



Hello

It's time we took publishing into our own hands. Got those hands dirty. Paste, ink, sweat, blood from those evil little papercuts. Time to print what makes us think, feel, react. Time to get involved in our tiny corner of the litmag world.

Riot Angel comes from the spirit of riotgrrl and the feminist punk zinesters who keep it alive. This is the first issue and only issue to be edited by one person. From here on the readers and contributors will choose the next issue's work. If you'd like to get involved, email!

Submissions of poetry/short stories/literary criticism to [riotangelzine@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:riotangelzine@yahoo.co.uk) in the body of the email or as a Rich Text attachment.

***DEADLINE FOR #2 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004***

Riot Angel online:

<http://freespace.virgin.net/george.dawes/riotangel.htm>

Soon to be <http://www.riotangel.co.uk> - please check regularly for updates!

## Riot Angel #1



What They Have – Beverley Smith

Untitled – Candace Lawrence

A Daughter's Tale – Michelle Angone

Gagging For It – Joanne King

Poetry with the Teletubbies: An Interview with Helen Kitson

Let's Get Tattoos – Helen Kitson

Flowers for Frances Farmer – Helen Kitson

Pablo – Patricia McCarthy

Red Light – Justine Jupe

Holes – Dee Rimbaud

Acid Sunset Not So Sweet – Dee Rimbaud

In Thrall to Lilith – Dee Rimbaud

## **What They Have - Beverley Smith**

### *Hair*

They shake their hair, long and blonde, catching the sunlight and shimmering, sparkling with gold dust. Smooth and untangled, golden, beautiful, like angels. They flick it shake it, stroke it, comb it, gel it, spray it, touch it. Sit there playing with it, twirling it round their fingers, examining the long silky strands that come away in their hands.

Or short and dark, spiky, like dark chocolate flakes, delicious and forbidden. Brave and different, opposite to the blonde angels, but still the same. Some dyed red, touched by fire, like it would burn your fingers to touch them, like a message. Keep away from me. I am angry. I am rebellious. But still the same.

### *Eyes*

Sharp and accusing, glaring, forbidding. Hard like green glass, like dark sweet chocolate, like cool pools of water. Beautiful, hiding the menace, the intent behind. Sending messages your way. Charged electricity keeping you away because you know it will hurt. Eyes see all. Eyes tell all. Eyes hurt. Looking at each other, blinking, eyelids fluttering like butterflies wings, attracting the foreign species, drawing them into their lair. Attracting each other. Eyes gazing into eyes, seeing what there is to see, falling deep inside.

### *Voices*

Their laughter rings like bells, but also bullets. Like music, peppered with notes that are too high to hear and yet hurt your ears all the same, ringing and whistling like it will never stop. They speak a foreign language, firing words back and forward, like a ball passing between them, like you have to be quick, fire it back or it will be too late. Like a fireball you do not want too long in your hands. Wait too long and game over. You are out. You are nothing. And mixing in the laughter. Words and laughter in the right places, at the right times, following some plan like you are building a house. One thing out of place and the whole thing will collapse around you.

### *Lips*

Lips, pink and red, like the sweet cold juice of ice-lollies. Sweet lips, beautiful, innocent, smiling pursing. Lips shouting sexuality, kiss me, kiss me. And they do. Kiss the helpless males. Kiss each other in the raging heat of hormones, tasting the salt, the sweetness. Lips

with cigarettes between them, hard and tough, blowing out smoke so coolly without choking. Lips spitting out accusations like firing from a gun, hard and angry, jagged like a serrated blade, tearing at your skin, drawing blood. Pain getting inside you, jabbing at you again and again long after their lips have fired their burning ammunition.

### *Ears*

Ears studded with flashes of colour, silver hoops to jangle and make you look. Look here is an ear and it can hear. It can hear what you say. Holding out to hear the laughter, the voices to fire back the right thing at the right time. Not to hear would be too miss. To miss is dangerous. Listening for that wrong comment, that out of tune word, misplaced, meant with malice. Turning sharply and words fired back inside, down the ear canal, back to that deep hole inside where they explore and burn. You will not do that again.

### *Hands*

Their hands sparkle with flashes of silver, pieces of gold, long slim fingers, nails shell pink or sky blue. They gesture with each other, draw shapes in the air with ink that only they can see, drawing, waving, circling. Jabbing fingers, hard accusing, sharp and painful as if they've poked you in the eye, sent a wave of electricity through your body, transfixing you but hurting like a thousand needles.

Touching other arms, arms draped round necks, stroking, cuddling, wiping away the sparkle of dewdrops from other cheeks. Fingers entwined, arms touching. We stand united. Together we are strong. We are never alone.

### *Bodies*

Beautiful bodies, small breasts pushed up, pushed out, shirts straining at the chest, declaring to the world 'I am a woman.' Skirts too short, showing slender legs or encased in tight trousers. Confidence oozing from every pore. I am what I am and like it or else.

### *The Green Cloak*

They have something she doesn't. Something beautiful like green shimmering smoke around their electrically charged adolescent bodies. If she stares hard enough she swears that she can see it. If she stands close enough she can feel it, like a sharp shock spreading through her cold body, warm and inviting, like she could give herself up to it completely. She can smell it, like sugar, like

pollen in the sun, like the fizz of lemonade. She wants it, craves it, like an alcoholic craves a drink.

She feels cold and naked, like her flesh, her bones even are exposed for all to see. Like her blood is running away, crimson rivulets draining from her almost empty body. She has nothing to protect her, keep her from the cold, the exposure, keep everything together inside her. She is embarrassed, hangs her head because she knows it is something she should have and doesn't and they know she doesn't. They can look at her and see right through her, the mess of her body, her secrets laying open for all too see. She can hide nothing. She has nothing to hide, nothing to hide in. She wants to wrap herself in the layer of shimmering green silk, as if it is a cloak. She would emerge as someone else, like a butterfly from a cocoon, something ordinary, ugly even turned into something amazing. But she has no cloak. She doesn't know the secret of how to get one. It is not something you can ask, either you know or you don't. Either you have one or you don't.

