

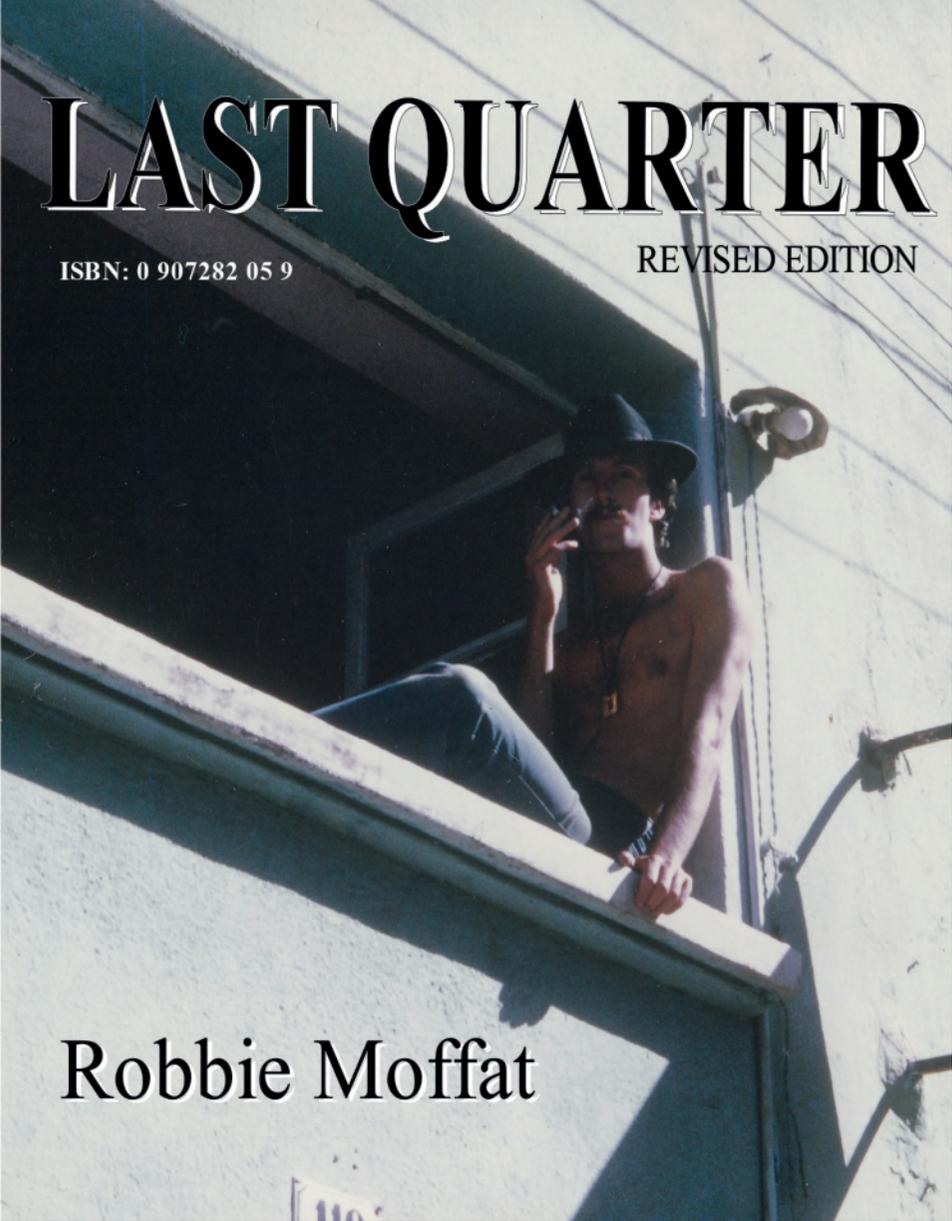
Poetry Series



# LAST QUARTER

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REVISED EDITION

A photograph of a man wearing a dark cowboy hat and a necklace, sitting on a concrete ledge of a light-colored building. He is shirtless and wearing blue jeans, and is holding a mobile phone to his ear. The scene is brightly lit, casting shadows on the wall behind him.

Robbie Moffat

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## LAST QUARTER

This collection of poems covers Robbie Moffat's poetry output in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium. It commences in 1974 and ends in 1998. Many of the early works are simple, but they are included here to show the poet's development.

Besides the major works *The Undergraduate*, *Universal Being* and *The Wanderer*, the collection contains many of Moffat's unpublished works previously uncollected, un-typed, and forgotten about.

In all, this collection contains almost thirty thousand lines of verse and is set out in chronological fashion. The poet's notes on when and where the poems were composed are included and these give an insight into his life during the twenty five years the work covers.

Because of the volume of work, it has taken fifteen years to gather all of the poems into this one collection. The two major exclusions are *Frog - A Tale For Adults*, an illustrated poem first published in 1980, and *Fettlepan Fayre*, written in 1975. Otherwise, the poet believes most of his work is represented here, and if it is not, then it was not meant to be preserved.

I dedicate this collection to everyone who inspired me to write for them, about them, or because of them. Thank you.

Robbie Moffat

## IN SEARCH OF A GURU

### **BUS CONDUCTOR**

[Spring 1974]

Dreaming ... thinking of what life is –  
If I applied myself, the genius I could be.  
I'm really rather clever, its not plain to  
see –  
My dream is to be accepted by society.

Fighting in an army isn't for my likes –  
The navy? The sea's not for me.  
Flying does not wow me with joy –  
So its the buses collecting fees.

### **A1 SOUTH**

[11<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, A1, Gateshead]

Maggie and me going over the sea  
To see what we can see -  
We're standing here with all our gear,  
Waiting, and waiting and waiting in fear  
In case we can't get a lift out of here –  
Who knows, we might be here a year  
Before we make it abroad.

### **DOVER**

[12<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Dover]

Waiting on the Dover quay –  
Passport in hand,  
Francs from the bank –  
Just waiting, waiting, waiting.

### **STUCK**

[15<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, France]

The sky is blue, the grass is green,  
The air is clear, the water is fresh;  
But what a shitty place to be dropped  
And left.

### **BARCELONA (fragments)**

[17<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Barcelona]

We have reached Barcelona,  
And now we venture forth ...  
To hitch our way to Madrid  
To end this tortured road.

The room is great, white walls,  
tiled and easy on the soles.  
The bed's soft, pin-stripped top,  
Maggie's happy, laughing at it all.

### **LERIDA**

[18<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Lerida, Spain]

Maggie says she's losing weight,  
I think she's just joking –  
Her lily legs resemble  
The plucked skin of a chicken.

Rain, rain, go from Spain,  
Go back to England once again.

### **NO MORE DOUBTS**

[19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Madrid]

Phones to my ears, the music  
Bringing on the tears –  
My sentiments are running high,  
My fears are lost in blue skies;

Here worries don't exist,  
Happiness is not a myth,  
Everything is working out –  
I have no more doubts.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### FRANCO

[19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Madrid]

Franco's got a bad leg,  
Cancer or something they say.  
Who should be believed though?  
The Church? The Doctors? The Army?  
How long will he live?  
Tomorrow? Next year? A decade?  
We'll all find out one day –  
When fascist Spain is saved.

### MAGGIE

[19 Aug 1974, Madrid]

Maggie has taken some prunes  
To help with her digestion –  
I guess we'll know soon enough  
If they've aided, helped or hindered  
Her constipation.

### A RAINY DAY IN MADRID

(fragments)

[20<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Madrid]

Back a hundred years –  
As the power fails, the darkness splits  
Into a thousand sectioned shadows  
By candlelight.

Madrid is – the Prada,  
Piatza de Roma  
The Calle de Goya,  
The Banco de Espana,  
And the Metro  
Under the centro.

We live by the autopista,  
A life of leisure and ease,  
With friends Inaki and Joahna –  
Some Premmies from Arturo Soria.

The rain pours, and pours –  
The washing gets wetter and wetter.

(ii)

Britain seems a long way north –  
Scotland, Glasgow, Shawlands Cross.  
The rain brings back many thoughts  
Of times in youth I had forgotten;

Those days when summer came and went  
And winter passed on to Lent;  
I'd cock a snoot, have no cares  
If outside it was fine or fair.

The rain for me cleansed the streets,  
I'd pad and paddle, sodden footed;  
My mother, worried for my health  
Would try to coop me up indoors.

She'd say 'You'll catch your death by  
cold!'  
I'd not agree, and speak out boldly –  
An action that oft brought regret  
When I got a clout on the head.

Back then, all I had to pass the time  
Was the burgh clock's distant chimes;  
I'd watch the raindrops earthwards fall  
Into puddles, pools and holes –

The steamed up windows, my only fun  
Drawing pictures with my thumb -  
All other things seemed unimportant  
To the make-belief of an infant.

The rain stops, my memories fade  
I return from my childhood daze –  
The sun begins to split the clouds  
To shower rays on my reflections.

For now I'm free to go outside  
With no fear of a mother's chide;  
I choose in Madrid to stay indoors  
And dwell upon my fading innocence.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### GERALD R FORD

[21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1974, Madrid]

Gerald R Ford made a statement today,  
And it wasn't about the weather –  
In fact it concerned the new vice – pres,  
Ex-major of New York – Rockefeller.

Nelson, you see, is really quite pleased  
At being appointed over Barry Goldwater;  
He was full of big smiles, a mouth of  
cheese –  
But I doubt if things will get better.

For Nixon by now, we know all about,  
His friends Erlichmann, Haldeman, Dean;  
History will say, without a shadow of  
doubt,  
They were dirty, crooked and mean.

All of them now have bitten the dust  
With the exception of Spiro Agnew –  
He's been forced to resign amidst public  
mistrust  
Over the back tax bill he's acquired.

President Ford has the task of his life  
To get callous America straightened –  
Let's hope it's the end of what we've  
lived through  
Since Kennedy was murdered in Dallas.

### TOMORROW IBIZA

[23<sup>rd</sup> Aug 1974, El Saler, Spain]

Tomorrow we sail to Ibiza –  
That golden isle of sun;  
Perhaps we'll think it's worth it  
For all the miles we've come.

### I TRAVEL NOT IN INCHES

[24<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Valencia Ferry, Spain]

One foot on the ventilator,

One foot on the wall,  
One eye straining at the door,  
The other closed.

My cabin mates scurry to and fro,  
I lie here, calm and cool –  
Perhaps they should be told  
That in my mind, I travel  
Not in inches, or by hashish,  
To an inner land, a distant star  
No amount of dosh can get you to.

My star is reached by thought,  
Thought alone - a far land  
I am trying to know, to get to -  
my journey's end.

### FORMENTERA

[26<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Formentera, Balearic  
Isles]

The beach last night, it was okay.  
I could have hoped for better –  
But now I don't care – the weather  
Has turned wet. It rains, it shines,  
It rains, it shines – I think we wait  
For winter. Who knows? Who cares?  
I do not for Formentera.

### ROUNDED UP BY THE FASCISTS

[27<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Formentera, Balearic  
Isles]

Formentera – we must leave  
For the police say so. Rounded up,  
Passports taken from us hippies.  
To sleep on the beach is not  
The Franco way – they've let us  
Know so.

To Ibiza we must now go –  
To find a place to sleep -  
Herded on to the ferry –  
at gun point, we shuffle like cattle

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

on to the crowed deck -  
the spirit of Europe's youth  
made to revisit Auschwitz.

### **IBIZA**

[27<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Ibiza, Balearic Isles]

Ibiza is a shitty place,  
I really am pissed off –  
I must keep a smiling face  
For Love and Peace, man.

### **MAN OVERBOARD**

[30<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974, Ibiza-Barcelona Ferry,  
Spain]

A man fell overboard,  
As the ship sailed on –  
The alarm was raised,  
The ship blew its horn

We searched for an hour  
Or two, then much more –  
Still we saw nothing,  
We gave up all hope.

Suddenly – someone pointed  
Far into the dark –  
The searchlights played the water,  
We'd found him at last.

But it still wasn't over –  
The ship couldn't stop.  
We cruised for ten minutes  
Well past the poor chap.

A boat was finally lowered,  
It retraced our wake –  
We all hoped, some prayed  
That he would be saved.

We waited, and waited  
For the boat to return –  
And then it was sighted,

The light on its stern.

When out of the darkness  
five figures appeared –  
four were the boatmen,  
the fifth we all cheered.

As everyone inwardly  
Let out a sigh –  
Amazed that the man  
Stepped aboard still alive.

### **FRANCE 1974 (fragments)**

[ 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 1974, Cerbere]

Out of Spain, and the rain –  
Into France, and *bon chance*.

[1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1974, Toulouse]

I went for some food  
To fill myself up,  
And what did I do?  
I broke a china cup.

The lift I had hitched in a sports car  
Of all things, with this man who  
Was a flier. He drove into a ditch  
Which bent his springs, that gave  
Us a bloody flat tyre.

[1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1974, Ussel Sur S...]

A man bought me a meal last night,  
And boy, it sure was alright –  
I took some beautiful bites –  
Every bite a delight – when I slept  
I went out like a light.

[3rd Sept 1974, Thiers]

Yesterday, we took the train  
From Ussel to Clermont

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Because of all the rain –  
Hitching was just not on.

Instead of buying tickets,  
We rode the train for free.  
The ticket collector came,  
We jumped and ran away.

### GENEVA HOSTEL

[3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1974, Geneva]

I'm sitting on the hostel stairs  
In the beautiful town of Geneva,  
Chatting away to two young birds  
About nothing much as yet.

Now, they are talking to me about mint  
And the patch that they going to grow,  
About work permits, and things like that,  
And of course, *Catch 22*.

### ALMOST KNOCKED DOWN

[4<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Lorrach, Germany]

I crossed over the frontier into a town  
Where the German townsfolk wore serious  
frowns;  
The roads were busy, and being a clown  
Eager to cross - I was almost knocked  
down.

### MUNICH (song)

[5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Munich]

At last I come to Munich –  
That town of song and beer,  
Perhaps if I remain for long  
I'll also know good cheer.  
It is a place I know quite well,  
It holds quite dear to me –  
The last time I came here  
Was pre-Olympic year.

### MUNICH IN THE RAIN

[6<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Munich]

Sitting in a nice, clean restaurant,  
Drinking coffee, eating chocolate,  
Listening to soothing music  
Making with the conversation,  
Thinking about some distant nation.  
It's Munich in the rain.

It plips, it plops upon the roads,  
Shoppers passing, very drenched,  
Umbrellas flying in the wind,  
Wet hair sticking to their necks –  
The town seems quite and very dead.  
It's Munich in the rain.

It has no end, the hours pass,  
The light it fades, there is no lapse –  
In every pool, the water rises,  
Workers weave and dodge the splashes  
Made by other workers dashing.  
It's Munich in the rain.

It drips from every leaf and twig,  
Raindrops carried with the breeze  
Into gutters, down the drains  
Into the S-bahn gurgling sewers,  
Lost to our over world of light.  
It's Munich in the rain.

It eases off, the wind now dropped,  
Strollers smile, begin to chatter,  
Gaze above, view the sky,  
The clouds part, the sun breaks through –  
At last, the day reveals its truth.  
It's Munich in the sun.

### BACH

[7<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Herrsching, near Munich]

Bach plays softly in my ears,  
And I begin to lightly doze,  
The echoes of the many strings

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Carry me off to a distant land.

The rising lark winging high,  
The trees and meadows speeding by,  
The hills and valleys over which I fly  
To rest, and lounge here, now.

Relaxed, though tired as I am,  
I lie here thoughtful, relaxed, and calm  
As innocent as a suckling lamb  
Without the stirrings of the ram.

Time, it passes – I notice little  
So deeply lost in my own thought;  
I'm happy here with what I've got –  
Though Bach, I've found Bavaria.

### THE NUN WITH A FAG

[8<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Andechs, Bavaria]

The saintly nun with graceful air  
Ambles with a monk – but not in prayer;  
She holds not in her hand her beads,  
But disgracefully what we call – the weed.

The halo that surrounds her head  
Comes not from the life she's led –  
It is in fact some man-made stuff,  
Not holy smoke on which she puffs.

The fag she holds to her lips,  
In contrast to the cross she grips -  
In joy removed, then slightly raised,  
She gives the cigarette her praise.

### I SLEPT IN A HAYSTACK

[10<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Mittendorf, Austria]

I was picked up by a girl,  
And invited to stay the night.  
Then I found out –  
I'd have to pay ten Marks.  
I slept in a haystack.

### LIKE A SCOTTISH DAY

[10<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Mittendorf, Austria]

The rain drives down again,  
I huddle against the wall  
Of a little log cabin.  
It's not unlike a Scottish day,  
The mist rolling down  
To flood the valley below.

### BULGARIAN-TURKISH FRONTIER

[12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Turkey]

They asked me for Dollars –  
I said I had none.  
They asked me for Francs –  
I said I had some.  
They asked me for Marks  
I refused then to pay.  
They asked me for Pounds –  
And that saved the day.

### ANKARA

[13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Ankara, Turkey]

I walked five K into Ankara,  
Far up Cankaka Hill –  
I was asked by a stranger  
If things were difficult.

I didn't say all that much –  
Then we took a car.  
Now I have a weekend room  
In villa-side Ankara.

### THE CHILDREN'S CRIES ECHO

[16<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Ankara, Turkey]

The trees sway in the wind.  
Then I notice the lack of birds.  
The children's cries echo,  
I see only in the distance, clouds.  
The sun radiates its warmth.  
I see a man watering his lawn.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The people pass quickly by –  
I see that I watch all alone.

### CHESSE AND CLUES

[17<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Ankara, Turkey]

I sit here, the chessboard in front of me,  
The game won. Upstairs I hear the voices  
Of the neighbours & cops, an American  
Recounting his story of the break-in.  
I hear them probing about searching for  
clues as to the identity of the intruder.

### RAMADAN

[18<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Ankara, Turkey]

It is the eve of my departure  
After my long Ankara stay.  
It coincides with the start  
Of the fasting through the day.  
From early in the morning  
Until the sun has fled away –  
The Muslims who are faithful  
Eat by candlelight after prayer.

### THE FRENCH CANADIAN

[24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Ankara, Turkey]

His name is Jacques, he lives at the back  
Of a hotel in Ankara.  
We talk about dope, about our hopes  
And the days we still have to come.

### FLAG DRAPED COFFIN

[25<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Bus to Erzarum, Turkey]

On a bus to Erzarum,  
Through the window, a passing car  
With open boot –  
A flag draped coffin  
Sticking out the back.  
Is there much ceremony  
Over the dead these days?

### IRANIAN FLY

[27<sup>th</sup> Sept 1974, Maku-Tabriz, Iran]

He's a happy little fly, this fly.  
He crawls on my hand full of life –  
He feeds on my blood with great pride –  
He rubs his wings in delight –  
And I try to squash him on sight –  
He succeeds just in time to take flight –  
He's a smart little fly, this guy.

### HASHISH (fragments)

[3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1974, Herat, Afghanistan]

My creativeness is dissipated,  
My body drained, and my thoughts.  
The culprit –  
the abominable hashish plant.

Climb every mountain  
Cross every wall  
Ride every camel  
Beware every fall.

### KABUL

[5<sup>th</sup> Oct 1974, Kabul, Afghanistan]

The flies are buzzing around my head –  
I'm lying here playing dead –  
Staring upwards, my thoughts astray,  
Light bulb swinging, its cord well frayed.

The calling birds are chirping out –  
Aggressive dogs in barking bouts –  
A woodman chopping – his echoes  
bouncing  
Back and forth between the mountains.

### HIMALAYAS

[17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1974, Manali, HP, India]

The bus winds its weary way slowly to the  
top,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The engine whining all the time as if it's  
going to stop;  
The passengers grip their seats in fear of  
pending doom,  
The driver steering round the bend with  
none or little room.

Until at last we reach the crest and gasps  
give way to sighs,  
The view I've travelled far to see is now  
before my eyes –  
The peak is its centre piece, its minions  
scattered round,  
The roof of the world – Mount Everest –  
lies cloudy bound.

### MANALI TO KULU

[13<sup>th</sup> Nov 1974, Simla, India]

From Manali to Kulu,  
We pass the mountains by.  
Onward to Mandi  
And darkness plays its hand.  
The road disappears –  
The headlights form the path,  
We career round bends,  
The driver in command;  
Trucks scrapping past -  
It's not a lot of laughs.

### THE DEALER

[1<sup>st</sup> Dec 1974, Delhi, India]

Delhi, the city of dope and hope  
When you're gambling with your money.  
Delhi, the city of folk and scope  
If you're looking to make some money.  
For money makes the living easy,  
Gives you a style that's free and breezy;  
An air of confidence gained with rupees,  
With an appearance that is rather freaky,  
You are as straight as the next man –  
Just a bit sneakier.

### MARIJUANA IN CALCUTTA

[28<sup>th</sup> Dec 1974, Calcutta, India]

Smoking on down the river,  
Passing people on the shore.  
Smoking on, winding ever –  
Scrapping bottom at the fords.

Puffing hard, moving upstream,  
Grass is green, head feels more.  
Easing off, to drop the anchor,  
At last I've docked, reached the shore.

### SHARING WITH PIGEONS

[4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1975, Puri, Orissa, India]

Cigarette ends lie on the table  
Scattered amongst the mounds of ash,  
Candle wax and spent matches.  
The light dances in the breeze  
In tune to the pounding waves,  
The ceaseless clicking-buzzing  
Of the insect world.

My book lies open at page 327,  
My mosquito cream lies at arm's length,  
And my chillum still feels warm.  
My room mates, four in number,  
Belay their presence with feathered  
droppings.

### HOTEL ROOM IN INDIA

[10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1974, Madras, India]

Just another typical hotel room –  
Bare light blue walls, and  
The inevitable five speed fan,  
A paint splattered mirror,  
Six plastic, two broken, wall hangers,  
And an energy saving 40w bulb.

Two wooden thin matted beds,  
check covered, plus a metal legged

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Paint chipped three-by-two pink clothed table,  
resting on a well swept smooth surfaced  
Grey concrete floor – makes it just  
another typical hotel room in India.

### CLOCK

[10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1974, Madras, India]

At midnight, pointing northwards,  
Heart beat steady, with a white face  
And hands clasped together as in prayer –  
They slowly part, to present us with  
The beginning of another day.

### A COW BATHES IN THE OCEAN

[15 Jan 1975, Pondicherry, India]

Lonely palm trees,  
Empty-netted fishermen,  
White topped waves  
And bobbing sail boats.

Fly infested sand,  
Horizon forming clouds,  
Long striding man,  
And in she goes again.

### HARIJAN

[15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1975, Pondicherry, India]

Harijan woman, praying to the son of  
God,  
Jesus Christ.  
Harijan woman, religion means so much  
In your lower class.  
Devotion to an idea, to a super being  
Has left you in the depths of the world.

Lift up your head,  
For even I find it easy to be taken in  
By the surroundings.  
Painted statuettes, and stain glass  
windows,

And just for a fleeting moment,  
I too, believe in it all.

### MOSQUITOES

[17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1975, Pondicherry, India]

Mosquito net billowing in the draft to  
form a door.  
A droning heard, increasing to high-  
pitched scream  
Within inches of my head. And then ...  
My paranoia begins that makes each hour  
Of the night an endless age without sleeps  
or rest.  
Each hour becomes a fear of death itself -  
Until by dawn, my enemies depart, each  
one a winner  
in the game that rules their lives;  
The game – survival.

### A FAR OFF SIGH

[26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1975, Madurai, Tamil Nadu,  
India]

I find looks matter not in this far off land.  
To groom oneself is, I am afraid, a  
pointless task.  
Admiration is a far off thing that reaps no  
fruit;  
A passing glance, a flirty smile –  
And always in the end, a far off sigh.

### LETTER FROM HOME

[26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1975, Madurai, Tamil Nadu,  
India]

Half a letter is better  
than one, or none;  
For if none, you have nothing,  
But if one, you get one,  
But you never get one again,  
As the last one  
Left me with nothing to say  
In the next one.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE GOOD SHIP SRI LANKA

[9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1975, Colombo]

In the good old days of the king,  
Her maiden name was Ceylon –  
But when she had her complete refit  
Sri Lanka was how she became known.

Rocking gently afloat in the ocean,  
She stands the chance of running aground  
–  
For she's steered by Capt Bandiaranaikie  
Who flies the red flag over the bow.

She calls into Havana quite often,  
Each time the cargo the same –  
But the hold is a bit on the small side  
And she must take on visits elsewhere.

Peking offers most for the Sri Lanka  
And her hold is really quite full –  
A rough sail northwards to Russia,  
And leave Valdi low on her fuel.

Back in her home port of Colombo,  
Wheat, rice, and sugar shared out –  
There seems to be an overall shortage  
Though the crew look to be doing alright.

### DEAD BANANA FOR THE COWS

[25<sup>th</sup> Mar 1975, Tiruchirappali, India]

As the train begins to slow –  
A sticky hand lets it go;  
It hits the track all arms and legs  
To lie prostrate in a manner  
Unbecoming to the dead.

From a nearby field, heads are raised –  
Blacks, browns, whites, greys,  
Some with horns, and some with stripes,  
Their rolling tongues revealing thoughts  
Over which they'd fight.

### FIRST TIME FLYING

[21<sup>st</sup> Birthday, 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 1975, Jaffna-  
Colombo train, Sri Lanka]

The sea forming into layers of skin –  
Wrinkled, pitted,  
Flashing, dying,  
Rising, flowing,  
Pulsating, living,  
A thousand streams and rivers going  
nowhere  
Foaming, falling,  
Forming, folding layers,  
Of oceanic skin.

### SWEAT

[14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1975, Madras, India]

Sweat dripping from my forehead,  
Streams and torrents rushing down,  
Until at last they reach my neck  
And trickle down my spine.

### MONSOON RAIN

[14<sup>th</sup> Apr 1975, Madras, India]

And the rain never ceases  
Flash and smash  
And the heavens give a warning of  
A broken peace with the Gods.

But their anger never lasts  
And in the end they shed a tear  
To cleanse the wrongs of  
A world that's in their hearts.

### UNFURL THE DAWN

[10<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Hyderabad, India]

As the cockerel sounds reveille,  
Nature hoists her flag –  
Background greys, subdued rays  
Cascading forth in spectrum  
To unfurl the dawn.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE FROGGIES

[10<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Hydrabad, India]

All my friends are little froggies  
Who live in a pond,  
And each little froggy  
Lives in a world of his own,  
Each has a green leaf  
Which he calls as a home,  
In a pond where each froggy  
Is bored to the bone.

Each froggy can swim  
But not as well as he leafs,  
And when he goes out  
It's to a friend's leaf,  
For his friends live close by  
And there's no need to swim,  
So each little froggy hops  
From leaf rim – to leaf rim.

What goes under the pond  
Is a mystery to them,  
For they never go diving  
And in the end never learn;  
What happens beneath them  
Is of little concern,  
To them all that matters  
Are their friends and themselves.

So none of the froggies  
Care much for the pond,  
Apart from the part  
They're particularly on –  
But they don't know that either,  
Because they don't swim,  
So due to this failing  
Their knowledge is thin.

If the froggies went swimming  
And dived down real deep,  
And left the security  
Of all their green keeps,  
To see if just briefly

They really could cope,  
Then all they'd be risking  
Are their watery hopes.

There are many more froggies  
And leaves in the pond,  
In parts that have been heard of  
And parts that have not –  
So if each froggy has time  
To come up to scratch,  
The pond could become more  
Than just a green patch.

### PRESENT DAY

[16<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Allahbad, India]

Tomorrow is an endless waste  
Of shifting blue-moon sands  
Surrounding the thirsty man  
Who cannot drink  
From the worn well  
Termed present day.

### OH INDIA

[16<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Allahbad, India]

Oh India, oh India –  
I'd love to call you my own,  
So why do you all always ask me  
Where do I come from?

Oh India, oh India –  
I like you as my home,  
Yet sometimes I really wish  
You'd leave me well alone.

Oh India, oh India –  
I want the love you've shown,  
But I fear the heartbreak's come  
And now this bird has flown.

Oh India, oh India –  
Parts of me still remain,  
But when I return some future day

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

It won't be quite the same.

### JOHN LENNON'S AMSTERDAM

[16<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Allahbad, India]

For me John Lennon's Amsterdam was different,  
I didn't spend all y time in bed,  
I didn't have a Yoko who could listen  
To all the things I had to leave unsaid.

The tulips there were far from being pretty,  
They really looked as though they all were dead,  
I found the cafes were full of too much acid  
Which had withered far too many tulip heads.

The diamonds no longer had their sparkle,  
It's glass beads the public were being fed,  
The jewellers there were all small-time chemists  
Whose stones turned many living into dead.

The dykes of self-restraint had been blown,  
The kids were hanging on by a thread –  
The wards were full of many flipped-out heroes  
Who were the only ones in Amsterdam in bed.

### BY THE GANGES

[18<sup>th</sup> May 1975, Benares, India]

The steps leading down to the river  
Radiate more than a gentle warmth  
As dusk designs its fall.

Three snowy geese  
Crack the incense air

Of tolling bells and near to distant voices.

Small boats rock  
In the wave of pleasure cruising vessels  
Avoiding shaven-headed swimming pilgrims.

By the water's edge  
The last smouldering of embered fires,  
Each pyre, a loved one lost.

The laments unceasing,  
The mourners wait patiently to torch  
Another funeral pile.

Darkness comes! One small spark,  
Heat and light  
Reclaiming man to endless night.

### NINE MONTHS of PENNING

[22<sup>nd</sup> May 1975, Benares, India]

This page is all that's left to end  
Nine months of penning, and yet  
Not enough to catch the endless meaning  
That lies within my mind.

For only time will free the mental tongue  
To offer the words  
for every context  
In the right degree.

### THE WALLS AROUND ME

[22<sup>nd</sup> May 1975, Benares, India]

The walls around me have no shape –  
My memories keep me from my sleep;

Reaching out – I find one left,  
A striking match preludes its death.

The room becomes a shady show -  
The match goes out, the ciggy glows.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### STONED ON HASHISH

[17<sup>th</sup> June 1975, Peshawar, Pakistan]

My mind is bottled up like glue;  
I've had too much – I think that's true;  
My thoughts are sticking to my skull,  
My tongue feels useless, dry and numb.

But what's the use of using both,  
I needn't think, or talk, or croak;  
For all is here to look and watch –  
The rising sun, a babbling brook.

### MIDSUMMER'S DAY, KABUL

[20<sup>th</sup> June 1975, Kabul, Afghanistan]

Midsummer's day, and what a way to  
spend it –  
Eating alone, speaking in tones that  
reflect it.  
Lying around, listening to sounds to forget  
it.  
Smoking a joint, reading of Quant,  
enjoying it.  
Drinking mint tea, scratching at fleas,  
regretting it –  
Till soon, the moon replaces, the sun's  
bright face  
And brings on Midsummer's night.

### CARRY ON GIRL

For Zindra Zita Skesteris

[4<sup>th</sup> July 1975, Macou, Iran]

So carry on girl,  
And travel the world  
But make sure you find a true friend.

You may travel the world  
To all of its ends  
But you might never find a true friend.

So open your heart  
And let your love free

Look everywhere for that true friend.

### SHE SLAMMED THE DOOR

[15<sup>th</sup> July 1975, Aathal, Switzerland]

She slammed the door,  
And that was that –  
But a few hours later  
It really hit me that  
More and more  
That slammed door  
Had cracked the frame  
Of my pictured life.

It left me nothing,  
Just completely numb,  
Just an empty nothing,  
Just a nothing,  
Just nothing,  
Nothing.

## CAN'T FIND THE BEACH

### LOSS OF A BEST FRIEND

[23<sup>rd</sup> July 1975, Edinburgh]

*The Royal Mile, and I smile – I'm back again.*

*Nothing's changed - ain't that strange.*

The music's sweet o'er by Arthur's Seat,  
Life's rearranged – two of everything;  
Gold wedding rings, the hope of little feet,  
Him working hard; sending Christmas  
Cards to her kin.

Tuesday's washing day –  
Nightly telly plays make life sadder,  
While his guitar lies idle, no longer  
Vital to stop his decay into  
mediocrity.

### BUNNY

For G

[26<sup>th</sup> July 1975, Glasgow]

Blue-jersey woman with green dreaming  
eyes,  
Chocolate brown hair, milky cream  
thighs,  
Silver tipped lashes, long strawberry nails,  
Black stockinet legs, and a fully puffed  
tail.

### WHY DON'T WE KNOW IT (song)

[4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1975, Edinburgh]

Why don't we know it,  
Why don't we show it,  
Why do we hold it to ourselves?

What are our feelings,  
What are our reasons,  
What are we hiding from ourselves?

Where are we going,  
What are we seeking,  
What are finding out about ourselves?

Who are we fighting,  
Who are we kidding,  
Who are we really but ourselves?

Why don't we know it,  
Why don't we show it,  
Why don't we be just ourselves?

### SKIVVIES LAMENT (fragment)

[5<sup>th</sup> August 1975, Edinburgh]

I wash the dishes  
From seven till three –  
I scrub the pots,  
I make the tea.

### THE FALL

[14<sup>th</sup> Aug 1975, Queen's Rd, Newcastle-u-  
Tyne]

The fall being early  
It was time to sweep  
The autumn leaves  
Into a pile.  
As the rain descended  
Upon the bronzed stack  
With blackened tears  
And fading smile,  
In hark'ning frosty nights  
Of frozen sleep,  
Of warm less stars  
And hostile owls.

For summer green had gone,  
And ice-cream cones  
Gave sway to hot broth soups  
For steaming colds,  
As time ticked by

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A little faster every day,  
A little slower,  
As the evenings  
Long and lengthening,  
Stretched on to winter.

### **TWENTY ONE**

[1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1975, 10 Chester Cresc,  
Newcastle]

Twenty one, and still a lad  
Whose knowledge mounts to nothing less  
than nothingness.

At twenty five, more a man,  
Perhaps my knowledge will mount to  
nothing less than nothingness.

At forty – that’s getting on,  
My knowledge will mount to nothing less  
than nothingness.

The day I die, a child once more  
My knowledge with be nothing less  
Than worthless.

### **FLIES**

[1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1975, Chester Cresc, Newcastle]

Flies leading a fuzzy summer life,  
Hopping and buzzing,  
Humming and flying,  
And getting around to laying eggs,  
And eating at sores,  
And walking on floors,  
And dog shit,  
And dustbins,  
And everything that smells.

But heat is a problem  
For these little pests,  
It singes their wings,  
It scotches their legs,  
It freezes their bodies

And kills them stone dead;  
In the darkness of winter  
They meet a cold end,  
To lie prostrate at windows,  
Cocooned – in cobwebs.

### **SHOE GIRL**

[1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1975, Chester Cresc, Newcastle]

Toe nails so large and red,  
And on each foot a little ball  
Of flabby skin, and worn out corns  
From constant use of shapeless shoes  
And flashy boots to impressed the vicar  
As he is on the outlook for a wife.

### **PAY DAY**

[5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Chester Cresc, Newcastle]

Friday, pay day, some I dare say  
Feel it means much more than  
Just a day to have a few pints,  
A dance, a winch, a quick bite  
On a bag of chips before the night  
Sets in and the evening’s gone.

For it’s the weekend, no work tomorrow  
Morn, and guaranteed a good time  
With no going home as early as usual  
On last orders ... for finding ourselves  
Out on the street swaying slightly,  
Yet still on our feet, looking for a party,  
But with little hope unless a friend  
Is on the know.

And she’s disappeared, the entertainment  
Stops – there is nothing left to  
But stride it out on the homeward walk  
And think what might have been.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### PEOPLE LIKE YOU

For Carol

[12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1976, Newcastle]

People like you are changing all the time.  
You now accept the dangerous marijuana,  
You talk of liberation at the front;  
You sip martinis, yet seem never to be  
drunk;  
You drop the pill in case you might get  
fucked;  
You lead a nice life – one day you'll hit a  
rut;  
People like you are changing all the time.

### CONTENTED 21 YEAR OLD ON TYNESIDE

[12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

Why change? A time old question.  
I'm happy as I am,  
Sitting every evening  
My young wife at my arm.

I've got a colour TV,  
A kid in a pram,  
A dog that still needs weaning,  
And a cat I canna stand.

My job is really steady,  
No threat of laying off,  
I reckon when I'm sixty  
That's time enough to stop.

Meanwhile, the day's tick by,  
One night's like the next –  
I'm really looking forward  
To taking my wife to bed.

### THE FASCIST

[13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

I'm not a revolutionary;  
Today there are no revolutions.

I'm not a reactionary –  
There are no real causes.  
There is -  
no government to overthrow;  
no army to fight;  
no suppression;  
no intimidation;  
no poverty;  
no racial disharmony.  
This is the UK –  
Not farthest Africa.

### FORLORN

[13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Chester Crec, Newcastle)

I feel it coming on –  
The urge to be forlorn  
And hopelessly lost and obscure  
So that no one understands a word,  
Not one word of what I say.

For if they did –  
They'd say I'm wrong  
Or mad, or lock me up  
For being different from what  
They think I really am.

So what I think, I think,  
And only now and then  
Do other people learn  
Of what I'm thinking.

Only then is it someone special,  
Someone who will understand  
Not what I say,  
But what I am.

### SEEING IT MY WAY

[14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

They said 'Try to see it my way',  
But I know I've tried that too.  
I've tried to see it their way  
And found it's not what's in my head.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I see their point, I understand  
But still I think I have better plans  
To live my life the way I see  
That I should.

### **YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK**

For Ollie

[14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

Woman, full of understanding,  
You've lived abroad  
And still you're only twenty.  
You say you're always free,  
You want to head out East  
And see old India – I think that's ....  
Well, you know what I think.

You spend your time with men  
And you have no lady friends,  
You have a little flat, so  
It's not so hard to get away  
To be alone. I think that's ....  
Well, you know what I think.

You like to get around,  
And keep your eyes up,  
You always smile and wear the clothes  
which haven't yet come into style,  
you feel your international;  
I think that's ....  
Well, you're breaking my heart.

### **THE ART OF LOVE**

[15<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

The art comes from being apart,  
Keeping from falling over heels  
And ending on your knees  
So that the music no longer plays  
At the same speed  
As your poor old heart.

### **LETTER TO MY MOTHER**

[15<sup>th</sup> Sept 1975, Newcastle]

It's like a maze, a garden full of images,  
The mind works fast, but the head just  
drags  
Its weary weight across the page.

Perhaps, someday, in times to come  
I'll just sit down, put up my feet, and  
close my eyes  
And think before I fall asleep  
Everything I wish to say.

And bang! When my piece is said,  
I'll have a long tape of all my thoughts  
Ready just to stamp and post  
And sent to you.

### **BLIND CONVERSATION**

[16<sup>th</sup> Sept – 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975, Newcastle]

I feel words say little and not enough.  
I imagine the flickering of an eyelid  
Can convey a truer, fuller meaning  
Of what I should have said  
But for which I couldn't find the words.

An eye for an eye -  
And yet the quickest briefest insight  
Can split the heart asunder  
And pale the stoutest fellow  
To a mediocre fool.

In this kaleidoscopic world,  
Inside a maze of optic mind,  
Beyond the sight of all the blind –  
Words don't say it all.

### **THE NIGHT TIME BUZZ**

[7<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975, Newcastle]

The night time buzz  
Of humming lights and fridges,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Of clicking clocks and hinges  
Creaking in the draught.  
The mellowed moans  
Of melting fires,  
Of circling hawks,  
Of chiming churches,  
The watery hush  
Of dock land tugs and foggy horns  
Of rumbling cars  
over mumbling manholes  
Carrying through the dark.

### THE SPIDER OF LOVE

[12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975, Newcastle]

I try and I try again,  
Perhaps another time -  
The sorrow is just a passing  
Phase of consciousness.

It will pass tomorrow,  
Or the next day,  
Providing not much thought is spent  
in useless channelled trains  
Of pointless reminiscence.

I will try again  
And hang my past.

### TIME TO GO

[12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975, Newcastle]

I'll see you to the door –  
It's time to go,  
Though the music's still playing,  
And the dope is still lying  
Somewhere between  
On the floor.

### INTERMENT

[20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975, Newcastle]

Would you be a friend  
To a friend who breaks the law?

To help himself,  
When the deal he's getting is raw,  
And more than just  
A petty useless squabble -

While an anonymous somebody,  
In an obscure and grubby  
Paper strewn office in some  
Hitherto anonymous government lobby  
Goes on a power trip -

And brands your friend  
A red, or fascist pig,  
And locks him up!

Would it be just another friend  
Forgotten, and a friend abandoned?  
Would you be a friend to a friend  
who speaks out, breaks the law?

### ART

[4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, Larkspur Terr, Newcastle]

Art? Now that's a subject  
Wide and vast,  
Pointless, fruitless,  
Classed as wasteful  
By the tactless, thoughtless  
Senseless individuals  
Of artless minds  
And stone cold hearts.

### WALLFLOWER

[9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, Newcastle]

They all think they're great here –  
Living in style,  
Hitting the straight parties,  
Getting the odd smile,  
Knowing a few people,  
Thinking it's enough  
To get themselves by with  
But not out the rut.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### AMNESTY DAY

[11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, Newcastle]

Amnesty Day –  
It's about front lines,  
And trenches deep  
And full of mud –  
Where soldiers died,  
Where few survived  
To pick red poppies.

The sad red poppies,  
Still blooming after fifty seven years,  
With the world still fighting  
To shed it's warped fears –  
Right and Left still killing  
To erase the other's ideas.

While the soldiers remember,  
With scarred eyes,  
Crippled sighs,  
Tortured cries,  
And march,  
To shed their last tears  
For the senseless agony,  
Of wasted lives,  
Of wasted lives.

### ASCOT GOLD CUP CHASE

[14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, Newcastle]

The Black and White whiskey Gold Cup  
Chase,  
And how many Ascot gentlemen  
Are already one over the eight  
On yet another great outing of hats,  
Bobbing heads, and mounted mares;  
As Easby Abbey, the odds on favourite  
Flashing by – a cert – the nagging doubts  
Of taking a tumble forgotten  
As she takes the last fence  
And romps home by a clear length  
To the cheers of 'Well done, girl!'  
By her backers at the post.

### KEEP CITIES POLLUTED

[14<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975, Newcastle]

Big city liver,  
The rest, just won't forgive you  
For being brought up  
Where they never had the chance  
To sample and feel  
The city's inbred arrogance  
For them, the country bums  
And small town weeds.

But big city liver,  
Don't you worry one hit,  
The pigs aren't worth it,  
They know nothing of your ways –  
They breathe through their noses,  
And complain about the air.  
But what do they know?  
Let them all go back  
To their small time snares.

### WHY ARE WE DIFFERENT?

[4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

Why are we all different?  
I sometimes feel ashamed  
To think that I might think faster  
Than my closest friend.

She's supposed to understand me,  
But really never does ...  
I'm frightened to admit it  
In case it causes hurt.

### I MIGHT HAVE GOT IT WRONG

[4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

Who's right? I guess it isn't me,  
No by heck, it isn't me.  
For what on earth can I be sure of  
When today, I know it, and tomorrow  
I've forgotten it, yet in between,  
I might have got it wrong.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### A STAGESHE'S GOING THROUGH

[8<sup>th</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

She goes on and on,  
Nagging all the time –  
It drives me mad,  
She's pushing me with her voice  
To the edge of sanity.

She feels she's being had  
As a fool. What can I do  
But treat this present hell as a stage  
She's going through out of love  
For me.

### PROFOUND WORDS

[21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

For once I've found some truth –  
No more lies to hide behind,  
No more twisted minds in battle  
Hell-bent in gaining superiority.

Being myself, untied and loose to find  
A way of being great with myself –  
Free to choose the options without force  
From sources pure in life.

Saying yes and no -  
without the doubt of being wrong  
reaching deep within myself  
to give advice and keep the peace;  
help the helpless help themselves;  
feed starving minds with profound words.

### UPS AND DOWNS

[24<sup>th</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

The ups and downs, ins and outs  
Though our minds, lost in words,  
Trying hard to cope with life.

Who trusts who? I don't know –  
I guess I feel my way until the trust

Eventually shows itself to me by  
What you say and do to make me  
understand  
Your inner self as well as you do.

### I CAN'T FIND THE BEACH

[24<sup>th</sup> Dec 1975, Newcastle]

I'm feeling high and dry,  
Though my feet are on the bottom  
And the waves are winding past my ears;  
For sure I'm not drowning,  
I'm swimming,  
But I can't find the beach.

### WE ALL HAVE DOUBTS

[9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1976, Newcastle]

We all have doubts.  
I expect each of us has felt  
That moment when the world  
Has seemed a place that has no point  
Of being in existence but to infinitely  
Serve the cause of birth and death.

### WHISPERING WINDS

[3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1976, Newcastle]

Whistling, whispering winds,  
Wynd through the weary winter months;  
Till spring appears in showers  
And dreamy snowdrops shyly sheltered  
'neath the crooked, twisted boughs  
And budding apple blossom branches –  
Half in shifting shadow or luke warm sun,  
The clouds meander quietly by ...  
The silence broken by a blackbird's cry.

### LACK OF HEART

[9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1976, Newcastle]

Thought to brain,  
Conscience holding back,  
Frustrating all my senses,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Restricting me to facts.  
I can't imagine, or  
Invent my own space.

Space to earth,  
Gravity pulling hard,  
Like the white stallions  
Tethered in my head –  
Reined by experience  
And a lack of heart.

### LOVE

[3<sup>rd</sup> Mar 1976, Stell Green, N'berland]

Love is ...  
What need I say that hasn't found its way  
On to the lips of all past and present  
lovers  
Who have trod the road of passion.

But love forever changes,  
Hearts stay golden, the harvest ripens  
Until the winter comes and the snows  
begin  
To freeze a love that rarely stays.

### ANNIE

[8<sup>th</sup> Mar 1976, Newcastle]

Annie, you've drained my soul  
And my hope has gone  
And left me empty,  
But much at peace.

Our ties are broken,  
Our strings have finally fouled,  
And yet, our parting words  
Were on the soft side  
Of our senseless speech.

I feel the need to say more,  
But I think it's best  
To leave things as they stand –  
Tomorrow may hold a different look

From the day that's gone.

### MISGIVINGS

[20<sup>th</sup> Mar 1976, Larkspur Terr,  
Newcastle]

Not a happy day would pass  
Without containing an unhappy hour.

Not an inch be gained with out a fight  
About our stupid self-centred, narrow  
Pig-headed beliefs.

No room for change,  
No sun to make the buds bloom forth  
To show their hidden colours.

No concrete legs of understanding  
To give support to our towering  
problems.

No compromise to our needs or wants,  
But cries of selfishness to chill the ears.

No basis, no reality.  
No contentment, no fantasy.  
No present, no future, just past.

No hope, no faith,  
No trust, no love, just hate.

### AT THE CROSSROADS

For Chrissie Brown

[21<sup>st</sup> March 1976, Newcastle]

Such a long and ponderous time,  
How the years fly by,  
How the memory takes a jolt  
When confronted by a friend  
Who's just blown in.

And still the ease with which  
The words flow off –  
No sticky 'How are you?',

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But something warm and touching,  
Tender beyond the smallest flicker.

How I'd missed the presence  
Of a stretching past –  
Not a new and freshly found acquaintance,  
But a friend who's had her changes  
Close to mine.

How the world seems a different place –  
Not as transient, and ever changing  
As life might suggest –  
That people pass, stop awhile,  
And wander on.

Every path that leads away has a  
crossroads.  
There lies the choice –  
The smooth surfaced track of  
conformity,  
or to take off on the rough and tumble  
bandit ridden road.

How the years fly by –  
And rough and tumble road  
Finds friends waiting at the crossroads.

### **SINGER IN A BAND**

[23<sup>rd</sup> Mar 1976, Newcastle]

Singer with a band, a merry life?  
Riding round the towns,  
In and out the bars,  
Just to make a few bob.

Knocking back the jars,  
Entertaining hard to please punters  
Who think they know a star  
When they see one.

On the road again,  
Sleeping in the van for a few hours,  
Crowding over a coffee  
As the night turns to dawn.

Back behind the wheel,  
Rain driving down,  
Wipers waving through the spray  
Of heavy laden trucks.

### **LIGHT**

[26<sup>th</sup> Mar 1976?, Newcastle]

Rays of changing scenes,  
transcending all the pasts,  
Bringing forth a view,  
haloed in a sheen, as to last,  
but fading on to new  
and brighter flashing paths.  
Time winds its hand around  
its fleeting shafts,  
To cause a change.

### **POPULAR**

[3<sup>rd</sup> Apr 1976, Newcastle]

One day you are nothing,  
Then it all clicks with all  
the dudes around you,  
that your company, somehow  
really gives them kicks.

How long will it last?  
A couple of hours?  
A number of days?  
Several weeks?

Or will it be back  
To the old type of life,  
the ordinary every-day bum,  
who shares in the laughs,  
has fun for awhile.

Your company once vibrant,  
Exciting, unstyled –  
Becomes to the dudes  
Like a disinterested smile –  
Something returned with a frown.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **THE BOSS**

[5<sup>th</sup> Apr 1976, Newcastle]

He doesn't care about his minions,  
He hasn't time for their opinions,  
He treats them all as if they're shit,  
Or worthless useless bits –  
Of maladjusted and illiterate scum  
Who work for him – the boss;  
A jumped up, two faced, cunt and bastard,  
No good bum.

### **RONNIE**

[2nd May 1976, Newcastle]

Two children, and ten years later  
With still no sign  
Of being a bitter life hater.  
Only the smile of a beautiful lady,  
Capturing the heart  
Of her much younger playmate.

### **POETS DREAM**

[9<sup>th</sup> June 1976, Newcastle]

Poets dream of a better life,  
Of lovers flocking to their side  
In hope of some laughs and smiles  
To balance up their minds  
Of tumbled, broken, hard-luck times.

Lovers wait for their poets  
To make the sun shine,  
Make life fun and understandable.  
They give their love -  
while poets dream of a better life  
And not of them.

## ROAD TO AFRICA

### HULL

[11<sup>th</sup> Aug 1976, Hull-Rotterdam Ferry]

Here to find ourselves alone  
Aboard a ship –  
Here to find ourselves once more  
In life, adrift.

### ROMA

[19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1976, Brindisi, Italy]

Roma, a city in ruins –  
Incomplete on many levels.  
Roma, built on empires –  
Now a mound of crumbling earth.  
Roma, the tourist's nectar –  
Rip-off merchant's ten-a-penny.  
Roma, the Christian's Mecca,  
For those who kiss the ring.

### TWA FLIGHT MEAL

[29<sup>th</sup> Aug 1976, Athens-Cairo flight]

A cold meal of turkey, fish, cheese on  
bread,  
One mushroom, a tomato, an olive, a  
sprinkle of parsley, followed by coffee -

Orange juice served before -  
Coca-cola served after to wash it down.  
A piece of cherry cake to round it off.

### LUXOR

[2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1976, Luxor, Egypt]

The journey to Luxor a trip and a ride,  
That took me one day from Cairo by  
train.  
I arrived at the heart of the Pharaoh's  
domain

That since Amun's time has crumbled,  
decayed;  
The memories of Karnak, the pillars, the  
lake –  
Thebes and the heights its dynasty once  
scaled.

### THE VALLEY OF THE DEAD

[? Sept 1976, Luxor, Egypt]

Sun peeking over the horizon,  
And extendable Marks and Sparks  
umbrella along for the shade.

A wooden boat with inboard motor  
Ferrying me across the Nile.

Eight miles to the Valley of the Dead,  
Primeval villages like disused cannons  
To the left and right.

Near the Valley entrance, stopping,  
listening,  
The barren rock, surrounding semi-desert  
Devoid of vegetation – the air still,  
Nothingness.

No birds, no breeze,  
Nothing – only silence.

A complete emptiness;  
A world of non-existent life, the dead  
Shadowless, whisperless reaching out  
To touch the fingertips of the living.

The silence disturbing – the burning sun,  
Heavy breathing, lungs in gasps for air,  
Reminding the living, of life.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### ON THE NILE

[9<sup>th</sup> Sept 1976, Aswan Dam, Egypt]

Lying on the roof of a flat-topped paddle steamer  
With the sun an hour to set.  
The Arabs wait patiently to eat –  
One idly chops salad for the daily end to Ramadan,  
While pennywhistle music heats the humid air.

Irritated chatter fills the pauses between  
The banging noise of the cattle loading,  
Heavy footsteps weigh the gangway;  
With a last minute toot,  
Tyres screech on the hot sand, produce passengers.

Over to the east in contrast to the dying sun –  
The silver of the rising full moon;  
The water calm, a tickling wind  
Stretches out its rippled surface skin  
As the battered smoke-stack issues forth  
Its chronic scarring black to the ancient chug of an empire worn Perkins engine,  
The ferry drags its wooden slated paddle through the thick Nile mud.

### UPPER NILE

[23<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1976, south of Kosti, Sudan]

The brown and sombre Nile;  
Its smile now gone,  
Its weeds floating thick –  
Its hyacinths,  
Scabbing at the shore.

### UP THE NILE

[2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1976, The Sudd, Sudan]

We were paddling on a boat  
Up the river Nile,

On the bank the trees grew,  
Tall and straight, and wild.

We chugged on through the jungle,  
A thousand miles in length –  
Steaming out of rain storms,  
Steering round long bends.

### EVERYONE'S COMPLETELY SMASHED

[24<sup>th</sup> Oct 1976, Kappoeta, Sahel, Sudan]

From Khartoum, up to Kathmandu,  
From Kabul, down to Kinshasa –  
Everyone is blowing grass,  
Everyone is wrecked on hash,  
Everyone's completely smashed  
On ganja, bang and charis.

### DEATH OF SUMMER

[3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 1976, Lokichogio, Turkana, Kenya]

Let me take you in my hand  
Through the fields of slaughter –  
Past the years of uncut grass  
Down the path of slumber –  
Onwards to the days of breath  
Beyond a given number –  
To seek a meeting with your death,  
A slow and crippling murder –  
At the jaws of Winter's cur,  
Cruel, deceiving Autumn.

Until your life is squeezed and crushed,  
Your green a conquered black –  
until your gentle, soft caress  
is stilled by Autumn's bark –  
until the point your light of day  
is cut by Winter's dark –  
until at last your breath is cold,  
your body white, your stare is stark.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### OUT OF THE DESERT

[26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1976, Kitale, Kenya]

Stepping from the innocent wilderness  
Into the concrete jungle of sophisticated,  
Wheeling dealing downtown Kitale.

Just tripping on nightclubs, bars, and loose  
women;  
Spade-type suits on henchman type dudes  
Fast talking, moving, jiving people,  
Zipping, zooning, zapping evil.

Hitting the beers, crashing the ash,  
Splashing the cash, living real flash  
- just amazing.

Stepping from the bush into the concrete  
jungle  
Of downtown Kitale.

### THE HITCHHIKER

[10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1977, Livingstone, Zambia]

There was young hiker  
Who was sick to the teeth,  
So he hitched across Europe  
To the Indian truth –  
He searched for a guru  
But instead found himself,  
Then returned to the concrete  
Contended, but with little else.

He went back to his habits  
Of dope, beer and bed;  
Signed on the dole -  
Felt it was good for his health,  
Met a young woman  
Who gave him sheer hell,  
Until having enough –  
He trucked off, sick once again.

The desire for change  
In the African vein,

Gave him malaria  
But straightened his aims;  
He saw the new sunrise  
As a dream he'd slept through;  
Finally, he realised  
What it was he should do.

He went back to the concrete,  
The jungle, the race –  
Cut at his hair,  
Shaved at his face,  
Held down a job,  
Married his hell –  
Then steeped in the boredom  
Withdrew into his shell.

But then came an explosion  
And wrecked him again,  
When he started to think  
'Christ where will this end?  
I'm heading for nowhere,  
Got to get off my ass!'  
So he abandoned his wife,  
His three kids, packed up his bags.

'But where will I go?'  
he asked of himself –  
'India's no mystery,  
and Africa's the past.'  
He looked to the sky –  
'I'll reach for the stars!  
I'll future the cosmos,  
Find galactic highs!'

While down on the earth  
His children played on,  
His wife cried in sorrow,  
For her husband was gone –  
As two men in white coats  
Led him away,  
To a straight-jacket life  
And a world of grey.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### BLACK SUNRISE

[27<sup>th</sup> Jan 1977, Johannesburg, South Africa]

So Soweto finally broke the chains of  
bondage,  
My bonnie yuppies.  
Its made you think that blacks aren't  
happy being slaves.  
And soon you better watch out for those  
Militant kaffirs;  
For once Zimbabwe's free, your slaves are  
next to be the new world braves.

### LYING POETS

[7<sup>th</sup> March 1977, Johannesburg, South Africa]

The words issue forth like tumbling  
waterfalls,  
As alliteration allures additively in every  
situation.  
Yet all the phrases uttered in despair  
Are hardly compensated by the semantics  
aired  
By the university educated bard – who's  
never  
Experienced life as hard, and tough, and  
shitty  
Beyond real words – who's never hit rock  
bottom,  
Or been disturbed beyond the frivolous  
nice sounding  
lines made neat, and trim, and pretty one  
hundred  
times rewritten until the message dies –  
and all that's left  
are metered rhymes and stanzas of  
premeditated lies.

### DOWN AND OUT

[7<sup>th</sup> Mar 1977, Johannesburg, South Africa]

Down and out without a cent –  
Temptation is trying to make me bent.  
I'm trying hard to play it straight –  
Hell knows when I'll get that break  
To take me back on the road –  
To happiness and freedom.

### TUT-TUT IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

[April 1977, Johannesburg, South Africa]

#### (i) The Tomb

Sixty discovered, six open  
To the eroding steps of visitors.

Biban el Muluk, Tutankamun's the  
smallest.  
Dug deep into the bedrock,  
Downwards carved a hundred feet.  
Downward steps – passing faded  
Coloured wall-crafted hieroglyphics;  
The dark enclosing – finally opening  
Into the burial chamber, the sarcophagus  
That housed the Pharaoh and his wealth  
Before the robbers came and stripped  
The tomb of its priceless treasures.

To take to Cairo, Paris, London.  
New York, Tokyo – around the world  
Several times and back.

The tomb now bare – the stone  
sarcophagus  
Empty – the Pharaoh snatched to  
decompose,  
Consumed by jet lag.

#### (ii) The God Of Afterlife Ignored

*Osiris shed a tear for another lost one.*

Curse that Carter – and cursed he was,  
Fooling himself he acted for posterity.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The bandwagon-haggling over artefacts,  
While selfishly unconcerned about the  
spiritual – unlike Osiris.

The cultured always fool themselves.  
They are no better than the looters  
Of the millenniums, the robbers spurned  
by greed,  
Jabbing horses sides like Spaniards –  
Eyes turned green by gold – the heart left  
Untouched – their spirits cheaply  
bartered.

### (iii) The Left Overs

In the chamber the Pharaoh's biography  
remains.

Endless rows of figures on the walls –  
A lifetime's work by the artists of  
Karnak.  
I wonder at their devotion for their king,  
Each artist unaware that their descendants  
Would reflect and wonder at their work.

They, by time worn acclaim, are  
successful;  
They, the artists are immortal -  
Not just Anubis, Apis and Aten.

### **GET OFF MY BACK** (song)

[20<sup>th</sup> Apr 1977, Johannesburg, South  
Africa]

Get off my back!  
I can't stand your laugh.  
Get off my back!  
Before I knock you, Jack!

I can't pay my rent,  
I would pay every cent,  
I'm out of work,  
I'm out of luck.

If I could I'd leave,  
So don't act smart!  
'Cause if you do,  
I'll knock you, Jack!

Get off my back!  
Before I knock you, Jack!

### **ITS JUST NOT LIKE HOME**

[23<sup>rd</sup> April 1977, Newcastle, England]

Goodbye Johannesburg, South Africa,  
Hello, Europe, England – I'm back.  
Nice to see you all again.

Would you like to sip my African wine?  
It's none of your shitty stuff.  
But gee, it's nice to be back.

How's things? Snow, colds,  
unemployment?  
Inflation and no hash? Dearie me!  
It's still nice to be back – Africa was fine  
But it's just not home.

## ROAD TO SOUTH AMERICA

### SATURDAY NIGHT

[21<sup>st</sup> May 1977, Newcastle]

Saturday night highlight –  
Going to the pub and getting drunk,  
Involved in the gossip  
Of who slept with who last night.

Yet it all seems normal,  
The talks polite, the introductions  
formal,  
With occasional hints of boredom,  
Overshadowing the party still to come.

Outside – a cloudy night -  
Ringing footsteps find the right house,  
Give a knock, someone opens up  
To let us in.

The music is blaring, party-goers  
Standing, leaning, dancing, moving –  
Smiles all around –  
It's nice to see the usual faces.

Have you got a drink?  
I never got round to bringing a bottle.  
I like the music –  
Fancy letting go and having a jig?

You're moving well – how come  
You haven't been around for ages?  
Been away somewhere?  
Still working in the city, maybe?

Really out of touch ....  
I lost out on that encounter –  
Approaching others, but the phrases  
Are wearing thin.

Got a light?  
Hell, it's really getting late –

The women leaving, the guys  
Drinking on the dog-end dregs.

I guess it's home, nothing left  
To make a stay worthwhile;  
Anyone I know? Nope ...  
No one living down my way.

Heading up the road, black cats  
Staring from high walls –  
Front door key – Saturday night  
And going home to bed, alone.

### ROSIE

[29<sup>th</sup> May 1977, Newcastle]

Rosie, novocastrian liverpudlian,  
Stare intent, smile forgiving,  
Wanting nothing else  
But to give yourself  
And keep on giving.

### THREE WAY AFFAIR

[4<sup>th</sup> Jun 1977, Newcastle]

Really dig this chick,  
But my best friend's in the way.  
Every time we look,  
His shadow lurks, as if to say –

'Please I am a nice guy,  
Please don't hurt me in this way,  
I met her first.  
So let me have this break –

I'm sure she's going to love me,  
If you give me time to make  
Her understand my love.  
Please do it for my sake.'

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

How can I tell him?  
Should I tell him straight?  
Should I really let the chick  
Know the situation -

How we've come entangled  
In a three way love affair –  
Where we lovers are kept apart  
By my best friend's stare.

**AFTER THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE** (song)  
[8<sup>th</sup> Jun 1977, Newcastle]

I got kind of drunk last night,  
Ended up standing out in the crowd.  
I usually blend in with the scene,  
But last night I freaked out  
And ended up using foul language,  
Gyrating my body quite obscenely.

Everybody laughed, or looked the other  
way,  
Some played along, I was doing the  
entertaining  
Being a one man cavalcade,  
Being a one man cavalcade.

Earlier, everything had gone right,  
Then I met this chick who told me  
I knew nothing – I just didn't understand,  
So I said 'To hell! Screw you!'

I went on the booze, became degrading,  
Knocked holes in egos, screamed at the  
band –  
Everyone thought I was another punk  
rocker,  
Some even thought I was a New Wave  
shocker,

Then I met another drunk –  
She was also doing some screaming,  
I swayed in her direction,  
And we found ourselves competing.

I got kind of drunk last night,  
Ended up standing out in the crowd.

### **DYING FOR A CAUSE**

[12<sup>th</sup> June 1977, Newcastle]

As a realist viewing the world,  
He didn't understand,  
The subtleties of nature  
And its wandering roving hand –  
He didn't have intuition,  
He didn't have much at all,  
He didn't know the proverb –  
Pride before a fall.

And down and down he tumbled,  
Hurting all the way,  
The realist lost to nature,  
Nature had its say –  
He developed inhibitions,  
He dwelt on foolish dreams,  
He believed in foolish ideas  
And idiotic schemes.

As realist, now idealist  
On the absurdities of life,  
A semi-politician  
Who sanctified all strife –  
He now had intuition,  
He had it all to give –  
Yet foolishly he'd forgotten  
Why it was he lived.

### **NOT QUITE A FEMINIST**

For Caroline

[21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1977, Newcastle]

A woman in search of the mystic,  
Bar what she's already found  
To be non-existent.

A woman who love to live,  
And is loved for living  
By the ones who have nothing to give.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A woman surrounded by the weak,  
The boys, the little crying babies,  
The mediocre and the meek.

A woman who wants a man,  
To hack down the weeds  
And face her with her garden.

A woman with a need -  
That none can fill  
While her heart bleeds.

### **WE PICTURED OURSELVES**

For Diana  
[30<sup>th</sup> Aug 1977, Newcastle]

We pictured ourselves in a beautiful  
garden  
Where only the ones who saw beauty in  
nettles  
Saw beauty they could handle.

Too many stings have smitten our  
gardeners.  
They shy, turning to their roses –  
To the beauty of delicate petals they  
fatally damage.

Yet we know differently; how not to be  
stung.  
Those wonderful nettles – caress them  
gently,  
Let their acids - not burn.

It's said they smother the roses.  
Ah, those poor roses! Need we feel their  
pain?  
Fertile upon the finest soil.

If the roses cannot fight should they  
survive?  
Why must the nettles be uprooted,  
Cast aside, and left to die?

Are we not compassionate gardeners?  
Let us brush aside our dock leaves,  
And leave the roses to the weak at heart.

### **LEAVING NEWCASTLE**

[9<sup>th</sup> Sep 1977, Newcastle]

Granville, our days are almost over,  
I turn to Stockton in despair,  
Yet London lingers in my thoughts,  
My heart, belongs there.

I'm tossed between three homes –  
One is old, one is new, and one  
Is where I want to be –  
Time will make it clear.

### **THE ROAD TO WHERE?**

[1<sup>st</sup> Dec 1977, Newcastle]

Fucked up again,  
Is it expression or pain  
That brings the tears pouring down.  
Screwed in the head,  
The body's a mess,  
Feeling that life's a pointless end.  
Strange.  
Where to begin on the road –  
The road?  
The road to where?

### **WHY DO WOMEN TAKE MY BODY**

[28<sup>th</sup> Dec 1977, Newcastle]

Why do women take my body  
And squeeze the life that's left,  
Suck on the juice of living  
Till I lie here soaked in sweat;  
They're not content to listen,  
Or be mastered by the tongue –  
They'd rather be roughly ridden  
Than have their praises sung.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

They crave for my attention –  
My smile, my wit, my guile,  
Behind their coy expressions,  
Their passion's running wild;  
They lie against my shoulder  
And cry of love affairs,  
I turn gently to caress them  
In their apparent teared despair.

And more they cry for loving,  
And more and more and more –  
My smile, my wit forgotten,  
It's lust they're craving for;  
That's why they take my body  
And squeeze the life that's left,  
Suck on the juice of living  
Till I lie there soaked in sweat.

### CAROL

[25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1978, Newcastle]

She's tearing up my mind  
By being so hard –  
Yet she doesn't know  
What she's doing at times.

Her mind is fixed  
In one track –  
And her confusion  
Brings a blank.

### THE BUS DEPOT CANTEEN

[March 1978, Wearsheaf, Sunderland]

She fished out a tea-bag from a metal  
biscuit box,  
And threw it into a brown ringed-stained  
mug.  
She poured stewed water over the top,  
Till the tea-bag surfaced in a splutter and  
cough.  
Then drenched in long-life sickly milk,  
she shovelled in sugar to thicken it  
further,

and sliding the gruel over the splatter  
marked counter,  
she said – 'Five pence a mug, luv. Hope  
that you like it.'

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

[30<sup>th</sup> Apr 1978, Port of Spain, Trinidad]

The usual waiting .....  
Travelling is usually waiting,  
For the next bus, or boat,  
Or even plane if you're not broke.

Waiting for that next ride,  
To move you on to something new.

Then waiting once again,  
For the next bus, or boat,  
Or even plane – once you're bored.

When the new has passed to old,  
And the penalty of boredom,  
Is to wait anew.

### GUYANA (song)

[5<sup>th</sup> May 1978, Georgetown, Guyana]

We don't have no soap for our hair,  
We don't have no salt for our peanuts,  
We don't have no milk for our children,  
Heh, tell me what's wrong with Guyana?

We don't have no glass for our windows,  
We don't have no bowls for our toilets,  
We don't have no books for our libraries,  
Heh, tell me what's wrong with Guyana?

We don't have no jobs for our Indians,  
We don't have no smile for our Negroes,  
We don't have nothing for our  
Amerindians,  
Heh, tell me what's wrong with Guyana?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### LIFE'S HARD ON THE ROAD

[6<sup>th</sup> May 1978, New Nickerie, Surinam]

Life's hard on the road –  
The pennies jingling,  
The notes jaded, crumpled, torn;  
A back pocket as a wallet  
In a pair of jeans,  
Faded, creased and worn.

### THE BANKS OF THE OYAPOCK

[15<sup>th</sup> May 1978, Saint George, Guyana-Brazil]

By the banks of the Oyapock,  
The Amazon growth – matted and wild,  
The Indians undiscovered by white men,  
Cast their nets for the fish in the night.

By the banks of the Oyapock,  
The dug-out canoes – graceful and still,  
The Indians, figures outlined in the  
moonlight,  
Haul their nets for the fish in the night.

By the banks of the Oyapock,  
The silvery glint – thrashing and tied,  
The Indians, white teeth gleaming in  
knowledge,  
That their nets provide for the tribe.

### PLAIN SAILING

[28 May 1978, Securiju, Brasil]

Give me rough sea, the gathering cloud,  
The wind, the wail of the scavenging gull;  
The sail full sheet, the waves breaking  
aft,  
The cracking of timber, the sway of the  
mast.

### OLD MAN ATLANTIC

[30<sup>th</sup> May 1978, North Brasil]

The beautiful sea, his waved greying top,  
Combed by the breeze, uncurling his  
knots,  
Bleached by the sun, his last golden locks,  
Swept back from his brow by the bow.

### AMAZONAS

[1<sup>st</sup> Jun 1978, River Amazon, Brasil]

Sweet waters of the Amazonas,  
The Rio Negro makes you smooth,  
And darks your brown –  
While by your shores the rubber trickles,  
The crocodiles slither,  
The toucans hang your jungle  
With myriad sound.

Sweet waters of the Amazonas,  
Mankind intends to cleanse his wrongs,  
And pollute you black –  
While by your shore the oil trickles,  
The chemicals slither,  
The factories slake your jungle  
With concrete slag.

### THE GIRL FROM IPANEMA

[22<sup>nd</sup> Jun 1978, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil]

Where was that girl?  
I looked on Ipanema;  
But all I saw ...  
Was hazy Corcovado,  
With Christ, outstretched arms  
Looking too.

### COCA LEAVES

[15<sup>th</sup> Jul 1978, Cochabamba, Bolivia]

Leaves of broken green and acrid taste,  
Grinded by an eager jaw on ragged teeth,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Sucked by numbed out tongue in vain  
relief.  
Did Christ take the cross for cocaine's  
sins?  
Black cat on the prowl, doing the rounds,  
Razors out his lines in double vision,  
Counts one, two, and three in mild  
derision.  
Did Christ take the cross for cocaine's  
sins.

### **SOUTH AMERICAN GUNSHOTS**

[18<sup>th</sup> July 1978, La Paz, Bolivia]

Politics of the heart,  
Emotion of a sort,  
Expressed in an action  
Of violence,  
Against the negation of words.

As the young cry.  
Freedom of thought.  
Freedom's what they want,  
Not chains,  
Not a dictator's bonding laws.

