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Editors' Letter

Elen Caldecott & Lucy Cuthew

Welcome to this, our second issue of *Leaf Journal*, and the first of two planned issues that make up Volume Two. By now, we should feel like old hands – and, to be honest, the actual running of the journal has felt smoother, as if we are hitting our stride! – but, in fact, the more I get to see of the research going on, the more I realise how much I still have to learn about and explore in the field.

The submissions we received this time were surprising, exciting and covered such breadth. It was a pleasure to see how critically we creative writers are thinking about all aspects of our work. It has also been wonderful to receive submissions from both returning scholars and from new voices. The new voices are particularly welcome because they have been able to look at our back-catalogue (we have a back catalogue!) and decide that we are a worthy home for their writing. The returning scholars are particularly welcome because we can read their willingness to work with us again as an endorsement of our ethos here at *Leaf*.

Recently, on a campsite in Dorset, I was discussing our ethos with a friend who works in STEM at another UK university. She asked what I meant when I said we actively encourage early career researchers. I described our process and she was amazed that any academic journal does what we do – and I was equally amazed that they don't. So, in the spirit of openness, here are some of the ways we operate differently. We see our (amazing) college of reviewers as defenders of academic rigour and quality, this means that it can be our role to champion our writers. So, when the reports come back, either Lucy or I read both carefully, weighing up the advice our reviewers have offered. We

evaluate the degree of agreement between the reviewers and decide whether the best course of action is to pass on both reviews to the writer, or whether we need to parse out the advice a little bit. If it does need parsing out, we will annotate the article, showing the writer exactly where and how they might respond to the reviewer comments. We try our best to make it clear what the writer is being asked to do. Then, when we return the article, we offer a range of deadlines, allowing the writer to decide when and how they complete the work. If they want to share drafts-in-progress with us along the way, we welcome that. Ultimately, our goal is to help the writer say what they want to say as well as they possibly can.

So, in this issue, you will hear some powerful, persuasive, crafted voices.

We have [Noah Weisz](#) returning with a welcome iteration of the barnstorming paper he gave at the conference last year. Now in full article form, it is a heartfelt call for writers not to confuse commercial advice with craft advice. Our second returning writer is [Piu DasGupta](#), who we must first congratulate on the publication of her debut novel *Secrets of the Snakestone* earlier this year. Her article reflects on the alterity of animals in her own work and in two classics of children's literature. We stay in the natural world with [Rupert Barrington](#)'s article on the possibility of hope in children's literature in a world affected by climate change. The connection between literature and emotion is also explored by [Elaine Lambert](#) who asks how Middle Grade authors can discuss mental health issues in ways which support their young readers. From there, we have two writers whose work looks back to the past: [Anna Trusty](#) wonders how writers of historical fiction can navigate changing understandings of gender without alienating contemporary young people; and [Julia Dielmann](#) suggests three potential approaches to writing queer characters in historical settings. Finally, we look to the future with [Caitlin Clements](#) who asks can our characters be university-aged and still be considered Young Adult – and, if so, how?

Behind the scenes, Lucy and I will continue to work on planning the second *Leaf Journal* conference – see [the website](#) for more! – and, of course, supporting those writers who have work in the next issue.

In the meantime, we wish you happy reading!

Elen (on behalf of both Elen and Lucy who is a little under the weather just now)