

A photograph of a narrow alleyway between brick buildings. The left wall is covered in graffiti, including a yellow heart and the phrase 'all you need is love'. The right wall is a plain brick wall. The alleyway leads to a street with more buildings in the distance. The sky is overcast.

# SELECTED POEMS

Kit  
DERRICK

# Selected Poems

By Kit Derrick

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### Acknowledgements

Psychosis, Under Doctor's Orders With Adonis, and The First Cut is the Deepest,  
first published psychopoetica magazine  
Alice first published Purple Patch magazine  
Jack first broadcast BBC Radio Merseyside.

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### Original Publications:

Generation Why: 2004  
Carved into a Soft Bark: 1995  
Fear: 1993



<https://www.facebook.com/Hypnopub>

## Intro

At primary school, they made us neatly copy out poems onto sugar paper-backed displays to go up on the walls, and sometimes make up our own. That was what first started my love of poetry. Later, at University as I read more, met other poets and performed, my style changed, often into what I might call 'Punch the mirror' poetry. As I grew older my writing mellowed, and lost much of its anger, with more fiction than poetry being produced.

In what I chose to present in this selection, I've tried to weed out the worst of the teenage pomposity, and excise the more experimental for its own sake, even though some of those I personally love the best. Some not included here were deliberately provocative, and aren't excluded on those grounds, more that on reflection, the provocation often overpowers the poetry.

What you'll will find here is a selection, and in the words of one of them:

I've chosen these lines  
From different times  
and different tomes  
but they cut up to my satisfaction:

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From *Generation Why* (2004: Dr Hypno Publications)

## Generation Why

Don't know it all  
just know too much of what I don't need to know,  
bought into slacker cheap,  
know Kerouac to Coupland inside out,  
so now I'll die and just get old  
    get not grow,  
I'm not in the penthouse or the pit  
for which I humbly apologise...  
I'm ashamed to admit...

(I'm middle class)  
The class which sits the exams  
and files the safe certificates  
and sits here getting angry I'm not going anywhere  
and there's nowhere I really want to go  
but I need to go somewhere do something  
so I read newspapers and books and sell consumer goods,  
drink and dream  
often unfulfilling dreams,  
I McWrite and regurgitate

There seems to be a hole in my philosophy  
which is demanding all of my attention  
which is an irritation which shouldn't be there.

I could get married but quite frankly why?  
I would protest but I can't decide which cause  
I should change the World  
    someday

My self-esteem is actually quite high and  
Little Britain treats me okay

I've got no complaints  
except maybe that Eddie and the Hot Rods passed me by

## Scarification

Average on the outside and even nondescript,  
Nicci drinking with friends,  
scarred on the inside.

A hot knife  
disinfected with vodka for safety  
smoking on a silk cut,  
exhaling,

a piece of broken glass  
high enough up the forearm not to be noticed.  
The empty glass of alcohol, the conversation empty of worries.

Nicci talking to the barman  
who looks normal enough,  
but shifts awkwardly on his elbow  
in discomfort,  
as though she's trespassing,

Nicci distracted and disinfected  
as he feigns washing a glass  
like a bad mime listening

a cigarette between her teeth  
Nicci is drunk  
tonight  
like all her friends.

Nicci is looking for attention  
tonight.  
She compliments his original  
but unimpressive tattoo  
and downs another bacardi and coke,  
offers herself



## The Martyr

I don't understand how the sweet pea knows  
to curl and twist around the trellis,  
hugging and squeezing  
with every inch she grows.

I can't comprehend why or how she feels the need  
to tie herself up when she could grow free  
until the day she dies.

It seems so motiveless and selfless,  
I don't see how she could  
unless she somehow sensed the pain  
of crucified dead wood.

## Apology to A Minor

Children in Art Galleries amuse me these days  
now that I've grown up and in.

