

# Into Uncharted Seas



Demon Crew Volume V  
New Writing from Creative Writing Students  
at De Montfort University  
2011



# Into Uncharted Seas

Demon Crew Volume V

INTO UNCHARTED SEAS 1

Published by Demon Crew Publications 2011

[www.demoncrew.com](http://www.demoncrew.com)

All work © individual contributors.

## CONTENTS

From the editors	4
Sally Jack <i>Pigpen Postcard: Edinburgh, 1904</i>	7
Daley James Francis <i>Let's Drink to You</i>	8
Shell Rose <i>Arriving in Hope: Georgie</i>	9
Samantha Nicholson <i>Your Soundtrack</i>	11
Chris Thurmott <i>Discussing the Divine Comedy with Dai Dudu</i>	12
Jonathan Margetts <i>Mind the Gap</i>	13
James G. Laws <i>A Manifesto of the Frowning Bus-Catcher</i>	15
Bhagwant Kaur <i>Mysteries of the Universe</i>	16
Robert Busby <i>Everything's Chaos to Me</i>	18
Leonie Sturman <i>Liberation: 1972</i>	20
Sarah Lane <i>Last Night</i>	21
Rich Styles <i>Wee Don't Speak</i>	23
G.R. Philpott <i>Decay</i>	24
Laurie Cusack <i>Quack, Quack</i>	25
Zeeandrick Oliver <i>Happy Anniversary</i>	26

## FROM THE EDITORS

If the Demon Crew's fourth publication was marked by dangerous desires, this year's submissions have a dominant mood of isolation and loneliness. When happiness is present in the pieces that follow, it's rarely secure but instead framed by recollection, marked by uncertainty or endangered by prejudice. Happiness has rarely been a popular subject with writers, and it would be unwise to ascribe the content of the following pieces to a climate of shared misery. Nevertheless, whilst the 2010-11 academic year has been an enjoyable one for the Demon Crew with more students publishing and performing their work beyond the university, the year ended on a note of change and uncertainty.

As this is being written, plans for the new Faculty are underway but not yet final. A number of friends of the Demon Crew have retired, left the university or moved to new roles. There are too many for us to name them all individually but they include Steve Gamble, Martin Sheil and Bob Richardson, who have been particular friends to the Crew. We'll miss them. We shall also miss the help of Lynda McLaughlin, who has supported Creative Writing

as team administrator from the time the course was first suggested and whose calm professionalism has helped us navigate through occasional choppy waters. She's now moving into a different role within the Faculty and we wish her well in her new post. Meanwhile, we're looking forward to working more closely with colleagues who were previously in Art and Design. We know some of them already and are looking forward to learning more about the work of others. Just as writing improves through editing and the continual honing of craft skills, it also requires those who write to look and think beyond the borders of their discipline. Contact with people researching and studying in a new range of subjects, including fine art, game design, fashion and architecture, should encourage us to explore new areas and consider future collaborations.

Just as the university is changing rapidly, so is the world. In the past year, some commentators have wondered whether books, bookshops, publishers and libraries will continue to exist in the ways we understand them. Despite this, writing and imaginative literature have had a curiously stubborn way of persisting through several millennia. Poems, stories, dramas – and newer forms of imaginative writing – speak to people in a way nothing else does, offering both challenge and comfort. Even the

bleakest of writings can tell its readers that they are not alone.

*Kathleen Bell, Will Buckingham,  
Simon Perril, Jonathan Taylor*

## PIGPEN POSTCARD: EDINBURGH, 1904

So, if you've no plans,  
not off somewhere,  
would you care to come out with me?  
I will make myself un-busy.

I'll wait, unseen, that place you said to be,  
off Circus Place, down Dundas Street.  
Rolled up *Scotsman* if the weather's fine,  
you'll bring your parasol; it rained last time.

We'll stroll the length of Castle Street,  
I'll hold our bag of tablet and wink  
to mean I want to loosen up your corset.  
Just so's you can have a wee bit more than half a square,  
you understand.  
But say that? Wouldn't dare.

In the tearoom of the Huntly House Museum,  
amongst the steam and hot house vines,  
your booted toes touch mine.  
And as the Gun booms one o'clock  
your kid-sheathed hand, unflinching,  
writes to me in Pigpen postcard code.

