Welcome to Dundee Writes!

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Dundee Writes is a little magazine of creative writing by students, staff and graduates of the University of Dundee. It is produced and edited by postgraduate students from the MLitt course in Writing Practice and Study, part of the University of Dundee’s Creative Writing Programme in the School of Humanities.

We are now into our fourth year, and have had wonderful feedback on Dundee Writes 1 - 6.

Our website is now up and running – find us at: dundeewrites@dundee.ac.uk

We welcome your comments. You can write to us at: dundeewrites@wordpress.com

We hope that you will enjoy this seventh collection!

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We consider all kinds of creative writing, with limits of 1000 words of prose and 40 lines of poetry. Please send your work (in word doc format) to dundeewrites@dundee.ac.uk, including a cover page with name, department and contact details. All pieces are judged anonymously.
I hear the air sieve their feathers.
That swift indiscretion
where I flashed my soft underbelly,
gave me away.
Those sharp eyes and treacherous talons seek
to hunt me down
rip me apart
pick my bones clean, lay me bare.
There’s plenty to gorge on here.
So I make myself small
until I can see the arcs they draw
grow faint
and shrink to dots.
I am safe.
Until next time.
Isbister Chambered Cairn

This the prosaic nomenclature – location, classification and function (as far as we know).

The romantics call it “The Tomb of the Eagles”, carved from the Orcadian sky by outcrops of land and sea whose bones lie with the totemic talons of their partners in the rites of death – a narrow passage opens who knows where.

Monument

For some time I have been intrigued by the large Monkey Puzzle tree growing on a small island in the middle of a loch in South Uist. A tree I recognised from a suburban childhood, Araucaria araucana, introduced to Britain from Chile by the botanist Archibald Menzies in the late 18th century.

It is clear that someone purposefully planted this tree. There were rumours suggesting that it was Lady Gordon Cathcart (1845-1942), a former landowner of South Uist who was said to wander the isles with seeds in her pocket, planting as she went, but Lady Gordon only visited the islands once in her life. Old maps reveal that the Monkey Puzzle has stood on this small island in Loch an Eilean since at least 1875.

The richness and variety contained on this small pocket of land bears testament to an earlier era when the land was fully worked to support a thriving and large population of island dwellers before the Clearances depleted fertility, variety, self-sufficiency and sustainability. Macdonald of Clannranald parted with his estate of South Uist to the infamous Colonel Gordon of Cluny in 1841. By 1851, Gordon was directing a programme of forced emigration under the pretext that the land was overcrowded and therefore unable to support its population. Those who remained were forced to inhabit poorer ground, and the land they had developed over centuries was given over to sheep. It is strange to think that it was during this time of forced abandonment the seed of this exotic tree was being planted.

In 1881 pleas for help to the Crofters Commission eventually led to 3000 acres being claimed back, allowing for the process of replanting to begin again. However, the land never fully recovered because the population had been permanently reduced.
Yet the lands of Uist remain fields of potential. As I climb Aisgerbheinn, the hill overlooking the island, I am once more struck by the treeless landscape, and the rhythms and change of the natural world. And I realise that we can learn much from this small green island in a sea of grey grass and the gap of water that separates it.

This little island garden with its collection of distorted and varied specimens reveals two perspectives of thought: on the one hand it is a reminder of colonial dominance and the havoc it created; and on the other hand it teaches us about adaptation, diversity and symbiosis and gives hope for the future.

Paper Swimmers

My mother fills a large jar with water - one of those jars from sweet shops that I think contained Liquorice Comfits or Catherine Wheels. A faint anise lingers round the rim. The water does not reach the top - there is just enough space so as not to spill. I place the jar against the light, on the window shelf, four floors up and near the sky. On a cloudless day the water is backlit blue.

Then with Aquarelle pencils on thin paper, I draw the girls in swimsuits - halter necks, polka dots and gingham checks. The girls are older than me, glamorous girls with very long legs; girls who could star in King Kong or Tarzan.

