, although that's not how it was conceived at the time.

00:08:21 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

So, the early modern period in philosophy is, I would say, from say Montaigne, 1580, to Kant, 1780, and the way in which courses are structured, and indeed a lot of research is structured, is focused on seven key figures, all of whom are men, and the kind of mythology around those seven men—Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant—is that they are the great philosophers, and any other philosopher you might be interested in is really in some kind of service to those seven great minds.

00:09:06 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

That's been changing a lot over the past couple of decades, but one of the things that really got started, I would say about twenty-five years ago, is noticing that there are a lot of women thinkers of the period who are doing, I think, something that's recognizably philosophy, but that no one had really heard of at the time. People started to work on a handful of those figures.

00:09:37 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

Normally, people working on English, language traditions, people like Margaret Cavendish, and Mary Astell were at the forefront of this new line of research, but Eileen O'Neil has a great article called "Disappearing Ink", which is a bit of a tour de



force. She basically names, I would say, fifty women who were writing philosophy in the period, most of whom no one had ever heard of. And so the idea behind—

00:10:10 Kate Moffatt  
(co-host)

Love it.

00:10:11 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

this bibliography was to, first of all, get a handle on the work that needs to be done by providing a catalogue of the names of women thinkers and their works. And then, what we decided to do was actually, while we were putting this information together, was to track editions to track a kind of reception history to see how popular they were in their own time or when they might have dropped out of consideration and relying on work of people in other disciplines like English, we thought, ‘well, we might get started with some data for network analysis.’ So we included information about publishers, of course, it's bibliography, but also—

00:11:00 Kate Moffatt  
(co-host)

My favourite [laughs].

00:11:01 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

prefaces. And if somebody else wrote a preface, if the work was dedicated to someone, those are low-hanging fruit for things. So what was amazing is how many lines the database actually took up, right? The initial form of it was something like 900 lines of data, which was just really the tip of the iceberg.

00:11:26 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

There are so many women authors, who are on the list of people to add that we haven't gotten to. At the same time, the *Extended New Narratives Project* was moving outside of the early modern period to extend from the medieval period to 1940, roughly. So that adds a whole lot of eighteenth and late eighteenth and early nineteenth century or the nineteenth century figures to list as well as early twentieth century.

00:11:55 Lisa Shapiro  
(guest)

But we also came to realize that this isn't just a European problem. That other traditions have their own canons, and those canons invariably exclude women. And so, because I've been fortunate enough to have some Research Assistants with some language skills, we've included some Brazilian writers, so women writing in Portuguese, and some women in the Arabic tradition because I've got an Egyptian RA who was really interested in looking for women in the Arabic philosophical traditions.

00:12:31 Kate Moffatt  
(co-host)

That's awesome.

00:12:33	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So, it's expanded a little bit. It's expanded in scope. That's really mostly just limited by the language skills of the Research Assistants—
00:12:46	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yes.
00:12:47	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	who are doing the work in collecting the data. So the other reason the bibliography started is we were trying to keep track of works that had already been digitized so that we didn't replicate work that had already been done. Turns out that digitization is changing very, very quickly [Kandice laughs]. So I think the information in the database is already obsolete, I guess.
00:13:16	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So there's works that we don't have that have been digitized, that we don't identify as digitized. Probably some of the links for works that we knew were digitized have changed and they need to be updated. So, there's work to just sort of [Kandice laughs] maintain the database properly as well as to just really develop it as well. So I guess that's a kind of long answer, but comprehensive to—
00:13:51	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	No, that's wonderful—
00:13:52	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	how the bibliography fits in. So I guess in how it fits in with the larger project, to recover the work of women philosophers, you need some infrastructure to help structure the research and the bibliography is kind of the baseline infrastructure. So that's the role it's playing: here is how much we have not read [all laugh].
00:14:21	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yes!
00:14:22	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yes. Yeah. Relatable!
00:14:24	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	As a Romanticist, I definitely identify with the Big Six, Big Seven...
00:14:31	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I was about to say, it reminded me of the Big Six—
00:14:33	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	white man writer that everybody reads and everyone else is adjacent to them. So good to know it's not just my field.

00:14:42 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, who are the Big Six in your area? Just out of curiosity.

00:14:49 Kandice Sharren (co-host) You've got Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Shelley, Byron, and Keats.

00:14:57 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Oh, interesting.