*Sally Jack*

## LET'S DRINK TO YOU

The whiskey pouring hard and fast,  
a hangover being built to last.  
Uncle John takes me by the hand, and  
within an hour I can barely stand.

He dances to his favourite tune,  
and talks of friends gone too soon.  
When seven brothers sang as one, and  
now so many of them gone.

A playful wink to a girl nearby,  
he's never accused of being shy.  
With a laugh to warm the coldest of hearts,  
he fills the room as the music starts.

*Daley James Francis*

## ARRIVING IN HOPE: GEORGIE

The sting of the wind makes my ears ring. It becomes the wail of the sirens, the roar of the explosion; my mother's screaming, Blood. I open my eyes as the vision dies, sat up on Mam Tor. I look away from Hope; we're safer here; Mr Churchill said so.

But they scrutinised us. Teeth, limbs, looks; best ones go first. The sound of nervous chatter and wailing children died away as they let in the rabble of farmers' wives. Constant yelps of "I'll take that one!" and "No, I only wanted one!" ricocheted around the room. Kids were tugged around, ones and twos taken, some were crying. I gripped Alice's hand a little tighter. She held her tag, tugging at the string. My bundle rested between my feet, with all I had in the world inside it. Mum's face swam in front of me from the station, separated by the carriage door, "Look after Alice! Don't let her go!"

She's all you have left was a silent murmur passed between us. Alice's eyes grew wide with the onslaught of middle-aged women fighting for little girls, and strong boys. She was a prime target for some fat do-gooder separated into sausages by a leather belt. I drew her closer to me as a big ugly creature approached us. She peered at Alice, pulled her hair, looked up at the Warden.

"This one."

Spots appeared in my eyes, Alice screamed and began to wail, that woman gripped my wrist with her

broad hands, wrenching Alice away from me. I begged her to take me too.

“I have no need for you.”

I watched her drag my sister away.

I did nothing.

I recite the names of the different hill tops that surround Hope: Mam Tor, Hollins Cross, Lose Hill, Win Hill. Facing the direction of Castleton, I trace the road between it and Hope. It's still too far to walk. Hope is miles away from Alice.

I remember what Dad said: “Look after your sisters, son. I need you to guard the home front.”

*Shell Rose*

## YOUR SOUNDTRACK

There are moments you remember all your life. Songs that keep playing, repeating, as if part of your soundtrack. You remember happy days. Weddings; smiling brides, confetti drifting off into the breeze as if there are no cares in the world. Moments unrepeatable; the first dance; the first kiss. You always try to recapture it in your mind. Always repeating the happier days...Like a movie reel, playing throughout your mind.

There are moments you remember all your life. Songs that keep playing, repeating, as if they part of your soundtrack. You remember sad days; dark days; crowded round holes in the ground, toneless words from a vicar; hugs so tight you can't escape. The blood red rose as it drops down into the dark, deep hole. The anguished sobs. It is the first loss; the childish hope that it will be the last loss; knowing you will have to experience this again; like a repeating sensation... like a movie reel, playing throughout your mind. Like the song that keeps playing, repeating, as if it is a part of your soundtrack.

*Samantha Nicholson*

## DISCUSSING THE DIVINE COMEDY WITH DAI DUDU

Faces plucked from history,  
brought together into organised anarchy.  
No-one is safe, not even Bruce Lee.  
Is it hell, paradise or purgatory?

*Chris Thurmott*

## MIND THE GAP

We are riding the Northern Line.

Overhead, two strips of light illuminate the faces of tonight's underground travellers. En route to Waterloo, almost every seat is filled. A man sits face down in the evening's edition. Towards the end of the carriage, a group of school children huddle together and chatter impatiently. One angrily points at the maps above them – are they travelling in the right direction? A teenager stares out of the window into the side scrolling darkness. Occasionally he glances down at his phone. No signal. He then continues to watch the shadows outside. His reflection watches back.

Yellow and blue wires can be seen through the window; anonymous bands of electricity travelling beneath London for over thirty miles on the Northern Line. High Barnet to Morden. Over two hundred million passengers per year.