I move them out to life - I take the nail scissors and cut; take care around the fingers and toes - the girls must be lissom, willowy, compliant. I ease them into the jar and down they glide, down through the waterfall to some kind of natural pond, some deep swimming hole. Then I swirl the water with a porridge stick; grip the thistle handle and stir. Bubbles fuss up and cling; small moonstones on the glass. The paper swimmers dip and curl, their colours deepen in the wet. Sometimes they twist upwards in the surge; sometimes they shed pale trailing rainbows. My swimmers are fifties' Hollywood nymphs - graceful as Esther Williams.

I make an underwater ballet.
Sarah Isaac

Charlotte

Mrs Conti is taking my photograph in the garden. I am sitting against the warm stone wall in my new dress. It's pink with a white ribbon trim and has hoops under the skirt I have to arrange ever so carefully. In my bedroom I sometimes sit back and let the hoops rise up like the entrance to a gypsy caravan. I'd quite like to do that now but Mother is watching from the window. It would displease her. I know that in some unspoken way I am beholden to her in a way other daughters aren't. Matron says to the girls they should know which side their bread is buttered on which is stupid. Their bread is never buttered. Mine is. I am to mind that.

I have my birthday gift, a doll dressed in the same fabrics as me. Its hair is blonder and curlier than mine. Still, some soap and sharp scissors will put that right.

Mother gives me a little wave. I can't wave back because I have to stay very still. I have to count to ten without moving my lips or my fingers. It will be difficult.

Mrs Conti has disappeared under the cloth that billows out from the back of her camera. When she steps out there is a small spot of colour on each cheek.

"Charlotte," she says. Her voice is very low and very quiet.

"Yes," I reply, sweetly, smiling, my eyelashes fluttering the way mother likes. Mrs Conti is looking at the doll. I have my thumb pressed into one of her blue and white glass eyes. My other hand is holding her coarse hair so tightly I may dislodge the head. I release my grip and settle the doll on my lap, patting it the way they expect me to. I would have preferred another tin toy, one that sang and whirled although, really, I am too old for toys, too old for this dress.

I tried by fluttering my eyelashes, reading mother a chapter of a tedious book about entomology, eating my vegetables, and still she refused me a skirt that would skim the ground. Tears and tantrums did nothing. A two-day hunger strike made her waver a little but then she found the cake under my bed. So here I am, fourteen, wearing a child's dress, a doll on my lap. My mother has no idea what I know, what I learn from the girls, the things that are never part of my lessons but are nevertheless the things I most remember.

Mrs Conti re-appears.

"You're scowling, Charlotte," she says.

Mother isn't at the window. She's probably coming down the stairs, preparing to tell me off for scowling too. I smile. Mrs Conti goes back under the cloth. The garden gate opens and a woman in a beautiful dress, corseted and frilled, magenta and black, her arm held tight by a constable, comes in. Her hair is a mad skein of red around her shoulders. I carry on smiling.

Mrs Conti ignores the interruption, removing the metal thing at the back of the camera and the cap on the round thing at the front. I stick my tongue out quickly. She smiles then, not at me, just quietly to herself. It won't show, it was too quick. I waggle my toe for a bit longer. If I waggle it for the whole ten seconds I may make it invisible. Mrs Conti frowns and puts the lens cap back on although she's only counted to seven. She removes the dark thin box from the back of the camera and is away, walking quickly past my mother and Matron and Miss Martin and Miss Emily. I stand up, letting the doll fall into the herbaceous border.

"Ruby," I say to the girl in the magenta dress, the girl I recognise now she is nearer, "You're back."

"I wish it weren't so, Miss Charlotte," she says, smiling, showing the gap in her teeth. Then Mother takes her away.
The rest of the afternoon is long and dull. The girls are set to work. The garden is empty. I can't find scissors. The sofa makes the backs of my calves itch. Mother has put a padlock on the larder door. When Mother comes in she is hot and cross. I say I am glad that Ruby is back. She looks at me. The lines around her mouth are creased. I flutter my eyelashes.