*Beverley Smith had a boring, normal childhood in Ashford, Kent where she still lives 27 year later, scarily approaching 30. She has recently left the chaotic world of the local library for the comparative calm of the social services. Currently suffering from a particularly evil case of writer's block, she feels its the novel inside her struggling to get out that's kicking up a fuss.*



## **Untitled - Candi Lawrence**

staring  
at a screen  
imaginary  
gears turning  
lack  
of everything  
wonder  
about nothing  
clock  
ticks so slow  
time  
goes so fast

*Candi Lawrence is 19 and has lived in Northeastern Oklahoma for the past six years. She's inspired by music, especially the White Stripes, reading, cute socks, cartoon monkeys and web design.*



## **A Daughter's Tale - Michelle Angone**

There was once a time I saw my mother as a beautiful woman surrounded by the hardship of life. Struggle was almost an art form for her. She was a sixteen-year-old rushed into marriage and motherhood before she had a chance to experience maturity at any level. Once I had been a doll she dressed and played with. Unlike a plaything, I was alive. I grew and required more than just a pretend mommy. Perhaps she didn't know how to be a parent, but I believe that she could have at least tried

She wanted to believe we could be friends, instead of mother and child. We had very little in common. Her life was rooted in southern beliefs, working class values, and two working parents who loved her. My life was of a child from a broken home, welfare reliance, and moral resentment.

I was no more than a tag-along toy after she left my father. Toted to the taverns to play pinball, eavesdrop on drug deals and watch prostitutes be propositioned as she cleaned the bar. I was taught the coldness of life.

We were surrounded by other tarnished women with unwanted children most of the early years. The voids in their lives were filled with cheap wine by day and a myriad of men by night. However odd it may have been, I was happy enough with the honesty of life. Sunday afternoons were spent at all ages shows where I watched my uncles play music, getting to know the subtleties of musicians.

The time came when Mom escaped from the old crowd to find herself independent in the adult world. She did factory work during the day and went to discotheques at night, leaving me in the care of my grandparents. I shuffled myself off to school in the mornings, came home to an empty house and rarely saw my mother. The security blanket of other children like me was hung out to dry. Parochial school was full of truth. It was a sin not to honor thy father and mother as it was a sin to be divorced.

Finally my mother and I had a common ground, we were both sinners. How sad it was not to have her around to share the insight with.

She came back to me several times in those years. When her heart was broken she cried on my small shoulders. She shared her secrets when she couldn't handle the guilt of her actions on her own. I listened as she poured out how it wasn't feasible to have another child as it was hard enough giving me the things I needed. I no longer just bore the guilt of being born; I was now the barer of

the guilt of her choice. The rest of my childhood I understood if I required less there would be someone to share my life with. In time her wounds healed and she left me alone, silent in my thoughts.

Once, a man came into our lives, loving father figure showering us with attention and introducing new addictions and needs into our lives. We lived as a family under his roof. Again, we had a common ground. I now had two working parents but she was too busy to share my joy. All good things end before we are ready to say goodbye. The intensity of his cravings took away our home and he left before the birth of his child.

Mom and I could have shared the abandonment if she had not chosen to wallow in self-defeat. I wasn't young enough to share childhood with my sibling. However, I was old enough to share the responsibility of caretaking for my sister.

As I became an adolescent my mother became a stranger. She needed me to help her and didn't think that I might have needed help from her. The more I reached out to her, the more she turned me away.

It started innocent enough for me, a little something to help me sleep. Before long I couldn't leave the house unless I disinfected my mind with a drink. She noticed only after months of abuse when my baby sister found me nearly dead with alcohol poisoning. My childhood had taught me how to deal with abandonment by years of watching drunks in bars. Had Mom taken the time to open her eyes to my needs she could have stopped me in the very beginning. No, my mother saw my troubles as non-existent. If she admitted my needs she had to admit her failings. It would never happen.

Years went on as she turned me toward the opposite sex while rejecting them from her forever. Lies and secrets built walls between us. My life spun out of control and she didn't seem to notice. At times I forgot she couldn't handle my reality and told her about my hardships. Sometimes she didn't believe me while other times she didn't listen. She had finished parenting me when I was sixteen years old, because she was on her own at that age. Somehow I always figured out a way to deal with each new situation in my life.

In our adult years, we have little to share other than my children. Marriage and child rearing have never been a part of her life. Once, she confessed that she envied my life and how it turned out. I



think maybe that is because she knows very little about my life. Mostly she still makes me feel inferior and unimportant but that doesn't bother me any more. It seems I finally have someone who cares and listens.

My mother gave me a life filled with hard-learned lessons and little regret. She gave me the kindling of tragedy and pain to ignite the flames of fiction. Had she been a perfect parent I would have dribble to pull from. Instead, I can finally let it go in a way teaching others to not repeat the harshness I've lived. There would truly be no words for me to pen had it not been for the turbulent relationship my mother and I have had.

*Michelle Angone lives in Normal, Illinois with her husband, son, two daughters, and puppy. She is a full-time mom and writer, currently working on several projects including a novel. She's still trying to figure out what she wants to be when she grows up. Due to biological time restraints she is open to suggestions.*



## AA INDEPENDENT PRESS GUIDE

A CD-rom with detailed listings for over 1,000 Independent literary and genre magazines and publishers from around the world, including over 300 UK and 400 US magazines

Detailed information, including editor's name, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail and web-site addresses. Other useful info like year established, circulation figures, format, frequency, payment information and editorial requirements.

Not only that, but with this guide you can access magazines' and publisher's web-sites at the click of a mouse or you can send them an e-mail with similar ease. Also, we let you know if editors will accept e-mail submissions (which will save you a fortune in stamps)

The AA INDEPENDENT PRESS GUIDE is the ideal tool for writers and artists who are serious about getting their work published.

Available from:

DEE RIMBAUD,  
7 LOTHIAN GARDENS (GFL)  
GLASGOW, G20 6BN,  
UNITED KINGDOM.

Enquiries to [deerimbaud@hotmail.com](mailto:deerimbaud@hotmail.com)  
or [x-generation@ntlworld.com](mailto:x-generation@ntlworld.com)

**Cheques or Postal Orders for £6.00**  
**Payable to: Dee Rimbaud**

**Web-Site:**  
**[www.thunderburst.co.uk](http://www.thunderburst.co.uk)**

## **Gagging for It – Joanne King**

For the fifth time that afternoon Stu was over at Angela's desk, this time to tell a joke. Stu liked jokes, he liked telling them, he loved the laughter they provoked.

"Question: What's six inches long, has a head on it and makes women go wild?" he grinned. His main warm-up guys – Andy and Jon – laughed their blokish laugh. Like a communist election, the '*laugh*' box already had a cross in it.

"Come on," he goaded Angela. "What's six inches long, has a head on it and makes women go wild?"

"Money," said Moira, butting in abruptly. "Money - the thing we're supposed to be here to earn."

Moral Stance Moira. Stu's face momentarily reflected his disgust like a subliminal message flashing across a cinema screen. He turned his back and strolled away. His head was held high, the neck stiff. He'd learnt about physical posture on a management course: *If the body has a winner's stance, upright, confident, the mind will follow.* No one, certainly not Moira, would make him feel small. "Don't forget everyone – I've organised a department Drink-After-Work for this evening." he called. Good move, leave them with something positive.