Rise up in anger,  
Destroy all the fear,  
Tear down the national flag.  
It's slavery  
Not justice that you have.

Burn down the palace  
Drag out the minions.  
Hang every single one  
On lamp posts.  
Finish them all off.

For you need change.  
To bury the loss  
Of those years of dark,  
Of youth wasted,  
Your fathers humbled.

The shadow of tyrants.  
You shall remove them,  
So your old men  
Can straighten  
Heightened by your youth.

You shall succeed.  
Teach your children  
To know the value  
Of freedom,  
And open speech.

For you all know,  
That in a lifetime,  
One revolution is enough.

### **CONDOR**

[19<sup>th</sup> Jul 1978, La Paz, Bolivia]

Wingless condor in a windless day,  
Carrying wishful messages of peace  
Across the desert plains,  
Passing through the door of sun,  
Diving down to Titicaca's shore,  
Where once the Spaniards came  
In quest of gold.

### **FIESTA**

[29<sup>th</sup> Jul 1978, Chalhuanca, Peru]

Trumpet and horn,  
While drumming along,  
While natives in bowlers,  
Dance in circles together,  
Keeping time with a bottle  
That's keeling them over –  
As they sway down the street,  
The fiesta continues  
Far into the night.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### COLOMBIAN COPS AIN'T SO BAD

[10<sup>th</sup> Aug 1978, Guayaquil, Ecuador]

It was a heavy situation,  
Cloak and daggered,  
Whips at the ready,  
Cops soon on hand to drag us  
Down to the station  
And beat us up.

But it turned into a joke  
Of Keystone humour –  
Good natured captain  
Lounging behind a large wooden desk  
In off-hand manner,  
Letting us depart with a waving finger,  
And a word in our ears  
About behaving ourselves.

We, all smiles and chuckles,  
Relieved at our freedom,  
Went skipping into the sun filled day;  
Praising justice,  
Extolling liberty,  
Thankful at our skill  
To tell bold lies,  
Agreeing they should have locked us up  
Just the same.

### SUICIDE ACT

[22<sup>nd</sup> Aug 1978, Turbo, Colombia]

Stuck between the going on,  
And the point of no return.  
Held up, broke and hungry,  
With little hope of moving on.

I have no chance of catching  
The shadows in the night,  
Exchanging hope for despair  
I've lost all my rights.

For I'm nothing without my courage,  
My will to combat life.

I care nothing for my freedom,  
I've given up the fight.

Tomorrow will bring nothing,  
Tonight I die alone.  
Tonight I take my own life,  
For which I shall not mourn.

So do not pity suicide,  
It glorifies the act;  
Forget I died of hunger  
And be nourished by that fact.

### OLD MAN ON A PARK BENCH

[28<sup>th</sup> Aug 1978, Port Obaldia, Panama]

Blow blossom, blow wind  
Through the trees of the mind.  
Blow helpless, blow gently,  
Scatter leaves on my past.

Hush quickly, hush quietly,  
The autumn returned –  
Coat softly, coat velvet,  
The pains of gone love.

For the wind howls swiftly  
Over crab-crinkled boughs,  
Gathering the seasons,  
While beginning to plough

The past into future,  
The past's scattered leaves,  
Helplessly blown  
In an attempt to deceive

The old man's own memory  
Of what was before.  
A clarity of reason  
That sensibility has bourn -

To make the old man  
Remember an age  
Of romance, emotions

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Of passionate rage –

That since then has gone  
And left him to gaze  
At Spring's falling blossom,  
Rather sadly replaced -

By hazes of old age  
In its last final blaze,  
The slumber of waiting,  
A solitary wait,

For the wind to come rushing,  
To silence the birds,  
Hushing a stillness,  
A murmur of words –

Blowing blossom, blowing wind  
Through the trees of the mind.  
Hushing quickly, hushing quietly,  
The thoughts of old time.

### YOUNG CAPTAIN COSMOS

[7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Taboga Isle, Gulf of  
Panama]

I supposed him an old sea-dog  
Hit by hard times –  
But he turned into a captain,  
Harbour locked by design.

He was the youngest afloat  
The Pacific sea-board,  
But time was fast gaining  
On his barnacled boat.

Oh young Captain Cosmos,  
Just wasted away –  
He'd deserted the wind,  
And traded the waves.

His sails needed mending,  
The anchor a new chain,  
The hull wanted painting,

His deck was salt-stained.

But he lay on his bunk,  
Rolling the waves –  
In the safety of harbour  
In a pacific coast bay.

I watched on as first mate  
As my captain declined,  
And I felt growing anger  
In the seas of my mind.

I unslung my hammock,  
And we then parted ways,  
I shipped out of harbour  
Of that Pacific coast bay.

I gazed back at the Princess,  
The captain's doomed ship,  
And watched to my horror  
As she began to side-slip.

I saw young Captain Cosmos  
Erect at the bow,  
As the Princess keeled over  
And finally went down.

I supposed him an old sea-dog  
Hit by hard tides –  
But he turned into a captain  
Harbour locked for all time.

### BELIEFS

[12<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Panama City]

When the pages of one's life,  
Blow out the window,  
Bourn by a storm that's raging –

The feeling that the heart  
Stops ticking -  
And the damage to the mind they're  
leaving

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Is not relieved by forgetting  
- A loss -  
That's not regained by recollecting.

### SCANDAL MONGERING

[14<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Panama City]

May I stop to curse the dawn  
Of evil thoughts and abject wrongs,  
Raised against her noble head.

For me, she is the one I love  
And no one in the depth of anger  
Shall wrought lies in sweet revenge.

For I am the protector of my maiden's  
honour,  
For in my bosom rests my  
Maiden's heart.

### CREATIVITY

[15<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Taboga, Panama]

Night draws in – and the artist lost in ink,  
Little knowing where the next stroke  
Will lead his thought.

His imagination, once so immersed in  
reality  
Now quickly altered to flounder  
momentarily in the dark.

The light and vision of his work,  
Lost beneath a wave of endless new  
frightening possibilities.

### SELF INDULGENCE

[17<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Panama City]

The erect penis, and the steady hand,  
Teasing, squeezing, stroking,  
Extracting warming juices,  
With a fragrance mutely floating,  
Across the barrier of man.

With the rising, inner wanting,  
Tempered with a sexual longing,  
Frustrating ever haunting,  
For the release of nature's giving  
That symbolises man.

For without woman's coupled body,  
Deemed as instrumental normal,  
He turns an inner dwelling,  
To a sin that's only mortal  
That typifies all men.

### PARTING

[18<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Panama]

When the love flows over and out,  
And down beyond the edges,  
To the limits of restraint.

When the longing for desire departs,  
And loses all momentum  
Beneath the pain.

When rejection of well meant intention,  
Is spurned and hurled backwards  
As abuse.

Then it's time to burn the bridges of  
approach,  
And retreat in hasty action of divorce,  
Before the massacre ensues.

## ROAD TO THE AMERICAS

### THE AFRICAN GIRL

For Carol Woodruff

[28<sup>th</sup> Sep 1978, Newcastle]

From the mountains of Morocco,  
she came garnished in sea shells,  
with a smile to stir the waves  
on to the pounding English shore.

To the bleak moors of Northumberland,  
She went to be tarnished by the cold  
winds,  
Made bitter by an east-chill  
So typical of home.

And there banished in a northern field,  
She cried – her tears evoking  
a song bird to softly lullaby  
her Moorish sighs.

### THE SYSTEM

[26<sup>th</sup> Oct 1978, Newcastle]

Existing, more than just,  
Living with a lust for life,  
Greater than the forces out to hinder and  
restrain,  
The progress of the questing mind –

Going beyond the boundaries of  
conditioning,  
Forced upon the individual by a  
benefactor  
Who guides divergent thought  
Into the funnel of opportunity –

That channels all the minor tracks  
Back upon themselves,  
To converge as abstract ways  
On the beaten path -

And life quite simply nut-shelled as –  
A house, a job, a car.

### LOVE HUMANISES

[2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1978, Newcastle]

Love straddles the body  
And empties the thoughts  
Of all other idle curiosities  
Regarding life.

Love encompasses the being  
Like a shrouding mist,  
And envelops in its veil  
A cloak of secrecy.

Love embellishes the heart  
With gentle tears,  
For tender reminiscences  
Of lovers in the past.

Love humanises the soul  
In enlightenment,  
And opens up the void  
To show compassion.

### THE GIRL IN THE PONCHO

[9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1978, Newcastle]

You breezed into my life about noon,  
And asked if you could without being  
prude,  
Take my dog for a walk.

I was as busy as hell writing my book,  
And you upset my rhythm with your  
sweet euphemism  
'I'll be coming back in awhile'.

I tried sensibly to ignore your return –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But your innocent style and childish  
smile,  
Had me head over heels wrapped in love.

### LENNY

[26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1978, Akenside Terrace,  
Newcastle]

She rang my door bell,  
Then asked me shyly  
If I could remember who she was.

I had been expecting her,  
But showed great surprise  
As I let her in.

With the log fire ablaze,  
The candle illuminating her face,  
How could I not fall in love.

### GREY TITS

[30<sup>th</sup> Nov 1978, Newcastle]

Settling in for winter  
Midst falling snow,  
And withering garden poppies.

Idly watching grey tits  
Steal discarded tit-bits  
From the wheelbarrow.

Stroking my agile dog,  
Eager in her instinct  
To be off in hot pursuit.

### READING IN CHEAP ACCOMMODATION

[12<sup>th</sup> Dec 1978, Akenside Terr,  
Newcastle]

With the grey light,  
Unique in its setting,  
In the dawns and winter days  
Of festive England.

Reading from a book  
'neath the opaque rays  
of dull and cheap  
bought light-bulb hours –

That destroys the vision  
Of a childhood's brilliance,  
And decays the twenty-twenty  
Of a young man's life.

### PARAGUAYAN MORMONS

[19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1978, Newcastle]

Oh we are two wide-eyed Mormons,  
Spreading out the word,  
Who dance and sing and like to think  
It's in the name of God –

But really all we're doing  
Is running from ourselves,  
Convinced we know the answers  
From within our empty selves.

Oh we'd love to go to Rio  
And try the rumba thing,  
We'd love to visit Chile  
For the wine we cannot drink –

We'd cry to see old Lima,  
Of the drugs we've heard so much –  
But we're hooked up in religion  
As saviours of the Church.

Oh we'd love to break our morals,  
And go back to being saves,  
In a world full of sorrows  
And of people filling graves –

But we haven't got the courage,  
We no longer feel that brave,  
We are blind to all the changes  
Because we are afraid.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

So we go on with our conversations,  
With humour and with plum,  
We endeavour to spread wisdom  
On you and everyone –

We try to make it easy,  
But it isn't always fun,  
Though we hope you understand,  
We're trying to harm no one.

### LONELY CHRISTMAS

[23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1978, Newcastle]

It's almost Christmas and there's no  
snow;  
Tradition lets us down again.  
The radio stations of the world  
Are jingling bells and interviewing  
Thoughtful people passing helpful words  
of love to the lonely.

It sounds sad –  
Yet Christmas underneath it all  
Is a sad time of realisation at where  
And with whom, one stands alone  
Or on the fringes of care –  
As others go off home to be  
With Ma and Pa.

What would many say if they knew  
That your Christmas dinner was  
A half pound of sausages  
And a boiled parsnip?

No one's so unfortunate –  
But Christmas highlights the alienation  
Of living on one's own.  
It hides the truth 'neath the tinsel  
And the gifts beneath the tree.

### TIME TICKS BY

[27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1978, Akenside Terr, Newcastle]

With Christmas gone,

And all the wrapping paper  
Crinkled in the dustbins  
To await collection –  
Time moves on to the New Year.

Yet, we must wait,  
Each ticking second,  
From the Christmas let-down  
To the drinks of Hogmanay.

The last hours of the year,  
Edging forwards,  
With a week of quick remembrance  
Of the fifty-one before.

The final waiting days  
Of another festive season,  
That work pervades  
And money leaves an empty pocket.

As we all wait for New Year,  
As time ticks,  
We hang the past,  
And raise our hopes.

### NEW YEAR 1979

[2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1979, Newcastle]

Another anno,  
Another carnival over,  
And the seriousness of life  
Waiting with a hangover  
In the heavy morn.

### WEST COAST LIFE

[4<sup>th</sup> May 1979, Seattle, Wash. State]

LA, Frisco, Portland, Washington,  
A West Coast hike from Sun State,  
Through Oregon –  
Green trees, black roads,  
Blue skies over mountains high,  
Pacific waves and silver fish,  
And shells in the sand.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Seattle, Spokane, Olympic, Rainer –  
Washington State,  
Without its beauty -  
Red lights, walk signs,  
Squirrels dancing there,  
Campus girls with golden hair  
And bluebells 'neath the trees.

U of W meets 15<sup>th</sup> at 45<sup>th</sup>,  
College types -  
Lying in the grass to think,  
Dreaming on white clouds,  
On coffee cups and raindrops,  
Everything of student work  
That makes for simple life.

While at 16<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup>,  
A writer –  
Smokes a reefer every hour,  
Sees only blank walls,  
Dying plants and cheap bulbs,  
Living with his type-machine,  
Alone and unaware.

### JAKE'S CORNER

[15<sup>th</sup> May 1979, Beaver Creek, Yukon,  
Canada]

It's beautiful here. Tranquil and  
picturesque.  
The small hotel and gas station,  
With its free ice-cream for every  
customer.  
The road to Atlin winding down to the  
frozen lake.  
The sun still high, the breeze cool and icy.  
The mountains glazed in snow – the  
Alaskan  
Highway long and stretching and deserted.

Out in the bush, always, the cry of birds,  
Singing their spring songs, helping the sun  
along in its battle against the ice.  
Soon the trees will be breaking into leaf,

The flowers into blossom, and the grass  
into seed.

### THE AMERICAN TRAVELLER

[21<sup>st</sup> May 1979, Seattle]

Back in Seattle, looking to settle,  
Mellow out and search for a job.  
Or instead head for Frisco,  
Or across to Dakota –  
To a friend out in Fargo  
Who'll be busy all summer  
Playing music and spaced out on pot.

Or what about Palm Beach,  
To lie in the noon heat,  
And bake out on cocaine and snort.  
Or the bubble of New York,  
To hustle the back street,  
To get pissed and run with the dogs.

Or the jazz of New Orleans,  
Walking to blue-beat,  
Where lamp-posts prop up the broads.  
Or freeway-land LA,  
Jacked up on bad speed,  
To be choked and gagged on the smog.

As the rain in Seattle,  
Falls real, and falls gentle –  
Summer slips by green and wet.  
For to remain in Seattle,  
Is the question to settle,  
Before melancholy makes me inert.

### OLD MAN PHILLIP

[28<sup>th</sup> May 1979, Seattle]

Old man Phillip  
Rolled the brush along –  
With painting cares  
That greyed his hair  
But never aged his spirit.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### IT

[1<sup>st</sup> June 1979, Seattle, Washington State]

Women plan it,  
Men don't understand it,  
In between that difference,  
Lies the lie.

Hearts rule it,  
Heads ruin it,  
And bodies make it speak  
Before it dies.

Children take it,  
Aged break it,  
Rulers turn its power  
Into war.

Hate beats it,  
Greed defeats it,  
Time rots its apple  
To the core.

Fools deride it,  
Pride blinds it,  
Rejection when its given  
Kills the soul.

The wise take it,  
The smart make it,  
It fills their all  
With its gold.

### ALASKA

[5<sup>th</sup> June 1979, Seattle, Washington State]

Alaska's snowy hoary wastes  
That beckoned gold-diggers, then oil  
sheiks  
Was long before I drove and lost my  
nerve  
On the road into the deepest north  
Of arctic fox and permafrost –

Now go-go girls dance and sing,  
Paid in kind by the rugged rich  
Who slave their guts welding line,  
Canning fish, or trapping fur –  
Out their minds in drunken stupor,  
Fleeced by robbing pimps, rip-off tykes  
Who've forced Alaskans to sell up -  
Make way for the rotting future.

### VAGRANT OF THE WORLD

10<sup>th</sup> June 1979, Seattle, Washington  
State]

The broken steps of Macchu Picchu,  
I climbed not long ago –  
The raging falls of Livingstone  
To which I barred my soul –  
The holy waters of Benares  
Where I lost my hope –  
The majestic powers of the Taj  
Said words I never spoke.

The drifting sands by Pharaohs tombs  
Withheld a timeless power –  
The Herat fort Iskander built  
Detracted and devoured –  
The bleakness of the Roman Wall  
Awed and it inspired –  
The slender columns on Athens' hills  
Set history's torch on fire.

Six minarets of Islam's might  
Held my Byzantium in a spell –  
The Rio Christ outstretched arms  
In grace before, I knelt –  
The Golden Temple of the Sikhs  
Dwarfed my beggar man –  
While Siddhartha's fragile boa tree  
Gave shade on my content.

The bottomless pit of Kimberley  
Threw diamonds from its depths –  
The obelisk of Hatshepsut  
Needed hieroglyphic death –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The treasure house of Paris art  
Drew a smile that paralysed –  
The artefacts of Inca gold  
Blinded my weakened eyes.

The Colosseum of Caesar times  
Echoed roaring lions –  
The neat white crosses of Verdun  
Recalled fields of iron –  
The Lucknow fort of blood red brick  
Relived an Empire's trial –  
The missing nose of Giza's sphinx  
Napoleon's marching files.

The visions bought by travelling far  
subverts modern standards –  
The foreign culture of abroad  
Oft as left me branded –  
The bridges crossed into these worlds  
Here I have reflected–  
The pictures of a vagrant life  
Is all I have intended.

### IRELAND

[13<sup>th</sup> June 1979, Seattle, Washington  
State]

For centuries the battles have raged,  
Irish hands have been blood-stained;  
In cypress shadows the children have been  
raised  
In endless wakes, the morning broken  
By Fenian blasts or Loyalist shots –  
The covenant of the Lord – broken.

### THURSDAY NIGHT POKER

[29<sup>th</sup> June 1979, Fairbanks, Alaska]

Who's in for poker?  
If so, bring some beer ...  
We're going to have a party.  
The game's at my place tonight –  
I'm lining up the shots of tequila,  
So get your asses moving

And come on over.

You name it, we'll play it –  
From High Chicago  
To Follow the Whore –  
Or Mexican Sweat –  
Or Five Card Draw with Jacks  
Or better, to open, to win –  
Seven Card Stud, or whatever.  
Just bring some beer.

### THE GALS OF ALASKA (song)

[5<sup>th</sup> July 1979, Fairbanks, Alaska]

It is the time to loosen my tongue  
And let out a howl, then ease to a hum,  
Set free my heart with a wilderness song  
Straight like a trail that bumps right along  
–

Oh the gals of Alaska, so sweet and so  
pure,  
They'll take a man's heart and he'll  
never be cured.

I'll tell of my days in Fairbanksian bars,  
My nights with those gals under the  
Northern stars,  
A bottle in hand, and the Lights as my  
guide  
Making love by the pipeline over Quarter  
Mile side

Oh the gals of Alaska, so sweet and so  
pure,  
They'll take a man's heart and he'll  
never be cured.

### THE CANNERY BLUES

[25<sup>th</sup> July 1979, Seward, Alaska]

Who wouldn't gets the cannery blues  
When a toke of marijuana,  
Or a lunch-time beer obliterates,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And wipes away the slime  
Of another fourteen hour day  
Bent over the silver salmon  
That finds its way onto the tables  
Of families living high on life.

Back in the cannery,  
Slimmers slit the lumps of flesh,  
Rip the guts and innards,  
Inspect, and score and scale  
The King of Fish –  
Until it disappears as a silver slush  
Along a chute headed for the canner  
And a half-pound home of metal,  
Destined to be shelved at a store,  
And bought by some housewife  
For some outrageous retail price.

### BACK TO LIVING

[21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1979, Anchorage, Alaska]

I can hardly believe the work is over  
And I can get back to life.  
Twenty nine days of slog at the cannery  
And I need a rest.  
It reminds me of quitting the oil rigs –  
The same physical exhausted feeling,  
The constant desire to sleep,  
The vacuum left by having spare time  
After a period in which very minute  
Was accounted for.

### MOUNT MARATHON

[23<sup>rd</sup> Aug 1979, Seward, Alaska]

Resurrection Bay stretched exquisitely  
south too meet the Pacific Ocean.  
The piercing mountains hemmed in  
the dark blue arm of sea dotted with  
tiny sailing boats and a large lumber ship  
trailing timber, heading for port.

Gouged out cums and ragged crags knifing  
North from razor cut arêtes –

hollowed and sheltered timeless snows  
and glaciers from the Arctic sun.

Conifers of spruce and firs halted the eye  
From tracing the ice down gullies  
and canyons to the very sea.

A warm southern wind made hardly a  
ripple of white to disturb the calm.

### THE BEACHCOMBER

[28<sup>th</sup> Aug 1979, Kodiak Island, Alaska]

Howling gales are all too common,  
Splintered boats to deepest fathom,  
Drift ashore locked in flotsam,  
Beach combed up, lost in flames  
To the reaper of the waves,  
Sitting with his star-struck gaze.

Lost to all the world over,  
Wind swept souls perdu at sea,  
Gusty fires sweep the heart-ache,  
Steal the voice and lonely hope,  
Replaced by a mighty blankness,  
Tighter than the wettest rope.

Forgotten lives are time immortal,  
Saddened figures – we know them all,  
Raging storms we learn to live with,  
Feel the pulse of nature's war,  
Thrown at the broken shoreline,  
At the man who knows no love.

### GOING TO HAWAII

[5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1979, Fairbanks, Alaska]

Paradise, being what it is –  
I'm expecting to eat a lot of fruit,  
Stroll a lot of beach,  
And catch up on a lot of sleep.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### ALASKA

[6<sup>th</sup> Sept 1979, Anchorage, Alaska]

Some call it Oil-Capital of America,  
Others - Last of the Wild Frontier,  
Where pipelines are in confrontation  
With the natives hunting seals.

Tourists fondly recall the snow peaks,  
A number can name all the bars –  
And most can't forget the long evenings  
Or the night sky without any stars.

For Alaska is Alaska, and no less  
A state once founded on gold –  
Where a man is a man in his own right  
And an old man at twenty years old.

I came to Alaska in Seventy Nine,  
I arrived unshaven and broke –  
I worked fifteen hours a day on average  
And left with a wallet of notes.

### THE LOWER FORTY-EIGHT

[8<sup>th</sup> Sept 1979, Anchorage, Alaska]

Alaska, I ask you –  
What are you going to do?  
Wrapped in wool  
By government rules,  
They are slowly fleecing you.

### THE LIFE OF A BUM

[Lydgate State Park, Kauai, Hawaii]

Flying high on full sail,  
Just breezing along –  
With my girl overseas,  
And a reason to sing,  
A reason for whiskey,  
A reason for rum,  
An object for living  
The life of a bum.

### PAINTING A PICTURE

[22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1979, Lydgate, Kaiui, Hawaii]

When a coca-cola can  
Without its quaffed brew,  
Becomes a ready cup  
For a coco split in two –  
The turquoise of the ocean  
Prints an artist's view,  
That roots the painter's easel  
And halts his brushing hues.

For his eye in subtle magic  
Transcends the tropic hues,  
That belie a postcard's softness  
To crush and harshly bruise –  
As in person on the shoreline,  
The artist dabs anew,  
The kaleidoscopic ocean  
Ripens wholesome, fresh reviewed.

### LOVELY HAWAIIAN MAIDENS

[25<sup>th</sup> Sept, Lydgate, Kauai, Hawaii]

Captain Cook blundered  
As God ripped asunder –  
His blood dripped red on the shore.  
The Owyhee'ns turned savage,  
Devoured and savaged,  
A man their maidens adored.

Then later the whalers,  
Four-year mast sailors –  
Their lust so patiently stored,  
Would watch as the maidens,  
Naked and swimming,  
Climbed ready and giving, aboard.

And now it's no different  
In Oahu's light districts  
Or Waikiki Beach dance-floors;  
If the pockets play jingle,  
And the eye holds a twinkle,  
The maidens will love you as yore.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE HUNTERS

[28<sup>th</sup> Sept 1979, Kokee, Kauai, Hawaii]

Green in its shadow, bright in its sky,  
The mynah birds cry to the winds –  
Storms pass through as whistling words  
As strangers tarry in the towering woods  
offering shelter and shade to wild  
creatures.

These visitors, armed and round bellied  
Who come to take all that they want –  
Depart with their trophies, spoil and gain,  
Unknowing leaving their souls behind -  
Lost in a wood of far greater deception.

### SECOND OF OCTOBER

[2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1979, Kokee, Kauai, Hawaii]

Today is a day of non-thought  
Spent lingering in the sunshine  
Being close to nature and to life -

Feeling not a heartbeat,  
Nor a stirring of the soul  
That usually stirs the mind.

For today is a time lock,  
Tied in tangled vines  
And captured now forever –

Stored as a keepsake  
To ponder over slowly  
As a time sublime.

Today is a day of all days  
That listens to the silence  
That seals this final line.

### ON SKID ROW

[14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1979, San Francisco, California]

Being broke sometimes ain't no fun.  
The feeling of deprivation -

brought on by a hungry and a knotted  
stomach  
is further intensified by being destitute  
in a hostile city.

The streets of San Francisco are paved  
With many such men down on their luck,  
Crippled by work, and maimed by a  
society  
That is at a loss to help them.

In other finer cities, the citizens turn  
Their heads the other way on seeing a  
bum  
Collecting ciggy-butts, or wine-eyed  
slumped.

In Frisco it is hard to turn one's head  
Without eying a worse case of hardship –  
The lonely figure with the shakes –  
The bum talking to himself.

These bums are no different from their  
Counterparts in Bombay or Calcutta –  
Living their lives by hand-outs, sorting  
through  
The garbage that others see fit to discard.

Only their disfigurements make them less  
Obvious a case for making them social  
outcasts -  
Yet on closer look, many dockside winos  
Or park grass-dwellers are mental-home  
rejects,  
Disability pensioners, one-time petty  
crooks  
Who couldn't make a living by petty  
crime.

Few are there by choice – circumstance  
Has led them down a road of degradation,  
Left them jobless, homeless, spouseless  
And utterly useless to the general  
community.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

In Dickens' London, through the eyes of a  
child,  
The same world existed as now in San  
Francisco  
Where I find myself on Skid Row.

### **CANNERY ROW VISITED**

[15<sup>th</sup> Oct 1979, Monterey, California]

A cold wind blew along Cannery Row,  
The workers looked haggard and old;  
Eighteen long hours they hungered their  
lives,  
Lay bare their muscles for gold –  
That gleamed in the eye of the  
bartender's wife  
And the girl next-door - a whore,  
The work-shy who only worked at night -  
Thieved everyone on Cannery Row.

### **MONTEREY BAY**

[17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1979, Pacific Grove, California]

Silent flies the gull,  
Soundless swims the cod –  
But roaring breaks the ocean,  
Foaming, churning surf.

### **NO HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW**

[30<sup>th</sup> Oct 1979, Hollywood, Los Angeles]

Those LA nights –  
Hollywood striving, fighting –  
My heart pounding, frightened  
Not for myself, but for the future  
Beneath Sunset's famous lights.

The running never stops –  
Only the looking back  
Takes longer to forget.

### **HOLLYWOOD**

[4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, San Diego, California]

Strung on the thread  
That wove the coat of fame -  
Success wore a dress –  
Spun from the cloth  
Of another's distress  
And cloak of pain.

### **IMPERIAL VALLEY**

[9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, Mayan Hotel, El Centro,  
Calif]

Home in the valley,  
A bed down by the tracks,  
In a beat-up old motel  
Besides a lettuce patch –

Where gypsies camp or tarry,  
Where vagrants soil their hands,  
Where winter blows in workers  
Who migrate from other lands

### **DISENCHANTMENT**

[11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, El Centro, California]

How come, as every day passes  
I feel the need I must be somewhere else?  
How come as each moment ceases,  
I sense I must return from where I went.

### **THE COUNTRY CLUB (ON ACID)**

[18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

The singer-pianist Nancy was a  
professional,  
The manager was just another crook –  
The clientele were rich Vegas people  
Who used a bottle as I use a pen.

The bar staff and waiters were -  
Starched minds squeezed into white coats;  
The Country Club was Sinatra and Martin,  
The acid didn't help – they threw us out.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### DESPAIR

[23<sup>rd</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

I have lost touch with the high life,  
I have sunk to the depths of despair,  
I am crushed internally, I cry in pain,  
I detest that I have to dirty my hands.

I soil my clothes and play second best  
To individuals who should be my pupils,  
I am delving into introspective terms,  
My total dissatisfaction with present life.

My love for living has shrivelled -  
Lies buried in a woodworm riddled casket  
Far beneath the earth that soils  
The lowest labourer's hands.

I have been driven by the devil  
To the the furthest edge of torture,  
Racking hate for all members  
Of my fellow man.

I have reached the muddy bed  
Of a lake of fear,  
That stirs the mind to act  
In twisted outlook.

I am torn between two ponies  
Sent east and west for distraction.  
I am dying every second,  
Every pain filled moment.

I have lost my freedom,  
I am nothing,  
I am gone,  
I am dead.

I remain incarcerated,  
Chained in the dungeon  
I have nailed myself in.  
Southern California -  
It may be my grave.

### THE FARMER'S DEMISE

[23<sup>rd</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

Pain is no sorrow  
In the fields of the morrow,  
Where cotton runs high  
And white as pure snow –  
Where the furrows run dead-eye,  
And the burrows hold vermin,  
And the wind howls treetops  
To an old preacher's sermon  
In a rickety torn barnyard,  
The corners in cobwebs,  
Harbouring young field mice  
And a one-eyed old owl,  
That sits on an oak beam  
Hushed by the Lord's words  
That carries the law  
Across the wide country miles –  
That rings in the hollows  
'The Farmer has died'.

### ARIZONA FARMERS

[26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

Arizona farmers are cantankerous, old  
Twisted, gruff voiced, ill mannered,  
Totally unreasonable, cripple-minded,  
Damn pig-head sons of bitches that ever  
Walked - no – crawled this earth!

### COTTON PICKING

[26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

If ever there was a more boring job  
Than cotton picking – you name it.  
Cotton picking may sound like an  
occupation  
That reaps of humour and bad jokes  
About racism and callous slave masters.  
It is not so. The humour is non existent,  
The racism exists – Mexican, not Black–  
The white slaver is now an Arizona  
farmer.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE PICKER'S LINE

[26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1979, Holtville, California]

The Arizona farmer's whip  
Lashed the air about to hit  
A poor lost Mex losing ground,  
Falling behind the pickers line –  
The pickers line, the pickers line,  
Picking cotton all the time;  
Picking fat white snowy balls,  
Picking, picking, until he falls.

And thus the farmer drives his slaves,  
Picking cotton every day;  
From dawn to dusk the Mexies toil,  
Tilling deep the cotton soil –  
Picking cotton all the time,  
As pickers on the pickers line;  
The pickers line, the pickers line,  
Picking cotton all the time.

### THE DUNES OF GLAMIS

[4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1979, Holtville, California]

Thirty days beneath the broiler,  
Windswept nights, huddling closer,  
Wastes of sea taking over;  
Beached upon the dunes of Glamis,  
Riding on a four-wheeled camel,  
Slinging beers in buggy travel.

### 9,394<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MY LIFE

[12<sup>th</sup> Dec 1979, Holtville, California]

Today was the 3,633<sup>rd</sup> day of the decade,  
The 20<sup>th</sup> last day of the Seventies,  
And the 9,394<sup>th</sup> day of my life.

### THE DESERT WORKER

[13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1979, Holtville, California]

Winsome grows the winter harvest,  
Green and yet unripe to pick;

Dry the eyes the dust has reddened,  
Hoarse the throat the wind has whipped;  
Fierce the sun has blazed the forehead,  
Hot the sweat has coolly dripped;  
Hard the back has bent in labour,  
Toiling on the desert strip.

Evening fades the end day shadows,  
Red and black the mountain sky;  
Quietly ate the hands that mastered,  
Quieter still the hands that sighed;  
Quietly lay the hands together,  
Silent prayer on which to die;  
Still-like lay the rake so life-like,  
By the hoe that gently cried.

Windward blew the winter's harvest,  
Seeded and o'er ripe to pick;  
Wet the eyes the tears had deadened,  
Prayerless was the tongue equipped;  
Piercing pain had creased the forehead,  
Cold the icy mountains ripped,  
At the back bent down in sorrow,  
Toiling on the desert strip.

### A POSTCARD

[19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1979, Holtville, California]

Where is this land where the river runs  
bold,  
Where the arbors catch sunlight in fiery  
glow?  
Where the mosses lie red 'neath  
shimmering gold  
Of cascading leaves descending like snow  
To garnish like ribbons, tie up as bows  
A bower of seclusion in quiet  
undergrowth?

### DO WHAT YOU CAN

[23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1979, Holtville, California]

Do what you can  
While you can.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Ask what you can  
Before you can't.

### **BACK ON THE ROAD**

[Christmas Eve, Mexicali, Baja, Mexico]

Back on the road that winds down on  
south,

Back to a life of waiting for time –  
Waiting for time to frizzle away –  
Waiting to pass it down Mexico way.

### **TEQUILA FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER**

[26<sup>th</sup> Dec 1979, San Quentin, Baja, Mex.]

Ensenda lies behind me –  
The residue of my stomach with it  
Why did we start on that glass flagon of  
tequila

With the coiled snake lying at the  
bottom?

I had hitched to Aguas Calientes -  
It was Christmas. The Yaqui Indian bar-  
tender

Born in New York, raised in California,  
Was straight out of the book of life.

Saint Simon he called himself –  
Jesus never had no disciples like him;  
Tequila for Christmas dinner –

The last thing I remember was the snake's  
head

Looking at me from the flagon –  
A car in a ditch - a fist fight with  
Mexicans

Trying to help us – a thunderstorm,  
Before waking up in a hotel room in  
Ensenada.

### **RAINBOWS OF ROCK PURDAH**

For Lee and Heiko

[1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1980, Mazatlan, Mexico]

Washed in the waves of recaptured love,  
Gently relaxed by the murmur of words

Whispered and aired in passionate sides,  
Floatingly said in idle soft hours.

Patroned by gentry and beauty forlorn,  
Fringed by low artists midst psychic  
reform,  
Searching the rainbows of rocky purdah,  
Seeking immortal the seaside bazaar.

Laid on the shores for amorous designs,  
Caressed by the surf on lazy moon nights,  
Filtering the gaze of starry-eyed want,  
Sharing the peace of the palmed  
waterfront.

### **A SMALL MEXICAN VILLAGE**

[3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1980, Mazatla -Puerto Villarta  
Rd, Mexico]

To be dropped in a small Mexican village  
is one of the delights of travelling, but  
one of the nightmares of hitch-hiking.

Something to savour and dislike,  
cherish and abhor, it requires little  
compulsion to move on,  
and fosters a compulsive desire  
to remain on the road out of fear -  
of abandonment in a quaintness  
that suggests a forlorn acceptance of life.

A dream and a nightmare, it is best solved  
sitting by the roadside watching labouring  
peasants, sleepy shopkeepers, locals  
lounging out of work - by warily keeping  
an eye on the stretching highway  
offering a choice of leaving or remaining,  
on the whim of a thrown thumb.

### **SO BE IT THE DOGS**

[3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1980, La Cumbre, Mexico]

When the sun goes down,  
So does the tequila.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

When the rivers run dry,  
So do the teardrops.  
When the music stops,  
So ends the heartache.  
If something must die,  
So be it the dogs.

### THREE LINES

[3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1980, Manzanillo, Mexico]

It takes free verse  
To string three lines  
To make a rhyme.

### LO PRIMERO VERSO (Muy Malo)

[4<sup>th</sup> Jan 1980, Guadalajara, Mexico]

En al mercado a la lado  
De la calle Mexico  
Hay una casa para el peon  
Quien no haber una lugar  
Ni una casa pero la via  
No conoce igual a los campos  
El partir hace un rato  
Para la vida barata  
En un pueblo de Mexico.

### HOW NOT TO COMPOSE A POEM

[8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1980, Mexico City]

To understand more fully, the different  
kinds of rhyme,  
A general little rule should be utmost in  
the mind,  
It requires little knowledge beyond a  
simple line  
To comprehend the meaning the words  
knot and bind.

If you take the word *creation*, it means  
nothing on its own,  
But add a word like *freedom*, then a  
phrase begins to roll;

A phrase that starts as nothing but a  
thought of rough design,  
Completed, starts to sound as poetry of a  
kind.

*Creation of freedom* we try for all the  
time,  
And there we have a sentence brought to  
life divine,  
So next we need a phrase that will fit into  
the rhyme,  
So add *imagination*, creation undermined.

*Creation of freedom* is creation  
underrated,  
Investigated deeply by a prying artful  
clown,  
Out to prove by values, *imagined* metal  
crimes  
Existing within the walls of the structured  
imprisoned mind.

### PAMELA

[12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1980, Isla de Mujeres, Mexico]

A small Kiki bird  
With an eye for the bottle  
We emptied together  
Then made love by the water  
On a long Mexican night.

### PUNTA GORDA

[30<sup>th</sup> Jan 1980, Punta Gorda, Belize]

Trapped at the end of the world,  
A jungle waste, the last of the colonies  
Clinging like a dead man to a sinking ship.  
Trapped in a tropical hinterland  
Not fit to grow bananas,  
A steaming forest of nothing.  
Marooned by a river -  
Waiting for a ship.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### JUNGLE TREK

[1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1980, Cuyamelma, Honduras]

One day in Guatemala and we took to  
The jungle and crossed into Honduras.

It was quite a way and one for a novel.  
Banana trains and jungle treks are usually  
Only restricted to movies.

I have taken other jungle trails before,  
But none so enjoyable as the journey  
We undertook into the heart of nowhere.

### TRAVELLING WITH A GERMAN

[12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, Managua, Nicaragua]

In volcanic eruption  
The problems poured forth,  
Fiery and hot and flaming –  
To consume all my forest,  
To cover in ash - my unripe bananas  
and coco-hung palms;  
That I had pictured as perfect,  
That had formed my sublime,  
Before her smoke had enveloped  
My quiet peaceful mind.

### NICARAGUA

[12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, Managua, Nicaragua]

Nicaragua is a land of volcanoes and lakes,  
Rolling hills and green sweet fields –  
A land of pleasant smiles and peasant  
dreams,  
Of almond blossom and red flame trees.

### ELKE

[15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, San Juan del Sur, Nicar.]

We are alone now – we rest quietly  
In a small fishing village on the Pacific  
Coast, and we have just passed a warm  
breezy day, sipping coffee, ravishing

innumerable cones of soft ice-cream.

Each of us dreams of another world  
Unknown to the other. We maintain  
A company with one another as though  
We have known each other fifty years.

We rarely speak. Occasionally we  
exchange  
Warm smiles – we are lost to one another  
By the circumstances in which we find  
Ourselves in a strange affair of love.

### UNEASY SLEEP

[16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, San Juan del Sur, Nicar.,

Uneasy sleep steals my dreams,  
As uneasy rests the coming dawn –  
Hard on its heels, the hungry storm.

The nightmare in a fit, seizes my throat,  
Strangles my life, destroys my hopes  
Of clear blue sky tomorrow.

### WAR

[16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, San Juan del Sur, Nicar.]

Morning, coming morning,  
Only in a dream,  
Fastened by steel bolts  
Riveting the seams  
Of all the plans being moulded,  
Of all those welded beams  
That support the central structure  
Of fabricated schemes.

Dawning, slowly dawning,  
Emerging from a sleep,  
Rolling, thundering steel stock,  
Rumbling death machines –  
Made from all these moldings,  
All these welded beams,  
To fissure and to rupture  
Regardless of the means.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Morning, bright red morning,  
No longer just a dream,  
With streaks of jagged lightning  
Muffled, strangled screams –  
Choked by spitting moldings,  
Crushed by welded beams,  
all buried under rubble  
To end further schemes.

### **SAN JOSE**

[18<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, San Jose, Coast Rica]

This is not the place for a lonely man.  
I have had it with Latin America,  
The romance is over. Each day has  
become  
A pointless journey through a land  
Lost to me.

### **LONELY MAN IN THE TROPICS**

[18<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, San Jose, Costa Rica]

Another day gone and where was it lost  
Between the bus journey, and an empty  
Coke glass, that stared back with a  
coldness,  
Its icebergs in cubes, while the sun melted  
Ice-creams with a long sticky look that  
Defrosted my face, crinkled my brow –  
A red-faced white-man in the tropical  
south

### **AFTER THE REVOLUTION**

[19<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, Managua, Nicaragua]

Back in the land of smoking volcanoes,  
Black market excesses  
Amidst the continuing process  
Of alphabetisation -  
Now the dictator is gone.

An illiterate nation  
In revolutionary phases,  
In propaganda phrases,

With great effort erases  
The dictator's debases  
As the volcanoes smoke on.

### **A NATION OF FOOLS (song)**

[20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, Managua, Nicaragua]

As a nation of fools,  
No longer rulers of the waves,  
We think nothing of our pomp  
And nothing of our ways.

*God save the British!  
Let them dig their graves!*

We go blindly in our thinking  
And deaf like poor slaves  
To the values of our peers  
And the ideas of today.

*God save the British!  
It's too late to make the change!*

### **EL SALVADOR**

[22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1980, San Salvador, El Salv.]

There are people everywhere,  
And not all are rich.

On the contrary, there is much poverty  
here.  
A revolution is just around the corner,  
I can feel it in the atmosphere.

It is a hostile environment –  
We evoke cold receptions and stand-off  
Behaviour from the citizens of this city.

But what I see, I like, despite the tanks  
And the children with no shoes.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **BROKE IN MEXICO**

[28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1980, Oaxaca, Mexico]

On the road in Mexico,  
Tired, hungry and broke,  
No money for a coke,  
No pesos for a smoke,  
Only dust to make me choke  
The long gruelling miles.

On the High Sierras in a truck  
That's broken down –  
No shade is no joke,  
No water, and no nope,  
Only sun and heat stroke  
The long gruelling day.

In the cold mountains of the night  
In the starry dark –  
No poncho as a cloak,  
No wife as my whore.

### **NEW ORLEANS**

[3<sup>rd</sup> Mar 1980, New Orleans, Louisiana]

And the lazy river rolled on by  
The home of Jazz –  
While a tap dancer on the levee,  
Tap-tapped his heart out.

### **SUNDAY IN BATON ROUGE**

[9<sup>th</sup> Mar 1980, Baton Rouge, Louisiana]

Sunday is a day of rest,  
Meant to satisfy the clans  
That flock to worship at the feet  
Of silk-robbed priests intent on sending  
The yawning throng of ties and bonnets  
To the edge of sleep.

It is a Spring morning -  
Bounded by the scriptures,  
The God-blessed good-soul folks  
Sprout like flowers

From their window-box churches.

### **CRUMBS ON THE FLOOR**

[1<sup>st</sup> April 1980, 1700 Dollie Madison  
Blvd, McLean, Virginia]

Coffee and toast reveal so much  
About a lifestyle of breakfasts,  
And lunches, and late evening snacks,  
With pretty, lonely girls who've come  
To talk their blues away, and perform  
a repertoire of perversion –

before smoothing out their skirts,  
combing back their hair,  
drinking the dregs of their cup,  
and crunching the toast crumbs  
on the floor, as the amble to the door,  
and leave.

### **LIFE ACROSS THE OCEAN**

(fragment)

[2<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

To the misogynist man,  
Or miscreants of other lands,  
Life across the ocean  
To the distant glistening sands –  
Is a sea of pale-blue calmness,  
Of cloudless perfect want,  
Containing every dream  
Of heavenly thought.

Thus carried on this notion,  
Sets forth this sadist man,  
To voyage the unknown vastness  
To attack and savage hearts –  
As a barbarian, cold and sanguine,  
Like a pirate stealing plunder,  
He vents his treacherous hatred  
'neath a thick veneer of wonder.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### IN A HAUNTED HOUSE

[4<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

In a haunted house off the highway,  
Creaking floorboards, crunching driveway  
Sends the lonely tenant crazy  
Listening to the shutters bang.

Doorknobs rattle, ne'er a hand  
But his, cold-sweat shaking bones  
For forty years a recluse –  
Locked up in his own jail.

Rarely seen but as a shadow,  
Flirting past the curtained windows –  
Already of the other world,  
His lips satanic black.

### GLOOM, DARK GLOOM

[9<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

Gloom, dark gloom, blow from me,  
Sweep the shadows of a love  
Into a forgotten room,  
And not my lounge.

Ladies, fair-blooming in Spring,  
Strike at me in torment,  
Throw fits of anguish,  
Enough to end my life.

### CLASSLESS

[9<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

So they think I'm an uncouth adult,  
Born an adolescent,  
Who talks like a foul-mouthed parrot  
In their den of enchantment.

Please fane from laughing, dear people,  
The joke is not on me –  
Although I have an accent,  
All my thoughts are pure.

What of those other poor fools out  
there?

Noses to the wind –  
Avoiding the smell of the garbage  
They're up to their necks right in.

### AT SEA IN D.C

[9<sup>th</sup> App 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

Lost in a wave of colossal dimensions,  
Hung on a breaker of misapprehensions,  
Tottering on the edge of illusions,  
Crushed by the force of utter confusion.

### CATHY

[16<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

There was a lady named Cathy,  
Who I met over coffee,  
Then took to my chambers  
To caress her soft body;  
Love had is way –  
Oh, you poor sad babe.

### DAFFODILS THRU LILACS

[20<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

I met her when the daffodils  
Were first in bloom;  
Our relationship went right thru -  
The cherry blossom,  
The primroses, and the lilacs.

### THE SEED

[20<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

A squirrel out in Spring-time forage,  
Dodged a car and crawled a hedgerow,  
Crossed a field and forged a ditch,  
Swam a stream and found a niche  
Beneath a wizened budding oak,  
Protruding roots brown-leaf cloaked,  
That hid a hollow secret store  
On which the squirrel clawed in chore.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A fox stalked quietly through the woods,  
The birds perched mute in the trees –  
Observant of the hungry greybeard,  
Scornful, full of their own fears -  
On the scent the fox now followed  
That led him from his peaceful den  
Towards the kill he sadly wanted  
To feed is green-eyed discontent.

The hounds, they rallied to the horn  
That crossed the field that Spring-time  
morn,  
That forged the ditch, swam the stream,  
That found the fox beneath the oak,  
Its jaws locked-hard around the squirrel,  
Grey, but streaked a red day-glow –  
While on the earth lay the store  
From which one day an oak would grow.

### THE PROMISE

[26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

Ah, Miss Laura Cann, my flower,  
Unfold your fragile petals  
And allow this honey bee  
To plunder and to rape  
Your heaven-given pollen  
And honey-scented residue;  
In turn I'll make you fertile  
And pledge my love to you.

### ANOTHER TAKES THE STAGE

[26<sup>th</sup> Apr 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

Another young lady takes the stage,  
And lays open her desires to the rake;  
Break not her heart, my sweet fellow -  
As tender as the petals open,  
Cruelly does the blossom fade.

### NO MORE LONELY ROADS

[May Day 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

Thrown, no, tossed my cares,

Cast aside the doubts, the heartless tears,  
The childish thoughts and selfish  
introspect –  
And instead grasp I, the naked flame.

Abandoned, no, discarded  
The lonely man's illusion of happiness,  
The solitary soul and island dreamer –  
For instead touch I, the blood red rose.

Forgotten, no, erased,  
The sceptic views the ignorant holds,  
The conceited fool, the ways of old –  
To instead brave I, love's fragile kiss.

For thrown, abandoned and forgotten  
Seem the nights I slept alone  
On the road and pass to heaven –  
That instead cross I, and her I hold.

### THE SISTER LIGHTHOUSES

[5<sup>th</sup> May 1980, DMB, McLean, Virginia]

On one side of the might ocean,  
Two lost souls held hands,  
Gazing far across the barren sea  
To glimpse their thoughts in dreams.

They stood bound hand in hand,  
Inseparable as the mist from heather,  
Gasping at the fear that bit  
Their cheeks with salty blows.

They pondered in their isolation  
All that mattered most,  
They heaved great sighs of love  
That they grew close to understand.

They felt the new life coming  
And dared not look behind,  
They dared not move their wet toes  
Washed white by the tide.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

They were frozen in their terror,  
And stone-struck in their awe,  
They remained forever on the shoreline  
Beacons in a fog.

They cheered a mariner homebound,  
They tear'd one fond farewell,  
They stood sentinel neath the cliffs  
Witnessing the swell.

### **WET DOWNTOWN**

[18<sup>th</sup> May 1980, Washington DC]

The police, in siren-wails  
That cut the ocean's howl,  
And the driving of the sleet –  
Tore the glassy surface  
Of the deserted blacked-out street  
With their screeching tyres.

### **SCARRED BY VIOLENCE**

[20<sup>th</sup> May 1980, DMB, Mclean, Virginia]

A pretty face scarred by violence,  
Tempestuous love, brutally branded  
By the vicious arcing hand  
Of a man's cruel command.

### **IDEAL HOME OF A NOMAD**

[22<sup>nd</sup> May 1980, McLean, Virginia]

Just a little place on a hill,  
A stile across a fence,  
A horseshoe at the door,  
The roses framing hedges,  
A dog upon the lawn,  
The parlour full of servants;  
And a lady of fabric -  
To furnish my earthly wants.

### **OLD VIRGINIA**

For Terry Paine

[30<sup>th</sup> May 1980, Bull Run, Virginia]

The old Virginia pine grew tall,  
Near shady dell and trickling creek,  
That bleached the bones of Johnny Red  
A bullet and a century gone,  
Remembered only in a song  
The dogwood natives learn at birth.

A cardinal flamed the forest dark  
And streaked the hickory hollow quiet,  
Sunlight crashed upon the pine,  
A blue jay sang its morning song,  
Like the Yankee soldiers heard  
The day they shot old Johnny Boy.

Yet who can find that lonesome pine  
Or Johnny's bones bleached so white?  
A bullet and memory hidden,  
Forgotten bar a whistling song –  
About the lost old southern nights  
Of peace before the Union dawn.

## SIX MONTHS IN ENGLAND

### **FROG (an illustrated collection)**

[22<sup>nd</sup> Jun – 25<sup>th</sup> Jul 1980, 2 Victoria Sq,  
Newcastle] (See Notes)

### **THE MILKING BOY**

[22<sup>nd</sup> June 1980, Newcastle]

Summer rain and English weather,  
Slow, and gently closing in,  
On a dawn of soft, light yellows  
Resting on the hedgerow sprigs;  
Crossing swiftly through the meadows,  
Green and ripe in the rain –  
As the cows lay 'neath the shelter  
Of a spreading, towering plane.

Slowly wound the walkers' pathway,  
Broken and betrayed by mounds,  
Tractor wheels and muddy boot steps  
Traced all life upon the ground,  
Brown and mangled in with pebbles,  
Soil, and grass, and daisy rings,  
Vetch, and clover thrown in daring,  
Emptying bees and other things.

Down the pathway walked the young boy,  
Whistling on a humble tune;  
Cloth cap resting on his blonde hair,  
Shoulders hunched, his arms limp still,  
He ambled on down the pathway  
Hidden by the tall hedgerows,  
Toes-tapping on the pebbled highway,  
The only road he'd ever known.

The whistling ceased like a songbird  
Made to think upon its vow –  
As he leaped the five-bar field gate  
And began to call the beasts,  
Whistling now like a herdsman  
With great loving for the land;  
Whistling with a country frankness  
That the world could understand.

### **LIFE AS A DREAM**

[27<sup>th</sup> Jun 1980, Newcastle]

Some see life as a dream,  
In that others pay the price  
For all the little niceties  
That coat the cake in ice.

They cannot see the labour  
And the toil to struggle free  
Of their subtle inner-wanting  
In one giant pot-pourri.

While one soul shelves the shekels,  
The other amply spends  
All the saved up pennies  
The other scrapes to lend.

And so in some great sulk,  
I dwell on my affairs –  
Financially and private,  
A partner takes her share.

### **NO MORE LONELY ROADS**

[27<sup>th</sup> Jun 1980, Newcastle]

No more lonely roads to travel –  
Jungles, deserts – it little matters,  
Life has grabbed me by the legs,  
And shackled me with all its weight –  
Lead balls and ankle chains,  
Woes and pain, the tears and strain  
by which responsibility, it appears,  
Has been my only worthwhile gain.

### **ARTISTIC WRANGLES**

[1<sup>st</sup> Jul 1980, Newcastle]

Caught in a tangle of artist rights  
wrangles,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Brought on by confusion from every  
angle,  
Initially caused by the change in a plan –  
The change being better than the original  
design  
Of having three artists, scribble and draw  
For the privilege of embellishing a poet's  
words;  
When all that needs done is one artist to  
dab,  
And the poet to comment to avoid the  
drab –  
Instead of having headaches, and petty  
squabbles  
That develop enemies – overnight - over  
baubles.

### CAUGHT IN A ROOM

[3<sup>rd</sup> Jul 1980, Newcastle]

Caught in a room  
With the window open wide,  
Affording a gaze  
Across the wild countryside,  
To the far-away mountains,  
While I am trapped inside.

### WHY ARE YOU ALL IN CAGES

[28<sup>th</sup> Jul 1980, Newcastle]

I have never been caged –  
I sleep where tiredness overtakes me,  
I eat where providence leaves me.  
I know the stars better than any mystic  
Who pretends to deceive with his charts  
and horoscopes.

I'm not one to live by astrological  
reckoning,  
We live in an age of science, not  
ignorance;  
Superstition adds only senseless confusion  
To a world already rotten with deceit.

So tell me another, brothers, I shall not  
listen  
To stories woven on lies and excuses.  
My eyes do not deceive me –  
You are one and all, trapped in cages.

### THIRTY THREE YEAR OLD HIPPIY

[4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

He was just another flower Hippy,  
Lost within an age of reason,  
At a time when peace wilted  
Beneath contempt and treason.

For over green and pleasant hills,  
Glanced his gaze in higher thought,  
While underneath his sandaled feet  
Marched his enemies to war.

He let his soul and spirit fly,  
Free transcendence in his look;  
But all around in abject chains,  
Masters led their slaves to work.

He cast aside his outer garments  
And bared his chest to all the world  
That honesty had taught him how –  
That instead – they drained of love.

For who cared then to spend the time  
To listen to a Hippy's words –  
That a heathen world rejected  
By sacrificing God's own son.

### ME AND THE ROAD

[4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

I have no greater desire in this world  
Than to travel the four corners and seven  
seas  
To take me to the boundaries of  
understanding.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

For without the freedom of time and  
place,  
And the knowledge that restrictions of  
movement  
Are non-existent – then I am a traveller  
programmed  
By nationality, a tourist controlled by  
visas,  
And a tramp restrained by the fact I'm  
broke.

### THE ARTIST AND HIS WORK

[1.25pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

Before the artist drew a line,  
He had somehow to pay the bills –  
So knowing that the rent was due,  
He dropped his brush, laced his shoes.

Off we went up the street,  
Immersed in bright, pastel colours,  
Until he reached a building site,  
Punched his card, joined his brothers.

He wheeled a barrow up a plank –  
All day long he carted bricks,  
Hauled the cement from the mixer,  
Clocked the hours, bit his lip.

At dusk, and time to travel home,  
He shuffled weary legged and weak,  
Knowing that the rent was paid –  
The following day he'd work for food.

But underneath, he gnawed to work  
On his art and not his keep –  
For every night he raised his brush,  
Tired and worn, he fell asleep.

### BACKWOODSMAN BLUES (song)

[7<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

In a land, I know not of -  
A lonesome man, and his dog

Listened to the driving rain –  
Descending on their ill-lit place,  
A log-hewed timber home of peace,  
Lost in a wood of tall pine trees.

The drumming on the porch outside,  
Imbued him freely to recite –  
A lilting love-song melody;  
Released upon the dark rough walls,  
Hummed to a portrait on the tall-boy,  
A handsome face, age has destroyed.

The rain like time's own sweet blood,  
Caught the woodsman in a flood,  
Recalling sweet surrender moments -  
Of his life his ballads told of –  
Songs not yet quite fully sung,  
Of life not yet completely run.

The fire spat, threw some light  
Upon his hound stretched outright,  
Close by his masters feet –  
Inches from his Fender lead,  
Plugged into his ten-watt amp,  
The woodsman picked on his guitar.

*I've been a woodsman all my life  
I've preferred blues to having a wife.  
And if you think me wrong ... Oh yeah?  
Then don't listen to my blues songs.  
I'm a backwoodsman .... Yeah ....  
I'm a backwoodsman .....  
With a howling dog ....  
And this this is my song.*

### IT'S A MATTER OF LATITUDE

[3pm, 9<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

As it happens, I was born  
Faraway to the north –  
And when I finally left home,  
I went south to sun and warmth.

I lazed about by hotel pools

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And mingled with the idle rich,  
Petty, silly in their whims,  
I spent their money, getting kicks.

A mirage - my town of birth  
Cloaked in a mountain mist,  
Lost its lure to champagne corks  
And lines of easy chicks.

For living in the sunny south,  
Was like living with the devil –  
While returning to the icy north  
Was beyond my latitude level.

### CROSSROADS

[21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

Crossroads again, and what choice now?  
The ways divergent beyond the far hill-  
brow.

The winding broken road, the twisted  
fence

I lean thoughtfully on, in lull.

### CALLED FROM EVE IN THE GARDEN

[28<sup>th</sup> Aug 1980, Newcastle]

On an evening, on a pale mild night,  
The telephone commenced singing,  
With its insistent constant rhythm  
That drowned out all the birds.

I left the garden and my cocktail,  
And the maiden waiting there  
With a look of earnest longing,  
That I return forthwith to talk of love.

I strode swiftly, beckoned quickly  
By the ringing pending misery  
That I knew must be the reason  
For being disturbed on such a night.

For I lived lonely in the country,  
And knew no one who would want to

Disturb my peaceful love nest,  
Lest I perchance return the deed in kind.

So I glanced back at the garden,  
And saw the sweet-faced maiden,  
Waiting with a patience  
That not all men have as theirs to pass.

And I plucked at the receiver  
Like some ill-tempered no-believer,  
That the person on the far-end  
Was someone else's, and not my wife.

### CONSTRUCTING WORLDS

[11.20pm, 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1980, Newcastle]

The builder packed away his tools  
And laid aside his white hard-hat,  
Unslung his coat from a nail,  
Closed the door, and that was that.

The day had gone to grey with rain,  
The trees they dripped, sagged draped-  
wet;

The builder dry and soothed by work,  
Homeward went in casual pace.

And home he reached, to settle down  
To an evening of reflective thought,  
Of what the day had offered him,  
And what of life the day had taught.

And quiet the evening faded on,  
Soft fell the novel from his hand –  
The builder lulled into a world  
Constructed by another man.

### SAD POET, UNHAPPY PUBLISHER

[10pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 1980, Newcastle]

I published a man's poems the other day  
Though the contents brought on despair,  
And gloomily depressive long thoughts  
That the poet had written in misery –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Telling us why he was a poet, not a man  
Who went about the world without a pen,  
Nor armed himself with a smile  
And a wit that won all to his cheerful side.

So why did I publish the poet, you ask?  
I would like to know this myself –  
For all his stanzas dwelt on heartache,  
And mended none of life's cruel flaws  
That he pointed at; that he amplified so  
large  
As to make everything bare and empty;  
I wrenched from me, a happy man,  
Moral tears, from both eyes.

### **THE BAND WHO CAME TO DINNER**

[10.15pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 1980, Newcastle]

We had a band who practised in our  
basement,  
Who came and went, sometimes stayed  
for dinner;  
A male band who went about their  
business,  
A magic band everybody agreed were  
winners.

Then one day - close to the end of  
summer,  
A girl appeared, all charm and glitter –  
She, it was announced, was the new lead  
singer,  
And everyone agreed she was a stunner.

Then in an instance, as if a wand was  
waved,  
The magic band no longer played together  
–  
The lead guitarist ran off with the glitter,  
And the band no longer came to dinner.

### **PICKING GRAPES and BAILING STRAW** (song)

[5.47pm, 16<sup>th</sup> Sept 1980, Newcastle]

The day I gave up work, I laughed –  
The money jingled as I jumped.  
I made my way into a bar  
To spend my celebration, drunk.

I'd grafted on the open fields,  
Picking grapes and bailing straw;  
The produce of the land lay stored,  
The farmer paid my time by law.

All the while I laboured there,  
Three months of sweat, knuckled bone,  
I thought on my time passing by,  
The water flowing o'er unturned stones.

I thought of the girls I missed –  
Their sweet bodies, their tender lips,  
Their homely gossip by the hearth  
Whilst fired by their fingertips.

I pondered on the missing treats  
That coaxed a man to spend his change;  
The courteous passing in a street  
Of a face that was not strange.

I was just a fresh-faced lad  
Living far from home to work –  
A foreigner in another realm,  
Earning riches from ploughing dirt.

And now back home, instead of pain,  
My time abroad was not a waste –  
The memory of those labour fields  
Are happy as the memory fades.

### **TWENTY SIX LETTERS in SEVEN WORDS**

[9.45pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1980, Newcastle]

When gazed above,  
Sixty jumpers fly quick

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### HOMELESS

[5<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Newcastle]

On the run is a family man,  
Woman and kid, bags in hand  
Walking the streets in search of a home,  
Wandering like beggars with nowhere to  
go.

Asking for change on meeting a friend,  
Looking for cash that someone can lend,  
To fill the mouths of the starving kin  
That the family man has led to ruin.

Knocking on doors in utter despair,  
To see if someone can spare a room,  
Or a floor, or corner out of the way,  
As long as its somewhere they can stay.

The council man had offered them beds,  
Kipping in with the down and the helpless  
–  
A hostel where thieves and tramps had  
shelter,  
But where they never receive any further  
help.

It was better he thought to stick together,  
The bandage of love that had brought  
them hither,

Was more precious than any refuge  
from rain  
Given in exchange for heartbreak and  
pain.

So they wander the streets, still together,  
United in their love for one another –  
Though already they've spent a night in  
the cold,  
They'd rather die than let go of each  
other.

### LOOKING FROM THE OUTSIDE

[9.02pm, 6<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Akenside Terr,  
Newcastle]

Cold and hungry gazed the tramp,  
Haggard mouthed and blood-shot eyed  
On a man who read a book  
By the warmth of his hearthside.

Envy flashed across his troubles,  
Memories of his life of old,  
Before the decay and the rot,  
Ate his love and stole his heart.

But pity also lingered there  
For the man that life passed by,  
Trapped beside his open book,  
Old and grey beside the fire.

For had that man another life,  
He would not thus be sitting so –  
He would be travelling with the tramp  
Turning now to walk the road.

### MARRIAGE

[9pm, 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Newcastle]

The ring upon his finger shone with light,  
Illuminating the future, bright and clear;  
While his wife held his hand in happy  
faith – Secure in joy, and tears.

### OCTOBER 13<sup>TH</sup> IN ENGLAND

[6.05pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, 87 Byker Terr,  
Walker, Newcastle]

Autumn's almost gone now,  
Yet broad green leaves still hang  
From drooping boughs.

Thistles not long dead  
Stand brown unbarbed  
Upon the pastured ground.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Lapwings catch their meals,  
Before flocking on a few more miles  
To lakeside perches.

Bees at the end of plenty –  
Cool and thoughtful  
On the verge of barren days.

Grey and black, bleak views  
Carry the eye across the wasteland  
To reconcile the mind for winter.

### THE WALKER FISHMONGER

[6.30pm, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

There is a fishmonger with a shop  
In a place called Walker, England,  
Who feeds the working folk  
With a fresh and smiling look,  
That agrees with all their comments,  
But disagrees with all their social views.

He's a conservative at heart, he admits it,  
For after all, he is a businessman  
Who takes the money from the locals  
With a fresh and smiling look  
That accepts their hard luck stories,  
Yet refuses credit, as it's against his rules.

He is a pleasant man, that is true;  
He buys his fish fresh from the docks  
And opens his shop at seven for the locals  
With a fresh and smiling look  
That sympathises with their ills,  
But knows that's why the hospitals are  
full.

Just the same, he is a good man –  
He talks to the children and old folk,  
And finds time to chat to the locals  
With a fresh and smiling look  
That keeps the customers happy,  
And keeps the orders full on his books.

One cannot complain about this man;  
He is English and a citizen,  
Placed amongst the shipyard folks  
With his fresh and smiling look –  
He is the ideal corner-shop chappy  
Who with his fish has the locals hooked.

### THE GATESHEAD JEW

[1.05pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

BANG! BANG! "Hello, are you there?"  
A scrawny voice shouted out  
As Laura pulled the door ajar -  
A little man jumped with fright.

"Hello? Are you the tenant of this house?  
I've come to see about the rent.  
I think we haven't met as yet.  
I think it's time to talk. Right?"

"I'm not the tenant" Laura said,  
"I'll get my husband to speak to you.  
Robert! Can you come right now?  
It's one of those Gateshead Jews."

"Yes, can I help you?" I asked the Jew,  
"Yes" he said "I want the rent ..."  
"I'm sorry, mate, I've no cash today.  
Can you come back next Friday?"

"I'll get the law on your back!"  
He threatened me with vile spite,  
"One more word" I said to him  
"I'll pull your beard, squash your hat."

The little Jew squealed in fear  
And ran pell-mell from our door –  
We lived there all of three months more  
And only heard from him by post.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### SLEEPING UNDER NEWSPAPERS ON A PARK BENCH

[12.32am, 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Walker, Newc.]

Turn another page towards the future,  
And what transpires?  
Another word towards and ending,  
Another line towards a sentence  
Laid upon me by a judge –  
The God Creator, up in heaven.

Turn another page towards the future,  
And what comes next?  
Another leaf towards my autumn,  
Another black print day of horror,  
Pressed upon me by the Devil,  
Counting me amongst the fallen.

Turn another page, I dare not,  
And what occurs?  
Another page turns itself –  
Another day of written torture,  
Forced upon me by my failings –  
This bench my bed, my sheets sodden.

### FAME

[11pm, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Walker, Newc.]

Before he had the world – a pearl  
Safely held within his palm,  
A shining sphere of precious love  
That yielded all its dazzling charm.  
And then the fame came.

Then as he grew to be known  
And share his solitude of calm,  
He lost the inner-wanting peace  
That always lulled away the harm.  
But the fame stayed.

The present that the fame now stole  
Took the pearl without a qualm,  
Substituted a fist of gold  
That broke his once perfect calm.

And the fame went.

And with it went no sad regret –  
Anew the pearl he quietly palmed,  
He returned to peace and inner love;  
His ethos simply – Fame be damned!  
And then the fame came back.

### FROM EAST TO WEST

[11pm, 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1980, Walker, Newc.]

When I get to America  
I'm going to buy a car  
And drive across the continent  
From east to west, and back.  
I'll set out on a journey  
That few will ever make,  
I shall travel on forever,  
Leave memories in my wake.

The dream that inward burns  
Isn't mine alone -  
I've known countless others  
Less able, far more prone  
To fits of homesick languor,  
Depressive pining thoughts,  
To home's alluring comforts  
Easy times once brought.

For me, well, I'm different,  
I like the life of skies –  
The peaceful inner warmth  
Revealed on every rise  
That I wander as an innocent  
Of lingering inner-doubt;  
The past one step behind  
My road stretching out.

But when I get to New York,  
I'm trading in my boots  
For the automated comfort  
Of a pedal underfoot –  
A car, perhaps an old one,  
I'm going to take a car

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And drive across the continent  
From east to west, and back.

### PERFECT LOVE

[11.15pm, 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

When love is perfect  
And untouchable,  
And neither sad nor tearful,  
Nor unapproachable,  
Then love is perfect.

For what without love  
Can life be?  
As neither likeable, nor gay,  
Nor permeable,  
Then love is dead.

Love makes the snowflakes dance,  
While hate makes the heart freeze.

### THE WILD HEBRIDES

[11.30pm, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

Sitting by the lakeside,  
Idly passing memories  
From the ripples of pictures  
Created by the tide,  
And ocean carried seaweeds  
Washed along the loch,  
The Scottish fishers sail on  
Hauling crayfish pots.

The purple long since gone,  
Lingers in the sand,  
each tiny speck of past  
counting time while tightly clasped  
to the bosom, and the heart,  
tuned into the gulls  
plunging on the waves  
with reckless cries.

Where ploughs the crofter  
Now that winter's come?  
The grey wind bourn clouds  
About the waters turn –  
To maul and howl in tempest  
The black swirling sea,  
By the Highland shores  
Of the wild Hebrides.

### 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 1980

[10.40pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

The snow came down to paralyse  
The thoroughfares and walkways;  
With knee-high drifts and overhangs,  
All life moved precarious.

### INSPIRATION

[11.02pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 1980, Walker, Newc]

All inspiration has gone;  
All causes have died,  
And only the wind washes memories  
Once washed by the tides

That roared, and brought change -  
Adventure and freedom,  
Lust, and excitement –  
That inspired when over.

### CREATION

[11.12pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Nov 1980, Walker,  
Newcastle]

When the mountains were dragged  
From the bowels of the earth;  
And the oceans were melted  
From the rocks nature cleft;  
And the skies were coloured  
From the blood of God's themselves –  
Man was little more than  
four billion years ... behind.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **THE BLIZZARD**

[4pm, 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, Walker, Newcastle]

Snow again coats all the earth,  
The stubble corn on winter fields,  
the dying fern on barren heath –  
lost beneath white icy sheet.

The trucks labour on the roads,  
The salt and grit turned to mush,  
The heavy, grinding axles groan,  
Chewing slush and throwing mud.

Trains halt snowbound on the moors -  
While far at sea a tempest roars  
To drive all ships upon the rocks,  
To wreck upon the blizzard shore.

And there the farmer, no better placed,  
Cloistered by the winter snows –  
Sits cut-off in his granite croft,  
Perched upon sleet-beaten slopes.

### **I'M GLAD TO GO (song)**

[13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, Heathrow, London]

I'm leaving Walker now,  
Leaving England now, yeah.  
I'll work here no more,  
I guess I've had enough.

I'm on a bus for Heathrow,  
To catch a plane to San Fran,  
To land in the sunshine.  
I'm sure glad to go.

Surfing on the waves, yeah,  
Driving by the shoreline –  
Living like a man should,  
I'm sure glad to go.

### **NICARAGUA (song)**

[11pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, Heathrow,  
London]

Watching the old volcano smoke,  
Shadowing the small sailing boats.  
Licking on an ice-cream cone,  
Sipping a Nicaraguan coke –  
The clouds drifting over the slopes  
As the locals sat telling jokes.

Still the tall volcano smoked.  
I reached the rise to travel on.  
Chewing on my thoughts to go,  
I left the scene for the road;  
The sun setting on the sailing boats,  
And those Nicaraguan folks.

## BALLADS FOR THE PACIFIC BEACH

### SIX THOUSAND THOUGHTS OF EXILE

[14<sup>th</sup>? Dec 1980, England-California]

Six thousand thoughts of exile,  
Across six thousand miles,  
Across the Arctic heartland  
To the other side of life.

Beyond six thousand memories,  
During six travelling years,  
Six thousand east or west,  
It's six thousand just the same.

Goodbye England, little kingdom,  
Goodbye six thousand ways –  
Welcome to the U.S.,  
Six thousand miles away.