“It was a lovely dress Ruby was wearing, Mother.”

Her hand, when it arrives at my cheek, has never before felt so hard or so hot.

Fieldnotes from a Trip to the Heart of MS

I've been away. Not in some exotic location for work or fun. In fact, for most of the last couple of weeks I have been lucky to be out of bed. I have been on an amazing journey: the first leg is now completed, the second leg is about to begin. Perhaps I am writing this here so that someone who needs it might find it. Or perhaps I just need to share it for me, so that I don't have to pretend it didn't happen. Who (if anyone) reads this, and what they make of it, is not uppermost in my mind. I am writing this because I can and because I need to. The nuances of my motivations are less important than those facts.

A week ago I could barely walk. A week ago I was so exhausted that getting to the toilet right outside my room left me feeling like I had run a marathon. If I could get up the energy to control my errant legs I had to cling to the walls as my vertigo was so intense. We imagine we can control our fate. Yet we are at the mercy of myriad chance encounters between our neurons, synapses, atoms, and chemicals in the environment. My brain has been the subject of a bizarre chemical experiment these last few days. Bombarded with high dose corticosteroids and assorted other drugs in a last ditch attempt to suppress my immune system. The experiment has worked, and an unusually severe Multiple Sclerosis relapse has been stopped in its tracks.

I have been incredibly lucky these last 20 years since sudden balance problems walking along a beach wall in Split first alerted me to what a year later would be diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis. Rather than violent relapses followed by remission, I have largely followed an initially quite benign and then very slow progressive path. The gradual but steady increase of my disabilities rarely allowed me the luxury of forgetting it was there. It threatened my future, limited my present. But this was new to me: the violence of it unfamiliar, overwhelming, and terrifying. For a few days I circled around like a rat in a trap,
trying to stave off the moment of recognition. I rationalised and struggled and pretended to myself, and everyone around me, that it was all ‘ok’. And then, slowly at first then quickly, panic grew and escape routes seemed more and more fragile. Self-determination was sacrificed and resistance to taking steroids crumbled. Finally, dignity went as my body curled in and hoped only for relief. I took the steroids.

I was so exhausted the first few hours passed quickly, but then like sunshine after a downpour, it came; within a few hours of the first dose a huge rush, the physical symptoms still there but the mind alert. I barely slept that first night as the steroids cascaded through me. I could feel them rushing in my blood, in my ears. I felt like I did as a girl standing at the edge of the top diving board just at the very moment I realised I really was going to make the dive this time. It would be the next morning before I surfaced.

As I woke, there was a sudden shock as I realised I could feel my right foot. It had been (rather terrifyingly, for it’s my ‘good leg’) lost to my senses for a few days. I asked my leg to move, and smiled as I realised it did with more ease and speed than for many days, weeks even. I noticed the room was not spinning so violently. I moved to sit up, and I did. I just sat up. When you’ve lost the ability to do such elemental things, the shock of accomplishment is intense. Thrilling. I felt strangely different, and strangely me. Over the coming days I was like a child with a new toy. I explored, prodded, pushed, and delighted.

There’s a tingle in the bottom of my left foot (the ‘bad leg’). I have not felt the bottom of that foot for years. I stand from a chair without having to push myself up like an eighty year old. The bruises on my feet and legs finally have a chance to heal as day after day passes without a fall or a stumble or a bash. I can smell things properly for the first time in months. Each new dose brings with it another steroid high.

Though the disabilities from years of MS are unchanged, the new damage from the most recent relapse is greatly improved. And the clarity of mind is simply incredible. Of course there is still an element of steroid high at play. But right now, sitting here watching the sun dry the rain from the flowers by my window, I grab hold of this amazing gift, and I delight. I’ve been away, but I’m home again.
Watching the Sun
From the Mills Observatory, Dundee

The curator smiles when opening up the tower and swings its dome to face the Sun’s direction, priming two telescopes for my attention.