The merry throng congregated down at the Murderers Arms around six, the usual venue for these gatherings. The seating arrangement was as predicted, Stu at the head of a long table with the chosen few either side. Others, those only ever invited out on official department occasions, were seated at overflow tables. It made no difference. Even if any had managed to get a seat, they'd never quite be insiders. Talk boundaries are ten times more impenetrable than barbed wire. If the verbal drawbridge was up, Stu made sure it stayed up. None shall pass. They were forever twilighters: half inners, half outers.

Question: How do you know a blonde's been working on the computer?

Answer: There's Tippex all over the screen.

Loud beery laughter erupted well above the normal pub hubbub and the twilighters looked over wistfully at the 'A' list table, acutely aware of missing out yet grinning furiously: if your body has an 'I'm included' stance, your mind will follow.

Jenny, a tubby blonde sitting across from Stu, carried on laughing long after the rest. Teeth marinated in alcohol bared in glee. 'Please like me' was Tippexed all across her face. But she wasn't Stu's type - she enjoyed being humiliated. Where's the fun in that? Now Angela, Angela was different. Angela was a temp and attractive at that. Glossy hair, good body, fresh complexion. She was only working at the company to fill in time before university. She was decent.

"Know any good blonde jokes?" said Jon. Angela glanced at Moira then looked quickly away. She knew, even if she couldn't admit it, there was something distasteful about all this, but jokes are jokes. You could get branded a 'spoilsport' if you spoke up and as most women were only one comment away from this bar-code, it was better to keep quiet, fit in. Maybe one day, if it goes too far...But it's not like harassment or anything. They're just jokes.

Question: Why shouldn't you give a blonde a coffee break?

Answer: Takes too long to retrain her.

Stu smirked and the others laughed, a ricocheting ha-ha-ha laugh. Tippex Jenny ha-ha'd the loudest and longest, a shrill squeal. A blonde joke free for all broke out with most people chipping in.

Question: Why did the blonde wear condoms on her ears?

Answer: So she wouldn't get hearing aides!

The laughter went on for ages for that one. People, not even department members, retold it to friends. It was a Mexican wave of a gag. '*Hearing aides*', '*hearing aides*', echoing round and round the bar.

Tippex Jenny almost jumped out of her seat, the joke reminded her of one and she was over-anxious to join the gag fest. "You'll like this one, Stu," she giggled, reaching out impulsively to touch his arm. Her eyes were bright, gleeful. Her alcohol fuddled brain was thinking: *I'll show him I can be a good laugh.*

Question: Why did the blonde sit on a newspaper?

She floundered. "I mean, why did the *deaf* blonde sit on a newspaper?" This mistake was crucial, it changed the atmosphere, but Jenny missed the cues, didn't sense the irritation. But Moira did. She saw another facial flash card flit across Stu's face. It read: *Go ahead, because whatever you say, we're not gonna find it funny.*

Answer: So she could *lip-read*!

Jenny screeched piercingly. "Lip read. D'you get it? Sat on a newspaper and lip read." Her head lolled back and forth, assuming the others would follow suit, bathing her in approval because she'd been funny and crude and wasn't one of those tight-assed spoilsport women.

The silence fell around her like a cage. Hemming her in. Trapping her. "My dad had a hearing aid." Stu said sternly. Jenny's head lifted and the disapproval hit her full in the face, no air bag protection possible. The truth might be out there, but at that moment it was home for a tragic night in. For a brief moment she probably wondered '*But why wasn't the Hearing Aides joke offensive as well?*' But the group isn't logical. What was OK one moment, was social sinking sand the next. She'd said the wrong thing, totally the wrong thing, and worse, she'd joked about the wrong thing. Not deaf people, no one cared about them; it was Stu's dad. Everyone knew how much Stu's dad meant to him. Even worse, Stu's Dead Dad, killed twelve months ago in a car crash. People couldn't joke about what Stu cared about. The cult's eyes turned on Tippex Jenny. All they'd remember is that she told a sick joke about Stu's Dead Dad.

Stu turned to Jon, serious tone. "I was on a course last month about the disabled in business..." And so started a worthy five-minute discussion about discrimination in the workplace, with the usual burst of outrage about people who park in the disabled spots at supermarkets. A smokescreen conversation. Moira had been on the same course and remembered Stu sneaking out during the first coffee break to discretely move his BMW from where he'd parked it, right over the white line symbol for a wheelchair. *You jerk*, thought Moira. *One day the laugh will be on you...*

"Listen everyone," he said, getting bored with being earnest. He staggered to his feet. "Angela, like the intelligent girl we know she is, has decided to stay on with the company." There was an eager gasp. "Yes, folks. She starts proper work on Monday. No more temping, and no more silly ideas about living the layabout student life."

Moira spluttered on her wine. Angela was a smart girl, why choose to stay here? It made no sense. A fresh round of drinks was delivered and there was much self-congratulation. Moira watched, mesmerised by Angela basking in their delight, and it suddenly became so obvious. Stu and the group made Angela feel special,

wanted, welcome. She'd never felt their cold side, their oppressive side. A summer of influence had really done the trick. It's out of fashion to desire a stable life especially if you're young. You're supposed to want to go out and see the world. You're supposed to have a confidence, a self-assurance you'll make new friends wherever you go. And, of course, it's the ultimate taboo to want to get tied down. Who'd admit that? But everyone's afraid some time; everyone likes to wait a while in the comfort zone. We've all hollered '*don't hold me back*' while hoping strong arms will clamp tight, saving us from the fight... Poor Angela, thought Moira, sometimes safety is the harshest place to be...

By nine the cult decided to move on. As one big tribe they exited the pub in a blast of buoyant camaraderie. Stu took his chance, cornered Angela. Told her to come with him back to the department. He'd forgotten a file, an important document. Document? thought Moira cynically, over hearing. I'll bet. She gathered up her things, she was going home. Enough with these women that couldn't see the kind of man he was. That was life. You learn through experience. He never forced them. You can only flatter a vain woman.

Inside the dark office building Angela and Stu crept. Drunken giggles and 'shhhs' as they tiptoed across the taut chord carpet. Soon they were entwined together across a desk. "Not too far... I've never, you know.... I've never...." said Angela as Stu made a more determined move.

A virgin? Surely not. Eighteen and never been... He couldn't believe it, couldn't believe his luck. "But you're special to me."