00:14:58 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah.

00:14:58 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Yeah. All men.

00:14:59 Lisa Shapiro (guest) I've heard all. I know all of those [laughs].

00:15:03 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Those are our Big Six.

00:15:04 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Those are the Big Six.

00:15:05 Lisa Shapiro (guest) But I didn't realize they constituted a canon, but, they do, I guess. Interesting.

00:15:11 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Yeah. Yeah.

00:15:13 Kandice Sharren (co-host) A canon that I like to think is getting deconstructed as we speak.

00:15:19 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah. No, it's hard.

00:15:19 Kandice Sharren (co-host) But not for everybody.

00:15:21 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah, no, it's hard. Entrenched canons are interesting creatures, really. So one of the things that I think I struggle with just in terms of the kind of metaphilosophical questions that I'm interested in, in part, because of this project, and in conjunction with this project is the philosophical canon has played a really—there's a positive role

that it's played. And I suspect this is the same in the Romantic English literature canon, it's that it provides a kind of common ground for students and researchers in different institutions, in different countries to have something to talk about with one another.

- 00:16:12 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Typically, in philosophy, there is really a narrative of how these figures relate to one another, how their philosophical views are responsive to one another. So you get a picture of the logical landscape of the philosophical issues that they're in conversation about, even though they're 200 years apart from each other [Kandice laughs].. Sometimes it's closer than that, but you get a storyline that you can structure a book around. You can structure a class around.
- 00:16:50 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Well, and even that you can understand those women in relation to, right? I think Michelle Levy, our Project [Director], was talking about Mary Wollstonecraft [and how] one of the reasons she's remembered as such a philosophical kind of thinker of the time is because it's very easy to slot her into this narrative that already existed of philosophical thinking.
- 00:17:11 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah. So, that's actually one way that people started looking at the women of this period is slotting them into their relationship to the canonical figures. So, they become minor figures in relation to the major figures, and they can be brought into conversation, but they're sort of addenda, right. They're flourishes rather than central. Historically, that might be appropriate.
- 00:17 Lisa Shapiro (guest) But what doing that obscures is that a number of these women were central to different discussions and in particular discussions concerning the equality of men and women or arguments for women's education. The narrative of the canon makes certain philosophical questions central and ignores a lot of other questions, right?
- 00:18:10 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. That women might have been more central too.
- 00:18:12 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah, exactly. So, what's important is to read the women on their own terms, which, for someone like Margaret Cavendish is actually quite complicated, because she is responding to the scientific philosophy of the period. But she's also interested in a lot of other things as well. And so focusing on the body of her work is interesting.
- 00:18:42 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Mary Astell is responsive to Descartes' epistemology, but also a real central figure in arguments for women's education and for addressing inequalities in the political status of women. And developing a virtue theory—Jacqueline Broad has developed a

kind of systematic interpretation of Astell's writings as developing a philosophy of virtue, a virtue ethics that's tied to her conceptions of epistemology.

- 00:19:14 Kate Moffatt (co-host) It's so interesting to think about how much work there is to still do with these women figures who have become better known that are being more highly studied. And then to also be doing all of this work that your project is doing and that our project is doing to capture all of these other women that we've never even heard of as well [Kandice laughs]. And to know just like the extent of work that still has to be done. I have another question that this one was my biggest thing I wanted to ask, because I'm so—
- 00:19:43 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So let me, before you ask your question, let me just kind of close off this, there's an advantage—
- 00:19:48 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, please do.
- 00:19:49 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So the advantage to the canon is you get this neat storyline, the problem is it leaves out a bunch of stuff. And then once you start recovering the stuff that it leaves out you're confronted with just how much it leaves out. And this is just a question that I don't have an answer to: what are the productive strategies that you can both engage in the massive amounts of recovery work that need to be done and not just get a bunch of long lists of names and what they thought, but have storylines that help unify them in various ways?
- 00:20:40 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Is there a way to tell a story that isn't so exclusionary, right? Or is there a way to tell multiple stories that interconnect, that aren't exclusionary, and that we've opened the potential for inclusiveness, and it's a real challenge. And I think the comment you just made about just how much work there is to do. It really brings home that it's a real challenge, and it's a really hard question to answer. So you were going to ask me another question, though [laughs].
- 00:21:17 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, yes. I was. My question that I was so excited to ask because I'm not in philosophy, I'm in English lit. But while working on this, one of the things that we often do while working on the WPHP is find authors we'd never heard of, and then we read books by them and we're just so delighted. The running joke is that my favorite is Elisabeth Guénard's racy and ridiculous *The Three Monks!!!*. But while working on your bibliography, did you discover any new-to-you women

philosophers that you got particularly excited about? Like, if we, if we wanted to read philosophy by early modern women, who would you recommend we start with?