On cue, the Sun pierces the morning’s haze as he steers me towards a squat contraption – modern looking, cutting edge, no nonsense.

Now through its powerful light-screen I gaze (most of the blinding brightness filtered out) and peer at a massive red Sun magnified.

Narrow eyed, I focus on a black sunspot beside a smudge of tiny pinpricks. Small? The size of thirty or forty Earths, he says.

The spot appeared about two weeks ago since when they’ve watched its every waking hour, measuring and recording its every move.

Nicely discernible around the Sun’s red rim the solar prominences zoom. Their gassy plumes flare through a hundred-thousand miles of void…

Next, my guide aligns a giant cased in wood: the Thomas Cooke refractor, made at York. He climbs to its great lens to screen off parts of it (so it won’t overheat, he says). I warm to this huge instrument, its understated power. This time in black and white I watch the Sun shift across the midday sky and ponder whether Copernicus or Kepler shared my apprehension, What if the Sun explodes or hell freezes over?

Gordon Jarvie

The Mills Observatory is the only full-time public observatory in Britain. Located on top of Balgay Hill, Dundee, it was built in 1935. The Thomas Cooke 10-inch refractor was built in 1871, and its optical components are of the highest quality.
I learnt the facts of life early.

I was six years old and already a regular participant in the practice of fish-sex. This occupied my dad and me on cold mornings in early May, as the ice broke and the lake began to open its waters for the summer.

Sixty years later, I can still hear the ice crackle and creak as the wind pushes it towards the shore, forming ever-changing patterns with sky blue water and cotton wool clouds. Underneath, the fish are ready for the season. Large golden breams, muscular pikes with huge heads, and red and green perch are easy to catch; they are dopy, dizzily in love and afflicted by an urgent drive to procreate. My dad does not trust nature; he has seen fish stocks diminish each year; he wants to make sure the lake remains healthy.

The female fish we catch in katiska, a fish trap made of chicken wire, have large rounded bellies full of eggs, while the males are thinner. Dad cuts open the stomachs of the female fish with puukko, a sharp sheath knife, to harvest the eggs into a metal washing bowl. He presses the stomachs of male fish in repeated motion until white sticky milk spurts out of the tiny hole in their underbelly. My task is to hold the bowl steady as he milks the fish, carefully stirring the mixture with his bare hand.

Once the fish are emptied of their valuables, we take the bowl out in a boat. I row it to the rysä and keep the boat steady while dad pours the mixture in the middle of it. Rysä is a large fish-nest we made out of wooden poles and thick branches of juniper and pine. The ingredients for new life are protected from predators by a thicket of sharp fir tree needles, allowing the embryos to develop into fully fledged fish.

Each spring, I swam to the rysä to see how the little fish were getting on. It was always a delight to see shoals of fry swimming in and out of their nest, and marvel at my part in creating them. I now think of this practice as assisted conception and appreciate that my dad was a conservationist extraordinaire ahead of his time.
The cliff slope was thick with it. Sand, salt and shit. Muck coated the boy’s boots, the acrid smell seeping into his nostrils, into his eyes. But he kept watching, checking the calm waves in the bay for any slight change, for the slightest flicker of moonlight reflected back at him. He was well hidden under the gorse from the eyes that knew the cliff, eyes that knew the dark.

With one gloved hand, he held the musket, steadying its muzzle towards the break in the headland; his other hand, ungloved for dexterity, let one finger curl loosely round the trigger. No mistakes, any shot must be deliberate.

The waves were less audible now, cresting the rocks less frequently, retreating back to sea. The moon had shifted in the sky, giving way to the faintest slivers of dusk, kissing the water where it met the horizon.

An older man rests a calloused, weathered hand upon the boy’s back. ‘Keep steady,’ he says, barely moving his lips. ‘I am here.’ The boy shifts his shoulders, now seized with the cold, then resumes his former position, eyes never leaving the water.