Both her hands were pressed against his chest. She hadn't actually said 'no,' but that's what her body was saying. He mumbled, his voice clogged with passion, "I need you - really need you..."

Her eyes were wide open, a moment of clear sobriety, wondering, should I? Stu gave out another muffled 'I love you' and her hands relaxed completely and slid sensually towards his neck. He pulled away from devouring her and they kissed fully, lip to lip... Her eyes were tight closed by then.

Moira waited on the street, watching for a taxi. One turned the corner, For Hire lit up in orange. She wanted to raise her hand, wave him down, but something stopped her and she stepped back onto the pavement. She was angry as she walked towards the company headquarters. Other women weren't her problem. They were adults; they made their choices. He never bullied them into bed, never promised them promotion. He was subtle. He played

them. He promised them love. It's not my responsibility, Moira yelled inside, but relentlessly climbed the stairs anyway, heading towards the office doors. She stopped outside, listening, not quite sure what to do. The sounds of sordid passion took her nerve away.

Suddenly, the animal grunting ceased as Stu interrupted Mission Angela to pull back and prop himself up on one arm. He gave a half laugh. "I've been horny all day... But what with the drink and everything..." He looked down. "The mind is willing but..."

Oh my God, not that, thought Angela and remembered what Moira had said one time 'What men fear most is being laughed at'. Could there be a worse moment to inflict so profound a punishment? She'd have to be ultra careful, any gesture may be interpreted as ridicule. She must do the opposite, be reassuring, be compliant. She so wanted to be compliant, to spare his feelings.

Moira, outside the door, sighed. See? See? she remonstrated with herself. No need to interfere. Things have a way of working out. She felt relieved not just because this conquest of Stu's had been put on hold, but for all the other conquests. Turning the blind eye had not been a sin after all. Things have a way of working out.

"Let's try this" Stu said. Angela hesitated, but she couldn't refuse. How would he feel? He had to have another chance, if only for ego's sake. "It'll be easier, I promise," he said manoeuvring her into a new position. She turned without resistance.

Moira froze, held her breath, then turned to look.

At the moment Stu grabbed the desk lamp and suddenly there was a colour view of the two of them. Stu standing behind, one hand resting across Angela's back, the other on her hip. Her skirt was rucked around her waist and her underwear pulled down. Say stop, Say stop, a voice in Angela's head screamed, but she knew she wouldn't say no. She wouldn't let herself say no. Some kind of equation of obligation had totted up the score. Emotional maths. Every day someone gets that sum wrong.

Stu couldn't help smiling, not just for the physical pleasure of getting it up, but because the scam never failed. These idiot women, they loved to think they'd seen a man at his most vulnerable. They couldn't conceive someone would ever pretend impotence. It was a brilliant piece of game play: Lose your dignity and they'd almost bite your hand off to lose theirs. Women loved that kind of equality. Shame connects us. His mouth curved in a sadistic smirk and his voice became louder, coarser. "Hey Angie,"

he snarled, getting more breathless with every shove. "Question: What's the definition of indefinitely?..." he broke off, blast-off time any second "Answer: When your balls are... When your balls are slapping up against her arse," he gasped, giving one last thrust "You're in. Definitely."

~ \* ~

The cult closed ranks. It always did. If Angie was persona non grata to Stu she was persona non grata to them. That's the way it worked. Even Tippex Jenny ranked higher than a 'had' girl.

Angela stuck it out till February but then rang in sick with a fortnight left to notch off her notice. She'd worked out by then there'd be a boycott of the leaving drink. What's worse, no 'good luck in the future' speech or a half attended one? Still a sad way to go, like all those temps before and their sudden unmarked exits. Moira turned the Sorry You're Leaving card over in her hand. Stu had signed it "All the best, Stuart Harvey - BSc."

Some say nature or fate will sort it out. What goes around comes around. God should orchestrate life, not mortals. Moira smoothed a hand down her blouse. It looked just like the usual one. In fact, you'd need a subtle eye to spot the difference. But this one was fractionally more tailored. And she'd moved the buttons so even with the usual two undone more flesh was exposed giving a slight shadow of cleavage. The under-wire bra made the effect even better. Her skirt was a few inches shorter, her eye make-up a little heavier. Subtle changes. Subtle manoeuvres. Invisible touches. The way Moira saw it, if you can screw someone like a dog, then you can train them like a dog.

Question: What did the blonde do when she heard 90% of accidents occur around the home?

Answer: She moved!

Moira did a quick joke tally in her head. Number fifteen. OK time to react. She smiled like she was trying not to; pretending the joke was so funny it compelled her against her will. Stu gave her that extra little sideways look; it was a regular feature these days. Checking her out – *Did she like that one? Lap it up*, thought Moira, *because there's no more till you clock up another fifteen.*

Question: Why are blonde jokes so short?

Answer: So brunettes can remember them.



Laugh, laugh, laugh, ha, ha, ha. All the others, every time. Cheap supply so demand was slack. Moira made it obvious: *No, I didn't like that one.* Stu radiated disappointment. *I wonder if he knows why he feels so bad?*

That was her mistake in the past. She'd been consistent – always sending out disapproval. The real trick was to vary it, fluctuate response. Sadists aren't just people who torture in dungeons, inflicting pain on the flesh. They do it in the mind. They like shifting the goalposts. And a person can generate a great deal of loyalty from being moody. They can become top dog.

Sometimes, if you really concentrate, you can feel the time line of events flowing through. Information oscillating through space, giving a sneak preview of how things will be. If you lay the groundwork, if you're meticulous with the cause, you can be sure of the effect. Moira knew they'd both work late that night. Nothing spoken, nothing planned. Just following time line orders. And she knew he'd suggest a drink and afterwards, when her judgement was blurry, knew he'd suddenly remember a forgotten file and suggest nipping back. One of many landmark moments falling into place. So that's why she was ready, suggested going back to his place instead, sod the file. She putting a little break in the chain. He was used to change now, used to doing things to please her even if he didn't know it yet.

On his sofa, with tacky late night TV playing in the background, Moira doled out the metaphorical choc drops, oohing and ahing at his every touch. Role-play sex: Me Pavlov, you pooch. She wriggled free when things got too near the knuckle. "Lets go to bed" she told him. Yes, told him. It was no good asking, "shall we?" Getting him naked was more reminiscent of lovers; it'd unsettle his cool, make him play on alien turf. Another small deviation in his script. She knew she was winning when he let it go, didn't fight the change.

She delayed getting her clothes off by pretending she needed something from downstairs. Frustration surface momentarily as he was left alone and nude on the bed. More improvisation, more deviations. Actually, she did need something, a squirt of aftershave.