- 00:21:56 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Well, that's an excellent question [Kandice laughs]. So, the thing is there's so much I haven't read [laughs]. So the bibliography is a catalogue of names of people. And I have to confess that I haven't read a lot of the works that are included there. There's a woman whose works I don't know if they're in the bibliography yet because I haven't had students who are proficient in French. So, there's two answers I want to have to that question: so there's one woman who I want to have the time to read, because I'm really curious about her work.
- 00:22:03 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And that's Anne Dacier, who was a huge figure in seventeenth-century French literature, what she was famous for were her translations of classical texts, but her translations have substantive prefaces, and her reputation is entirely as a translator, and a master of Greek and Latin and she translated Homer into French. She translated anyone. She is a master translator, but I'm really interested to read the prefaces and what the interpretations are in them, and whether they have philosophical content, which I suspect they do.
- 00:23:25 Lisa Shapiro (guest) I'm interested in French women just because of my philosophical interests. Someone who I will never have time enough to read all her work is Madeleine de Scudéry who wrote about 10 ten-volume novels in the seventeenth century [all laugh].
- 00:23:44 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yes! [laughs]
- 00:23:45 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Wow!
- 00:23:54 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, what's really interesting about those novels is within the novels, they're always in a classical setting. And within the novels, there are these kinds of interludes of philosophical discussions of the main characters. And a number of those philosophical discussions were extracted from the novels and republished as moral conversations, right?
- 00:24:15 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, interesting!
- 00:24:16 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And there's two volumes, two or three volumes of those moral conversations, some of which are both interesting and hysterical [Kate and Kandice laugh]. So, one of my favorite ones is—

00:24:26	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	My favourite!
00:24:26	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	About love. There's these characters [thatt] get into a discussion about: is there such a thing as love at first sight—that's the opening gambit, and that feeds into a discussion about what the nature of love is, and that feeds into a discussion about what the nature of friendship is, right? And what the distinction between love and friendship is. So it's a really interesting discussion about the different dimensions of human relationships and how they're both different and related to each other. So she's a lot of fun.
00:25:05	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	That sounds fun. That sounds marvelous.
00:25:06	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Yeah. But she was prolific, she was absolutely prolific [Kandice laughs]. Someone you might be interested in, especially if you're interested in Wollstonecraft, and I think, as a philosopher, she is completely understudied. And I'm trying to convince someone with time and energy to develop a modern edition of her work—is Catharine Macaulay, who I don't know if you've heard of.
00:25:36	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yes.
00:25:36	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Yeah.
00:25:36	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Who was very influential on Wollstonecraft's thinking, her <i>Letters on Education</i> . So, she's recognized as a Republican, having a Republican political philosophy. She has an amazing pamphlet that's a lovely lambasting of Hobbs [Kate and Kandice laugh]. Her life seems super interesting, but her last work is called <i>Letters on Education</i> .
00:26:05	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So, it's a fictional correspondence with a woman, Hortensia, and it is super interesting. Like there's so much packed in there, as I read it, one of the questions that concerns her, that's always operating in the background, is how do you address a corrupt government, right? Like, a corrupt Republic. Or how do you ensure the Republic doesn't become corrupt?
00:26:34	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	And I think the answer is in the <i>Letters on Education</i> and a big part of it is about having a proper ensuring that the kids, the new generation, is properly brought up, right?. So it's a sustained argument, I think, about what a good education ought to

be, and how that education feeds into a proper morality. And then the morality would ground the political community.