They tell their parents that a famous piece of art  
looks just like a waterfall  
if you tilt your head at just the right angle

and the parent will tilt their head to almost  
the same angle  
and see a painting at an angle  
and agree with a puzzled smile  
and look at the next painting  
with a vertical, fixed, appreciative stare  
and an unintentionally slightly tilted head

and the child will look through a window  
with wide eyes and a gaping mouth  
will recognise with wonder the clouds  
that look like windmills, cotton wool  
and the face of a badger  
and a Christmas tree  
and the child is engrossed

and I feel sorry  
because I want to force the child to turn its head  
to face the paintings  
and to see only what I see now

## The 'L' Word

A simple pure and honest thought and  
word  
unafraid to be alone on the page with you.

Loving everything from the way you sometimes bite your lower lip lightly.  
Yes, your thighs and shins and calves too,  
I won't lie to you.

The way you laugh  
and the little way your fingers slip through my arm and curl while we walk.  
Your nose.

The music you remember and the films we love (we've never watched together).  
Your breasts and neck, your weak ankles.

Your pain I want to bandage with my arms.  
Your knife I feel against my flesh when you hold it against yourself.  
The aroma of your body I maybe imagine.

Your armpits even,  
not romantic but I'm not trying to be.  
Honest, as I promised

The shape of your lips and hips.  
The ways your fingers twisted into mine across your belly.  
Your belly.

Your neck.  
Your eyes,  
eyes I want to see differently,

Eyes I love to stare into, even more than I love to stare into your cleavage,  
(you wanted honest and I love your eyes even more than I love your breasts  
-if you know me even a little as much as I hope you do,  
then you must know that this alone is true love.)

I love your smile, your happiness, your sadness, your pain,  
because it is all a part of you  
Your mind,  
Your body,  
Your Wendy-ness.

And I so want to tell you all this but I'm not brave or cruel,

and more  
afraid of you losing what you think you need when that's the last thing I want  
for you

So this in silence

despite the fact that everyone I know tells me that I love you,  
and I didn't believe the first two or three

but now I know  
and I want to be the one to tell you.

But I'm so afraid

In so many ways  
Not just for me.

A simple pure and honest thought and  
word  
unafraid to be alone on the page with you.

## Therapy

In wakeful dreams  
I still see him  
somewhere just beyond my fingertips  
sometimes smiling  
always watching  
sometimes unpleasant  
always standing  
my father  
his sleeping dreams

I am not so young now  
though still, and I suppose  
young enough in years  
to remember him still breathing  
which I often will

A shadow which is no longer dark  
but sewn to my movements

He is walking forwards  
He is Sheela-Na-Gig  
He is a shadowless man  
He is these bastard headaches  
He is being able to love

## Quadrilogy 4 – Odd one out

I have a mole on my right forearm

Darker than it was

Uneven round the edges

And I know it isn't cancer

it should be.

Fits all the symptoms neatly.

Sometimes I pretend that I wish it was

but I've grown to love it

cheaper

(and safer as it turns out)

than getting another self-designed tattoo

Some nights it's a shocking reminder

some nights a worry still

Some nights I kiss it before I go to sleep

relieved.

## It's a Small, Small World

I'm not old and I'm not exceptional

But I noticed the mileage on my car  
And thought I'd calculate how far I must have been  
if I added the count from every vehicle I've owned.

Two hundred thousand miles.

I've driven round the World eight times,  
that's four thousand, four hundred and forty four,  
point four four  
times my age.  
During those years I've travelled  
halfway to the moon.

My Grandmother never left the house  
except to the village three times a week,  
to the Town twice a year,  
and once to Morecambe in the Wakes.

And that's not exceptional, and I'm not old.

From *Carved Into A Soft Bark* (1995: Dr Hypno Publications)



## Poetry

Poetry is not an animal  
To be dissected  
For intellectual pleasure,  
Any more than a rose  
Should have her limbs plucked forth  
For the sake of beauty,  
However sick it may seem.

Words are not music  
To be transcribed  
onto lifeless paper,  
Any more than a rose  
Should be confined in verse  
For the sake of poesy,  
However sick it may seem.

Writing is not an exercise  
To be simply executed  
For the sake of immortality,  
As this is the death of a rose  
That paints the poets' sickness.