A scent is like a surgeon's knife, it cuts straight to a memory horde and before you know it, a hologram of your past bursts to life before your very eyes. Just that faint trace of someone from her past and Moira could believe, truly believe, that she was going back upstairs to a man she loved. The fragrance put an end to standard grunts and groans, sex noises learned from films. Now properly

primed she was a highly skilled forger, a method actress of Oscar calibre; it'd take an expert to reveal her desire was fake.

A job Stu was ill equipped for, especially because he wanted to believe she was the genuine article. Moira knew this as sure as if he'd told her straight. There was definitely a new look in his eye. Something needy. You'd think a control freak would detest moments of vulnerability. But if it's done the right way, and they know they're in safe hands... if they trust. All that ground work, all those subtle moves over months and months. All that training, all that conditioning: you get the behaviour you reward.

Stu looked into her eyes, enjoying the sensation of being inside a woman like never before, giving Moira a glimpse of what he might've been before sex became another weapon to use against the world. People like Stu, those that say 'I love you' when that's the last thing they mean, are such suckers when the tables are turned, as long as their rules are obeyed: Don't say it out loud. Emotions for free, but not up front. So she didn't say it; instead summoned it up in her very being. Her body giving all the subtle signs, tests of authentication, and she could see his mind stretched with data influx till the protection barrier leaked and word got through. He didn't know what it was, but suddenly euphoria to beat the zing of orgasm enveloped every cell. And that was it, the moment when the air around went deathly still, not even their rapid breathing interrupted. Supernature, a law of physics not known of yet. Nothing on earth could disturb that stillness. No ringing phone, no knocking door, no beeping horn. The world waited while someone – Stu – took the plunge, fell into love.

He luxuriated in this intimate entwining of flesh and feeling, pushing towards the climax of all climaxes. Thrusting harder every time, the physical taking charge in primitive overdrive. This time he was doing it for real, no crude tricks, no porn poses. Only love... But before his moment of truth, Moira stopped dead, like the director just called cut. –“Question,” she said, almost spitting into his perspiring face. “What's the difference between the stock market and your dad?” Stu fought to catch up, comprehend: My dad, what's my dad got to do with this?

“Answer,” Moira said. “People would cry if the market crashed.” And then she laughed, and laughed and laughed. Crushing, bruising, spiteful laugh to shrivel the toughest soul. What men fear most, just before orgasm? Still, at least he'd be able to tell his buddies; Yeah, that one, she was really gagging for it.

equation of obligation had totted up the score. Emotional maths. Every day someone gets that sum wrong.



*Angel or Demon – Dee Rimbaud*

## **Poetry with the Teletubbies – an interview with Helen Kitson**

### **how long have you been writing poetry?**

Seriously - in terms of typing everything up and even tentatively submitting to magazines - since about 1989/90. I'm the sort of person who does things either whole-heartedly or not at all, and since I was in my teens I've known that I was going to write, that it was something I had to do.

There was something almost inevitable about it. I've always been bookish, but I think poetry – unlike novels – seemed like something anyone could have a go at. I used to read *Spare Rib* magazine and remember being very taken with a poem by Ntozake Shange, in which rhythm and 'painting with words' took precedence over the kind of formal poetics I learnt in school. Then I began to work my way through the poetry section in the library and every poem I read made me want to write my own poetry – not because I thought I could do better, but simply because it put me in that frame of mind where I wanted to express myself through poetry rather than through any other medium.

### **who are your main influences?**

The biggie is Sylvia Plath. No one has influenced my work or my attitudes to poetry as much as she has. The other long-term influence is Stevie Smith – very different from Plath, on the face of it, although there are some parallels (Plath once wrote Smith a 'fan letter', but they never met) – the preoccupation with death being the main one, of course.

There are also a number of contemporary poets whose work I find inspirational in terms of what I'm trying to achieve in my own work, and the three major ones I would cite are Sharon Olds, Pauline Stainer and Lavinia Greenlaw. Olds' gift is to be able to write about intimate matters without embarrassment in way that seems very simple and loose but is actually very lyrical and controlled.

Pauline Stainer's poetry has an almost religious, mystical quality – it's not always easy to unscramble but even when I don't entirely 'get' her work, I can – and do – appreciate its beauty.

Lavinia Greenlaw is the poet whose style I've probably borrowed most from – many of her early poems in particular were 'stories in miniature' but without the insistent, rather one-note voice of much of Carol Ann Duffy's work. I actually think Greenlaw is a finer poet than Duffy because she's that much more versatile.

### **how do you think writing poetry affects/informs your fiction?**

The thing about poetry is that it teaches you how to say what you want in as few words as possible. In a poem, every word must count. I'm not saying I never write a baggy prose sentence, but I think I'm more aware of making every word count rather than rambling on for the sake of it. Also I think fiction writers who began their writing careers as poets have a better ear for rhythm (something fiction writers often forget is important in prose as well as poetry).

The downside is that it's very easy to fall into the trap of writing in a poetic, 'fancy' way, when it's not necessarily appropriate. There are themes and subjects I might not have written fiction about if I hadn't dealt with them in poetry first – perhaps because it's easier to be a little obscure in poetry, without giving the whole game away. To that extent, I suppose it feels a little safer than fiction, even when it's actually more personal.

**what are you reading now?**

Having raced through EM Forster's curious, priggish, largely irrelevant but elegantly written *Aspects of the Novel*, I'm intending to begin a volume of Chekhov's short stories tonight. And I'm also reading an Agatha Christie – *By the Pricking of my Thumbs*. Perhaps it's a measure of how far literacy standards have fallen, but coming to Agatha Christie after a gap of something like 18 years, I'm surprised at how well written they strike me!

**many people write poetry but few buy it. why do you think this is?**

Many people write it, but few write it well. Many of the people who write it do so as a means of catharsis, it's a purely personal experience and I don't think their interest in poetry goes much beyond that. That sounds harsh but I think it's largely true. Funnily enough I never did that teenage thing of writing endless poems about my crushes or first failed relationships, and I really do think a lot of people would be better poets if they approached poetry as an art form rather than as therapy.

**do you have any thoughts on the Poetry Book Society's proposal for a National Poetry Week?**

My thought is that they shouldn't bother. You can't make people like poetry and you can't make poetry hip – 'poetry is the new rock & roll' is simply nonsense. Poetry is something people have to discover in their own way – you can't force it. Anyone with even an iota of interest will find a way in without being nannied by the PBS.