With dawn light comes a choir of frantic squawking, echoing around the cliffs. The boy flinches at the gulls’ cries then feels the reassuring hand of the man on his shoulder. This means it will be soon.

A light drizzle has started, enveloping the bay in a murky haze. The boy looks up. He tightens his grip as the rain begins to fall in blinding droplets, plastering his hair around his face and forming braided channels down his breastplate. The boy pulls the musket closer, his finger tightening on the trigger. He sees the boat.

A rowboat, darkened with varnish and saturation. It looks the colour of the sea from the cliff but reflects no light, barely visible from above. The hand on his shoulder clenches. ‘Take the shot.’

But the boy waits. Not hesitating, waiting. Keeping his stance, he moves forward, out of the cover of the bracken. There is a figure in the boat, hidden in the torrent of rainfall, but this boy has keen eyes, eyes that know the light in the dark. He waits longer. He can see the man now. He makes out the silhouette of a beard and broad shoulders. Poises his finger to pull. Then he sees eyes: one blue, one green. The boy pulls the trigger too late. The man is gone. The boat is empty. The boy stands, drops his useless weapon and moves to the edge of the cliff, scanning for his lost target.

He hears the shouts of his father behind him, turns but sees only feathers, huge wings and the eyes: one blue, one green. The great bird lunges at the boy, brandishing talons for tearing at flesh. The boy falls into the freezing, salty blackness, and, dragged down by the metal armour on his chest, he watches as bubbles abandon him, floating to another world...
Adam James Cuthbert

**The Nightmare**

I’m falling through space, through time,  
my skin like lava,  
blood pounding through pistons.

I hear the Valkyries.  
Their mechanical steeds,  
venomous breath, hooves of flame.

I’m five years old on the first day of school.  
Greg, my first friend.  
He lives in the neighbouring town. He has blond hair.  
We’re sharing a colouring-in book.  
I colour the grass blue while he fills the sky with maroon.

Twenty years on I read of his death  
in the paper. His face hasn’t changed -  
there’s the young boy I knew,  
those innocent eyes.

In the bathroom I cut myself on the razor.  
Is this how he did it? Cold steel to the jugular?  
Did he count the drops?

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Fiona Duncan

**Climbing on the Shelter**

Raised voices cut off suddenly by the slamming of a door.  
A young girl presses her ear to the wood, listening. The rise  
and fall of conversation, cutting and crossing, high pitched,  
intense. For a while she waits, shifting from foot to foot in  
the dark lobby, then, bored, she makes for the front door and  
twists the key.

That just scrubbed closie smell, of wet concrete and red  
carbolic soap. Down the back stairs. Wrestle with the ridged  
metal onion-shaped handle till the door opens with a creak.  
The backies. A grassy wonderland of greenie poles and  
damp washing, sometimes flashing and flaring in the wind,  
but today, still and calm. Past the bin recess. Breathe in that  
distinctive throat-catching tang of mouldering vegetable peel  
and disinfectant.

Then, the bomb shelter. A squat, glowering building, its  
entrance overgrown with vicious green weeds, clogged with  
ancient rubbish, faded labels mildewing into earth and stone.  
Inside, darkness, a black, tomblike smell, airless and lightless.  
Her feet on uneven stone, she pauses, hesitating. What’s  
inside? Today isn’t the day to find out. Her objective is  
different. She breathes in. Cold mud and grass, a faint scent  
of Daz and bleach. And the challenge. Small feet in white  
Clark’s sandals, ankle socks frilled at the broderie anglaised  
edges, rose printed gauzy summer dress and a brilliant white  
courtelle cardigan. Totally unsuitable for climbing a bomb  
shelter. She raises her eyes. Blue skies, sun. The lure of  
the forbidden. Behind her, the kitchen window open at the  
top lets out the sound of weary quarrelling. She squares  
her shoulders, blocks out the background noise and walks  
towards the wall, clenching her fists.
Climb up the mossy wall separating Benvie Road from the Pitfour Street tenements. Scrambling feet in crumbling concrete fissures, faded red brick, arms pulling, fingers scratched and aching, knees scraping, then up onto the top of the wall and walk along, balancing carefully, arms out to each side, a tiny tightrope walker, lips pressed together, whitened in concentration. Then the jump onto the shelter roof, pebbles scratching under thick crepe sandal soles.