- 00:27:08 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, it's a really sophisticated work, but philosophers haven't read it because, I think, in the large part, of its format. Because of the genre it's written in. It's not an argument. It's not a treatise. It's this weird three volume set of fictional letters where you only get one side of the correspondence, right.
- 00:27:29 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Oh, interesting.
- 00:27:30 Lisa Shapiro (guest) It's Macaulay's side of the correspondence, but there's a lot of really interesting themes there, like the role of having children engage with animals and having that engagement be one of care rather than one of hunting. So there's a lot of discussions of the dangers of an organized hunt, and how that's corrupting of basic human sympathy and human benevolence.
- 00:28:05 Kate Moffatt (co-host) That sounds very interesting. I've done a little bit on Catharine Macaulay, but not that much.
- 00:28:10 Lisa Shapiro (guest) If children have pets, they'll grow up to be good people, right?
- 00:28:19 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [laughs] Moral and happy, right?
- 00:28:20 Lisa Shapiro (guest) It's kind of the claim. So, there's a lot of why that is [and] thinking through why she thinks that is interesting.
- 00:28:32 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah, and it's interesting to think about her as a philosopher because I think in literary history, she tends to be remembered as a historian.
- 00:28:40 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Right. *The History of England*.
- 00:28:42 Kandice Sharren (co-host) So, she gets read by literary scholars as a historian and placed in conversation with other people—and Kate, I think that's why you wrote something on her last year.
- 00:28:54 Kate Moffatt (co-host) I wrote a spotlight on her last year. It was for our “Women in History Spotlight Series.” So it was about her *History of England*—



00:29:03	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Which was hugely influential, hugely influential.
00:29:05	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yeah. I absolutely talked about her as a historian. I don't think I even realized the philosophical elements of her career as well, which are becoming very clear to me now that you're kind of talking to me about it, I find that very interesting.
00:29:19	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So the preface of her <i>History of England</i> actually is very philosophical and is a defense of Republicanism. And that, as you probably know, right, her <i>History of England</i> was written in direct response to David Hume's <i>History of England</i> , who was very much a philosopher who is remembered more for his philosophy than for his <i>History of England</i> . Although his <i>History of England</i> was also very influential.
00:29:46	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	And, what's interesting I think for both of them is that they see history, the writing of history, as a kind of philosophical practice. So for both of them, the telling of the history, they are moral works, right? The writing of history is a kind of laying out of describing characters, the relationship to each other, how they figure in government and politics is at its core a moral work. It's a moral project, right, that's key to moral education. So yeah, histories as works of philosophy is, [Kandice laughs], definitely genre-bending.
00:30:33	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yeah. And I was going to ask about genre! [Kandice laughs]. This is very relevant right now because Kandice and I are currently in the process of trying to revamp our list of genres. And I started thinking of it when you were talking about—is it Anne Dacier? I'm going to butcher the pronunciation of her name—but how there's these prefaces to these translations that you think are probably also very philosophical.
00:30:55	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And we've been struggling with some similar things where people have come out with editions of things, and then they've included literary criticism. And so we're like, "okay, how do we apply a genre to this?" You know what I'm saying? And we have to kind of do a bit of a revamp and make sure they're applied consistently.
00:31:11	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And if we're wanting to add new ones, what does that look like? So we're very curious about how <i>your</i> bibliography uses its 19 genres, which range from 'novel' and 'treatise', as you mentioned, to 'correspondence' and 'fantasy', which is a really interesting one. Can you tell us a bit about the editorial decisions that you made around genre from one bibliography project to another? [all laugh]
00:31:32	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Okay, so there's a really straightforward answer to this.

00:31:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Okay.

00:31:38 Lisa Shapiro (guest) We are not theorists of genre [Kandice laughs]. We talked to librarians and got the standard library catalogue list of genres. So there's a standard language that librarians use in classifying genres. We got that list and we went through it and included in the list those genres we thought might apply. So for instance, 'fantasy', the work that fits under that most obviously is Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, right?

00:32:17 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Okay, yeah.

00:32:18 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And if there's one, there must be more—

00:32:23 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. Nice! I like that. I like that a lot [laughs].

00:32:25 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Basically we tried to be as broad-minded as possible to anticipate things that might come up, based on the preliminary work we were doing in looking at the works by the authors, the list of names that we had. So I can say that we already have run into a challenge [Kandice laughs] as we have moved forward in time; when we started looking at the philosophical works by women in the nineteenth century, we discovered that women are publishing an awful lot in journals and newspapers. And we had not thought about that because that wasn't a thing in the modern period, right? [all laugh]

00:33:11 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yes. [laughs]

00:33:12 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Yeah. [laughs]

00:33:12 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Nineteenth-century periodicals are a nightmare [laughs].