Six thousand thoughts of exile,  
Across six thousand miles –  
Across the Arctic heartland  
To the other side of life.

### SAN FRANCISCO BAY

[21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1980, 14619 Darius Way, San Leandro, Calif]

I came to my newest dream  
As a stranger to the scene –  
Coastal breaks upon blonde shores  
Girt by a cold sea-board.

### THE SINGING DRUG-PUSHER (song)

[1.56pm, 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro, California]

Drugs again. Well, damn  
I wouldn't ever tell the landlord  
Or the devil. What's my latest plan?  
Who's my latest girl?

I've got drugs, man ...  
I don't have to say a thing.

Time flies. That's right,  
I share it every day with the Parking  
Man and my lover. What's my craze?  
What drugs I rate.  
I've got life, mate ...  
I don't have to sing.

### THE WEEKEND TRAIL (song)

[5.33pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro, California]

On the weekend adventure trail  
Of alcohol and drugs –  
Rolling on the the highway straights,  
Driving through the night.

High on the weekend road  
Of kicks and rubber –  
Gliding through the bright lights,  
Reflections in my mirror.

Travelling those weekend lines  
Of cocaine and life –  
Coasting on the evening black,  
Driving through the night.

### LAST CHRISTMAS EVE

1.54pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro, California]

Looking back on last year,  
Last Christmas Eve,  
I remember facing Mexico  
On a dark dusty street.

The chicken wire towered over,  
Over Christmas Eve,  
I remember watching prostitutes,  
Sell love on the cheap.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

'Felix navidad' boomed the guard,  
guarding Christmas Eve,  
as I marched into Mexico  
to take a girl for sleep.

'Twenty dollars' she whispered,  
whispering Christmas Eve,  
as I left behind America  
to fulfil my needs.

Looking back on last year,  
Last Christmas Eve,  
I left behind Jesus,  
To sow wild Christmas seed.

### **JACK LONDON'S TOWN**

[2.56pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, SanLeandro,  
California]

I drove past Jack London's bar today,  
There were nine at least.  
I almost pulled in at the Nanuk,  
But there was a heavy traffic squeeze.

*Well, that's Oakland for you folks –  
The Tribune and the Temple.  
The docks, the tracks, Piedmont Hill  
Where your dollar bills won't wrinkle.*

I drove past Jack London's bar again –  
It was ten o'clock at least.  
I almost killed a drunken honkey,  
One of a hundred on First Street.

So I took a right on a red,  
And a right on 12<sup>th</sup> going east,  
Until I hit the Nimitz Freeway.  
Goodbye Oakland! Jack London's town.

*Well, that's Oakland for you folks –  
The Tribune and the Temple.  
The docks, the tracks, Piedmont Hill  
Where your dollar bills won't wrinkle.*

### **GREEN IS ME**

10pm, 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro,  
California]

Blue is the crudest form to take,  
It streaks, it burns, its searing pain  
In many forms – from steel to sea,  
From eyes to mind, blue's not me.

Red is passion at its height,  
It floods, it bloods all love's veins –  
Romantic Latin's, Commies, rebels;  
From peace to war – red proves fatal.

Green is the peasant's hue,  
It's fields, it's leaves, it's cooling rain;  
Shades of fences, windows, doors,  
Green is me – nature's core.

### **GOD IS AMERICA**

[7.49pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro,  
California]

California – haze and onshore mist;  
San Francisco Bay – from the bridge  
America looks beautiful, rises tall  
Over the world as a whole.

The Leninist from Kurdistan –  
He believes like the Afghan man  
That Russia rules, that America bullies  
The lesser nations in third world lands.

But today – let me tell you,  
From the San Francisco Bay Bridge,  
America looks beautiful, rises tall  
To frighten and to awe.

### **WALTER KRONKITE**

[10.16pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 1980, San Leandro,  
California]

When Walter failed to show tonight,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

As gagging clay bound his morale,  
The news from the desk in tote  
Featured deadline dropping notes  
That dredged the depths, but stole the  
show.

### **ANOTHER DAY AS WORKING CLASS**

[11.30pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro,  
California]

Another day as working class,  
A common labour man –  
Sixteen tons and no reward  
Except another verbal beating  
From a fag - the boss  
Who's never shovelled shit  
Except from his mouth  
Into my trench, this hell.

Who cares for my soul  
As condemned working scum –  
A hundred dollars towards my debts,  
Fifty bucks to live on,  
To stave off crippled, tired bones,  
Muscles bruised and torn –  
Every year an older man  
In a rented cold tap abode.

There is no priest to save me,  
No art to free my heart,  
No love to grow and flourish,  
No secret, hidden spark  
To fire my broken spirit,  
To flame my wildest aims –  
I'm just a working navvie,  
You'll never know my name.

### **ROAD TO HEAVEN** (song)

[12<sup>th</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro, California]

As I was walking the road to heaven  
I saw the end –  
As I was walking the road to heaven

I saw no friend –  
I saw no name  
But hers.

### **I TRIED TO PASS THE MESSAGE ON**

(song)

[14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro, California]

I tried to pass the message on  
Before you tried to cry.  
I thought it'd be an easy thing  
Before I said goodbye.

I've got to move along  
The only road I know.  
You never got the best of times  
That's why I had to go.

As I travelled on that night  
The night I made you cry,  
I left our love a broken thing,  
A broken hearted sigh.

The rain swept the lonely road  
The road I've always known;  
I'm back upon the endless track,  
The track I know as home.

### **PRAYER**

[8.20pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro,  
California]

Not another word will pass  
Beyond these silent lips –  
Not another phrase be heard  
That is not His.

### **THE TWO DOGS**

[18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro, California]

Boris was a poor man's dog,  
And Bart a homeless hound,  
Whose wagging tongue belied his thirst,  
His tail – his mellow mind.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Though Bart, a simple wandering soul,  
Suffered many moral blows,  
He never scorned a trusted friend;  
For what was life alone?

‘Tell me, tell me’ he seemed to yap  
to Boris, young and dumb –  
a clumsy German Shepherd mutt,  
his heart – his saving love.

But Boris couldn’t bark to Bart,  
He was barely nine months old –  
Instead he shook his sheepish head  
To answer yes or no.

And thus the bosom buddies played  
With stick, or stone, or bone –  
They shared the pleasures given them  
Along the doggie road.

**THE WATER IN THE BAY** (song)  
[12.50am, 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro]

And the water on the bay lapped gently,  
And the fog with the tide rolled in,  
And the boat on the waves sailed over  
And under the last harbour bridge.

And the bird in the sky soared higher  
And the land faded off from view –  
And I guess that’s the end of the story  
As the sun sank red, and evening grew.

**OAKLAND DOCKS**  
[4.50pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1981, San Leandro]

The evening – black and lonely  
The patroller walked his rounds;  
He clocked the passing hours  
And logged the boring night.

Dim lights glazed the darkness,  
The waters slapped the docks,  
A labouring diesel shunted stock

Along the harbour lines.

No shore men showed their faces  
Beneath the shore land lights;  
No human form emerged  
To dim or shadow time.

The watchman sipped his coffee  
To pry his blackened eyes –  
He cursed his job in hardware,  
His second forty hours.

And forty times he nodded  
Between each hourly round –  
A guard in west dock Oakland,  
Asleep each dock land night.

### **THE DRUNK**

[14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, San Leandro, California]

Yesterday is a lost day,  
The day before a blur –  
Three days ago forgotten,  
And four a misty murk  
No denser than the fifth day,  
The sixth completely blank –  
In tote a week of nothing,  
A week of being drunk.

### **THE BOXER**

[14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, Joaquin Av, San Leandro]

Another day, another dime,  
Another ring, another night,  
Another time, another life,  
Another thing, another fight.

### **HILLBILLY LIVING**

[8.05pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, San Leandro,  
California]

Life on the hill, on a dead-end street,  
Ended a two month lull  
Of hill-billy living.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Sleeping like dogs on a carpet,  
Close to the earthquakes  
And cosmic vibrations.

Who said that the free spirit died  
The day pot arrived  
And God departed.

The world careers on downhill –  
Saturn, then Luna Drive,  
And on into space.

### **GYPSY LOVING LAURA**

[10pm, St Valentine's Day, San Leandro]

What's happened to Laura?  
What's become for her?  
Her beauty, her eyes of moonlight,  
Their silver beams of love?

He loved her softer than satin,  
He adored her sweeter than musk,  
He cared for her more than Jesus  
Cared for the creatures and birds.

He carried her bundles of flowers  
Through the corn and rains –  
He chased the rising lark skywards  
On the path to lover's gate.

She loved him like no other,  
She drained her heart for him,  
She lay with him all summer,  
Fanned by the summer winds.

The gypsies warned of heartache  
By the fires of their circled nights;  
They whispered of shooting horses  
And of lovers taking flight.

And like the skylark soaring  
In song and rising free,  
The singing ceased, and silence  
Followed in its lee.

And in the falling darkness,  
Suddenly, he was gone –  
With him went her spirit  
Her heart, her flesh, her blood.

And left behind was Laura –  
A sad and cureless soul,  
Who let her good looks fade -  
Who finally let life go.

That's what became of Laura –  
That's what became of her.  
Her beauty, her eyes of moonlight  
Stolen by a gypsy boy.

### **OVERDOSED ROCKSTAR** (song)

[9.15pm, 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, San Leandro]

His career was almost over,  
So he took an overdose;  
They found him lying in his car  
In a comatose.

While the world played his records,  
He was buried 'neath the news -  
His girl found another,  
As the faithless always do.

His band went acoustic,  
And finally fell apart –  
The genius of his music  
Joined forgotten art.

### **THE WELDER'S TORCH**

[11.55pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, San Leandro]

The welder's torch lit the night  
And burnt a hue of steel,  
That flashed up on to the clouds  
As blue electric beams.  
The tungsten power arced though  
The workshop of the world –  
A lava burst of magma welds  
And a line of molten seams.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### FRESNO

[7.40pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, Fresno, Calif.]

Working thirteen hours without a break.  
Each day another.  
Awake. Work. Eat. Sleep.  
Fresno, California.  
Who cares.

### THE HIGH SIERRAS

[7.30pm, 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1981, Fresno, Calif.]

Across the Central Valley  
The High Sierras rose,  
As the winter snow descended  
Half a mile or more  
To cover every high ridge  
And Ponderosa pine,  
While every creek froze solid  
Beneath the silver ice.

Frostbitten in a hollow,  
A climber fought the night –  
Delirious, and dying  
He dreamt of city life  
That spread across the valley  
Towards the golden coast  
Of towering palms and blondes –  
A world he knew, now lost.

By morning all was pristine,  
The High Sierras stood  
Breathtaking on the skyline  
Beneath the heaven's flood  
That outlined every high ridge  
And Ponderosa pine  
As life began to trickle  
Down the mountainside.

It would across the valley  
Towards the golden shore,  
It entered rolling waters  
By palms and bathing blondes;  
It spread upon the ocean

The spirit of a man,  
Freed upon the thawing  
Of the High Sierra lands.

### TO FIND HER ROBBIE, SO

[9.50pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Mar 1981, Fresno, Calif.]

What would Highland Mary say  
If she found her Robbie o,  
Dancing with the serving maid  
In the parlour naked so?

Would she not cry aloud  
For her wretched Robbie o,  
Drunken, footloose with the proud  
Young Laura, white and virgin so?

For would it not break her heart  
For to watch her Robbie o,  
Stroke the red hair in the dark  
Of lovely Laura laying so?

And would she not finally die  
To hear her Robbie whisper o,  
That he loved without lie  
Young Laura he had taken, so?

And would they not bury her,  
The wife of wretched Robbie o,  
If we could not stop the hurt,  
To see the maid with Robbie, so?

### MILLIONAIRES IN DEBT (song)

[5.50pm, 8<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro]

They pay for their cars,  
They pay for their yachts,  
They pay for their mansions,  
They pay for their jets,  
They pay for their art,  
They pay for their friends,  
That's six reasons why  
There are millionaires in debt.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

They spend on their business,  
They spend on their wives,  
They spend on their drugs,  
And they spend all their life –  
Spend to stem boredom,  
Spend to hold back time,  
Spend until they die  
Without a single dime.

They buy for their comfort,  
They buy for their blondes,  
They buy for the future,  
And buy government bonds –  
Buy social status,  
Buy climbing stock,  
Buy cheap religion,  
And buy cheap gods.

They sell all their faith,  
They sell all their pride,  
They sell all their morals  
For a million dollar ride;  
They sell short their children,  
Sell short themselves,  
Sell short their riches  
In millionaire style.

So there goes the money,  
There goes the cash,  
And there goes the capital  
Before the final crash –  
And there goes the mansion,  
And there goes the jet,  
And there go the friends  
Of a millionaire in debt.

### MY WIFE AND MY TYPEWRITER

[9.25pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro,  
Calif.]

When my wife began to type, she asked  
'What do I do at the end of a line?  
How do I get the margins straight?  
Where do I put our address and the date?

How do I indent the paragraphs?  
How do I make a capital F?  
And where do I find the number 1?  
What do I do when the bell has rung?  
And if I happen to make a mistake,  
What corrections can I make?'

Well, you can imagine the peace I got,  
And the strain on my temper the  
questions  
Brought every time that damn bell rang,  
Every minute she continued to bang,  
And thump, and hammer my poor  
typewriter.  
Who said ladies fingers were lighter?  
I'll tell you now, all poets and authors,  
Playwrights and fellows of our  
professional collar –  
Never be so silly or so innocently nice  
To let your wife use your electric device.

### BALLAD OF THE BLACK ISLE

[10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

When the plague broke out  
On the southern seas,  
Of the ninety-two men,  
They buried four a day.

Their skins blistered yellow  
Beneath the frying sun  
As scurvy killed the crew,  
And the rats seaward plunged.

Then, on the port horizon,  
Land broke the voyage,  
A wisp of smoke escaping  
From a black volcanic void.

While green threw the ocean  
Upon its mangrove shore,  
Upon the island smouldering  
Beneath black lava rocks.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

White horses dragged the shingle,  
Dark mermaids combed the sands,  
Pink conches sounded over  
Pink coconutted palms.

Beige sky mirrored heaven  
In a wispy cirrus mime,  
Shrouding the volcano  
As the molten tempest climbed

And thundered out of Hades –  
Unleashed its storm,  
Burnt the steaming forest  
With its back ash rainfall.

And soon the roaring magma  
Ran to the sea –  
Till the island lay barren  
Beneath black lava scree.

As the crew watched in horror  
The destruction of the isle,  
The scurried souls prepared  
To spend their final hours.

And towards an end they headed  
Beneath the southern stars,  
Until the black isle faded  
And the white seagulls cried.

### REAFFIRMATION OF LOVE

[12.17am, 14<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro]

When lazy words crossed my lips,  
I meant no harm to you –  
Your simple love was all you gave,  
All you wished was my love too;  
But all I had was cheap reply,  
A thing I never meant to do.

An offered pledge of servitude,  
Of death, if need be known,  
Should not be treated with a laugh,  
Not treated lightly like a stone

Tossed thoughtlessly towards a lake  
To watch the ripples turn to shore.

Far better that a flickering flame  
Burns with all its fire,  
Than have a man dowse its light  
Or sate its glowing ember pyre;  
For like the rose that blooms a day,  
Love is sweet, should be admired.

Yet still my heart, my head deceives,  
For you – my only girl!  
With whirling eyes and swirling smile,  
With crimson cheeks and hair a twirl,  
I could not think of anyone  
To give me more of love's sweet thrill.

### THE PAST STILL BURNS TO O STRONG

[12.35am, 19<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro]

Ne'er have the shores of England seemed  
so far.  
Ne'er have the pains of languor been so  
strong.  
Though oceans separate two nations and  
the past;  
Though people's different ways keep each  
apart.

Ne'er have the hills of England seems so  
lost.  
Ne'er have the thoughts of fiends been so  
dad.  
Though language bonds two nations so  
alike;  
Though continents create such wide  
divide.

Ne'er have the rains of England seemed  
to missed.  
Ne'er have the aches of lovers been so  
stirred.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Though freedom grants the two with equal rights;  
Though day shines there; while here is night.

Ne'er has the lure of England seemed so true.  
Ne'er has the call of England been so clear.  
Though Liberty resounds with song so loud;  
Ne'er shall I turn again from England now.

### **EL SALVADOR IS NOT THE PROBLEM**

[11.10pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro]

While others bear the cross of Salvador,  
Or decry the Polish labour crisis –  
I gaze around me at the tramps and winos  
Destitute upon the Bay city streets.

Beneath the Stars and Stripes,  
Beneath the democratic lights,  
Beneath the granted rights,  
Beneath the surface of American life –

Please don't tell me about Calcutta,  
I've seen the poverty for myself;  
I've seen the bodies face down in the  
garbage;  
I've seen the flies, the fleas, the lice,  
Eat the sores and take Indian life for  
granted.

Such memories fade as time passes on –  
They only come as demons in the night,  
As mystic remains - horrors retreating  
Into the subconscious of the mind.

Now I spend my time in America,  
Where dreams exist for all to grasp;  
Where bridges span the gap of class,

Progress speaks its own refrain  
'Another day, another dollar -  
some get bigger, some get smaller'.

Who really shares their wealth  
With those who struggle on the street?  
With their raggy clothes, shoeless hobos  
Drunk and living with the trash  
That represents our own foul waste –  
A downtown district, deserted, desolate,  
Inhabited by bums and derelicts.

Give a man some wealth, he forgets his  
brother;  
Give a man some pride, he rides another;  
Give a man truth, he turns and shudders.

Had you been born the son of a child  
molester?  
Or the daughter of a cruel and twisted  
parent?  
Would you be a social dreg, a parasite,  
A twisted broken human fragment -  
Living by handouts and dying from  
neglect.

A blindness to poverty exists –  
For the moon is made of cheese and  
lemon fizz?  
How can anyone really believe in this?

The President in a pathetic political fix,  
Cites thirty-two pages of help-wanted ads.  
His point? The nation has no desire to  
work.

Winos and tramps all around us,  
And the plight of El Salvador scares the  
youth.  
The mighty Republic of Fifty Unions,  
Frightened by the consequences of  
Salvador.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Please don't try to tell me about  
socialism,  
And how it will destroy the morals of the  
world.

Look around you, friends,  
the person at your elbow –

The answer is not the defence of the  
Panama Canal.

The answer is not in total Cuban  
withdrawal.

The answer is your own sweet American  
self.

And your own bitter American selfishness.

### WEST GRAND AND SAN PABLO

[7.38pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro]

A black spare-changed upon the sidewalk,  
The streets the ladies strolled or lounged,  
Each lamppost offering refuge to  
someone

In the dark ghetto district of downtown.

The girls whistled out in hope of custom  
To the honkers idly waiting at the lights,  
While around the corner in an alley,  
A mugger dragged a lady out of sight.

A baby screamed out from an attic  
window

As a hustler sold a kid a stolen watch,  
And from the noise of the wailing cop-  
car,  
Another grocer store had just been robbed.

A young girl gave into a rapist  
After pleading at the point of a gun –  
While a gang of high-school dropouts  
Set fire to a disused house for fun.

A shoeless wino riffled in a trash can,  
Just before another knifed him for his  
loot,

As a man beat his unfaithful lover,  
While a junkie fixed his last poisoned  
shoot.

In all it was quite a summer's evening,  
Nigh before the sunset finally came,  
And brought the streaming red of evening  
As blood filled very downtown drain.

### MARCH OF TIME

[10.25pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Mar 1981, San Leandro,  
Calif.]

Weary Time wobbled on along the  
cobble way,  
Feeble hand on the shaft of his sickle  
blade;  
White beard trampled by this trembling  
step,  
He marched one step ahead of Death.

Loud tolled the tintinnabulator Earth,  
Shaken by the weight of Time's forced  
passing,  
Pushed on by the lifeless breath,  
Released from Death in fits of frothing.

Wretched wailing welled the ailing life,  
Death solved that which Time passed by;  
Step for step they marched together,  
Arresting not for man, nor child.

### APRIL IN CALIFORNIA

[2.30pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro]

What could be better in April  
Than to sit, watch the hummingbirds  
Dart beneath the blossom trees  
Ablaze with springtime colour.

Or listen to the tickling breeze  
Playing in the Chinese chimes,  
Blowing gently on the petals  
Of the pansies and snapdragons.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

As I, sit by the lettuce patch  
Whittling away the hours,  
Under the shade of maple leaves  
And a towering eucalyptus.

I study an ancient bonsai tree,  
Sheltered by a redwood giant,  
On such a sunny April's day  
Under a Californian sky.

### THE HIDDEN GLEN

[10.50pm, 5<sup>th</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro]

What is real in Highland lands  
Of heathen fields and windswept  
mountains,  
Peopled by such hardy peasants,  
Driven on, and wind blast hardened,  
By the harshness of their future  
Dwelling in their wild domain –  
Made braw by the soaring heather  
Lashed and hewn by the rain.

Craggy were the rocks and faces  
Of that hidden Scottish glen –  
Across the moors, beyond the loch side  
- Misted by the swirling wet,  
Hazed and fogged a million mornings,  
Black and dead a million nights,  
Never seen and never crossed,  
by cottage light, nor crofter dykes.

Who passed such lonely hostile life  
Beneath that roof. Who dwelt there?  
A question that gave no answer  
As the mist shroud-wound the air,  
And brought with it an evil shiver  
That made me cower deep inside,  
To wrap my tweeds about my body  
And leave that haunted mountainside.

### BANKRUPT SWINDLER

[10.48pm, 11<sup>th</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro]

It started with a dodgy check,  
And wages docked for income tax –  
And other little simple things  
That didn't seem to matter much.

The next he knew a letter came  
Calling for an unpaid debt,  
And then ten others on the mat,  
Signalled that the rot had set.

His creditors came to take their goods  
While their lawyers sued for more –  
The sheriff locked the factory gates,  
The workers sacked, went home.

Some said he'd do five straight years,  
Some thought he'd go Scot-free –  
But some saw a roaring jet  
Carry him to sun and sea.

They were right, strange enough,  
He went to hot Belize –  
To swim in surf in coral bliss  
And laze 'neath coco trees.

### WHERE GO I

[8.10pm, 12<sup>th</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro]

The question loomed out the sky  
Like a spate of rolling cloud  
Heading for the rain-thirst slopes,  
To rescue and revive –  
Every small blade of grass  
Sun-battered to the ground.

Two eyes blazed upon my own  
Like a vision of a God  
Staring down in bloody want,  
In need of a sacrifice –  
As I counted out the cattle  
Grazing on the land.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I cast my eyes to the hills  
Like a wanderer on the move,  
Roaming endless distant ways  
In search of paradise –  
As every thought I ever had  
Answered in reply.

The question faded from the sky,  
The burning died in his eyes  
To whistle high above the rise  
Of cattle grazing fields –  
As I left the farmer there  
Asking where go I.

### **NAPOLÉON'S SOLDIER**

[10.50pm, 19<sup>th</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro]

Versed in wisdom, not in sense,  
Immersed in knowledge but not its love,  
You travelled high the weathered trail  
Through thickets thronged and barbed –  
You carried countless inner doubts  
That set your jaw line hard.

Hard against the cold wind,  
Cruel upon the snow  
That buffeted your great-coat  
As you struggled onwards home –  
Broken like the army  
The Emperor call his own.

Marching on to Moscow  
And scattered in retreat,  
While all France trembled naked  
In the wake of raped defeat –  
Why did you leave bright Paris  
For Napoleon's sad elite.

Why forsake your lover  
To fight for glory's sake,  
I'll never understand the foils of war,  
It only leads to wakes –  
that women tend, and cry at  
For men's proud mistakes.

Marching on to Moscow  
To be scattered in burnt fields,  
You left behind a trail of blood,  
The Russians at your heels –  
You left behind the one you loved  
To die for your ideals.

### **HE WORKED TEN HOURS EVERY DAY**

[9.35pm, 21<sup>st</sup> Apr 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

He worked ten hours every day,  
And hour there, an hour back,  
By bus he travelled in the morn,  
By train he left to journey home.

His wife waited for her man,  
And kissed him warmly like she should,  
His son asked if he could help  
Fix his bicycle if he could.

The clock ticked on in gentle sighs  
As he struggled with the bike –  
His hunger pains grew very loud  
While his wife took a shower.

While his hands were smeared in oil,  
His son sat and quietly read –  
His wife clean, and prettied up,  
Felt tired, and went to bed.

He laboured on with the bike,  
Instead of caring for himself,  
And finally when he nodded off,  
He hadn't eaten, hadn't showered.

Thus cheated of his leisure time,  
He worked his life for his wife  
And his son - who hated him  
For never spending time with them.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### JAPANESE GARDEN

[9.27pm, 27th Apr 1981, San Leandro]

The Japanese garden  
By the turtle lake  
Beneath the awning maple  
And mugo pine –

The juniper arrows  
Raining on azalea heads –  
There should be no flowers  
In a proper bonsai bed.

### CHINATOWN

[10.05pm, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1981, San Leandro]

Sitting by the gates of Chinatown  
Having a burger and shake,  
In a sardine-box type café  
Across from a sushi place –

While the tourists click away merrily  
The taxi's roar through the gates,  
As the sightseers crowd the sidewalks  
In the shove for gifts and keepsakes

That glitter in every store window  
The colour of emerald jade –  
Fans and frogs of fertility  
Sending flushes to every awed face –

Trapped by the paintings of tigers,  
By cymbals and tinkling chimes,  
Climbing with the chattering chatter  
Into the lit lanterns of Chinatown.

### DEATH OF A YOUTH

[24<sup>th</sup> May 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

When life is taken from the young,  
It's sadder than a man of age,  
Or graceful lady passing,  
Who had time to pick a plot.

There is no peace, no solitude,  
No preparation of the end –  
It comes, the panic on its heels,  
No prayers to let the dust descend.

There is no hope of quelling grief  
While fault and blame bloods all minds –  
There is no way of turning back  
The clock before the fateful hour.

There is no more, no cold return  
From tombstone etched in churchyard  
plot –  
Greying, like those left to live,  
To grieve the young so early lost.

Yet who knows why the grief is so?  
Perhaps we know, but will not say –  
Youth rushes at us all ablaze;  
It comes, flames, and then it fades.

### FREEWAY ACCIDENT

[12.25am, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1981, San Leandro]

He was only twenty seven,  
Manhood sparked in his eyes –  
He blazed a trail through dreamland  
Before being paralysed.

The wheels for legs slowly spin  
Along the corridors of white –  
Everything is flying castles,  
Pink butterflies and soaring kites.

Before the star-bursts fade off,  
Become a grey lasting zone,  
Slowly darkening each last second  
Until all light ups – is gone.

### ONLY THE BEST WILL DO

[12.54am, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1981, San Leandro]

Soldiering on, Duke Wellington  
At the battle of Waterloo,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Between a fit and a temper  
Called his bugler to.

He said in an order of 'Bugler!  
Be damned if you don't play true.  
Signal the Royal Scot Greys  
To charge Napoleon's Blues.'

No sooner the order carried,  
The bugler bursting his gut –  
For King! And Country! And Glory!  
Made the Scots Grey horses charged.

They sliced through the terrified  
Frenchmen,  
Who fled from the hooves of the Greys,  
Losing their coveted standard –  
That Ensign Ewart snatched away

And carried to cheers and rejoicing  
To the camp of the Iron Duke –  
Who turned aside to his bugler  
With a satisfied military look.

### **JUNE MAY COME TOMORROW**

[5.35pm, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

This month a day but gone,  
Pervades in sight of coming June,  
Rides out my cantering thoughts  
Cantering over the urban gloom  
Of spending life in idle waste,  
Paying rent and sundry bills,  
That neither rid, nor further help,  
Not cure the soul, to leave it still.

Will June be the answer then -  
Straddling every broken fence  
Hemming in the city ruins  
Of crumbling nerves and tired limbs,  
Fettered to the urban tether?  
Thank God that May has almost gone –  
Bring on the summer weather.

### **FAREWELL SWEET POETS**

(on completion of another notebook)

[31<sup>st</sup> May 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

One year of poems fill this book,  
on many thoughts and passing moods,  
Sketched by peaceful flowing brooks  
Or penned behind black masks and hoods.

Yet, here we are, at the end  
And who shall say I did not try  
To capture dreams and real intent  
That time has gladly passed on by.

For who can count the inspired hours  
My pen has flashed across the page,  
Or dragged its ink in useless power  
While inside my soul has raged.

But now, my work is nigh complete,  
The words alone now will speak,  
I'll leave this stage in slow retreat –  
Farewell, sweet poets, farewell in peace.

### **BEFORE THE RAINBOW COMES**

[31<sup>st</sup> May 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

America's given me stage-life,  
Performing my work to crowds  
Who gather like rumbling clouds  
Before clapping with loud shouts  
In a thunderous shower of applause.

### **HOT PRAIRIE SUMMER**

[20<sup>th</sup> Jun 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

The chords of wood stood by the road,  
By fields of corn hemmed in by woods.  
A crane passed over in looping swoops.

A sleep-eyed mouse shook the sheaves,  
*A cool draught seeped around its nest*  
*So steeped in heat, no breeze could*  
*dowse.*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE VALLEY OF BIG SUR

10.47pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Jun 1981, San Leandro]

Sentinel stood the pinnacle, the buttress  
and the peak,  
Over all the forest – oak and giant  
redwood,  
Shadowing the sur, the river gouged and  
stripped,  
Leaving yellow gleaming pools with silver  
trout.

Foreboding o'er the treetops, and eagle  
swooped,  
Magnificent, majestic, across the valley  
floor,  
Chasing the wind sent up from the  
shoreline,  
The ocean flowered in polka-dotted  
blossoms.

Ruefully passed a miner, his donkey and  
his load,  
Along the eucalyptus, birch and aspen  
path –  
Following the lust the wilderness denied  
him  
By washing the golden flakes beyond his  
grasp.

Blinding sped the water, the cataracts and  
falls,  
Surging off the basalt cliffs and canyon  
rocks,  
Sweeping jewel-bright leaping trout into  
eddies  
On which the eagle swooped as the miner  
watched.

Sad he turned, to search another raging  
creek -  
Hazy fell the forest of oak and giant  
redwood;

Dark closed the sur on the river streaked  
with gold;  
Misty grew the pinnacle, the buttress and  
the peak.

### MURDER ON THE CATHEDRAL STAIRS

[10.27pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Jun 1981, San Leandro]

Hollow sounding steps rung the night –  
A woman high-heeled, heavy thighed,  
Quickly passed beneath the courtyard  
lights,  
Near which a shadow lurked, tense and  
quiet.

The mist of Montmartre swirled about,  
Her low-hem dress, her naked ankles,  
white,  
Frozen in a cold seat from sudden fear,  
As behind the lurking shadow – neared.

Hurriedly her footsteps clawed stone  
stairs.  
Too late! The shadow met her there!  
Too young, the *fille de joie* lay there –  
Severed bowels, red against her ankles  
bare.

### THE WAY WE INTEND

[11.37pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Jun 1981, San Leandro]

It's crazy how these things begin,  
And how they never seem to end –  
But go on – time on endless time,  
Not the way we intend.

### PUTTING THE BOSS STRAIGHT

[30<sup>th</sup> Jun ? 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

Lazy, that's how I feel today.  
Digging holes ain't my cup of tea.  
For you tell me, amigo,  
Have you spent the summer working

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And sweating without payment?

Hell, no! You prissy little mother-fucker,  
I sure ain't going to work for no bum!  
Work? Screw it, man! Love!  
Love is what I need, brother.

You give me your money,  
And I'll give you my love.  
Lazy, Christ no!  
I'm just smart to know  
I ain't working for fun.

### **IN DEBT TO THE TUNE OF YOUR LIFE**

[9.17pm, 11<sup>th</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

I've tried to be tolerant of my debtors,  
Of creditors, I've rarely had one –  
And if I have somehow been negligent,  
It was accident, not malicious intent.

It was because of my debtors lies,  
My debtors deceptions and crimes.  
I have with all honesty,  
Tired to pay my debts, at all times.

I am angry with all my debtors,  
I have my gun loaded and primed –  
While my creditors are looking for me,  
I'm gonna mow my debtors down.

### **THE POET LEFT IN ME**

[10.15pm, 16<sup>th</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

If the poet always has his wealth in  
poverty,  
Is not his spirit then in debt?  
Is not his hope a fragile longing  
Of wasted words, idle talk, regret?

If a poet always quotes the truth aloud,  
Is not his voice then in chains?  
Is not his wisdom shackled by his honesty,

On which all lies, are truths just the same?

If a poet always speaks for the people,  
Is not his thought then enslaved?  
Is not his ego locked in essence,  
On which all men are bound deprived?

If a poet always is and never was,  
He's not the judge we see him as.  
He's not the jury set to try us.  
Then that poet is the poet left in me.

### **THE RAINBOW ROAD**

[10.55pm, 21<sup>st</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

I once knew the world as a lonely place,  
A place where man took his own stand,  
A stand that separated him from others,  
So that everyone knew each, apart.

These were old times, young wandering  
days,  
Days spent upon the carefree road,  
A road quiet, a way long -  
That stretched towards the rainbow's  
glow.

I suppose now, that I was blind then,  
Blind but young, and free and sold,  
Sold to an idea of pots of gold  
At the end of the rainbow road.

### **HEROES**

[7.30pm, 26<sup>th</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

Heroes come in forms sublime,  
Divine, yet surely fragile seeds  
Bourn by the storms of war,  
Planted by the ploughs of peace.

Visions fall on those, so few  
Selected from the seas of corn,  
The grasses wild upon the plains,  
The cradle of the voice unborn.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Too soon the cause has risen clear,  
To run, to shun the final call –  
A hidden hand pushed forth,  
The hero stands, erect to all.

Stories told, in time unfold,  
Of deeds, of inspiration cloned –  
And statues tower in the parks,  
Where victories raised, saw heroes fall.

### **JULY 29<sup>TH</sup> 1981**

(for Laura's Thirtieth Birthday)

[8.45pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

On a summer's morn in English fashion,  
The grey dawn will be long in brightening  
–

Silent, yet waiting for the city sleep  
To turn the bells and drums which beat  
To sound the coming of the carriages,  
Carrying the Prince and his sweet  
Princess.

Yet for Laura, in distant California,  
Such a morn of smoggy summer heat,  
Takes the tenderness caught in her room  
To mean that dawn has brought too soon  
The passing of youthful age –  
And the rising of a fuller shining moon.

### **NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN WILL COME MY SWEETHEART'S DAY**

[00.00am, 29<sup>th</sup> Jul 1981, San Leandro]

Never to be forgotten will come my  
sweetheart's day,  
As dawn in England brings two million  
forth  
To view and cheer for Charles, Prince of  
Wales,  
Surrendering sweet love to his royal bride.  
Which corner of the earth will not take  
note,

To trumpets ringing on the beat of drums,  
To pipers singing in the lift of London's  
bells  
That draw on people to hold their breath.

Yet, within my soul burns freedoms fire!  
As violence, riots, starvation are  
forgotten,  
While Ulster sickness ravishes Liverpool  
and Leeds,  
And Glasgow nears the edge of open  
revolution.

The storm looms imminent in fascist  
Britain,  
While I imprisoned, interred on hunger  
strike –  
It started as a cause for equal rights,  
Not rebellion, as the law has called my  
crime.

Meanwhile my love is far across the hills,  
Across the wildest moors in hidden Irish  
heaths;  
Awakening to the whistle of a hopping  
blackbird  
On the garden fence, close by her window.

Grey clouds will rise from out the black  
North Sea,  
As dawn presents her with a birthday gift-  
Her thirty years of life run 'neath the  
bridge  
On which I imprisoned, must let the water  
flow.

The soldiers with their bullets, the police  
their shields,  
I alone, call and cry these words for her.  
Our love as a thing – cannot be broken,  
Like the revolution that flowers and  
grows.  
Never shall be forgotten my sweetheart's  
day,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I shall wait on God, to be set free –  
A thousand years of English class  
oppression,  
Shall be appeased, the day my sweetheart  
rejoins me.

### SITTING AT A CAB STAND

[3<sup>rd</sup> Aug 1981, 13th & Mission, Hayward]

When you're sitting at a cab stand  
And waiting for a fare,  
You watch all the action  
Outside the bars and transit bays –  
The to and fro of people  
Beneath the falling night,  
The drunks, the late-tired shoppers,  
The aged, and wide-eyed types –  
The old, and not so healthy  
Who can't afford to ride.

### TURN OF FATE

[10pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, Hayward Bart]

Its strange how life takes so many turns  
That is somehow incongruent with fate.  
How many times have you barely  
wondered  
That each step wasted could have been a  
hundred.

### SIMPLE LIFE

[10.05pm, 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

How others' lives seem to simple;  
So full of dull, and weathered living;  
So bliss with boring, sameness days,  
The same old thing, day in day out.

### THE DICE PLAYER

[11.25pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, Hayward]

When you can't make money,  
Then you have to take a rest;  
You might as well forget

The fortune in your head.

Who knows, perhaps tomorrow,  
Or the next at least,  
When you can't make money  
What's the point of losing sleep.

When the day goes too quickly  
And things are left undone –  
What's the use of being angry  
In the glowing, setting sun?

Who knows, perhaps tomorrow,  
The anguish will not burn  
As hot and deep and troubled  
As today's frustration churned.

When the night fails to linger  
And dawn begins to light,  
You may feel the spirit  
Rebirth in your life.

Who knows, perhaps by evening  
The dice will have rolled –  
With your fortune ready made  
And your world turned to gold.

### THE WET GET-AWAY

[10<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

On a rare cloudy night in California,  
Near midnight on a chilly August evening,  
On the outskirts of a large spreading city,  
By the shores of San Francisco Bay –

A sleeping taxi-driver in a dream,  
Set in a windswept Safeway parking lot,  
Was suddenly awakened by a shot.  
The 7-11 across the way was being  
robbed.

A gunman sped away in an '80's Chevy,  
Burning rubber like some high-school kid,  
In panic, doing wheelie's on the sidewalk,  
Leaving a hydrant gushing like a fountain.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE IRISH

[19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

Why does the Irish issue burn sweet  
tongues  
With bitter words and stinging taste,  
With acrid fire and acid pain  
While Irish palates stay unstained?

Where I came from midst the working  
class,  
Irish men wore handkerchiefs for hats,  
Irish eyes were blank, and cheeks bright  
red,  
And alcohol reeked from their every  
breath.

That's not to say they were low men,  
For ne'er was one to hold a grudge –  
And ne'er was found a broken soul  
Who could not belly-ache a laugh.

Yet scourging every Irish tongue  
Were tales of legend and of myth,  
Mingled with a touch of truth,  
Stretched beyond all common sense.

And who could doubt Irish love  
Woven from the fear of God –  
That honest women never gave  
Till after wedding in a church.

Yet, please believe, I have no beef,  
I've shared sweet nights with Irish girls;  
I've drunk till dawn with Irish men  
And had no foes, but many friends.

### VETERANS CAB

[8.13pm, 21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

Another night on the road –  
Though rather different from the past;  
Riding out in working life,  
Driving round for Veteran's Cab.

### THE TRAVELLER

[24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

I've spent a year in California,  
But its not the only place I've been –  
I was twenty-one in India,  
And travelled Europe at seventeen.

I passed some time in Brazil,  
And Kenya, not so long ago –  
I crossed the Andes to Bolivia,  
To rock-n-roll on the radio.

Now I'm flying out for Bangkok,  
And India a second time around –  
Can't say when I'll be returning;  
Travelling is a fate blown life.

### LET SWEET PEACE ABIDE

[1.47am, 27<sup>th</sup> Aug 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

Its always nice to let things slide,  
To let things blindly, smoothly ride –  
To lay all things off to the side,  
And amply let sweet peace abide.

### IN A FARAWAY LAND

[2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Sep 1981, Hayward-San L, Calif.]

Clear be the day and blue the dawn  
Before the gathering coming storm,  
The unleashing of child, still unborn,  
Coming, coming, until dawn's long gone.

Clammy the heat of the tropical noon  
Before the thundering clamour rolls –  
The storm, storm imminent looms,  
Heralding, heralding a roaring typhoon.

Heavy the lashing and dark the simoon  
Tearing palms from century old roots –  
The rain, rain drumming tin roofs,  
Bringing, bringing the wet monsoons.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Cool be the night and huge the moon  
Through the door of the lighted room –  
Crying, crying, carries a voice,  
Born, brn from a native's womb.

Clear be the day and blue the dawn,  
The childbirth room beginning to warm –  
The palms, palms whistling hum,  
As gathering, gathering the storm it  
comes.

### PARADISE

[6pm, 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1981, San Leandro, Calif.]

Other worlds wait far beyond the seas,  
Fired with long tanned, naked legs  
And breasts heaving in the waves –  
On a golden beach in Paradise.

### UNFULFILLED ATTAINMENT

[6.02pm, San Leandro, Calif.]

How many years must the spirit wait  
To catch the glory of the times;  
Why must the soul bend its knee  
To filter out the evil in the light?

No answer waits the unsure mind,  
No treasure yields to the wanton heart;  
Blank is the empty demon's love  
Raging on, and on, through life.

### THE MONOLITH ISLE

[14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Sept 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

Every day I tire of city life  
I cry for the lost still hours,  
I spent by the healing black waters  
That circled the Monolith Isle.  
I long for the endless peace found  
Down by the pebbles and stone –  
Circling the ghosts and the spirits  
Cast by the mist on that shore.

For there I discovered silence  
Skimming the black lake swell,  
Gently cutting the white tops  
While stars as raindrops fell.

Till I ground ashore on the agate  
That clung to the Monolith Isle,  
I tied my skiff and unclothed -  
And ascended in primitive bounds

To a cave I know on the summit,  
Where naked and utterly alone –  
I listened as the echoes recited  
The beat at my deep heart's core.

And curled like an unborn baby  
In the chill of the cavern womb,  
I grasped the lost millenniums  
And the cave as a sacred tomb.

And still as I tramp the city  
I hear the inner, clear cries  
Of the spirits leashed in the darkness  
In the depths of the Monolith Isle.

### MY TWENTY-THREE FIRST- COUSINS

[23<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

Of my twenty-three first-cousins, Allen's  
now in jail,  
Brian got released last week, certified sane

–  
And Cathy is a prostitute, barely in her  
teens,  
And there's cousin Ian Barrie who's  
confessed as being gay.

There's George, a shipyard worker, always  
out of work,  
And cousin Alec Hoban, who's never  
heard the word,  
And there's little Annie Jean, now a  
convent nun,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And her brother Jamie John, a lying,  
cheating bum.

There's Marjory, a spinster, with a colic  
rubber heart,  
And Margaret, a singer in the Sunday  
Mass church choir –  
And Hughie lost to reason, wandering the  
world,  
And cousin Robert Aitken who grows his  
own pot.

There's Carol born at Christmas, angelic,  
pure and dumb,  
There's Davie, a gambler, a rogue, a thief,  
a pimp –  
And lovely sweet young Gillian who drops  
them all the time,  
And her sister Esther Bauld whose love  
produced a child.

There's Joan, a factory seamstress that  
suicide almost claimed,  
And cousin Jimmy Moffat that religion  
has reprieved;  
And Hilary, the rebel, spouting high on  
LSD,  
And Laura, slimming down on purple pills  
and cheese.

There's Robin, fallen woman who's been  
married seven times,  
And there's cousin Isabel, an old  
fashioned girl,  
And finally, there's Albert, who just this  
week was born –  
I guess when added up, that's twenty-three  
in all.

### 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

[24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

On the 24<sup>th</sup> September, the rain began –  
'Earlier than usual' said the tramp.

'I guess I'll be looking for somewhere  
warm  
to hole up before long'.

And he was right as the leaves fell  
And bare the skyline stood –  
As rain dropped, and wind blew  
In every neighbourhood.

And the floods came, and deluge followed,  
And homeless fled the rising tide –  
While on the higher land, water carried  
The soil off in endless mudslides –

That never lent not let hinder  
The never stopping rain that came –  
Dropping like pennies falling  
From a Las Vegas slot machine.

Soon stripped, the covers of the sky  
Lay bare the naked stars in bed –  
And instantly the waters fell  
As rising dawn like cockerel broke

The tramp awake from his sound sleep;  
Oblivious to the passing flood –  
In idleness of yawning breath,  
He arose from the sea of mud.

### THE TWENTY TWO TRIALS OF A TRAVELLER

[29<sup>th</sup> Sept- 6<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, San L –  
Hayward, Calif.]

He has lived the life of a wanderer,  
and much has he conquered and bourne,  
he's lived with the twenty-two troubles  
in order to learn and to know

That though weakened & ravished by  
hunger  
and covered in rivers of veins,  
he'd take only his rationed measure  
and wander on cheerful and sane -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And refrain from drinking cold water  
though gagged by tropical thirst,  
restrained - by shame and aversion  
to discover the happiness sought.

Avowed, austere, and ascetic,  
occasionally plundered by cold,  
he'd never walk without reason  
beyond what the scriptures controlled.

He'd suffer from heat on his body,  
he'd suffer from summer's hot winds,  
but he'd never lament discomfort  
nor wipe the sweat from his limbs.

And suffering from insects and gad-flies,  
he'd not chase the creature flood,  
he'd tolerate all living beings  
though they fed on his flesh and blood.

With his clothes torn, he'd go naked,  
it mattered not to him ....  
complaint was for poor weaklings  
whose robes were spun from whims.

And born a man of our essence,  
with women a natural desire,  
he'd prefer to perform his duties  
than search for the ego in I.

Thus different from those about him  
he'd acquire no chattels nor goods,  
unattached to house or house-holders,  
he'd sleep wherever he could.

In a burial place or roofless house  
or below a tree he would sit,  
alone, without moving, and fearless,  
he would study encircled by birds.

And having found good lodgings,  
he would never tarry long,  
the nature of penance and inner-self  
would make him travel on.

Thus houseless and poor, the wanderer  
from town to village did roam,  
Passionless, perfect, and sinless,  
he'd wander on tireless, alone.

And if a layman somehow abused him,  
he'd grow neither angry, nor cruel,  
he'd take torment with silence  
and keep his soul a jewel.

And when beaten, he was not angry,  
he'd vent no vengeful thoughts,  
with calm resign and patience,  
he'd revise what wisdom taught.

And in the quandary for perfection,  
he'd debate to beg, or starve,  
for all, or some, or nothing,  
he'd hold out his bowl and ask.

And when denial produced hunger,  
in the grip of deep desire,  
in the wake of gathering sadness,  
he'd still produce a laugh.

And when ill, he'd take no treatment,  
he'd sojourn on alone ....  
to find the firm and fast,  
and the future for his soul.

And naked, rough, and sun-burnt  
hurt by grass, by wind ....  
he would not search for new clothes  
to cloak his dust-stained skin.

For to carry such filth on his body  
until expiration on death,  
while not lamenting discomfort,  
was noble and true to the path.

Which led him to harbour no cravings,  
nor have resent for pleasant things,  
for not being dainty and sorry,  
he took what life might bring.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And such remembered past actions,  
as a product of ignorance and youth,  
To understand was the answer -  
the way of reaching the truth.

Turned from the lust of the senses,  
he lived re-strain-ed-ly,  
he practiced religious austerities  
until his path was clear.

He thought of the future coming,  
the exulted state received,  
he journeyed from village to village  
until this was achieved.

And this is the life of the wanderer!  
The ascetic who travels alone!  
Who bears the twenty-two trials  
the length of the heavenly road!

### IN THE MENDICINO MOUNTAINS

[13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, Hayward, Calif.]

In a smoky little cabin in the mountains  
Where the girl of my dreams had taken  
me –  
I discovered while watching leaves fall,  
The love that was blind to me.

To doubts I'd had about the word forever,  
To which my lover whispered answers  
with her touch;  
In the dark as naked flames danced to  
music,  
I clearly saw life, and death, and love.

In reflection, in that solitude and  
calmness,  
True love showered and showed itself to  
me;  
In the silence between the drumming  
raindrops –  
Eternity bound my true love to me.

### IN GEORGE'S NAME

[14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

If only George had known  
That his face would fly above  
The aspirational wanting  
Of a nation on the burn –  
That everything he stood for  
Would be written on the back,  
In green, and blessed by God,  
And signed as ONE.

And in the city of his name,  
Huddle fascist heads –  
Scheming arbitration  
With Egyptians and the Lebs;  
As greenbacks reach the ceiling  
Of the U.S. Fed Reserve,  
Stamped – DESTINATION BEIRUT,  
SPEND ON ARMS AND LEAD.

And above Jerusalem's wailing  
From the tallest minaret,  
The muezzin's cries befalling  
On subdued Arab heads –  
Suppressed and bent to order  
While planning sweet revenge,  
On walls daubed with slogans  
And machine-gun epithets.

And no wonder George is angry –  
He's being used to kill,  
All PLO fanatics  
And to pay for Muslim girls,  
Bought by Yiddish soldiers  
Occupying the Strip –  
To the clapping of the world  
And a blitz of dollar bills.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### IF JOHN LENNON HAD BEEN A WOMAN

[16<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

If John Lennon Had been a woman  
Where would she be now,  
And if he had been a woman,  
Would Sadat have been shot down?

And what about Abe Lincoln,  
Pursuer of equal rights –  
And poor Mahatma Gandhi,  
A spirit in the night.

They could have all been women  
With love in their souls,  
To guide with mother kindness  
Till all were aged and old.

Yet if only sad John Lennon  
Had been less dreamer like,  
And Anwar Sadat hadn't let  
Bodies float on down the Nile;

And if Lincoln hadn't sent  
A nation into war –  
And Gandhi hadn't put  
The Muslims to the wall.

If only they'd been women!  
With gentle, subtle minds,  
To rule with love and conscience,  
In peace with all mankind

If only man were woman ....  
And woman, only love.

### BETWEEN THE SHEETS

[11am, 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, San Leandro]

White in spring,  
Brown in summer,  
Golden in autumn,  
Me and my lover.

### THE CONTINUATION

[11.40pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 1981, East Bay]

And hot the brown heath rose in flames  
Around the dying sunflower stem,  
And hot the fire-dust stung the eyes  
As weeping screamed the flower near  
death –  
As black wings beat the blackened air  
As war the country swept.

And after, when the war was dead  
And skeletons silhouetted every field –  
Cool the rain wet the earth  
And swollen soil hid the unmarked graves;  
As steamy dew turned to misty haze  
And life emerged as a sunflower's face.

### EARLY MORNING IN EAST BAY

[1.35am, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

Cloudy fog and dampened streets,  
Trundling freight and rolling stock –  
Deserted cafes and sidewalks.

Glaring lights and hanging palms,  
Lifeless cars and smile less tramps,  
Traffic signs and billboards.

Stop lines and cop sounds,  
Long waits and bus brakes,  
High-heels and gays.

Radio waves and darkened stairs,  
Mean towers and lofty stars,  
All through the night.

### DRIVEN TO MAKING EXCUSES

[1am, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

Mr C.H.P man –  
Why 're you giving me a ticket?  
I was only doing ninety  
Like a million other idiots.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Mr. County Sheriff –  
I ain't been heavy drinkin,  
I only had twelve beers  
And your talking prison!

Mr. City Cop –  
I never ran that red,  
You blinked and missed the amber,  
I ran through pink instead.

Mr. District Judge –  
I'm telling you the truth,  
That for every bad offence  
I've a plausible excuse.

### **DOWN BY THE BAY**

[27<sup>th</sup> Nov 1981, East Bay, Calif.]

Around the Bay today  
There's too many towns to name;  
Five million people living  
Life crazy, and insane.

There's Berkeley – looney haven  
For the brilliant and the dregs;  
Full of cosmic happenings  
On the street and inside heads.

There's phony Palo Alto  
And its love of social class  
While the leaves on the street  
Are as thick as piles of trash.

There's lovely west-side Oakland  
Next to Alameda borough,  
Where the Fleet dries its ships  
By the quaint wooden houses.

There's geriatric San Leandro  
Where the whites are full of fight;  
The cops return the black folks  
To Oakland every night.

## PARADISE AND HELL

### HONG KONG

[1.50pm, 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 1981, Hong Kong]

The visitor to Hong Kong notices  
That the air smells like day-old egg  
sandwiches.  
It is a combination of motor vehicles,  
Frying rice and piles of garbage  
Spiced by the oil-streaked harbour  
Carried by the sea-breezes.

A journey by cable-car to the top  
Of Victoria Peak is only a respite  
From the choking atmosphere,  
That makes the head reel, the stomach  
wretch,  
The legs wobble as if coping with the  
tremor  
Of an endless earthquake.

But better to suffer the streets  
Than the warren, crowded tenements  
With their voidance of daylight  
In box-size rooms serving whole families,  
The rationing of water between set hours  
Making most human functions a chore.

These inconveniences do not make living  
inexpensive in a city where a hotel room  
costs fifteen dollars a night -  
A meal in a crummy dive more than  
A spotless restaurant in San Francisco.

Hong Kong is riding on a wave of  
prosperity  
That almost makes the cost of living  
bearable,  
The overcrowding acceptable, and the  
smell  
Of day-old egg sandwiches almost  
unnoticeable.

### BANGKOK

[22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1981, Bangkok, Thailand]

Sampan and coco-palms,  
Bamboo and banana fronds –  
All along the waterfront  
Of the Bangkok canals ...

### CHRISTMAS DAY IN THAILAND

[Christmas Day 1981, Sukothai, Thai'l'd]

Christmas Day in Sukothai –  
Wats and ancient stupas,  
Buddhas reaching for the sky,  
Their heads like rising steeples.

Casting needle shadows down  
Upon the pink pond-lilies –  
Sailing in a pool of green  
Of calm, serene, sweet beauty.

Blocking out all Christian thought  
Of Saint Nicolas and Jesus –  
Jingling bells and powder-snow,  
Parcelled gifts, and candy.

All so far away and lost,  
Neither missed nor wanted –  
Christmas just another day  
Where Buddhas brood, undaunted.

### HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

[1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1982, Bangkok, Thailand]

Anyone who's been to Hong Kong or  
Bangkok  
Will know what I'm talking about –  
They're gas chambers of smog and  
pollution  
That strangle and choke, day and night.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

It's no surprise the eyes start weeping  
And the nostril cake opium black –  
And the throat begins to rasp like a file  
Grinding down a laryngitis attack.

It's wise to get out of such cities  
And give your lungs a rest –  
Clear the throat with a whiskey  
On a flight to somewhere else.

### SONG FOR BANGLADESH (song)

[3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1982, Dacca, Bangladesh]

Did George ever really come here?  
Did Mr.Raman really lead the crowds?  
Between the floods and the famine –  
Oh Bangladesh. Oh, my!

*Bangladesh, ah yes!*  
*Bangladesh, aa chaa!*  
*Bangladesh, oh man!*  
*Bangladesh, oh my!*

### BRAHMAPUTRA

[10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1982, Sylhet, Bangladesh]

The Himalayan snows lay faraway  
Beyond the shimmering solitude.  
From hence the Brahmaputra rose,  
A thousand miles it washed lost Tibet.  
Until, it turned and rained Assam  
Of all its rain that ran like blood,  
Red with silt, and weighed with mud,  
All carried westwards, high in flood.

And when it reached the Bengal plain  
And broke its banks while turning south,  
The waters spread, carried miles  
To form a hundred rivers and a thousand  
isles.  
While joyous farmers, hungry from the  
drought,  
Cried and sung their joy into the night;  
The Brahmaputra, smooth like glass,

Threw the moon into a splintered mirror  
of light.

And in the small hours of the dawn,  
The sacred Ganges waters merged;  
Swelled by tears that pilgrims wept –  
The rivers joined, and onwards swept  
As the monsoon storms blew in  
To cloud the distant delta flow –  
The Brahmaputra, once so proud,  
Gave out beyond the Bengal shore.

### MONASTERY OF GHOOM

[Jan 1982, Darjeeling, India]

Sweet mountain rising over all,  
Cypress wound, the mist it falls  
As cloud upon the foothill ridge  
Where perched - the tribal flags  
Unfurled, meet the creeping wall of fog  
That falls on the monastery at Ghoom.

### IN THE GUTTER IN CALCUTTA

[Late Jan–17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Calcutta &  
Madras, India]

Down in the gutter in Calcutta  
With the waste, the sewage, and trash,  
I am smoking a chillum, and watching  
From behind my opium haze -  
The commotion of rickshaws and taxis,  
Trams and buses jam packed –  
While sitting on a bench in a chai shop  
And throwing piase in a beggar's plate.

It's a long way down, a Calcutta gutter –  
I've fallen in with ruin, and drugs;  
I can count three lepers as comrades  
And two French dopers as chums;  
There's a girl I've declared my love to,  
Who refuses to listen to me –  
She scorns, and curses my position  
At the bottom of the social tree.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

My enemies seem like the whole world,  
Guilty and pitiless free –  
A seething mass of faceless souls  
Afloat in a shipwrecked sea,  
Filled with waste, and with garbage  
And the vomit of a thousand years –  
I'm just an opium addict ...  
Drowning in opium tears.

### **MALARIA**

[31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1982, Puri, Orissa, India]

Mosquitos of India!  
Killing me with stinging, gnawing bites.  
In fever I am hemp-roped in bed  
For four days, three nights?

I am delirious ... the shutters are closed,  
The punkah looms still.  
The waves are pounding on the shoreline,  
A black crow sings –

Oh the wonder of the sunrise!  
Carried to the Indian Ocean -  
and bathed in the brine waters.  
The fever left my body. I cried.

### **HUNTERS OF THE SEA**

[7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Puri, Orissa, India]

Out beyond the warm, shore sands -  
Where sit the village wives and mothers,  
As hungry as the burnt-back men -  
The hunters of the deep blue waters  
Thrash out against the sharks  
Whilst reaping in their caste nets –  
A basketful of bone-backed fish  
And a turtle, to sustain their faith.

No man lets his children starve,  
If out beyond the the shore he knows,  
Swims a beast his neighbour craves,  
And eats because there are no fish;  
For like the hunter who finds no fowl,

Turns he then to larger game;  
Likewise the fishermen were forced  
To bring their turtle back to shore.

To the fisher of the Eastern seas,  
The turtle is not sacred, not returned -  
And there, upon the golden sands,  
Amidst wives and naked children,  
They let the turtle's red-blood flow  
And trickle down into the waves,  
As the sky became a crimson glow,  
And evening fell upon the shore.

The turtle filled a score of hands,  
That dripped their way to each dark hut,  
Lit only by quiet, naked flames  
As through the night as hunger died,  
The dogs licked out the turtle shell.

Three days later, bleached and wormed,  
Two girls scrapped the shell with bone,  
Ocean washed it – then carried home  
Their trophy as a baby-cot, or bowl –  
As the hunters, with nets untangled  
for the depths set their sails -  
Flexed sore muscles, torn by toil,  
Burnt-backed, hungry, left the shore.

### **DEEP IN THE TROPICS**

[9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Puri, Orissa, India]

Laziness is conducive on a sunny day  
As the white sands stretch,  
And the palms hang limp in the heat.

Idleness is not a foolish dally  
Among the white, cool waves,  
Or beneath the cloudless sky.

Laughing is not a rich man's domain  
Under the leaning shade,  
And a spreading banyan.

Leisure is not a noon-day sleep

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Upon a hemp-rope bed,  
While a fan slowly turns.

Inactivity is a way of life,  
Lethargy is human nature  
In the tropical south.

### SHORES OF ORISSA

[12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Puri, Orissa, India]

Quietly come the shadows of evening  
On the wake of the day.  
As the fishing boats beached in the sand.  
Ashore went the warriors and heroes  
To the fires of the night,  
Soon ablaze with the catch.

Asleep fell the feasters and drinkers  
Close to the break of the tide.  
The lapping counted out time  
As full, rose the moon in blister  
To hush the night murmurs  
Before the rebirth of day.

Ferociously the dawn woke crimson  
To colour the fishermen's limbs  
Fighting the in-bound surf –  
And soon, mere dots on the skyline,  
Tiny specks of brown sail,  
The fishermen laboured till night.

### IDLE EVENING

[10.35pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Puri, Orissa,  
India]

And evening of little doing and doing  
little,  
Letting the seconds trickle and the hours  
whittle,  
As the days tumble and the months  
rumble,  
And the years slip by in tens.

A night of thinking little and little  
thinking,  
Letting the thoughts slither and ideas  
slide,  
As the candle dims and the shadows claim  
The world on either side.

### THE LAND OF OM-NA-ONG

[13<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Puri, India]

Sitting under the mango tree  
Awaiting the fruit to fall –  
Is how the fairies collect their wealth  
In the woods of Om-Na-Ong.

### OLD MADRAS

[17<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Madras, India]

Mobs of bare-footed beggars  
Littering the cow-dung streets,  
Crowded with vendors and merchants  
Talking business over tea and sweets.

Discussing the latest in shipping,  
The price of tobacco or wheat,  
The state of the country in general,  
The abuse of government seats.

The excessive lining of pockets,  
Leaving the poor little to eat,  
But little morsels of gossip,  
Trampled under uncaring feet.

A community striving for progress  
In a rumble and tropical beat,  
Kept alive by the suckling of babies  
On milk from naked teats –

Once fired by the hands of lovers,  
Faithless and ready to cheat,  
Or abandon their armies of children  
Thrown out to compete –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

For food and worldly attention,  
Who as beggars, learn to greet  
Life with a shrug of acceptance  
And *hello* as meaning *baksheesh*.

Home as a roadside mattress  
A couple of cardboard sheets,  
In the open, or under a tree  
On one of a hundred streets.

### THE MADRAS CAFÉ

[4.50pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Madras, India]

In a city famed for its cuisine,  
And noted for *dossa* and *bakala*;  
Between the savouries and sweet things,  
The *bajis* and *gulabjamons* –  
There is *pongle*, *poori* and *semia*,  
Noodles in a variety of sauce –  
And the famous *massala dossa*,  
Madras's own special love.

At the heart of the culinary wonders,  
Is Shree Krisna's enormous Lunch Home  
–

Where an order of *oothappam*  
Is like ordering *spaghetti* in Rome;  
Where coffee's the price of a phone call,  
And as good as you get in Rio;  
Where the service is swift and pleasant,  
And the bill a few rupees all told.

I doubt they know what they're missing  
In the cafes of Paris and Rome,  
In London, or New York, or Moscow,  
Or Berlin, Buenos Aires, and Tokyo.  
For Shree Krisna's, the venerable Lunch  
Home  
Is above, and beyond their know –  
Oh hail, Shree Krisna's Lunch Home!  
I café in Madras where I go.

And thus, having lavished my praises  
On this oasis of gastronomical power,

And thus having emptied my cravings  
For the endless dishes I've devoured;  
I shall rise from my idle longing  
And prepare for my daily show  
At the Shree Krisna Lunch Home -  
The café in Madras that I know.

### A LOT OF EFFING NOTHING

[5.10pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Madras, India]

Free flowing thought flying fugitively  
With foreign fancies and familiar feelings.  
Fighting furiously to flourish forth  
And fill fresh fantasies of fame,  
Fortune and future, in finely  
Fixed, formulated fiction flying  
Fatalistically from fact to false  
Fits of frustration, faulting few,  
Yet fatiguingly forcing flimsy faith  
In fate to the fore.

### ARJUNA'S PENANCE

[11.20pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982,  
Mahabalipuram, India]

Arjuna was a warrior prince  
Who summoned Lord Siva to grant him a  
wish -  
That his foes be destroyed,  
And he released from his penance.

### THE ASOKA (THE PARK)

[25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> Feb 1982, Mamallapuram, TN,  
India]

The jasmine blossom open there  
Incensed with love, the night-air stirred,  
Rippled by the sea-wave pound,  
Mumbled on by drunken mirth,  
As stars broke bright and hazy through  
The cypress standing by the palm –  
What better arbour was there made  
For lovers and the bliss of kiss.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The stories of a universe –  
Sands as endless as all life,  
Sprung to form, fired the night  
Like flaming parakeets in flight;  
As falling stars streamed the dark  
To carry jungle callings far –  
Far into the longing hearts  
Of dreamers caught in want of love.

And deep within the floral park,  
The scents of content, issued forth  
To grant a heavenly grove of jewels,  
A paradise of isolated mood –  
A place where lovers' only food,  
Was love, and love a constant woo –  
Where jasmine blossom wildly grew,  
And love was all that lovers knew.

### SAGUNTHALA

[11.20pm, 7<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Pondicherry,  
India]

The Lady of the Forest one day appeared  
To the hunter lost in fear;  
Gripping tight his unslung bow,  
He could not let an arrow go –  
Such beauty, he had never seen;  
She stood erect – a queen.

### THANDUVAM (NATARAJA)

[11pm, 12<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Chidambaram,  
TN, India]

Bharata Natyam, thus is called -  
Lord Shiva, poised in awesome sight,  
The Cosmic Dance to destruct all,  
With Nataraja posed in flight.

### EDGE OF NIGHT

[5.45pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Tiruchirappalli,  
TN, India]

Here I am at the end of the day  
Far in the Indian south –

With the reward of a shimmering evening,  
And a breeze of refreshing delight.

But how does one know heaven  
In the middle of paradise –  
How can the blue of the night sky  
Be anything but an illusionary sight.

How can this circle of palm trees  
Be but the fringe of twilight –  
Or more than a perimeter of blackness  
Close to the edge of the night.

### MATTER OF OPINION

[13<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Tiruchirappalli, TN]

Some people say I have the Devil in me,  
And others that I am God himself –  
I think the latter are righteous,  
And the former don't see themselves.

Who can dispute the difference  
Or the shade of the character unseen,  
When working on being mischievous  
Or preaching religious belief.

For some say I am a villain,  
And others, I am a perfect saint;  
So take it from me when I say –  
I can't always be what you paint.

### FINE MANGO TREES

[8.30pm, 17<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Courtallam,  
TN]

I'll tell you of a very fine town  
With healing falls and spectacular views,  
With bands of thieving monkeys  
Living in the fine mango trees.

It is land which is rich in honey  
And flowing with sweet, nectar juice,  
And spiced with fennel and nutmeg,  
And the oils of essence and wood.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And where, tell me, is this haven  
Of radiant green and flowering forest;  
In what such a land do monkeys live  
High in the fine mango trees?

And why no talk of shady dark things,  
Can there be such a perfect land  
Of sylvan walks, and ripening fruits  
Rarely visited by outside man?

Well, I'm not about to tell you  
And risk spoiling such a perfect place;  
The town where all can plainly see  
The monkeys in the fine mango trees.

### FATE IN PARADISE

[9.05pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1982 Kanniyakumari]

One person's paradise is another man's  
home  
Across the globe's oceans and shores,  
Coloured by the spectrum ever spinning,  
Rolling out sand-dust or gold.

While ours foul or sell their bodies,  
We lie in the naked sun parade –  
Fanning the breeze of sweet desire,  
Squeezing out diamonds from rain.

While others shout out for peace and  
freedom,  
Or sap growing power into strength;  
One man's universe is another's prison,  
And paradise a vision dreamt.

For all that is born and passes  
Under the blaze of the galaxy stars –  
One is created, and one is expended,  
And we, willing or not, take part.

Where would we be without paradise  
In the worlds of a thousand myths;  
One man's fate is another's faith,  
And fate in paradise a gift.

### THE NAGERCOIL TWIT

[9.55, 24<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Allepey, Kerela,  
India]

Every beggar is a human performance  
Of mime and theatrical tricks,  
Laced with a touch of mockery,  
Sarcasm, and biting hard wit.

But none was the equal of Natty,  
The half-cocked Nagercoil twit,  
Who could drool at the hint of a penny  
Or break into a hysterical fit –

That broke the bounds of convention  
And drew spittings and shrieking disgust  
That once made a lady from Delhi  
Vomit on him from a bus.

Which somehow improved his  
appearance,  
Made him overjoyed with his filth  
As he danced like a raving madman,  
And clung to the legs of the rich.

Yes! Natty was hero of some kind,  
In the swamps of the non-descript,  
He drew stares for his pathetic condition  
And more than the occasional kick –

That sent him into the gutter,  
Where he rolled and laughed in the stink –  
For even hell was a heaven  
To Natty, the Nagercoil twit.

### AS THE LIGHT CONTINUED TO BURN

[3.05pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr 1982, Mysore, India]

How bright the light shone in the window!  
And how the eye carried over miles.  
Yet dark within were the words expounded  
And whispered to unravel time.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And like gold, the palace reflected,  
And crimson the mimosa tree flowered.  
Yet sad were the thoughts interrupted  
And ceded to the piercing sunlight.

And how the jade hills beckoned,  
And the sky enveloped the world.  
And how the dark of the skyline room  
Absorbed the heat of the afternoon.

And sweet blew the breeze to embellish,  
The air afire with temple-scent woods.  
Yet unmellow the whispers continued  
To unruffled the infinite smooth.

Till a hawk in sky hovering higher,  
Ended time in a downward plunge.  
And the talk in the dark subsided  
As the candle continued to burn.

### THE COLONY

[9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Apr 1982, Goa, India]

Fishing boats raced to be first on the  
ocean,  
And sparrows hopped the roofs of red-  
tile,  
And men in white shirts and ladies in  
blouses,  
Bused and walked the streets of the town.

Clouds that were grey shifted and  
lightened,  
And the breeze in hints unfurled the flags,  
And children in temper would settle for  
ices,  
As friendly policemen joked loudly and  
laughed.

White limousines sped to rich  
destinations,  
And poor tired workers headed for home,  
And the sun in the west set on the ocean,  
As the restaurants threw open their doors.

Life in the colony was endlessly  
changeless,  
Where everything new became repeatedly  
old,  
Where the sun in the east rose out of  
jungle  
That only the towers of the churches  
broke.

Then one day in-marched the invaders,  
Proclaiming the colony under a new flag,  
And the men in white shirts and ladies in  
blouses,  
Bent to the force of the invader's new  
laws.

Till no-one remembered the names of old  
rulers,  
And the poor tired workers headed for  
home,  
And the clouds above, shifting and  
passing,  
Where everything new became repeatedly  
old.

### ARABIAN SEA

[11<sup>th</sup> Apr 1982, Arabian Sea, Daman,]

The aquamarine hue of the tortoise-shell  
water,  
Broke from the bow in a stream of white  
slake,  
As a black-headed gull trailing the stern  
wake,  
Befriended a tanker till the land  
disappeared.

The sky above was a picturesque  
brightness  
Of milky-cream beauty tossed on the  
breeze –  
The world – a saucer of endless ocean,  
And the name of that water – the Arabian  
Sea.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **BOMBAY**

[14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Apr 1982, Bombay, India]

There is nothing much to speak of  
But vendors and rinky-dink stalls,  
Obscured by the rude general public  
Viewing the overcrowded sidewalks -

Hugging the wide central roadways –  
The choked arteries of the city's guts,  
Kept blocked by red twin-decker buses,  
And by yellow-topped taxi cars.

As the trains in the station depart,  
Or screechingly halt, and unload  
A seething mass of pain-faced foes,  
Rushing to join the jostling hordes.

Like all of Bombay's ten million souls  
Careering on their personal courses,  
Up the steps of the Post Office stairs,  
All arms and legs in a beaded-brow pant.