The world from a different angle, vertigo, elation, the sky whirling as she turns and laughs, delighted at her daring. Don’t stop
Don’t think.
Don’t listen to the voices, clearer now from the open window.
Just jump.

That stomach-leaping hurtle over dark green stinging nettles growing thickly in the ditch at the bottom of the shelter, right out onto the soft, cushioning grass of the drying green. That feeling of flying, of weightlessness, of absolute and complete freedom.

Landing. The chilly scent of grass and daisies and mud. That delicious dizziness. She feels herself smile as she stands up, ready for the next jump. Only this time, a different way up. Not the sun warmed reassurance of the red brick wall, its curved top offering a simple route to the shelter roof, but a more difficult ascent, one used by the boys in the houses round the greenie. James Buchan, Sandy Peddie, Dennis Askew. All the adventurous boys she admires and envies take this way. A deep breath, then little fingers scrabbling for a hold, tentative, tenuous. Then feet, scrabbling madly against the rough surface, a toe hold, tiny, narrow, but then, that strong, determined pushing of legs and feet, and up.

And sudden bright spots, red on grey. No pain, just a drip drip of blood, a sickening flap of hanging dead white skin. And panic. Push away that babyish impulse to cry. Jump down, instinctively holding her finger high. Watch the blood running down quickly, so quickly, spattering the pink dress, merging with the rosebuds, staining the grass. Push open the heavy back door, bloody fingers slipping on the iron handle, then up the grey stairs, a riot of red dots marking her passage.

Still the voices, angry and bitter, then her mum’s white face, her dad lifting her up, holding her tight, a towel masking the blood and no telling off, even though her white sandals are verdigris with mould and her dress stained and crumpled.

The three of them in the kitchen, sun streaming through the bright window, her on her dad’s knee and the rough tweed of his jacket, the scent of tobacco, leaning into his safety and comfort and her mum’s hand on her head, softly stroking. And only then does she cry. And she doesn’t know why, when really, her finger isn’t painful anymore. It hardly hurts at all.
Rain

They speak about me differently in London, like a bad investor wined and dined at a place with a six-month waiting list, who doesn’t drink, but talks about the woman under London Bridge with no shoes on, begging.

As if I’d missed the point: it was their place and they had things to do, and needed to stay dry: and couldn’t I just fall on rent-capped re-locators peering out of tiny high-rise windows who had nowhere else particular to be?

But here, they wait for me or clearer skies, with equal gravity: either one they know they’ll pay for on some pre-determined day, and whilst nobody’s keeping score, the damp feels like a settlement, credit stored for one nice week, remembered during long grey morning mists.

The warm wet smell elevates the concrete, makes commuters look like watercolours bled into their city, my insistent permeation of the pavement underfoot is freely given, it will not trouble any sense of ending.

Biographies

Karen Clifford is a landscape architect based in Tayside who splits her time between Edinburgh and Dundee. From the age of 4 she has had a burning desire to become a writer. Her writing is informed by and focussed on how we are shaped by our environment. It is also an attempt to identify the fleeting moments of realisation we each share. Nothing Wasted is an attempt to acknowledge and embrace the darker undercurrents of life.

Roderick Manson first crawled into the Tomb of the Eagles (a.k.a. the Isbister Chambered Cairn) on South Ronaldsay less than a week after breaking a few ribs on Shetland when attempting (inaccurately) to jump into a disused hilltop GPO relay station. He has become somewhat mad about Orcadian archaeology and likes to muse on how both professional archaeologists and ordinary types like him variously invent stories to explain the little evidence they have.