00:33:15 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And so, we are going back to revamp. We need to update the pull-down menu a bit and some of the bibliographical columns so that we can include the full bibliographical information for those articles. It's particularly the case for politically minded arguments. So lots of arguments about slave abolitionists, anti-slavery arguments, are in periodicals of various kinds, right? And so, yeah.

00:33:57	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	In very different forms. Yeah.
00:33:58	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	So it's quite dynamic; it's things you don't think of when it's not your historical period [Kate and Kandice laugh].
00:34:07	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	That's something we really landed on while working on this podcast, especially, because we'll be discussing things and we'll realize like six episodes later, we're like, "oh, that thing we discussed back in episode three, it's wrong now because it's"—and I like that. I like that this podcast does allow us to kind of show how dynamic it is, but it really is.
00:34:26	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	One of the things we just changed—a review suggested it and it was something we'd been thinking about anyways—is we can now add multiple genres to a title. So we're trying to figure out how we want to manage that because when you apply all genres to something, it doesn't mean anything anymore.
00:34:42	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Right.
00:34:43	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	How many genres do you attach to your titles?
00:34:44	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	That's a good question.
00:34:46	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Do you know?
00:34:48	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	I think it's just one. But I'm not the data entry—I've got RAs. So, one of the things we have is a notes section, so that the people doing the data collection can make a determination of what the major genre is. Genre: it's important, but it's not central, is I guess what I want to say. For philosophy, it's of interest, but it's not central.
00:35:31	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Right. Well, and I guess because philosophy is a genre [Lisa laughs], you know what I'm saying?
00:35:37	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Well, that's an interesting—sort of! [laughs]
00:35:40	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	We had another question about that, because we were going to ask: how do you define philosophy? And then how does that fit with these genres that you're working

with? I guess this is a bit of a two-parter [question]. But the other thing we're curious about is: does working with women change that as well? [Kandice laughs]

- 00:35:58 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah, no. I don't know whether this project or the original project has caused the increased interest or whether it's just the moment we're at, where everyone's interested in these things concurrently. But I will be going to a conference in April on genre in early modern philosophy at Duke that someone's organized [Kate laughs.]
- 00:36:33 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So I think one of the things that the more conservative folks tend to come back with is, well, "these women aren't really philosophers because they're not writing treatises." And the answer is usually because they're not writing treatises, right?
- 00:36:53 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting.
- 00:36:54 Lisa Shapiro (guest) [laughs] So, in order to be a philosopher, you need to write a treatise, which is sort of interesting because if you look at some of these canonical philosophers, they never wrote a treatise [all laugh].
- 00:37:08 Kate Moffatt (co-host) You are like, "really? Are you sure?" [all laugh]
- 00:37:10 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, like, "Oh! So does that mean Nietzsche is not a philosopher?"
- 00:37:12 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Is that the hill you want to die on? [laughs]
- 00:37:14 Lisa Shapiro (guest) What about Descartes? Descarte didn't [Kate and Kandice laugh]—he wrote a textbook.
- 00:37:20 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Let me just poke holes in your theory! [Kate and Kandice laugh]
- 00:37:22 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Yeah! I mean, it just shows you how unexamined the assumption is, right?
- 00:37:28 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Totally.

00:37:29 Lisa Shapiro (guest) That we know a philosophical work when we see one. And you don't have to even just look at women, you can look at men who aren't central, like Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, [a] crazy mix of genres [Kate and Kandice laugh]. Like poems, essays, but really important in the history of political philosophy, right? So, this conversation has really opened up people to really re-examining tacit assumptions.

00:38:06 Lisa Shapiro (guest) That just because Kant's an important philosopher doesn't mean that every important work of philosophy needs to look like the *Critique of Pure Reason*, right? And then, I think the question that people are starting to ask, because as philosophers, we are certainly not trained in literary theory and in genre theory, and one question that people are starting to ask and working towards answers of is: is it an accident what genre a philosopher chooses to write?

00:38:49 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Is it just what works for them or is there a relationship between the form and the content? So is it just a convenient way to express the philosophical view or does the chosen form of writing actually contribute to the philosophical argument in some way? Is it the most apt to convey the philosophical content? And that's a really challenging question for someone who knows what they're talking about when they talk about genre [Kate and Kandice laugh], but it's even harder, I think, in a philosophical context, right?

