

Dear Reader,

I'm writing you this letter as I sit on the bus, heading for the University of Nottingham campus, where this journal's office is based. It's an elegant and leafy campus, set in parkland donated to the people of Nottingham by that entrepreneurial pharmacist of the early 20th century, Jesse Boot. Our building overlooks a boating lake, wildflower meadows, and croquet-smooth lawns across which students will shortly be lugging their armfuls of books and clothes and stereo equipment as they arrive for the new term. Our office overlooks none of this, however. Our view is of a brick wall, and our eyes are on the prize of the launching of a well-respected literary journal. This is what I promised when I took the job here, as a writer-in-residence in the School of English, and it's what we're on the verge of realising now. It's taken a while, as I knew it would. After all, why even think about launching a new literary journal, at this moment? There's no apparent shortage. I was genuinely unsure, at the outset, how to make it a worthwhile enterprise; where to find the excitement, the fun. I started by opening a blog to explore the question, inviting responses in the form of letters and styling the project as 'the letters page of a journal that doesn't yet exist.'

Reader, maybe you know the rest. Our correspondents began almost immediately to focus on the letter as a form; to wonder about the differences between letters-on-paper and emails, to reflect on their own letter-writing history, to notice the democracy of correspondence as a literary practice. The medium became the message, and the idea of *The Letters Page* - a literary journal in letters - was born. I invited submissions for a first issue. I asked that those submissions be written by hand, and sent through the post, and then I sat down with my student assistants and read through them. Those were heady days, reader; we had letters coming in from Canada and the U.S., from Spain and France and Germany and Cyprus, from Donegal and Dublin and Brighton and Hemel Hempstead. Most of the letters were legible; most of the letters had something interesting to say about letter writing; a select few stood out, I felt, as fine pieces of writing regardless of form. We hope you agree.

In this issue, we've focused on letter writing itself as a theme; in future, we'll be taking that 'regardless of form' to heart and looking for fine pieces of writing - essays, stories, poems, memoir, travelogue, reportage - which just happen to fit the generous parameters of the letter format. We're thinking about letters sent home, letters from prison, letters of complaint and thanks and pleading, letters that carry news and love and a sense of time and place. For our second issue, we're thinking in particular about penpals; details of our call for submissions can be found in this issue's postscript.

Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy this first issue of *The Letters Page*. If you do, you'll find that it can be folded neatly into thirds, slipped into an envelope, and posted on to a friend; if you've received your copy in this way, then be sure to sign up to our mailing list in order to receive future issues.

Anything else? Oh, just that you'll find our address on the back page. We'd love to hear from you.

Yours Sincerely,
The Editor.