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Editors' Letter

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The third volume of *Leaf Journal* feels – like a third-year student handing in a dissertation – as though we have finally got the hang of it all. But, unlike that hopeful third-year, we haven't mastered the systems and genres and modes of working with words only to have to give it up and move on to life beyond academia. On the contrary, we are pleased to share the news that the future of *Leaf Journal* as a stable part of the Writing for Young People landscape seems secure. Lancaster University has taken the journal in-house. This means that our publication costs, website hosting and the small administration fees (that soon mount up!) are being covered by our host institution – we are deeply grateful for that. May it signal many more volumes to come!

We are grateful too, as ever, to our Editorial Board who shared their wisdom as we made the move. And to the wonderful members of our college of reviewers who volunteer their time to ensure the work we published is of the highest possible quality.

This volume has work which spans our widest range of topics yet and is more international than ever. Queer writing and literature from the LGBTQ+ community serves as a theme, albeit a serendipitous one rather than in response to a specific call! **Candice Lemon-Scott** expands her earlier *Leaf* conference paper to argue that the shapeshifter can disrupt binary gender norms in Middle Grade literature. **Alex Henderson** shifts the age range to demonstrate that Young Adult literature is a vibrant storytelling landscape for trickster characters and trickster tales. It is the question of

narrative form that moves **Chloe Cannell** to argue that the short story is uniquely suited to representing a diverse range of queer identities. **Varsha Varghese** offers a personal reflection on the challenges that arise when writing Indian LGBTQ+ Middle Grade fiction.

We have a pair of articles which share themes of ill-health and disability, but approach them in markedly different methodological ways. **Hannah Durkan** investigates how authors can portray characters with mental health problems both realistically and compassionately. **Daniela Rozental** and **Joanna Nadin** turn their attention to authors themselves as they explore the experiences of six disabled children's writers in the publishing industry.

Our final tranche of articles consider ethics and craft from a writer's perspective. **Laura E. Jacquemond** examines how writers of Black characters in YA historical fiction portray their protagonists, channeling their anger to positive ends in dangerous situations. **Rachel Hamilton** and **Christopher Piper** explore the journey of AI characters from the 'Pinocchio Paradigm' and suggest a Bechdel Test for AI. **Julia OConnor** presents a practice-based research approach to selecting point of view for a Young Adult fantasy novel. Finally, **Dan Hunt** considers the responsibility of the author when writing horror fiction and offers his own guideline for 'scaring not scarring'.

We hope that this eclectic and insightful selection of articles will be food for thought, and may even change the way readers approach their own writing-in-progress. And – if it changes something for you – you might choose to tell us about it via a conference paper or article of your own. Details of the [conference call](#) are available now and submissions for volume four will open in Jan 2026.

Wishing you happy reading!

Elen and Lucy

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