00:39:33 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And yeah, I think a flip side to that is sort of opening up: does it matter? So that one question is: does it make a philosophical difference what genre something's in? And another weaker form of that question is: are there any genres that really can't count as philosophy?

00:39:57 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Interesting.

00:39:58 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Are there any limitations to what you're willing to count as—what are the boundaries, right?

00:40:06 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Totally. So that you can have a definition so that you can define the boundaries literally.

00:40:08 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah.

- 00:40:10 Lisa Shapiro (guest) The boundaries of philosophy. And I'm working with a postdoc right now who's interested in an Indigenous philosophy, and in particular, a very strange work from the Andes, the *Huarochiri Manuscript* which is a Jesuit commissioned seventeenth-century account of Quechua, the native indigenous Quechua worldview. And [Jorge H. Sanchez-Perez] wants to read this as a work of philosophical value. And the question he has come up against and comes up against himself is: is this really a work of philosophy?
- 00:41:00 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And I think he's drawn a really helpful distinction between some things being a work of philosophy so that it's written as a philosophical work or produced orally as a philosophical work or whether it affords philosophical insights. And you can think of a whole lot of different works as being of philosophical value for, and in particular, works of fiction.
- 00:41:33 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And I think there's a lot of fiction writers who actually saw themselves as—George Eliot, is the obvious one [Kandice laughs] as communicating philosophical ideas through the means of their fiction. And I think Madeleine de Scudéry, who I mentioned earlier, also is doing that, right?
- 00:41:57 Lisa Shapiro (guest) You can extract philosophical insights from a work, even if it might be a stretch to say that it is a philosophical work in and of itself, right? And then, I think, the more ecumenical approach would say that we should be reading works that offer philosophical insights and aren't just created from a point of view—
- 00:42:30 Kate Moffatt (co-host) Right. Defining themselves that way versus being defined that way after the fact.
- 00:42:34 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah. That's a really interesting question that I was personally coming up against quite a bit while I was preparing for this interview and looking through your bibliography, is that question of the disciplinary divide between philosophy and literary study. I read a lot of philosophical works, but I feel like the questions I'm asking when I'm reading them are really fundamentally different than what you would ask from them or what anyone else who was doing philosophy would ask.
- 00:43:05 Kandice Sharren (co-host) And I think I took a philosophy class once in undergrad [Kate laughs] and I couldn't figure out what I was supposed to do [Kate laughs], because it was just such a different set of questions. But, as you note on the homepage of your bibliography, the work that you're doing has been helped by the interest in women's philosophical writings by literary scholars of different periods. So can you speak a little bit to that

disciplinary divide and why it's so important to recover these women specifically as philosophers, rather than just kind of recover them as writers more generally?

- 00:43:43 Lisa Shapiro (guest) Well, that's an interesting question. So, the first thing I want to say is those disciplinary divides are historically contingent.
- 00:43:54 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Absolutely.
- 00:43:56 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So there is a long tradition—I'm not sure when it got started—I would probably guess in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century is when literary studies really started to define itself specifically. And philosophy is often called the 'queen of the disciplines' because almost all disciplines started as species at some part of philosophy [Kate and Kandice laugh].
- 00:44:25 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah [laughs].
- 00:44:26 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And then somehow got separated into their own distinctive discipline, we just talked about histories, right, as an example, just as much as works of literature. But you could also talk about psychology or physics, which were a part of philosophy before they were their own distinct disciplines. So, that's the advantage of philosophy and that almost everything can be looked at from a philosophical point of view.
- 00:44:58 Lisa Shapiro (guest) But I think, the way you just put things, Kandice, I think what does distinguish philosophy from, as a discipline, is the questions that get asked, right? And philosophical questions tend to be more abstract: [Kate and Kandice laugh] "what is a cause," right? Like, "what is the nature of causation?" Whereas the work of a physicist would depend on an answer to that question, but the physicist sort of takes it for granted that we know what a cause is.
- 00:45:38 Lisa Shapiro (guest) And they're just interested in discovering causal relationships and then relies on the philosopher to maybe make good on their experimental data to figure out how to conceptualize their experimental data. And I'm not sure your experience in a philosophy class parallels my experience in an English class [all laugh].
- 00:46:02 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, I'm not sure I really understand the questions that folks in English ask. There's some sets of questions that I do understand about historical contextualization that set women's history. *The Women's Print History Project* is invested in [Kandice laughs] this contextualization of literary practices. Those questions I understand,

but interpretations of texts from a literary point of view, I've always found challenging.