## Dylan Thomas In America

Below the curly mop  
Light bulb nose  
And pork-pie hat  
Lies a poet  
Below the poet a thought.

Farcical and intensely wifed,  
He answers questions  
With beery quips  
A Punch & Judy poet.

He leers and lurches  
But can't offend the  
Twinkle in his eye.  
He laughs off his reputation  
With a whiskeyed retort  
And lampoons colleagues as  
He drops their names  
From a height  
Until a purple rinse  
Asks how one as trifling  
As himself  
Can possibly be serious about  
His poetry.

Mannish, Boy and Poet,  
The elusive third appears  
Briefly from behind  
The bloated disguise of  
Tatty lip-droop cigarette  
And pulling himself up  
Above his height  
Delivers a deathly quiet stare:  
His words are his life,  
They write his private world,

They are religion:

He falls back on the clown  
And falls back on the couch.  
Tells her he reaches inside people  
As he peers blatantly inside her blouse  
And takes satisfaction at her skin tone blush  
Brighter than her hair and his nose:  
Then stumbles off to search  
For someone who understands:  
Someone not his wife  
He left behind  
To escape himself.

I hear this.

I see this.

Is my image important?

## Psychosis

I've tasted the sweet

and spat out the dead taste  
in my mouth:  
Street corners sing it all,  
Lighting twists in terraces  
(and no, I don't even like Eliot, fucking pussy):

I've seen the beauty in both eyes  
Cataract,  
contact clouded melted lense  
grafted to eyeballs  
scorching bluebird soft-flesh hips  
and finger traps;

Doe-headlamped river rats  
sucking on algae and litter arm-bands,  
Catching typhoid on crab-lines,  
cramps in smiles and eyes,  
cold in significance,  
its' death indeterminate;

Cold cold yellowing photographs  
curling burnt masquerade edges,  
cool album cover images  
stuck together with freeform jazz:

Dyfalú lines  
Ich bin ein Ausländer in meinem Kopf,  
Krank im denken,  
Nichts ist vielleicht verboten,  
Vielleicht ist nichts verboten;

kiss my ass, move on down the line,  
shake hands

leave my cheeks sandpapered  
by the wind;

Hold on,  
you think you've finished,  
but you've missed a bit;  
as usual:

(then 'Another fag packet poem')

Shiny-cold white corridor out-telescope stretched  
beyond the event horizons  
perspex hall of mirrors walls:

I look at two screens and I notice  
only thin-skinned eye socket rims and limbs and  
too prominent nose in hairy lip:

Wondering at the frame with  
Worrying in no picture  
With more than the picture:  
Will my heart attack arrive tonight?

What are you thinking of me?  
Why are you looking through me  
at me?

Four walls with ears  
spearing floors and ceilings,  
Squash court hearings  
Hydraulic wallpaper iron maiden ripened skin;

I am scared

I asked you for a word  
and you said  
"postillion".

I asked you what it meant  
"a guy who used to ride  
on the back of coaches...  
ha ha...  
Postillion struck by lightning...  
something a friend of mine once said..  
it was back at school."  
and I'm stuck in a horrible sense  
of deja vous:  
and I tell you

and we laugh.

Just smile  
and ignore the milk bottles  
collecting outside my top lip,  
under my too-prominent nose.

(I am well aware  
the last line is borrowed)

I talk too much;  
I see... Anyway:

I wanted to go home  
but my ankle hurts,

No, Terry, I never read that review,  
and personally I couldn't give a fuck,  
give my agent a call when you  
want to talk about my new show:  
Thank you and goodnight.

We'll keep it simple,  
a little self-indulgence never hurt anybody:  
but to get back to the point,

can anyone flash us a fag?,  
I'll get a pack when I've  
got some change,  
I've only got a note:  
Oh, and lob this somewhere  
while you're at the bar

+++

Returning to normality for the day  
I'm sorry if I caused offence,  
As you know, I prefer to sit on it:

Sorry...  
shuffle off to Buffalo  
(I owe you one for that)

My eyes see straight ahead,  
and I appreciate the thought;  
I am, after all, a collector  
of one solitary Van Gogh:  
I am a writer of net curtains that  
fall miraculously straight at the edge:  
I am self evidently self indulgent  
But you think I like it that way;  
So that's OK then,

I've chosen these lines  
From different times  
and different tomes  
but they cut up to my satisfaction:

sometimes I like to spit.

sorry to bother you, but  
have you got a light?