**what is poetry's role in your life? how do you feel it fits in everyday life?**

It is there as a whisper, a fleeting thought, a constant rhythm. It's not something I think about explicitly, most of the time, but at a

subconscious level it is always there. The great thing about poetry is that you can work on it when you're washing up, or ironing, or half-watching The Teletubbies – it's true you can think about plots or characters whilst doing these things, but there's something about poetry in particular that needs to rattle around in your head for a good few days before anything appears on paper! So it's a good medium to fit into a busy lifestyle.

**have you ever written song lyrics, or would you consider it? I**

have done, actually. I used to have an American penfriend, who was a musician who wrote his own songs, and I did write a batch of song lyrics for him – I still have the tape, somewhere – though it's not something I could imagine doing again, simply because I don't know anybody in a band! Very different from writing poetry - having to be aware that the words are designed first and foremost to be *sung* does alter the way you write, I think. I enjoyed the challenge but did find it a little constraining, thus frustrating.

**do you write to music and if so, what bands/artists?**

Not any more, though I used to *all* the time. My favourites for writing to were (a) something loud and 'bangy', like The Pixies and PJ Harvey; other times, when I was after something a bit more lyrical/complex, I'd go for something where the words were either absent or largely incomprehensible - such as Michael Nyman or the Cocteau Twins.

**what is your favourite poem right now and why?**

I'm involved in a project with Cathy Cullis in which a group of women poets were invited to write either a long poem or a series of shorter poems, the brief being that the poems should be experimental and broadly on a nature theme. At the moment some of us are putting together essays dealing with our responses to the work submitted, all of which has been very different and exciting, but in particular I've been very drawn to a sequence of poems by Helen Knibb – *Tonguing Medusa* – which employs images from Greek myths and of the North Wales coast to explore an abusive relationship. It's a powerful sequence and I find myself quite haunted by its power.

*Helen Kitson is 38 and lives in Worcester, England with her husband and their two young children. Her poetry collections include 'Love Among the Guilty' (Bloodaxe), 'Seeing's Believing' (Scratch) and an upcoming collection (from which the following two poems are selected) from Oversteps, 'Tesserae', is due later this year.*

### **Let's Get Tattoos – Helen Kitson**

I think, She never used to bite her nails.  
Her vague smile fixes on me as she stirs her tea -  
I remind her she never used to take sugar,  
and she cracks the inevitable joke about  
being sweet enough without it.

She slurps her tea -  
*God, you look ugly when you do that* -  
she sticks her tongue out, it's like the old days,  
but I'm trapped in her suffocating kitchen,  
the Peruvian mug tree, the heirloom cups.

She says she doesn't know me any more  
but I know she's got a tattoo on her breast,  
it matches the one on my shoulder.  
Her husband thinks I'm a bad influence;  
he's right; but the devil's in the detail.

I remember the tender strips of white gauze,  
the anticipation when she peeled them off;  
she admits she remembers the needle, the  
nervous laughter, the pictures we chose together.  
And the tattoo in red lipstick, over the ink.

### **Flowers for Frances Farmer – Helen Kitson**

It's always dark in here -  
dark with women who talk rubbish,  
their eyes as bright  
as belladonna berries, nearly black.

I have my mother's letters  
and the flowers she sent me.  
Somebody ate them, left the stalks.  
When I found them they were still wet;  
ragged as chewed skin around a fingernail.  
They bleed sap, a poisonous blood.

I write poems on envelopes,  
recording straightjackets,  
vitamin injections; electric shocks  
that force my body into the attitudes  
of a madwoman, a drooling idiot  
with paralysed arms.

My bed is crammed against other beds,  
I'm shouted at all night.  
I try to offer them  
the comforts of my sanity,  
for as long as I'm allowed to keep it.

My mother sends flowers every week,  
the kind you'd send to an invalid:  
geraniums, African violets,  
brightly coloured hothouse monstrosities.  
They are all colour, they have no scent.

They are like the women in here  
who wear too much make-up,  
thick bands of blue, black and red  
a brave attempt to disguise baggy mouths,  
grey skin, and dark empty eyes.



## **Pablo – Patricia McCarthy**

He goes to whores in brothels  
with scurrying dust on the floors  
and windows blackened  
to the outside world.

He is invisible  
to the first hole he goes down,  
then a second comes.  
In his room paid,

The whores are goddesses,  
creatures descending from high above.  
He answers the call to his primal ego  
and fucks.



*Patricia McCarthy writes because it helps her sleep better at night. Her influences include Pablo Neruda, Walt Whitman, Leonard Cohen and Emily Dickinson. She has self-published two books of poetry, Vulgar Verse and Friction, her poetry was the subject of a photographic portfolio in Australia*

## **Red Light – Justine Jupe**

Past the old brick railway arches, the headlight beam swung across the pavement to where my thin legs stood freezing on four-inch heels. Exposed under the diffused street light to the punters, kerbing it down the back of the old brewery on the Great North Eastern Road. My black hem met the open window, leaned my underage cleavage on the sill, mini bum stuck out behind.

'Lookin' to do business darlin'? Twenty hand job, twenty-five full sex in car or thirty in my room. No kissing. O.K.?' I spat my gum into the gutter. 'Straight or French then?' I pushed. He stared hard, filled his mind with my body.

'How old are you under the warpaint?'

'Old enough love.'

'Not for my money.' He left his car fumes in my face. It wouldn't have happened two years ago. I didn't want to be here, coughing and cold. Knew that as soon as I'd pulled the first one that would be it, easy money, easy game, easy to go back. Do what you know Kel, right? What you were. It's easy Kel, right? Always used to be.

'Evenin'. This bloke walks by, five foot and stocky, stops two feet away, cloth cap and wind cheater. 'You workin'?' He stares me over.

'Not busy then.' He looks along the road. 'Not with the others? You must be new. Know everything me. I come by every night, live round the corner see.' He whistles through his teeth. 'Come on Penny.' A small mongrel comes scuppering up, sniffs my ankles, I'm thinking it's going to use me as a lamp post, shove its body away with my leg.

'He won't bite. Like his owner see. How much d'you charge? Like to see new girls along here.'

Silence. 'I was nearly a professional footballer once, you know that? Could have been one if it wasn't for the knee. Have to be fit see, not like your game. It's all money now. No feeling for the game, know what I mean?'

I heard but I wasn't looking at him. The dog came back. 'Here Penny, good girl. You've got to be firm with bitches.'

I stared out front. 'You're all doped up aren't you, you silly cow.' Now some guys can't take being ignored, not if they've bothered to give you their assessment, their opinion, their judgement.

'Doesn't cost nothing to be polite you know, you might need me to protect you one night, things I've seen happen along here.' Him and me. Not a car in sight. They'd drive straight by anyhow with him there.