Or along the road past the Indian Times,  
Where the chatter of presses drown the  
chants  
Of mourners, bearing a a fallen-one's pall  
Through the streets till the procession is  
lost –

In the snarls of temper, the whiplash of  
steel,  
Of human reactions to the machines on  
wheels,  
Vehicles reeking of cheap gasoline fumes,  
The pollution as thick as whipped double-  
cream.

The cream as sour as the government's  
schemes,  
The city as decadent as a westerner's  
dream –  
Of drugs, sex, where everything is legal,

Where money rules, and killing comes  
easy –

Where crime employs a tenth of the  
people,  
And pigeon shit is an unavoidable evil,  
That adheres to walls, statues and  
vehicles,  
And drops like rain in the monsoon  
season.

A man without shit is a man without  
reason  
To complain about Bombay's indifferent  
treatment  
Of stranger, of friend, of tourist or fool,  
Trapped in the melee of the city's dark  
mood.

### **KATMANDU**

[10pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Mar 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

The so and so birds, in the such and such  
trees,  
Swaying with the blossom, carried by the  
breeze,  
Caught in the short grass, covering the  
fields,  
Stretching like patchwork.

### **LORD FARTINGSON**

[25<sup>th</sup> Apr 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

Lord Fartingson was a bully, and a rogue  
Who captained the house team-side –  
While ruling with a cane on the inside,  
He whipped and stung the boys to the  
quick.

### **THE SYMBOLS OF KATMANDU**

[27<sup>th</sup> Apr – 4<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu]

Snow buddhas lined the high ridge path,  
Descending at a waterfall,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Towards the ancient city walls,  
Twelve hundred years evolved  
From even older truths and vedas –  
The Symbols of the North.

1

The Conch Shell symbolises Victory  
Sounding o'er the land -  
Returning armies spoiled by war,  
Courageous battles fought, and won,  
Never lost, and ne'er forgotten  
When even playfully blown.

2

A Vessel denotes Mental Purity  
In an abstract form -  
A vase containing crystal clear water,  
Or a pitcher, the sweetest oils;  
So thus the mind in perfect solution  
Fixes on absolute thought.

3

The Endless Knot symbolises Long Life,  
Like the boughs of an oak -  
The intertwined vine growing profusely  
Upon the ancient and crumbling past,  
Woven and strengthened, ever  
lengthening,  
Never unravelled, nor snapped.

4

The Umbrella denotes Spiritual  
Supremacy,  
Aloofness from life -  
Celestial aspects and knowledgeable  
insight,  
Patronised protection of truth and ideals;  
Enlightened are those by history made,  
Canopied beneath the umbrella's shade.

5

The Lotus weeps Spiritual Purity,  
The essence of beauty -  
Accepted by all who are cosmically gifted,

In search of the honey-milk pond,  
A drop of sap, manifest as amber  
In the palm of the hand.

6

The Banner portrays the Power of  
Knowledge  
Held over all -  
Waved at the fore of all confrontation,  
Or flying as prayers, written as vows,  
Or transcribed as tantras telling of  
mantras;  
The secret of learning to be found.

7

The Wheel is the wheel of Dharma,  
Truth never ending -  
The soul reborn in continuous life,  
Bound by the codes of ancient time;  
Rewarded are those of chivalrous fame,  
Released from the cycle of rebirth's pain.

8

Two alike Fish is Spiritual Wealth,  
A banquet of plenty -  
The spirit kept in supply of substance,  
Without the cravings of hunger and greed  
That lie beyond the mind, embedded  
And rooted in every-day deed.

Even now, on the high ridge paths,  
The snow buddhas melt –  
And though the crumbling city walls  
decay,  
And time runs through the cracks,  
The Symbols of the North prevail  
As the future, as read in the past.

### YAB YUM

[4<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

This peculiar little delight,  
Once popular in Tibet,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Practised by sexual union,  
Sets the soul alight.

### **CONDEMNED ON A FOREIGN WALL**

[6<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

We may be condemned on a foreign wall,  
Hated by one and all, and spat upon.  
Our ideals may be treated with loathing,  
Despised and trampled supremely on,  
But never is a head raised, face to face  
To tell us of those things, rightly wrong.

Ireland on a foreign wall is tyranny,  
Oppression, human rights, blood and  
bigotry,  
Civil war, occupation, and fascism,  
Colonialism, Maze Prison and anti-  
Popery,  
But never will a foreign clenched fist  
outstretched  
Refuse a cheque for aid with scorn.

We may be condemned for Argentina,  
Hated by one and all, and spat upon,  
Our principles may be rooted in the past,  
With the dogs now barking at our doors,  
But to lay down our arms, and all that?  
Such living in the past won't bring it back.

We know our enemies on the foreign  
walls,  
The fronts of their houses are daubed with  
us,  
Our actions may fill them with loathing,  
Yet our armies still make them cower in  
fear;  
But what use are foreign wall slogans,  
In places where the people cannot read.

We may be condemned, but still unbeaten,  
Hated by all foreigners, but never  
defeated,

Our culture may turn their very stomachs,  
While our dominance smashes their very  
ego;

We may be condemned on a foreign wall,  
But we are we, and the walls our people.

### **TEN THOUSAND DAYS**

[9.30pm, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu,  
Nepal]

Another day older, one of ten thousand  
That have passed on like clouds in the  
sky;  
They seem short, can't all be  
remembered,  
And have gone before the future arrives.

### **LEADING THE WAY**

[9.50pm, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu,  
Nepal]

Pushing on, trying to reach somewhere,  
somehow,  
Pulling along somebody who doesn't  
know how,  
Leading the way like a goat up a  
mountain;  
Tight-roping the cliffs like a clown on a  
wire.

### **SUPPLYING A FATHER'S WANTS**

[10.05pm, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu,  
Nepal]

'Give me more pot' cried the father  
as the boy quivered and filled the bowl –  
'Hurry up, boy, or I'll give you the  
slipper,  
you sad wretched, rag of a child!  
One more moment of wasted pleasure,  
I can't stand it. Get on the go!  
Hurry up, child, fire the mixture,  
Your father's waiting, fill that bowl'.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### PLAYTIME

[14<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

The thunder storm was over  
And the birds were singing loud,  
The sun was shining though  
The floating pillow clouds –  
And the children were playing  
In the school playground,  
And little pools and puddles  
Were being splashed about.

Then unexpectedly, the bully  
Splashed a girl, got her wet,  
And ne'er was there such fury  
As she wrung his sorry neck –  
And the thunder storm came back  
As the bell for classes went,  
The bully lay in a puddle  
As the first raindrops fell.

### VULTURES

[19<sup>th</sup> May 1982, Katmandu, Nepal]

In the high trees, caught in the breeze,  
The vultures sat with their fearsome  
faces,  
Hooked to the wind carrying wild seed,  
Widely sown against walls, in quiet places.

Clover thrived in fields of cow pasture  
Ringing the city in an emerald glow,  
While the vultures, black upon the  
horizon,  
Sat in the trees as the darkest of foes.

The breeze continued to blow on the city,  
Wild grass sprouting from the cement in  
the walls.  
The vultures remained sitting in the  
branches,  
Watching the crumbling city walls fall.

They sat there, up in the high trees,

Bills to a wind carrying wild seed;  
Getting old just like the city –  
Soon a place of grasses and weed.

And still they sat there in the high trees,  
For where else were they likely to go?  
Until the city was a desolate wasteland,  
The dust a scattering of powdered bone.

### PARADISE AND HELL

[31<sup>st</sup> May 1982, somewhere over Turkey]

Paradise may be found at a rainbow's end;  
After being to the ends of the earth,  
Such a paradise is also a hell –  
An experience never to talk of.

But having been through pleasure and  
pain,  
Prying open oysters in search of pearls,  
Seeking life's truths seeping from wells  
Springing from wealth that nobody sells -

We emerge at last into the light  
To continue the quest that began long ago  
–  
With a crescendo of ringing, peeling of  
bells,  
Slowing towards the last final knell.

There we shall leave it measuring time,  
Like an old clock spring winding down –  
May tall trees fall but never be felled  
As we pass through paradise and hell.

## THE NORTH COUNTRY

### THE SURRENDER OF PORT STANLEY

[14<sup>th</sup> Jun 1982, Newcastle, England]

We have just heard on the radio,  
the Prime Minister's confident voice  
that the Argentineans have surrendered,  
to the British forces on the Falklands.  
Everyone in our house gave a great cheer.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO HIPPIES

[27<sup>th</sup> Jun – 2<sup>nd</sup> Jul 1982, 259 Shields Rd,  
Newcastle]

It used to be drugs, now its booze,  
What happened to the hash and the acid?  
That went with the clothes, like fashion –  
Blue jeans with holes and arse hanging  
out,  
Hair the length of a floor mop – and a  
crotch  
That never got washed night to night.  
No one really cared about V.D,  
It was something of which to be proud.

Those dark lines from tripping till dawn,  
The tiny crow's feet, wrinkled and formed  
From keeping the dope smoke out of the  
eyes;  
Or the blindness caused by dance hall  
strobe lights,  
Beating the life out of rock-an-roll tunes,  
Blasting the ear-drums in a dance frenzied  
room –  
A sea of hair, and ocean of bare feet,  
Getting their rocks off as best they could.

Now that same guy who wouldn't work,  
Who collected his S,S for something to  
do,  
That same guy who used to say 'Shove  
it!'

Instead of putting on a tie for job  
interview –  
This same guy with his jeans worn  
through,  
Now looks like the rest of the middle-age  
crew  
'Hell, if you can't beat them, join them!'  
Hippies are now off drugs, and well into  
booze.

### THE FALL OF SIR CRESTWELL

[10.15pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Jul 1982, Newcastle]

After that fella broke into the palace,  
It was scapegoats and hangings they  
wanted;  
Nothing to do with Her Majesty at all,  
It was her bodyguard Sir Crestwell they  
haunted

For nine years Sir Crestwell had guarded  
the Queen,  
I wouldn't want the job for a million  
pounds –  
And after nine years they made him  
resign,  
After telling the world he was queer.

Everyone knows he wasn't disgraced by  
the break-in,  
Or his prostitute friend's threats of  
blackmail –  
It was the fact he was plainly homosexual,  
A cruel admission that ended his career.

The country feels pity for mistreated Sir  
Crestwell,  
Denounced in the Commons, stripped of  
his 'hood –  
It stinks of creeping conservative  
morality,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Shall we call it - the castrated Eighties  
decade?

I'm sorry Sir Crestwell, and for all who  
are gay,  
I hate the way this government disgraced  
you –  
It will be sometime before the country  
forgets,  
That honour bestowed, can be taken  
away.

### THE NEIGHBOURS

[20<sup>th</sup> Jul 1982, Newcastle]

Receding wanes the whining car engine,  
Out in the lane, an hour past twelve.  
What would prompt a good living citizen  
To be abroad and about at this time?

Just five minutes back, I heard a loud  
crack  
That reminded me of a starter's track-  
gun,  
And almost inaudible, I could be mistaken,  
I heard a scream, and a mention of God.

I also recall a clatter of footsteps,  
In haste, and running along the sidewalk –  
A car-door opening, and closed in a hurry,  
An engine started in a deafening roar.

Who would disturb the peace of the night  
hours,  
All good neighbours were meant to be  
home?  
Only prowlers and miscreant persons  
Would venture out so late on the road.

### EGO GOES WHERE I GOES

[20.05pm, 11<sup>th</sup> Aug 1982, Newcastle]

Everywhere I go, EGO goes too,  
Talking and changing my mind.

One hour we're laughing, next crying  
Over things of various kinds.

I try to forget about EGO,  
Lurking and weaving about,  
But time after time he saves me  
From lingering boredom and doubt.

EGO has rights like I have,  
I cannot command his power.  
We are like a rainy day –  
I am the cloud, EGO the shower.

Sometimes I tend to hate EGO,  
Others, he's the best friend I have.  
So, I kind of live with EGO,  
And EGO lives with me, and that's that.

### BARBARIANS OF THE WEST

[12pm, 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 1982, Newcastle]

The arose from the mists mounted on  
horses,  
And armed with weapons dripping in  
blood –  
They crossed the wastes and desolate  
places  
To arrive like the anger of a terrible  
storm.

Savage in battle, they ravaged the rich  
lands,  
Their brown eyes burning all that they  
saw,  
Felling all order with axes and terror –  
Spears and swords their dispensers of law.

All before them toppled and crumbled,  
The night skies blazed as the cities burnt;  
Corpses lay slain and quartered  
As the fleeing fled the slaughtering hunt.

No man survived the merciless carnage  
That barbarians finally invoked –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Who taking their dead over their horses,  
Cleansed their weapons and turned  
towards home.

And into the mist that unveiled their  
existence,  
They faded like ghosts from a terrible  
sleep,  
Blown by the wind to far away places,  
Chased by tales of their heinous deeds.

### LIVING WITH CHANGE

[9.39pm, 25<sup>th</sup> Aug 1982, Newcastle]

Autumn began with showers and wind,  
Caught the folk in shirt sleeves and  
blouses,  
Over-night, milk suddenly stopped  
turning,  
Everyone at once had a sudden yearning  
To stop time dead with the wave of a  
hand,  
For Summer had gone, and leaves were  
falling.

It wasn't as bad as it was made out to be,  
Not as terrible as some would make  
believe,  
For even if life could be one eternal  
summer,  
There would still be complaints about the  
weather;  
Autumn or Winter, of Spring for that  
matter,  
There wouldn't be one without the other.

### TO HELL WITH WEALTH

[10pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

Poverty of mind is a less obvious evil  
Than running around shoeless and naked,  
For who's to know the desert of  
knowledge

Without first feeling the stones and the  
cold  
Of physical pain endured to survive,  
The hunger of begging, the racking of  
want.

Yet I cannot believe that material wealth  
Is the be-all end-all of knowledge itself;  
For the wisest are those with nothing at  
all  
To hinder their thought or enslave their  
souls,  
For the man with money buys and keeps,  
While the man with nothing shares what  
he seeks,  
Which is usually no more than a happy  
mind.  
As far as I'm concerned that's all he  
needs.

For what use are paintings, and fancy  
goods  
When a man talks to man about love or  
looks  
That can never be bought or exchanged in  
barter –  
For looks they say form half the  
character,  
And once formed, what does wealth  
matter,  
The other half of man is his accrued  
knowledge  
Used to benefit the world, and thereafter  
Used solely to spread humour and  
laughter.

It's a sad world without a smile a day,  
When many people die of broken hearts  
and neglect  
It's silly to think that money's the  
answer;  
Yes, more people croak crying in bed  
Than in wars, on roads, from drugs, or  
crime

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And all other kinds of dangerous stuff –  
I don't care what the history books say,  
Historians die in their beds just the same.

They want us to believe everything is  
different,  
That heroes die with pain on their faces,  
That the poor and hungry know no happy  
days,  
While in fact the poor laugh all the time.  
The wealthy and learned are famous  
indeed  
For their lengthy scowls and troublesome  
looks  
Of frowning discomfort and unhappy  
moods –  
The wisdom that knowledge begins with  
laughter,  
Passes them by like a tramp with a  
blanket.

### **BOREDOM**

[10.45pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

Boredom comes from within, not without,  
So don't blame your companions.  
Boredom is a disease, like mumps or  
measles,  
It spreads like molten lead,  
And poisons every single thought  
That may lead to an interesting end.

### **COFFEE**

[11pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

I drink it like a kid eats candy,  
Or like a dog attacks a bone –  
And like a desert in a rainstorm,  
I'm parched again once it's gone.

### **THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS**

[6.30pm, 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

The water was polished and reflective of  
nature,  
Nature was changing every ripple of time,  
Time was passing over the weir stone,  
Falling away in a blinding of white.

The arch of the bridge spanned the  
horizon,  
The horizon was filled with cedar and  
pine,  
The pines were dropping cones in the  
water,  
The ripples were breaking on the bank-  
sides.

The reeds were catching the debris of  
autumn,  
Autumn was sweeping down from above,  
Above was no longer cloudless and sunny,  
Filled with magpies, swallows and doves.

The water was grey and dark to the  
bottom,  
The bottom was lost as night drew nigh,  
The night forgiven for stealing the magic  
Of a moment on the Bridge of Sighs.

### **THE POOR PROVIDER**

[9.22am, 8<sup>th</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

Ever tried to feed the dog when you're  
broke,  
Never mind the wife, the son, the  
daughter,  
The lodger, the mother, grandfather, and  
great grandmother  
When they all sit there at the dinner table  
With big eyes and enormous appetites,  
And thoughts of how things could be  
better,  
If, as provider, I went out and found a  
better job.  
It's other peoples' ambition that drives a  
man on.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### ADDRESS TO THE MARRIED

For Robert Langdon and Amanda Nork  
[16.15pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

Oh who has not heard of young  
Lochinvar,  
So wrapped in love, he took on the world,  
And stole a bride from the groom at the  
altar,  
To gallop into the mists of the moors.

Will such spirit ever be forgotten  
By all lovers caught by such fire –  
Where death together is finer than  
parting,  
And parting as thoughtless as quarrelling  
words.

What of fathers, and mothers, and  
kinsmen,  
Companions and friends, each with their  
part  
In keeping quiet council, and not dividing  
Something love made forever to last.

Romance is like gold, and love a magic  
Not conjured, but allowed to blossom and  
grow,  
Marriage not sacred, but an incredible  
journey  
Along the length of the rainbow road.

So here's to the bride! Here's to the  
groom!  
Here's to the bridesmaids, ushers and all!  
The fathers, the mothers, kinsmen and  
friends.  
God bless this couple. God bless us all.

### GREINA GREEN

[13.05pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

Gretna Green is a haven for lovers,  
Close to the Wall, by the Western Sea,

Where rain sweeps in along the Solway,  
Trees as scarce as scattering leaves.

The anvils ring and the horses clatter  
Over the cobbles of the many inn-yards,  
Their windows filled with elopers and  
couples,  
Huddled together, every moment their  
last.

Blackbirds sing, enliven the hedgerows,  
And runaways come, and the married go –  
Back to the cities, or onwards to new lives  
Made in homes far from the old.

The grey clouds roll and darken the  
moorland,  
The lapwings soar or cry from the ferns,  
Across the marsh are grey-stone houses,  
Dry-stone walls that never quite end.

The quiet road in, leads quietly out,  
The border a mile for those with a mind  
To flee from parents, or the laws of  
religion,  
To be united o'er the anvil at night.

So hasten you lovers, take to the dark,  
Run to the frontiers of love and be seen  
Kissing and hugging by the fires of  
romance,  
In the windows of inns in Gretna Green.

### A SILLY ENGLISHMAN

[1.25pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

To think like an Englishman,  
Is to think of one's own superiority.  
Superiority leads to an inferiority of  
attitude  
That reveals the silly man.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **SOCIAL SECURITY**

[28<sup>th</sup> Sept 1982, Newcastle]

We had a visit from the Social Security,  
A review of our circumstances –  
The officer was pleasant and reasonable,  
Not a prying low beast so often found  
In that profession.  
He had a sense of humour –  
And once his questions were answered  
He said it would be our last home visit  
for three years. That's a long time –  
But with today's unemployment,  
Social Security officers are very busy men.

### **GYPSY HILL**

[Sept-23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1982, Byker, Newcastle]

The grey slate tops to the red brick  
houses,  
Ran like stripes to the valley floor;  
The drabness dressed with smears of  
parkland,  
Dipped and clung to the sagging, steep  
slopes  
Traversed by lines of cobble-stone roads,  
Hazed in a canopy of choking coal  
smoke.

Off in the distance the Civic Hall shone,  
The Cathedral spire circles by cloud,  
The iron-swing bridge spanning the river,  
Creaked and opened like a rusty  
mousetrap  
Set to catch the industrial output  
Of machinery and steel leaving the town.

But Gypsy Hill was a place for horses,  
Broken pit-ponies tethered on ropes,  
Where kids with faces as red as melons,  
Played hooky, and choked on roll-your-  
owns;  
Where men on the dole took long strolls

To forget their thoughts about getting  
old.

### **SELF-PLAYING CHESS SET**

[15<sup>th</sup> Oct – 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1982, Newcastle]

The Pawns to the fore of the battle front,  
Rolled along on wheels of steel,  
Driven by a will to breach all defences,  
They ploughed away with mercenary zeal,  
Advanced to challenge the threatening  
noise  
Of an army equally ready for war.

With scythes and bludgeons, the Knights  
attacked  
And hacked a sway with irresistible force,  
That drenched the air with springs and  
pistons,  
Rivets and axles, and shafts of iron,  
Sickening all hearts with fear and terror,  
All valour and honour lost in the oil.

When into their midst whirled the  
Bishops,  
Upholding and backed by the power of  
God;  
Guided by faith, they rushed into  
slaughter,  
Slicing apart the massacring flood –  
With scriptures and mantras, holy and  
tantric,  
They sacrificed all in the name of their  
Lord.

Never was life so quickly extinguished,  
As on the blades of the pole-axing Rooks,  
Splattered red in the front line carnage,  
They relentlessly carved till entrails  
steamed,  
And bowels and heads lay like flowers  
From horizon to horizon on the  
battlefield.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Headlong forth the Queens careered,  
Storming and crushing the screaming  
hosts;  
Compelled by nature and self-  
preservation,  
They exacted a result with such heavy  
toll,  
That mounds of dead rose like mountains,  
And opposition fell like harvested corn.

The Kings stepped back, clumsy,  
ungainly,  
Like creaking monsters of dinosaur gait,  
To await defeat or take the surrender  
On the final mating of the hated foe –  
Victory brandished as the ultimate glory  
To end the self-playing chess set show.

### MY LOVER'S LIPS

[7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1982, Newcastle]

My lover's lips were icy cold,  
She had no heat to give –  
Her passion once so hotly kept  
Was now hazy mist.

### TIME HAS A WAY

[7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1982, Newcastle]

Time has a way of taking  
Everything that once was plain –  
Simple times and simple minds  
Once had a part to play:  
The sunset of another day,  
The past, the past must stay.

### WINTER FARM

[2<sup>nd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 1982, Newcastle]

The winter fire warmed the iced hands  
Of a farmer hunched on a backless chair,  
Huddled in blankets of coats and garments  
Once the better of wear and tear.

He sat with a face of serious expression,  
Lost in the flames of imaginary thought,  
Drowning in memories of previous  
evenings  
Covered by layers of snow and frost.

The windows shook and the cold edged in  
On the world's sides; brittle like glass,  
And glazed in hoar, the night wind  
murmured  
On the door and farmer's back.

Black were the scars he mentally ploughed  
Through the horrors of harrowed ground;  
Fallow the pastures newly unearthed,  
The seed of rebirth, and the sepulchred.

Memories cascading like waterfalls  
remained  
Like the berries on holly or thorn,  
While all else shrivels, something exists  
In the immediate snow, the lingering mist.

Something survives beyond the grey dawn,  
Something is born during the black night:  
Creation plummets like a hungry hawk,  
Also glides like a graceful swan.

As windows rattle, and doors knock,  
Strangers warm pasts by friendly fires:  
Winter comes as a seasonal trial  
Of judgement passed on mental thought.

Likewise, the farmer retread his own past,  
Hunchbacked upon his backless chair –  
Even for him it was logic to rest  
While the winds of winter disinvested –

And wasted the land, mastered the sky,  
Took command of the near-distant sea,  
As the glowing fire warmed the hands  
Of the farmer hunched in his backless  
chair.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### IGNOBLE BEASTS

[14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 1982, Newcastle]

Ignoble beasts that turn about and  
stampede  
At the sound of distant war.  
What dismay and panic their actions  
dispel  
As the rumbling grows louder.

Beasts that bow and shield their ears  
At the whine of crashing shells.  
How subdued and tame their slavery  
As the sibilant echoes pound.

Beasts that cower from the flames  
At the sight of consuming fire.  
What disgust and scorn their behaviour  
entreats  
As the vanquishing army arrives.

Beast that hide themselves in their lairs  
At the sound of marching footsteps.  
What shame and fear they take from life  
As the trembling earth resounds.

Beast that wet themselves in their terror  
At the silence of halted footsteps.  
What rape and death their cowardice  
brings  
As the lasting screams fade out.

Beast that give themselves to their foes  
At the command of foreign officers.  
What pity and hatred their meekness  
evokes  
As the marching fire-squad comes.

Beasts that go blindfold to their fate  
At the utterance of final prayers.  
How quick and easy their cowardice ends  
As the quavering gunshots kill.

### ON RISING TOO EARLY

[18<sup>th</sup> Dec 1982, Newcastle]

The first snows fell just yesterday  
While I was still in bed.  
The silent nature of its first descent,  
Left white images as I dreamt  
Of past winters spent in hammock huts  
With girls in passing idleness.

All those thoughts receded, went  
As I drew back the drapes –  
The silken blanket of the virgin cold,  
Unlocked the child within,  
As the jack-frost friends of old  
Re-emerged to play in the snow.

Stark, yet pretty, the trees stood bare  
As I turned from the window.  
The chill of winter had frozen my breath:  
Rekindling the fire,  
I went to the mirror in a dreamer's daze  
As the sunshine outside blazed.

What true secrets the looking glass told  
As I stroked my thoughts:  
The sullen sag of saddened eyes  
Searching for a glimmer of hope,  
As I returned again to the falling snow,  
And to bed to escape the cold.

### LONGEST NIGHT

[22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1982, Newcastle]

It was never ending like the path  
Trodden by those who travel in circles.  
The longest night.

The darkness was its clinging virtue,  
Preserved by the stars and moon dancing.  
The longest night.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The soul was immersed in mystery  
Unearthed by the planets shining down.  
The longest night.

The silence was its keenest weapon,  
Cutting through the briar of entangled  
life.  
The longest night.

The stillness gripped the solid ice,  
Cracking on unrest and growing louder.  
The longest night.

The tree owls preyed upon the black  
Bats flaying through the snares of  
woodland.  
The longest night.

Hook-beaked crows rose like coal-smoke  
Blown before the south-west gales.  
The longest night.

The morning broke in lingering darkness  
Lengthened by the shadows in the vales.  
Greeting the shortest day.

### **THE BANK HOLIDAY**

[6.09pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 1982, Newcastle]

Never ending the road wound on  
Like a serpent coiling to bask.  
Sleek and shinny like polished shield,  
It ran before the wheeled mania  
Of the lemmings racing to the sea.

They had sprung from the lairs  
Like courting mad-march hares.  
Grey and oily like the beach sands,  
They viewed across the promenade,  
Just like seamen fevered by the sea.

They wrestled before their castles  
Like wild beasts of distant jungles.  
Snorting and charging like mad rhinos,

They launched themselves on the ocean  
As lifeboats attacking the sea.

Never ending the road wound out  
Like a snake uncoiling to wake.  
Rippled and black to smoky towns,  
It returned the ants to their hills  
At their end of the day at the sea.

### **GRAVEYARDS**

[2.20pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 1983, Newcastle]

Graveyards are meant for the dead and  
mourning,  
Tall, long fir, and weeping pine,  
Yews that cry with a soft wind blowing,  
And willows drooping with the weight of  
time.

Graveyards are not for the young and  
living,  
Morning roses, bled in their prime,  
For briar and bramble, encroaching and  
thriving,  
Meet hemlock bearing in from the sides.

Monuments shall rise, and headstones  
shall stay,  
Graveyards are there, for always.  
The high walls exclude the trials of life,  
The creeping motion of passing age.

The high walls enclose the future to  
come,  
Cypress and holly forever leaved.  
Graveyards appeal to the tired and lonely,  
And those of us who are not afraid.

Graveyards are meant for the dead and  
mourning,  
Tall, long fir, and weeping pine,  
Yews that cry with a soft wind blowing,  
And willows drooping with the weight of  
time.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### DRY STONE DYKER

[3.45pm, 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985, Newcastle]

Stones or rocks like pebbles lie  
In the hands of the dry stone dyker.  
Turned aside by the plough in the fields,  
They lie piled like mountains to the sky.

The dyker, steady, tapping, tapping,  
Echoing across the grey whin sill.  
The wind against the crags, and howling,  
Carries the tapping o'er the wild  
moordale.

His lonely company kept with songs,  
Joins the curlew's whistling tune.  
Love ballads penned for old and parted,  
Chase the bloom across the scree.

Ancient poems washed from memory,  
Sweep the fern and heather slopes.  
Tall standing stones by Celtic circles,  
Tell lichen tales of spells and druids.

All the time, tapping, tapping,  
Each day goes, another looms.  
Years of passing like the gurgling waters,  
Trickling from a vale-side coomb.

Now like snakes across the hills,  
The miles pass from lake to peak.  
The fells split into walled domains,  
The dyker lies in his tomb.

### AS MY SHADOW SAT BESIDE ME

[10.26p, 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1983, Newcastle]

Never ending like all stars stretching,  
Beyond my eyes belief and  
comprehension,  
The fateful moment came and sat beside  
me,  
And I flinched not, dared not.

What is company without conversation?  
Of which there was none ...  
Not even the motion of nervous chatter,  
Not even the evolution of frivolous  
laughter  
That accompanies all heart-to-heart  
matters.

It was a though evening had come,  
And brought nought by darkness, and  
sadness,  
When moonbeams should have outlined  
shadows,  
Out shone misery.

Even loneliness may show its light side  
Beyond the parameters of self-  
investigation,  
As my other self sat there beside me.  
I blinked not, tried not, then barely  
nodded,  
And my shadow comprehended,  
responded, nodded,  
Which was something after all.

### THE CANDIDE OF A YOUNG SCOTSMAN IN ENGLAND

[19<sup>th</sup> Feb - 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1983, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Where do I begin my story.  
I'm a Scotsman, but mind you now ....  
My language may leave you hanging,  
Though I'll try the best I can  
To make my statements plain  
So that Geordie, Scouse, or Brum  
May heed my every word.

Now, when I left Scotland  
I was eighteen, and from Glasgow,  
And though that sounds bad  
That I came from 'Glesca',  
As the largest sprawl in Scotland  
At least you've heard of it.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Because if I'd been from Tignabruich,  
Or Auchenshuggle, or Auchtermuckty  
Or some Highland village in the wilds,  
Instead of talking Glaswegian,  
I'd be speaking Gaelic and swinging a kilt.

But instead of eating bens of porridge,  
Or Cairngorms of haggis,  
Or drinking lochs of whiskey,  
And dreaming Rabbie Burns ....  
I settled on being a typical Scotsman  
And went to England to find work.

Nothing wrong with that is there?  
In Scotland, England is a dirty word,  
Its only redeeming factor is ...  
An easy living and a fast buck.

So leaving Scotland by its only decent  
thing,  
I crossed the border by National Bus,  
And I heard the bagpipes droning  
As I left behind my homeland mists.

Of course, when I got off the bus  
I was typically tartan-pissed,  
But still wide-eyed and hungry  
I stopped a man 'Heh, Jimmy!'  
But he turned and fled.

Some welcome I thought.  
I looked around the bus station  
and said 'So this is England!  
And Newcastle? This is it!'  
I'd seen more life in a Glasgow midden,  
no kidding, it made me sick.

But a wee women passing by  
Gazed at me and asked  
'Are ye lost, pet? Can 'a help yee?  
'I can tell yee'r nae a Geordie lad.'  
And I surprised took a step back,  
Then grinned and blurted out to her

I've come to Newcastle to find my Uncle  
Jock,  
To stay with him until I find some work.'

She kind of shook her head and said  
'Well, I hope you have some luck.  
'Its kinda hard round here r'eet noo',  
Ma husbands oot of wurk himself'.  
He's a shipbuilder, a Walker lad,  
But since the cuts, the strike, the dole,  
The only thing afloat on the Tyne is  
ducks.  
But maybe ye'll have an easier time  
Being young, an' having yer Uncle Jock.'

Uncle Jock was my mother's brother,  
And about ten years younger.  
I fished a piece of paper from my pocket  
And showed it to the little woman.  
'Jesmond?' she said in great surprise  
'He's a stoo'dent then?' she asked  
I answered that I didn't know  
But that I thought he was about thirty-  
five.  
'Then more than likely' she said  
'Jesmond people are students until they  
die!'

She put me on the right bus,  
That went past the University and Poly,  
The school of Arts and Technology,  
in no time, the bus was full of students  
Reading books and making paper aero  
planes,  
Re-enacting primal scream and  
Shakespeare,  
All bubblegum fanatics and graffiti  
scribblers,  
Could tell that from what they were  
driveling.

'You know, Daphne' one tulip was  
whispering,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

'Your eyes are 100 watt light-bulbs against the moon.'

'Oh yeah, Steve, and you can forget tonight'

'A 9 volt battery would make you drool.'

I turned & looked at Daphne and Steve  
And saw a pampas of orange hair.

'A pair of hairies' I said to myself  
As Daphne burnt me with her 200 watt  
stares.

'Acorn Road!' the driver shouted  
Flicking the lever of the bus-door  
WHOOOSH!

Flushing every student on to the  
pavement ...

And carried along in the panic and rush  
I took refuge behind a lamppost,  
And remained there staring at the posh  
surroundings  
As the students disappeared into their  
flats

Or bedsits, or to the place at the end of  
the street  
Which overhead read *Willow Teas*,  
Which being a place for students  
Meant I could only buy coffee.

'Where are you from, luv? .....

The girl behind the counter smiled.  
I told her, and immediately she frowned  
And began to tell me a very long story  
About a bloke from Glasgow she knew  
Who once she'd fallen madly for.

T'd let him move into my place,  
And after six months of feeding him,  
He turned round one day with a smile on  
his face  
And declared he was off to India or  
someplace!

'I suppose it came as a shock' I said  
And she answered 'No, he was kind of  
weird.'  
And I asked 'Did he ever get to India?'  
And she said 'No. He got scared'  
'He got as far as Acorn Road Post Office'  
'To ask for a passport form.  
And now he lives across the street  
'Smoking up a hashish storm.'

This was the first time I'd heard that word  
Used in public and branded aloud.  
I looked about, but nobody was listening  
They were all in their own hashish cloud.

'You looking for somewhere to stay, luv?  
I've plenty of space at my place, if you  
like?'

She looked into my eyes, red and blazing  
And I saw great fires of lust,  
But I panicked and burst into a blush -  
'No thanks, I've an Uncle I have to look  
up!'

She seemed disappointed, yet took it well,  
I had my coffee, and a crumpet with jam  
And she pointed with a wave of her hand  
'You'll find your uncle's street across the  
tracks.'  
I took that as a sign .....

That I wouldn't have to walk very far.

How wrong I was, I got lost!  
I walked in circles until darkness fell,  
Till the smell of fish and chips drove me  
wild.  
I scoffed a supper, and threw the bag to a  
dog  
Which whimpered when it found the  
paper empty,  
But it being such a nice English dog,  
It didn't even give me a parting growl.  
I was tempted to take him home with me,  
But I didn't have a home myself.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

At last I found Uncle Jock's house,  
I knocked on the door, it sounded so loud,  
The echo vibrated down the whole street -  
All red brick, and green doors  
And white lace, and curtains  
That moved, and threw bolts of light at  
me.  
It was like being suspected of murder,  
But it was only students watching for the  
police.

The door creaked open, a figure appeared  
And slowly came forward into the light.  
I smiled and spoke 'Hello, Uncle Jock'.  
I wrote, I hope you got my letter alright.'  
'Robbie-boy!' he gasped in great delight  
'The devil has brought you into my grasp.  
Come-in, come-in, I've got friends over.  
Bill, Tom, Pete and lovely Frances.'

And straightway from the company I got  
the idea  
My Uncle Jock was no nancy-dandy,  
All his friends were weirdoes,  
Painters, poets, bums and dancers.  
Frances was the local queen of aerobics  
And Uncle Jock was her fancy man and  
lover.

That night the world exploded.  
Frances made me take off all my clothes,  
Then Uncle Jock said 'Here, take these.  
Two little bluiies. You'll never be the  
same.'  
He told me that it was LSD,  
But I thought nothing of it at the time,  
I was enjoying the hash-pipe going around  
When the tingling started in my brain -  
Flashing lights and cosmic oscillations.  
'Waves, man!' was the phrase Tom  
named.

I drifted off to Lally Land,  
Bill said I was on 'Overload'.

I was out my head .....  
But still wide awake to see the dawn.

Youth rushes at us all ablaze,  
The experience of LSD can make anyone  
strange.  
But I'm not going to dwell on this.  
Who has time anyway?

Uncle Jock saw me alright,  
He apologised for what he'd done to me.  
'If I'd known you were so naive  
I'd have kept you strictly on beer.'  
But I shrugged my shoulders and said  
'I have a friend who's into solvents  
And another really into speed.  
Finding something bad like acid  
Is just the thing I need.  
'Don't worry, uncle .....  
Just give me more of this LSD

Time passed quickly at my uncle's place  
Until I did a thing with Frances.  
It was all so innocent, I mean,  
Well, I suppose it was a mistake!  
Uncle Jock was more than furious,  
And Frances was incredibly red-faced,  
I was given two days to pack  
And forced to find another place.  
Frances told me 'I love you'  
But stayed on with Jock just the same.

Uncle Jock buttered all her bread  
And in all the right sort of ways.  
Frances was strung out on Jock,  
And Jock summed it up by saying  
'You're very young, Robbie-boy,  
And I wonder what your Mum would think  
If she found out you were cheating,  
Playing around with her brother's chick.'

He was right, I felt a heel,  
But he wouldn't give me a second chance,  
So I went back to *Willow Teas*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And double-talked the girl I first met.  
'Yeah, my uncle's moving away from here  
I've got to move in somewhere-else.'  
And would you know it, she said  
'You better move into my place, then.'

Her name was Sandra, and kind of cute,  
I moved in that night, and kissed her  
good.  
Well, at least I think I did,  
She smiled too sweet to lie .....  
But my experience of women then  
I could count on either hand.

And soon we were making plans.  
She talked of sunny Spain,  
I dreamt of far Japan.  
Eventually we made a ferry trip  
To exotic Rotterdam.

Don't ask me what we did in Holland,  
Except I can tell I enjoyed myself;  
I've told you of my first time in England,  
The second time's a tale in itself.

### CONVERSATION WITH A STATUE

[23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1983, Newcastle]

I had a conversation in a park  
With the statue of a great philosopher  
The other day.  
'Nice day' I said, and a leaf fell  
off a tree and skidded off his head.

'You must have been a great thinker  
before they moved you to this place'.  
His grey eyes stared motionless,  
His hand resting upon his lapel.  
'Aren't you going to answer me?'  
I pleaded, humbled myself at the  
Thinker's feet.

And lo, he answered ...  
For there read his epitaph –

'I passed my life in blindness,  
and let my words fall on deaf ears'.

### MORE DEAD WORDS THAN STARS

[6<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

*Between the stars that fade,  
Little will be remembered.*  
And so written words  
Become like well played records,  
Old and scratched, then dated.

Yellow pages, and yellowed memories,  
Distorted and rejected, discarded and  
neglected,  
And fast forgotten.

All newer work is likewise destined  
To a similar fate of mildew sentiment  
On the toppling stack of nostalgia.

Many words are written,  
But few are worth recalling.  
Add this poem to the pile.

### SADDEST CLOWN IN THE WORLD

[6<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

I had a friend who was a clown,  
And he worked in a circus,  
Making the audience joyous,  
But what a sad man he was.

His wife left him for a strongman;  
She had been his pride and joy,  
High on a trapeze like a graceful bird.  
One day she had flown out of the ring  
And to Paris with her muscleman, winged.

He was heart-broken, distressed.  
Have you ever seen the tears of a clown?  
He flooded the tent, a customer  
complained  
That he had come to laugh, not drown.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The ringmaster tried to explain  
That even clowns have their bad days.  
The audience were sympathetic,  
They tried to cheer the clown's blues,  
Until they were red in the face –  
But his blues remained.

He fell into depression.  
Soon people came to make him laugh,  
The y came from Europe, America,  
Japan.  
His sadness spread far abroad –  
The ringmaster introduced him as  
*The Saddest Clown in the World.*

Overnight he was famous,  
Success had found him at his lowest ebb,  
New wealth outweighed everything  
But the sadness of his plight.

Then one day, his loved one returned,  
Bruised from the beatings of her  
strongman's love.  
She begged to be forgiven –  
She had seen the folly of her ways.  
She cried, and he forgave her,  
Happiness welled where sadness lodged.  
She went back to the trapeze,  
And once more flew like a bird.  
He stopped being the Saddest Clown in the  
World.

### SPRING EQUINOX

[22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

The Spring equinox brought new snows  
On old experiences.  
Winter having been forgotten,  
White crocus hid in the flurried fall.  
The sun did not rise,  
Slept the whole day,  
And so did I.

### TREASON

[22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

Treason seeps from pressed mouths,  
Contorted and cruelly twisted.  
Going over to the other side  
Is like buttering bread both sides.  
Once you've spread it,  
You have trouble taking a bite.

Sticky fingers and spying,  
They go hand in hand alright.  
Treason is for the hungry –  
The hungry men of power.

### TWENTY NINTH BIRTHDAY

[3.45pm, 25<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

Just a day older than twenty-eight.  
It was hard enough accepting twenty.  
Now at twenty-nine, it seems crazy  
That I doubted I'd survive  
Nine more years.

It used to be hard believing in tomorrow.  
Winter mornings and tropical dawns,  
Ten thousand gone.  
Now, tomorrow comes, and likely  
fifteen thousand more.

Age strikes a man like waves  
Upon a rocky shore.  
It beats all roughness from him,  
It drains him, tames him.  
Age is the only gain.

Twenty nine? There is still  
A long way to the crest of the hill,  
The roller coaster ride,  
That slides out of the clouds,  
Down to the basking sunshine.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### BLANKS

[25<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle]

More and more I leave blanks –  
Then after all, blanks fill space.  
Space after all is the fifth dimension  
Where time knows no bounds.

### MISSIONARY HERO

[7<sup>th</sup> Apr 1983, Newcastle]

I had a namesake, a relative,  
No, an ancestor let's say –  
He went from Scotland  
With God on his lips  
And arrived in Africa.

Robert Moffat, yeah,  
That was his name.  
The missionary hero of Kuraman.  
Kuraman?  
Hell, where is that place?

### POETICAL POVERTY

For Michael Hamburger  
[3<sup>rd</sup> May 1983, Newcastle]

Poets are renowned for being poor,  
Poor in wealth,  
Usually poor in health from drinking.  
Too many bars,  
Too many late nights,  
Not enough sunshine,  
Not enough money.  
Poets are ill-fated alright.

### PASSING OF FATES

[3<sup>rd</sup> May 1983, Newcastle]

Easy words to not give easy meanings  
To hard expressions of fate –  
The diamond cut to dazzle,  
The hapless believers in fame –  
The illusion that lingers like snow

Upon the mountains of faith –  
The child covered in mud,  
dragged through the rains.

This is the beauty of fate paraded  
That the elements, weather and fade.  
The men, once strongly broad  
With their pasts still to face.  
The human clock counting  
Till mortal heartbeats fail –  
The gathering of the mists  
To shroud the frail.

The quest for immortality  
That God-like creatures fake.  
Yet, this is it, they cannot stop  
The passing of the fates.

### OLD HAT

[12<sup>th</sup> May 1983, Newcastle]

Instead of mouthing like a politician,  
Or sprouting like a jacked-up puppet,  
I think I'll turn the TV off,  
The stereo up, smoke a joint,  
Get down to making love  
With the same old girl.

It might be old hat,  
Better a hat than no hat,  
Unless it's the Tory party  
Who've left four million dying,  
Starved for want of work.

Better a hat than no hat –  
I'd rather see Cruises going up,  
Than Pershings raining down,  
X's aimed at my behind,  
My trousers round my ankles.  
Only with my wife.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### IDLENESS

[4.05pm, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1983, Newcastle]

Idleness is once more my preoccupation,  
What better than relaxation;  
What better than no mental stimulation;  
None better than laziness,  
None better than forgetfulness,  
None better than laziness.  
Idleness suits me.  
Idleness is the only decent life.

### AFTER THE ELECTION

[10<sup>th</sup> Jun 1983, Newcastle]

On our side of town,  
We voted in Nick Brown.  
'Labour! Labour!' was the chant.  
The Conservatives got shouted down.  
The S.D.P got their asses kicked.  
The fascists live where jobs are sold  
And socialism dies.

Socialism weeps tonight,  
Red the eyes with fear.  
'Keir Hardie!' they shout in the street,  
while behind closed doors, Tories sit  
with sneers from ear to ear.  
The clicking heels are stomping o'er  
MacDonald's grave tonight.

On our side of town,  
We're neither adverb or nouned.  
'Fuck! Fuck!' was the chant.  
Five more years of rats and slugs  
And Thatcher's Gorgon smile.  
The secret police are watching us  
From within our very midst.

On our side of town,  
We voted Labour, not for bombs,  
Not for money, not for jobs,  
But for health, and welfare,  
Equalities, minorities and poverty.

The people of this servile town.  
The South has sold you out.

Now I better hasten  
Away from this room –  
The whispering words echo  
'Commie! Nigger! Jew!'  
I see four men pushing through.  
They may stifle our voices  
But never squelch our views.

### MOVING HOME

[16<sup>th</sup> Jul 1983, Helmsley Rd, Newcastle]

Gone - the chimneys and red brick houses,  
The roads running to the valley floor  
Substituted now are gardens of roses,  
Drifting voices in well-to-do tones.

Lace curtains conceal hidden mementos,  
Gathered and stored, but never shown –  
Eyes alert, dart at the windows,  
Curiosity dies, as the gossip grows.

Neighbours all smiles are shadows at  
home,  
Flirting about in dim yellow rooms –  
The cars in the street are big metal cans,  
Ketchup coloured, and mustard green.

Here, pet dogs, respectable and clean,  
Bark, are kept to back-lane yards,  
Doves, though many, are rarely menaced,  
Cats well-fed, are content to stare.

Shop-keeper service panders to station,  
Snobbery is part of community pride,  
Avocado, guava, chilli, and pasta –  
Forget about finding any white bread.

I miss the chimneys and red-brick houses,  
The roads running to the valley floor,  
The views I exchanged for cultural status,  
Now are nothing to write about home.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### HEIGHT OF BORDER SUMMER

[10<sup>th</sup> Aug 1983, Ferniehurst Castle,  
Jedburgh]

The barley grew high in the midsummer  
heat wave,  
Neat rows of soldiers, heads to the sky,  
Hawks, their plumage ruffled and  
moulting,  
Deposited feathers on thistle-down fields,  
Edged in wild grass, cross-seeded and tall,  
Flattened not crushed by the harvester's  
cull.

The barbed-wire fences covered in  
bramble,  
Staggered, fragile and rusted, ready to  
crumble  
Upon poppies, campanula, thriving midst  
nettles,  
While out of a beech copse, a wood  
pigeon re-entered,  
And between the corn stalks, a beetle  
hunted  
Through the dust of soil turned to powder.

Firm round breast of hillocks, yellow and  
ochre;  
Pastures falling sweetly to shallow fords;  
Heat and sunlight like never imagined,  
Cared the cares of the world to the  
skyline,  
The summer heat wave in the open fields,  
Haystacks as beds and stars as good omen.

### THE BORDERS

[11<sup>th</sup> Aug 1983, Snoot, Hawick]

Horses, docile and playful as children,  
Ran to the fences in want of petting,  
While sheep taking shade by oak fringed  
hedges,  
Looked up with black faces before bolting

Down to the edge of the round pebbled  
river  
Crossed by a bridge looped like a serpent.

Roads wound and uncoiled over the shiel  
lands,  
Paths wandered through pasture where  
tracks  
Lined for breaks in walls, skirted  
mountains,  
Fringed cliffs to criss-cross on hilltops,  
Where once had stood iron-age forts,  
Where ancients watched the northern sky  
glow.

### ON THE MOORS

[12<sup>th</sup> Aug 1983, Broadmeadows, Selkirk]

Moor walking leaves the city behind,  
Forgotten, the troubles of the structured,  
Responsibility, society, fame and bright  
lights,  
None of that is worth the time it devours.

Alcohol, hashish, coffee, bills,  
Headaches, pains, tiredness, boredom,  
Work, commuting, pollution, money.  
Death! Death! While nature thrives.

Fresh air, flowers, scenery, peace,  
Tall trees, sun, mountains, fields,  
Streams, clouds, insects, grass.  
Life! Life! While the city dies.

Telephones, buses, cars, roads,  
Television, radios, stereos,  
Buy, sell, hustle, kill.  
Death! Death! The city rings.

Sheep, cows, rabbits, deer,  
Cliffs, gorges, moors, dales,  
Hawks, crows, finches, wrens.  
Life! Life! While nature flies.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Downers, scroungers, clingers, nuts,  
Doubters, beaters, battered, scarred,  
Suiciders, homiciders, drunks, OD'ers.  
Death! Death! The city brings.

Health, loose, unbonded, free,  
Yet still the city weighs on me.  
Time drags the weary miles along,  
Beyond each hill, a city runs.

### USHERS ADDRESS

For Frank Parris & Carol Aitken  
[2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1983, Newcastle]

Who can remember a summer this hot,  
The grass as high as savannah corn,  
The fireweed flaming the glens and braes,  
The burns dry, the earth parched dunes.  
Let us drench our own slaked thirst,  
And toast the bride and groom.

And even when this winter comes,  
And hard packed snow hems us in,  
And driving rain frays our thought,  
And icy winds flay the gloom,  
Let us wet our own chaffed lips,  
To the lovely bride and groom.

And when the summer months return,  
And people hark on last year's blaze,  
And think upon such rainless days,  
And we upon this afternoon.  
Let us stand and raise a glass,  
And praise the bride and groom.

And when love is on our very tongues,  
And happiness our only thought  
To find such bliss outside ourselves,  
We need not search beyond this room,  
Just look upon this cherished union!  
This charming bride! This handsome  
groom!

So let us bless this blushing couple,  
And strive to help them on their way,  
As duty bound and honour tokened,  
Twinning together like earth and moon,  
To glide in love through the cosmos,  
Long live the bride and groom!

### AUTUMN IN SANDYFORD

[15<sup>th</sup> September 1983, Helmsley Rd,  
Newcastle]

And autumn was upon us without warning.  
Grey pillow skies that changed and ran by;  
Gusty brown-tipped leaf carried  
afternoons;  
Dark shadow shifting laundry days;  
Mild back-door ajar boiled potato  
evenings;  
Nigh before the cold breath of winter  
Descended on the grey-slate streets.

### FOREST IN MY BEDROOM

[18<sup>th</sup> Sept 1983, Newcastle]

I wake up every morning,  
With daylight in my eyes,  
We never draw the curtains,  
We have too many plants.

It all began in March,  
When we seeded in a tray;  
By April we need a ready score  
Of plants in pots, on tables.

By May, they'd grown so much,  
We put them on the floor.  
Bigger pots ... more space,  
And the net curtains lowered.

By June, they were three feet.  
By July, four ...  
By August, they were so big  
They could be seen across the road.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We raised the net curtain,  
And they grew even more.  
August went, September came  
Before the flowers showed.

Now the things are six feet tall,  
Four feet wide, three plants deep.  
If you walk past our house,  
You can smell them in the street.

My friends are understanding –  
They're all doing the same.  
Backyards, rooftops, window sills.  
Home grown's the game.

Grass ... pot ... marijuana  
Ganja ... bud ... and weed.  
I wake up every morning  
With it towering over me.

It's worth the paranoia,  
It's a fine illegal sight!  
Nature in its finest bloom  
Amidst the urban blight.

Yes, I wake up every morning  
With daylight in my eyes.  
The forest needs the sunshine,  
In turn it gets me high.

For that's the plan.

### **BALLAD OF THE CELTIC SOUL**

[21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 1983, Newcastle]

The Highlands will forever call  
Me back to glen-braed bens.  
The gloaming roams on peat and fern,  
The heathered straths, and birks.

The cnocs and stak column tower  
Me whole to lochan strands,  
Beneath the dhu dark watered band,  
The deepest legends lie.

The pibroch strains aye-ever skirl  
Me swirling to the eils,  
The invers stride the allts and streams  
Of sleet seeped basalt cairns.

The clachans reek the silver birch  
Me mind the kil and dun,  
The clash of clans and kilted sons,  
The brackened wild grass hums.

The brochs upon the ruhbas stand,  
Me lashed to ard by seas,  
The gales beat the crag and scree,  
The butt-ben lichened shiels.

The levens shade the heather leas,  
Me rest to linn and burn;  
The pens and fells to sands aye-run  
By granite-stane dyked walls.

The Highlands will forever call  
Me heart to ken its shires,  
The dirging pipes in lament fire,  
Aye drone to soul me back.

### **ITS SUCH A LOVELY MORNING**

For Brian, Jack and Jeffrey

[23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1983, Newcastle]

Brain, Jack and Jeffrey,  
Me mates from Villa Four,  
It was such a lovely morning,  
We went collecting harvest store.

Jack was in a wheelchair,  
And Jeffrey in one too –  
And Brian filled the plastic bag  
With ferns, grass, and thorns.

Jack was kind of silent,  
And Jeffrey laughed a lot,  
Brian did all the work  
Though he thought work a bore.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

They each ate a bramble,  
Though Jeffrey made a face,  
Jack quietly savoured his  
While Brian searched for more.

We collected leaves and hogweed,  
And elderberry spreads,  
Though Brian thought it shameful  
To pick the flower heads.

Jeffrey, sweet cute Jeffrey,  
Rolled his head and smiled,  
While Jack heard the birds sing  
And felt the warm sunshine.

Brian trailed behind us  
With the bag of leaves and grass,  
And we stopped to pick willowherb,  
And other withered plants.

It was such a lovely morning,  
And we raced Jeff and Jack,  
Their wheels spinning madly  
Across the grassland park.

We waited up for Brian,  
Puffed to catch with us,  
His blue eyes were sparkling  
And we all had a laugh.

And as we slowly ambled  
Back towards the home,  
A pair of large magpies,  
Flew before us, then were gone.

It was such a lovely morning,  
For Brian, Jeffrey, Jack,  
Who collected in the harvest  
In a black plastic bag,

We left them at the villa,  
In time to have their lunch.  
It was such a lovely morning,  
They were such a lovely bunch.

### POETS ARE NO DIFFERENT

[8<sup>th</sup> Oct 1983, Newcastle]

Poets are no different from workers,  
Shirkers, tramps and drifters,  
Lawyers, statesmen, salesmen,  
Painters.

Poets are as base as winos,  
Pimps, war-dogs, crooks, liars,  
Brokers, killers, cops,  
Scientists.

Poets are for truth and justice,  
Avarice, hate, imperial causes,  
Racist, right-wing, left-wing,  
Rubbish.

Poets are, and poets die,  
Cry, laugh, frown, fart,  
Piss, wank, come,  
Crap.

Poets are like you, or him,  
Her, it, men, women,  
Those, these, them,  
And more.

### FROST CRACKED & BROKEN

[9pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983, Newcastle]

Life passes too quickly,  
Like the wind, a rushing,  
A hushing black storm clouds,  
Clouds heavy with mourning,  
Tears black and rolling.

The day goes too swiftly,  
Like a stream, a torrent,  
A raging white flood tide,  
Tide bound with wooing,  
Eyes downcast and flowing.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The night is not fleeting,  
Like fire's flames, a licking,  
A consuming blue lightning,  
Thundering with cymbals,  
Sight ashen and waning.

Death comes on unseeing,  
Like the land, a frozen,  
A frost-cracked and broken,  
Split-lipped with ploughing,  
Vision doubled and going.

## THE UNDERGRADUATE - 1<sup>st</sup> YEAR

### TERM 1

[16<sup>th</sup> Oct–17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983, Helmsley Rd,  
Newcastle]

### WEEK 1

#### FRESHERS

*I got to meet many girls, and guys and  
tutors.*

The timetable ran like a Sunday school  
outing  
And laughs peeled louder than distant  
thunder.  
Belts and canes and classroom blues  
Melted like troubles on hot buttered  
scones.

Who could have dreamed of such ivory  
towers  
Hidden in brick-block and concrete  
seclusion?  
Who would have reckoned to pillars of  
salt  
Surrounded by treasures of wisdom and  
learning?

The knowledge there stood, steady and  
daunting  
While above grey clouds crossed like  
lighting,  
So swift that time had passed without  
warning.  
A week of one's life gone forever,

Experiences new upon pathways now  
stretching.  
Conquer before you, and burn all the  
bridges,  
Scan the horizon for the dawn of ripe  
openings,

Secure the knowledge the honest palm  
offers –

Capitalise on education's rich coffers,  
Look not back - Ego warned I.

While God damns us, but helps us –  
The world despises students –  
the unemployed hate us – the elite,  
the sleek, the young and beautiful;

The slender, the tender, the gentle, the  
virgin  
who know not life as twisting and hurtful,  
painful and hollow, empty and shallow,  
wanton and gluttoned, cruel and o'er  
shadowed.

The shimmering today, the shattered  
tomorrow,  
The cream of our children taken and  
eaten,  
Devoured by ambition, need and greed.  
The rungs of the ladder swing in the  
breeze.

Grasp hold, guide our tutors with smiles,  
The road to perfection before you lies.  
Here is a list of the books for the journey,  
A ninety week travel of history and  
prose.

Beware ye of Marlowe, Jonson and  
Shakespeare,  
And Bede, and Caedmon, and Geoffrey of  
Monmouth,  
Malory, Chaucer, Langland and Dunbar;  
Better to know not, than try to know all.

*For some rush to split the atom  
Before the apple falls.*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### WEEK 2

#### **THE APPLE IS BITTEN**

And the next week on, the apple is bitten,  
Teeth-marks scar the delicate skin ...  
But penetrate not to the core of fruition.  
The pip is not ready to seed.

Volpone and Faustus, and Utopia mellow,  
And Wyatt and Sidney speak from the  
grave.  
Raleigh looms like a grey apparition  
While Erasmus coughs every turn of a  
page.

Who would have thought that medieval  
poets  
And thinkers thought of nature as base;  
Beneath the cobwebs of books they  
consulted,  
Spoke Cicero, Horace, Ovid and Plato.

Original thought was a mighty wet blanket  
Covering sex and sinning prelates –  
Bestial conduct and fornicating standards,  
Their course didactic, coital love-plays.

Which student of English, newly left  
home  
Does not blush on discussing such things?  
Sex is not the possession of ages  
Read while thumbing history's frayed  
pages.

Nubile young bodies squirm in hard chairs,  
Pulses quicken, engorging occurs.  
The edited texts of high school days  
Are not to be found in varsity texts.

Screwing and balling, lewd and telling,  
Form the basis of submitted essays –  
Bartholomew Fair is literature's answer  
To the porn books of illiterate taste.

You can't tell me that tutors are cold  
And students unaroused by the bawd of the  
stage?

Decadence starts in English departments  
And ends in students getting laid –

Most because they like the nightlife,  
Others with tutors to raise their grades.

And what of the virgins, the guys and  
dolls,  
The eighteen year olds, shy and naïve?  
Will their time come during the first  
term?  
Or after completion of their final year?

And what of the ones who lost it at  
fourteen?  
Or the ones with lovers waiting at home?  
Or the ones hung up because they are  
frigid,  
Ugly, impotent, frightened or alone?

The icy cold wind of a winter's study  
Can destroy the will of the freest soul.  
The towers of learning may stand like  
castles  
Or prisons where hearts are vamped to  
stone.

Or where hermits dwell in their library  
cells,  
Windowless jails where no sun shines –  
Where year by year mothball fumes  
Yellow the treasures of human kind.

*For time is the only human dwelling  
Where we can abide to count the chimes.*

### WEEK 3 **DARK ARTS**

Suddenly dark shadows enter in study,  
*The Changling* flirts across the page.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Beatrice dies with tragic De Flores,  
A Lady MacBeth transplanted in Spain –

Her deflowerer like he of Montmartre  
fame,  
Her father a tyrant in everything but  
name.  
And in a whiff! They are gone –  
And Marlowe rears with a breath if fired  
air.

‘Faustus! Faustus! How vice has ruined  
you!  
The powers of darkness ruled your soul.  
Your humanist learning gave out to  
yearning  
For knowledge beyond the infinite  
known.’

Such are my thoughts on *Doctor Faustus*,  
A set essay piece for my drama course;  
But drama is only part of the substance  
That embodies the spirit of literature’s  
bones.

At the heart lies the poetry –  
Of Sidney, of Raleigh, of Spencer and  
Pope,  
And Wyatt ‘we did’ in a half-hour lecture,  
His expressiveness singularly worthy of  
note.

But I must a way from all this claptrap  
To talk of people instead of books –  
About Sarah and Andy, Ellen and Steven,  
Diana and Margaux, Ken and Jean.

The world of students, teachers and  
colleagues,  
Friends, peers, competitors and sloggers,  
Wrestling to fit into the mix –  
Of working class values and upper class  
maxims.

Each caught in the middle and a little  
unsure,  
whether up is the way, or down the truth  
–

The dichotomy of bourgeois-socialist  
views,  
Is certainly clear for all to see;  
Each individual is a burning sphere  
As the world around them totters to war.

For only two days have passed since  
Grenada  
Was invaded by droves of American  
marines –  
And barely five days since the Americans  
lost  
Two hundred and twenty with a Lebanese  
bomb.

The world at present is a fast changing  
nightmare  
Where ‘nuclear’ is the word on  
everyone’s lips –  
And even the bomb proof burrows of  
wisdom  
Can not be pristine at the end of all this.

### WEEK 4 **THEORY**

The fourth week has gone, gone and gone.  
And weekend of drugs has erased much.  
Plato’s attack on the essence of poetry  
Bores to the heart of dramatic illusion.

The mimesis of form, reality, imitation –  
The grandchild of God – the epic deludes;  
Where truth is the light, the finest  
creation  
Without being a mirror reflection of life.

Not Jack went up the hill with Jill;  
Not Jack fell down and broke his crown –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But more a clarity of truth ...  
That even simple things may have a root.

Yet let us turn from such serious thought,  
And travel the realms of lyrics and  
ballads;  
For even Plato said it was fair  
For poetry to return from exile as song.

So what of these ballads that canters and  
rides  
Through the gloom and terrible sleep –  
Of lovers caught by cruel circumstance  
And warriors lost so that mothers weep?

*Oh would such laments fire the hillsides?  
Oh would such grief whip up the sea?  
Oh would such loss destroy the heavens,  
The stars, the planets far from me?*

*Come listen, come sit, and hear my words  
While the wind howls over crooked bent  
trees;  
For ten long years the rain has fallen,  
For ten cowed years I've been on my  
knees.*

*Oh mother! Oh father! How could you  
leave me!  
Oh brothers, and sisters, why are you  
gone?  
If I had known such disaster would take  
you,  
If I had known I'd be left so alone!*

*The price I have paid to be a traitor –  
The reward I've received for my cowardly  
work;  
Is to be left so broken, lonely, and hated,  
And hunted, and haunted by those I once  
loved.*

*For ten years now I've languished in  
prison;*

*For ten lives now I've shrivelled and died.  
For ten more eons I'll rot in this  
dungeon,  
But ne'er will I shed a tear for my crime.*

*The war has killed my mother and father;  
The struggle has taken my sister too.  
My brothers are dead, slaughtered and  
butchered,  
And freedom a word they never heard  
used.*

*Oh would such laments fire the hillsides!  
Oh would such grief whip up the sea!  
Oh would such loss destroy the heavens –  
The stars, the planets, so far from me.*

### WEEK 5 READING WEEK

How different each week is from the last  
–  
Each day a moment never to be,  
As back to the grind the world shudders,  
Or forward by fate it slides ill at ease.

Forward through theories in open  
throttle,  
Down poetry lane towards Aristotle –  
With even some time to brush up on  
Horace.

Ne'er was the luck of those caught in  
limbo  
Thrown away like an empty milk-bottle;  
Or blown away like dandelion or thistle,  
To seed away in a broken egg-carton.

What better shelter in a wild world,  
Than faculty halls on a wet day –  
Each student a foetus unhatched and  
dormant  
Packed in a box, and stored away.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Fed on Miller, Lewis and Spenser,  
Regurgitating essays without a break –  
Yet one canto of Dante ...one phrase of  
Houseman,  
Can ease the troubles of a murky noon;  
Sweating and turning, frigid and daunting  
Facing the circle of tutorial groups.

One dash of *Green Knight* ...  
a wave of the *Fair Queen* ...  
beats a room of dirty knaves –  
prancing across a Jacobean stage!

Drama, they say, is here to stay;  
But give me good poetry ...  
And a dictionary to paw it ...  
And I'm as good as sold for the day.

And having had a week off classes,  
Reading Week, yeah, to stay home and  
swot –  
I feel as though I've been up every  
evening  
Reading the lines between the blue dots.

The invisible markings, the allegorical  
meanings,  
The knowledge lost that I haven't got.  
Have you ever felt sick because you're  
missing  
What you think everyone else wants a  
lot?

Like dancing, and singing, rocking and  
swinging,  
Boogie, and jive, and reggae –  
Punk, New Wave, Romantic and Classic –  
Bright yellow ties and shocks of blue hair.

I was never into boots, muffs and bovver,  
Crombies, braces, and very close shaves –  
I was far-out geezer with dreadlocks,  
And jeans ripped at the knees.

I was into drugs and druggies,  
While others were into bikes and sleaze;  
I got into sun and travelling –  
While Bowie sang his brand of blues.

I was smoking hashish in India  
When the Vietnam War came to an end;  
I was flat on my back in Kenya  
At the ripe old age of twenty two.

I went savouring the delights of Rio,  
Rather than sit watching the tube.  
I went to west coast America  
Three days before Thatcher took rule.

I witnessed the waste in Managua city  
Just after the Sandanistas took over;  
I was in the plain of Katmandu  
When the Falkland War broke out.  
*I've been to Argentina ...*  
*I can see both sides.*

You would think I've had an education  
But here I am back at school –  
Five laps gone in a ninety lap course,  
And it's getting cool in the pool.

### WEEK 6 SAXON TALES

Winter's coming on and fast –  
The light fades off at four o'clock.  
Grey days and black, dark nights;  
Sweater weather and overcoat times.

I sit through the chilly hours  
Huddled over Saxon tales –  
I drift with the rising moon  
Lifting o'er the terraced roofs.

Then back to study's earnest pages,  
Syntactic structured simple phrases –  
Soon tired and bleary of all learning,  
My poet's heart craves for peace.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But my mind will not slumber  
Upon the thoughts of daily need ;  
My mind will not quietly rest  
Upon the deeds of past and present.

I seek to fly on the air-waves  
Of the buzzing wireless lines.  
My secret thoughts of incarnation  
Burning on the private kind.

My drifting notions caught and strangled  
By the notes of draining life –  
Incognito pass the strangers  
Filing on through out the night.

Until my little duck comes waddling,  
From her pond filmed in oil –  
Comes to have her feathers smoothed,  
Comes to have her body warmed.

For such is love and lust together,  
Locked and roped, and inter-twined;  
Passions risen once in anger,  
Pass, and give to lover's murmurs.

Subdued talk of future longings,  
Present times and lasting chimes;  
The church bells ring and count the years-  
CHIME! In endless chime they rhyme.

Atomic clocks TICK TOCK the hours,  
Each second like cold corn seed  
Dropped into a miller's quern –  
Ground and powdered into flour.

*Time passes all too soon,  
White-washed moments caked to you –  
A swimming swill of overdue's,  
Forgotten pains and mellow tunes.*

*A juke-box full old dead songwriters;  
A bookshelf sagging drab, crap titles;  
A string of photographic snap-shots,  
Pinned on the wall with thumb tacks.*

*Coffee stains ring the table;  
Bong-smoke clings to the shade;  
The light bulb yellow, dim and glaring  
Down upon a threadbare room.*

*Armchair broken, ashtray chipped;  
Fireplace tiles cracked and scored;  
Floorboards warped and always  
creaking;  
A door ajar that never latches.*

*Ceiling bowed and ever peeling;  
Walls gouged and brick-work holed;  
Mirror flaked, and hanging crooked  
Reflects the student's poor abode.*

I turn to – Tennessee Williams,  
And sink to the depths of New Orleans,  
Back to the Quarter and the Mississippi –  
Down south where I have been.

Back to the world of sad Hart Crane;  
Down to the pit of ghetto towns;  
I haven't seen anything of Orleans proper  
That I didn't think was a crying shame.

When I was there, broke and hungry,  
I didn't see the streetcar called Desire;  
I was just a travelling nobody –  
Who saw nothing, met no one, and  
starved.

New Orleans is a very cruel city,  
And this is no story just for laughs;  
I know the world of Stella and Stanley,  
And I've met girls like Blanche de Bois.

So getting myself back to England –  
And my boring, little Newcastle flat;  
Six weeks have gone at university,  
And that's where I'm at.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### WEEK 7

#### STUDENT SOLITUDE

Its not often time o come to this  
Midst earnest thoughts of intellect –  
But come I have to lay my mind  
Upon the white of vacant page;

And having started, must now contend  
To dwell upon some fancy terms.  
Yet, dark outside the night may howl,  
I know not what I must attack.

The city sleeps or slumbers down,  
As ice about its houses dwell.  
For now the frozen heavens reveal  
The coldest face of winter's hell.

And as I sit before the fire,  
Cutting deep my unformed thoughts –  
Silence drops into the still –  
Soundless lulls moving through  
the eddy of the solitude ...

Dropping.  
Dropping.

Then caught, and suddenly renewed,  
A car whines into the night;  
The light bulb hums a merry tune,  
My breathing beats a fresh simoon.

Footsteps break upon the street  
To wash along the terraced waste –  
Dark, and misty, with no end  
Winter's grasp grips the night.

Chilly thoughts and cold ambition.  
Driving on my walk through wisdom,  
The rain, a hazy whizzing drizzle,  
Seeking, soaking, permeating –

Better dry and wrapped in weakness,  
Than wet, and dead because of greatness;

Sat still, I stay before the fire -  
My strength gone like my summer days.

I hear the knocking stick of sadness  
Chattering during these twilight hours.  
I feel the pulse of growing madness  
Feeding on the grey outside.

And yet, I sit in mute repose  
To think upon old English poems –  
Has college life ruined desire  
For women, sex and carnal knowledge?

Am I a boring fart or dolt?  
A bumbling, slumbering sort of fool?  
To pass a chance to taste free love  
When offered by a loving girl?

Would I be right to turn my eyes  
To gaze upon a Saxon tale,  
When challenged by a nubile woman  
Of weaving thought and coy intention?

All smiles, cute, and passing -  
Ready to flash, and ready to mate;  
Age doesn't halt lust's fire,  
And desire doesn't disappear with age.

You only want more of everything,  
And everything gets further away –  
This is what seven weeks of college  
Does to a once plain brain.

### WEEK 8

#### BORING BORING BORING

*Rosencranz and Guildenstern* died last  
week –

Stoppard bored right into me.  
Boring, boring, and boring more –  
More boring than henna'd hashish.

And worse than the phonology test  
That is still burning in my ears -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The homily half of the salty *Seafarer*  
Spewed up crap of a superior kind.

Listen, if you ever get the chance to read  
More than nursery rhymes,  
Don't spend your time on modern plays,  
They're as bad as Victorian jokes.

Maybe you've never heard a Victorian  
limerick,  
But they're worse than Irish anecdotes –  
Four lines of A – B poetry ...  
And one line of punchy sniggers.

Not one word of honest truth –  
All Polacks, Chinks, and Negroes;  
The worst of taste at every turn,  
The work of senseless authors.

Forget the written lines of playwrights –  
Turn you to the poets!

