

Dear Reader,

I'm writing to you from the café area of the Nottingham Climbing Centre, watching people pick their way up the artificial rock faces that rise three storeys out of what was once an Edwardian swimming baths. When I first came to Nottingham this was where I came to swim, which makes climbing here now somewhat disorientating. Although, thinking back, I was disorientated then as well, having landed in a new city I wasn't yet ready to call home. Fifteen years later I do now use that word, but I still hesitate when asked where I'm from. Where you're from, where you're home, where you are: these can be complicated questions. I've always been struck by the Scots usage of 'stay' for 'live', as in 'where do you stay?' The expression has always sounded lightfooted, to my ears at least, as though all accommodation was only temporary (which it is of course, in the long run). And yet the word 'stay' also has a solid permanence about it. Which I suppose goes to show only that language is malleable and ambiguous and we can never quite be at home with what we think we mean.

We were thinking about home when we announced the theme for this issue: specifically, about those writers whose biographies describe them as dividing their time between various – often glamorous – locations. We couldn't help wondering what this kind of constant relocation means: is it a lack of attachment, or an abundance of attachments? If you've never spent a full year in a place can you ever really know it? And yet we do all divide our time, to a greater or lesser extent. We are people at home, people at work, people alone, people in company. We take the time to prepare a face to meet the faces that we meet, as some guy once said.

I divided my time a lot this summer. For a short period I experienced the life of the Professional Writer: that rare breed who do all their writing in hotel rooms and transit lounges, and tweet about how they wish they had more time for writing. I went from a judging panel in Dublin to a short story festival in Zagreb, then to a literature conference in Norwich, then to a week's tutoring at Arvon in Devon. I met a lot of writers, and I got a surprising amount of writing done. The dislocated lifestyle began to seem quite appealing. But in the end I needed somewhere to do my laundry, and I came home, carrying with me some of the letters which feature in this issue; letters which were prompted by conversations with the writers I'd met, and which were delivered by hand, passed across breakfast tables or pushed under hotel room doors by people who were not quite at home.

The other letters in this issue came, as they always do, from writers I've never met and in most cases never will, flapping through the brass letterbox of the *The Letters Page* office and discovered with delight amongst the many other letters which we spent time reading carefully through. Our new call for submissions has just gone out – details are in the notes overleaf – and we very much hope to see a letter from you, dear reader, come flapping through that same brass letterbox.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue. And we hope you find yourself feeling at home wherever you may be today. Keep in touch.

Yours,
The Editor.