'Some of them get a right good seeing to. I've seen 'em, bruises and scars and they still come back. You listening to me? What you stood here for if you're not up for it? What you need is your head seeing to.'

He walks off with Penny at his side. Another satisfied customer. I stay in my trance, talk to myself. He could be right. What are you doing Kelly? This isn't you. Not anymore. You can't do this, don't want to do this, shouldn't have to do this. Was my mind numb from the cold or from the reality?

'Au darlin'! We got something for you.' Over the road two young guys haul their drunken mate from a flash motor. He trails between them as they drag his sagging frame towards me.

'It's his stag night love,' shouts loud mouth,' last chance for a bit of shag.'

'C'mon Duggie, stand up and get it up, the lady's waiting.' They grin their male enthusiasm at me. I half smile. Duggie looks up, surveys his prize.

'You want me to fuck THAT?' He coughs, splutters, wobbles.

'Ignore him darlin' he's pissed out of his skull. Here's thirty quid, mind if we watch?' They all laugh their bonding laugh, stare back at me. Duggie eyes me suspiciously.

Go on then Duggie, get in there.' Loud mouth holds the money in front of me.

'I'm not fucking that, no way am I fucking that.' Instinct protecting pride.

'It's all right love, Duggie 'ere is a tight fisted Scot. Normally he has a wank first so he gets his moneys worth from pro's like you.' More bonding laughter as they push him into me.

'He's got two kids somewhere, shame his missus don't know!'

This 'ere's a fucking slut, I don't fuck sluts.' He grabs my jacket to stay upright, holds his breath close to my face. 'You're a slut, that's what you are, a fucking slut, I don't fuck fucking.....' He leaned back, then forward. His puke hit my bare belly, down my little skirt, stuck on my leg. Thai take away. Puke away. They laughed, loud good on yer mate laughter.

'Nice one Duggie! Go for it! Give her your best shot!' What are you doing Kel? Who are you to be worth this? Disgusted, I moved away.

'Oi, where you going then? Oi, I'm talking to you!' Loud mouth chases after me, pulls me to a stop. 'Don't you want our money then? Not good enough for you are we? Know what you need darlin', you need a lesson in manners.'

I snatched away from him, started walking. He ran, jumped in front of me.

'Hey Adam, we've got a right little slapper here. You up for it darlin' or not? What you doing hangin' out 'ere then? He poked his finger into me. 'Eh? Eh? I'll tell you what, I'll do you a favour you fucking tart, I'll fuck you for nothing, y'hear, nothin', 'cause that's what you are darlin', fuckin' nothing.'

Can't they ever think of another word to use but that. I froze. 'Leave me alone will you.'

'You're not out here to be left alone, suckface. Adam, you in on this or what?'

'Adam' was holding Duggie up. Loud mouth glared at me, waiting for my next move. He just needed an excuse to whack me one, prove his strength over little girls like me. The silence hung in seconds. Then Duggie puked up again. Adam called out. Loud mouth stuck his face in mine, booze, smoke and cologne under my nose.

'Count yourself lucky darlin' I ain't got time to fuck the arse off you.' He held the look close until he thought I'd got his message. 'Next time eh you fucking slag and you'd better be worth it.'

He stepped back, gave me the once over, up and down, then gobbled into my cleavage, such as it is. He bounced back towards his mates, all mouth and trousers until they bundled Duggie into the car and drove off hooting.

I stood in the cold, my mind and body apart. I didn't used to be like this, I'd give as good as I got. Have I changed that much? Did I really think I could go back to it? It should have been easy, shouldn't it? I sat down in the gutter. My gutter. It's been a long time since I cried. For myself. For me. For Kelly. Where are you? Which are you?

'Hello dear, you got a fag.' I looked up, sniffed, blinked to clear away the tears. The old woman was coated in layers of rags, her face in layers of life. I could see the backs of her shoes were flattened, thick socks protecting her heels. Fingers stuck out of her gloves, clutching four carrier bags by her side.

'You all right love?' The floppy mouth and missing teeth asked. 'I was trying to be who I was and I've found who I am.' I wiped an eye with the back of my hand.

'What's that?' I got up, stood back from the gutter, delved in my bag.

'Here, have these.' Her shaky hand grasped the packet of ten. The lines on her face doubled as she grinned thanks. 'All of them dear?'

'Yeah, sure. I've giving up on past habits.'

'Bless you dear, may life be with you.'

'Wait.' I undid the zip inside my bag, offered her the tenner. She hesitated, then her fingers crunched the note tight, gazed me thanks and waddled off in her dragging shoes.

'Be happy,' I called, turning into the night, into myself, into me, Kelly. 'With yourself,' I whispered, wiping the puke away.

*Justine Jupe was born and raised in Liverpool until the age of 13 when she ran away from home after being raped by her father. Reading and writing kept her spiritually alive while she sold herself on at King's Cross, and after 6 years she escaped to Brighton and later Southampton where she met her girlfriend Louise who encouraged her to go to college and study English. Justine believes, like the Little Prince, that what is essential is invisible to the naked eye, and currently has a novel for possible publication at Transworld.*

## **Holes – Dee Rimbaud**

Cigarette smoke hunkers round the angle-poise. A vile yellow fog thickening the air, congealing your thoughts. You want/ you do not want. The words slowed to meaninglessness. The sluggish sound of them sucked in with each tight nicotine tainted breath. Wanting. Like the empty ache after masturbation. The hole that will never be filled. Wanting. You feel the wantonness of it in the pit of your belly. A hunger that drives snakes to eat their tails and sends fools to dreams of chocolate, drugs and sex. Wanting. You know it most in the dark hole below. Fucking and being fucked. Men, women, images, demons. You've had them all. You have filled and been filled. But never have you been fulfilled. Never. Until now. You think, maybe. Maybe. Shaman, raking your way through a fragmenting underworld: crawling over sharp, broken things; china doll parts, razorblades, watch springs. And for a moment there, you realise you are truly revolting to yourself.

What is this love you think you feel?

You love her/ you love her not. The questions plucked like petals from hemlock. You nibble them with the puckered lips of the connoisseur. The gourmet who has had too many holes. The salt-earth aroma of them conjured up like so many words. Small, tight holes. Hot wet holes. Holes of every taste and texture. Like wines, you can describe every nuance of their flavour.

But what is this love you think you feel? Something beyond the boredom of fucking: the endless, but compulsive dinner of nothing? The realisation that you are revolting to yourself? The desire to transcend the banality of simply being?