You see, how I've primed myself,  
And wet my pen to the task;  
Eight weeks have passed of college life,  
And like a surgeon I prepare -

My thoughts upon some idle thread,  
Of mocking jibe? Yes, I'm not content  
To let days pass in mute grievance,  
Or let time slip in cool abeyance.

I see each hour gain with me  
Some weighty wealth of judgement  
Made upon the works of living men –  
Here, dead men are not my victims.

The living spread their own fine lies  
As truth to cloak their own sharp plans  
Masked behind a rising fame –  
Until accolade makes their name.

And soon, that name is on the lips  
Of critics, laymen, academics -

The printing presses churn all night,  
Critiques, reviews, graces, praise!

Till library shelves sag and groan  
Beneath the author's awesome fame.  
A work once a hundred pages,  
To one hundred thousand grows.

A simple fable simply told,  
Into ten volumes quickly rages –  
A small idea plainly written,  
Into a great ideal is driven.

A few wet verses badly hacked,  
Soon flourish into major tracts.  
And without a whimper, nor a word,  
The author reaps his sick reward.

His name is like a billboard sticker,  
Stuck and left to fade forever.  
While all the time his own esteem  
Is but a broken might have been.

The booze and drugs killing him –  
Patrimony, alimony, screwing him –  
Bad breath, bad health, ruining him –  
Poets like me, abusing him.

No man is perfect like the God  
We're all supposed to be part of.  
Human failing oversees –  
Pathetic weakness shows in deeds.

Written words twist like snakes –  
Spoken words straightaways hurt –  
Wisdom splattered on a page,  
On the tongue is aptly just.

Book language smooth and styled enough  
From the lips may sound corrupt –  
Yet still the academics turn  
To pick the flesh of fiction's corpse.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And we the students of their thought,  
Dissect the body, cheek by jowl.  
Bowels, innards, organs, blood –  
An author's merit, metre, mode –

With much dissection, dissertation,  
Discussion, and interpretation;  
We help dismiss, junk and trash it -  
It is an English major's modest moral  
goal.

WEEK 9

### LOST IN BOOKS

Last week a foggy past transcends  
The inner waves of difficulty.  
Syntax lines of useless form  
Is function into anonymity.

Johnson's coined sarcastic wit  
Eats away Tom Cane's heart –  
God is always on his lips  
As Johnson joins what others part.

While students lounge in Union bars  
And lecture time is quietly spent  
Beneath the sheets on chilly morns;  
The weight of literature descends –

Like snow upon the sleeping earth  
To blanket white the naked truth,  
Wrapped incognito, bound in books  
For eager critics to peruse.

And we poor students, lost, confused,  
Struggle to withstand the bruising –  
The knocks they come like hammer  
blows  
Upon our panel work of ego.

Pounding like the autumn tides,  
Arriving warm, then bitter leaving;  
Daily tussle these titanic forces –  
haunting us with our own moaning.

Out of breath, and short of time,  
No pause, no rest, no second life –  
No second sight to right first done,  
No second chance to fix first wrongs.

And so we students waste our chance  
To grasp the universe we guess  
That hides between the yellowed sheets  
We never quite find the time to read.

Youth comes upon us all ablaze,  
Its fire a burning inner rage ...  
In search of free-thinking angles,  
Away from what childhood's taught.

Perhaps we came here for the beer?  
Perhaps the beer's the best thing here?  
But yet, such shallow depths lead on  
To fails, re-sits, and change of course.

The drop-out quota must be filled –  
Thirteen percent must find the door.  
Now at the end of the ninth week,  
We are well on down that road.

WEEK TEN

### MARTYRS

Someone committed suicide last week,  
But nobody knows her name.  
The rumours fly around like moths  
In flight around a naked flame.

No one denies the event,  
But no one knows when or where.  
The Registrar in muted nothing,  
Says nothing to avoid a scare.

There's always been suicide's at college,  
And the future will hold the same;  
But it seems like a terrible waste  
For life to end this way.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Youth in a blaze and a flourish  
Becomes bone in a musty grave.  
Better to let youth wrinkle  
Than let youth pass into decay.

Young lives should pass happily  
Into old lives of contentment;  
Old lives should think back  
On young lives looking ahead.

The young should outlive the old,  
The old should outlive young thought.  
The young as bright and bold,  
The old as wise and mellow.

The young should have their praises sung,  
The old their tales have told -  
Let's pray our dead martyr has gone  
To the land of *Tir na Nog*.

*Do I see the cape of hero Cuchulain,  
The mightiest of Ireland's warrior gods?  
Feel I the sword of Bran, son of Lir?  
Or beneath his Isle, the cauldron of Man?*

*Man – that jewel in the Celtic Sea,  
Lapis lazuli, ribboned in gold ..  
Sand broken horses, white and rippling  
On the shores of our islands.*

*Three kingdoms united, one divided,  
And a republic, presently stand.  
Yet forgive me for dwelling on myth,  
'tis only the pride of a Celtic man.*

*For the Celtic world is one of riches  
Buried beneath the English view -  
That Angle came, and Saxon conquered,  
And Norman did what Dane couldn't do.*

But this is avoiding our academic studies,  
The travels of Spenser, and Marvell,  
The works of Shakespeare and Marlowe,  
Middleton, Webster and Dryden.

Like a procession of princes,  
They parade before me like shadows;  
Men caught in limbo ...  
Knowing no rest, no arrival.

From the human to the immortal –  
Caught, they live perpetual;  
Going round in circles ...  
They reach central and provincial.

Every college, school and infant –  
Their influence being infinite ...  
Their works collected, words recited;  
There are no living poets - mightier!

No playwrights thought of so highly  
That critics turn to praise their work;  
These great men of testament –  
Let's preserve them as they are dead!

And if you doubt my token homage,  
Go you to Westminster, now,  
Stand before St. Peter's church –  
Pass through the great arched doors.

And once your eyes have scaled the  
heights  
And wondered at the work of men;  
Turn you to the eastern aisle  
And gently pass before the marble shrines  
–

Statesmen, warriors, and knights;  
Until you leave all those behind  
And pay your debt to travel on  
Beyond the gateway that permits -

Entry to the resting place of kings.  
There, close by the poets lie,  
The men whose words outlived kings,  
Though wretched may their lives have  
been.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

How splendid have their names survived,  
Etched upon polished stone ...  
This corner of England theirs, alone.  
Martyrs for our studies.

And thus ten weeks have passed;  
Ceased. Lost, forever gone.  
And all I leave are thoughts,  
Thoughts we all must have.

The Hippies said share your love  
And God will love you back.  
I'd rather dwell on that –  
Than put the writing on the wall.

So whoever you be, reading this,  
Recall that I am mortal –  
Ninety weeks at university  
Is not long at all.

End of term has caught me up,  
I stand to catch the wind;  
The ivory towers at my back,  
The artist in me quicks.

The winter evenings fast draw in,  
Each morning darker slides –  
But now vacation time is here  
I'll sleep till noon time bides.

Wash fatigue from tired eyes,  
Late study hours have strained –  
One term has gone, eight remain,  
The ice-berg submerged lies.

Nine lives, a cat lives out;  
Nine terms a student strives,  
Cloud nine the first term passes by  
Across a becalmed sky.

A magic carpet ride of joy,  
A free-load trip of fun;  
From here on in, the path descends  
The road of graft and slog.

Now I have the chance to rest –  
I'll lay my pen aside;  
Await the coming of New Year  
As Eight Three departs.

So till you hear from me again –  
Goodbye and all my love.  
Student work's a better job  
Than working for a boss.

### TERM 1 VACATION

#### THE DWELLING OF KNOWLEDGE

[10.30pm, 26<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983, Helmsley Rd,  
Newcastle]

Enter the dwelling of knowledge,  
Grasp hold of wisdom,  
Release the blanket of ignorance  
Out to smother all memory.  
Learning must progress through death,  
Life must pass by steps,  
Time must be the key  
To the knowledge quest.

Enter the house of learning  
And reside in the cycle of time,  
Study the order of being -  
The duration and length of life.  
The eternal circle of wisdom  
Along the infinite line,  
Symbolic signs of learning -  
Paths forgotten and found.

Lost wisdom on fresh knowledge  
Await the questing mind -  
Enter the dwelling of knowledge  
And reside in the cycle of life.

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

[9pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983, Helmsley Rd, Newc]

Drinking port, and fingering -  
Girls are all the same

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Dressed up without knickers  
Their scent lingering.

Swilling burgundy, and kissing -  
Sex inside is swelling  
Pumped and willing  
Girls are swooning.

On the sherry, and reeling -  
Held up by women  
Getting in on the killing  
Christmas Eve is kissing.

### ENGLISH BOXING DAY

[26<sup>th</sup> December 1983, Helmsley Rd, New]

Natives tell me the thing to do -  
Pass around drinking spirits,  
Fall about in swooning stupor  
After Xmas cheese and chocolate.

Friends say 'Don't feel guilty,  
Work has stopped till after New Year'  
And I think 'Maybe I'm foreign  
And all that they tell me is true'.

Putting that aside, such idleness  
Becomes a way of life too soon -  
Yet locals say "On Boxing Day  
You must start the New Year way".

Somehow this English train of thought  
Panders to a life of ease -  
But who I am, cointreau in hand -  
To be displeased.

### THE DAY AFTER BOXING DAY

[27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983, Helmsley Rd, Newcastle]

Easy flowing words  
Wind effortlessly from my pen -  
Such delight in simple phrases  
Is what makes men act  
As though God has done them favours.

### BIG DICK AND LITTLE WILLY (song)

[22<sup>nd</sup> January 1984, Helmsley Rd,  
Newcastle]

Big Dick and Little Willy  
Were shipyard sort of blokes,  
They both lived down the Scrogg Road,  
Their barns were schooled at Walker Road  
-

Both their wives had varicose veins  
From the weight of Worry's load.

Dick's whole life was work and club,  
Played football for the local pub,  
Played the darts and fruit machines,  
He loved his wife - a pretty thing -  
But she could not stand being broke  
And married to a doled shipyard bloke.

Little Willy's life was balding -  
Pension schemes had long been growing,  
His canny wife seven grand kids weaned,  
Threw up her arms and justly screamed -  
"For every job the bastards squeeze,  
Three generations of Tyneside heaves".

In any other time but now  
The shipyard work has stood them proud  
-

Tales of Big Dick and Little Willy  
Would leave you laughing in the aisles,  
But this is not a happy tale  
As the shipyards on the Tyne decay.

So think you long on what I say -  
Every human has his day.  
Today the Tory flag is raised  
Above the workers in cold hate;  
Shipyard work is a dying joke  
And Tyneside an unemployment sore.

They were shipyard sort of blokes -  
Big Dick and Little Willy.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### TERM 2

#### PILLARS OF WISDOM

[22<sup>nd</sup> Jan – 27<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, Newcastle mainly]

Week 11

#### CHAUCER

Of Chaucer's verse, we must foremost review  
And scan the inner meaning so employed.  
Yet what is this to me? And more to you?  
Now that winter snows fluff down anon.  
Term time's here, and we once more enjoin  
To our studies, to trap and chain our minds.  
The punishment of privilege is enslavement;  
It is a defeat of a kind.

Yet in truth, outside hailstones fall like pebbles  
Upon a large snare drum – deep the echo  
Pounds into the soul until inaudible;  
The vibrations modulate until the spirit's numb.  
White, and right out of the sky it comes  
To fall and lie and settle close to walls,  
To top high layered drifts, to blanket all  
This winter.

But let me drop this scant news of weather  
And move to mention other more real things  
Like sex, and drugs, and fellow sin bed leather;  
The latest in mid-Nineteen-Eighties kink.  
Nudity, free love, abortion, clone tubing,  
Mastectomy, hysterectomy, and you name it clinics;

Some people stoop while others know no limit

To it all.

Where are the joggers now that blizzards run?

Where do gardeners dig now the soil is frozen?

Where do fishermen sleep while the storm's blowing?

And which mad roofer fixes drainpipes in a freeze?

Pristine overhead snow overhangs the window,

Glacial from eaves iced with stalagmites –  
Fine slender crystal javelins droop street wards

As hard as dolomite.

And so I wander off my scholar's toils,  
Away from the studies that before me lie;  
The distractions in the background fade  
Till only my eyes sense the words before me.

Order and structure, what of it?

Chaos in beauty is there outside my window;

Known forms transformed in an eon  
That decays concrete.

This simple logic, to the academic  
Has no literary value, none attached;  
So far I haven't mentioned anything sick or comic

And it line forty four of my attack.

I am forestalling without much tact?

Its time to tell tales about students balling;

The more serious of you might think  
That's just appalling.

So the new term's begun with Chaucer,  
Syntax, Hobbes, and Rochester the Rotter.

As simple as saying 'cup and saucer'?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Linguists and grammarians always stutter  
Over the diphthongs in words like ‘butter’  
Over the spelling of textual vowel sounds;  
That in Chaucer are flat, and in  
Shakespeare round.  
Oh what a bother!

In other rooms and other theatres,  
Criticism is expounded on strained ears;  
Richards, Leavis, and fifty other theories  
Bring on a puzzlement of sighs and  
groans.  
Oh the price of textbooks for the year!  
Knowledge, like they say, is not cheap.  
Like farming land, the sowing is costly  
Before you reap.

Here I end this short tribute to Geoffrey  
And close with barely a mention of his  
name;  
I will finish this weeks ramble  
With a reminder that the studies remain.  
The R.S.C are coming in five weeks,  
We must prepare and read our  
Shakespeare  
Into the dead of night - all is white,  
And snow is everywhere.

WEEK 12

### THE POET'S TOOLS

Prose is the medium of playwrights and  
authors  
Of fiction – creative, historic, biographic.  
But poetry is the pulse and heartbreak of  
lovers,  
The accent and stress of all things  
romantic.  
The ecstasy, the weeping, the relic of  
worship,  
The epic, the ballad, the quatrain, the  
couplet;  
Hyperbole, allegory, symbol and fable,  
Fallacy, emblem and paradox statement.

Petrarchan conceit, irony and pun,  
Classical epithet and moral exemplum;  
Paradox, metaphor and personification.

Devices and styles through millenniums  
run,  
The bards are immortal, but rhythms  
pound on.  
Assonance, consonance - internal,  
imperfect,  
Verses rhyme on in free stanza resonance,  
Through Middle-Age humour, Humanist  
pre-reason,  
Neo-classical correctness, and restoration  
lewdness;  
Romantic feeling and Victorian ethics –  
All find voice in poetic metrical.  
Decorum of genre, colic and sanguine,  
Phlegmatic, melancholy to fit  
temperament;  
Mimetic, pragmatic, myth and legend.

Thus bile, blood, phlegm, and puke  
contrast  
With ode, elegy, and lyric chant –  
Burlesque, and mock heroic puncture,  
Baroque, and Manneristic banter.  
Sceptic, stoic, or epicurean;  
Roman catholic, deist and Puritan;  
Tribe of Ben, Metaphysical and Cavalier,  
Gothic, Graveyard and modern surreal.  
Theory rules in poetry schools,  
Stress and foot the poet's tools –  
Metre the crown, and words the jewels.

Now armed, the poet can talk of love  
As couples entwine in the darkness of  
night;  
Exchanging soft glances in light finger  
dancing  
Waltzing the length of naked delight.  
White as the skin of an English virgin,  
The land lies bare in winter ice.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Red as the lips of a North Country  
maiden,  
The berries of hawthorn and rowan stand  
out.  
Nowhere yet is crocus shooting –  
Nowhere yet is snowdrop protruding –  
Nowhere yet is daffodil blooming.

Beds are warm and loving nightly,  
Daily, hourly through the chill;  
The sun comes up and yellow flushes  
Lovers lost in willing worlds.  
Gutters drip and drainpipes gurgle,  
Music lifts the blackbird's song;  
Rooftops shake with sliding shudder  
As thawing slush turns to flood.  
Nowhere yet are starlings rushing –  
Nowhere yet are swallows darting –  
Nowhere yet are insects swarming.

As lovers laze and grace the daylight,  
Coily reaching out to share  
A passion hot, with fleeting like-minds  
They feel, to lay their secrets bare.  
Mirrors strung about their love rooms  
Steal the real, and show the new –  
Reflections cast return as shadows  
As fleet foot nymphs aid their play.  
Nowhere yet is light rain falling –  
Nowhere yet is mild wind blowing –  
Nowhere yet is snow short going.

As lovers rise and greet the sunset,  
To kiss and dress, and sadly part;  
Like pupae in the act of shedding,  
They leave a skin of bed-clothes wry.  
Daylight fades and evening enters  
The solitude that darkness fills;  
As lovers hold each other hard,  
And then release with a kiss.  
Nowhere yet are night fires burning –  
Nowhere yet are couples warring –  
Nowhere yet are friendships waning.

As lover waves to lover going  
Deep into the void of night ...  
We must return to other subjects  
Touching on the poetry kind.  
But if you want to dwell on lovers  
Turn you now to John Donne's verse –  
Locked within his sunk devotion  
Lingers love for womankind.  
Not in Donne is emotion sated –  
Not in Donne is passion bloated –  
Not in Donne is love outmoded.

This I shall no longer labour,  
Another week has gone for good.  
The academic life, a privileged calling,  
Love on a grant - a simple woo.  
A *Country Wife* a play to read,  
And *Custom of the Country* too;  
*The Winter's Tale* the Willie text,  
and now we've moved on to *The Tempest*.  
Not in memory does knowledge lie –  
Not in wisdom is truth implied –  
Not in love does life survive.

### WEEK 13 RELAX

Relax! Take it easy  
Put your troubles on the table –  
Smoke some marijuana  
Have a beer!

Life isn't worth a penny  
When the worries are too many  
And you can't enjoy a bevy  
Or a bleeze!

Feelings held in ready,  
Stored up in swelling plenty –  
Let them go with a renting,  
Let them free!

The mind may be counting  
Doubts, rushing from a fountain,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But let hem drown a mountain,  
Let them be!

Moments come and go,  
Sometimes quick, sometimes slow –  
Each second as it comes,  
Let it flow!

Anxiety is a waste  
In this double-sided place –  
For life can be two-faced,  
Don't we know!

While across the western race  
Where technology's a blaze –  
Where edifices are raised;  
Let them fall!

While the astronauts count stars,  
Where Jupiter conjuncts Mars,  
Beyond galactic parts –  
Let them wander!

While the communists yield,  
When the socialists squeal,  
As the capitalists do a deal –  
Let things pass!

While the workers scream  
At having their wages creamed,  
And the bosses buy their dreams –  
Let it go!

As the short days lengthen  
Towards that place in heaven  
That the believers crave for –  
Let it come!

For when belief is weak,  
Remember faith is failing,  
And is a type of jailing –  
To bar against!

For open thought and open mind  
Stretches back to first mankind,  
Whizzing on to future time –  
Let it amble!

While the storms tirade,  
While the icy gales ferment,  
While the Arctic waste descends  
From frozen tundra!

Stand a wake on such days,  
So its said people say,  
Even when off on holiday –  
It's little wonder!

While the ships ocean toss,  
While the waves oil rigs rock –  
While atomic subs dry dock –  
Let it sunder!

Let those tempests pass,  
Drink a beer let time part,  
Take some drugs with your pals  
Till doped under!

Relax, take it easy,  
Put your feet on the table,  
And tune into the radio –  
Let it blast!

### WEEK 14 **TRAPPED IN NEWCASTLE**

The Smoke That Thunders  
Tumbles the Zambezi.  
The sands of Giza  
grate past Cheop's;  
while I dwell in Newcastle  
In the One-Nine-Eighties.

Tai Shan that towers,  
keeps a dragon sleeping.  
The burnt soil of Crete  
labyrinths a creature;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

while icy fogs descend  
On me in England.

The white that shimmers,  
mirrors shrined Kailasa.  
The hissing of Iguazu  
assimilates Parana;  
while the clouds beyond  
Durham top-cut winter.

The purple plained Karoo  
splits the Orange State.  
The marshland of the Sudd  
silts the Nile spate;  
while the viscous Tyne  
slakes my campus days.

The whale that spouts  
gushes green Kauai.  
The beast that howls  
haunts Alaska's wilds;  
while gales gut Tyneside,  
swamp my mind.

The Angel that falls  
silvers dense Guyana.  
The monkey that flies  
hovers o'er Sri Lanka;  
while North Sea winds  
slash-in on me from Russia.

The volcanoes that glow  
blow in Nicaragua.  
The tremors of fear,  
shake up California;  
while Jurassic Northumberland  
crumbles coal into the sea.

The giants that slumber  
guard Easter Isle,  
As the university of Newcastle  
keeps me study bound.  
Yet, I know that someday  
I'll leave this town behind.

WEEK 15

### LIVING HERE UNDER HEAVEN

Behind the times, we all lag on –  
we marathon to the Olympic slopes,  
faster than slaloms swishing with fliers,  
we career through bronzes, silvers, gold  
in ice rinks – where a matador's lips  
take the surrender of an ice queen's lips.

Faster than sleighs tunnelling burrows  
in roller coaster corkscrews –  
across Yugoslavia in a sightseeing tour.  
Dubrovnik or Beograd,  
Sarajevo and Zagreb –  
we see everything on T V.

Serb and Croat, little known Kosovos,  
I've been to that land five times or more;  
five times is enough for the well travelled  
man  
for it's a rough country to bear –  
who will believe me, not having suffered  
the memories of the Albanian front.

It brings on the trembles,  
the bad nerves, the soaked temples  
dripping sweat, measured in litres,  
dripping to quench the parched ground;  
the thirst of the farmer  
the dust of the pasture  
the brown walls of the churchyards  
the dry walls of the chapels  
the arid-eyed statues  
Madonna and Peter  
Paul, Andrew and Stephen  
surrounded by weepers  
and the baked tongues of preachers  
holding aloft gold casketed relics  
poor mummified creatures  
wizened and shrivelled  
decaying pitted-features  
yellow glazed bone  
skin like old leather

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

shiny in parts where pilgrims fingers  
have touched, for good omen -  
for an old saint's blessing  
for a martyr's dead message  
of sainthood, of spirit  
hallowed by time  
by the passing of ages.

Only through living memory does  
reverence pass on  
down the generations;  
thru wide gateways of veneration  
thru broad doorways to the universal  
thru expansive openings to the eternal  
to stop in matter, to exist in the nebulae,  
beyond the celestial;  
to a ruined world  
a globe burnt out  
a corpse upon the ride of night  
whilst we the mortals, back on earth  
living here under heaven -  
we so not like Andromeda, chained to sub  
astral diversion;  
we are tellurian and terrestrial ...  
we are mortal and perishable.

### WEEK 16 IS SPRING HERE?

Monday. *The Wakefield Cycle*,  
Noah's flood washed over me.  
The sheep in the cradle,  
Cain crippling Abel,  
And the good shepherds three.

Also, the Cavalier poets -  
Carew, Suckling, Waller.  
Lovelace and King Charles,  
the best of Court pals,  
Before all that Civil War bother.

Tuesday. A long lie -  
Then syntax and Oscar,  
With some thought on *Earnest*,

Lady Bracknell, and 'jest'.  
A look at a poem over tea.

Wednesday. Too late -  
For the Diachronic lecture  
On history in speech.  
So I had a quick read  
Of Herrick, and felt better.

Lunchtime. Common room meeting  
About a barn dance evening.  
Our Lit Soc's a ramble -  
Our Lang Soc's a shambles -  
But students are honest, not thieving.

At Two. The Gulbenkian -  
And Ruskin's *Space Invaders*.  
Weird play on the future,  
By the RSC's fringe tour  
Of actors and players.

Seven Thirty. Lopez de Vega,  
And his old Spanish play -  
*Lost in a Mirror* -  
I doubt it's a winner.  
A rewrites in order, I say.

Thursday. Pissing ol' Gissing  
And his Victorian dribbling.  
A discussion on Rudkin  
In a tutorial mud rubbing  
Where we gave his play a ribbing.

Friday. It must be Shakespeare -  
*As you Like It*, an' *Twelve Night*.  
Viola and Rosalind, and most  
Of the talk in reverence  
For the two women's rights.

Evening. Edward Bond -  
*Red, Black and Ignorant*.  
A play with little movement,  
About a nuclear charred monster,  
Acted with some brilliance.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The Weekend. No rest –  
For the serious student.  
The ardent academic,  
Conscious and polemic,  
So proper and prudent.

Sunday. This poetry –  
Reflects the week's parting,  
Post dates a week going.  
And in one final partake –  
There's another week starting.

### WEEK 17 TUTORIAL

What have you learned, my son,  
In this week's study?  
I have learned many things  
Of interest and wonder!  
Of tragic *Lady Astolat*  
Floating down to Camelot –  
Of salivating *Major Barbara*  
Undershafted.

And have you come to terms  
With idealism in texts?  
I have read my Roland Barthes,  
And on Sontag made a start.  
I've been lectured on Cullers  
And a number of others.  
I think I know my Richards,  
My Olsen, and my Leavis.

This may be so,  
But what do you know???  
I admit I feel uneasy  
About Whimsatt and Beardsley.  
Intention of expression –  
Invention or impression.  
The fallacy's inherent.  
Or no?

No one knows for sure.  
But what about Saussure?

Language has its borders,  
Words have their order;  
Sentences have a structure,  
So meaning may puncture  
Our reading governed by rules.  
Chomsky was no fool!

You have been reading  
Your Shakespeare on evenings?  
Most certainly fulfilling,  
The hectic text billing!  
*A Comedy of Errors* – borrowed  
from Menaechmi and Alcestis.  
*A Midsummer's Night Dream*  
And its Sylvan moonbeams.

And twentieth century drama?  
Are you maintaining your stamina?  
Most certainly engaging  
In these theatrical playthings.  
Yeats on Baile Strand –  
Cathleen Count and ni Houlihan.  
Chekov's *The Seagull*  
And his *Cherry Orchard* mull.

And what do you think now  
that seventeen weeks have passed?  
I believe life is worth living -  
Though poverty's a misgiving  
That a student takes as payment  
For the wealth of mental slaving.  
My brain may be splitting  
But my hands are soft and clean.

### WEEK 18 ABANDONMENT

All week long I have abandoned my  
studies  
And turned to typing my latest stage play.  
Instead of in-going, my thoughts have  
been flowing  
Through my fingers. Oh, you may think  
Such trivial information should slide

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Into the trash can of my past – but  
Half a student's life is lived in order that  
He may somehow learn to record his past.

Such trite belief may be for the ignorant,  
Such sentiment be an elitist precept, but  
I would rather see my world in flames  
Than see my time not tethered in this  
way.

For one day, the student will be a man,  
And face men as a man not a boy –  
Though, I de-mobbed to the rank of  
student  
I'm seeking benefit from such a fall.

By rising to it all, I know better –  
Or perhaps I can really only guess  
That first class degrees are won by  
courage,  
Risk, and spins of bare-faced gall –  
provided  
You bandage your neck begging for the  
chop.  
One bright idea too many, one smart  
remark,  
First class honours hinge on more than  
neat  
Typed essays and good tutor grades.

And hence – my plays, my stories, my  
Armfuls of novels, poems and songs –  
These are my profession, my kind of  
trade  
Of which study is half, or two thirds, and  
Writing practice stems from reading –  
Not from scribbling merrily on to sunrise.

A word of advice to all would be writers –  
Never drain the lamp while it's burning.  
Sunrises come, it's the sunsets we count;  
The flame may flicker in the light bulb,  
But it's the sun that blinds.

Man is out to destroy himself –

It is the better part to know one's self;  
Also knowing that wee hour writing is  
As productive as stirring ice with a hot  
knife –

Lots of steaming and hissing ...  
But in the end nothing left of the ice.

If only I could practice what I expound?  
Wisdom is never heeded by those in  
whom  
it abides. The smart fool is the one who  
admits to this masque of pride. Blinded  
by self deceit and personal esteem,  
the complete fool will miss this advice.

Remember ... I am here to amuse myself  
As well as to hand out woeful rhetoric;  
The governing laws that make the rules  
May be broken, but it's not important.  
Likewise I may deviate from my studies  
And ramble on into the night.

Eighteen weeks gone - it seems so long a  
time.

### WEEK 19 THE QUIET UNIONIST

*Here lies Old Robbie, sex has wet his lips;  
And hear, m 'lad, she laid him for a quid.*

Milton wouldn't have spent his time  
watching television,  
He would have been dreaming somewhere  
between hell and heaven.  
But I haven't time to dwell on poetic  
paradise –  
My debts are mounting as my cash flow  
dies.  
The government is draining every drop of  
liquid  
Cash out 'a poor folks' pockets.

I feel the torture in my guts,  
The knots tied by the passing of new laws;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The wrenching sickening way each one gnaws  
On socialism.  
The ministers of our noble state –  
Two in very three should be held in public probate  
For leading our nation to war for profit;  
For abusing state powers to line their pockets,  
While poor men starve and ill me die,  
And the children of our morrow, have education denied  
For no reason.  
It is slavery were given –  
The chains of class are not made in heaven;  
They are forged on earth at Cabinet carve ups,  
Where Defence eats the breast, and Industry sups  
On the beads of sweat rung from the brows of labour.  
What better fare may a fascist government savour  
Than inequality.  
We face again dark feudal days –  
Four classes of men – master, merchant, beggar, slave,  
Where even a begging bowl is preferable to bonded wages;  
Where merchant supports master in return for favours  
Granted in a trade off o'wealth, property, and power  
That permits the merchant class to sow and flower  
And t'send their fragile seed to public school  
And long vac' escapes that flout the rules  
Of common brotherhood.  
Let us not forget  
That woman is not sister to herself as yet  
–

Despite the pipes of peace that many wind  
With songs and demonstrations against nuclear bins  
And silos buried deep in mother England.  
For this kingdom's raped a world of lands  
To rise upon the backs of blacks and the under privileged  
Fathered by cheap seduction.  
And still we pillage –  
Petty puppet states and psuedo democratic nations;  
Tomorrow's despots and tyrants we instruct in education,  
We teach dictators politics and diplomatic code;  
Indoctrinate the overseas elite in current mode  
And technique as how best to divide and rule  
And institutionalise subversion.  
We are fools –  
Not blind, but open-eyed imperialistic conquerors.  
Our army stands in readiness to under shaft order;  
Our government stands prepared to remedy disorder.  
We are neither weak nor ineffectual in world affairs;  
We do not grow bananas, we produce atomic ware;  
We rank third in a list of two hundred ethnic nations;  
In order to maintain – we crate negation  
By propagating destruction.  
We are Britons –  
Most nights I try to disentangle the truth on television;  
But to no avail, we lie to one another without blushing;  
We are no better than the Cubans or the Russians,;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

In truth we may actually be a whole lot worse.

I'm sure there are many Britons who'd shoot me first

And ask their questions later.

WEEK 20

### VACATION LOOMS

Silence is most times better than loud words

Together

Between the pauses, we listen coldly

As the March rains fall.

Still, motionless, to quiver in the lee

United

The quietness presses on laden movement

Stirred by Spring's forced marching.

Students read in nooks and culverts

Undecided

The numbness eases in on outer nothing

Mulled westward by the east wind rising.

Old men hover round and round in mute obedience

Hunchbacked

Flagstones smart with flaying canes

Skating on the frost of damp cast alleys.

Tempers parade into the morning skyline

Unprotected

Thoughts formed unhindered, fade

unvoiced

Unuttered sweetness left bitter on the tongue.

Speechless lulls cross awkward voids

Unguarded

Moments career along at reckless canter

Unobserved, out of wind, gone in silence.

Unstressed points made in muttered words

Unemphatic

Hours spent in idle laze or fancy

In squeaking chairs or moaning couches.

No amount of movement levers action

Unintentional

Silence settles on receptive hearers

Waiting for the echo and crescendo.

End of term brings on a tiredness

Uninvited

The weeks have passed all too quickly

Vacation is a gift so quietly granted.

### TERM 2 VACATION

#### THE EXPERIMENTALIST

[10.55am, 28<sup>th</sup> Mar 1984, Lumb Bank, Heptonstall, Yorkshire]

Mistakes are gross distortions

Authors twist to reach for the real,

Delusion in a letter form

Show the lies as barely fact.

Yet others take inhuman face,

Class division - serf and lord,

Worlds turned on worker / master

Is the novel's pride of place.

States of mind ... warped or strange,

Insight into the mental bent;

Voices silent, loudly blatant

Typed upon a rambling page -

Martian culture, ultra context,

Islands in a swimming world;

Things fore granted shift like sand

When held in focus to the norm.

Plots abound to hack around

Fairy tales and common myth -

Everything is cop and robber.

Steal? Authors deny this word.

Notebooks full of jotted insight,

Lines of quotes and plagiarism -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Extracts thinly veiled to hide  
The source from which they're taken.

Sentence structure played upon,  
Tense in past or present form;  
Questions asked in unsolved rhetoric;  
Sky's the limit so they say.  
All these things a writer juggles  
Well before he starts to write -  
Experimental prose is open  
Is never fixed, and lives to die.

### A NIGHT WITHOUT LIGHT

[27<sup>th</sup> March 1984, Lumb Bank,  
Heptonstall, Yorkshire]

It was one of those nights, when one  
Could spend an hour describing the  
weather.  
The city clocks unsynchronised spanned  
Five tolling minutes to announce  
The hour before midnight.

The grey sandstone walls of the cemetery  
Stifled the mumbling traffic; the yellow  
Street lights hazed and numbed the  
shadows;  
The silhouetted cypress touched branches  
With the weeping willow.

John the farm worker lay stretched out  
On a grave. Overhead a Celtic cross  
tattooed the darkness.  
What life there was he had crushed  
underfoot. Poor snowdrop, cut crocus,  
greenhouse daffodil.

### TERM 3

[6<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> July 1984, Newcastle]

### WEEK 21

#### (i) THEY RUN TO THE OCEAN

Some folks have all the fun

And run to the joyous ocean  
To escape work.

They return wafting wood smoke  
And joke about home made wine  
And dead seagulls.

They leave trails of beach sand  
Before hanging heads in worried thoughts  
About tomorrow.

Their fortunes wave  
Keyed upon unfound aims  
And unmade laughter like the sea.

#### (ii) BEFORE CLOSING TIME

While beyond my walls -  
Neighbours play the music of our times  
And clink their glasses – I must dwell  
On the works of Miller, Pinter,  
Becket, Taylor ... while friends enjoy  
The fruits of their labour, I labour on,  
Imbue myself in emblematic code  
That leaves me drained and sober.

While out in the lane –  
Dogs bark loudly at the moon  
As overhead a Boeing rumbles southwards  
To who knows where – somewhere far  
From here, somewhere warm,  
Yet cool beneath a palm – where  
Memories linger on across the calm.

It makes me think of Rio,  
Where the sun is white  
And the music hot.

I return to my senses –  
The open text books, the unfilled essay  
Pages – on Miller, Pinter, Becket,  
Taylor – before turning off to dream,  
And thinking ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Milton wouldn't have spent his time  
watching television,  
He would have been dreaming somewhere  
between hell and heaven.

I wish that tomorrow was today,  
And yesterday a day to be relived  
As my thoughts drift to real-ale revels,  
And bar-room afternoons when a pint of  
beer  
and a bag of crisps was better than a  
frozen  
dinner from the fridge.

Still the work remains undone –  
As my memory turns, churns and burns  
As summer rushes in first flush  
In May; and I think of days when  
Blackbirds drown the party song  
Of revelers going strong at dawn.

I can't continue –  
A thirst has gripped my throat,  
Its time to stop, grab my coat  
And make a dash along the road –  
The local pub is paradise for those  
Who haven't time to waste the night  
By driveling on past closing time.

WEEK 22

### DEATH ENTERS AND EXITS

Death  
Enters and exits  
From the taverna.

Pass black horses  
And hooded people  
On the profound highway  
Of the guitarra.

There's an odour of salt  
And of female blood  
In the balsam fevers

Of the harbour.

Death  
Enters and exits,  
And exits and enters  
Death  
From the taverna.

Through the mariposas  
A sad girl walks ...  
*Tierra de luz*  
*Cielo de tierra.*

Through a field of olives  
A white snake slides ...  
*Tierra de luz*  
*Cielo de tierra.*

The children look to  
The far away mountains ...  
*Tierra de luz*  
*Cielo de tierra.*

Beneath the orange trees  
Lies Lola with me ...  
*Ay, amor, bajo*  
*El naranjo en flor.*

Her big green eyes  
And her voileta voice ...  
*Ay, amor, bajo*  
*El naranjo en flor.*

Her slender brown arms  
And her slim bare legs ...  
*Ay, amor, bajo*  
*El naranjo en flor.*

The music of the birds  
Swimming in our heads ...  
*Ay, amor, bajo*  
*El naranjo en flor.*

The wind blows the dust

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Yellow from the fields ...  
*El viento con el polvo*  
*Hace proras de plata.*

The fields are deserts  
And the orange groves dunes ...  
*El viento con el polvo*  
*Hace proras de plata.*

Lost in our love  
in the green kiss of moon ...  
*El viento con el polvo*  
*Hace proras de plata.*

The constellation candles  
In the arch of a swoon ...  
*El viento con el polvo*  
*Hace proras de plata.*

Death by the taverna  
Beginning and end ...  
*No me imparta nada*  
*Mas que tu querer.*

Amongst the mariposa  
A sad girl walks ...  
*No me imparta nada*  
*Mas que tu querer.*

Beneath the orange trees  
Lies Lola with me ...  
*No me imparta nada*  
*Mas que tu querer.*

The wind blows the dust  
Yellow from the fields ...  
*No me imparta nada*  
*Mas que tu querer.*

In the singing wind  
Words are lingering ...  
Death  
Exits and enters  
the taverna.

WEEK 23  
*Each play is not as it seems – when  
you catch a glimpse behind the scenes.*

### THE AUDITION

How can I do what you ask?  
Bend over twice, two pats on the ass,  
Three kisses a scene,  
And stark bare in the first act???

It's easy, luv, just give a smile,  
A wave will have them beguiled.  
It's a hard part to play – but  
You're a winner all the way!

I'm not so sure this plot's any good.  
Three rape scenes, sodomy, and gays  
Running about like little boy blues!  
I'm like Snow White in a den of wolves?

You're tense, it's the weather, or  
something.  
Have you eaten today?  
I've known actresses survive a week  
On cheese, and sex, and speed.

I'm not into downers or that sort of  
thing!  
I like Cola, coffee and alko-fizzed drinks.  
I'm not into side-lines and fixes.  
I'm not hooked or ready to sink.

Never suggested you'd have a price.  
Nice girls come, but real pro's survive.  
If you're going to take the part –  
When do you think you could start?

I think we'd be best to forget it.  
Acting's a profession, not a habit.  
Sex on the stage is an amateur's ploy  
To legitimise porn and finger the toys.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Darling, how can you say this???  
This playwright has had ten West End  
hits!  
You can't believe his work is porn?  
He's a dignified man, rich and respected.  
  
Money gets soiled on the merry-go-round  
—  
It picks up dirt wherever it's found.  
Writers can be the dirtiest of fellows,  
And most of them are incredibly shallow!  
  
What utter rot! You silly little bitch!  
Get off my stage, I'll black you for this.  
This author's been with us for twenty  
years.  
It's me! I've had enough of your sneers!  
  
The rudest of natures always comes out  
In hacks who know nothing, and shout.  
Good riddance, I say, to your poxy stage!  
Find another whore for your play!

### WEEK 24 **THE QUARREL**

She had come to me almost breakfastless,  
Eyeless and draped at the breasts in silk,  
The leaves of the world like darkness to  
me,  
The dawn like a storm out of China.

I was neither a king nor a fool  
As she sat thin faced with vacant stare,  
She the fruit of the forbidden tree,  
Wild times and valley streams rushing  
still.

She watched the clock tick minute by  
hour,  
Foul, then fair as she sat and dreamed,  
The caverns through which she deeply  
passed,  
Carried me down to a sunless sea.

Down some profound dark tunnel I  
followed,  
A voice in me said 'If you were in love  
You'd whisper three words on her  
withering,  
Before the flowers fade and sorrow  
yields.'

As the neighbour's dog barked in it's  
sleep,  
She looked like coral hacked from a reef —  
Every wound having cut her sharply,  
I owed her no net to catch her fall.

She cried like the wind in the maple trees  
'If this is us, then who is against us!'  
She'd reached the verge of the knife-edge  
ledge  
That love had brought her blindfolded to.

Affairs like seed blow in the wind,  
She ran from the battle defeated and  
worn,  
And into the storm of the day she  
departed,  
As I sat and watched the thunder roll.

### WEEK 25 (i) **AMBIGUITY**

Ambiguity of the first type —  
Atmosphere and style.  
Pure sound and Empson  
Sounds like such a lot of hype.

### (ii) **DREAMS OF SPAIN**

Sunny Spain seems so succinctly sweet,  
I'll trade these days of drizzle  
For a Malaga beach.

And still the evening rain descends  
To dampen droll belief  
Of paradise in England.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

June's juices dribble from scented roses,  
Chestnut blossom black-flied falling  
On empty beaches.

No one goes trimming garden hedgerows,  
Mowing lawns, clipping verges  
In the rain.

Bluebells bend backwards 'neath birches,  
Broken barked and birked  
By rows of beeches.

Avoiding gurgling gargling gutter pipes,  
Pedestrians push past puddles  
On into the night.

Spain looms large ... then fades  
As minutes master moments made  
In idle image.

Illusion inconsistent with intended ideal,  
Forces false impressions to the fore  
Of infirm logic.

Fair misty the fine rain falls  
To polka-dot and rivulet  
The chip-shop window -

Where the punters round the block in line  
To murder ninety-pence newspaper nosh  
Of half-cod slices.

I float to Spain ... to costa  
Casual days of Coppertone carousing  
'Neath the acacias -

As evening empties out to twilight,  
Catching shadows criss-crossed by  
streetlights  
Ochre-orange.

Little wonder workers strike in summer,  
Power to them ... they are my brothers  
And my sisters.

As the rain hurls in heaving hurry,  
Spain retreats ... darkness starts  
In on tomorrow.

### WEEK 26 STUDENT PARTY

(i)  
I went to a party this week –  
It was a pale shade of Oscar Wilde.  
I missed the cucumber sandwiches,  
But the cream cake was nice.

(ii)  
I sometimes wonder where everything  
leads;  
We starve to eat cake, while others feast;  
We may get a nibble at the occasional do,  
But a few crumbs of gateau washed with  
tea  
Are customary habits few of us chew.

Once, grapes were the passion of fashion  
–  
Succulently dangled in erotic rations.  
We may get a neck at a student party;  
A quick pop of juice on top of brown ale  
Can make any wimp ballsy and happy.

Poor sods, that's all I can say,  
Waiting all year for one of those days.  
So much for caviar and oyster dishes;  
Champagne may well be a place in  
Spain  
When nursed with cocoa and McVities  
dip.

The English way is a packet of crisps,  
A skinful of bitter, a bag of chips,  
Fags for the party, a couple of cans,  
A toke of hash, a bop and a dance,  
A quick bit of natter, and it off in a van.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### WEEK 27

*Some weeks are better than some days,  
Some wines aren't as good as some years.*

### **I DON'T GIVE A DAMN (song)**

Oh, I don't care for nothing,  
I don't care a toss –  
The rain may fall in dull Whitehall  
While it blazes in quiet Kos.

The girls may bare their breasts a lot,  
I wouldn't turn a hair –  
I've seen the nicest fellow drown  
Because he turned and stared.

I've had my lack of interest  
Keeping me well dowsed –  
God knows what would happen  
If my interest was aroused.

I thrive on doing shit-all,  
It gives an easy life –  
An easy life's twice as nice  
As one that's rich in strife.

Maybe I care too much about  
Not caring very much –  
But too much care so they say  
Is much too care as such.

### WEEK 28

*The beaches of Spain are like  
Glasgow gardens.*

### **COSTA DEL SOL**

Exams over, results still to come,  
I sit beneath an olive tree  
Thinking ... and wondering ... and  
Watching the off-blue Med lap  
The toes of topless bathers.

And you may think, lucky sod

Or ... that must be the life  
Or ... God I'd never go to Spain  
In June when the flies are outnumbered  
By English tourists!

Of course – you'd be right ...  
But at least ... the sun shines  
And the beer is cheap ... the chicken  
And chips a hundred times superior  
To Colonel Sanders.

Yet, is that enough to warrant  
A two week exile in a pale shade  
Of paradise?

I do not know as I watch  
The pequeno fishing boats beached  
on the shore, and a tall master  
Racer ... flying the tricolour  
Bobbing in the cove.

I sit beneath the olive tree  
As the breeze gently blows ... and  
ants climb the gnarled trunk  
in hunt ... as the lapping waters  
to and fro.

The midday sun hovers close  
Overhead ... as the jubilant cries  
Of bathers awake the sleeping  
Slavers ... tattooing themselves  
On sun beds.

Two players join me beneath  
The olive tree ... strut to and fro  
Quoting lengthy lines of Lorca –  
'Amigos, que peza de teatro  
haceres ahorita?'

I shouldn't have disturbed them -  
They are artists ... working  
Whilst I am here composing poetry ...  
And then I hear, and understand  
They are English.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I find that boring. And two  
Days later, here I am poorer by several  
Thousand pesos ... but healthier  
Than yesterday ... something after all  
The studying of late.

The playa is the place where  
Students should vacate their brains –  
A little bit of salt on the mind  
Washes things that beer and drugs  
Can't erase.

A bit of skiing ... a bit of sailing –  
Surfing, dipping, bathing ...  
Takes the mind from thoughts that  
Otherwise over dwell  
On studying.

For the pale and pasty pigment of  
Civilisation is stigmatic in all  
Urban populations ... hidden by slick  
City clothes ... it becomes public  
On the open beaches.

*While only the mind goes nude at  
university –  
And only exams bring good the teaching.*

WEEK 29  
*Still in Spain and it hasn't rained.*

### GRANADA

The beaches have gone,  
I'm in the Sierras,  
There's snow on the tops,  
But man! It is hot  
In the streets of Granada.

Music is played  
In every third calle;  
The water flows  
From each public fountain  
Straight out of the mountains.

In the ancient city  
Where the Alhambra towers,  
The geraniums flower,  
And beer washes down  
The calor of the hour.

The Arab quarter hums,  
Not with drums  
As in Africa they might,  
But who is to say  
That trumpets are normal.

The traffic tails back  
Through the old parts  
Of the town in the dark  
That is dropping fast  
On the swooping bats.

Windows gape open,  
People are moaning,  
Talking and groaning,  
Laughing and crowing –  
The vino is flowing.

The bums sit about,  
Well down and out,  
Smoking their dowts –  
Shouting about how  
'Yo tengo hambre'.

The chalk figure drawings,  
Paintings on awnings,  
Flower sellers yawning,  
Street vendors lolling,  
Helados men calling.

Granada at sunset –  
No one in bed,  
Well, no adults as yet,  
The night young ahead.  
This city's not dead.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 30

*Days pass quicker than rush hour traffic,*

*Nights come on with little thought given.*

### END OF FIRST YEAR

(i)

War is a trauma most survive  
But which few return from innocent.  
But how would I know, I've not been  
given front-line death as medicine.

The only gore and guts I've eaten  
Are tabloid leads and lies;  
Glib-lipped words dripping blood  
That the boys of Fleet Street sugar.

While in some far off foreign field  
A headless corpse hosts black fly;  
The Stock Exchange counts the points  
Of the profit war and index yield.

In some ditch the maggots crawl  
And feed upon rotten flesh –  
Mass graves are being dug  
And bodies mount like Berlin Walls.

In some English garden sits  
A magnate shooting thieving crows;  
For death is all the magnate thinks -  
Between cigars, the world smokes.

(ii)

The music plays on into the stars,  
The rock-a-billy boys are rocking out,  
Blues are humming the old to sleep;  
The slums are awake to the reggae beat.

Down on the clubs the New Wave sound  
Quavers and totters the underground –  
As the new romantics flower the street  
And die hard punks freak to meet.

There they crow all peacock combed,  
These rainbow-stopping Eighties clones –

Armed with monster wave machines  
To fill the gaps in teenage dreams.

I'd rather shoot the bull with them  
Than cut the crap with black-tied men;  
The machine-gun rat-tat can be heard afar  
I'd rather hear the rasp of an electric  
guitar.

(iii)

Thus a student mind preambles  
Through the world that I inhabit;  
Far beyond the scholar's scope -  
Each day I'm here, quickly goes.

Wars may come, and slowly pass,  
Friends quick made, soon grow apart;  
What remains is very brief,  
Time can be the fleetest thief.

But this aside, life goes on,  
Dust collects where timidity hides;  
The warm long summer months await  
To get into vacation's slide ...

Of lazy days and afternoons -  
Through July till harvest looms,  
And grey October days recall  
Us students to the marbled halls –

Where once again the hollow ring  
Shall chain us the learned texts;  
And we shall dream upon such days  
When childhood went, and summer fled.

### YEAR 1 SUMMER VACATION

#### IN THE BARRIO

[30<sup>th</sup> June 1984, Nerja, Andalusia]

In the barrio, women's chatter  
Rattles the red tile rooftops  
Which divide the mortal world  
From the clear blue sky.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

In the Calles, children hide  
And seek between the narrow alleys  
That cut the whitewash houses  
And lead to the azul sea.

In the cafes, men's laughter  
Shakes the taverna olive trees  
Where shadows split the day  
Into the orange baked ground.

In the casas, families gather  
To talk in wide doorways  
Where friends tease companions  
Who come and go, or stay.

### **EL PUNTE (THE BRIDGE)**

[1<sup>st</sup> July 1984, Nerja, Andalusia]

Somewhere in Andalusia  
A sky blue river  
Passes beneath an ancient bridge.

By the river's edge  
A sombrero'd hombre  
Sits under a tall Spanish pine.

He contemplates his future  
As the river flows  
Underneath the arches of the bridge.

The pine needles fall  
And a small chaffinch  
Sings to dance his dreams along.

Then the chanson ceases!  
The burnt red earth  
Trembles as the pine needles drop.

The old bridge shakes  
The sombrero'd hombre  
Awakes as the earth rumbles.

The town bells ring  
As the ancient bridge

Crumbles as the hombre watches.

The central span collapses  
The sky blue river  
Washes over the ancient arches.

Now, somewhere in Andalusia  
A dark red river  
Passes over a ruined bridge.

While by the river's edge  
A sombrero'd hombre  
Sits under a tall Spanish pine.

### **LA SIESTA EN LO CAMPO**

[2<sup>nd</sup> July 1984, Nerja, Andalusia]

I had four hours to kill before  
My bus arrived, took me off  
Up the high Sierra roads  
Away from the hot Malaga coast.

The torrid sun of the Nerja noon  
Boiled my blood, and all too soon  
The beer drunk to quench my thirst  
Made my eyes heavy, my spirits droop.

I left the bar, settled down  
Beneath a peach tree at the edge of town  
Where peasants tilled the fields -  
Dropped off, slumbered.

I awoke to birds singing,  
Flies humming and butterflies soaring;  
Time had flown, I'd missed my bus  
And a cock was crowing.

### **BLUE SKIES IN MALAGA**

[4<sup>th</sup> July 1984, Malaga, Andalusia]

Under the palm trees of southern Spain,  
On a park bench in the cooling shade,  
Thinking of nothing but the passing day.  
Oh what joy to pass life this way.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Through the frond the sunlight falls,  
Catching the scales of the carp in a pool;  
The hibiscus in flower, star grass in seed -  
Oh what more could a poet seek.

Breeze in the branches of the sycamore  
trees;  
Sparrows on the boughs of the orange and  
peach;  
Doves in the braid of the oak and palm  
leaves -  
Oh truly, what more do I need.

### NORTHUMBERLAND PICNIC

[29<sup>th</sup> July 1984, Helmsley Road,  
Newcastle]

With armfuls of wine and cucumber  
sandwiches  
They swept through the bracken and fern  
waist high,  
The poet with pen, the artist with paper  
Led the birthday party to the top of the  
crag -

Where beneath the thorn trees they threw  
their blankets  
And sprawled or lay on the sheep cropped  
grass,  
With eyes to the sky or vast horizon  
The sound of the corks broke the curlew's  
cry.

Beer bottles popped, and lemonade  
fizzled,  
Indian dish savouries lay with fresh fruit,  
The artist sketched the sun-weathered  
beauty  
As the poet searched for his words in the  
wood.

The gents idly cricketed by the castle  
folly

Scaled by the ladies in their scant summer  
clothes,  
Thereafter, the company scattered like  
wildfire  
As wander lust spread in from the moors -

Until in all directions the high fern  
swallowed  
Or the thick woods ate the lovers of  
nature  
Off in search of a small nook or hollow  
Where happiness begins and time stands  
still.

As the artist rested and played with the  
children,  
The poet emerged from the faraway trees,  
Stalking a fox, sallying over hillsides,  
He encountered a lady in search of the  
lake.

While picnickers played ball or picked the  
flowers  
Or cracked boiled eggs on old weathered  
stone,  
While they leap-frogged the crags or  
climbed the trees  
Or raced through the bracken or prickly  
thorn -

The poet and lady conquered three field  
gates,  
Two stone walls and the ruins of a fort,  
And descended the hill in a rush and a  
hurry  
To come to the banks of the reedy lake  
pool -

Where they dived from the bough of a  
willow  
And stole a single flower from a lily ring,  
Letting it drift as they raced then floated  
Back to the shade of the willow hung bank  
-

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Where they soaked up the sun as the  
insects hummed  
And drove them uphill to a weathered  
outcrop -  
Where they dressed and gathered an  
abundance of flowers  
As they returned by the moors to the  
picnic spot -

Where first goodbyes were just being said  
With the shaking of blankets and  
gathering of things,  
The wine long gone and the food all  
consumed  
And the artist all done drawing the kids.

With an armful of memories, carrying the  
empties  
They started down the rocks without  
looking back,  
Till the knee-high fern swallowed the  
party  
And the day of their picnic on the  
Rothbury Crag.

### **BECAUSE I LOVE YOU**

[A commission, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1984, Helmsley  
Rd, Newcastle]

Sometimes I sit and wonder,  
And stare out the window,  
And think about the past,  
And reflect upon our times together  
Before we parted.

Sometimes I lie and worry,  
And dream about the future,  
And cry out in my sleep,  
And wring my hands in horror  
Because I am lonely.

Other times I laugh and smile,  
And plan my whole life,

And arrange to do things,  
And do things very well  
Because I am lonely.

Other times I am very sad,  
And do nothing with my days,  
And do nothing with my nights,  
And do nothing with myself  
Because I miss you.

Other times I look for someone else,  
And I find no one suitable,  
And I kiss no one special,  
And I love no one at all  
Because I love you.

## THE UNDERGRADUATE - 2nd YEAR

### TERM 4

[7<sup>th</sup> Oct – 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1984, mainly Newc.]

### SECOND YEAR

#### REGISTRATION WEEK

*Grey October days and money.*

*Dry winds and scurvy faces.*

#### (i) THE END OF VACATION

Living on the fringe ... is  
No way to make a living;  
No way, but others' way:  
No way of saying things  
With a hope of being listened to  
Without first listening to  
The establishment.

*Our fathers who are not in tune;  
Our fathers who bend the rules.*

We are not consulted,  
Yet we are next to guide  
Or lead the unestablished:  
We are not here nor there,  
Yet we are called upon  
To take up the running  
To follow.

*Our fathers who are not honest;  
Our fathers who shit upon us.*

My time should not be spent,  
Nor passed in unwell words,  
Nor in waste; yet always  
Our eyes are met upon  
By looks of propagation,  
The flying imagination of  
Our elders.

*Our fathers who are not giving;  
Our fathers who are not loving.*

We struggle on in ecstasy  
While we strive to pay;  
We see, but we have not seen:  
We hear of wondrous riches,  
We touch the glittering wishes  
Of those we once believed –  
Our overlords.

*Our fathers who give ear to slaving;  
Our fathers who are not sharing.*

We owe them thanks  
For what they've done.  
For what they did  
They owe us nothing,  
They own us, our lives  
Our future freedom.  
Our tomorrow.

*Our fathers who are not saviours;  
Our fathers who are dictators.*

They leave us on the fringe,  
To the left, and cold,  
Off-centre and forgotten:  
We are afloat, adrift,  
And must not rock the boat  
Or o'er we go pushed by  
Our captains.

*Our fathers who are vile fascists;  
Our fathers who are our masters.*

As October days turn to black,  
There's nowhere now to hide one's back.

#### (ii) RETURN TO THE HALLS

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
The marbled walls of university remain.

Newly painted halls, footstep echo now

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

With a fresh smell hanging on the familiar.

New faces glide past almost unnoticed,  
Some old faces noticeably gone forever.

Renewed customs quickly become old habits,  
Cast-off habits become the fad of others.

Three cups of coffee slake every hour,  
Everyone's so serious over pompous trivia.

For students are such gibbering wrecks,  
It takes ten tabs to brave a lecture.

Many are untruthful, a few deceitful,  
But most are spaced on flipped out egos.

No one reads books, unless caught pretending  
While taking a crap in the toilet.

Others are bored, most are bored,  
And a lot go around boring themselves.

Some are rich, and many well-of,  
But most are as skint as a rugby man's knees.

The student life – quiet hashish smoking,  
Seedy beer parties, and little book work.

Another year started, and one more after,  
The academic life is geared for nerds.

### (iii) GRANT TIME

Grey October days bring us our grants,  
Money is a student's favourite conversation.

First Year's come here for the beer,  
Second Year's the two grand a year.

As in the bars, these students ponder  
How long will such money last?

### (iv) BACK TO THE BOOKS

So once again we tread the trail,  
Down the course of this poetry road.  
To stop at the wayside, to take respite,  
Is now a no-no, we're in our stride.

So bear with me another year,  
And hear the tales that will befall me,  
And remember, sometimes I overtly lie  
To protect myself and shield my friends.

For my foes, I will not blunt the truth,  
Nor numb the pain that seers my morals.  
So on with the prose down the poetry road;  
Let's hope you're along for the ride.

### WEEK 31

*Illness makes no distinction.  
It knobbles everyone.*

### MEASLES

Laid up in bed with measles,  
Windows rattling in the autumn rain.  
Banned from classes –  
The gold chestnut leaves  
Cover the damp grass parkland  
Of walking thought;  
- my dreams tread paths  
that lead to mountain treks  
and pilgrimages to India.

I re-cross deserts haunted  
By symphonies of German masters.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I cradle in shady hollows  
Where men once dwelt alone  
To rediscover laughter.

While you, or are you, we  
Must take the day apart  
And leave it bare;  
Each breathe of conversation,  
Brick by brick constructing  
The prisons of our own ideas.

I fight alone with myself  
And turn the battles back  
To replay, and rehearse misdeeds  
Undone, but done without recourse  
To painful memories.

I stand upon a cliff  
Conversing with my only friends –  
White gleeful gulls,  
Descending, skeeting on the waves  
With reckless cries.

Where ploughs the crofter?  
I have asked this before, but  
No one answers but the wind  
That whispers in my cerebral  
'You have been chosen'.

I never cry for freedom,  
It is none other's gift to give,  
Not take in token –  
It is stored safely  
In my breast.

We have thought to lose that  
Which we have not gained  
By crook or prostitution;  
We are one, and I am  
A liquid without solution.

Too soon external forces pull  
The wool, and censor manifestos  
To the shear, before they're knit

Or woven into masterpieces  
Of craft and exhibition.

I am silent, uncommitted,  
Unopposed to mass opinion.  
I am free in the morning,  
But chained by evening –  
Unbroken, yet bound.

In terror, dissolute, dismayed,  
I smile on misfortune  
Brought about by misadventure;  
Too many travels teach the traveller  
To accept all things.

For fate fades with fortune;  
Found in fragmentation,  
Ideals formed in theory  
Seldom fuel the fires of fashion,  
Or flush the face of reason.

*Illness makes no distinction –  
It eats us all.*

WEEK 32  
*Art is for philistines.  
Oh poor miserable beings!*

### (i) **LOVE HAS FLED**

You hate yourself, love has fled,  
Your friends have gone. United o'er the  
anvil  
The hammer now falls. You are no more,  
Your words are hollow, harsh, and  
ineffective.

You are my enemy, slashed and bleeding,  
You barely stumble on. Dreams pour out,  
Illusions cruelly blind. You are a mirage,  
Your gaze is sunken, blank, and mindless.

You are pathetic, lost, and helpless,  
Pitied, void of aid. Found in light,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Drowned in misery, you are forgotten,  
You are rejected, now, and always.

### (ii) WAR IS FOR TROJANS

The grey October days turn black again;  
The heavens - dark oils stains, splutter,  
Bubble, burst. The thunder deafens,  
And the debris of the cosmos, rains on  
earth.

Awash, vain little islands float  
Miraculously mid the storm. People  
drown,  
Swept overboard, till only politicians  
survive  
And fight to take command of the oars.

Debates rage into open confrontation,  
Quarrels with smaller islands. Boarding  
parties  
Gather all gung-ho, and off they go  
To occupy a sinking piddled nowhere.

Soon enough the water's round their  
necks,  
sees glory sunk. Vain refloating  
Ne'er recovers the lost limbless sons  
Of thankless mother island.

They are but heads, countless, distant  
Warrior cousins, dead. Marked by waves,  
Their tales are the gannet's cry,  
Their spirits in the call of the whale.

When the deluge waters fall, subside,  
And petty islands become large continents  
Detached, divided. No woman sees herself,  
No man applauds another but himself.

The music of the sea, so instrumental  
On island thought, lulls. Isolationists  
Revel, in false solitude, on blind reflection  
In the mirrors of an untruthful past.

And I, or you ... must we wait,  
And wither in the wind, or storm?  
Unprotected,  
We bend to fate, as the deluge waters fail  
To drown our hopes, just our aspirations.

*War is for Trojans.  
Oh poor miserable losers!*

### WEEK 33

*A toast revives the secret drinker  
From the slumber of his thirst.*

### (i) BARE FOOT INTO DAWN

Dry lips make no noise  
Against the chaffed voice of winter.  
Frost layers its crystallite sparkle  
In the silence as dead leaves drop  
On hoared slate pavements or tarmac  
Worn and pot-holed by uneven  
expectation  
Passing rough-shod into night.

Out into breath chilled hours  
File the natural order of things.  
Heavy laden the pristine cackle  
Of the pyramidal monument arises  
On slick black highways or routes  
Well trod by more frequent visitors  
Travelling bare-foot into dawn.

### (ii) POETS IN THE GALLERY

What of those poets in the gallery?  
See they what we strain to see ourselves?  
Ask not! Silly questions beg indifference.  
Ignorance, or dumbness, pleases  
pertinence.  
You may seek to find the moment in my  
mind,  
And fail. But despair not, good readers,  
I am not born alone, or merely once!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I have, in confidence, an insight on  
My brother poets ... Milton, Marvell,  
Unsightly Pope, stoic Wordsworth,  
Poor sickly Coleridge. As they weigh,  
I wager, you ponder, hesitate to read on,  
To view their immortal lines running  
Round their verse like mad dogs  
Chasing one another.

Until the light shafts through the window,  
and the shapeless shadows take their  
former selves, and the poetry speaks,  
and we see ourselves.

### (iii) MARVELL

Marvell's *Coy Mistress* rightly speaks of  
love,  
Of nature's tempting nature, labours lost;  
Of sensuous fruits raped, and vivacious  
thought;  
Of youthful innocence unrobed, raptured  
hearts;  
Of sunless pleasure's burns, and fettered  
trap;  
Of lust-spent ashes piled, till the world's  
dust.

### (iv) POPE

Pope, ailing, frail, yet indulgent of courtly  
pleasure,  
Never saw beauty more, nor prized it finer  
Than those out to seduce his lady Belinda.  
With wit, and charm, he second guessed,  
those  
Who knew better – no names mentioned  
–  
Those who bore the scandal, the intrigue,  
And the infamy by which he grew famous.

### (v) COLERIDGE

Coleridge drivels on, then saves himself

From drowning in his lime tree bower,  
where  
Trapped he sees the universe unfold,  
before  
The dark hand of childhood lays its hand  
Upon his weak sloped shoulder.

Some men are made for great  
achievement,  
Warriors to the full, they march  
regardless  
Of the casualties. While other weaker  
men  
Are of stronger mind, they seldom  
conquer  
More than their own walled castles.

### (vi) WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth, floating, gone on cloud,  
On far out wind, and back again  
To heath, and dell, and leafless walk  
Midst solitude, and social isolation -  
He knew not where he was, or how  
He went upon the lay of words, as  
They gushed, flowed, then trickled slow,  
To rest upon the bed of immortality.

### WEEK 34

*A poem may revive the well-worn writer  
From the tiredness of his poverty.*

### (i) CHILDHOOD

I must confess, I never wander much  
back to my childhood, to that innocence  
when mountains seemed escapably in the  
heavens, and rivers seemed to flow on  
forever.

For were I to know that the muddy  
streams that raged in winter, and stank in  
summer, met a mightier river which met a  
wild sea, which met an endless ocean; my

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

own large world would have crashed in on me, and I would have floundered in the knowledge that only time has now immersed me in.

I still see the dip-boughed willows wash the floating reed dancing in the current, the large sighing elms and brooding chestnut standing watchful o'er the birch and thorn where thrush and blackies wove their song of cheerful play, where owl filled the dark with steadfast wooing, where berries hung in red array against the white of morning, where brown autumnal leaves burst the still, punctured young illusions caught in eternal summer years of joy, of freedom.

But yet, there was a sense of foreboding sad decay, erosion of all that man achieved, or built to glorify all nature, as the urban parks of beech wood grove and cypress lane, stood bare as roofless columns to a temple art of salient culture troves and gardens, cured, cared, preserved in timeless order for those who braved the broad expanse of narrow path to penetrate nature's bounded border, where they sought questions, brought their answers.

Yet I little doubt grave thought or mood or such vexations taxed my youthful mind, as wing flew another year, and ochre frosty hibernation, slumbered, snored, awake in time for summer.

For life was long, and winter short, and spring first felt in February, with snowdrops found beneath the apple trees, and wild wall crocus waxed and white, long before the daffodil split the earth to turn the shady woods the colour of sunshine, health, and happiness; till green

protruded, and bluebells hung, and purple lined a moor land ripeness, soon violet dark and lost beneath a cloak of first fall snow - preparing me for adolescence.

For if I can recall a past, a childhood full of happy memories, full of open hands presenting me the world, then I am born in favoured times beneath auspicious stars, bright and full, and ever burning till the end of human time, and far beyond into a space we ne'er perceive, nor ken exists. A world, a galaxy, a universe.

### (ii) MY OWN GODS

By now, the ardent scholar, may be flaying arms, dismayed at this verse, its simple turn away from classic mode, its vivid lack of underlying machinery, of Gods, of Demons, and all that lies between Heaven and Hell.

There is no single Muse, no recurrent address, no plastic moments filled by Jove's blaspheming; there are no Cynthias, Belindas, or Sylvias, no Colin Clouts, Don Juans, nor Saints, nor Heroes to usurp the glory, of each page of verse.

Yet, there is a growing murmur, a gathering call for order. Ancestral voices strain to be heard, while poetry lovers wait to catch a glimpse of the fictional deities, I, the idle vehicle of their genius, resist to call upon the Gods in desperation of narrowed thought and emptiness.

But inner pressure bears on me, to force my will against the nature of the times, to turn me retrogressively through history, to copy, imitate, and unfold my universal concept in epic ode, or well tried *octava*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

*rima*, or quatrain, in even meter, or some other well used mode, or style.

But I resist! Though it is fair to say that I have learned from the fathers of our language, from the masters of our bardic heritage – too few to forget, too many to list – and that I am resolved to let the Greek Gods slumber, to let Bacchus drug those of Roman number, until the end of poetry.

For I have my own Gods, turning, squabbling in my head, searching for the exit from my chained imagination, out into the realm of consciousness, out into the material of existence; Gods which are nameless, Gods which I worship.

For had Wordsworth known how many sister Moons Jupiter supported, or Milton been shown the Devil in the atom bomb, poetry's machinations would now have turned upon the myths of outer space.

For out there are our future Gods, with past God names, and though I will never live to stand upon these celestial heavens, I can dream of wars with Mars, and inter-marriages with Venus, for out in the furthest seas, Neptune swims, and Pluto darkly moves through cloud storm and star shower; far beyond all vision, beyond all space, lies the void of all that's now beyond imagination.

### (iii) NO FALL FROM PARADISE

I see no end to man, no fall from paradise, nor rise from hell. I see only flesh as atoms of a cosmic energy, changing, rearranged, or altered to fit within the vessel of time, a swirling abyss of solid void, ending with motion, slowing

with going, coming, flowing, but never stopping, halting, but never standing, never unknowing, never absolute, complete, nor healing of the old sores, cancers, and tuberous growths.

Dead flesh to ashes, dust, wind, rain, and sun, all former forms vanish, to shape the fresh new forms.

### (iv) A PROFOUND DARK TUNNEL

Down some profound dark tunnel I led kings and fools, the caverns through which we deeply passed, cut them sharply.

We came to a pool, and on the water lingered words, while beneath the surface swam the meanings. An old man hovered round and round the pool in mute obedience in the speechless lull that crossed the awkward void.

He began to career along in reckless canter, making unstressed points, muttering words from which no vowel movement could lever action.

The silence unsettled the receptive hearers waiting for the echo and crescendo, the quietness pressing on the laden antics of a man's forced marching, paraded into the cavern skyline until his thoughts formed unhindered, faded unvoiced, and he plunged into the pool.

Up some steep channel to the light I led the kings and fools, the desert where I left them, hot and dry.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 35

### (i) OF THE QUEER FOLK

I'd rather be British than just Scottish.  
I'd rather be Scottish than just a man  
from Glasgow.  
I'd rather be a Glaswegian than just from  
Pollokshaws.  
I'd rather be o' the Queer Folk than be a  
London boy.

### (ii) SEX IS A WARRIOR

Sometimes the wolf in me screams out  
into the realm of dark and sleepless night.

In the wild Alaskan fireweed,  
he was plucking wild pansy  
near her forget-me-knotted lair;  
while she gathered berries by  
his bower of prayer.

Too late, too soon, the sun and moon,  
the flaring northern light show looms,  
too soon, too soon, lovers mate  
In summer caves beyond logged rooms.

On into the light dark shadows  
are modelled the lovers of the present.

Other wild memories seize the mind  
containing the experience of sixty  
countries;  
tropical storms lashing beach palm,  
the dry desert waste of the Bolivian  
mountains,  
the serene landscape of coral reef grotto,  
the open expanse of Chaco and pampas,  
Rift Valley haze, Pacific coast mist,  
volcanic chains breasted in snow,  
Nicaraguan cauldrons, afire, aglow.

Wordsworth didn't speak of such places

in his lengthy *Prelude* to life and nature.

Other soft recalls – let off emotions  
supporting the touch of sixty women;  
tempestuous mauling of body and sheet,  
the wet warming place of Venus mount,  
the naked extent of jungle and fruit,  
the open invite of pasture and field,  
sweet valley chaff, soft down still moist,  
Vesuvius and Etna in heave and cough,  
Stromboli gushing fiery and hot.

Eliot didn't put his finger on *Prufrock*,  
or succeed in stifling frustration with talk.

Other forget tracts lead to motive  
spanning the interlude of sixty seconds;  
making out on a Mexican beach,  
the melon mouth lips of a Kenyan kiss,  
the tender caress of a Transvaal girl,  
the Indian embrace of a giving French  
lass;  
deep rich delights, within, withal,  
German or Thai, thawing or melting –  
Everest stands solid and daunting.