- 00:46:40 Lisa Shapiro (guest) So, it would be interesting to compare someone like Wollstonecraft as being read from a literary point of view and from a philosophical point of view because I think there'd be some points of overlap in the interest, but then what each of us would want to highlight might be different, right? And aspects of her writing, one might want to highlight, might be different.
- 00:47:21 Lisa Shapiro (guest) But I don't think that means that they're better in conversation with one another than as opposed to one another; it's not that one's right, and the right way to approach it and the other isn't. It's that there's all that going on. The disciplinary divides are maybe there because you've got to prioritize what your own interests are. You can't do everything. There's too much to do.
- 00:48:01 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Yeah.
- 00:48:02 Kate Moffatt (co-host) [laughs] So true!
- 00:48:03 Lisa Shapiro (guest) There's just no way to do everything. But I think it becomes more of an issue—I don't know if this is true or not—there are going to be works that are more clearly straightforwardly only of interest to philosophers precisely because—well, I can't say that this is going to be true either because critical theory uses philosophical frameworks to structure a mode of interpretation. So, that's not even—so that's not even going to hold.
- 00:49:03 Lisa Shapiro (guest) What I was going to say was, well that takes away that point; I think that the opportunities for real cross-disciplinary collaboration really come out with, not with these theoretical works and applying them to literature and looking to literature for how the theoretical works are applied,
- 00:49:37 Lisa Shapiro (guest) but actually looking at works that are much more invested in daily life, the problems of the moment, and looking at how the different disciplines approach those works from these different angles. Because one of the things that has been really striking to me through this project is how interested women, the neglected figures, both male and female, right—



00:50:09	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	There's a group of philosophers who are now really interested in recovering the writings of formerly enslaved persons as philosophical texts that includes slave narratives, but also works of people like [Olaudah] Equiano and others that have a really complicated— reading those through a lens of metaphysics and questions of personal identity, and how they figure in these anti-slavery texts, that these neglected figures are leveraging philosophical ideas in the service of engaging with real social issues.
00:51:01	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	I don't want to just say like—so, arguments for women's education, right? That's a political issue, but it's more than a political issue. It's about what the social structures are and that slavery is wrong; that's a political question, but that's also very much a social question as well. So these texts are very sophisticated texts that are nonetheless meant to communicate to a very broad audience.
00:51:40	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	I think today we might call them 'popular philosophy' or something like that. But they're philosophically substantive. They're philosophically interesting. And they're written in lots of different modes of writing, whether you want to call them genres or styles or whatever. As the texts were written, they weren't written from within a particular discipline or from within a particular genre.
00:52:11	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Right. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
00:52:12	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	They are bringing writing style and rhetoric and philosophical ideas together to bear on a social issue. And insofar as we are in a more disciplinary context, we can approach those texts from the expertise of different disciplines and bring our different expertise into conversation with one another to better understand what's going on in those texts, right? So, maybe what I'm getting to is what the disciplines represent is a kind of expertise and these texts that are non-canonical require lots of expertise in order to recover properly, right? To really properly understand.
00:53:05	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	That's a great answer to that question. Thank you.
00:53:07	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	And I think that's also a beautiful end to the interview. We had another question we were going to ask, but I think we're running short on time. So I think we should end there if everyone's happy to end there. That was so good. Lisa, was there anything that we didn't get a chance to talk about that you were dying to speak to?