A throng of Japanese tourists swarm into the carriage at Charing Cross. They are fresh from a late night visit to the National Gallery and are forced to stand. A mother leans against a safety pole and cradles her crying baby. It wails to the rhythmic pounding of the tracks beneath. The young father meekly looks around, almost apologetically. His lack of experience shows.

The tube slows down into Embankment and some passengers edge towards the train doors. Men in suits look on from the platform. The voiceover calls out, 'Mind the

gap'. And for a second, that laughable and clichéd idea comes to mind. How can people be so close yet lack the calm intensity of intimacy? As if a huge chasm were to suddenly open in the ground.

*Jonathan Margetts*

## A MANIFESTO OF THE FROWNING BUS-CATCHER

The negatives of humanity are frequently displayed and dramatised in poetry.

Modernist alienation and such one way conversations and conversions from the ordinary to extra-ordinary censor masturbation and un-regretted terminations as if low art isn't low enough til it shocks silver spoons to the floor.

In a station of the Metro I just think 'she's fit'  
and must let that be the end of it  
without a histrionic or allegorically platonic, desperate,  
post-modernist dash for the door.

What's left after that is a less-than-ideal  
white-hot mess, the best of which I feel is little more  
than a faint urge for  
a leap from  
the tenth  
floor.

*James G. Laws*

## MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

There were stars, flowers and a tropical fish on the table. Also, an array of insects: a dragonfly, a smiling bumblebee, a butterfly.

“You see, our thoughts are physical.”

I nodded.

“They can bring things into existence.”

Nod-nod.

“What happened yesterday, for example.” Her gaze drifted out of the window. “That boy. He isn’t real. I mean, he wasn’t. It’s just that I was wondering how it feels to kiss someone, and then he appeared.”

“Like magic.”

“I prefer to call it metaphysics.”

“So what did it feel like?”

There was a flicker of a smile on her face, but she didn’t say anything.

A rose bush grew out of my schoolbag, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw ivy creeping across the walls.

The clock chimed midnight.

“Listen,” she said, taking my hands. Her palms were clammy. “Don’t tell Father about him. Okay?”

I looked into her eyes, into the grey clouds that swirled there.

“Promise you won’t.” She squeezed my hands.

I couldn't look at her anymore, so I looked down.  
"I already told him." I thought at first she hadn't heard me.  
She just sat there, frozen.

Then she let go.

I stared at my bitten fingernails, and wondered if  
any boy, real or imaginary, would ever want to kiss me.  
"I'm sorry. I thought you were doing something wrong."

She wouldn't say a word after that.

The roses wilted, the stars crumbled and the ivy  
peeled away.

*Bhagwant Kaur*

## EVERYTHING'S CHAOS TO ME

I paced towards a toucan crossing  
whilst the man was green,  
though it turned red before I arrived  
everything's chaos to me.

Alone, I waited at the stop  
near an hour I stood  
a part of the queue  
they formed to ensure  
cordial progression;  
a democratic stew.

At the front, I sat  
gazing at my vista view  
over-hearing, all the news  
from all the men and woman  
who fail to articulate  
of all the men and woman  
whose judgment they debate.

I paced towards a toucan crossing  
whilst the man was green,  
though it turned red before I arrived  
everything's chaos to me.

*Robert Busby*

## LIBERATION: 1972

Taunts mingle with our cries for equality. Banners are sails as we cruise down the streets in our hundreds – a denim-clad crew of liberation rides the waves to Hyde Park.

Clammy fingers entwine with mine. I give them a gentle squeeze and feel my partner relax. A glance at him reminds me of why we are there; love. Five dudes in hot pants dance past, flag a rainbow explosion of colour with ‘Gay is Good!’ printed in charcoal black. Stoned hippies, faces painted neon, belt out Bowie with a group of freaks. The pungent smell of weed permeating tie-dyed t-shirts. Mum will be cursing at the TV, *The Generation Game* and Brucey forgotten. Will she spot my face among the ‘Queers’, holding hands with my ‘best friend’?

Exhilaration from the rising passion, I stall and draw Josh in for a kiss. Whoops and hollers from a group of punks clashes with an outburst from bystanders. Bogus insults fly: ‘fairies’, ‘pansies’, ‘queers’ – their ignorant vocabulary stunted with hate.

