

Caldecott, Elen; Cuthew, Lucy, 'Editors' Letter'

*Leaf Journal*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Dec 2023

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.58091/mrzn-2582>

URL: <https://ojs.library.lancs.ac.uk/lj/index>

## **Editors' Letter, Issue 1, Volume 2**

**Elen Caldecott & Lucy Cuthew**

We hoped, when we published our first issue of *Leaf Journal*, that it would serve as a hub for writers for young people in the academy. We were delighted by the breadth of the articles in Issue 1, volume 1 – there were writers working on picturebooks, Middle Grade and YA, articles on craft, articles on commerce, and the intersection of the two. We heard from writers and students who had read the articles, connected with the authors and continued to discuss the ideas in classrooms, on social media and in essays and creative work of their own.

We were delighted – and we wanted more.

That came this year in the form of the *Leaf Conference*. Over two days in Autumn we had 100 delegates, speakers and workshop leaders come together online to share their insights. The post-conference feedback from attendees praised the warmth and ease of access, with an atmosphere somewhere between a literary festival, a writer's retreat and an academic conference - exactly the spot on the Venn diagram we want to be.

So, we decided that our second volume would be made up of our conference proceedings, an invited project proceeding, and a scholarly article held over from volume 1 – note, we always want to give our authors sufficient time to respond to reviewer feedback, and if that means holding a piece over then that's fine. This has created a bumper volume, almost double the size of our first!

You can expect a practical, tips-laden article from verse-novelist [Tia Fisher](#) who delves deep into the form-specific opportunities for creativity she identified through making. We hear from the [staff](#) and [students](#) on the design and impact of a transnational reading project which brought together cohorts from Bath Spa University in the UK and Ashoka University in India to consider climate fiction for young people.

Our conference proceedings invited panellists to publish their papers for wider dissemination. Not all of our panellists decided to take this route – of those who didn't we hope to see further iterations of their papers submitted as scholarly articles in the future.

We had panels on: Writing the Fantastical; Writing Trauma; Exploring Boundaries; Shifting Spheres; Craft and Commerce and Writing Nature and many of the ideas shared during the conference are represented in Issue 1, Volume 2 as 'Conference Proceedings'.

[Charlotte Taylor](#) and [Nell Griffin](#) both consider the function that ghosts might play in writing for young people. Charlotte posits their use as a way to explore and come to terms with grief; Nell suggests that they can serve as an allegory for loneliness and neglect in childhood.

[Rosy-Triantafyllia Angelaki](#), [Alyssa Hollingsworth](#) and [Viktoriia Medvied](#) all approach trauma, though from three quite distinct traditions. Rosy uses literary criticism and content analysis to identify the ways in which Andri Antoniou constructs her characters' identities through trauma; Alyssa offers an Arts Praxis approach, embedding her own experiences as a writer in her discussion of trauma and dissociation; and Viktoriia suggests a very practical guide for those wanting to work in the field of biblio-therapy for children who have experienced war.

[Piu DasGupta](#), [Vlad-Madalin Marinescu](#) and [Fran Benson](#)'s papers explore the artificial boundaries imposed by industry bias, and the personal boundaries imposed by writerly ethics. Piu's paper explores the concept of the 'adultification' of Black and working-class children and offers some welcome corollaries for writers; Vlad assesses the ethical landscape of post-apocalyptic writing and the difficulty of maintaining useful role-models for young readers; and Fran reflects on the current landscape of Deaf representation in children's publishing and critiques some recent examples.

[Joanna Nadin](#), [Alison Baker](#) and [Sarah Dyer](#) contributed to our Shifting Spheres panel, connected by the idea of movement from one milieu to another and having to adapt. Joanna's paper on social class and the writer considers the long shadow her own childhood has cast on her writing; Alison sets out the effect on a whole genre that took place when the Gothic moved from bucolic country estates to inner city London; and

Sarah usefully charts her own experience of moving into academia as a mature student and how she set about negotiating the challenges posed by academic writing.

We welcome [Tia Fisher](#) back with her paper on the UK's stubborn resistance to the verse novel when compared with America; and [Kristien Potgieter](#) offers her experience of writing in South Africa and how the specific demands of the readership shape the nature of what's written. Both contributed to our 'Craft and Commerce' panel.

Last, but absolutely not least, we also publish in full Prof Emeritus [Julia Green](#)'s conference keynote, in which she sets out the history of the discipline and Bath Spa University's role in its development.

Looking forward, *Leaf Journal* opens its next submissions window for scholarly articles in the new year. Plans for our next conference are imminent and this time will include an invitation to our community as we want to recruit two volunteers to assist with publication and conference delivery. To keep abreast of all our news and activity, please sign up to our [Mailing List](#).

Thank you all so much for your support and good wishes in 2023.

Yours,

Elen and Lucy

Managing Editors  
*Leaf Journal*