00:53:24	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	No, we covered a lot of bases.
00:53:25	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	This was so much fun. Thank you so much for doing this with us. We had an absolute blast.
00:53:33	Lisa Shapiro (guest)	Good. It's been fun.
00:53:34	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	I feel like I learned a lot too, which is like the best combination.
00:53:36	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Me too! I feel like I just learned so much. I've been taking notes! [all laugh]
00:53:44	🎵	[music playing]
00:53:52	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	It's telling that our spotlight series relied on the <i>New Narratives Bibliography</i> to help us identify women philosophers that were already in the WPHP. As our conversation with Lisa Shapiro highlighted, philosophy isn't limited to a single genre or mode of writing, which makes it easy to discount works that don't fit preconceived notions of what philosophy or the philosophers writing them look like.
00:54:15	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	As a project with a book history approach developed by literary scholars, the WPHP doesn't capture the philosophical elements of many of the works that we discussed today—we don't actually have Philosophy as a genre, and searching for words like 'philosophy' or 'philosopher' in the title is as likely to bring up works satirizing the figure of the so-called female philosopher, such as <i>Elizabeth Hamilton's Memoirs of Modern Philosophers</i> , as it is to reveal genuine works of philosophy.
00:54:43	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So, while our database includes philosophical works, our data model doesn't necessarily make them visible as such—which means that these women's contributions and interventions in the field of philosophy remain invisible within the parameters of the WPHP. At the same time, both the WPHP and <i>New Narratives</i> are bibliographies. So, if philosophy is in fact, the 'queen of the disciplines', then bibliography might be considered the jack of all trades.
00:56:17	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	We're not philosophers, so we aren't trained to read works with philosophy in mind or necessarily notice how a particular eighteenth-century novel is intervening in a philosophical debate. But our conversation with Lisa reminded us that each discipline has its own narratives to question, revise, or potentially reject altogether,

and that each needs its own tools to undertake this work. But creating those tools, as Lisa brought up, requires time, resources, and energy, and that's before we even get to read the works themselves or start to analyze them.

- 00:55:52 Kate Moffatt (co-host) It seems fitting that this challenge was described so clearly during the tenth and last episode of Season 2 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*, as it gestures towards a theme that has been present in so many of our episodes this season: the values and challenges of cataloguing works outside the canon. So, from our Frances Burney bibliography in Episode 1, to our conversation with Lawrence Evelyn about uneven digitization, Season 2 has grappled with some of the big, existential questions that digital bibliographical projects face, like Lisa's question about time and resources and research.
- 00:56: Kate Moffatt (co-host) Whether we were talking with Kirstyn Leuner about the amount of work required to mark up a single manuscript catalogue, or interviewing Timothy Whelan about the process of collecting data to help with mapping, or using our own database to identify and analyze witchy works of interest, this season was all about how we catalogue, count, and make available works outside the canon—and what we can do with them once we know they exist.
- 00:56:48 Kandice Sharren (co-host) One of the things we often discuss behind the scenes is the value of beginning to undertake this work in non-traditional venues, where we work through ideas in conversation with each other as well as scholars involved in other projects. The podcast, as our episodes attest, is part of this collaborative working-through, but so are our Spotlights, which are the products of lengthy conversations, as well as formal and informal feedback sessions.
- 00:57:12 Kandice Sharren (co-host) Outside of the boundaries of conventional scholarly publishing, we are free to experiment, play, and take risks in ways that often complement the strangeness of the books we have encountered through our work on the WPHP.
- 00:57:26  [music playing]
- 00:57:37 Kate Moffatt (co-host) This has been the tenth—and final—episode of Season 2 of *The WPHP Monthly Mercury*! If you're interested in learning more about what we discussed today, we've compiled a list of suggestions for further reading and links to some relevant entries in the WPHP in a blog post that you can find at [womensprinthistoryproject.com](http://womensprinthistoryproject.com). We'll be back with a new season in June, but in the meantime, you can also find us at @TheWPHP on Twitter and on Instagram @womensprinthistoryproject.

00:58:04		[music playing]
00:58:12	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	[outtakes, part 1] One... oh.
00:58:13	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	Oh, hang on. Sorry. I need to clear my throat. It's got—you know when you eat and then you have that phlemgy feeling in your throat? I had peanut sauce on my dinner, and it's sticking.
00:58:25	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Oh. But delicious.
00:58:25	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	So that's going to be in our bloopers. It was delicious. I love a good peanut sauce [Kate laughs]. However—
00:58:33	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	[outtakes, part 2] 1, 2, 3. Beautiful. I just did the weakest clap ever. Let me make sure it got it [Kandice laughs].
00:58:42	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	You could just do another one. It's not the end of the world.
00:58:45	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	Yeah, yeah. Let's do another one. That one was so wimpy. It almost didn't pick it up [Kandice laughs].
00:58:50	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	[outtakes, part 3] Jack of all trades [both laugh]. Thanks for laughing at my joke.
00:58:59	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	I love it so much! [laughs]
00:59:03	Kandice Sharren (co-host)	[outtakes, part 4] Yay!
00:59:05	Kate Moffatt (co-host)	This is the last episode of Season 2. Crazy!