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For the Love of Letters: The Joy of Slow Communication

John O'Connell

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Remember letters? They were good, weren't they? The thrill of receiving that battered envelope with its longed-for contents – all the better for the wait... Handwritten is a celebration of letter-writing in all its guises, a showcase for the masterpieces we would all write if we had the time and inclination – the perfect thankyou letter, a riotous despatch from a far-flung location, that heartfelt declaration of love. As John O'Connell shows, the best letters have much to teach us – Samuel Richardson's 'familiar letters'; Wilfred Owen's outpourings to his mother; the schoolboy scatology of Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin; Churchill and Clementine's reflections on the 'colour & jostle of the highway' they trod together; the sly observational charms of Jane Austen... In this richly entertaining book, O'Connell puts forward a passionate case for the value of letter-writing in a distracted, technology-obsessed world. A properly crafted letter is something to be cherished, an act of exposure which gives shape and meaning to the chaos of life. In the words of John Donne, 'Sir, more than kisses, letters mingle souls;/For, thus friends absent speak.'

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