## A Solitary Mister

Alone  
In the park  
With his friend,  
He kisses the book, and shaking, he cries  
Alone in the park, with his friend who is wise.

Alone  
In the park  
With his friend  
Sits a scholar,  
He takes up his newspaper, inwardly sighs,  
Then turns to his friend, and closes his eyes.

Alone  
In the park  
With his friend  
Sits a miser,  
He hoards up his memories, tells himself lies,  
Alone in his park, with the friend that he buys.

Alone  
In the park  
With his friend  
Sits a shadow,  
Talking to no-one, he says his goodbyes.  
His friend lies beside him, unnoticed he dies...



From *Fear* (1993: Poetry compilation)

## Smile

fuck my eyeballs,  
let your balls smack  
against my eyes.

dig your nails deep  
into my gums  
and rip the flesh of my cheek  
to the bone with nicotined teeth.

lick the spewing blood  
into diverse patterns,  
collaged with shades of fear.

suck hard fresh flesh  
from the gristle of my nose  
and stab your blood-starved tongue in  
between my lifeshot eyes.

watch how snot and blood and spittle  
kaleidoscope and swirl and bubble  
beautiful; and too fragile to touch.

all i can do is watch the television,  
and smile.

## On Her Prayer

If I was naked as a bone  
without my skin of stories  
(python coiled)  
or bare of the poetry of bad flesh  
my toothless skull would  
laugh,  
My empty sockets see  
only the warm brown  
bed  
around me

The archaeologist would find too  
many bones,  
He fair and the foul as  
one,  
and only the voiceless words would remain.

We'd rest in pieces  
as a beast with two backs.

## The First Cut is the Deepest

Half an hour,  
and then it will be six years;  
six minutes of memory.

tick tock

The wallpaper is colder now,  
and the pattern is no clearer;  
just smoke stained and tired.

Try to talk nicely, nicely to me,  
and I will be honest, cliched and twee

Five fathoms deep my memory lies,  
ding dong shell

tick tock

It hurts more than pain:  
paper cuts are always the deepest  
because you can't see them.  
You can't take a paper cut seriously.  
blank or full of stories,  
paper is harmless.

tick tock  
hang ten ten

this is the sixth year  
the day brought death.  
Death, death everywhere...  
If there were the sound of death only...

tick tock

the seconds are shuffling today  
sympathetic laboured pains

there were none when his clock stopped  
there were none with the second cut;  
only bemusement.

tick tock blip monotone  
last of the line

tick tock  
blip on the six year alarm

tick tock  
the contractions are already monotone.

How long is respectable  
before we can turn off the machine?

This song had ended:  
it could have had the decency to  
wait for the tenth minute...

tie things up nicely, like.

Still ticking, I see.

I hate births that aren't punctual.

Or maybe the pains are just bellyache

Maybe... or paper caesarean...  
... maybe ...

in my line  
you can't avoid paper;  
it's in the constitution.

## Silence Is Golden

She sits on the floor,  
On her heels,  
On her own.

The pale skin and soft furnishings  
Surround her  
And make us shiver;  
Father is not at home.

Only a very small dribble of blood  
Is visible, and we can see no wound;  
At least she isn't crying...

Mother does not live at home any more  
But we needn't worry because  
Father loves her...

Watch closely,  
But quietly;  
Viddy well, daddio,  
But hush...  
All that blisters isn't gold.

*B Sides (ephemera, other works, or first published elsewhere)*

## **Screw this current year to Heaven**

The view through the glass is the same again today,  
and no-one noticeably died.

The view hasn't been affected in the slightest  
by infection, from the other side of this invisible border,  
in the last year or so.

Today, the water forms pretty streams,  
meandering down the far side of the glass,  
washing clean in parts.