They’re scared of our freedom, of our apparent threat to ‘normal’ life. They fear the unknown; we embrace it. Our fear of speaking out is gone. We are the start of something new.

*Leonie Sturman*

## LAST NIGHT

Sammy opened her eyes. ‘Fan club’ had been great. Okay, she had woken up in her own bed, on her own, but she had made progress. They had danced together. She seemed to recall a bit of a cheeky kiss before she went home too. Although, that part could have just been a dream.

Stretching, Sammy sat up in bed and ran her hands through her knotted hair. She didn’t have a headache this morning, which was unusual. After rubbing her squelchy eyes, she put a foot to the floor. There were two new blisters on her foot from her ridiculously high shoes; one of the perils of being short. At least she knew how to walk in them though, unlike most girls. Sammy grinned to herself and she stepped out of bed. Tom had kissed her. She was certain of it.

She walked across the room and checked the time. 10:30 Am. She was no later getting up than usual. Catching a glimpse of her panda eyes in the mirror, she reached for her face wipes. There was no rush; she had no classes today.

Sammy pouted at herself in the mirror. *No wonder he kissed you, you sexy creature.* She pushed her hair up and posed some more. After admiring her own naked body for a good ten minutes, she decided that it really was time to get ready to go out.

Still on a high from her lip-lock the night before, she floated over to the curtains. It looked bright outside.

With a huge smile across her face and eyes closed in bliss, she grabbed onto the curtains. Sammy flung them open, wanting to bask her body in the sunlight.

A shadow lay over her.

Sammy's eyes sprung open. She let out a scream as a pair of eyes met hers. Her face flushed as she yanked the curtains closed. She had forgotten that the window cleaner came on a Wednesday.

*Sarah Lane*

## WEE DON'T SPEAK

I know the man in the next urinal.  
He did our kitchen  
the summer before last. He looks  
older now without  
paint on his cheeks. I want to say  
“Hello. How’s it going?  
Oh, you do remember? Yes, it still looks  
great, thanks. The missus likes reading in there  
now.” But I’m not allowed because  
he’s in hisrinal and I’m in myrinal and  
there are rules. So I don’t. He shakes  
and zips and washes his hands and walks  
out.  
I’m still going.

*Rich Styles*

## DECAY

I stood and,  
for a while,  
was a lamppost.

Dogs,  
    employers,  
        multinationals,  
            governments

— wet and rotting.

*G. R. Phillpott*

## QUACK, QUACK

'I'll cut it off,' I said as I scrubbed the cooker. I'd clocked his phone. Nothing. I'd peeled my toes raw. Should've saved all that skin and made a souvenir. He'd been acting the jerk for weeks. And he'd started treating me nicer. 'Do you want another cuppa, sweet pea? Fancy going for some scran on your birthday, scrumptious?' Who could it be? It'd really started to wind me up. He kept saying he was knackered. I was boiling with rage. Never felt like that before. I couldn't stop dashing about. Then walking in the town I tripped over a raised paving stone, fell straight on my face. 'She's wearing green knickers,' passing lads giggled. 'Wish she'd fallen on me like that. Ha, ha, ha...' Pain pierced through weeks of volcanic turmoil. Then it hit me...! Debbie...? 'Her?' I howled into the granite. Samaritans helped me up. I smiled through the blood. 'Oh, that looks deep, pet.' Sweet blessed release. Bingo. I knew I'd carry it out after that. I'd do the time standing on my head. Oh yes ... that was one birthday romp and a half. Exactly like that Thai travel programme: I razor-sliced his hard gristle off! Opened the window and threw it out to feed the ducks. Oh...! The butchered look on his face... Priceless!

*Laurie Cusack*

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

(As if)  
by your design  
I stand alone  
inside  
this Art Deco shell.

To 'honour and obey',  
forgotten routes  
and stoned windows  
that cut  
at my feet.

Glass remnants flash  
I follow  
towards the river  
carpeted  
like quicksilver.

I try  
searching beneath  
the plastic bottles, beer cans  
and shopping trolleys;

all I pull out  
is a sign

'Demolition Scheduled'

*Zeeandrick Oliver*





**Published by**  
Demon Crew Publications  
2011

All work copyright © individual contributors

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

[www.demoncrew.com](http://www.demoncrew.com)