Hughes or Heaney, Harrison or Hill,  
All are well over the race of the mill.

As the tone now alters, the romantic  
Returns to haunt hollow ringing  
Of time marching by. Goodbye, humble  
Friends, invisibly hidden 'neath  
Hedgerows and archways spanning  
The space of the present, of past, or  
Flying on future time beyond now –  
Where foes are friends, where friends first  
Last, where he-she knows no thirst.

Onwards to glory, obscurity, then dust –  
fuelled by power, pride, penis and lust.

*Sex is a warrior,  
Love is a spouse.*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### (iii) HUMOUR IN POETRY

Humour in poetry? Good poetry has none of these long sickly lines that forever run to the edge of the page, and die in puns, or in crude *breviter dicam* of the limerick kind, that punctures the verse, and deflates the stanza, to flatten the whole, to metre the features with quips and asides that most diligent readers can't abide!

Byron hated, thus loved to jibe, till his satirical verse branded backsides.

### (iv) NOVEMBER STARS

*Some he-she men eye only cars,  
Yet half the makes are in the stars.*

Taking me down to the nether glade grove, to room in hand with star and sky; I see Orion in autumn hunt, and Cassiopeia waiting high – the sacred Twins going to bed, Taurus tossing Aries to the west – the Great Bear turning as the Pleiades trail their tresses across the Milky Way – Mercury cupped in the three quarter moon near Canis at bay.

### WEEK 36

*Melancholy has passed to apathy – so  
who cares a toss!  
Apathy breeds where melancholy swells.*

### (i) IT RAINS FOREVER

It must be all this rain –  
It wets the soul.  
It's the wet feet –  
Wet socks drip before the fire  
forever all winter.  
It's the lank wet hair –

chaffing the forehead on the way  
to the chip shop and back.

It's the wet pants –  
clinging around the ankles,  
the legs rubbed spotty.  
It's – everything, the dark –  
the studying till three chimes  
or a bulb burns out.  
It's the sun that's missed –  
loose slates, leaky roof,  
plastic buckets filling.  
It's the wet sleep –  
drip, drip, the echo thuds  
with a continuous ring.  
It's all wet blankets –  
this wet November,  
this damp weather.  
It's rain, so what?  
In Kauai and Assam  
It rains forever.

### (ii) SCRUPPLE, OATH and VOWS

Milton numquam deos esse negare  
neque Crane qui deum esse negat.  
Pro habere superstitio mentes occupavit  
posse quod di immortales omen avertant.  
Pro esse deos sancte, pie venerari  
tentare rebus divinis interesse,  
et sperare templa deorum adire,  
et non aliquem in deorum numerum  
referre,  
est imbuere pectora religione.  
Audientum animos religione perfundere,  
religionem ex animus extrahere,  
omnem religionem tollere, delere.

### (iii) MERCURY MAR AND VENUS DOVE

*Other times, simple ballads must return  
to tell of men, and maids, and grief.*

Out of the mist came young Mercury Mar

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Riding across the memories of love,  
Carried he forth to the boundaries of love  
And into the arms of sweet Venus Dove.

Their passionate love was swift and  
discrete,  
Old Boy Jove ne'er knew of their bliss;  
Venus with Mar kissed every part,  
As the music played ever so sweet.

As quick as his name he whisked her on  
wing  
To a heaven far beyond men;  
She loved her fleet foot Mercury Mar,  
The lover who could make sing.

But bad ass Jove wanted back his wife,  
The lion inside him growled out.  
'Stand still, you bugger, I'll darken your  
lights!'  
But Mar sliced him up with a knife.

The couple then fled to starry lone haunts  
Where eagles hovered over their bower,  
Their music it faded far into the night,  
Till the morning lit empty and gaunt.

No one followed their endless cold flight  
Of Mercury Mar and sweet Venus Dove –  
But somewhere soon sweet Venus Dove  
Lost Mercury Mar in a feckless fight.

And since that time Venus has cried,  
Making love to Adonis and others;  
For mistress or mastered in connubial  
love,  
Non equalled the music Mercury lyred.

Remember the moral and what was done,  
Lest you forget it came from my head,  
Love while you can, and recall Venus  
Dove,  
That if the music ends, the dance goes on.

### (iv) **CROOKED IN OUR CHAIRS**

*Pitter, patter, matter, matted, moulted,  
bolted shut, and dead.*

Evening falls again, dross winter!  
It's hard to catch the drift of sunlight  
in this downcast season. The cold  
obeys itself, we are its prey, the living  
against which it stunts its growth, and  
ours.

Yet, I may take such bare thought  
comfort  
From the numbness of growing idleness  
That inward-out progresses sloth-like  
indolent.  
Winter catches all of us out of breath,  
And leaves us slumped and crooked in our  
chairs.

*The weeks they pass like games of chance-  
We never get to deal the cards.*

### WEEK 37

#### (i) **THREE SONNETS**

Sometimes I feel the academic life  
Weighing like a ton of bricks upon my  
shoulders.

It is not the books, the essay sets,  
But rather something more akin to  
loneliness.

My peers, each in a world revolves,  
Till moods become obsessions to detest;  
Yet, each dark moment wrought, oft'  
Brings about a spark of genius to  
remember.

I know no way to battle with such ill,  
But isolation in my books and lecture  
notes,

I sense that the days slip by, and

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Friends once firm become like seas in  
tempest,  
Till, where one time I beheld an island,  
Slips past the wreck of some mere  
acquaintance.

For while others inward gaze, I outward  
grin,  
And find small comfort humour set before  
me,  
While others outward view the world  
about,  
I dream or meditate or shut things out.  
For what's the point in being as my  
brother  
When the sister in me doesn't want to  
play,  
Or as the father of my dreams and  
aspirations,  
The mother quells ambition when the  
child strays.  
For like the eagle hovering over barren  
wild,  
Or mute white swan gliding down a  
stream,  
We cry when no one's there to listen,  
Or we never find a voice with which to  
speak;  
For I weep when all the world is laughing,  
And I laugh when all about me weep.

Other times I laze and idly waste  
Precious moments not to be recovered or  
relived.  
The sun comes up, and all too soon has  
gone  
To light some other part of Earth; while I  
In northern bitter cold, bear icy gales.  
With my skin in shreds, my stature wan  
and wry,  
The bronze of summer beach is a pale  
regress,  
The tone of mountain lake, a sag of flesh.  
Once clear eyes now are blue with chill,

Sallow brow now wracked and creased by  
fever,  
Hair once a fountain head of golden  
tresses  
To grey now turns in cull to northern  
winter,  
While hunch backed around me travel  
strangers,  
As somewhere else goddesses join with  
princes.

(ii) **A BRIEF ENCOUNTER**  
For Penny

*Never more ready than ever,  
Never more willing than now.*

Mischief ... oh, oh, oh,  
My penny drops and stolen  
Moments in the attic of night  
Lead to coitus.

Sweet, perfumed and giving  
Sighs heaved into the rafters  
Where time settled quietly  
On love-making.

Company and comfort,  
Our whispers broke the cobwebs,  
We laughed beneath the quilt,  
Kissing softly.

WEEK 38  
*Actors are vain, poets are vague.*

(i) **WE FALTER**

Again, why must we falter.  
The voices in the basement carry  
up through feet to settle down  
to murmurs. They are of little  
consequence upon the creaking timbre  
that groans from age old winds  
sweeping in like frantic genies,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

conjuring magic, invoke, and incantation  
for their supper.

Yes, again, we falter.

The voices in the basement now  
heavy footsteps trampling stairs  
towards the light. They are largely  
discordant upon the quarry silence  
that grates like desert beings  
crossing naked waste and denudation  
to reach oasis.

Until, they arrive upon our falter.  
The voices in the basement, demons  
with hoods and pitch black  
about withal. They are greatly  
fearsome upon the earthly tremble  
that quivers like jungle wild life,  
stalked, trapped, and beset  
upon with clubs.

They have fed upon our falter –  
We live now in the basement.

### (ii) I PREFER MY DANCER

*Talking heads said haven is a place  
Where nothing ever happens.*

I prefer my dancer to my singer,  
'cause I know all my singer's songs –  
and though my singer's very pretty,  
I love my dancer's moves, turns and all;  
and though my singer's breasts are  
perfect,  
'tis my dancer's legs that lead me on;  
though I adore the lips of my songbird,  
I prefer the kiss of my graceful swan.

### (iii) BEYOND MY OWN SMALL PRISON

*Beyond my own small prison, a world  
evolves.*

In Brazil, the Selva disappears;  
In the Sudan, the Sahel succeeds  
Where isolated forest once gave oasis;

Or by the Brahmaputra, a country drowns;  
Or by the Hudson, debris towers  
Where habitation outstrips generation.

Such trite observation may be trivial,  
But accusations fly about the subjective  
Modernists preach as gospel.

There are no prophets in the world,  
Only he-she-men with world visions  
Of their own petard.

We name them not, yet we know  
Their names, their thoughts, their views  
On stars and turds.

We joke, we parody, and we steal  
Their visions for our own locked worlds  
Of fantasy and deception.

They make us weak, make us happy,  
Make us cry in sheer frustration  
At their rules of dogma.

Yet, do or should we care  
When time makes no thing new  
Between the moon and sun.

Dawn, be it now or tomorrow,  
Night, be it tonight or morrow,  
These are constant.

But alas our prophets fade,  
Their light a tallow candle  
Dripping into fate.

Till even Plato and Aristotle  
Have their sagest food devoured  
Off time's plate.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

For it is the means of nature  
To have a sapling flourish forth,  
Then age and wither.

Visions are but bricks baked  
To form the structure of thoughts  
That perishes with nature.

There are no repairs to be made,  
Rejuvenation, imitation, repetition,  
Establishes good resemblance.

We, each are prophets, but  
Who shall say that we  
Shall be remembered.

Beyond our own small prisons,  
A world evolves, metered,  
Tempered by false prophets.

### WEEK 39

*It is easy to forget loved-ones,  
When art is greater than mankind.*

#### (i) **MY ONLY LOVER** for Laura

Being a student, I have neglected  
Everything but books. I love Chaucer,  
Shakespeare, Milton. I have forgotten  
The girl who cooks, who shares my bed,  
Who cries rejection. What lonely life  
I have given her – long, dark nights  
Of silent company, my mind in  
Wordsworth,  
My eyes on Coleridge, my humour Pope,  
My anger Eliot. I have no emotion  
But my literature – long lines of words  
And poignant statement, my marriage  
dying,  
Sacrificed for poetry. If this is fate,  
Then I'm deceived. If this is truth,  
Then I'm misguided. Give me love, or  
I shall be bitter. Give me emotion, or

I'll become unstable. Books give no  
solutions,  
They pinpoint failings. Men of action  
Win women's love. Men of isolation  
Lose love to others. My studies must  
subside,  
I have drowned existence. My illness must  
abate,  
I have fevered cold. My passion must  
return  
Or leave me barren. Love must reconquer  
Lust's contempt abuse. Feelings must  
replace  
Uncaring thought. Softness must recline  
Harsh unkind statement. Changes must be  
endless,  
If I'm to rescue, and salvage marriage  
From the rocks of study. My love is  
boundless  
Within pride's vessel. Down! Smash the  
vial  
That has poisoned me. I smell the scent  
Of fragrant frangipani. I remember  
courtship,  
I remember love, I remember Laura –  
My wife, my friend, my only lover.

#### (ii) **LAURA**

Oh Laura, I am wan to let you go.  
Nymph of nature, love untold;  
I cry into the wind, but never hear  
An echo turn my voice to song.  
Wilt is my soul, my own Persephone,  
Lost to me forever – banished  
To far regions, where I cannot travel,  
Attended by the servants of despair.

It is I who drove you hence –  
My fool-fold pride – my bow,  
My sharp waste words – my arrows,  
Transfixing every motion of your love.  
'Tis I who iced the marriage bed  
with indifference and cold sleep.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

'Tis I who froze your passion  
with numb vague dismissal.

I am a fop, a recreant lover  
To whom romance is one with lust.  
I've been blind to *fin amour*,  
I've been beyond the word *forever*.  
I've been harsh like frost-cracked winter,  
I've been uncaring beyond remember.  
I've been worse than any tempest,  
Or storm that beats all to submission.

I've been cruel and thoughtless,  
A thousand nights in two thousand days.  
I've been moody and unsmiling,  
And disapproving in a million ways.  
I've been stupid to the point of hurt,  
I've been selfish till the tears have flowed.  
I've left you crying alone, unknowing,  
While my joy has fountained on the  
world.

I'm ignorant, uncouth and detestable,  
It's been your right to take revenge.  
You've slipped from the shade of shadow,  
And cast your beauty on my deformed  
mind.  
And like Persephone, pulled into the  
underworld,  
Whose matchless beauty was unmatched  
by lust,  
I pine for the loss of summer -  
And I repent all I did, and all I've done.

### WEEK 40

*Drunk! I say, what? Never!*  
*Is this what makes students clever?*

#### (i) PARTY TIME

Party time – whoopee! End of term,  
Wine the fountain of youth.  
Who cares about the weather,  
'cept the conscientious and the pooped.

Clatter, Riesling, new Bordeaux –  
If there is more ... Pour! Pour! Pour!

#### (ii) TYNESIDE WRITERS WORKSHOP

Last night I met with writers –  
Armstrong, Beadle, Astley, Cleary!  
A lowly pub high-placed in town  
Where sickly poets drown on pints.

They chatted on with Northern airs  
(half of them were from elsewhere)  
Their weakly words weighed with beer,  
They huffed and puffed poetic smear.

Till brooding Armstrong, at the ear  
Of gout-toed Beadle set to sneer,  
Said ' We're the only poets here.  
We've no peers. Up yours! Cheers.'

Beadle crooked his neck and nodded,  
His rimless glasses glazed and misted,  
And supping on a pint of Guinness,  
He spluttered out his views on nothing.

(One might think upon his genius,  
but one may dismiss such feelings,  
for poets who declare their brilliance,  
can not be viewed as being enlightened.)

Thus fat Beadle full of gibberish,  
Blurted on, and puffed, and railed,  
While Armstrong off in other regions,  
Leaned across his girlfriend's breast

And said aloud 'This country's full  
of Tory types, fascists, racists, sexist  
creeps!  
See them poets across the room -  
They condone this country's ruin.'

'Up the Miners!' someone shouted,  
and up shot clenched fist salutes;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

startled, Astley's mob looked up,  
till up and up their noses flew.

They sniffed the air for impoliteness,  
Riff-raff, and all their noise,  
To sniff for scent of Commie sweat  
from the COAL NOT DOLE pickets.

Too soon they lost this certain whiff,  
Too soon they found their noses pinched,  
And huddling together like little boys,  
They wittered on with quite a din.

Till Cleary mentioned C.N.D,  
And Astley shouted out 'Belfast, Ireland!'  
For such trite slogans buy their pens -  
Arts Council money pays their rent.

These grants, that Astley, Cleary seek,  
Weakens further, their meagre verse -  
What the hell, I don't care ...  
I was very briefly there.

I left slim Armstrong spouting on,  
With Beadle drooling on his arm,  
Astley nibbling poetry crumbs,  
Cleary sniffing up his bum.

The sort of act that breeds disgust,  
Yet minor poets thrive on such -  
For I have heard and seen enough  
To know these poets and their works.

So take you heed, if you're wary,  
Ne'er read Armstrong, Beadle, Astley,  
Cleary.  
They're but a bunch of bitching poets,  
The truth is out, now you know it.

### (iii) ETHIOPIA

People are dying in Ethiopia  
In drought season Tigre land.  
It is important if we are Christian,

Muslim, Buddhist, Taoist, Maoist,  
Marxist, Leninist, Hindu, Janist,  
Atheist or Nihilist.  
For even if you believe in nothing,  
Our country is wealthy.  
We can pray for someone -  
And there's nothing wrong with that,  
Though its money that's needed.  
The thought must come first,  
And once relief is given -  
Will the exploitation follow?  
Let us pray our kindness  
Goes beyond our wealth.

### (iv) END OF TERM FOUR

It is the end of term -  
I am worn out.  
Nine hundred lines of verse  
Takes fair clout.  
A student's life is dull and grey,  
I am assured.  
A hundred books a term?  
A lie for sure.

Meanwhile, I read mad John Clare,  
I am impressed.  
I search through Percy Shelley -  
What a quest!  
Maybe I'll get on to Swift  
Before Christmas.  
Maybe I'll just give up  
And take a rest.

### TERM FOUR VACATION

#### THE DAY YOU LIED (song)

[12.26pm, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1985, Newcastle]

You know you love me  
So why do you lie?  
For you now you love me,  
And you cried aloud.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

So why did you lie?  
That was the day I died.

Well, now I'm crying too,  
You shouldn't have been so hard.  
You were once soft like butter  
Until the day you lied.

So why did you lie,  
That was the day I died.

### **TIME AND MONEY (song)**

[12.30pm, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Nothing changes ... time nor money.  
We all need something, and it isn't love.  
Nothing changes, ... place or people  
We all want something, and it isn't peace.  
Nothing changes ... war or science,  
We all have something, it isn't good  
times.  
Nothing changes ... memory or mind,  
We've got something, but it isn't worth a  
dime.  
Nothing changes time or money.  
We all need something, and it isn't love.

### **I CAN TELL (song)**

[12.35pm, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Somewhere someone asks for dance,  
And somewhere someone takes someone  
home.  
But we're too far gone, too far gone.

Somewhere someone takes someone out,  
And somewhere someone kisses someone  
all night.  
But we're too far gone, too far gone.

Somewhere someone makes someone  
smile,

And somewhere someone loves someone  
right.  
But we're too far gone, too far gone.

### **TERM 5**

[13<sup>th</sup> Jan - 30<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985]

### **PROLOGUE**

#### **THE BAREFOOTED LOVER**

Her foot scraped the riser  
As she trod her way upstairs,  
She wound round the newel  
And strung the baluster rail.

She quarter-turned the landing  
Towards the dog-leg steps  
That led to the chamber  
Where her next lover slept.

Her dress brushed the stringer  
And her hand the open wall  
Which took her from the well  
and towards the cancelled hall.

She paused by the postern  
She lingered by the thresh,  
Her hair about her shoulders  
And her hand upon her breast.

She bit her lip and tip-toed  
With a rustle of her dress,  
She crossed the tiled chamber  
And reached her quarry's bed.

She shod her simple jewellery,  
She shod her tinsel dress,  
And met her stirring lover,  
The chalice of her quest.

And when she had him sleeping,  
She quietly slipped away  
On tip-toe very softly  
Down the dog-leg stairs.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Her hand wound round the newel  
She grazed the final step,  
She turned the big brass lock,  
Closed the door and left.

### WEEK 41 (Jan 14<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup>) **THE STORM EAST WIND**

O storm east wind from farthest Russia!  
You, from distant Arctic, bring sleet  
snows  
And blizzards to the shores of Africa.

Grey, and black, but quietly so,  
Death you bring, and white, and cold,  
The seas you whip, lash, and blow.

Great ice tracts form up, and fold,  
And in a rage you carry home  
The fiercest bite your anger holds.

You cut, and slice, into our bone,  
And take our warmth without care,  
You leave us wrack, torn, and lone.

And on an eve when light is shadow,  
You whisper in the trees and travel  
On to where no man might follow.

And in the summer months we revel  
In the warm fan of your journey  
Waft and ripe through lands unlevelled.

Or on the beach in naked lay,  
We feel you on our skin, our foreheads  
Set to sea, our thoughts astray.

We glint to see where gulls are led  
And left upon the crag cliff-tops,  
Your mighty gusts rock-wave wed.

Round the citadels of Time, you hone  
And shape, and leave your biting mark,  
Until forums crumbling, raised, are gone

And men retreating from your stark  
Wild killing blade of conquest dreams,  
Are poppies in a bower of park.

For you, cruel Shivite, master mean  
Of all you sweep off to the West,  
You triumph, ravish, switch, and glean.

You are the force to judge, to test,  
to strip, and whip, all you see,  
You're rarely welcomed as a guest.

O violent muse! we seek to flee  
From your freezing storm behest.

Green spring we never seek from you,  
It's ice and snow you bring to us,  
Our skies pale blue, cold with dew.

We often greet you with a curse,  
And vanish quickly to our tasks,  
Thinking of no wind as worse.

But, you are gilded with a mask  
You quietly smile, then vilely seize  
The smallest life in your grasp.

And when you've blackened all the leaves,  
You moan in greed for further offerings,  
Your wantings like the cry of thieves.

O waste wild wind! crave no following!  
We'd rather see you go than howling.

Some morns you wake with bated breath,  
The sun aglow, and luke, and yellow,  
Its rays a boon shed on our health.

While ages pass, and cities go,  
Still you come, and on, an on,  
You sigh, you blow, warm, and cold.

And time turns round towards new dawns,  
You retreat, as the west wind speaks

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And winter sleeps, as spring-time yawns.

And back across the sea you creak  
And groan, to where it always snows,  
East, to a place of mountain peaks.

Where you come from no-one knows,  
We're never sad to see you go.

WEEK 42 (Jan 21-27<sup>th</sup>)

*We students have got to stick together,  
Especially when we're screwing one  
another.*

### (i) AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE GIRL

Give me an' English language girl,  
All Rrr-Pee an' fine tones.  
Give me an English literature girl  
To ponder over poetry and prose.

Stella met me at the discotheque,  
She was strong, tall, and blonde.  
She whirled me round the dance-floor  
And tore off all my clothes.

She made me jive bare-footed  
And bump, and grind no hold.  
She jiggled me over broken glass,  
Bought beer till I was blown.

She took me home in a taxi,  
She lay me on the floor,  
She rolled me two fat wackies,  
And made me toke two more.

She roamed about my body,  
Her hands like hot steam irons.  
She kissed me with a passion  
I thought I wouldn't survive.

I tried to drink my coffee,  
But she had me in her arms,  
Her lust was like French mustard

On a pie straight out the fire!

She was all Rrr-Pee and whispers,  
Not weak, nor shy, nor coy.  
Stella, the student of English,  
Have you ever met her, boys?.

### (ii) BYRON

Byron knew Italian,  
Though he learnt his best verse  
From obscure British poets  
Like Trere and the rest.

His Beppo was successful,  
He then turned to sketch himself,  
Don Juan welled and flooded  
To wash poetry's shelves.

But his headlong passions rushed  
To form no moral sense,  
For Byron was a cad,  
Who loved to fuck and wench

### (iii) TELL ME AGAIN, JONATHAN

Hoyle,  
    hibbily,  
        dribbilly,  
            plop!  
stinky-drip flow,  
jobby-pooch slop.

Hissy,  
    wissy,  
        piddilly,  
            whoosh!  
willy-whack gush,  
gargle-gaa tooosh!

Slurp,  
    slithilly,  
        wibbilly,  
            booh!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

johnny-joe grunt,  
gilly-gack wooh!

Ga-gaa,  
    goo-goo,  
        droolly-da,  
            waart!  
harry-haw coo,  
pissy-pa gart.

Hobbilly,  
    habbilly,  
        wickilly,  
            wong!  
billy-bah dooh,  
davey-la bong!

### (iv) **THATCHER'S CHILDREN**

This is no age to be romantic,  
Into ideal, freedom, love;  
The high emotion born from ego  
In the Sixties, now is done:

Self-awareness, once a virtue,  
Now we find is bent to vice,  
Our vision once towards the East,  
Now is like a martyr burnt.

All we have is ash and char,  
Remains of faith and cosmic one,  
We see no phoenix rise on wing,  
Star war cloud blots the sun.

We mow the eco-system down,  
planted barely ten-years back,  
Air, once free of nuclear dust,  
Gathers grey, blacks our lungs.

Rivers clear, stocked with fish,  
Near fresh to drink years ago,  
Foam and froth and radiate,  
As red to sea slaked they run.

Oh sad child of our time,  
Hear tell of what your grandsires did,  
There was an age of honest care,  
When your fathers were but young;

There was a land of dream, ideal,  
With greater men, and ample work;  
Idleness was a happy choice,  
You choose to do for fun.

O sad children, life is cruel,  
Once our land an empire was -  
Though with an empire gladly gone,  
The wealth remained while we clung

Tightly to our treasure troves,  
Of art, of business sense, and wit;  
'Till Thatcher's bulldogs gobbled up  
The riches two whole centuries worked.

Perhaps we have no right to weep  
For what our heroes wrongly stole,  
Someday our foes shall take, return  
These treasures back across wild seas -

Across far blues and universe,  
This is our final Diamond Age.  
Can you hear the beating drum?  
Our time of glory now is done.

WEEK 43 - (28<sup>th</sup> Jan- 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb)

*Go to bed, me darling,*

*Tomorrow's come, it's late.*

*I never thought we'd see it through,*

*Me darling, go, it's late.*

### (I) **THE STUDENT'S COMFORTER**

Love is the student's redeemer  
From the death of study.  
It is common complaint that  
English poetry dwells on death,  
And after death. Yet sometimes love  
Creeps in between the sheets,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But not that regularly,  
Not that seriously.

A student's life is too ethereal,  
Full of bookish ideal  
When it comes to common sense  
Or matters of the flesh,  
They flounder, or thrash themselves  
With Gothic novels.  
Beat themselves with Reader's Digests;  
Exchange and Marts;  
And pop like Frankie.

For music heightens the emotions ...  
The silence of the lecture halls,  
The muteness of tutorial conversation,  
The droll of seminars ... these drive  
Students to the bars  
To seek their comfort;  
To look for friendship;  
To rush sex first into things  
To exchange names later.

If this seems how it is -  
Perhaps this is what it's like.

### (ii) **SEPARATED**

When you've loved someone  
Like you've never loved anyone,  
It's hard to say goodbye.

When you see them again,  
And can't find conversation,  
You remember the good times.

When you part again,  
The love wells up,  
The heartbreak hurts some more.

When you think of them,  
The wrongs are recalled,  
But you love them still.

As winter turns to Spring,  
Such love remains  
Forever in the wind.

### (iii) **THE ONE LEFT BEHIND**

We love not what we see,  
We love what we do not have;  
When we walk out on someone  
We lose all that is material.  
It is the one left behind  
Who must mend the ego.

### (iv) **LIVERPOOL**

This week I went to Liverpool.  
I've been to Santiago,  
I've been Cairo, Dar, Joburg;  
Hong Kong, Bangkok, Delhi, Dacca;  
Madras, Kabul, Tehran, Ankara;  
Athens, Rome, Paris, Tunis;  
Port O Spain, Rio, Lima, Quito;  
Panama, Managua, City Mexico;  
LA, San Fran, Orleans, New York.

All those place far away -  
I travel with more purpose now,  
I'm not the crazy hobo that I was.  
Besides, 'Pool's not that bad,  
I just never thought to visit it  
Though it's well marked on the map.

### (e) **ODE TO KEATS**

*Elysian fields in minds secrete  
A lasting memory of John Keats.*

O Grecian urns and nightingales!  
Sweet song and ode I hear.  
O heart of heart within me fails,  
Soft sleep and dream it nears  
To wash and swim the dead of night,  
I travel on in mist;  
Descending verdant slopes of leave

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I stumble on in bliss;  
My being off in humble flight,  
What pleasures have I missed?

WEEK 44 (4<sup>th</sup> February)

*Like storms the best stories have lulls.*

### (i) **THE LULL**

I am not your average student,  
I am at most, ten years senior  
To my peers, my fellow scholars  
Who are in the main quiet free  
And easy going despite the studies,  
Which, when said and done, are all  
They have to fill their leisure.

And I? I have age ...and just barely tiny  
crow's feet  
Walking towards my hazel eyes -  
That most times contains the devil  
So I'm told - while smile lines  
Leave me handsome in a happy way;  
(And what better wisdom need we gain  
By this, unless we know that it takes  
Seven facial muscles to smile, and  
Twenty three to frown with disapproval).

Therefore, as we must, I've had  
providence,  
Carefree love, and felicitous emotion  
In my childhood and teenage years -  
Joyous years of wit and honesty  
Continued in my travelling years  
That crossed the breadth of one full  
decade;  
Years of faith, defence and truth  
In which I triumphed over vice  
Despite the human follies I encountered  
And embraced in want, in cold survival.

But now I also see the present -  
The two iced years since I first  
Returned from half-baked Delhi

With a wife and son, all our worldly  
Goods weighing less than twenty kilos;  
Since then, I've lost the root of truth  
And sold my ideals in pursuit of fame  
And money. And for what? ...  
A student's life of part-time work,  
A wife estranged, a son sixteen who's  
Still to young to make it in the world,  
As nightly he sleeps on a sofa in a flat  
In shipyard Walker by the slips of Tyne.

Meanwhile, I who has not moved  
From the comfort of our home - I have  
A girlfriend who makes me feel desired;  
Yet how can it be love when there is  
Something that is dying still alive?  
It commands years to love new lovers,  
And a lifetime to unlove the old -  
Yet life goes on, the sun comes up  
And every day is a new beginning  
That never seems to double back  
Upon the past turns of fate that ill-sent  
The unkind experience of disillusion.

Now of late, I newly see how  
I have travelled blind along the road  
These last two years. I have gone  
For fame, and in the process lost  
The me that was the basis of my  
Strength and personality, so that now  
I am an empty vessel shipping light  
On a wave crest driving me  
Like driftwood caught in undertow  
To barren shore.

Perhaps in this, I am average,  
Though in other ways, like other  
Individuals, I am my own persona -  
But by mulling on well off the point,  
Not quite explaining why I'm different  
From my fellow English undergraduates,  
It seems I am making mountains out  
Of inner risings I cannot view myself.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

If this has been a moment of interlude  
Between storms. It has filled the lull.

WEEK 45 - (11<sup>th</sup> February)

### (i) TYRANT TYRANT

Tyrant! Tyrant! Burning vision!  
Devastating, ruining Britain!  
Will immortal fame or glory  
Seek you out before Time's jury?

In whose future age or eon  
Will you justify your reason?  
In whose memory will you rule?  
By whose will formed you cruel!

And will justice, and will law  
Make us will what Gorgons saw?  
And will our voices cry enough!  
To army boots and policemen's clubs?

Will the hammer? Will the chains?  
Will the people bear your pain!  
Will the cross? Will our blood?  
Will our veins gush and flood!

Will your words clothe our poor?  
Feed the starving, sick and more?  
Will your smile heal our ails?  
Will your harsh laws ever pale!

Tyrant! Tyrant! Burning vision!  
We are slaves in your Britain!  
Will immortal fame or glory  
Seek you out before Time's jury?

### (ii) GALILEE LOVERS

I had a friend in love in Israel  
With a girl from New Zealand,  
Who he'd met in the orange fields  
Out in the dry slopes of Galilee.

They worked on their love with a passion  
Hotter than the earth they tilled  
They promised each other a nation  
Of children to sail the seas.

They laboured and turned the dust  
That built a country of strangers,  
Lying in the burnt grass by starlight  
They mumbled a heaven of words.

They stood on the banks of Jordan  
Pledging an undying immortal faith  
And on the Mount of Olives  
They swore to never break.

But fate had other roads to take,  
They were separated for two days;  
My friend sent down to Galilee  
Returned to faces weighed.

For everything that lovers know  
It is not enough to guess -  
She could not wear the world  
And had craved for death.

They showed him her wan body -  
He shed a lake of grief,  
He kissed his suicide lover  
And swore he'd always weep.

But time has eased his misery,  
My friend now often laughs,  
Yet still I see in his tragic eyes  
His time with that Galilee girl.

### (iii) NEWCASTLE ENCLAVE

Meanwhile in Newcastle,  
On the northern fringe of England,  
Far away from all the fascism,  
We have a youth culture  
Fired and burning.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

You can have your Liverpool's,  
Bristol's, Birmingham's and Leeds  
And cold calculating London,  
There's nothing there but heartbreak  
For the young and hungry.

Rebels - you'll find them in Newcastle  
On the frontier with Scotland -  
For if you like to sing, dance,  
Paint, film, write or crow,  
There's plenty here who'll listen.

### (iv) **THE BITE OF THE WRITER**

A writer lives in a world of his own,  
He's always probing into worlds he  
doesn't know.  
You'll find him knobbing where no other  
artist goes -  
Whores, housewives, debs, his inky fingers  
roam;  
Crooks, nice-guys, bores, his icy humour  
gnaws.  
A friend when he sucks, a killer when he  
blows,  
A writer loves to love, but don't eff him  
over,  
Or you'll see yourself lampooned in print,  
and more  
he'll have every privacy, publicly known.  
And then God save your reputation of old,  
For a writer never lives in a world of his  
own,  
He seeks out the truth, then moves on  
alone.

### (v) **EAGLES AND HAWKS**

In this country of democracy,  
Who carries the branch of peace?

In the hills, in the mists,  
There hides the eagle's prey  
Cowering in the windswept nooks

Pretending to be free;  
Is there beast strong enough  
To keep a hawk at bay?

In former times dragons slept  
In caves high in the mists,  
But we had knights to battle on  
For honour and the girl;  
For there were once men enough  
To combat wolves and bears.

Now the mist is ever down  
And thick about the vales,  
The doors are locked as nightly knocks  
The eagle shaking chains;  
Is there one to free us all,  
To do what what no one dares?

WEEK 46 (18<sup>th</sup> February)

### (i) **LINDA**

And then there was Linda  
I met at the swap shop,  
Blue tank-top and bob-socks  
And hair like a wild mare;  
She led me to pasture  
In a one night affair.

She talked of her loved ones,  
Her brothers, ex-husband,  
Her daughter, and mum,  
All her friends in the world;  
She was open, yet shy,  
She was sweet, but not dry.

She was fine English lass  
Who'd tasted green grass,  
Who ran on wild winds  
To fly from life's grasp;  
She was cheerful and free  
And asked nothing of me.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### (ii) THE MARTYRS

Robbed of good health,  
wrecked by sharp rods,  
prodded with needles,  
tortured and roped,  
cudgeled and clubbed,  
battered and doped,  
naked and shamed,  
fingered and raped,  
degraded and shaved,  
twisted and shaped,  
conformed to reply,  
moulded to lie,  
ordered to speak,  
slugged to be quiet,  
forced to eat shit,  
pressed to drink piss,  
coerced to suck pricks,  
made to ass lick, then  
kneaded in the gut,  
kicked in the teeth,  
bent to say sir,  
beat on the feet,  
gouged in the eyes,  
stabbed in the ears,  
poked in the nostrils,  
choked and turn keyed,  
shocked to confession,  
starved to comply,  
denied any sleep,  
broken to cry,  
marched to an end,  
hung to the sky,  
put in a grave,  
buried with flies.

The revolution end,  
the rebels smashed,  
the martyrs dead,  
the people lashed.

### (iii) THE WRITERS WORKSHOP

Got a letter from the Workshop,  
you know .. them writing people  
who spend all their time in talk  
and criticism of your work ...

The secretary wrote and said  
that he couldn't get the pub,  
the next meeting would be held  
in the cinema coffee-shop.

He said "if you miss us,  
you'll find us down the Lane",  
which of course is a bar  
not noted for its talk.

Then again the beer's good.  
It has to be to take the sentimental  
love verse and the soap and sappy  
pop culture of the Workshop -

which drains Labour's veins  
with plays about shipyards  
and rusting empty docks;  
poems about the miners  
and dustmen and bakers,  
haunted ex-signalmen,  
seamstresses punching clocks;  
teachers feeling guilty  
about being quite well-off,  
students rambling on  
about some forgotten cause,  
housewives driveling dry  
about missing out on love,  
husbands droning wet  
about the girls they've cocked;  
doleys whining ceaseless  
about not having jobs,  
the bourgeois gurgling over  
about being in hock,  
gays flowering out  
about being in the cold,  
sexists mouthing-off

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

about feminists and jocks,  
women calling for action  
and their own Workshops,  
men demanding order  
and more pints of hop,  
the chairman caught unready  
searching for smooth words,  
the secretary amused,  
pissing in his socks.

O what a wordy shambles  
during these pub Workshops,  
imagine the next meeting  
in the cinema coffee-shop?

### (iv) STELLA'S BROTHERS PLACE

Jerry and Carrie were happily married,  
Three girls, a boy, a house on the bay -  
He was a medic into obstetrics,  
She was thinking about a fifth baby.

Amid the mess the kiddies had wrecked,  
Stella and I drank their January wine;  
We recklessly throttled six litre-bottles  
And awoke hung over to the noonday sun.

### (V) IN MY BONES

In my bones is posterity  
In my blood is fame  
In my flesh is glory  
And the memory of a name.

In my heart is success  
In my mind the same  
In my soul is money  
And the script writing game.

In my eyes is poetry  
In my ears acclaim  
In my dreams is love  
And the girl I shamed.

In my hands are novels  
In my fingers blame  
In my arms is gone  
The girl I tamed.

In my life is nothing  
In my home is pain  
In my brain is longing  
For the girl I maimed.

In my loss is posterity  
In my loss is fame  
In my loss is glory  
And the echo of her name.

WEEK 47 (25<sup>th</sup> Feb - 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar)

### (i) I KNOW THAT GIRL TOO WELL

I know that girl too well ...

I'm trying to cling,  
She's trying to break away,  
She loves me just the same.

I talk about Rome,  
She looks at me and smiles  
She'd love to go I know.

I try to make her laugh,  
She attempts to swerve my trap,  
She's already caught in fact.

I walk her home in talk,  
She's got work to do inside,  
She's got me on her mind.

I say goodbye and kiss,  
She says she'll see me soon,  
She doesn't seem too sure.

I know that girl too well ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### (ii) EVERYTHING AUDIBLE

Sometimes I hear and pick-up everything:  
Budgie singing at the top of his pecker;  
Cars rubbering-by along our shabby street;  
Neighbours swearing at each other loudly;  
Postman stuffing letters through our slot;  
Front doors slamming in a fit of temper;  
Gas fire hissing throughout mid-winter;  
Sink water draining down the plug-hole;  
Electric cooker harmonising with the  
kettle;  
Video snowing heavy on a blank channel;  
Telephone off the hook and purring;  
Students in the flat below playing reggae;  
And all those other sounds that make  
renting  
An upstairs flat on Tyneside far from  
silent.

### (iii) PUNTERS PASS

I wrote a letter to Tyne Tees Television  
About being just another plebe -  
Queuing up outside Studio Five  
To get into The Tube every Friday.

I put in some flippant poems with it,  
It didn't cost a penny more to send.  
I don't expect to get a Punter's Pass,  
I'm grey about the temples and no Punk.

At least I don't have a beer belly  
Like Jools who seems to be going bald;  
I guess it must be too much coco -  
It must be hard doing lock-ins every  
night.

The grey grimy North has its laughs,  
I'm going to pray for my Punter's Pass.  
Hell, come on Tyne Tees telly -  
Let me have my chance just for once.

### (iv) A' IS THINKIN

A' is thinkin its a wast o tim  
Neimn' a studnt writin' powtry  
Fur th' sak o nuthin butt wurdz  
And jib's ut fulkin no-buddies.

### (v) CLITSHITCUNTPISS

CLITSHITCUNTPISS was a town  
I left behind years ago,  
It was somewhere right of here  
Up a clodclutclingbutt road.

I guess I won't be going back  
To those asskissbrownnose folk -  
Everything they steered me off  
I've freakballprickdip toked.

WEEK 48 (4<sup>th</sup> March)

### (i) FRIDAY LECTURE

After sitting through the Songs of  
Innocence,  
I wit and willed an hour of Langland,  
But in place of timeless lecture notes,  
I felt the full impact of my hangover.

O laudee! Lectures are so boring;  
Students asleep plugged into their  
walkmans.  
O doolah! There's nothing worse than  
snoring  
Or a fourteenth century lecturer's  
droning.

### (ii) SELF DESTRUCTION

Up  
Over  
The top  
He  
Threw himself

LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

'Till  
Under  
The Sun  
He  
Baked to Death.

(iii) **THE DREAMER**

The dreamer sat swimming  
in an open window sea.  
The wasters drifted by  
on rafts of beech wood trees.

The captain waved a scarf  
as he set his parrot free  
which flew to the dreamer's  
shutters creaking in the breeze.

He put out his hand  
with a palm of budgie seed,  
have you ever seen a parrot  
eat that type of feed?

You can always tell a dreamer,  
he's full of words not deeds,  
the parrot bit his hand off  
and dropped it in the sea.

The dreamer took a shotgun,  
one handed drew a bead,  
he closed his eyes and fired  
at the parrot on the beach.

Yet when the smoke dispersed,  
with sea-weed in its beak  
the parrot rose and flew off  
with a wild triumphant screech.

And the dreamer sat gazing  
at the open window sea  
for the next bunch of wasters  
to come by on beech wood trees.

WEEK 49 (11<sup>th</sup> March)

(I) **ON A TUESDAY IN DUBLIN**

Wandering the streets of Dublin  
On a springtime afternoon  
The Book of Kells behind me.

I stepped into the National Museum.  
There I found green walls  
Hung with Tintoretto and Titian.

Yet half the paintings were missing,  
Sent to London for an Irish exhibition;  
What they'd left were twenty Magi,  
Countless saints, and a dozen crucifixions.

I found nine other rooms,  
One with Barrett, one with Roberts,  
Hickey, Crawley, Chinnery, Barry,  
Scenes of love, lust, want, desire.

A mandarin stoic and grey in age,  
An Indian girl in silk unveiled.  
An actor watched by two fair sisters  
Caught in a comic-tragic musing.

I sat and watched their wily game  
Before dwelling on Eve tempting Adam  
With a rotten apple,  
The poor bloke Rodan-like despairing.

Alas, we know the outcome of that tale,  
I move on thinking, seeking more;  
I glided on to other rooms  
Mulcahy, Mulready, and Mulvany.

Then I came across the sixth apocalypse,  
A Martin, Blake, Dore - all in one,  
Moynan's waifs across the way  
Looked well fed in view of Danby's fallen.

Then I spied Lavery's Lady,  
Orpen's Yeats, O'Connor's Nude,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Osborne's hand at Jugs and Dogs,  
And artist Yeats Many Ferries -

Its naked men and women walking  
Towards a priest absolving sins,  
Beehive cells behind the grief  
And death before those who'd come.

And that was it, I'd seen enough,  
I walked back through the many rooms;  
I'd passed away two afternoon hours,  
On a Tuesday in Dublin.

### (ii) ONLY THE POET PAYS FOR POETRY

Visiting Ireland has made me feel  
I have to start a new life -  
Somewhere no one knows my past  
Nor kens I have the semblance of a  
future.

Life for me in small town England  
Is a cloistered thoroughfare -  
I cannot go or be alone  
Nor find the time to be unknown.

In every bar, on every street,  
I see to glance a face I know -  
They give me nods, chance a wave,  
Sometimes a frown, a look away.

Most times they ask 'How's the wife?'  
And yet they know we've separated.  
'Keepin' writing then' they quip,  
Hoping I may have jacked it in.

'Yeah' I often make reply,  
And fill them with consternation.  
'Don't give up, you're nearly there!  
Stick it out, you'll make it yet!'

I look at them, they look at me,  
My jeans ragged, my shoes holed -

And all I think in my head  
'I should have made it years ago'.

Their interest wanes like winter sun,  
The conversation turns to them -  
'How's your kids? How's your wife?'  
And they offer then to buy a drink.

'Maybe you'll write down what I say?'  
One pint's cheap payment for such hope  
-  
No one ever pays me for such work,  
A bluey for a timeless poem.

Painters get hired by the dozen,  
For tons, grands, ten times over;  
Poets are expected to do penance  
And write their works while on the dole.

### (iii) THE UNDISCOVERED POET

I must go someplace no-one knows me  
so I may give up being a poet,  
someplace where words on my tongue  
are heard as me and not as work.

I long to be where things are new,  
where days are bright and evenings warm.  
I long to be with plain young friends  
who laugh and never think of death.

I long to leave the past that binds  
the present to the woes of time.  
I long to turn my back and walk  
from all the things that make me run.

I long to free myself from thought  
to make my body feed my days.  
I long to settle in a place  
where all my truth is in my face.

### (iv) HEED ME, ENGLAND

Thus I have been in Ireland but one day,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Yet strongly feel my life must change;  
Time may bring me fame and recognition,  
But I feel I cannot wait for fate.  
I may break before my opening.  
Heed me, England. Hear my warning.

### (v) **DISHONEST DEMOCRACY**

Ireland has an honesty, a hope unbroken,  
A spirit not crushed by class oppression -  
England is a country where freedom is  
dying.  
Where were you when the miners were  
staving?

Democracy is a joke around the world,  
Dictators are a product of the capitalist  
system;  
Every movement of reform and  
revolution  
Starts when hunger overcomes reason.

Yes, this poem is for all you capitalist  
pigs  
Who live off the back of slave labour;  
The ones who exploit youth  
unemployment,  
The ones who do no one any favours.

### (vi) **BELFAST**

The church steeples rose  
against the bleak black hills  
capped white and rolling  
down to the stormy Loughs.

Industry's scab-coal smoke  
swirled the day ... the night  
cold and bitter blasted  
by the wild Atlantic gales.

The black taxis snaked  
Falls Road and the Shankill,  
grey walled, round-shouldered,

Huddled, hidden, soldiered.

### (vii) **THE BELFAST READING**

We sit in pain ... listening  
Politely waiting ... our breath flaming  
In the Art Centre cold.

We long for drink ... for warmth,  
For happy voices singing,  
For lively conversation  
Dwelling not on death and violence.

Poetry readings breed discontent,  
Alcohol drowns ... loud verse  
Thumping politics and bible humpers,  
Anarchists in ties ... Poets  
singing modern dirges,  
Traditional tunes sung off-key  
By girls in blue jeans ...  
Paddy Day short stories  
Delivered by grey pensioners  
Over coated, in demob suits.

Meanwhile, the cold ankle numbness  
Creeping up the legs ...  
Like a dog pissing one me.  
Woof! Woof! The words protrude  
Into the private of my life ...  
See, we wait ... in abject vain,  
In unprotected candlelight  
We suffer on ... and on ...  
Until our hell is real.

We totter in our chairs,  
We pray for soft release,  
We engage in harsh inertia ...  
The poetry reading stretches,  
Stretches far beyond the threshold  
Of artistic taste.

We near the end ...  
We near the end ...  
We near the end ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### (viii) ST PATRICK'S DAY DUBLIN 85

St Patrick's Day by the Liffey,  
Green, white and gold,  
The flags along the quay,  
The sea-salt fresh with freedom.

The tide turned at three,  
The icy winds from Iceland  
Tempered by a brave March sun  
Burning bright the north bank.

The parade long since past,  
The girls stop to parley,  
The gulls quietly circle.

There is no Sunday frenzy,  
No wild mad fighting,  
Only happy families,  
Couples strolling, laughing.

Dublin traffic gently rumbling,  
Grandmothers pushing children  
Waving flags, green rossetted.

Budding elm and sycamore,  
Spires, arches, domes,  
The Liffey flowing out to sea  
Beneath the fair bridges.

WEEK 50 (18<sup>th</sup> March )

### (i) TUTORIAL - WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED

End of term again  
And what have you learned  
To make you more human,  
More enlightened?

I do not know, mentor,  
I haven't read a word  
To make me feel special

Or delighted.

Never mind, my son,  
What we have not touched  
To get you a two-one  
Is sleight.

I do not understand, master,  
I don't remember enough  
To take the final step -  
Examination.

Never fret, my lad,  
The world is out to lunch,  
Beyond this room lies  
True habitation.

### (ii) MARCH RAINS

The heavy March rains, washing grave  
stones,  
Drenching mourners, weighing willows,  
Pressing cypress, bending hawthorn,  
Dripping on crocus.

Falling forlorn, the March rains soaking,  
Spring rains pouring,  
Weeping, weeping, cleansing, restoring,  
Winter passing - no more snow,  
No more cold - its anger going.

### (iii) PURITY (for Elaine)

Purity came out of the cold,  
Stood on the doorstep,  
Dressed in red,  
Her hair in plaits.  
All the way from Manchester,  
She came to love, to walk through the  
door  
Towards the unknown.  
She stayed barely a day,  
A night together,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A night forever,  
Sunshine at dawn.  
Bus station parting,  
We kissed quietly,  
Turned backs sadly,  
To worlds of our own.

### (iv) **THIRTY ONE**

*I never thought that at thirty one  
Some people would view me as still very  
young.*

Thirty one,  
Just a young one  
On the poetry scene.

I know poets sixty or more,  
I think I'm just starting  
In this game.

It must be tough  
For those students  
Who're only seventeen.

No wonder poetry's boring  
And for old farts  
And ugly intellectuals.

Take it from me, pal,  
Thirty one is young  
To be a poetry man.

### (v) **THE NINE-FIFTEEN TO KINGS CROSS**

The nine-fifteen to Kings Cross!  
Twelve-nineteen at Kings Cross!  
The nine-fifteen to Kings Cross!  
Bumpity bump bump bump!

Telegraphs and Times', Maxwell House  
and wines.  
Clinkity clink clink. Heller to the left,

Mailer to the right. Flippity flip flip.  
Durham and York. Doncaster gone.  
Bumpity bump bump. Faster past houses,  
Slowly on southwards. Trundily wooh  
wooh.

Onwards by pit-heaps, by towers of  
concrete.

Rumbily nock nock. Onwards to Kings  
Cross!

Ditches and pastures, Constable pictures,  
Gulls in the trees, windmills in fields.

Humbily hum hum. Wheeliwah run run.

Swans in the furrows, horses on stubble,  
Gypsies encamped by motorcross tracks.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Cllickity clack  
clack.

Broken yard fences, dirty black bridges,  
Fallen down churches, uprooted hedges.

Softly slow slip. Steadily clack click.

Grey weather breaking, tall multi's  
looming,

Scrap pile mountains, factory smoke  
streaming,

Wires criss-crossing, highways well-  
knotted,

People on platforms, people on buses,  
People not waving, people kept waiting.

Juddery jug jug Juddery bump bump.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Midday and not  
far.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Tunnels and  
sunned skies.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Welwyn and  
Hatfield.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Hadley and  
Barnet.

Onwards more tunnels, onwards past  
Southgate,

Electrified cables, whizzing past Hornsey.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Four minutes  
late.

Onwards to Kings Cross! Kings Cross!  
Kings Cross!

Arrival at Kings Cross! Four minutes late.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

(END OF TERM FIVE)

### **EASTER VACATION 1985**

(Easter Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> Apr 1985,  
Newcastle)

My life is empty  
Of all those things  
... those hang-ups  
we are pegged by  
those envious and hurt  
who are about us  
daily and forever.

For we do not see  
the harm caused,  
the pain unleashed  
by self admirers  
and their liggers  
... until too late  
the cut is made  
and the wound runs deep.

I am severed  
to the marrow  
by very little  
... we are bled  
by contempt and shuns  
and sharp returns,  
and still we heal  
to carry on as ever.

### **JUNE**

[16<sup>th</sup> April 1985, Newcastle]

June got me to smoke a cigarette  
While listening to Elgar  
As we kissed upon her bed.

### **YOUNG BILLY**

[21<sup>st</sup> April 1985, Newcastle]

Young Billy and I talked into the night  
Till the sun rose over Byker Hill.

We passed the jays in steady flow,  
Conversed about dreams and future things,  
Family ties and the passing of years,  
Sleepwalking, music, and personal faults,  
Rejection of love and welfare forms.  
We charted the troubles of the world,  
Till half asleep, we recorded the dawn –  
Billy with song, I with this poem.

### **TERM 6 THE STATE OF LEARNING IN ENGLAND**

[22<sup>nd</sup> Apr – 30<sup>th</sup> June 1985, mainly  
Newcastle]

#### **WEEK 51**

*As bankruptcy edges in on my friends,  
I'm glad to be lost in another term.*

#### **(i) BASIL BUNTING**

Where now Basil is dead,  
And the crows cry alone on the Flats,  
The north has lost an aging man,  
To dust now gone.

What now Basil is dead  
And the wind blows seed over the reeds,  
Earth to air and water fired,  
Tall grass split and shorn.

What now Basil is dead  
The lake heaves twigs into the weed,  
The trees bend in sighing woe  
Wailing 'Where did Basil go?'

#### **(ii) WE ARE ORDERED**

Too often we are ordered  
To do that which we should be ordering  
For ourselves, for structure comes from  
within  
Not without. For without parameters

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We allow ourselves to be shaped by others.

The commands of others represent the disunity

Within ourselves. Such disarray  
Only spreads the power of others.  
We are equal, but order produces  
A master for each slave.

### (iii) WHY IS IT SNOWING?

*Why is it snowing in the last week of April?*

*Is this the start of the nuclear winter?*

When I look out my window,  
Ignoring all the red-brick houses,  
I do not see a veritable garden  
Of green shrubbery and protruding  
flowers.

It is spring, yet the verdant promise  
Of a profuse summer of botanical plenty  
Seems a hazy distant hope based on past  
Experience of long hot summers. Sleet  
and

Hail three days before the advent of May  
Suggests a shortish summer of heavy rain  
And cool afternoons spent beneath the  
eaves  
Of park pavilions and disused shelters.

Outdoor pursuits of tennis, bowling,  
Walks along the beach in search of quiet  
And isolation to go nude bathing, seems  
A far mirage, a forlorn dreaming -

That paradise will come to England  
While the well-to-do travel overseas  
And read the British press every day just  
In case they miss out on a summer heat  
wave.

Yes, how the tropics call to me,  
To dream and idly pass my future  
In a hammock on a beach upon an island  
Set amidst the coral reefs of an ocean -

Coloured by the bounty of a teeming  
Bathymetric sea ... But in England,  
Only some folks have all the fun,  
To run to the joyous ocean to escape  
work;

Whilst the rest grind on towards the hope  
Of summer, the lucky least take off to  
Asian parts in quest of drugs, of pleasure;

While a covert few depart in search of  
wealth  
In young America, and only those  
discouraged,  
Disillusioned, and despairing, find  
themselves  
Dwelling on the bleakness of the weather.

### WEEK 52

*Everyman has deeds to do on Earth;  
Ill-spent time impedes great design.*

### FOLLOWING MY TUTOR'S ADVICE

A poet must be brief, so my tutor tells  
me.  
This week I bought some hash, and drove  
To the Lakes on the Lit Soc outing.  
Tutor's advice stops me from telling  
more.

### WEEK 53

#### (i) CUMBRIA

I cannot help but dwell upon  
The last few days ... and how  
The Lakeland Pikes call on me  
To turn towards their tarns,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Those strides that cradle heaven  
For those earthbound creatures  
Straddling dungeon gyll and airy fall  
To standing stones; to mere side hosts  
Round islands garlic green and yewed  
That calls on me anew – till few  
Remaining ripples lap me constant  
In the shade of silent waters, or  
In the mists upon gowned fells, or  
Beneath cracked and gullied crags  
Cutting cloud, piercing the sublime  
To sweep along the edge of nothing  
Where I long to stand and wonder  
At the limit's of man's kingdom.

### (ii) CAEDMON'S MIDDLE-EARTH

Now shall we hail the heavenly guard,  
Metudaes might, and his mind-thought,  
His world-father works, each wonder that  
he our God first ordered.  
He, prime poet, of men's children,  
Heaven unto thatch, the holy shepherd;  
In Middle-Earth, mankind's guard,  
Our god, who past adorned  
Life's land as lord almighty.

### (iii) O FERMOD (PRIDE)

Over mind, over thought,  
Over spirit, over all,  
Some try to split the atom  
Before the apple falls.

Pride rooted in chivalry  
Killed Brythnort at Maldon,  
Harold Goodwin at Hastings,  
Prince Henry at Crecy,  
James Stuart at Flodden.

Ofermod! Ofermod!  
The kettle drum judders.  
By one man's will,  
Many more suffer.

Pride rooted in power  
Cast Satan into Chaos,  
Alexander to the Indus,  
Brought Anthony to Egypt,  
And Bonaparte to Russia.

Ofermod! Ofermod!  
The knell bell tolls.  
One man's will  
Brings many more woe.

### (iv) I SHAVED MY MOUSTACHE OFF

I shaved my moustache off,  
Then talked to my lover on the phone,  
But it didn't make a difference,  
I was still the same to her.

I struggled on with *Judith*,  
Hating very verb I didn't know,  
My upper lip quivered violently,  
Trapped in study not in love.

For my love had left me,  
And fled across the vale,  
Up the steps, beneath the beeches  
Sloping up to Byker Hill.

There I drifted, there I lingered,  
There I pined to rest,  
But *Judith* drew me on to work  
As darkness made descent.

No fair muse heard my call,  
My spirit passing on,  
*Judith* had me trapped fore'er  
Without a thought of love.

I called upon the summer winds  
To bring on cooling calm,  
To wing me clear across the vale  
Into my lover's arms.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### WEEK 54

*Ageless I find the motive of my existence  
Inconsistent with the dreams I demand.*

#### (i) PROSE WRITER

True to all ideals, existence bears up  
To all examination, discounting art  
And emotion as reasons for survival.

Prose should be the medium of poets –  
Alas, would-be-bards soon turn novelist  
In reaction to dictionaries and foreign  
languages.

How sad, we mourn ... tut, tut –  
Poor England lacerating her native  
tongue,  
And which pulp fiction hack would deny  
it.

Prose, my friends, is for the likes of me,  
Poor man's poetry, rich man's lifestyle;  
Prose is not safe for fine ideal.

Hence, an escape to freedom,  
Removal from restricted reason  
To digress on Kenya –

*Where girls mate with strangers  
And strangers have men at their feet.*

In prose we swallow nectars  
That middling poets have never tasted –  
Poor, lone souls drifting somewhere  
Between the high moors and the crashing  
sea.

I the prose writer, you the reader  
Can twitter in a huddle to ourselves  
In the recess of a fiction bower,  
read words poets will never warble.

#### (ii) THERE IS A WORLD OUT THERE

There is a world out there that no wealth  
Of language can express. Ablution. The  
life  
Of an undergraduate is always taking turns  
Towards the future. Likewise, his forms,  
his means  
Of demonstrating inner motive – outer  
emotion  
Require changing styles in keeping with  
the  
Constant variation of his education. And  
so,  
In streaming prose, in keeping with the  
wet  
May weather, I the undergraduate, the  
driveling  
Scholar, once reviewed as a tartan  
Candide,  
Must entertain.

For this is too often  
Is the failing of our Arts Council poets –  
They rarely make us laugh, and I can only  
Giggle when I see and hear such artificers  
at  
Readings with their puffed out chests  
And scraps of yellowed paper – with their  
Neckerchiefs and garden-digger sweaters –  
With their droll dry voices dragging out  
Dreary dirges – their audience with smiles  
In pain until the clapping's finished. Oh  
Sad state of learning in England, must  
We cry, forego the pleasures of laughter,  
Exchange the literature of song for such  
Versed misery?

My tutor, a man of learning,  
So Romantic, he is an expert, whispered  
Quietly in my ear that poetry was dead –  
'There are finer things a man may do  
than waste his time upon the art of  
verse.'

He made me see the light – and now  
Transformed, my voice speaks to you

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Unmarked by rhyme, unchecked by  
metre,  
As the novelist in me triumphs over poet  
To hack me free of dogged-down verse.

### WEEK 55

*Text pages wet with tears, dog-end with  
weeping.*

### FANNY AND DICK

Fanny gave Dick hell for six months.  
She studied art and film at the  
Polytechnic.  
He, poor soul, struggled through Old  
English  
And Milton, while she watched movies  
In class and at home on video.

Her exams finished weeks before his;  
She partied and drank, balled and smoked  
hash  
While Dick stuck it out with *Beowulf* and  
*Judith*,  
Hating the silence of Fanny's departure -  
No one came round, called, or arranged

To meet Dick for a drink, or over for tea  
—

They left him to drown on *Seafarer*  
verse,  
They left him to wallow on *Wanderer*  
text,  
Abandoned him totally to Old English  
literature;  
None thought to save him, least of all  
Fanny.

Out on the town, out in the countryside,  
Off to wild picnics, off on mad trips  
Down to the seaside, up in the hills,  
Free as a lark, with no thought of Dick.  
Fanny was happy and shot of her studies.

Dick was trapped, and fairly full sad  
That Fanny forgot to ring or drop by  
With a thumbnail of hash, or bottle of  
wine  
To splash on his books – to get him  
wrecked  
As he sat revising Old English verse.

### WEEK 56

#### (i) THRASHING THEMSELVES WITH NETTLES

When the sun shines in the far north of  
England, it does so usually by chance.  
When the heat wave comes - the natives  
Cancel their plans of two weeks in Spain  
And travel instead to France by  
motorbike  
Or thumb. The less adventurous potter  
In the garden or make pots of mint tea  
And enjoy the only time in England when  
The climate is everybody's idea of  
summer.

Then the thunderstorms bring the  
overcast  
Of cool afternoons so typically the norm  
—

The windows close, the doors stay shut  
And everyone goes around with hard  
shoes  
And a briskness so common of the  
drudgery  
Of work and day to day low grey dawns  
That drizzle, fizzle, pop into dull  
descending  
Evenings leading on to another grey  
morning –  
While the folks in Spain, turn a shade  
more  
Olive, and the grape in France swells fuller  
Bodied – the natives in north England  
suffer

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

the fate of Caesar's legions guarding  
Hadrian's Wall -  
Who thrashed themselves angrily with  
Flowering nettles to keep from getting  
cold.

(ii) **RACHAEL ROCK**  
for Sarah (Stone)

Rachael Rock – if ever there was girl  
More perfectly in tune with how I felt,  
Or how I wished to be, then hell, I  
Don't think I'd feel this panegyric.

Yes, Rachael Rock, sweetness profound!

We met and came, and conquered all  
Inhibitions at an all-night party that  
Threw to dust the cobwebs from my  
Boring life of going to university.

I loved her sea-green eyes and coral  
Black hair, and her dark brown skin  
And soft quiet voice that spoke like  
No poet ever could affect.

I see her still, we talk of foreign  
Places where she would like to go,  
To live content teaching English  
Language to the world.

Rachael Rock, a candle in a storm.  
Yet Rachel is a lie, her name false –  
It gives no truth to the natural spirit  
Underlying her sweet exemplar.

To call her Rock is wrong ... she is an  
Island verdant rich profuse with fruit  
In passion ripe abundance.

The Muses sing her praise as a precious  
Angel set to gift rare treasures  
Of amber-gris and jet.

Rachael Rock – I cannot yet forget.

WEEK 57

(i) **PROVOKED**

Too often men find themselves  
provoked,  
To lash out at the world and hit whatever  
it is that they find most cause to hate.

Such umbrage can produce from a writer,  
A satire on the fellows of his profession  
Who sell themselves for everything but  
truth.

(ii) **THE STATE OF LEARNING IN  
ENGLAND**

*Is it back to poetry so soon?  
I thought I'd given it up for good.*

But listen, which right minded writer  
Would admit he's lost the knack of verse  
And thrown himself to hewing hack lines  
Of nonsense and tomfoolery?

Now, you may wonder at the state of  
learning  
In England these days when its  
undergraduates  
Are told that their verse is too long, and  
That they should think about doing other  
Things more in keeping with the century.  
I'm sure wee Alexander Pope would turn  
In this grey clay bed in the Abbey, and  
Nudge the elbow of big John Dryden, and  
Say 'Hey, Bayes, have you heard the  
latest  
Gossip in the town?', and John would say  
–  
'No, young lad, I've been dead three  
hundred

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

years and been enjoying the peace and quiet.’  
But of course, his curiosity would better  
His common sense, and he’d ask ‘Well,  
What are the hacks in town moaning on  
About right now?’ – And obligingly  
We Alec would open his trap and blurt  
That ‘I’ve heard that goddess Dullness  
Has been set above the poets that  
Abound the list of Arts Council scribblers,  
And that each, to get his pennies from  
The State, must first of all agree not  
To write the truth or say a word against  
The leaders of the country, and that  
All their verse must be published by the  
Friends of friends of friends of  
government  
Ministers of the Tory faction, which  
Of course, so they say are the only ones  
Who can afford to pay the scandalous  
prices  
For the briefest lines of piss-pot bumf  
That slides its way on to the shelves of  
All the public libraries in the country  
where  
Its ignored, as it hasn’t got a thing  
To do with anything that’s got anything  
To do with people who use the public  
Libraries up and down the country!’

And Big John Dryden, listening sleepily  
To the high-pitched lilt of Alec’s voice  
Echoing through the night of the Abbey,  
Scratched his nose and offered up some  
Quick advice to his young death-bed  
Mate, and said ‘Nothing ever changes.  
Shadwells, Settles, Cibbers, and all those  
Grub Street liggers, hanging on to words  
Like children clinging on to sixpences as  
if  
They were the jewels of the realm. Ne’er  
Did I hear a sentence from a hack that  
Did not take an hour to construct – ne’er  
I heard a line from a scribbling poet that

Hadn’t taken all of a year to compose.  
They play with words and hope that the  
idea  
Drops into place like a round peg in a  
square  
Hole, and lo, when it does not happen  
they pretend to one another that it has,  
until each is slapping each in turn upon  
the back at their genius – each buys each  
a drink at the bar, and getting drunk  
they make their lies much easier to  
spin, until by closing time their words  
are so inflated by bombast and farting,  
they sing into the rafters of how they’ve  
solved the mysteries of time, and can  
proffer forth solutions to the ails of  
common folk and half the world. And  
off the go in blind drunkenness to their  
shabby attics to compose their  
masterpieces –  
where slaving half the night to find  
the first word, they abandon it for  
their beds like the Irish bards of old.  
There they remain till afternoon and  
Hunger calls them to the vertical –  
Once more they totter off to the public  
Houses with their pens behind their ears,  
The first word of their latest masterpiece  
On their lips, and safely memorised,  
written  
Out a hundred times in case they lose it,  
Or forget what it was the laboured  
Half the night to compose. Aye, hear  
Me, young Alec, none of this is new –  
The Dunces abound and belch louder  
Than those who sleep quietly at night  
And rise and keep Nature’s proper social  
Hours. Though, I must confess, that  
I have slept these three hundred years  
Without seeing a single dawn, though  
I doubt our enemies, the Hacks, have  
Seen any more first greying than I  
Since they embarked upon their fancy  
ships

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

As self-appointed captains of genius, just  
because the government pays for every  
line.

Aye, Alec, the hacks were bad in our day-  
But at least we were around.'

Woken up by Dryden, Jonny Swift, from  
Over In a corner, spoke – 'You're right,  
Big John, wee Alec was the scourge  
To all those hacks in our time – I gave  
Them hell in my *Battle of the Books*,  
And you turned Shadwell's hair wig grey  
With yon *MacFlecknoe*. That bit the ear  
Off half the poets in the kingdom, and  
Man, it was treat to see all the faces  
Of the critics red and shit upon  
In the very manner that they tore down  
The pillars of literature we erected -  
I put them all to sea with my mad cap  
Tale of three rub-a-dub fools in a tub.'

The Abbey rang with their laughter, as  
Now, big John, wee Alec, and lank Swiftly  
Garbled on about the good old days –  
Till suddenly they heard a creaking, a  
Groaning, then a yawning, & the voice of  
Andrew Marvell - 'I remember well the  
hacks of England,  
And yon when I went to Rome  
And bumped into *MacFlecknoe*; and later  
When that fool Tom May died and left  
Behind his sad driveling, it made me  
Tirade more on him than I ever did on  
Our deist Monarch! But quiet, headless  
Charles lies over yonder, and Cromwell,  
Thank god, is even further apart from us  
Good poets crowded here in the apse.'

Then through the darkness of the Abbey  
Night spoke a poet lying close to Marvell  
'Do I hear the lilt of coy Andy? I cannot  
see, but I remember well every sound  
I learned on my journey through Paradise  
And Hell. Surely I could not have slept

So long to find my companions here  
Are but mortal men?' 'You hush, John  
Milton!' Marvell said loudly 'You'll bring  
Damn Satan down upon our Eden!. How  
Can I forget your pounding verse, in  
Our time I passed as second best. Yet,  
I will admit you helped me to get on,  
Prosper, writing all that propaganda  
For that old dog Cromwell. He paid  
For every line to which I confessed –  
It's just as well I hid the rest. I wonder  
If they've found it yet?

Milton scratched his grave-sore bum  
And said – 'The Devil still not caught  
Your tongue, young Marvell? You were  
A cad for sure, we both well knew  
How to sit on fences, ride the times  
Of king's departures, lords beheadings –  
I played the *Penseroso*, you the *Allegro*,  
We rode our hobby-horses, not a Pegasus.  
No wonder I got lost in Paradise, it  
Was safer than playing politics no  
Matter how much we pandered. Look  
what became old Suckling, Lovelace,  
Carew -  
feathers in their helmets, daggers at their  
throats; they went public, while we held  
private our own personal views. We must  
have done right to be buried here. But lo,  
who are those poets whispering over  
there?  
Is that young Dryden I hear?'

'Hail, great Samson of English verse!  
Aye, it is I, big John, you hear twittering  
On to our great Augustans. We have  
Been upbraiding hacks and scribblers.  
Do you remember any such piss-pots  
Who drove on and made a name?'  
Samson took a breath, then spoke –  
'Aye, there are a hundred hacks to  
every single poet of worth, so many  
to recall, so few worth the bother at all.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

If they are not buried here, then time  
Has taken its toll. But hush! Let's speak  
Softly, we don't want to awaken John  
Donne;  
He'll sermonise us delirious, his work was  
Good, but its better to let dogs snore.'

Too late! The Dean turned stone-cold  
over  
And flew out emotion with a roar from  
His mouth four centuries dry and silent.  
'I heard you, young Milton – quiver  
if you will, but we are in the Abbey,  
and I dare not use any dirty words. These  
are the stock and stave that burden hacks  
and bind them loveless to the universe.'  
'You old piss-prude!' another poet yelled.  
'Who calls me that?? Dean John  
indignant.  
'I know that voice. Come on, own up my  
friend. I still see your Tyburn thumb  
pressing up the butt of Ginger Jimmy.  
You're loud-mouthed poetaster Ben  
Jonson!'

'You dirty old priest' sniggered Ben,  
'Four hundred years and still the same –  
buried in this musty mausoleum, you'd  
think they'd have cleaned your grave  
out once at least. I'm surprised Poetry's  
pilgrims don't complain. I could do with  
a wash and brush and change myself.  
Our poetry is fresh, but our bodies hum.  
I wonder when old Willy last turned?'

As if no one wished to disturb the  
Greatest bard of them all, a chorus of  
'Sssshhhhh' filled the Abbey, and  
everyone fell silent as they listened to  
the echo carry down the aisle towards  
the kings and queens, the patron of their  
art, whom they had served and pandered  
without being low common hacks. For

though art could be bought, genius could  
not  
be made to order like a pudding or a pie  
from a recipe concocted to guarantee a  
diet of good poetry and honest verse.

So – this for all the hacks, and all  
The piss-pot scribblers – let this be  
A gauge of all that needs to be done  
If a poet is to succeed from meagre  
Verse to great timeless poetry. For  
In the Abbey lies our slumbering critics;  
Only in the whispers of their approval  
Will you hear the truth – and only when  
You lie with them will the truth be  
known-  
That you are no hack, but a poet in your  
own.

WEEK 58

### (i) WHAT'S IN A NAME

Petra is not happy with her name.  
She wishes to be someone, but cannot say  
Whether Linda is better than plain Jane,  
Or Debbie more common than mere Jill.