It just makes the pane  
more obviously stained from this side,  
filtered through the dirt and streaks.

That is my current outlook  
and perversely, it helps me to cope.  
What do they say, by hook or by crook?

This is the middling time, with the end in sight.

Things could change, in case you mistook  
my meaning. Don't get me wrong, I haven't given up hope.  
I just find it hard to live up to the conventional rulebook.  
There aren't any tears running down my own cheeks,  
even though I tried. I truly did! But it's so long since I cried  
that I no longer have the patience for personal vanity,  
and seem to have lost the drive in my heart.  
Does my shell with no ambition for betterness embarrass  
you? Scare you? Do you still cling to your dreams?

On reflection, I notice my hair is now inconsistently white,  
Which goes against my own natural order,  
But with a natural flow.

I've been behind the glass  
For almost fifty years today, no-one visible died.



## Jack

Jack Williams died in 1954.

The death certificate read that he had been accidentally struck by a locomotive engine somewhere in Shropshire on the curve of the main line to London, occupation plate-layer.

My family tells me stories of Great Grandad Jack, his sense of humour, the twinkle in his eyes, the angular nose of which he was so proud, his legacy to me.

His whirlwind marriage to a beautiful maid from Cork, Great Grandma Lizzie May Ellen Hughes, His patched moleskin trousers he claimed he's caught himself. His bald patch worn he said by the pressure of her thumb. His tales, at sixty, of their fruity nights in, told to make her blush a peculiar puce of which he was so proud. Stories of his youth in the Valleys, the pulpit and the coalpits (He was born in Shrewsbury). His party piece which made them laugh for the wrong reasons, a fact he loved and played on, building the suspense each time.

But there are no photographs. Only the memory of which he would no doubt be proud, the memory of a working man boozing and laughing all the time he wasn't conscientiously fixing rails, plates and sleepers. And now a little deaf Not hearing the cries of his workmates, smiling up at them as they think he's joking; Laughing at their increasingly frantic waving and waving back, comically balancing on the rail, his back to the curve in the track.

## Something Like A Catfish

I lie below her  
comfortable

Watching her watching  
and weaving  
through glances

Swaying and dancing  
her shadow around me  
a peculiar movement  
that's not quite a smile

It seems to captivate  
the room  
is agreed that

she's delicious

and  
I simply lie  
alone  
beneath her  
and wonder

something like a catfish

**At your Funeral** for S.B.

Thank you

For coming

To say goodbye

And I'm sorry for your loss, that it was time to die

You're expecting

concrete

verse

and

agitation

politico

You can fuck off

I'm not sorry for anything in my life

Except, you know,

I don't need to say it to you, you know I had to go

(Whisper it) (and, please, stop doing rhyming shit in my name)

I'll soon be food for the trees and

I can't think of anything better I'd like my ashes for,

So I'm sorry it's inconvenient, but I just couldn't do it any more

(stop rhyming now, you mewling cunt; if I was there we'd laugh at the stiff in the box and show nothing. Stiff upper verse, whisky chaser, cry later, or not, unseen)

Simply promise me this, after words, once in a while,

when you pass a tree in the street just say 'fuck the police'

(though sometimes, I'd prefer, 'hello, my friend')

I regret I can't be there for you today, but I couldn't risk to think about that

Je ne regret rien

Kazoo

When you least expect it,

Don't be surprised if you hear a rustle in the trees

And a twig with pink tinge offers up the bird

It might just be the breeze

**Asylum II** after DT & EM

A girl mad as birds  
to share the reformatory

twisting she's twisted  
free of the blotted sheets  
soaking up her viscose  
thoughts flying through  
the wisping echoes of a cumulous dream  
breaking up with the first hint of shadows  
the daybreak offers  
in supplication.

A deadlock rusting to the sounds  
a fading hinge offers as it flakes  
away to a distance  
in another hue  
a precious laughter breaks  
large as the dead  
open always to the myriad dawn  
bringing warmth and illumination  
from the night to the first soft breath.