You love her/ you love her not. The image of her with briars of blue cornflowers woven through the sunlight gold of her hair. You ache to touch, to stroke the downy cheek, the crook of arm, the blush of freckles: to sink into the dark, endless blue of her eyes. Longing, wanting, needing. You love her/ you love her not. Blue blue blue. Everything is blue. The water of her turning your headstrong planets top-heavy, spinning orbits of chaos. You have never felt as deliriously delicious as this. Not even at fourteen, with unrequited lust painting pastel fantasies of love.

You love her/ you love her not. How many times have you had your hole and felt nothing? How many times have you clung to the shores, as the rip-tide dragged you under? All that flesh. All these holes. All those dangerous nights turned to nothing.

She has destroyed everything. This Kali Ma dressed in blonde softness, with her breasts of sweetened poisoned milk.

Midnight. The hours spiral away in narcotic confusion. The clarity you sought to possess eludes you still. Another pill?

As if you could tear salvation from God's winking eye. The God who comes only in moments of despair. The God who couldn't care. The God who was never there, except in her embrace.

The telephone is hot vulva pink.

You *could* call. But not before you know whether you love her or you love her not. Damn her: she's ruined everything. Turned flesh into mere flesh, holes into mere holes.

Black midnight. The city pulses with sex. The Saturday night prowlers and ghosts seeking their own extinction. And tonight, you are separate: outside, watching dispassionately, as the strangle tango begins the process of its own completion.

Another pill? You think you will. Something to see you into the sober light of Sunday morning. Something to lead you to comprehension.

Meanwhile the ghost of you haunts the pick up joints. Tequila rapido, absinthe, after shock, cocaine: leading you on to the inevitable expiation of flesh. Is it too late to get your coat?

Ghosts.

But you cannot leave. The telephone is hot vulva pink and you love her/ you love her not.

The moon tracks a slow arc across the sky. Bodies briefly couple. Orgasms ring out into a void of impermanence. Atoms disperse and reform. And then, all are sullenly alone.

Your cock presses hard against the dark cotton of your trousers at the thought of it. All that fucking. All that knotted, sweating flesh. And yet, so desperately sad. Your fingers cradle your balls. Comforting your world weary soul. You dance solo through the schizophrenic night. The moon - half eaten - calls, cold and white. The telephone is hot vulva pink: tempting your fingers. Across the city - seven digits away - she is naked, warm, willing, waiting for your loving. She loves you/ she loves you not.

When you think of her, it is more than tits and holes. She's the home you've been seeking all these years. She is moon, sun, stars. A scattering of light that turns the sky away from night.

And now everything else is corruption and rotten flesh. You love her/ you love her not. Remembering the taste of her, the touch of her. Angelic, golden and clear. As if she were made from finer dust.

\*

\* \* \*

You imagine her petrol blue eyes. The clouds passing away. A clear and calm day. The fruit of the forbidden tree. A forgiving God. A pink telephone. A harbour of still waters. The touch of her fingers on your chest. The crinkle of her cheek as she smiles. The smell of summer. Dandelion fairies blown in the wind. She loves you/ she loves you not. She loves you/ she loves you not.

Her petrol blue eyes  
You drown and you burn  
The spectre of flesh.

How can you love her and love her not?

\*

\* \* \*

Hours into the morning, nothing is resolved. You love her/ you love her not. A sleeping pill for each which way. You slide under the duvet: alone and lonely. Your fingers cupped round your balls. Chaste. Safe. The marshmallow wonders of chemistry dragging you out into the warm dark seas. You love her/ you love her not. Sinking into dreamless sleep. Tomorrow is a hundred million light years away.

## **Acid Sunset Not So Sweet – Dee Rimbaud**

The earth tilts up so rapidly I'm frightened of falling off:  
Prostrate, I cling to the short stubbled grass  
Till their keen shoots make fibrous fronds of my palms.

Blank skyscrapers stare down at me:  
Their smiles defying geometry.

Kids play ragged games along broken walls and railing:  
Their knees bloodied by too much breathing,  
Struggling to thrive along the margins  
Of someone else's thoughtless creations.

Theirs is the last station of the cross:  
A Gethsemane of cigarette butts, broken bottles,  
Needles and glue smeared crisp packets;  
The wind blowing monochrome  
Across the briny, sweaty firth –  
All colour smudged grey  
In blanked out temazepam spindrift.

Amongst the grease and dereliction,  
The warehouses and closed down factories,  
The gas towers and the chemical works,  
There are clumps of short stubbled grass:  
Some of it sharp as razor wire,  
Some of it smooth as tidal glass;  
And there's us, the marginalized,  
Clinging on for dear fucking life,  
Knowing fine well, that just one slip  
And we spin off into empty space.



## **In Thrall to Lilith**

She parades into my dreams: her impudent pudenda, an open, intricately carved flower. Bees and stinging things live within, waiting for the soft whisper of invitation. She is *vinegar* and *vanilla*, *vaseline* and *vagina*.

She is a cascade of vocabulary: vibrant and vivid. The supreme vivisector of vacuous idolatry.

Her dictionary is a thrashing of ten-fold limbs; and all meaning is encoded in the fluttering of her labial wings. I am a prisoner to her intelligence, her volition, her erudition.

There are pale blue men  
working her Siberian pits,  
freezing;  
and all for the want of a kiss.

Lying out on her gypsy brass bed, she smokes a cheroot: staining the walls with disdainful agitation - her cheeks, red as the cheeks of Modigliani's whores.

The blasphemies of pigment beguile: viscous rivers drain the soul of every homely warmth. Her likeness cannot be caught: it eludes with simplistic ease. Teasing, she baffles me with the pink virtuosity of her tongue.

In vain, I reach out to grasp her grassy banks: yearning for the safety of a foreign shore; the heat of inevitability, the dark depths of her cavities.

It was she who devoured my strong ancestors: she who left Christ crying and gasping for breath. What hope then for me, with only my clotted paintbrushes and second hand adjectives to protect me?

The future, I see, is a glassy cold pit: yielding nothing more than small handfuls of flawed diamonds.

***Dee Rimbaud is a poet, author, artist, illustrator, graphic designer, spiritual healer, house-husband, dad and jack of many trades. His poetry, short stories and artwork have been published extensively on the internet and in hundreds of magazines and anthologies worldwide. His first poetry collection, "The Bad Seed" was published by Stride (1998). His second collection, "Dropping Ecstasy With The Angels" will be published by Blue Chrome in March 2004 (and can be ordered online now at their web-site <http://www.bluechrome.co.uk/store.asp> ) You can see more of Dee's art and writing at <http://www.thunderburst.co.uk> You can buy limited edition prints of his art at <http://www.surfaceonline.org/rimbaudshop.htm>***



*The Poet's Muse – Dee Rimbaud*