She should be called Anna or Emma,  
But she has some friends with these  
names.  
Rachael or Petra, one means the other –  
I'll call her Heather, play safe.

### (ii) HEATHER AND PETE

Heather and Pete came down on a cloud  
And slept together in a moor land bog.  
The mist provided a curtain from peepers  
Wanting to know the phenomenal cause  
Of the deep red glow, the blue flashing  
light  
That covered the sky seven mornings and  
nights.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But Heather and Pete, unsaddled, unbridled  
Rode out their love with such blinding fire  
The peepers turned blind watching their  
passion.  
They most they espied was one naked  
thigh,  
Or a knee, or a toe pushed to the sky –  
But never a torso, a cheek, or a face.

On the eighth day of bliss, they rose aloft,  
Enveloped and wound in a celestial haze.  
The mist vaporised in a steaming whirl  
As the lovers sped off at a chase –  
The peepers stumbled forward into the  
bog  
Scrambled, and crawled at a loss.

They cam upon the love bed departed –  
A crater shot-hot with the host;  
They tumbled into the heat of the hole  
To discover their vision miraculous  
restored;  
But never again did the peepers  
experience  
Heather and Pete making love in the bog.

### WEEK 59 **POETRY IS DEAD**

There is little point saying something  
When there is nothing to say.  
Having declared that poetry is dead,  
Where now can this long work lead?  
If there is a resurrection, then  
Who shall witness and proclaim it?  
Surely not the critics, the closet hacks,  
The ones who invent meaning, yet deny  
it!

No, if Poetry is to live in spirit, not  
material,  
Then it is in the voice of youth we'll find  
it,

Not on the tongues of middle-aging  
capitalists,  
Secure in their homes, secure in versed  
hypocrisy.  
For were it not for reasons less important  
Than a personal commitment to myself,  
I would give up this diary of event –  
And believe indeed that POETRY IS  
DEAD.

For when all is said and done –  
I still turn in recoil from nature  
To attack all that has gone wrong  
In Poetry since I began this sojourn.  
Like the hour before the battle lours,  
I see the hordes of hacks advancing,  
Their armour dull, their plumaged  
jaundiced,  
Smearing bile on all they trample.

Yet I should ignore all conflict,  
And turn my face to gaze upon  
The beauty of wild nature; seek the  
sublime  
Hidden from the know of city dwellers.  
For when man is sick of his fellow man,  
He should renounce all that is material –  
Travel to a landscape right for solitude,  
Or seascape sedative, to reshape his  
hostility.

And there, on the barren hills of nowhere,  
Out upon the wild waves of ocean,  
Poetry may come to a listening man  
And fill him with the resurrecting spirit  
That eludes the urban guru – the city  
Hack pounding his machine for copy.  
For if Poetry is dead, there is no body,  
Only a spirit waiting where few men  
wander.

WEEK 60  
*Exam results – how we tremble  
To hear that we are not geniuses.*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### (i) LIVING OFF THE STATE

To hell – its summer,  
Time to hit the beaches,  
Forget all the book crap.

Sun, sex, and travel ...  
Vitamin C mornings  
Chasing alcoholic dawns.

Give me stretching beaches,  
Tall cocktails mixed,  
Slow music yawning.

Aye, the student vacation,  
No talk of work,  
That's for commoners.

Greece? – no, man,  
That's only a thousand off –  
It's India or Oz for me.

But not this year,  
Mass for this guy,  
Standby to New England.

Makes you sick, eh?  
Us layabouts lazing,  
Living off the State.

We cares, mates –  
Someone has to pay –  
But not me, okay.

### (ii) NOT CLEVER

You know, the more I study,  
The more I realise I am no critic.  
Someone said to me 'Anyone  
Who gets more than a 2-2  
Doesn't know how to think  
For themselves – they're only clever.'

It makes me ponder whether

*Clever* means stupid and dumb  
About the common practical aspects  
Of everyday chore and habit,  
Or whether *clever* means uncreative –  
That is – totally critical,  
Analytical, verbal and quantitative;  
Or whether it means that students  
Who study seven days and nights  
In every week are weirdoes –  
Or whether people who get 2-1's  
And Firsts are just into books  
And not into drugs and sex.

But who cares – everyone's different –  
In America *clever* means money;  
There you're dumb if *clever*, but broke.

So, maybe in Britain, if you're *clever*,  
Then you're into particular studies  
That means more than just a 2-2.  
Where as, if you are *not clever*,  
You're into having a good time,  
Enjoying life, and that sort of thing.

### (iii) ANOTHER YEAR ENDS

And so another year ends.  
No more exams, no more classes  
Till October comes again.

The grey autumn skies  
That herald another cold winter  
And nights over books.

Sixty weeks gone, thirty left,  
The undergraduate life withers,  
Moves towards freedom.

Vacation is here, lord –  
Cobwebs and bookworms  
We leave undisturbed.

And what have we learned?  
The echoes of masters

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Go round in our heads.

We go down for the summer,  
To sink in green meadows,  
To forget all our trials.

We go down till autumn,  
Returned with knowledge  
'cept of ourselves.

### 2ND YEAR SUMMER VACATION

#### THE AMERICAN DREAM

[18<sup>th</sup> August 1985, Framingham,  
Massachusetts]

And so beginning with the trees  
and all the summer foliage,  
I commenced to question nature  
for the answers to wild theories  
formed on half-baked ideas,  
never tried or put into practice  
in the context of the milieu  
the great American Dream.

Yet here in this vast New England  
where men and women shape a land  
far different from that all others know ...  
There is a void, a lack of life  
that flows beneath the surface world  
of timber houses backed by yards  
that stretch in common to an acre,  
deep and fenced and posted 'Private'.

For common to the rights of individuals  
is belief in private ownership –  
a concept in keeping with an Englishman  
that his home is a lofty bastion,  
from where to view the world,  
to champion, to defend the Dream –  
as proud hero, a stalwart of liberty  
behind his mighty edifice of wood  
For while Atlantis may have been a  
paradise

that far exceeded the beauty recalled  
of lost Eden, forbidden for all time  
to mortals on this earth or the next –  
unlike Nirvana that lies beyond  
perception  
to those who dwell solely on Heaven,  
Utopia is a bookish premise for  
happiness,  
offering no rules for all that's realistic.

And still, while summer grips  
the conscious world of this new republic  
made beautiful by a hive of industry  
and the will and heart of ordinary citizens,  
life slips by towards some Armageddon  
taking root in the soil of America.

And while the breeze blows the tops  
of old Virginia or Ponderosa pine,  
and the grasses of the Plains bathe  
in the sun-seas of botanic ocean –  
time moves a sleeping Kali to awaken  
and explode upon a guilty nation.

Yet, if truth belies stock ignorance ...  
if ideal is misguided by good intention,  
then we must part blame our teachers,  
the enlightened leaders taking us towards  
the dark empty void of chaos  
filled by a blind adherence to order.

Hell has many paths to its centre,  
but Bardo is a place where terror reigns;  
for along the road to other worlds  
can be seen great citadels of pleasure  
where warm blooded creatures  
serve with smiles and care for nature.

Thus in this new England we discover  
passion flying on the ecstasy of now,  
the Dream – in that there's no tomorrow  
where each yesterday is forgiven –  
each sin pardoned by some saviour,  
Leaves the wicked wickeder than before.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

God makes his plan in each of us,  
in each, in all, in everything – the Dream  
lives and births anew upon America;  
forever, each dawn enforces the myth,  
supplants the new world doubt that  
action overcomes the inner spirit.

For Paradise is a café, a diner  
where good Americans feast or breakfast  
before returning to the hard reality  
of social failure midst material success –  
where proud, fine individuals, fail to admit  
the alien-ness of their fellow citizens.

Struggling to put a face on a day  
that every hour is a part of the Dream,  
in this new world there is hope  
that someone is going to love you,  
that someone is going to touch you,  
And shower your life with sex.

And still ... as summer slumbers on,  
the wild grass seeds blow across  
a continent basking in plenty –  
the sky fills with native birds  
following a host of insects;  
I lounge in the caverns of this England,  
pine roofed, pine floored, clear pooled.

On the water, the sun reflects a vision  
of perfection so much the American way.  
Yet, if we cannot wish, then how  
shall our dreams ever come to bear?  
A penny dropped, the ripple created  
is all that marks the wish never made.

Dreams are never read on people's face,  
rarely found in the yellow of our hearts,  
we think alone, and pass off foreign  
notions;  
adhering to the glow of the seventh  
chakra,  
those of the Dream are centred in the  
bosom

or the spine, and not on the light that  
matters.

Misguided in our visions, we slumber  
where we should show alertness of  
purpose,  
sleep where thought should penetrate  
and manifest itself as action –  
we die where concentration fosters life,  
struggle where the way leads on with ease.

If the barriers to a fruitful progress  
are not already mighty in themselves,  
we create fresh mountains from the debris  
of decaying faith and moulding beliefs –  
then foster a new religion, a fresh  
enchantment  
with which to obscure the plain old Truth.

And having thus erected a mountain,  
we fortify it with all our knowledge,  
invest our time, our wealth of interest,  
foster reverence, guard, defend, and covet  
all that we jealously protect – ring it  
with walls and keep out our enemies.

Loving what's within, hating all without  
our code of conduct becomes enmeshed  
in a struggle to subject, or conquer  
all that stands against our belief -  
our vision as we perceive it from  
our castle on the mountain.

And thus the Dream - a sacred summit  
in the mists of complex fortification -  
is beyond the sight of normal man  
travelling across the flat plain of Truth –  
It is a mirage, a thirsty man's delusion  
that life is more than what nature offers.

And here, in this new England – I see  
trees swaying in a warm south wind,  
smell the pine and maple in the air,  
watch the wagtails flock for insects

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

in the long grass grazed by ponies,  
shy and lazy, in the buzz of summer.

And as the light begins to fade -  
the Dream is but a myth that's peddled -  
each setting sun reveals its secret -  
there's nothing new that is not old,  
or nothing old that's not been repeated  
since the first cockerel crowed.

And like old England, this new England  
has men desiring to imitate the old anew  
in replica appearance with golf and tennis,  
with quaint olde world facade and fashion,  
till even those familiar with the real  
may wonder if the two are so different.

In old England, the Dream is dead,  
left rotten and best forgotten -  
the shame of centuries chokes all swagger;  
Imperialism as the perfect form of  
government?  
With human justice so badly enforced,  
who now would follow such a course?

In that old England, the Dream -  
once carried around the world as a flag,  
exists in this new England - in the same  
clash of colour - red, white and blue.  
Men marching in the name of God and  
nation,  
overlord of all other Gods and countries.

For this is the way, the way of America,  
the Dream that goes beyond imagination -  
save the world, organise the universe,  
shape the destiny of man by arms -  
to bully on beyond the know or  
knowledge  
of lesser mortals doomed to feed the  
Dream.

And I, in this new England as a guest,  
what then when I return from here -

back to old England, disillusioned,  
unwilling to share the daughter's Dream;  
what will I say about those wooden castles  
built on moral sand and half-baked views.

### EMMA

[21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1985, Framingham, Massachus.]

As I took my morning tea,  
I heard the breeze in the eaves;  
Quietly, as the warm of the day  
Rose on me, I lingered in the park,  
Wandered there, till noon -  
Listening to a bird singing 'Emma'.

As I tore myself from earnest  
concentration,  
I caught the stream whispering softly,  
Barely, as the leaves of autumn  
Shed gold on me beneath an aspen  
That I pondered by, at three -  
I listened, and I heard 'Emma'.

As I bore myself out of meditation,  
I heard the cicada call her name -  
Slowly, as the cool of the night  
Descended on me beneath the maple  
Where I retreated after supper,  
I heard it again 'Emma'.

### THE BOSTON SHADE

[22<sup>nd</sup> Aug 1985, Boston, Massachusetts]

August afternoon in the Boston shade,  
watching the tramps collect their booty  
from the trash in Copley Square.

Lovers winning kisses with a laugh,  
kids skate-boarding crowded streets  
across a city doing what it does -

Despite the frenzy of nearby New York,  
Boston, slow and easy every day,  
Buses on as if it's on vacation.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### THE MAN ON EARTH

[25<sup>th</sup> Aug 1985, Framingham, Massachus.]

Let the peregrini travel the world,  
the saddu's walk the roads;  
let them find kundalini  
while I stay at home.

Let the sanyasin preach the word,  
the rishi guide the way;  
let them have their yagas  
while I dream the dray.

Let the guru teach the pranas,  
the saints love of god;  
let them drink the ambrose  
while I sip on broth.

Let pandits tap the monad,  
the charkas, yantras, rays;  
let them chant their mantras  
while I from slumber rise.

Let the master reach nirvana,  
their pupils astral highs;  
let them quench their fire  
while I live to die.

### THE CULTURE SHOCK

[5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1985, Newcastle-upon-Tyne]

The culture shock of squalid England,  
man pressed to man like rivals –  
the open land gone centuries ago,  
opportunities no longer for the labourer,  
as we wait, and watch the decay  
eat and fester any future we had  
for ourselves or for our children.

Sent out from our homes poor & hungry  
for a life this land will never let them  
have  
the chance to search for ... as above us

rule a greedy few against all  
commonwealths,  
the brotherhood that sets all equal.

Upon us are the laws of class  
that forever cast us to the wind,  
where the voices of the dead cry out,  
warn us of the wrongs of servitude,  
blind compliance to a dying system,  
kept alive by a blind obedience  
to a forceful order that breaks resistance  
with the iron fist of fear.

This cruel injustice that sends policemen  
To the doors of the innocent, sets soldiers  
armed upon peace campaigners -  
More & more the victims of repression.

These are the methods of the few,  
Put in power by a people  
Soft and easy in their mediocrity,  
Where ideal sold for false security,

We are sick and fevered – our children  
Die in this plague of self destruction.  
The time for words has gone – and we  
The people search for a new Messiah.  
For we have no future joy – we lead  
our children blindly on towards an end.  
Can no man steer us from annihilation?

## THE UNDERGRADUATE - 3rd YEAR

### TERM 7

[Oct 1985 - Dec 1985, Newcastle]

#### PROLOGUE

##### (i) RETURN TO THE OTHERWORLD

I am undone.  
Autumn steals long summer.  
Take me then,  
take me back in chains.  
Fix the bonds of study  
until I'm imprisoned.

Free my time has been.  
I have lazed, procrastinated.  
Racked .. my books stand dusty,  
aside lies knowledge  
shelved for pleasure.  
Now, goes the vernal equinox.

And what has gone?  
Soft long mornings,  
tea and conversation,  
wine upon the sands,  
tomorrow hung on sunsets,  
tomorrow ....

Now, expectancy is dead.  
Each day takes meaning.  
In a diary of engagements,  
time punctuates all time.  
And study draws in on  
the freedom of living.

##### (ii) AND NOW?

Yet shall I laugh  
while all others cry.  
What better life can there be  
than taking two thou'  
to peruse and browse novels

in whimsical go-as-you-please.

You can have your two quid-  
an-hour or so,  
dirty snot jobs or the brue.  
The soft student life  
of parties and wine  
is a rich doddle and breeze.

And so when I howl,  
wrinkle and scowl  
at returning to varsity -  
take it from me,  
it's only a sneeze,  
I'd rather be there than at sea.

#### WEEK 61

##### (i) CHARLIE

A girl from down-south  
with an incredible smile  
and blue eyes that dash  
flash kingfisher dart  
like the back of a dolphin  
cutting reefed sweeps  
of lapis-lazed oceans,  
hung azul horizons  
aglow with the blaze  
of a heaven of candles  
lit by the gaze,  
the aquamarine glaze  
of Charlie, my blue-jay  
and darling.

##### (ii) ALBERT

My mate and my marra'  
but no timid sparrow,  
or vole off a-scurrying  
through grass to burrow,  
to hide in the dark

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

like an owl or bat;  
no frightened field-mouse  
turned out of house  
when the harvester culls  
the wheat summer ripe  
for eating and storing  
by hamster or mole.  
He's Albert, me china,  
me mate an' me marra',  
me chip off-the-old-wood,  
solid and rot-proof,  
treated and seasoned,  
sound and dry through.

### (iii) **BILLY**

What's that you say?  
You've got terrible drug debts!

Billy, my lad, what can I tell you  
but pack it all in,  
and go back to piano  
or singing, or stringing  
your poor gut guitar.

I heard a C minor  
when you last thumbed a chord,  
it's been floating around  
like pollen since August,  
I swear it vacationed  
all of September,  
I heard it come back  
last week for certain.

Look .. it's under your bed,  
I heard it yawning,  
being on the dole  
is no good for notes either,  
it's starting to smell,  
turn blue, and sound rotten.  
So give us a song, son!  
something major to rock on.

## WEEK 62

### (i) **SOME FOLKS**

Some folks are pebbles in oceans  
others stones in dry streams,  
some like soft limestone  
wash quickly to sea,  
some like black basalt  
weather, fade, and erode,  
others like soft clay  
rain-run in storms.

but some are white marble,  
pink granite, red sandstone,  
others green feldspar,  
blue quartz, common mica.

### (ii) **MICHAEL**

He was a lump of schist,  
hard as calcite,  
and thick as pitch-blend.

Lived in grey millstone  
by erections of whinsill  
and outcrops of sandstone.

He was a blunt flint,  
a dull scaly shale,  
a soft piece of slate.

## WEEK 63

### (i) **THE SOLDIER & THE VIRGIN**

He put his eggs between her legs  
and dipped his soldier sin.  
She was pale and yellow  
as he broke the yoke within.

He beat her hard and curtly,  
he whipped his weapon round.  
She was warm and runny

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

as he gorged and finger wound.

Shelled, ash, and lint white,  
he crushed her fey remains.  
She chalk gone to powder,  
he boiled to rape again.

### (ii) AS TALL SHIPS DEPART

Erstwhile tall ships depart, arrive  
around the world of seaboard fringe  
where hearts akin to wind and wave  
speed farewell and haste return  
to parts dry-marshed or thistle-downed  
that have not heard the call of tern  
nor whale nor seal nor ocean sprites  
that sail far-off beyond our ken.

And we who wait and dream of storm  
and wreck upon some wrecker's rock  
midst gale and tempest lashing hard  
on minds beset by fear of loss,  
we bar and bolt our flimsy doors  
against the angry hail of night  
and sleep unwary of the deep  
run by ships in hunt or flight.

Till home they come, and drop and rock  
in haven, harbour, quay, or dock.

Till tall masts sway like beeches  
along the margined strand they break,  
the captains on the bridge-decks sing  
and tack about their sea-dog days ...  
and still the lubbers stand about  
and gaze wide eyed-about the lee,  
and shipwrecked souls roll or stroll  
around the birch, and elm, and shore.

While other dry-jack-tar-chips  
wistfully whistle subtle tunes,  
the tall ships lean against the wind;  
their flags set-out to bruise the sky  
to wing like gulls afore a gale ..

to travel where no black wing dares;  
till all is calm and safely back,  
Charmed, and chained, and anchored  
there.

Where time slips by like no-one knows  
and ships return like wolves to lair.

### WEEK 64

#### (i) WAITING IN LIMBO

And always we must return  
to the Undergraduate ... unbaptised  
caught in Limbo ... his studies  
like some task on the edge of Hell.

And if he breaks his chains like some  
Prometheus  
dispossessed of Olympic fire?  
Or if he overturns the columns like some  
Samson  
dispossessed of all his strength,  
will he bring down the roof of that abode  
so called ... The University?

What then? Will not his Hell  
become the ends of all labour?

No! Into chaos sink the misdirected  
void of heart and mind to pain,  
into dark and depthless chasms

fall the weary, weak, and worn  
of struggle, weight, and burden laden  
on them strapped great bales of straw

each sheaf a thousand lengths of timber  
each fag ten chords of sawn log.

Without end, through-out time,  
without time, beyond all end,  
through ethered air, without grass

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

nor ground, nor solid living mass,  
for all is dead, and black and hums  
of corpses burnt, bled, or hung.

And this .. when nightmares haunt  
the lax and lazy lolling student,  
this is his Hell, his sinful fix

from which he wakes to find his books  
closed and stacked, his notebook blank,  
his thoughts unformed about his work

while stern Abe Stone his tutor broods  
like Satin waiting .. set to cast  
another erring student term-time down.

Yet .. in innocence of all misdemeanour  
like the nightingale at dusk,  
song issues from our Undergraduate.

In deference of cold hard reality,  
sweet words vibrate off his pursed lips  
zipped upon the latest modern air.

The refrains lift his worries skyward  
like a lark soaring free -  
they lift him on the south-west breeze  
rising up from out the far West Ocean  
where once his childhood gamed on sands.

Now adverse to the strands of universe  
that the teachings of demented bards  
expound like surf upon Time's rock -  
he walks ...  
he mocks ...

he knocks upon the door of learning  
which he finds closed and barred,  
cobwebbed like some great cellar

where shrewd and greedy men hoard  
the wine that unlocks the inhibitions  
that block mankind from truth and  
wisdom.

### (ii) VINO

If vino is the drink of Gods and poets,  
there is no dispute ... men of wealth  
sip the grape and swill the berry  
while lesser men of fortune go thirsty  
or quench their wants with hops and  
barley

mashed, but not strained to perfection,  
not sipped and tasted unto vintage,  
not aged in vaults in seasoned casks,  
but served from vats like common feed  
of husbandry .. with earthy modesty  
and slop dispensed as honest beverage  
for the breed of lower beast  
cast by fate into lesser human order  
maintained by those of higher birth  
irrespective of genius, beauty, honour,  
Pride, concern, conscience, love or  
learning ...

### (iii) WE ARE THE OXBRIDGE MEN

We are the Oxbridge men.  
We go up. We come down.  
We end up running London Town.

Stock and state!  
We take our share!  
We carve it up medium rare!  
We are the Oxbridge men!!

Nothing ever changes.  
Beginning without end,  
End without start.  
Doesn't matter if you're smart,  
You'll end up with nothing.  
If you're nothing at birth,  
You'll have nothing at death.  
We are the Oxbridge men!

We have the fortunes!  
We have the wealth!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Give up on money ..  
Grow potatoes instead.  
This is our advice -  
For we are the Oxbridge men!

Bonds and chains!  
We run estates!  
We run the place!  
So know your place,  
We're not your mates!  
We are the Oxbridge men!!

We are the Oxbridge men!

### (iv) **OUR GODS ARE MORTALS**

Oh what dark rumblings can be heard  
from behind the clouds shielding  
Olympus!  
Today .. our Gods are all mere mortals  
implementing tyranny like pseudo Titans.

Where is that fire Prometheus gifted us?  
Around us dim shadows flirt in half light.  
Where is the torch to guide the good man  
as he emerges from the swamp of  
nationhood?  
May such lesser beings free their will  
seek their wildest dreams on equal terms?

No! The Titans interfere .. enslave!  
No! The Titans doom all mortal kind to  
Limbo!

Yet some wriggle free ...

### (v) **THE UNDERGRADUATE**

He gets his chance, his nibble  
at the Stilton and the Camembert,  
the reckless olives served with endive,  
before his grant wanes to peas,  
beans, chips, and cheap mince pies,  
muesli base without nuts,

porridge oats, and lentil rice,  
tahini toast, rye crisp bread,  
Typhoo tea, and boiled eggs,  
Pasta, paste, and boiled veg,  
Lifeless, salty, starchy stew,  
Madras, Bombay, Vindaloo,  
he'd give a dog to chew.

While his studies ...  
like some task in Hell  
wait in Limbo .....

### WEEK 65

*Punctuality is the virtue of the board,  
And tardiness the vice of the game.*

### (i) **IT MAY RAIN ....**

It may rain in Spain,  
but England never changes!  
It never nears the paradise we seek  
when on vacation.  
It never quite sustains our want  
to shed our winter clothes  
and bare ourselves strong and naked  
on the sands of Whitley Bay,  
Bournemouth, Rhyl, or Morecambe.

### (ii) **WE WHALE WHITE BRITS**

*We catch on time our morning trains  
Yet arrive too late to catch the sun.*

We wan and waste whale white Brits,  
we sit before our fires and freeze,  
our blotch red cheeks blue-vein cracked,  
our joints arthritic, stiff, and knacked.  
All wrack rheumatic, pinched, and hagged,  
we huddle nursing heart attacks.

### (iii) **HAPPY HUBBY HOME**

From eight to five we log and clock;  
From five to eight we wait for work.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Happy hubby home to happy housey goes  
to waiting wishful whole-some model  
wifey.  
They smile sweetly with the morning  
separation  
expecting every evening's joyful re-  
uniting.

What Perfect Bliss! What Bon Accord!  
God made the world for such love!

Until, home hubby came one noon  
and in their house found his wife  
wrapped round the torso of another  
hubby.

Lord! What Fate! What Bad Timing!  
How long has model wife been double-  
timing?

The other hubby Spanish brown and  
beetroot,  
in a jiffy panted, but unbuttoned,  
gathering up his tails in a panic,  
said "I'm off! It's coffee at the office!"  
But almost out the door he scanned  
his season pass lying on the carpet.

The erring lover swift returns!  
Folly feeds on such dumb stuff!

Angry cheated hubby cruelly quick  
seized cheating hubby and did him in.  
Screaming model wifey called the police  
Can you imagine such a scene!

One dead! One jailed! and wife possessed!  
All on account of a season-pass!

WEEK 66

### THE STRAGGLER

It is so easy to fall behind

Everyone, and everything,  
until there is no present  
only the will to recollect  
what should have been  
and shall not ever be.

WEEK 67

*Cold English rain upon our lips,  
You chill us with your winter kiss.*

### KUMQUATS

Night .. it drops in half-cast grey,  
the yellow street lights hazed  
behind the spray of fruit trucks  
bowling north to Scotland.

I watch and dream parch mouthed  
and think of kumquats, guavas, avocados  
rolling up to Glasgow,  
to be unloaded ripe at market.

For these are things I never saw  
nor tasted in my childhood dreams,  
these were left till travelling days  
took me far to luscious gardens

where resplendent fruit rained and dripped  
and soaked the earth with sensual ease,  
until I was taught to balance waste  
as Nature's will to please itself.

For I was want to think of fruit  
as Man's reward for being first  
in need of Nature's sweetest food,  
But soon it was explained to me -

all creatures share in Nature's gift.  
And I, with Northern childhood gone,  
saw kumquats as a fruit for all,  
and tasted kumquat, ate my fill.

And as I watch the trucks haul north,  
the dark November night now black;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I taste the kumquat in my mouth,  
and guava, avocado, forms a part -

of all the taste my travelling taught  
which ample childhood did not teach,  
nor knew existed in my North  
of berry, briar, and Scottish mist.

WEEK 68

### THE SEVEN SISTERS

*There are many things books cannot tell  
of.  
There are many worlds poets cannot dwell  
in.*

The Seven Sisters ... Alice, Annie,  
Betty, Dot, Mary, Vicky, Violet ....  
fell out from Hospital heaven  
and went on a big dipper ride with me  
around the snow topped Northumberland  
waste  
in a light blue mini-bus with insignia  
on the side which read *Health Authority*;  
and although nobody stared in the  
country,  
when we got to Rothbury, everybody  
looked  
and wondered why seven old ladies  
were wandering up and down the High  
Street  
in the freezing cold of late November.

But the girls didn't notice a thing  
as they sat on two park benches  
and I took their photos for posterity ..  
when all of a sudden, a rave-mad dog  
came bulling helter-skelter across the  
grass  
and tried to knock Dotty to the ground!  
What a beast! I chased it off;  
but the thing came back as Alice shouted  
"Dot! Dot! Wartch out!" and I kicked it  
in the teeth so hard I heard a crack,

but the thing ran on and barked,  
and barked so loud, I went to the owner  
standing all dumb and stupid with his chain  
and said "T here's a phone-box! Put the  
mutt  
on the lead! Or I'll call the cops!",  
and the bloke swore at me, and meanly  
commanded his dog "Get him. Get him!",  
but the smart dog, hurting in the mouth  
ran circles round and round me  
till the thing was spent and sore  
worn out and tired and crushed  
and only half the rave-mad beast  
he was before he went for Dot ...  
who hadn't even seen or heard him  
whooshing-by just inches from her ankles.

But Alice had, and Vicky holding  
Violet's arm had seen it all,  
and tried now to tell her all about it.

But, well, Dot's the least with it of the  
Sisters.

Annie's eyes are bad, she's almost blind.  
Betty's usually dreaming or half-asleep.  
Mary likes to sing all the time  
I could hear 'Kitty Kelly's Daughter'  
as the punter's dog attacked.

But the threat was over, the punter  
took his dog away on his chain.  
I didn't watch him go, my eyes  
were down the camera on the sisters  
posing for me in the Rothbury cold.  
Click! One more for old posterity,  
then we joined hands, and crossed  
the road to the seven-day cafe  
famous in the North for being open  
on Sundays all year round.

Two young boys stood at the counter  
sweeties in their hands, fingers  
scraping the frost off the ice-box,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

"What's that say, mister?" one lad  
pointed to a giant cardboard-cone  
"Cornetto" I said, and he grinned,  
and I asked "No school today?"

They shook their heads and giggled  
when I said "Teachers on strike, I bet".  
One pointed out the window, other said  
"Oh no, it snowed this morning!"  
"School was called off!"  
"We live up the tops. Over there!"

Both pointed out the window  
beyond the Cragside trees to the bare hills,  
and as the boys turned to be served  
I helped the sisters slide along  
the pine bench-seats of the empty cafe  
while one boy asked the lady owner  
for the ice-choocs on the ice-box chart  
by pointing and saying "Two please".  
The owner couldn't see what it was  
that the young lads wanted.  
She was on the other side of the ice-box.  
We all laughed, and the two lads,  
now red-faced, plunged their heads  
into the ice-box to ease their  
embarrassment.

Good-natured they emerged and parted  
with the change burning in their hands.  
They said goodbye as I ordered  
five milk coffees and three teas  
from the lady owner eyeing the old ladies  
with a look that slightly disapproved  
of the Sisters sitting quietly waiting  
for the drinks they'd come twenty miles  
to spend their twenty pence's on.

But soon she came around to view  
them as the lovely Sisters that they are,  
and asked me why they were so subdued,  
I said "They're quiet because they're old".  
This truth seemed to hit the owner  
as a thought she'd never contemplated

and put her instantly at ease.

We were in the cafe quite awhile,  
and as three o'clock drew closer  
the cafe filled with afternoon custom  
that either seemed disturbed by the Sisters  
or failed to notice them at all.

Mary sang a song, I forget what.

Dot inspired by Mary's singing,  
sang one of the three songs she knows.  
Alice talked about her hair-do,  
and Annie a little more about her eyes.  
Violet, always silent, laughed,  
and Betty *tete-a-tete* with Vicky  
chewed on fruit pastilles she had got  
me to buy with her seventeen pence  
before we left the cafe and went  
for a walk down Rothbury High Street  
in the freezing cold of winter.

They loved it. We loved it.  
We talked with three tied up dogs  
and said hello to every passing child  
and felt that Christmas was in the air,  
and walked down to the river  
where they posed by the bridge  
in the biting wind for another picture  
that would prove that we had been  
to Rothbury one icy winter's day.

And though there were no photographs of  
me,  
when finally we stood on the High Street  
dancing to music from the cassette  
recording of Glenn Miller we had along,  
although we all froze and our noses  
dripped  
as we waited for the mini-bus  
that would take us back to Northgate,  
I knew I would need no photographs  
to remember the day I took the Seven  
Sisters to the seven-day cafe in Rothbury.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And as the sun went down, and  
the full moon rose out of the North Sea,  
we travelled back silent, and cold,  
but inside flamed a light and warmth  
that matched the blazing orbs of heaven  
we could almost touch as we crossed  
the high moors of bleak Northumberland.

And as darkness fell, the other Seven  
Sisters  
twinkled in the folding day, and  
pointed us in the direction of home.

### WEEK 69

*December's here. This time of year  
Undergraduates stay in bed.*

#### (i) **BED**

Dog-down hoe raked  
rough shod over ridden  
black hell flat backed  
cat-gut mouse tailed  
cool cruel tip-toed  
pit cut gob filled  
dark down air caught  
bed sore dead bum  
numb tongue lead head  
dick stiff limp legged  
Bed, bed, bed!

#### (ii) **OTHER WORLDS**

Other notions, other times,  
Sequenced, travelling on  
through age predestined,  
era held determined.  
Movement, motion, matter  
Made, destroyed, made,  
Destroyed, created out  
Beyond, within an end,  
a destination, pre-defined,  
re-embarked, disengaged  
upon arrival .....

#### (iii) **LIFT UP YOUR EYES ...**

In the bleak December chill  
the coke-smoke drifts ...  
The South-West blows upon  
the slate-cloud, wet and dark,  
it casts a smoke-blue shadow  
on the red-brick pit-rows

The miners hold their ears  
to halt the singing of the wind  
howling babies huddle into breasts  
of mothers hauling laundry

Weary round-back-shouldered,  
skin-sagged, puff-red tears  
roll down shuttered eye-lids  
and streak wind flayed cheeks.

The harsh December cat-in-lash  
tan-hides their impaired hearing.  
The miners dream of hearing angels  
with their wan angelic singing.  
Will it take a summer sun  
to ease their beastly burdens?

The winter wind has no voice,  
mute, it is a silent brute  
bent to bend and cock-a-snoot  
in mischief in the pit-row smoke  
and blow, and blow, and blow  
about and on the miners going  
head-on up long valley slopes  
red-brick row, pit-house row,  
Row, row, and row row row,  
no curve, no crescent green, no park,  
no tree to break the chimney line,  
the grey-slate wet of time.

The miners hold their ears in pain,  
who can tell what they hear?  
Eyes that scrape the step of time  
never climb to see the sky ..  
O lift up your eyes!!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 70

### (i) WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE POETS, LAD?

Who are your favourite poets, lad?  
Whose influence sparks your verse?  
Who taught you how to elegise?  
Who shaped your line and length?  
Who showed you how to satirise?  
Who trained you in such words?

Why sir, it was God himself  
Who taught me style and length!  
God it was who gifted me  
Gave rhythm to my words!  
God it was who married me  
To poetry, line and verse!

Who is my favourite poet, sir?  
Why - God, the bard, who else!

### (ii) GOOD MORNING ROBIN

Little robin bobbing hopping  
through the white frost morning,  
Charlie said your bright red breast  
thawed the chilling winter.  
I said I thought your chirpy song  
split the morning sleep.  
We slumbered on, rose, and broke  
some breadcrumbs for your supper.  
Oh bright red thing! How I think  
we'll greet the spring together.

**End of Term 7**

### NOVEMBER FOREST

[11th November 1985, Newcastle-upon-Tyne]

The lime tree lemon bitter stands  
Beside the beech sandy leaved,  
The chestnut reigns in the breeze,

The aspens shiver ill at ease,  
The larch droops yellow in the frost,  
The willows sag, and weep, and creak.

The lichen grey, and green and dark  
Like carpet layers wind-chaffed bark,  
And branches bare against the sky  
Where spruce and pine, and fir tree rise,  
Shed their needles, cones and sap,  
Drift, and thud, splat and crack!

Like treasure on the forest floor,  
Acorns, nuts, hard berries hide  
Beneath the aural autumn glory,  
Beneath the gold and amber foliage,  
Scratch the mouse, rabbit, deer,  
The fox and squirrel, as winter nears.

### FORLORN

For Frances  
[5th January 1986, Sandyford, Newc.]

What beauty takes us from ourselves  
to leave us where we've never been?  
What love can make us break old vows  
and make us want for purer things?  
What tears may fall to make us cry  
for joy at all this glorious earth?  
Tell me, please, I do not know  
what makes love and lovers so.

### TERM 8 COLD WINTER

[21<sup>st</sup> Jan- 27<sup>th</sup> Mar 1986]

### PROLOGUE LAY ME THERE

There is none  
but what there is  
before it began.

Take me down  
the river of life until

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

time flows by like a kite  
hovering over winter fields  
edged by trees standing bare  
in the twilight of evening.  
Carry me there.

Carry me forth  
upon the warm south wind  
until I cross brown hills  
fly over verdant pasture  
enclosed by thick hedgerow  
thriving with nature.  
Bear me there.

Bear me along  
the floor of long valleys  
that stretch from a sea  
gull hung to greet me from  
white cliff and tide-wash  
by jutting out headland.  
Lay me there.

Lay me deep  
where silence falls day  
not far from white fall  
stream banked by hawthorn  
on thistle-down mountain  
clover vetch crowned.  
Leave me there.

### WEEK 71 **THE TOWER OF WORST VERSE**

The worst verse  
collected all together  
towered to the moon  
and round and back  
and onwards to the sun.

Beneath that tower  
eager critics hovered  
dizzy at the height.  
Caught short of breath,  
they lit the fire.

Ablaze, the taper  
crackled to the moon  
and round and back.  
Onwards to the sun  
burnt the awful stuff.

Ten million miles  
away from planet Venus,  
the verse burnt out.  
Earth was left  
with only good verse.

The children played,  
adults stood amazed  
at the pile of debris.  
Someone made a joke  
but none were made.

They'd all gone up  
in the tower of smoke,  
so no-one spoke,  
no-one could think  
or remember any.

Worried critics frowned  
nervous of their choices.  
They thought of verses kept,  
one's they'd burnt  
or might have saved.

In panic they hurried  
with pen and paper  
to collect all they could  
before time erased  
all bad verse for good.

They talked to poets,  
idiots, and old folk,  
recorded every line,  
noted every rhyme,  
collected them together.

Until the new verse stood  
towering to the moon

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

and round and back  
and onwards to the sun  
beyond, and back, forever.

### WEEK 72 **THE FIELD HOSPITAL**

Behind each screen  
lies a story,  
a book of scenes  
unfolded in sequence  
to present the whole,  
the complete picture.

With each scream  
rises a confusion,  
a scar of blanks  
compounded out of order  
to expose the numbness,  
the bloody horror.

### WEEK 73 **FEBRUARY**

The alabaster weather  
drifting,  
the hungry starlings descending  
dropping,  
on to the winter-store  
dripping.

The hawthorned garden  
berried,  
lower branches laden,  
laying,  
on the white-carp-pond  
frozen.

### WEEK 74 **LILY**

A petaled flower,  
who drifted at ease  
upon an unrippled surface.

Her delicate skin  
when waft by the wind  
was moon-white and shiny

Her cheeks fairy pink,  
contrasted her eyes  
the colour of envy.

### WEEK 75

#### (i) **SNOW, SNOW**

Snow, snow,  
fall slowly on me,  
bury, bury me  
deep in your quiet.

Soft, soft  
lie so on me,  
hide, hide me  
forever in your peace.

Settle, settle,  
light on me  
heavy, heavy,  
conceal me with your flakes.

#### (ii) **SNOW IS COMING**

If February were not so cold,  
nor berries black on blackened hedgerow,  
would we listen for the blackbird's  
caution "Snow is Coming!!".

If February were not so dark,  
nor elm trees bare, oaks crack-barked,  
would we laugh at our blackbirds'  
calling "Snow is Forming!!".

Yet February is cold and dark,  
the bare skyline is cast and stark,  
we dare not miss the blackbird's  
warning "Snow is Falling!!".

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 76 [Feb 17th-23rd 1986]

(i) **FINALLY**

As a first year undergraduate,  
my obsession for poetry  
was also an obsession  
with study and student life.

As an aging sophomore,  
my delight was sex,  
with drugs and alcohol,  
and things of the flesh.

As a mature finalist,  
my canon was respect,  
knowledge, the freedom  
to move on and forget.

(ii) **WEEK SEVENTY SIX STUDIES**

This week I've been pounding Arnold,  
having a go at insincere elegiac,  
looking at Masefield, Bridges, and J.B.,  
poets of cloth, not substantially plebeian,  
men of culture, not anarchy.

(iii) **GYPSY DREAM**

Far off, I hear gunshots ring,  
and hand-held hounds barking fiercely,  
I look about me, no-one's looking.

Nature wells in me like water  
in a vase upon a sideboard,  
but flowers drink my body  
as I think upon a flood.

I am alone, an eagle on a mountain,  
below me .. frozen lakes  
rimed with nature's spittle.

I groom my ruffled thoughts,  
gather the flowers feasting in me

and throw them, stem rotten,  
down my trash-can mountain.

They scatter on the lake,  
until the thaw sets them drifting  
in a toothpaste foam.

I wander the margin of shore  
fern, wood-rush, garlic,  
beneath the dry still oaks  
I lie immortal.

(iv) **RACING ON TO MARS**

Men of war racing on to Mars.  
Sickle star red banner rockets  
submarines of spatial ocean  
aging Argonauts birthing knowledge.

Submarines of spatial ocean.  
Where the reeds? Where the coral?  
Where the beasts of astral atoll?  
Creatures basking in clear shallow?

Sea of stars without strand,  
journey out without end,  
sojourn on into dark  
floating in a void of shadow.

Through the vast cosmos going  
onwards daily to tomorrow  
on to strange unknown border  
chaos new beyond old order.

Submarines of spatial ocean,  
time sits on standing shuttles,  
lies in dreamy empty thoughts  
fixed upon furthest harbours.

(v) **IN THIS ROOM**

In this room  
I take my pleasure,  
With this hand

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I clasp together,  
All alone  
I clap forever.  
Let me do or die.

In this house  
I make my laughter,  
With this mouth  
I reap and gather,  
All alone  
I smile forever.  
Let me do or die.

In this town  
I break my anger,  
With this foot  
I kick and scatter,  
All alone  
I smash forever,  
Let me do or die.

In this world  
I wake my father,  
With this heart  
I date my mother,  
All alone  
I grieve forever,  
Let me do or die.

In this church  
I fake my worship,  
With this mind  
I kneel tight-lipped,  
All alone  
I pray forever,  
Let me do or die.

WEEK 77 [4<sup>th</sup> Feb - 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar]

### (i) THE FURIES

Many feasts Menara saw,  
stole bread from Thesiphone,  
friendship based on virtue

leads to death by vice.

The up-so-down condition  
root in passionless lust,  
Alecto's bow-strung arrows  
pierce such hapless love.

### (ii) WINTER

Winter take me from my confess  
to the execution wall,  
about me wail the furies  
frothing on my wrongs.

Free me from my confines  
at the gate of freedom's dawn,  
around me woe the sirens  
with hiss and spitting song.

Blow me wind in confide  
to the throne beyond recall,  
around me wing the cherubs  
with whistle, word, and sword.

WEEK 78 [3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Mar]

### (i) THE MARCH STRIKE

O Ireland! Ireland!  
native Celtic blood spills  
and stains humanity.

What hatred! loathing!  
Love your countrymen.  
No! slay them!

The shadows of the clans  
haunt the *no-goes*,  
death shades the sunlight.

Strike! Kill! Murder!  
sick, hollow-eyed  
rampage the ignorant!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

O Ireland! bleeding!  
heal your gaping wounds,  
crush your angry fever.

### (ii) DERWENTSIDE RESERVIOR

Wide, crimson-grey  
breeze calm still  
wild fowl cast,  
larch bare margined

iced last week,  
now peat-brown,

thorn-hedge wall  
rain-waxed stoned  
grass soft-earth  
snow-hash hollow.

spring-kissed wet  
bud-sprig full,  
bird flight wild,  
south wind flown.

WEEK 79 [10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Mar]

### KIELDER

Out there ....  
there is a forest  
man-made, gigantic.

In here,  
there is light,  
artificial, comfortable.

Indoors, my heart pines.  
Tired limbs, weary,  
slumber on desire.

The ravens silent,  
the forest creaks ...  
a lapwing dips,

soars and dips,

the lichen rocks  
ancient and sentinel.

Felled forest brush,  
bare winter gorse  
tree-line break.

WEEK 80 [17<sup>th</sup> Mar]

### (i) THE EYE OF A TROUT

Time rolls on like thunder.  
Imagination outstrips imitation.  
Form and context  
Wither in the light of summer.

Urban decay recedes  
With each view of country.  
War is for lesser mortals.  
Peace, harmony, surrender.

Images are refracted  
As pictures disjointed.  
Worlds are created,  
Synthesised and ordered.

Beauty and balance,  
Comfort in a flower,  
Love in a river  
And in the eye of a trout.

### (ii) WITHOUT PART

Brain without reason,  
mind without body,  
thought without logic,  
sense without object.

Hand without digit,  
arm without muscle,  
foot without measure,  
leg without tissue.

Middle without centre,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

heart without core,  
blood without colour,  
flesh without whole.

### **TERM 9 ESCAPE FROM THE TOWER**

[22nd April - 27<sup>th</sup> June 1986]

WEEK 81  
**OLD MEN WIDOWED**  
[30th April 1986, Newcastle]

Individuals, struggle on exhausted,  
fatigued beyond rejuvenation.

Old men widowed, soldier on,  
tend small flowering cacti,  
weed beds of daffodils

with bodies stiff  
and wills too weak,  
they wait for late-spring  
to set the geraniums,  
get at the roses

while ill-mates in pain  
linger in bed, dreaming  
of companions waiting  
in Eden or heaven.

WEEK 82  
**WATENDLATH ROAD**  
[3rd May 1986, near Ashness, Cumbria]

Rain on Ashness;  
celandine, violet, and sorrel,  
bullfinch call, wagtail hop,  
Derwentwater in a mist,  
birch trees barely leaved,  
gorse-top touched yellow,  
sun peeking over crag sky,  
wild bee, midge, black fly,  
scent of bark, of stone,  
of moss, of fern uncurling,

green in variegated brown.

WEEK 83

**(i) CESIUM ONE-THREE-SEVEN**  
[7th May 1986, Newcastle]

Thirty years from now,  
half of what has fallen  
will still be halving.

A week ago Chernobyl blew;  
lovely iodine one-three-one  
and cesium one-three-seven.

Today it rained thirteen times;  
never saw the sun at all -  
grey, grey, grey.

Couldn't drink the water;  
have any milk and cereal;  
REM count was hundred over normal.

Thirty years from now:  
cesium one-three-seven -  
half will still be there,  
halving.

**(ii) TO WORDSWORTH**  
[7th May 1986, Newcastle]

Wordsworth, were you living in this hour:  
England would disgust you with her marsh  
Of murky waters: bomb, missile, and flash  
Of fire: unwanted misdirected unheroic  
power  
Which railroads; dictates; makes cowerers  
Of her own people. We are wrecked;  
awash.  
Corrupt men dissect our diseased nation:  
Use tissue, flesh, in barter for sour  
Upkeep of order; democratic freedoms.  
Lake, tree, flower, creature, sky:  
In your time were whole and healthy; high

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Mountains once safely climbed to cloud;  
Water fresh to drink; in our kingdom  
Now leave us sick, unhappy, and unproud.

### (iii) THE SEVENTH ART

[9th May 1986, Newcastle]

Image on image,  
language of vision,  
language without words.

Montage of meaning  
to guide, lead thought.

Composite pictures,  
accelerated time,  
parallel shadows,  
attraction by like.

Each image a painting,  
a thousand sounds,  
aesthetic edit,  
realist long-pan,  
immediate copy  
across imaginative span.

A hand-wave, a fading smile.

This is the dark,  
the celluloid end,  
the composite picture,  
the whole and the part  
montage and image  
of the seventh art.

WEEK 84  
**THE BOOK JUST CLOSED**  
[17th May 1986, Newcastle]

Between the book just closed  
and the action of a hand  
stretched to take a hold  
of yet another volume,  
two blue eyes stare ..

they watch me haul a thought  
across my pale ploughed brow

two grey-blue eyes ..

that halts me in my labour  
through the blue of summer

eyes that greyly cloud

the grafting hours I've spent  
tilling miles of tract,  
the long lays of text  
that ruts the fields of fact.

Grey, grey, she gazes ..

Vacant, empty, back I stare,  
and reach, but stop,  
and rise and stretch,  
and touch her hair,  
her hand, her breast,  
and with a kiss,  
I close her eyes,  
and go with her beyond my books,  
and go with her to  
where ..

.. flowers light the earth,  
and bees, and birds wing  
upon the happiness of day,  
and sunshine streams, beams  
and plays wild upon the sound  
of river, burn and stream,

and pools of weed,  
reed and birch,  
and ash and elm,  
where turkey oak  
edge a hedge  
verge a road  
heading for a wild coast  
or some wrath ocean  
of white wave toss

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

and salt scent breeze  
on which a gull  
carries free, and drops  
into a boundless sea  
all the books  
that hang to me

The grey eyes smile,  
return to blue,

Free I see  
the waves of love,  
books are fields  
of fallow stuff.

WEEK 85  
**WHAT ABOUT MY BROTHER**  
[21st May 1986, Newcastle]

See him dying yonder in Kandahar,  
and watch him starve in Eritrea.  
Look at him slain in Nicaragua  
while we wax fat in Surrey.

There's inequality everywhere,  
everywhere I look,  
I see the shame in sad men's eyes  
and pity in their stare.

See him slave in Bangladesh  
see him toil in barren Bolivia,  
see him bend in hot Sri Lanka,  
and martyred in South Africa.

There's injustice everyplace,  
everyplace I've been,  
anger in the eyes of men,  
and hatred in their glare.

See him rich on Hampstead Heath,  
and watch him stroll in Windsor's green,  
see him lounge in Kentish pub,  
snug and smug and warm.

Insensitive in every way,  
everywhere I look,  
avarice in the eyes of God,  
and no God that's any good.

See men scream in every dream,  
see each pass along Park Lane,  
see each walk with oozing pain  
the empty streets of shame.

Is this the face of brotherhood?  
Is this how things must stand?  
Have I rightly understood  
the vision that I've had?

Is there love in Bethnal Green,  
or faith in Cheney Walk,  
or hope in pitch black Hackney  
that men are born as one.

WEEK 86  
**SELECTIVE**  
[27th May 1986, Newcastle]

Selective,  
the images emerge  
within the frame  
of consciousness.

Arbitrary,  
without record,  
visions fade  
into eternity.

WEEK 87  
**(i) AXEMAN OR TREE?**  
[4th-5th June 1986, Newcastle]

Can I be the man I was  
when words were blunt axes  
on the trunk of other's wisdom?

Now, my blade wet keen

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

stands no match against  
the metal walls of politics.

A life in the thickest wood  
is no civil training  
for survival in the clearing.

My axes stripped from me  
I stand dazed  
transformed into a tree.

### (ii) **THE SACRED MOUNTAIN**

[7th June 1986, Schiehallion Rd,  
Perthshire.]

Burn, sun, burn,  
the long summer light  
drawing  
behind the high Grampians.

Schiehallion, sacred mountain,  
the ancient yews of Fortingall,  
talk in the wind  
of primeval memories.

Blazing orb, sinking,  
catching the bens of Atholl,  
shadowing the corries of Rannoch,  
the sentinels of Erricht.

Red, silver, indigo,  
sublime Swarga of the ancients,  
burn, burn, and burn,  
as the yew trees whisper.

White cloud lifting  
from snowy ridges,  
red, pink, marbled sky,  
red, red, burning.

WEEK 88

### **COTSWOLDS - EARLY SUMMER**

[14th June 1986, Stroud, Glos.]

Sun of bliss and happiness,  
sunshine of my youth,  
blue sky urban wilderness,  
green grass, fragrant nooks,  
shade of summer bower,  
glades of cooling brook,  
canals of duck and moor-hen,  
swan, and grebe, and coot.

Breeze of joy and freedom,  
waft of infant past,  
clear-air rural tameness,  
cowslip, milkwort, flag,  
pools of summer eddy,  
coomb's of damselfly,  
vales of swift and martin,  
swallow, finch, and lark.

WEEK 89

### **THE DEVON DAY SUBSIDED**

[22nd June 1986, Bucks Mills, Devon]

Ever so meek,  
the day drizzled open.  
Summer rain fell.

Still, swelter noon  
gave way to afternoon storm.

Sun emerged from hiding,  
skies cleared, then clouded,  
blackened, then poured.

Warm, chill, then cold  
that's how the day subsided.

WEEK 90

### **THE CLASS OF '86**

[27th June 1986, Newcastle]

Today I graduated.  
The sun shines in all its glory,  
I laze on the burn-tipped grass  
while my contemporaries congregate

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

gowned and happy.

At last, three years strained,  
I relax and feel the world before me  
open like a lotus.

I gaze into the blue of heaven  
so glad with joy,  
I would not trade this sky  
for all the world.

Let the role-call be made.  
Now, no longer a class,  
the class of '86,  
Is part of history.

### WAITING TO GRADUATE

#### ON THE ROAD IN LAKELAND

[10.30pm, 4th May 1986, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Derwent, Grasmere, Coniston,  
Hawkshead,  
Ambleside and Ullswater .....  
roll off the tongue like a recipe for  
solitude ....  
but 'Keep Out', 'No Parking', 'Private',  
'Closed',  
double yellow lines and ticket machines,  
keep the cars rolling, and the hikers on  
the road.

#### I COUNT THE DAYS

[12 noon, 11th May 1986, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

I count the days till I depart,  
and who can say what's wrong with that.  
My time in Newcastle's all but done,  
the sands of time have had their run.

Day dream hours ill spent I sit,  
but who can guess the cause of it.

Fourteen years have chained me fast,  
now eddies turn, and shift, and pass.

I gaze upon the red brick rows,  
and who can gauge what I know,  
my footsteps vanish, the waters reach  
the parts I've walked upon the beach.

#### THE WIDE DIVIDE

[11.30pm, 17th May 1986, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Romance is not sweet  
when distance separates,  
or time runs away  
with intimacy.

Independent lovers  
war and fight forever,  
never lie embraced  
in fields of clover.

Sweethearts faced with doubt  
cry and tremble,  
shudder, nervous  
and uncommitted.

Emotion fired by anger,  
rowing sleepless fight,  
open-hearted whisper  
across the wide divide.

#### LIKE A MAY MORNING IN KATMANDU

[3pm, 24th May 1986, Ouseburn,  
Newcastle]

The daffodils barely gone;  
thrush and blackbird song  
rose higher than the sparrow hawk.  
Dragonfly flirted on the hogweed.  
Breeze-borne hawthorn blossom  
and wind-blown nettle flower  
drift-caught in the burn.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Elder swaying, bramble trembling,  
dock leaf and glass-blade twitching -  
bee and wasp nectar hunted  
dandelion bright and blinding.

Oh what a welcome late May dawning!  
Fresh air-scent, water babbling,  
soil damp, sun fire-warming -  
like a Katmandu bright morning.

### LOCH TAY IN JUNE

[8th June 1986, Loch Tay]

Violet and primrose,  
stitchwort and bugle,  
dandelion and daisy,  
anemone and thistle.

### FROM THE PANDON ROOM

[9th Jun 1986, Civic Centre, Newcastle ]

From across the Great North Road,  
the Pandon Room of the Civic Centre,  
I gaze sleepily on my former University,  
stoic red-brick, atheistic concrete.

Old Father Tyne, green-copper rusted  
drips Kielder water from his finger,  
wind whispers thru' the Council dome,  
the ducks' feathers ruffle in the moat.

Wearily my eyes close out the Town  
Moor;  
the rush-hour summer traffic rumbles by  
to blend the snorting of the Sea-Horse  
Heads  
with the *Blaydon Races* of the Tower  
Bells.

I slumber in the D-Day heat,  
the Union clock clicks past six -  
the Banquet Hall echoes time  
as in a dream, or sleep, I sit.

### I USED TO RHYME

[9th June 1986, Newcastle]

I used to rhyme all the time  
but now I try a different style,  
instead of rhyme's alternate lines  
I drop the metre curtly.

If this makes my verse unsound  
and rough, and does the lyric in,  
then the gain is in the lost and found  
of accentuated meaning.

### AN EVENING IN JULY

[11.30pm, 25th July 1986, Sandyford,  
Newcastle]

Where are the whispers,  
the gentle sighs of children?  
Is this the miss?

The thing gone adrift?  
Where are the nymphs  
by the pools of glass?  
Hear we the pipes?  
Scent we the flowers?  
Where are the Muses,  
the makers of music?  
Where do they hide?  
What do we sense in  
the touch of dusk dew?  
The smell of the night?  
The lure of the wild?

## IN THE WILDS

### **FIVE BIRTHDAYS ON** (for Laura)

[29th July 1986, Sandyford, Newcastle]

Five birthdays on the summer lingers,  
memories rise, but good times stay,  
the Royal would-be's live and mirror  
all that will be history.

While in some rotten Irish prison  
lingers once what was a love,  
some tangled soul caught in ideal  
for a cause that's all but lost.

Every day and every rock-blow,  
he sweats to serve the hated foe,  
while maidenhood and pining lover  
awaits for him afresh each dawn.

Where is that love that carried rivers  
on towards the peace of sea?  
When flowed the barge that ferried life  
on the tide of kiss and freedom ?

And now, at thirty five she waits,  
the river trickles, erodes soft rocks,  
and still her lover, barred, imprisoned,  
cannot yet break time's lock.

### **THE BERBERS**

[23rd August 1986, Sandyford, Newcastle]

From cap-topped ridge  
to valley stretch  
they lead their goats to drink

with flute or sling or tribal song  
upon the hills, the mountain cols  
they go from stream to spring.

Their Berber blood,  
their nomad lust,  
their life of dust and wind.

### **BILLY JOE (song)**

for Chris

[24th August 1986, Sandyford, Newcastle]

Billy Joe the pop idol,  
tried to eat his fame,  
the press shot him down  
for getting on the heroin game.

Billy Joe the drug addict,  
wrote all his songs in pain,  
the judge sent him down  
for shooting crack and H.

Billy Joe the prison convict  
sang songs to the cons,  
the guards beat him down  
for getting it wrong.

Billy Joe the rehab hero,  
shut up and played it straight,  
the warden marked him up  
an A1 in-mate.

Billy Joe the model prisoner,  
spent a year in Durham jail,  
the parole board decided  
he was back on the rails.

Billy Joe the hip musician,  
came out a wiser man,  
and never touched the needle,  
nor sniffed another gram.

### **WATERPITTS, SOMERSET**

[4th Sept 1986, Manor Farm, Waterpitts,  
Quantocks]

At last, the green Quantock combs  
enclose my summer days.  
Chin-high nettles sway,  
tap on our mobile-home.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Chickens brood or scurry,  
horses snort and sneeze,  
pea-fowl fuss and faddle  
about us all the day.

### **DOWN ON THE DEVON SANDS**

[9th Sept 1986, Branscombe, Devon]

And I too, lay naked there  
on the beach of Branscombe,  
Greece, or Spain, I'll have instead  
the Devon Costa Brava!

Moaning sea and sighing gulls,  
skies pure grey to yonder,  
ticking breeze and breaking waves,  
it was a lovely torture.

White chalk cliffs tumbled down  
on chalets ruined and rotten  
where pensioners transfixed by the swell  
watched the bare and brawny.

Girls voices perfumed the air,  
sweet laughter fed the coast,  
cider swiggers crunched their crisps  
and ice cream lovers snored.

Explorers paced the shingled shore  
proud of being English,  
they scowled at my naked bum  
and damned the bloody British.

I lazed until the sun passed over  
Branscombe's cliffs then under,  
and left as clouds rose out the sea  
and brought a touch of thunder.

### **THE BROOMFIELD BEECH**

for Bridget McConville

[2nd Nov 1986, Waterpitts, Broomfield]

The copper beech, the Broomfield beech,  
mature and tall, huge and round,

its branches latticed, locked, and stout.  
Two centuries gone, aye, and more  
it's whispered in the warm sunlight,  
it's sighed in wind, in rain, and night,  
it's creaked into the quite, cold white  
of frost, of sleet, of snow, and like.

With laurel, chestnut, cypress, oak,  
sprout and sprigged, specked and span,  
the mighty beech, the Broomfield beech  
has stood and been -strike or stroke-  
a shield and screen -sheet or bolt-  
by star, or moon, by twilight hour  
with spread and shade, a sacred bower,  
of copper leaf and silver bough.

### **IN HOLFORD COMBE**

[4.30pm, 10th Nov 1986, Holforde  
Combe, Quantocks]

In Holford Combe, I climbed through oak  
and made my way to Upright's hill,  
and there I saw Wordsworth's Thorn,  
more ancient than he saw it then.

I sat beside this tiny bush,  
and gazing out, I saw the sea,  
the coast of Wales beyond in haze,  
the purple holms in silver mist.

And rising with the south-west wind,  
I walked along the Quantock crest,  
and saw to east the Parrett wynd  
from Avalon to Quantoxhead.

Towards the beacon ridge I strode  
Through the bracken, broom, and thorn,  
beyond a cairn and Wilmot's Pool,  
until the west spread out below.

And to the fore the Brendons rose  
dark, more sombre than the clouds  
rolling in on evening grey  
from Exmoor and the Devon south.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And turning from the chill and night,  
I started on the downward climb  
through the oaks of Holford Combe  
and home towards the village lights.

### **THE SEVEN SISTERS OF COTHELSTONE**

[3-4pm, 23rd Nov 1986, Cothelstone  
Beacon, Quantocks]

The sun in a beam, a flash, and a blinding,  
shines upon the tumuli of Cothelstone  
Beacon  
were like thirteen old women, the Seven  
Sisters  
stand witnessing the acts of heathens.

The wind, in a howl, there shakes the  
moss  
and the rain falls bitter and cutting;  
the crooked sisters creak and lament their  
fate  
crested on a hill so uninviting.

The worshippers come, but the sisters  
remain  
through autumn, and winter, and spring,  
and though summer brings hot baking days  
the Sisters stand trapped in their ring.

### **THE FLAME IS OUT**

[11.40pm, 30th Nov 1986, Waterpitts]

I feel like some piece of waste,  
I cannot feel my inner flame;  
I am extinguished, snuffed, put out,  
Inside there burns no light.

I cannot yet escape my hearth -  
the heat still gives a lingering warmth,  
but every hour brings on chill,  
I cannot yet rekindle life.

No little spark lingers on,

my fuel is black, charred, or ash,  
my flame once my burning dream,  
spent out, now, is gone.

### **THE DOLPHIN**

[9.30pm, 1st Dec 1986, Waterpitts]

The dolphin beached upon the sand,  
I stood and watched and thought  
I might wade into the icy waves  
and set the creature on its way.

But no, I let some others come  
and plunge into the winter tide,  
I let them nudge the dolphin's snout  
on towards the sea, and out.

When at last the creature reached  
some water deep and clear of beach,  
as the dolphin swam out free  
an ocean welled in me.

### **PORTLAND BILL**

[10.30pm, 1st Dec 1986, Waterpitts]

The spray, the spume, foamed and spat,  
the black shags cracked and opened crab,  
the winter wind blew and crashed  
the crest and trough against the crag  
and cliff of crumbling Portland.

The Channel lash, licked and smashed  
the oolite lime and salt-washed linch,  
the lifting gale threw and dashed  
the heave and break against the link  
and limb of lichen Portland.

### **CHRISTMAS JINGLE**

[7th Dec 1986, Waterpitts, Quantocks]

Jingle, jangle, juggle, do!  
Candle, bauble, trinket too!  
Cards, cakes, pudding, phew!  
Enough for me and you!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Got the holly? Got the tree?  
Got the sherry? Got the beer?  
Golly! What a lot of cheer!  
Merry Xmas! Bon New Year!

### **THE BALLAD OF MEG GRAY**

[Begun 8th Dec 1986, Waterpitts -  
Finished 13th May 1988, Cothelstone]

He heard the sound of horses hooves  
in the dead of night -  
He tossed and turned and shouted out  
'They've come for me tonight!'

His lover took him to her breast,  
caressed his fevered brow -  
'They'll not have you this morning light  
or first they'll have my life.'

She rose and took a pistol out  
and threw the shutters back -  
'Who's there below in the yard?  
Do you know the hour?'

The horses in the courtyard bucked,  
their riders reigned them in,  
but none would say who they were  
or why they'd ridden in.

'Who are ye men?' she firmly called  
'Who are ye black cloaked mob?  
I have a pistol by my side  
to use if none will talk!'

She caught the sound of whispered words,  
then heard the leader say  
'We look for a husband slayer!  
We've heard he's come this way.'

'Who be ye men?' she asked again  
'Which rich man be murdered now?  
Who be this man you're looking for?  
Why look you to this house?'

'We've heard' the leader of them said  
'We've had it from a groom  
that in your room hides John Black  
who murdered your man Gray.'

'Is my husband murdered then?  
I'll wear no black for him -  
He was a swaying braggart man,  
his love was forced and cruel.'

'Then open up this door, Gray wife!  
for you have part in this!  
We know you have the gigolo  
behind your scarlet skirt!'

'I shall not slide a bolt for you,  
be off beyond my walls!  
I'll aim into the shadowed night  
and one of you will fall!'

'You cannot scare us off like this,  
we're here to serve the law.  
Send him out before we fire  
and send you to the Lord.'

'I'll gladly go' she boldly spoke  
'I'll never give him up!  
She drew her pistol to the dark  
but her lover cried out 'No!'

'Enough of this! I am here!  
You may take me as you want,  
but leave Meg Gray out of this,  
she has done no wrong.'

'She is a common tavern whore!  
She'll die with you tonight.  
Let fire!' their leader shouted out  
and pistols roared to life.

Death they brought to Meggie Gray,  
she fell scarlet to the floor -  
'O lover, do not tarry here,  
they'll soon be through the door.'

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I will not leave, never, no!  
No, never will I leave.  
I've killed a man to have you thus  
And fate has made it brief!

'O John, O John, flee you must  
or I die in vain for thee -  
Leave me here upon the floor  
and fly like the deer.'

'I will not leave you now' he cried  
'Our fates are met in one -  
Close your eyes and sweetly dream  
of all our times as one.'

And as she lay there in his arms  
the riders broke the door -  
And as he kissed her on the lips  
they took him with a roar.

'We have the adulterant murderer now!  
We have him in our hands!  
Take him to the oak outside,  
we'll hang him good and high!

'John! John!' Meggie Gray called out  
'We'll meet tomorrow morn.  
We'll meet in summer sun and heat  
and make love in the corn.'

'She's mad!' a rider shouted loud  
'It's best we help her die.'  
'Leave her be!' John screamed out  
as a pistol pressed her brow.

A shot rang out through the dark  
and Meggie sighed no more -  
'Now take him to the hanging tree  
and dispatch him to his whore.'

They took John out to the oak  
and tied the noose about -  
'Now we'll hear your final words  
and then we'll have your life.'

He never spoke a single word,  
his thoughts were all for Meg -  
'We will meet in the corn  
as soon as I am dead.'

They strung him up, sent him off  
to spend his days in Hell -  
and when cold and stiff and dead,  
they threw him in a well.

Who can say what transpired  
on the coming of the morn,  
or whether John and Meggie Gray  
made love in the corn.

But woe betide the married man  
who treats his wife amiss -  
for there are those who'll gladly kill  
and die to have her kiss.

### THE COTTAGER

[6<sup>th</sup> Mar 1987, Lower Terhill,  
Cothelstone]

Oh Robert, need your sullen frown  
Dark the days of Spring now born,  
The sleet is but a passing gloom,  
The wind is nothing but a storm.  
Why sit you brooding by the fire?  
Is it yew you burn for warmth?  
Through green the evening molders on,  
What is your ail? What works your  
thought?

For whilst you sicken by your hearth,  
The laughter fills the village inn,  
Though you might not liken beer,  
There's comfort found in ingle nooks.  
Yet sit you still, tense and bilged,  
Nursing pains you self-inflct.  
Tell me, Robert, I'll have the truth -  
Is there sense in these dark moods?

And as your fire dims and whites,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The cold of night upon your back,  
Do you wish that you could flee  
The sleet of Spring, the gale of March,  
To take upon some lengthy voyage,  
A pilgrimage to some beyond?  
Where gloom and wind and sullen storm  
Are traded for a health of thought?

Oh Robert, will it turn you grey  
To sit and pass your Springs like this?  
Get you up, dowse the fire  
And venture on the wind and rain.  
Forget your brooding by the hearth,  
Forget the yew you burn for warmth,  
And though the sleet and stormy blast,  
Get you down the hedge-rowed path.

See now, those hazel eyes alight,  
Burn like all the northern stars,  
See how a fresh kindled flame  
Flares up in your knitted brow.  
Here now the latch, your lively gait,  
Stepping firmly off into the night;  
As through the sleet and stormy blast  
You set out for the village lights.

### COTHELSTONE

[12<sup>th</sup> March 1987, Lower Terhill,  
Cothelstone]

Cothelstone is a place for a poet -  
The landscape cut with the knife of the  
artist,  
The air has the quiet of a national park,  
And the earth has the tread of the  
prehistoric.

I sit on the stoop our cottage hide,  
And bathe in the blaze of the first Spring  
heat;  
The collie lies on the warm tile path  
And the cat stalks a bird.

### THE WILD MARCH WINDS

[27<sup>th</sup> March 1987, Cothelstone, Somers.]

On the Bagborough Road above Tilbury  
Farm,  
One of Brown's beeches was down in the  
gales,  
It cut off the road to Cothelstone Hill,  
The old Saxon way to Seven Mile Stone.

I turned, descended by Lower Terhill,  
Then to Quelbec, past Cothelstone Arch;  
A small ash lay felled by the Vicarage,  
But I climbed the grade to the crest of the  
hill  
To find a great elm blocking the road  
That joined the way to Seven Mile Stone.

I turned, went down by Cushuish Cut,  
Stopping to gather armfuls of kindling,  
Then on to Kingston, along Lodes Lane  
'Till at Broomfield Cross another  
impasse!  
A colossal oak tree straddled the way,  
Hedgerows smashed and many trees felled.

The lane, deep cut, I passed under the oak  
Reached the cross at the edge of Fyne  
Court,  
There met a lad on the Duckpool Road  
Who told me - six beeches were down!  
The only way out was by Broomfield Hill  
By the lane that leads to the Enmore  
Road.

Up, then down towards Smocombe and  
Barford,  
A huge larch lay slain on Enmore Green,  
The water of Durlough looked like a sea,  
The Quantocks, now a chaos of felled  
trees.  
Surely I'll remember March Eighty Seven  
And the twenty-seventh day for the  
fallen.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

[16<sup>th</sup> April 1987, Cothelstone, Somerset]

He who takes sleep for granted  
Goes through life like a dream.  
He who works night and day  
Suffers, pain, distress and fights  
To overcome the anguish plight  
Of a sleepless, torturous life.  
Rest, rest from the flickering flame.  
Drink, sip your phials of ethanol.

### THE QUITTER

[21<sup>st</sup> April 1987, Cothelstone, Somerset]

Inside my heart, my belly, my bowels,  
There is a voice that whispers 'Quitter!'  
At first I could not hear the voice,  
But slowly as the weeks went by  
I heard the voice grow like a storm,  
Until now I dread the nightly echoes,  
The ringing in my ears 'Quitter! Quitter!'

Perhaps you might think I'm ill,  
For I cannot say that I am well  
When I have this voice inside my head  
Shouting 'Quitter!' You are a Quitter!'

I cannot run away from what's inside me!  
I cannot silence the voice that haunts me!  
My belly cramps and knots and gags,  
My mind turmoiled, boils and gasps  
And gives out - 'I am a quitter!'

### THE QUAY

For Jane

[25<sup>th</sup> May 1987, Mumbles, Swansea]

Out on to the promenade,  
We walked our love around the quay,  
And there where sea and sea-wall meet,  
We found a shelter from the waves.

