**Rebel Song** *by Jean James*

(after Allen Ginsberg)

I heard the howl of those

who leapt the barricades with pails of ash and daubed the lodges with an epitaph,

who shut their mouths and slashed their wrists on razor wire curled on the prison walls,

who rode in long cars through the night to stash Kalashnikovs in secret bunkers,

who fed the bullets to the guns that shattered kneecaps of the white-gilled boys in terraced streets,

who stalked the fields in every weather marking the paths of quiet policemen and their blameless dogs,

who fed the fever for a promised land of milk and honey to the favoured few,

who blew up cafes, pubs and boardrooms breathing in blackness as they roared away,

who torched the curtains of the theatre scorching the watchers in the wings,

who handed money over counters wrapped in slack cloth and scarlet ribbons,

who faded out on bar room tables caught in the neon sequined lights, a trail of

butt ends, shattered glass and everywhere the broken stools and empty cartooned floor,

who lost their way in lock-ins singing rebel songs and shoot the heroes for their

tarnished medals pinned on chest bones in the rattling boxes they went home in,

who vanished swiftly into doorways and wrote about the good old days,

then sat, like old men on park benches, reading the suffering carved in stone.