## Under Doctor's Orders Without Adonis

He told me I should stop  
playing games  
(and I tried to)  
and I want to  
and I wanted to kiss you tonight

I found myself hiding in the corner  
of a circular thought tongue hanging and mind depilated  
my posture unerect  
trying to be open and honest  
(like he told me)  
trying not to be seedy  
(whatever I think that means)  
and fading  
(failing)

“I know it’s been a long time  
and I don’t know if it’s  
    you  
I want

but I think you’ll do”

looking in your eyes  
hoping you won’t notice  
and that you do

I’ve got some images in my head from a film  
I saw the other night but I can’t remember  
whether or not they’re me  
I should re..  
recreate the spontaneity he says I’ve lost

not that it matters really  
(he told me that too)

## Alice

"Third star on the right  
and straight on 'till morning..."

Twinkling tears and diamond deep  
in the davy of a shuttered eye  
now grown slender perfumed woman;

still seeing waif in her troubled perception  
still bruised from the slamming of three doors

one trapping her in the world  
one stopping her entering  
the third she still holds fast with a puppy foot

the more I learn of her  
the less I know  
the more of me

I want to cradle her in my arms  
in that useless way that helps  
the cradler ease the guilt of  
not being able to share a burden

I know I talk too much  
(I try to bring my Wonderland  
to Mohammed),  
when it slips away  
I get lost easily

I want my own Alice back  
but all I get are  
white rabbits and red herrings

I live in a vacuum

I have chosen a sexless vacuum  
from my limited choice  
to retain some safety

another problem in this larger body  
eat me-

I trust  
and live to be trusted  
goo goo goo-jooob

I don't know what's behind her eyes  
but I know it's still burning  
and something hurts in me  
when I hear a doormouse sing

three doors round  
a child  
locked under the stars

a bolt in her hand  
a padlock on her eyes  
a combination lost

smiling eyes with a tear  
on the inside  
but does it rhyme with  
'fear'

or

'despair'

and does Alice know anymore?

## Staring at the Moon

let's sit and talk  
alone  
sitting over the edge of a high cliff  
only the sea below  
crashing against the rocks  
that were worn away the last two thousand years  
or more

sit and talk  
and know  
only what's below us  
a death or a constant  
not even a thought;  
something that was constant  
before any time was there,  
a time when we were perhaps  
a hundred miles inshore  
where we are now  
but to sit with our feet dangling  
over the edge of this high cliff  
and look out  
look out to the horizon  
where sea meets sky  
where grey meets blue  
and blue meets grey  
where one is one and the same  
there we can sit and talk  
you and I  
you and someone  
me and anyone  
they are the same here  
we can talk of life, death, unfairness,  
the universe, the scenery,  
television, childrens' toys,  
music, death, the price of milk,



sex, politics, memories,  
anything,  
nothing is more important than anything else  
nothing has any meaning  
nothing except  
you, I, the cliffs below  
the sea crashing  
the water pounding away  
the rocks;  
in five years  
the rocks we're sat on  
will be pebbles beneath  
the sea below  
either of us might be  
ashes in the earth below  
nothing might have changed  
except the world around us  
the world made by people  
the world peopled by people  
the world shared by people

sitting here still  
that has no relevance  
to the rocks we sit on  
the cliffs our feet dangle over  
the rocks below  
the sea crashing  
the pebbles of cliffs that  
crashed five years below  
behind, ago

what matters when we think about that?  
what matters when we think about be a reflection of anything  
in my eye  
could be nothing

I was going to say that

nature is sublime  
but what does that say?  
seas that aren't blue  
aren't grey  
aren't white foam  
seas that aren't green  
just seas  
and rocks  
yesterday's cliffs in pebbles,  
walking down Granby Street  
walking through a village,  
walking in a city,  
sat on a couch opposite  
a woman in an armchair  
sat looking at a photograph  
at a mirror  
at the stars  
like pebbles in the sky,  
looking at a photograph  
of us sitting on a cliff,  
meaning nothing  
except a feeling.

## **Fin**

Yanks with bumper stickers  
Refute the teaching of the Tao  
Shit happens

Thank you for reading.

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