Laura Donkers is an environmental artist, based in the Outer Hebrides. Her artistic praxis explores the bio-cultural links between people and the lands they inhabit. Originally from London, she has good agrarian knowledge gained through a life in agriculture and horticulture spent physically working on the land. Laura is interested in the act of living on the land, both personally and collectively. Her 2D, 3D, digital and written works interrogate the political, physical and material conditions of landscape as experienced through the body.
Bet McCallum lives in Broughty Ferry and London. She has co-authored three books on primary education and published widely in academic journals. Recently her short stories have appeared in New Writing Dundee, Gutter and Watermarks. She is currently attending a Life Writing class at the University of Dundee, working on a series of personal essays on dolls, one of which is Paper Swimmers.

Sarah Isaac works as an art teacher and is fascinated by the process and history of photography which features in much of her work. Charlotte is one of four characters in a novel set in a girls’ reformatory in Victorian Bristol. Sarah attends Esther Read’s Continuing as a Writer class in the University of Dundee.

Cat Macaulay is an ethnographer and user researcher who has worked in the technology, service and public sector design fields. She ran the MSc Design Ethnography at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design until July 2014, when she left the University of Dundee to resume figuring out what she wants to be when she grows up.

Gordon Jarvie worked at Learning and Teaching Scotland in Dundee for more than a decade. With his wife Frances he wrote several “Scottie Books” for children, most recently There Shall Be a Scottish Parliament (2013, National Museums Scotland). He has edited various publications, and his latest poetry collection is A Man Passing Through: Memoir with Poems Selected and New (2014, Greenwich Exchange).

Marjut Kosonen has recently begun writing about her roots in the changing borderlands of Eastern Finland, having spent her working life in social work in England and Scotland. In 2001 she completed a PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow on children’s sibling relationships. She spends her time between Broughty Ferry and Finland, exploring the way lifetimes of crossing borders - geographical, cultural, social or political – have shaped the lives of her family of origin, and her own.

Kate Mcauliffe is a fourth year student at the University of Dundee studying English and Creative Writing, and aspiring to study for an MLitt in Theatre Studies. Her piece is the prologue to a fantasy novel which she hopes to finish this year. During non-term time she stays in Burntisland, Fife, where she grew up, and the coast and countryside is a constant inspiration.

Adam James Cuthbert recently graduated from the University of Dundee with a MA in English and Philosophy. His writing has been published elsewhere, but he regards Dundee Writes as an exciting opportunity for any budding writer. He counts amongst his inspirations Ulysses by James Joyce (previously a subject of his undergraduate Dissertation), with its themes of reminiscence, the dreaming consciousness, the passage of time, life, and death.

Fiona Duncan is a retired English teacher who loves Olympic lifting, Crossfit, reading, cooking and spending time with family and friends. She also enjoys creative writing classes with Esther Read where she creates pieces of work hovering around the darker side of life. Currently, Fiona is working on a crime novel set in Dundee, based around Balgay Park.

Alice Tarbuck is in the first year of a PhD on the poetry and practice of Thomas A. Clark. This year, her poetry has been exhibited in the Forest Cafe, and has appeared in Rain Party Disaster Journal amongst others.
Lindsay Macgregor recently graduated from the University of Dundee with an MLitt in Writing Practice and Study. She has published poems in a range of magazines, including Gutter, New Writing Scotland, and Dundee Writes, and was highly commended in the William Soutar Poetry Competition 2013.

Josephine Jules Andrews was born in Dundee, trained in Anthropology and Ecology at the University of London and Washington University in St. Louis, and lived in Madagascar for ten years where she ran an award-winning lemur conservation project. She has recently graduated with an MLitt in Writing Practice and Study at the University of Dundee and teaches two classes in life writing in the Department of Continuing Education. She has co-edited Dundee Writes since its first issue.

Jennifer Paton is a graphic designer and graduate of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. She is now based in Paisley but will always have fond memories of Dundee. To find out more about her and see some of her other projects, visit: www.about.me/toomanyballoons.

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Editors and contributors may be contacted via: dundeewrites@dundee.ac.uk