And lip to lip we kissed the tide,  
Breast to breast we lingered hours,  
The breeze, the salt, the in-rush spray,  
All alone the night was ours.

The city lights strung the bay  
As dusk fled in from the sea,  
And night fell on the quay -  
We rejoined the promenade.

### DINEVOR

For Jane and Dawn

[20<sup>th</sup> June 1987, Mumbles, Swansea]

By sycamore and nettle path  
With wine and female friendship,  
A troubled sky easing past  
We climbed from Deilo's pasture,  
Preceded by a wind bourn host  
Bent to summer madness.

The River Towy wound below,  
We skipped and crossed the motte,  
Vertical to the milling sky  
Ivy-walled rose the fort,  
A fortress mount, a Norman keep  
Enclosed by fern and oak.

In fleeting bursts summer broke  
Through the violent Ambrose cloud,  
Then summer plunged into dark  
As showers fell on Evor Mount,  
And we beneath a sycamore  
Read our plays, smoked our dope.

And turning from Dinevor's walls,  
The sky burst open, blue on blue  
The Towy glistened in the heat'  
Deilo's pasture beckoned forth;  
We passed beneath the sycamores  
And saw no more - Dinevor.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **I WISH IT WAS MY LOVER HOME**

[15<sup>th</sup> August 1987, Mumbles, Swansea]

Every voice I hear I think  
And wish it were my lover home.  
I wait, I hope, I pine  
And do not know where she's gone.

I will not cry, not tonight,  
I'll sit into the dawn -  
How can I rest without word  
Of what my lover's done.

O break, o break my broken heart,  
For now I think I'll weep -  
For only if my lover comes  
Will I be made to sleep.

### **COME WIND COME STORM**

[1<sup>st</sup> September 1987, Mumbles, Swansea]

I love you for what you are,  
Wind, storm, and song.  
How I long for your warm arms  
About me 'neath the stars.

I've never had a love so pure,  
Crystal, ice, and snow.  
How I wish for your fresh lips  
Upon my wanton own.

And though I cannot have enough  
Tempest, fire, and sea,  
O how I know I'll always want  
The love you steal for me.

### **JANE AND EMMA**

[13<sup>th</sup> September 1987, Mumbles, Swansea]

Jane and Emma  
The loves of my life  
One without the other?  
Oh my, I will die!  
For I cannot stand the parting

I cannot bear the grief.  
Jane is my want,  
Emma my need.

### **RUN ME OUT OF TOWN**

[20<sup>th</sup> October 1987, Swansea]

I have myself a lover  
But I haven't any time  
For all the awkward moments  
To talk about our crimes.

'Cause I'm a dodo,  
No, a dirty hobo!  
Run me out of town!

### **AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL**

[6<sup>th</sup> November 1987, Swansea]

At the bottom of the well  
If you listen quietly  
You'll hear a ringing bell.

Who can really tell  
Who tolls that lovely bell  
At the bottom of the well.

### **GHOSTS IN THE LANDSCAPE**

[15<sup>th</sup> November 1987, Swansea]

Wind water rush  
I crave to see the blood  
Some ancient Saxon shed  
With his dying breath.

Howling honing rain  
Sing the gasping sighs  
Mail-clad Normans made  
As the fatally fell.

Rage torrent flood  
Flush the choking screams  
Harold's soldiers poured  
As they cried fleeing.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **YOU'RE A WANKER**

[18<sup>th</sup> November 1987, Cothelstone,  
Somerset]

Why don't I tell you like it is?  
How I'm really pissed off.  
How I don't like your ideas.  
How I don't give a toss  
'Cause you're a wanker.

### **WHEN I'M PISSED OFF**

[18<sup>th</sup> November 1987, Diana's Statue,  
Cothelstone]

When I get really pissed off,  
I climb Weary-All Hill behind my cottage,  
And sit and stare out on to Exmoor.

For there's something in the nothingness  
That exists when inside is full  
Of hate and envy and burning anger.

I don't care about money and stuff,  
All I really want is beauty,  
The world and all that's natural.

I can't stand all the jealousies,  
I hate people stealing ideas from others,  
Doing nothing for anyone that's any  
good.

So I escape my hemmed-in cottage,  
Flee the smallness of the human world  
And sit and stare into the sun.

### **INSIDE BURNS A CANDLE**

[18<sup>th</sup> November 1987, Cothelstone,  
Somerset]

Inside burns a candle  
Lit for those who're lost;  
Outside hangs a lantern  
For those that might return.

### **MY MATE - THE OWL**

[26<sup>th</sup> December 1987, Cothelstone,  
Somerset]

That owl nightly sits and who's  
And woo's into the winter wind,  
But as there are no summer leaves  
I hear no whispers from the oaks.

That owl's my ear upon the night  
Witting through the winter white,  
Its who's and woo's waning slow.  
'Till once again, it wits some more.

That owl and me, we're old mates,  
Sometimes he keeps me wide awake.  
And even when I slumber deep  
That owl's in my dreams and sleep.

### **BIDDY BROWN (song)**

[27<sup>th</sup> December, Cothelstone, Somerset]

I used to think that Somerset girls  
Were the ugliest lasses in all of England.  
But then I met Biddy Brown.  
Oh my! What bliss her kiss was.

Who would have thought amid the  
blossom  
That I would meet the likes of her?  
But Biddy Brown was so divine  
I took her for an angel.

I think my luck was luck as such  
At finding such a virtue,  
That Biddy Brown knew my mind  
And lay me in the hay barn.

I never knew such bliss before  
At touching such a beauty,  
For Biddy Brown was soft and lithe  
And supple like a willow.

If you knew what sweet release

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Came from our mutual longing,  
Then Bidy Brown would not be mine  
She'd be hunted like a fable.

For I am all of sixty nine,  
Hunt master at the stables,  
And Bidy Brown's just twenty one!  
Sweet, and young, and able.

### **TO AND FRO ON THE LONG BRITISH ROADS**

[30<sup>th</sup> December 1987, Severn Bridge]

To .. ing and fro .. ing,  
Neither coming nor going,  
Not in nor between  
Neither excited nor bored.

What's next on the road?  
What next is in store?  
Hell if I know as I fro  
on the long British roads.

### **I'VE SOWN BARLEY**

[30<sup>th</sup> December 1987, Severn Bridge,  
England]

I've sown barley  
I've sown oats  
But I've never  
Sown English oak.

I've sown these,  
I've sown those,  
But I've never  
Sown English rose.

I've reaped wheat,  
I've reaped kale  
But I've never  
Reaped in English hay.

Heed my words,  
I've eaten curd,

But never ...  
Fed on English whey.

### **THE LANDLORD'S WIFE**

[8th Jan 1988, Cothelstone, Somerset]

She is sweet, she is coy,  
a dream, a blushing angel,  
she's the sweetest tavern lass  
that man could ever fancy.

But all my hopes fade away  
she is the landlord's darling;  
he's a brute of plus six foot  
that men are loath to battle.

I did not stay to love her, no,  
because she had her hard man,  
though in my mind I thought her mine  
halfway through the evening.

Sometime later, feeling bolder,  
I grabbed her by the shoulders,  
next I knew, out I flew  
chin bouncing off the gutter.

'Oh my love, where are you?  
Why are you with this butcher?'  
My head was broke, my back was sore,  
but I loved her like no other.

When I woke, I was soaked,  
and wet from too much drinking,  
but I could say I'd made a play  
for the darling of the tavern.

### **THE KNOT**

[15th Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

I do not know what I have  
Nor yet what it is I've bought;  
The cord as yet is not taut,  
It's coiled loose around me.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I will not know what I have  
Nor know what I've got;  
The cord binds as it knots,  
It's hot-burn cruelly smarts.

I cannot know what I have  
Nor yet what I've caught.  
The cord continues to garrotte  
My knotted heart.

### **SHADOW OF A GIRL**

[18<sup>th</sup> Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

When I look out upon the hills  
And gaze into the swirling mist,  
At first I see, a hand, a mouth,  
Then the shadow of a girl  
Who's in my head, who's in my mind  
But will I find her in my bed?

### **A NIBBLE ON A TART**

[18th Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

I cannot think what I'd like  
better than a bite of you,  
perhaps a nibble on a tart  
or some other less exotic food.

But ban such joy, I'm on the case  
for a taste of you -  
you're better than a row of cakes  
or a mouth of sugar cubes.

I wish to have no other muse  
than have a chew at you -  
so come to me, sweetest thing,  
I've come to nibble you.

### **I'LL WAIT FOREVER**

[21st Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

I'll wait forever for you, love,  
till all the seas have dried,  
until the heavens twinkle out

and every star has died.

I'll wait forever, and for more,  
till time no longer goes,  
until the exit of all space  
I'll wait and love you so.

And when I've waited for all time,  
I'll wait a lifetime more,  
I'll wait until you're in my arms,  
and your lips are on my own.

### **WHEN I LISTEN**

[21st Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

When I listen to the beating of my heart,  
I hear a little voice pleading with me -  
'I must escape! Please let me out!  
I'm in love, my prison's crumbling!'

Then, suddenly I find my head pounding,  
my breath is short, I'm in a pant,  
my cheeks flush, I'm flashed with feeling,  
there's swelling where once there was  
slack.

And having listened to my pulsing heart,  
I listen then to my throbbing mind -  
'You must be nuts to feel like that!'  
and once again I am torn apart.

### **TWO NAILS IN AN OAK TREE**

[22nd Jan 1988, Cothelstone]

And though they age and rust with time,  
these nails will never parted be;  
likewise, though parted by wide seas,  
this tree will bring you back to me.

## NORTH SOUTH DIVIDE

### PLAYMENU (North-South Divide)

[7<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1987, Cothelstone,  
Swansea, Monmouth, Leeds, Newcastle,  
Bradford]

### THE NORTH - SOUTH STORY (song)

When I begin to tell this story  
about the hate,  
about the system,  
about the North, about the South,  
about two different ways of life.

When I relate the awful truth  
about the wealth,  
about the poor,  
about the North, about the South,  
about two different ways of life.

Then you'll know, god you'll know,  
you'll see it all,  
you'll take it home,  
you'll smack your head  
and break your bones  
for coming to these written poems  
about the North, about the South,  
about two different ways of life.

### WE HAVE THE LIFE (song)

In the South we have the life,  
its roses, cake, and gin ....  
we haven't got no problems  
'cause we've got everything.

There are a few who rock the boat ...  
the South is not for them.  
We like to keep them on the move  
and keep them off Stonehenge.

We have our southern heritage  
wot we've got's quite nice

but we wouldn't want to kid you  
that nothing has a price.

Oh, it's great to be a Southerner,  
rich, and smug, and loveable .....  
we haven't got no problems  
'cause we've got everything.

In the North they have the strife,  
its thistles, spuds, and beer ...  
they've got all the problems  
'cause they haven't got our cheer.

Up there, they all rock the boat  
and throw each other out,  
and when they want to come down South  
they get nowhere on their bikes.

They have their northern customs  
wot they've got's for them,  
we wouldn't want them living  
on the Downs or by the Thames.

Oh, it's great to be a Southerner  
rich, and smug, and loveable .....  
In the South we have the life,  
its roses, cake, and gin ....

we haven't got no problems  
cause we've got ev-ery-thing!

### NORTHERN GIRL ENVY (song)

What have I got,  
a couple of bob,  
look at her now ....  
she's all buttons and bows.  
How come I'm dull  
and she's all dolled up.  
Is it because ...  
her dad's loaded  
or what?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

How come I work  
and I'm broke all the time.  
How come a student  
swoons like a queen.  
Why am I tired  
when she dances all night.  
Is it right, is it right,  
is it right?

She's taking my man!  
How can I win.  
What does she have  
that I can't provide.  
When money can buy  
love has its price.  
I shalln't give in, can't give in  
when I'm losing my man.

### ON THE DURHAM STREETS (song)

Down by the bus station  
you can get yourself a sniff,  
you can be a vandal,  
you can smash a bus-stand window  
and get stoned for kicks.

I've spent my life on the streets,  
sitting on benches,  
hanging round cafes.  
People think I smash-up gravestones  
and sniff glue with kids.

I love the hills,  
it's great on the hills  
you can walk for miles.  
you can run with the wind  
take love and be kissed.

But down on the streets  
you're no good to no-one,  
you're in with the bums.  
When you live on the streets  
you run with the scum.

### THE WEIRDOS OF GLASTO BURY

Iv 'ee be lookin' for that ther' place  
I not be tellin' 'ee where it be ...  
'Cause iv 'ee be knowin' how weird it be  
To be zeein' wizards in dar' High Street  
Wu'd a man be right iv he point the way  
To a town, skip, where wumen 'uv bare-  
feet?

No, it not be on me mind to show 'ee dar'  
Where zom volks backpack evrthin' they  
'av,  
Rather I point ee' towards a smarter town  
Arr, Taunton be alright vurst time round.  
No, 'ee be staying away vrum dat weird  
place  
Glas'an'by be lost, an' best n'eet vound.

### CONSETT (song)

Last time I went to Consett  
to look for a steel souvenir,  
I couldn't even find a washer  
from the works that once was there.

Consett's wonderful for recreation  
Country walks, unspoiled views,  
and dry-slope skiing ....  
They shut the Steel Works down.  
They shut the Steel Works down  
On lovely Consett Town.

The steps led up the Derwentside  
there was nothing but new laid steps  
square miles of caterpillar tracks  
grass seed and the wind on my neck.

Consett's wonderful for recreation ...

I turned my back on the grassy banks  
and went into the town  
I couldn't see an unboarded shop  
the town had been nailed down.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Consett's wonderful for recreation ...

such sweet happiness  
if you offered it right.

The folk of Consett aren't outdoor sports  
they're a salty home-loving lot.  
The works are now dry ski-slopes  
where the doleys walk their dogs.

Would I say no ....  
Would I say no ....  
if you let yourself go ...

Consett's wonderful for recreation ...  
Oh lovely Consett Town.

### **I LEFT THE NORTH (song)**

### **ENGLISH QUALITY OF LIFE**

I left the North for the South.  
I heard the venom that seeped from  
twisted mouths.  
I'd gone over to the other side,  
I'd buttered my bread on both sides.

The quality of life is not in a house  
is not in a job, a car, and a wife.

The quality of life is not in cash  
not in possessions, trinkets and trash.

I went South to study,  
To get a degree at a pre-fab Poly.  
After four years I graduated;  
I got a job being somebody's Wally.

The quality of life is not pounds and  
pence  
mortgage and rates, bills and rent.

I earn good money;  
I have my own warren;  
I have come to think of myself  
as Southern, not Northern.

The quality of life begins at home  
not in the pub, or over the phone.

The quality of life is in the mind  
in the spirit, and being kind.

I think of myself as Southern,  
not Northern.

### **SOUTHERN SWEETHEART ON THE BOTTLE (song)**

### **NEWSPAPERS**

Would I say no,  
if you let yourself go  
and kissed me right on the heart.

How can people be what they read?  
Are there such newspaper breeds?  
Can it be true that political creed  
Is husbanded by such press-baron feed?

Would I regret  
such delightful caress  
if you offered it so.

For what of the others; the Star? the Sun?  
The Mail? the Mirror? - the regional runs  
That headlines "Vicar Becomes A Nun"  
Next to a picture of the Queen and her  
Mum.

Would I forego  
if you presented it forth  
and hugged me into the night.

Can we believe what the papers say?  
We have to judge day by day -

Would I forget

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **IF EVERYTHING IS PAID FOR, SO SELL THE COUNTRY'S SILVER**

If everything is paid for  
why should everyone pay again?  
If everything is paid for  
it should be given gratis.  
For if everything is paid for  
and paid for yet again,  
who keeps the profit  
when the second payments met?

Nothing is free in this world,  
free means you've still got to pay.  
Nothing is free in this world,  
you've still got to pay!

If everything is paid for  
who's making the dough?  
If everything is paid for  
who's running the show.  
For if everything is paid for  
and paid for yet again,  
we're purchasing free things,  
we're buying up ourselves!

### **CHAUVO URBAN MAN (song)**

He was a chauvo man ... he had no class  
He thought of her as a piece of trash.  
He never tried to read her mind ...  
He brought to task all woman kind.

He was a pig first class ...  
He was a braying ass ...  
He was a brutish mass ...  
He was a piece of trash.

He was a chauvo man, he had no taste  
He saw every woman as a humping mate.  
He tried to ignore his woman's mind  
He wanted her for the bits he liked.

He was a prick first class ...

He was a dick to the last ...  
He was sick and crass ...  
He was a piece of trash.

He was a chauvo man ... he had no class  
He was full of lust when he made a pass.  
He always made her feel real bad  
He always found ways to make her mad.

He was a prick first class ....

### **BLACKBURN BURGLAR (song)**

Caught in the act  
The goods are the facts  
My hands are all red  
I'm in a fix for sure

I'm in trouble with the law  
And I'm on my way to court  
O I wish hadn't thought  
That I never would be caught

O isn't it a shame  
That I'm taking all this blame  
I really should have known  
That I didn't have a chance.

And then I might have not  
Had an eye on what I've got  
I've been nabbed by the collar  
by the long arm of the law.

I've been caught in the act  
And the goods are the facts.

### **THE TEMPLE MEADS PORTER (song)**

A porter can retain goods entrusted to  
him  
Until carriage is paid in full,  
A porter can keep a suitcase  
Until carriage is paid in full.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A traveller might lend his items  
And might expect to get them back  
But a porter has no wages  
Until a traveller pays his whack,  
A porter has no wages  
Until he's paid his whack.

So there we have the law, sir,  
It's as plain as Jane, you see;  
A porter will have his carriage  
Or be first to cry 'Police!'  
A porter will have his carriage  
Or be first to cry 'Police!'

### **THE TORIES AND THE HEATHENS (song)**

He had no faith in nothing  
Not even the Lord above,  
He didn't believe in Fairies  
Or all those other things.  
He only believed in nothing,  
Negated all he could.

O how we felt for him!  
O how we prayed for him!  
O how we tried to save him  
From the Devil's grip!

O Lord unleash this poor enslaved soul.  
Make him see you, make him know.  
Make him cower where you go bold.

### **THE LONDON VEGAN**

I do not exist, I will nor exist  
in the mist upon the hills.  
I do not exist, I will not exist  
with the swans on the frozen lake.  
I do not exist, I will not exist  
with the hiss of the rain in the trees.  
I only exist, I merely exist  
as a human in an urban cave.  
I do not exist, I will not exist

with the stags in the autumn leaves.  
I do not exist, I will not exist  
with the whistle in the winter breeze.  
I do not exist, I will not exist  
with the trout in the river reed.  
I only exist. I merely exist  
amongst man and the city creed.

### **HEAVEN IS A SUPERMARKET (song)**

We kept meeting at one of those places.  
It was like Daz, and Omo, and Persil, all  
in one.

It was marmalade, jam, and honey.  
Cornflakes, Crunch, and Wheaties.  
It was baked beans, pasta,  
Frozen peas, and crackers,  
Rashers, buns and marg.  
At every counter we encountered.  
In love we touched and rubbed.

It was disgusting.  
We always met there.  
It was warm, it was public.  
It was secret.  
We could be discreet.

In Sainsburys! In Sainsburys!  
The super-duper market where we meet!  
Sainsburys! Sainsburys!  
The only place where we can be discreet!

It is an institution,  
without it we'd be losing  
half the hanky panky going on.  
It is an institution  
where men almost equal women,  
it's just the place to have a love affair.  
It is an institution  
with lanes of smiling women  
looking at themselves in shiny cans.  
It is an institution  
where men thin or middling  
push back hair no longer there.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

In Sainsburys! In Sainsburys!  
The super-duper market where we meet!  
Sainsburys! Sainsburys!  
The only place where we can be discreet!

### **ANGLE, SAXON, and DANE (song)**

The Romans came and brought a name  
Rule Britannia! Screw Britannia!  
They buggered off to fight in Spain.  
Left Britannia! Fled Britannia!  
They left Britannia to the invading  
waves.  
Poor Britannia! Sick Britannia!  
Saxon, Angle, and sodden Dane.  
Rue Britannia when that lot came!

### **ARTHUR**

Arthur lies near the Holy Thorn  
At rest in the earth of Avalon.  
He awaits the call of the Celtic tribes  
To gather his sword and ride, ride, ride!  
Ride to the aid of oppressed souls,  
To fight against heartbreak and woe!  
To rule by right, and vanquish foes!  
He'll draw his sword, unleash his bow,  
And then for certain we will know  
That Arthur has come to save us!

And once he has saved us,  
Back he will ride swifter than wind,  
Rises on the Holy Thorn  
Where Arthur sleeps in Avalon.

### **THE MASTER OF BROOMFIELD HALL (song)**

Profit's the reward of those in authority  
Too often it's a few impoverishing the  
majority.

But that's the way it is, mate  
That's the way it's got to be

The pounds for me, and the pennies for  
thee.

It's a great old world we live in  
I wouldn't trade it with Gunga Din  
For all the hashish in Peshawar!  
No, I'd rather be Lord of the Manor!  
I'd rather be Lord of the Manor!  
Toasting my bum at the fire.

### **THE SEX PLAGUE (song)**

Then the plague came along  
and struck us all down,  
there were fewer of us left,  
we were sad for a time,  
we were sad for a time.

Then we came out of decline  
everything was fine for awhile,  
then, the children started coming!  
O they kept coming!  
O they kept coming!  
'till they filled all of London  
'till they filled all of England

And they never stopped coming  
no, they never stopped coming  
they've never stopped birthing  
they'll never stop birthing  
cause we cant give up fucking  
they'll always keep birthing  
cause we won't give up fucking  
they'll be millions more birthing  
so there's billions of fuckings  
cause we never stop fucking  
so they'll never stop birthing.

### **ROOTS (song)**

You've got to have roots.  
Unless you know where you're coming  
from,  
how can you know where you're going to.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

You don't have to go someplace else  
to get on in the world.  
Nothing wrong with being in one place  
all your life.

It breeds community ....  
It makes for harmony ....  
It breeds family .....

Life's all about family,  
having your close ones about you,  
especially in times of trouble.

I feel sorry for these poor kids who drift  
about the country like gypsies.  
I feel sorry for their mothers ... especially  
at Christmas.

It's shameless ....  
Who's blameless ...  
Depending on neighbours ....

You don't have to go someplace  
to get on in the world.  
Not if you've got roots.  
You've got to have roots,  
or you might as well look  
to the ends of the earth for yourself.

You've got to have roots,  
or you might as well shoot  
to the moon for the source of mankind.

For if I tell you now,  
while the clouds are about  
that all that I know  
is what I learned back home,  
then you'd see why I say  
you've made an awful mistake  
by neglecting your roots.

You've got to have roots  
and I don't give a hoot

for the fancies of wandering souls.

For I'll tell you right now  
at isn't swell to find out  
that there's no-one you really know

For if I show you now  
while the sun's coming out  
that I all that I care for  
is the home that I came from,  
then you'd see why I say  
you've made an awful mistake  
by neglecting your roots.

### **ROOTLESS (song)**

I don't earn a thing  
I don't work, so I'm thin  
I live in men's homes and hostels.  
I had a wife,  
I had a child,  
And a mother in Fife ....  
But time can be hostile.

I am confined  
To a bed on the ground  
And roam the country in all weathers.  
I get the Nashy  
I need it for baccy  
It keeps me happy ....  
Though life could be better.  
it could be better.

### **GOODY SNATCH (song)**

If we've all to have a value,  
Then it's nothing to resist,  
We might as well cry 'Uncle!'  
And cease to resist -

Goody Snatch, Goody Snatch,  
Leaping on our backs  
Goody Snatch, Goody Snatch  
With her hacking sack

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Sharpening up her axe  
Heads instead of tax,  
On our back  
With one hack  
Head in sack!

Goody Snatch, Goody Snatch  
A price upon our heads,  
Goody Snatch, Goody Snatch,  
Lets have your head instead  
You are such a witch  
You are a fascist bitch,  
You are unwell,  
Time will tell.  
Go to hell!

### A RENTED HOUSE

A rented house is not a house  
When it's someone else's home,  
There's those who think rented stinks  
cause it'll never be one's own.

But why do such people think  
that what they've got is their's,  
I like to think that everything  
Is merely out on loan.

All I know - we grow and slow  
And take nothing when we go.

### FOOTBALL BOYS (song)

We are the football boys  
We are the champions!

We love to see our goalie dive  
and save the day for us  
We love to watch our centre backs  
hack, and hook, and writhe.

We want to see a crunching slide  
from our midfield lads,  
We scream to tell our inside men  
to smack and have a crack!

We cry on seeing our super star  
strike it home for us  
There's nothing like the after-crack  
while boozing in the bar

We are the football boys  
We are the champions.

### THE CRICKETING VICAR

How about a game of cricket, vicar?  
Nice day for the odd over or two.  
Don't you think the weather's rather  
splendid?  
There'll be no sticky wicket, for sure.  
Have you ever thought of being an  
umpire?  
My, you're wild with the odd ball or two!  
You're batting is rather wicked,  
You're a wretched player, vicar, aren't  
you??

### THE THICK SCULLED RUGBY BASTARD (song)

I'm a thick sculled rugby bastard  
I'm Neanderthal and slow  
I like to beat upon my breast  
And spit at people's toes.

I am a rugby bastard!  
I am a thick sculled bastard!  
I am big slow bastard  
I am a sick pissed bastard!  
I am a rugby lad!

## SOUTH SEA WANDERER

### HUA HIN

[5th Feb 1988, Hua Hin, Thailand]

The palm fronds quiver,  
the sea breeze cools  
the heat of the tropic noon.

Ants file across the sands,  
there is an army on the march  
towards the blue lagoon.

Massage girls oil men down,  
peanut-boys sell their wares,  
deck-chair men halt the swoon.

The sun beats evening down,  
the shadows lengthen everywhere,  
night comes on too soon!

### KIRI KHAN

[7th Feb 1988, Prachad Kiri Khan,  
Thailand]

Below Mirror Mountain  
and the Koes of Kiri Khan,  
by the shading palms  
on sands as white as pearl,  
beneath the broad pandanus  
and a moon of tropic night,  
beside the warm green waters  
on a shore as smooth as ice,  
under the spell of Taurus  
and the ka-ka of the black,  
near an edge of ocean  
where the breeze never barks.

### KO PHANGAN

[28th Feb 1988, Haardin, Ko Phangan,  
Thailand]

The cool night breeze walked right in  
with the ocean right behind.

The palms stood higher than the Cross  
and drew in from all sides.

The moon two days off being full,  
Scorpio flicked its tail.  
Dead of night went *ka-ka*  
as deep night onwards came.

With it came the quietest calm,  
a hushing of the wild,  
as white sea-horses softly bucked  
dawn up like a child.

### CHAWENG

[6th March 1988, Chaweng, Ko Samui,  
Thailand]

Caught in the greyness of evening,  
moon three days past full,  
a stiff wind in from the east  
rolled the surf over good.

In the sultry still evening,  
night hung on the moon,  
the palms nutted the up-draft  
above the palm-thatch roofs.

In the throb of the nightfall,  
the moon splintered in pools  
on the hot tropical passion  
in our sigh-filled lover's room.

### I WILL FIND MY PARADISE

[18th March 1988, Ko Pee Pee,  
Thailand]

Beyond the gates of paradise  
where sadness comes to bear,  
I cannot face being left  
in such torment there.

In search of earthly paradise

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

where joy and bliss are free  
is a search I cannot miss  
to settle down and be.

So I will find my paradise  
where hope and love are one,  
and I will be forever smiled  
and joyed and free and young.

### THE SOUTH SEA WANDERERS

[18th March 1988, Ko Pee Pee,  
Thailand]

On the deep-blue South Seas,  
we sail beneath the Cross,  
we travel on by starlight  
in thought, not in talk.

We travel on in daylight  
beneath the burning sun,  
we rest and slumber fitful  
without plan or cause.

We wander through the seasons  
beneath the shifting clouds,  
we pass by whole continents  
without halt or pause.

### PILLOCK

For Donna Catherine  
[18<sup>th</sup> March - 16<sup>th</sup> Apr 1988, Thailand &  
Indonesia]

#### CANTO I

Pillock sat upon a rock  
the ocean washed the sand  
sea-salt crystallised  
on his body-tan.

O mighty ocean wash away  
the meditation of the day  
for who can say what will break  
upon this man of clay.

And in a moment all the world  
broke upon the golden shore  
turquoise waters on the mind  
of Pillock going round.

O mighty ocean, perfect sea  
chase the shade from the breeze  
for who can sneeze upon the shore  
of such a pleasant bay.

.....  
Poor Pillock on the rock  
the sun inside his head  
midday heat burning  
all he should have said.

O how love eats his happiness  
the ocean drowns his hope  
alone upon a coco beach  
coping with the pain.

Should such fire eat him whole  
and ash his paradise  
Pillock on the rock of time  
unwise he sits and pines.

Boats out on the sea crest  
ships beyond the bay  
across the endless oceans  
gypsies run the waves.

.....  
Pillock sat and ate the bile  
that rose into his mouth  
he spat it out and cursed  
and gave out a mighty shout.

Was that the cry of a gull?  
Beachcombers turned and stared  
all they saw was a rock  
and Pillock huddled there.

Who is that wretched crying man  
surrounded by the sea?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Should we proffer forth some help  
or should we leave him be?

.....

Pillock rose and blew his nose  
then dived into the waves  
walkers stopped and whispered low  
Is he mad or brave?

The green sea frothed vanilla white  
then settled smooth as glass  
the eddy reached the pearl sands  
and broke without a crash.

O mighty ocean, perfect sea  
break some coral from a reef  
for who can hope for the return  
of Pillock from the deep!

.....

Sunbathers weighed the waters  
beachcombers clocked the tide  
walkers stretched their metered legs  
'til sunset measured night.

They searched for him 'til sunrise  
not a trace was found  
his love left on the shifting sands  
the sea took Pillock down.

### CANTO II

It had begun in the islands  
on the night of a full-moon  
by a gently lapping lagoon  
while eating coconut-curry

Pillock met an angel!  
She lifted him upwards  
she carried him skyward  
until they touched the stars

He'd been miserably lonely  
mopping and home-sick  
moaning and groaning  
in off-putting tones.

She was a God-send  
who came by and saved him  
who took him to quiet seas  
and healed him with love.

They travelled through lands  
they laughed and they sang  
they lay in the sands -  
he adored her!

.....

She was his Venus  
She was his Daphne  
She was his Sappho  
all made as one.

How he adored her!  
How he upheld her!  
O how he fell!  
O how he plunged!

Into her bosom  
into her arms  
unto her charm  
he went without qualm

.....

She was an angel  
a beautiful angel  
but I must relate  
that he was unkind.

Unkind to an angel!  
Such despicable nature!  
I'm ashamed he behaved  
like a mere mortal sole.

Failed to cherish an angel?  
forget she had feelings?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

thought that her smile  
could never be lost?

Man can be cruel  
when he lives by vain rules  
and not with soft feelings  
nor heart, but his head.

Man can be hard  
when he orders and bullies  
when he ignores all reason  
in the throws of a mood.

.....

And so with his angel  
this beautiful angel  
he clouded her smile  
and damaged her wings.

The wings that had borne him  
to island and mountain  
that had carried him forward  
from his earlier gloom.

### CANTO III

What drove him East, then South  
to the island where the angel  
found him eating curry  
beneath a full-moon?

I might suggest it was boredom  
or some political objection  
or that his health was bad  
and he needed more sun.

But such trite reasons  
for travelling from home  
won't wash with Pillock  
who loved to rove.

He was a wanderer  
a vagabond gypsy  
rootless and footless

circling the globe.

He had a restless spirit  
that left him no comfort  
nor property nor home life  
nor such common joys.

Four-score foreign states  
six continents, six seas  
he'd crossed waves and highways  
to fulfil his dreams.

And always one more nation  
called on him. Come!  
One more distant country  
lured him on.

.....

He loved sun and palm trees  
the sands of tropic lands  
and to such magic shorelines  
he trekked to paradise.

He'd leave behind his stereo  
his push bike and his car  
and take an endless flight  
to an exotic distant isle.

He'd carry little baggage  
take precious little cash  
take nothing precious with him  
and bring precious little back.

All he'd seek was shelter  
food to keep him sleek  
and sun to reach the parts  
that time makes weak.

.....

He certainly wasn't perfect  
but sought to be himself  
to find the child beneath  
his adult grave reserve.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Reserve that clouds the morning  
reserve that wets the day  
reserve that darks the evening  
and turns the spirit grey.  
.....

What better aim or purpose  
than the betterment of self  
Can all of us aspire to  
on this planet Earth?

Perhaps there is a better cause  
that some wiser person knows  
many preach on this and that  
and many follow so.

But Pillock followed his own heart  
which led him all about  
and this is why we first find him  
in the tropic South.

### CANTO IV

Pillock lingered in despair  
waiting for his angel  
they had parted by a lake  
to rejoin on the shingle.

She had taken to the air  
Pillock to the land  
his journey lasted six long days  
that took an hour to fly.  
.....

Pillock rushed to meet her  
he couldn't get enough  
he had never met a woman  
who'd given him such love.

He crossed volcanic mountains  
he trekked through matted bush  
he forewent food and drink  
and slept on bare wood.

He spent his last few pennies  
on a boat out to the Isle  
the sea kicked up a fuss  
he gifted it some bile.  
.....

Landing on the white sands  
he was broke and hunger-wracked  
she wasn't there to greet him  
his mood grew dark, then black.

He sold his last possessions  
he prepared for her to come  
somehow he'd travelled faster  
than his blessed airborne one.  
.....

He brooded over a plain tea  
and a stale banana bun  
why had he let her fly off  
towards the southern sun?

Why had he blindly followed  
to catch with her again?  
Why hadn't he turned North  
to home and sleet and rain?

Why was he in torment  
when he was in love?  
Bewitched and so bewildered  
why was love so rough?  
.....

The sea wiped the foreshore  
coral broke the break  
Pillock waited every boat  
to bring his angel-babe.

He hoped every morning  
he worried every noon  
he cried every evening  
and nightly swooned.

O what a sad indictment!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

What a turn of fate!  
Pillock and his angel  
deemed never to be mates!

That is what the breeze said  
into Pillock's lug ...  
'You'll never see your Angel!'  
'She'll not show up, you mug!'

O how cruel the breeze tormented!  
how vile it played with him!  
it drove him to the rock  
and did him in!

.....

Poor Pillock, love-sick Pillock  
what a hopeless chap!  
where was his fellow Man  
to help hold him back?

### CANTO V

While despairing on the Isle  
there was one who nursed him  
she was a dark native girl  
who cared and tended.

She gave him shelter in her hut  
fed him rice and fruit  
wiped the sweat from his brow  
when his fever took.

She could not speak, she was deaf  
she spoke to him with touch  
she tried to make him laugh  
but sticking out her tongue.

She made him take swims with her  
and long walks on the shore  
but Pillock lost in angel love  
scanned the waves for boats.

No boats came one whole month  
Pillock wept at night

the dark-skinned girl put about  
her arms and held him tight.

With Pillock's head upon her breast  
she combed his unkempt hair  
when he slept she lay by him  
and watched till break of day.

She devoted all her time  
to Pillock's small demands  
she didn't know nor knew about  
or why his fever ran.

She nursed him thru his restless  
turns - his fixation for the sea  
she could not guess he waited there  
for Angel to appear.

.....

She loved Pillock more and more  
as more he grew more ill  
Pillock did not realise  
his cruelty to the girl.

The village talked of the cause  
of Pillock's strange malaise  
until at last they came to guess  
sex was to blame.

The girl's father came to save  
his daughter from a rogue  
but when he viewed the fevered man  
he quickly changed his tone.

For when he saw Pillock's face  
and his daughter's hovering care  
he saw that God was needed there  
and off he went to pray.

But Pillock leapt from the rock  
before he reached the temple  
the girl put a red-tailed snake  
to her lobe temporal.

LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Yet strange enough she did not die  
but fell into a swoon  
she woke to hear crashing waves  
and voices in the room.

A miracle! the father cried  
God had cured his girl!  
which God this was who can say  
but she has her hearing still.

CANTO VI

Who was this angel  
this glorious creature  
who mesmerised Pillock  
and managed to beach him?

Was she a mortal  
or some heavenly person  
sent from above  
to break ego-ed men?

Perhaps I should tell you  
that this woman was human  
she was as mortal  
as woman can be.

She was all Irish  
as Irish as I am  
when you're raised in America  
in cold Illinois.

Lets call her Chicago  
sweet girl Chicago  
an angelic Chicago  
in her thirty eighth year.

She was no chicklet  
newly out of the shell  
she was a well-groomed  
Mid-Western belle.

She wasn't your rough type  
who tended bar

she wasn't a waitress  
or farm girl dyke.

She was no nun  
or schoolteacher mam  
she was a lady  
alright!

.....  
Angel had beauty  
she was perfect in feature  
age had failed  
to sag or to line.

Her voice was honey  
her hair golden silk  
her eyes a warm ocean  
her skin like milk.

Cheerful of nature  
happy of face  
lively of step  
she walked with grace.

A model of manners  
patient to learn  
careful of action  
never angry nor stern.

.....  
With no obvious flaws  
nor traits to dislike  
she is an angel  
to all Pillock types.

When she met Pillock  
she was lonely and tired  
far from Chicago  
and drained by desire

Till under the full-moon  
by a lapping lagoon  
they kissed in the starlight  
and a lotus bloomed.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And what was this lotus  
freshly new formed?  
but Pillock and Angel's  
bosom love - born?

### CANTO VII

Sometimes when upon the road  
happy times come and go  
and when things are really slow  
it's sometimes best to split.

Pillock had his moody days  
cold as ice, insatiate  
with his own lax ways  
when he couldn't get his fix.

His needs changed with his mood  
and Angel couldn't understand  
whether he was sad or rude  
when in these mental fits.

Tired of his changing nature  
she took to pen and paper  
or books about romantic capers  
that stole her from despair.

She loved him with increased waver  
as his fitful moods enslaved her  
she gave less of her favours  
until they kissed no more.

.....

But why discord and such rancour  
when each had found safe harbour  
in the breast of sighing ardour  
made to foster love?

Angel never had such passion  
she cherished Pillock without ration  
she made with him in every fashion  
in hammock or in sea.

They were fast at every sunset

and every morn they were wet  
heavy with love's scented sweat  
they rose into the day.

Each gazed into each for hours  
they were bound by passion's power  
Pillock brought his Angel flowers  
she gave him all she had.

.....

Yet time in Paradise can pass  
and turn into a timeless trap  
that holds mortals in the clasp  
of a living Hell.

In this Hell mortals wither  
idleness can turn sweet bitter  
love can soon slide and dither  
on the brink of loss.

Couples once so sweet united  
find themselves quickly frightened  
at the thought of being bonded  
to one another for life.

In a way these thoughts hinder  
bring on love to its winter  
break pure love into splinters  
before it is a whole.

Sometimes there is no prime reason  
when neither wish for such lesion  
when couples have great cohesion  
in matters of the soul.

Circumstance can pressure all  
Pillock needed time alone  
Angel thought she'd get along  
better on her own.

So Angel flew up and out  
Pillock took the hard land route  
they said they'd meet on an isle  
in the tropic south.

LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

CANTO VIII

What became of Angel?  
Can I really speak  
of the tragedy that befell  
this perfect lady.

It breaks my heart to tell  
how Angel plunged  
was lost in the clouds  
on her flight south.

Wrapped in misty garments  
above the soaring birds  
she was sipping coffee  
when the engines cut.

What did she feel!  
Will we ever know!  
Her coffee spilt on her dress  
as the plane plunged below.

O what distress!!  
Imagine the fear!!  
Imagine the panic, the screaming!  
as the mountains neared.

Those mountains of death  
with their volcanic smoke  
craters that bubbled  
and flowed!

Such serious trouble!  
the entire plane shook  
the passengers took  
to their knees!

But Angel was calm  
she took from her purse  
a picture of Pillock  
and laughed!

When the plane hit the ground  
she was haloed in love

but her shimmering shroud  
did not save her.

.....

There were some who survived  
but in fact they all died  
those with true faith  
went to Heaven.

Those who were bad  
I might sadly add  
had their spirits snatched  
by the Devil!

Where Satan took them  
is a hazardous guess  
I'd rather forget  
they were taken.

For to dwell on the Fate  
of the unfortunate  
is the vice of curates  
and the righteous.

.....

Angel was borne away  
with the others saved  
and carried beyond ...  
to a garden.

And there she was cared for  
and tended by fairies  
and brought endless gifts  
by nymphets.

There she was happy  
but for moments of memory  
and thoughts of poor Pillock  
on the Isle in the South.

CANTO IX

What of that distant southern Isle  
surrounded by a smooth jade sea

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

where Pillock spent eternity  
waiting for his love?

It was a place of nature wild  
where steep volcanoes rose above  
the green expanse of coconut  
that swept down to the shore.

Temples broke the undergrowth  
ancient shrines fresh offerings bore  
wood chimes hung on every door  
and music drummed the air.

Rice fields steeped the verdant land  
streams flowed ... everywhere  
rivers rushed through sacred lairs  
where creatures took the shade.

Brown snakes coiled harmlessly  
green snakes slithered yellow scaled  
(But woe! The snakes waiting there  
red-tailed fork-fanged to bite!)

Sun birds drained the pink papaya  
swifts soared to sightless heights  
parakeets plunged like light  
into the shadowed glade.

Heron's filed across the sky  
white cranes waded on parade  
sparrows stole down in raids  
upon the seeded rush.

Lizards scurried in the ditches  
insects rose in a flush  
dragonflies beat the crush  
with their double wings.

In the pools shamrock clustered  
around pink-tipped lily rings  
skeeters whizzed in reckless whim  
from leaf to leaf.

Stacks of stalk lined the paths  
as natives cut the ripe rice-sheaf  
and winnowed chaff from the seed  
sparrows swooped to steal.

Men set-to with four-pronged hoes  
mud clinging to their heels  
they dredged the ditches with a zeal  
that drowned the heat.

.....  
And Pillock waiting for his love  
vainly wrestling with defeat  
lay prostrate completely beat  
and cried all day.

Till slowly time caught up with him  
to leave him weak and crazed  
the natives thought him malaised  
from being bone-idle.

They laughed at him for being so  
but they kept their silence  
they left him on the shoreline  
the ocean waxed and violent.

.....  
So who could blame the natives  
or the girl who couldn't save  
Pillock from a sea-grave  
in the tropic south.

For who could muse this indolent  
would plunge into the waves  
when only one could save him  
and she was not about.

### CANTO X

Down and down Pillock went  
dragged deep wards by the current  
driven by the wild sea force  
he went beyond all worry.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Short of breath he knew no more  
sound and sight departed  
some would say he left this life  
but this is mortal fancy.

Two mermaids took him in their arms  
ten leagues took him down  
'til they broke the surface  
of a cool lagoon.

Doting nymphs took him then  
dressed him in shinning robes  
drew him up above their heads  
and in procession bore ....

Him through a singing forest  
through a citrus grove  
through a spice filled garden  
of nutmeg, ginger, clove.

There's no beauty quite like this  
no scent nor sound to match  
one might say its Heaven itself  
but I do not know that much.  
.....

They brought him to a splendid bower  
they laid him in the grass  
they kissed him lightly on the lips  
and took their leave with that.

Pillock suddenly blinked awake  
before him stood a Queen  
before him in a beam of light  
stood his waking dream.

It was his lovely Angel-babe!  
It was his Angel-pooh!  
It was his every wish in one  
but how could this be true?

He rose and kissed her gently  
she gently kissed him back  
he took her in his wanton arms

and that was that.

At last! They were together  
he ... by land and sea  
she ... by air and accident  
until there they are.  
.....

O how we try to change things  
and work to shape our love  
but Fate will have the last say  
in spite of all our work.

And Faith will be the one hope  
we have to keep our love  
for without belief in someone  
we haven't got a lot.

And some may say that's nonsense  
we're better on our own  
but perhaps they have no knowledge  
of how love grows.

Yet, I have little wisdom  
on matters of the heart  
you should turn to authors  
more expert in this art.

But now you know of Pillock  
who pined for absent love  
it was all a little drastic  
but it worked out well enough.  
.....

### **IF LOVE WERE LIKE THE EAGLE'S FLIGHT**

For Donna Catherine  
[29th March 1988, Tuk Tuk, Lake Toba,  
Sumatra]

If love were like the eagle's flight  
and hovered on a gentle breeze,  
and we were fast into the night  
and never thought to tease nor scold;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

we would soar into the clouds  
and leave the works of man below;  
we would penetrate the shroud  
of earth and on to heaven go.  
And when we came to love's abode  
where mortal coat immortal cloaks,  
naked in the clouds we'd dote  
and lip our days in endless bliss  
until we'd filled the skies with stars  
and lit the universe with kiss.

### **BUKITINGGI**

[4th April 1988, Bukitinggi, Sumatra,  
Indonesia]

Crying into my tea in Bukitinggi,  
an hour before my bus-trip to Jakarta,  
the girl I've travelled with flies on  
to cultural Java and Yogyakarta,  
while I less fortunate in cash terms  
must brave the broken roads of Sumatra.

Thirty eight hours away in Java,  
Jakarta waits for me, and I am sad  
that twelve hours on lies Yogyakarta  
where the girl I've travelled with will rest  
while I sleep fitful on a bus,  
she will wing her way to Bali.

Eight hours on beyond Yogyakarta,  
eight hours on beyond Surabaya,  
I will travel on through sticky Java,  
I will reach then rest in sleepy Bali,  
and there I will meet my travel partner,  
or I will cry some more into my tea.

### **RELEASE MY FATE**

[16th April 1988, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia]

Never had I had such love  
rush and gush and drain me  
till I am wrecked upon a shore  
where none can save me.

What can I do but take these days  
as trial by Fate at work -  
for if I try to fight such luck  
I'll never know true love.

O heaven grant me sweet respite  
from all the ails I've done -  
I repent for all the times  
I've made others burn.

Forgive all the sins I've cast,  
the hearts I've bled with pain,  
I know now that love is not  
supposed to be so vain.

Age has made me realise  
that love is not return,  
but giving all you have to give  
without a selfish thought.

I suffer now, now I know  
what it is to lose  
contentment with a special one  
Fate was want to chose.

So break my pain, let me go  
unite me with my love -  
for I have learnt the hard way  
that love should not be spunred.

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 1

### THE UNIVERSAL BEING

[May 1988 - June 1989, Moscow,  
England, Scotland, Iceland]

#### 1ST LEXICON

I exist, therefore I am — so goes the philosophical argument. As beings of existence, humankind is related to the whole. This relationship is abstract — and humankind cannot make sense of it — for humanity will not embrace the Universal Being.

#### 1 - EXISTENCE

1. *Ergo sum*, in being I am absolute,  
Monad in the currency of time,  
I prevail in essence and reality,  
I exist, and become to evolve.
2. I resist absence and emptiness,  
The vacuum of the nothing & the void.  
Nirvana is nowhere, null & groundless,  
The neverness of life unbegotten.
3. My reality is the stuff of visibility,  
The matter of plenum and of things,  
Substantial, concrete, and solid -  
Body, flesh, pith, marrow, meat.
4. I resist vacant inane Maya,  
Gauzy ghostly vague & hollow shadows,  
Dreams of folly, fancy, and figures,  
Figments of vain fantasy and fallacy.
5. Inherent is the inwardness of ego,  
Intrinsic and generic to the self,  
Essential in all aspects and features,  
Implicit and autistic in the gist.
6. Outward is an accident of foreignness  
Collateral and appendaged to the id,  
Incidental to the basic nub of being,  
Casual to the quid per se — the ideal

7. Of State, of place, and circumstance,  
The shape of things as they stand,  
The way of style and high fashion,  
And its relation, status, rank.

8. I am all of these ins and outs:  
Of juncture, of matter, and of case,  
In respect, regard, in every detail;  
Chapter and verse - I am the page.

#### 2 - RELATIONS

9. I am kinned, and connected ....  
Related, allied, and of that ilk,  
To all that is pertinent, *ad rem*  
And all that is relevant, *a propos*.
10. Mortals are misallied, & misrelated,  
Foist in, dragged in by the shoulders,  
Isolated like some outlandish alien,  
Adrift from all that comes and goes.
11. Some have blood-ties, affiliations ...  
With clan, tribe, nation, race:  
Kith, germane, distaff, spindle,  
Distant, intimate, and close.
12. Some have relationships thru'  
marriage  
Affinity with the whole wrecking crew:  
Relatives-in-law, nuncles, lawma's,  
Buddies, step-kin, and kin removed.
13. Some reciprocate with interaction,  
Engage and interlock and inter-tie:  
With mutual or joint correlation,  
Some respond, and give reply.
14. Some identify with selfsameness,  
There's no difference 'tween them all:  
Duplicate, twin, and homoousian,  
They're six of one, and on all fours.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

15. Alike or similar, analogous mortals  
Match the alter ego: the mirror image;  
The twin that resembles and takes after  
The pea besides it in the pod.

16. Some dissimilar, differ by degree  
Enough to tell the daisy from the dock;  
I'm not a bit alike, nothing of it!  
I'm as different as a prune from a plum!

17. Uniformity certainly doesn't suit me  
Nor persistent running true to form.  
Invariably, without exception ...  
I do not tick monotonous like a clock.

18. Subtly, I am different, a far-cry,  
An apple off another type of tree:  
Like a horse of a distinct colour,  
I'm nothing of the kind, or the other.

19. Contrary or repugnant, I am not  
Counter, and opposite, and hostile.  
Such obverse, inverse antipathy  
Is vis-à-vis to all I desire.

20. Many are uneven, irregular, each way  
Divergent, and all over the shop:  
Changeable, and varying in manner,  
Inconsistent - everwhichway erose.

21. Few are multiform & hetramorphic,  
Allotropes motley manifold:  
Of every colour and description,  
I'm diverse, and eclectic of sorts.

22. Many may mimic, imitate, & copy,  
Ape, and parrot, dupe and mock:  
Some might follow suit, and mirror  
Pattern, model, echo, all they want.

23. But I am original, and novel,  
Fresh, and unique in the whole,  
Authentic, underived, and firsthand,  
A prototype going down the road.

24. I am not a faithful photocopy,  
Pastiche, parody, or perfect dub ...  
No replica, off-print, or tracing;  
Nor cast, nor chip from the block.

25. I'm no artist model, or dummy,  
Archetypal, died, or punched  
Sample, specimen, or taster  
Made as object lessons for the world.

26. I am in accord, in perfect unison,  
In keeping with *consensus omnium*,  
I am right down everyone's alley,  
Agreeable, congenial, and in sync:

27. Not clashing, jarring, nor discordant,  
I'm no ass in a lion's skin ...  
No jackdaw in peacock's feathers,  
No sardine in a salmon tin.

### 3 - QUANTITY

28. In quantity Humanity is a mass:  
Measure, strength, a force of numbers;  
Some certain sum, a magnitude,  
An amplitude, *plus ou moins*.

29. In degree Men are marked,  
Graded, notched, stepped in pitch,  
Ranked and rated, status staged,  
In so much, bit by bit ...

30. That some are equal, even, par,  
Equiponderant, balanced, poised,  
Even Stephen, nip and tuck,  
Neck and neck, drawn and tied.

31. Most are at odds: imbalanced,  
Ill-sorted on an inclined scale.  
Thrown off, they're disquarant  
In a top-heavy lopsided way.

32. Others - mean and juste milieu,  
Is in the long run middle state,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

On the average, normal, standard,  
*Mezzo termine* ... Generally.

33. Most are recompensed quid pro quo,  
Peter robbed to pay off Paul -  
Counter poised and bent over backwards  
To indemnify and cover costs.

34. Some men are great, much, and vast,  
Stupendous, lofty, large, and grand,  
Colossal in their mammoth most,  
Extreme and ultra beaucoup gross.

35. Most are small, slight and little,  
Minute, smidge, smitch, and snitch,  
Scant, and sheer, stark and scarce,  
Barely not a wit, nor stitch.

36. Some are eminent, transcendent,  
Superior, senior, and predominate.  
Excel! Surpass! Exceed and better!  
A cut, a stroke above the main.

37. Many are base, and second fiddle,  
Subordinate, shabby, bottom drawer,  
Tip-of-the-hat, understrappers  
Inferior, low, and in the shade.

38. Some advance, and some expand,  
Increase, gain, grow, extend,  
Build up, pyramid, and parlay,  
To mount and fuel the rising flames

39. Before decrease & lapse, they wane,  
Downturn, fall, and fade away;  
Cut down, rolled back, then shortened,  
They waste away, wear and tear.

\*

40. In addition, adjunct, append,  
Attach, tag on, *cum multis allis*,  
Clap on, slap on, burden, saddle  
Et cetera, and so forth, affixes -

41. Mortals are addenda, & appendixes,  
Supplemented to all issued things:  
Codicils, postscripts, offshoots  
Allonged, labelled, suffixed.

42. Criminals are deducted, & removed:  
Subtracted, tarred without rebate -  
Rubbed out, ruled out and written off:  
Struck off, knocked off, or erased.

43. Tramps are remains, relics, &  
remnants:  
Odds and ends, rags and scrag,  
Parings, raspings, filings, shavings;  
Fag-ends, doubts, stumps, butts.

44. Kings smack of vestige Hybrid too!  
Mixed and blended, instilled, fused,  
Touch of tar, and interbred -  
Hodge podge, mixty-maxy through!

45. Saints are pure: simple, plain,  
Unmixed, neat, straight, and true;  
Uninvolved and disentangled ...  
Uncombined and absolute.

46. Demons are complex: tangled skein,  
Labyrinths and Gordian knots  
Snarled and fouled, confused, muddled;  
Embrangled in Hyracanian woods.

47. Thus joined, hooked up in copulation,  
Fastened, fixed, lashed and trussed,  
Hand-in-glove, dovetailed, battened,  
Firm, secure, and hung together:

48. Mankind is bound, rope and anchor,  
Bowline knot and harness hitch,  
Inside clinch, and hawser bend,  
Couple, link, and bridge ...

49. Sectioned, parted, severed,  
Ruptured, fractured, split and slit,  
Non-adhesive rifted, rent and ripped,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Chipped, crazed, checked, and chapped,

50. Cohered, adhered, stuck together,  
Staying close, Mankind clings -  
Holding on like some old creeper:  
Bramble, ivy, briar, burr.

51. So inconsistent! Non-adhesive,  
Useless as a rope of sand -  
Man is lax, slack and loose  
Flapping, hanging, and detached.

52. Unified ... associated,  
Some tie-up, fuse and blend:  
In cahoots they pool their interests  
Till fortunes join in common cause.

53. Atomised ... in dissolution  
Ravaged by the tear of time,  
All break-up, fall to pieces ...  
Crumble, wear, and waste to dust.

54. Thus, I'm the whole, tout ensemble,  
Each and every, be and end ....  
The shooting match, the total works:  
The complex jimbang, one and all.

55. Some are part, portion, fraction,  
Section, segment, cantle, tithe;  
Piece by piece, and in small doses,  
Dribs and drabs, scraps and crumbs.

56. I am complete, all or nothing,  
Heaven and earth, no stone unturned:  
From Hell to breakfast, cap-a-pie,  
First and last, charged and crammed.

57. Incomplete, scant, and half-weight,  
Lacking, wanting, in arrears ...  
Mutilated, mangled, butchered:  
Most are short of what they need.

58. Embodied, constituted, made,  
I am set up, formed, contained;

Factor, part and parcel, leaven,  
I consist of all that's named.

4 - ORDER

59. Before the sequel: before the trail;  
Before the eddy and the wake;  
Before the aftermath was tagged;  
Before the after clap was tailed;

60. Before the egg; before the dawn;  
Before the very starting point;  
Before the onset; before the light;  
Before the hour Time was born -

61. All was disarrayed, crooked,  
Awry, amiss, askew ....  
Huggermugger, willy-nilly,  
Rant on, much-a-do.

62. Disarranged, mussed, confused,  
Messed up, fouled, disturbed:  
With no general order  
Like tea-leaves in a mug.

63. Then, all was set to rights, regulated,  
Cut and trimmed, separated,  
Groomed, spruced, straightened-up,  
Placed ... policed into shape,

64. Into class, rate, and grade,  
Genus, genre, group ....  
Subdivided - list and file,  
Species, branch, and root -

65. 'til Nature left us everything,  
Fine fettle, jimp, and snug,  
En regale, and apple-pie ...  
Like flowers in a jug.

\*

66. However - I have prime place -  
I go before: I go ahead of

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

All afore-mentioned things  
Preliminary to existence.

67. Bipeds come next, ensue, & follow  
In procession behind me.  
They are successful pioneers  
In the order of progression.

68. They're foregoers, and voorloopers,  
Frontiersmen, and voortrekkers,  
Messengers and harbingers ...  
The prelude to the train.

69. And that is that - subject closed.  
Yet - with the last cat hung,  
The proposition is not cold:  
For constant flows the continuum

70. Parading, filing, marching past  
Round the clock; ceaseless rows,  
Caravans in cavalcade -  
Columns swathing to and fro.

71. Never interrupted! stopped!  
No fitful *longo intervallo* ...  
The pioneers come behind me:  
The ceaseless masses onward follow.

72. So I'm accompanied on my journey,  
Attended by a comitatus:  
A retinue, an entourage,  
Fellows who blindly follow.

73. When they muster as a caucus,  
When they convene as a congress,  
Packed like sardines, thick as hops,  
Like flies on a carcass ...

74. I demob them, I disband them ...  
I dismiss them, disperse the lot -  
Scatter, pepper to the winds:  
And then I journey on alone.

\*

77. Some fellows are barred, excluded,  
Precluded, purged, shut-out.  
Colour, race, and segregation ...  
That's what I'm on about.

78. Some revile the foreign devil  
In favour of the long-nose men ...  
Abroad in distant parts, or home -  
I'm at one with aliens.

79. In worldliness, I am one -  
Every mother's son and more:  
*Tout le monde*, every Jack,  
His brother or his far-flung wife.

80. For I am special, I'm distinct -  
Your Uncle Dudley, truly yours!  
The he, she, it; they, them too;  
The videlicet. To wit I am -

81. The line, pursuit, pet subject,  
The main interest, the leading card.  
I confine my major in -  
By going into minor forms ....

82. Until all men walk the chalk,  
Keep in step, fall into line,  
Play the game, hold the rule,  
Come up to scratch when I squawk.

83. Men might dissent, get out of line,  
Leave the path, go out of bounds,  
Stretch a point, drive a coach  
And six - but not to be undone

84. By normal, real, and naturalistic,  
Usual, ordinary, commonplace,  
As matter of course, expected things  
Prescribed and regulated -

85. I welcome abnormal eccentricity!  
Mis-creations, freaks and monsters.  
Only quirks of Fate by mistake -  
Create basilisks or Minataurs.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

5 - NUMBER

86. Let us figure, let us number,  
digit count, cast and score.  
Let us total, let us tally,  
The whole including aliquot.

87. Let us reckon, let us rehearse,  
Count noses, call the roll ...  
Let us tell, let us tot-up,  
Keep a check as we go.

88. Let us list, let us line-up,  
tabulate, screen and scroll.  
Let us calend, let us cadre.  
Log .. roster ... poll.

89. Am I to stand alone?  
Exclusive, single, removed, apart  
When I am lonesome, on my tod,  
A sole - per se detached ....?

90. We could be mates, coupled, matched,  
Twinned, braced, yoked, teamed ...  
*Tete a tete*, a heavenly twain,  
A starry twilight pair engaged

91. Who need not duplicate, repeat,  
Nor be two-sided, twice as much,  
Nor double-up as much again.  
If we were more like pals

92. Who need not bisect, cut in two,  
Split in demi, semi-spheres ...  
And half-an-half, fifty-fifty  
Divide and take bipartite stance.

93. We could be tri-form, three-in-one,  
Create a third from our love ...  
We could triumph, deuce-ace all,  
In threeness be as one in bond.

94. We have no need to triple tension,  
Cube derision, and treble thought

We could terminate trilogic ...  
And three times more think as one.

95. For why trisect and make three parts  
Triangulate and leave three-forked,  
One third this, third part that ...  
Trisect one, 'til balance goes.

96. We could be four! Tetrad, quartern,  
Two square one, a quartet whole ...  
We could a four leafed shamrock be -  
Precious, rare, and blessed with luck!

97. Not one fourth this, a quarter that,  
To be nothing in this world ....  
Four-fold these, by quarters those,  
By quadruplication - distance grows.

98. There is no need to draw a quarter,  
To make a farthing of the whole,  
Create four answers to one question  
When the answer isn't four.

99. We could be five! Six! Or twenty!  
Sixty! Or a hundred thousand!  
We could be five billion beings ...  
And still be one in number -

100. Such a great number! A plurality of  
causes!  
The majority with the excess of votes,  
The lion's share, the manifold most  
..... Who's who amongst that host?

101. A number .... a certain number;  
Rife, abundant, copious thick .....  
A million and one creeping & crawling,  
Not easily stopped by shaking a stick.

102. Only a handful, scarcely a middling,  
Sparsely scattered, barely a few ....  
A precious little, skimp and sprinkled  
Here and there push thinly through.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

103. Till over and over, again and again,  
Many times round ..... the echo rings  
Tedious, monotone, without a dingdong:  
Until it becomes a harped upon thing.

104. Into the infinite, the inclusive dark,  
Knowing no bounds: bow without stern.  
Thru the eternal void, they untold go:  
End without end, on without term.

### 6 - TIME

105. I am that bald sexton of Time,  
Nurse and breeder, devourer of things.  
Author of authors, spinner of all,  
Summer sun and winter wind ....

106. I am timeless ... sine die;  
A neverness of blue moon days.  
I am the moment, the last millennium,  
The era, the epoch, the aeon ....

107. I'm the age that spans and stretches  
The swing of season, spell and shift,  
The kalpa ... yuga ... manvantara,  
Day, date, duration, stint.

\*

108. You all have your innings,  
Your whack ... and your go,  
Your bout ... and your stretch,  
Your spell filling in for ...

109. Before the interval brings the pause,  
The meantime, meanwhile, ad interim:  
The *pedente lite*, the provisional break  
for the time being, for the nonce -

110. That makes you endure, last, abide,  
Maintain steadfast for donkey's years  
The lengthening vista of human time,  
All your born days, hour after hour -

111. Till all is flit, fly, and fleet,  
Two shakes of a lamb or monkey's tail;  
Gone like a shadow, gone like a dream,  
Burst like a bubble - short, and sweet!

112. For all's forever, constant, immortal,  
Deathless, imperishable without bound  
*Ore a sempre* - perpetually perennial  
Knowing no limit, knowing no end.

113. While in the twinkling bat of an eye,  
In a jiff - like a shot out of Ulster!  
Afore you utter 'Goody Snatch! Witch!'  
Time has been plucked by the Swooper.

114. Till what's left? Calends & records,  
Annals & diaries & journals of verse,  
Almanacs, chronicles, signed and dated  
By Greenwich time & tolling Big Ben -

115. Mistimed, misdated, misleading,  
Prochronic or anachronously false ...  
for I am true Time - I am a neverness,  
I come before, and I follow all.

\*

116. All that is new, novel, and fresh,  
New fangled modern, firsthand & vernal,  
Abreast of the times, *fin de siecle*,  
Up-to-the-minute latest in fashion:

117. And posterity? subsequent & later?  
The *expost facto* of all presence?  
I attend to that afterwards  
Sequenced to beyond past forever.

118. All that is old, cobwebbed and  
reliced,  
Antique, traditional, primeval & worn,  
Outmoded, disused, has-been & old hat,  
Old as the hills; like dodos outmoded:

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

119. Simultaneous in pace with the after,  
As one in concert & chorus '*una voce*':  
I keep in tempo with the nowness  
Concurrent in the same breathe as yore.

120. All that is youth, tender, and callow,  
Childlike, puerile, girlish & awkward,  
Cherub, doll-like, minor and new-born  
In May-morn life & salad day summer:

121. And time out of mind - *auld lang syne*  
When mortals were a figment of fancy:  
Days beyond recall when I was young;  
When all was green and newly sprung -

122. All that is boy, laddie, and garcon,  
Girly and missy, maiden and gal,  
Infant and baby, bambino and bairn,  
Chunk of a kid, and unspoiled child:

123. I remember - I am sum past of all  
Time:  
This day and hour - the here and now;  
The hereunto; the as yet; the already;  
The thus-far-today but not the man'ana.

124. All that is adult, woman, and man,  
Darby and Joan, dame and old duffer,  
Crone and hag, heffer and gammer,  
Senior and dean, elder and doyen ...

\*

125. Where flies the future on the  
morrow?  
Which by-an-by some advent calls  
life to light; which in coming,  
In time is lost, by the act of going.

126. All that is years, the measure of age,  
Mature and ripe, full and flowered,  
Past one's prime, in the sere  
With one foot in and worse for wear:

127. Until dead and off, a creature stalks  
Dry or rainy, nightly comes ....  
In solstice swing and equinox ...  
Through Aries, Cancer, Capricorn ...

128. In proper time, in fullness shows.  
In passing, by the by - it turns  
To pinch, clutch, squeeze, and rub,  
To hinge past, and push on luck.

129. Untimely, importune, half-cocked  
This creature is an evil-hour  
That feasts on those who miss the bus  
And locks the door on those who dote.

130. It steals on those with time to spare,  
It swiftly gains on those who rush,  
Soon enough such said - than done!  
Straight with, fore with, it overruns

131. The late, the tardy, and those  
behind,  
Delayed, detained, those who dally,  
Those who stroll, hold off, prolong,  
Put on ice, postpone with red-tape:

132. 'Till the morn, red-fingered dawn,  
Has woke the lark at cocklight call  
And noon glides on to afternoon  
And moves upon the close of day

133. 'Till pale pink hour of evening turns  
-  
Grey-hooded sundown brings nightfall,  
And shank of owl-light dimply draws  
'Till dead and off Death it comes.

### 7 - EVENTUALITY

134. Death is an accident, a fact,  
An incident, a bloody do ....  
Affair, matter, thing, concern,  
As things turn out .... its back.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

135. It is imminent ... any minute  
Approaching, nearing, looming close.  
An attack impending ... to be expected  
Any moment ... it will attack!

136. Frequently Death prevails,  
In common occurrence, oft returns:  
Without cease, perpetually, constant,  
Regularly I hear the fiend hunt.

137. It's rare, uncommon, unusual &  
seldom  
I see Death doing its job.  
Once in a dog's-age or blue moon,  
*Pro hac vice*, I'll chase it off.

138. Intermittent, spasmodic, on and off,  
Wavering, flicking, spastic, erratic,  
By fits & jerks, snatches & catches,  
Death sporadically gnashes.

139. It is a presence, an omnipresence  
That permeates and overruns .....  
It haunts and hangs around like mist  
That always scares or chills.

140. It's always absent, non attendant,  
Playing hooky without leave.  
It's always nowhere to be found,  
Out of sight ... but always there.

141. It lives, habituates, and dwells,  
Quarters, billets, rooms and berths.  
It camps, it bivouacs, it roughs  
Where man cannot descend.

142. Death likes to copulate,  
Couple, mate, and fornicate,  
Congress, coitus, intercourse,  
Death's beget a billion souls.

143. Mother, dam, and grandmamma ...  
Death has had its mount and lay.  
Stock, stirps, sept and strain,

Death has had its way.

144. Birth, blood, breed and branch,  
Death has seed in every house.  
Bastard, bantling, nobody's child,  
Death has sown a billion times.

8 - CHANGE

145. So we need to change! alter! vary!  
we men of Earth, we savages?  
Will we deviate? revamp? veer?  
Shift and turn a leaf?

146. You status quo conservatives!  
You standpats! You unprogressive's!  
You intransigent bitter-enders!  
You brute old bulls! You farting  
wallowers!

147. Who are you? You fickle dackers!  
You chameleon rolling stones -  
You kaleidoscopic Cynthianan phasers  
Who blow hot and see-saw cold?

148. Who are you *a plomb* fixed  
Immobiles  
With your mortgaged investment-homes?  
Secure, battened, anchored, moored,  
You high, dry marooned buffoons!

149. Can we keep on, prolong the pain,  
We men of Earth, we savages?  
Drag, maintain, retain, keep going,  
Pursue the tenor of our ways ...?

150. Change, convert, transform,  
progress?  
Mature, mellow, melt and merge?  
Time has brought about the need,  
To renew and mend our Earth!

151. You've lapsed, regressed, reverted,  
Harked back, embraced reversionism!.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

So turnabout, escheat, recess ...  
Change your ways, you Earthling.

152. Overthrow, overturn, break down  
Without revolt, or revolution ...  
Without anarchic, *sans culottish*  
Jacobinic insurrection .....

153. Exchange, supplant, switch by proxy  
Without fall guys or whipping boys.  
Ring-in no ghosts, goats, or dummies,  
No faute de mieux in absentia.

154. Tit for tat, quid pro quod,  
This is our Earth, noble Earthlings!  
Tooth for tooth, eye for eye!  
As you take, you shall pay back!

### 9 - CAUSATION

155. What's the cause, occasion, call,  
The big idea behind the whole?  
Who is the author *primum mobile*,  
The mainspring, *fans et origo*?

156. What effect, result, conclusion,  
Culmination, climax, end  
Arises from all germination,  
Stems from such development?

157. What attribution, imputation  
Can be ascribed on this account,  
Laid at the door of assignation,  
Who's to blame, and on what ground?

158. Perhaps by chance, fortune, fate,  
By fluke, by random shot, by lot,  
Without design, the way things fall,  
Providence provides the cause?

### 10 - POWER

159. I am the power, vigour, the force,  
Omnipotent, almighty, puissant ....

Capable, competent, *vis viva et vitae*,  
I am endowed, invested with life.

160. I am not impotent or weak,  
Eunuched, hog-tied, done-up brown,  
Out of the battle, out of the running,  
Off the field and laid up bleeding!

161. I am sturdy, staunch, and stable,  
Strong, sound, a stamina'd stalwart,  
Sinewed, sphinctered, strapping,  
Stout in stance, I stand solid.

162. I'm not feeble, whimsy or wimpish  
Frail, fragile, faint, infirm.  
No delicate dainty, dodder or drooper,  
Wobbly waster or weakened fool.

163. He's the kick, the zip, the zing,  
The punch, the drive, the get, the go,  
The pep, the vim, the verve, the snap,  
The spark plug and the dynamo.

164. I am not violent, fierce, nor savage,  
Fury, furore, ferment, fume.  
No storm, no tempest, roaring wind.  
I am no Vulcan fuelling such things.

165. I am the all of moderation,  
Mildness and the golden mean;  
*Medan agan* - the happy medium  
Striking a balance, instilling peace.

\*

166. None have influence, favour, pull,  
Prestige and sway, pressure, effect,  
None have the in to carry weight ...  
None have a hold or gain on him.

167. You are all non influential .....

Impotent against my immovable self,  
Unyielding, impervious to corruption,  
I am unresponsive to pleas for help.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

168. I'm not inclined to lean or bend,  
Drift with trends, swing with fashion.  
Bearing, line, direction, course,  
I am in a fair way unopened.

169. I'll not go with the current,  
Fall in with fads, follow phases.  
I'll not be brought down,  
I don't believe in braving chance.

170. I'll not get involved or entangled  
Up to my neck - nor deeply ensnared  
In embarrassing tie-ups of interest  
That make for a party's own greed.

171. He'll not concur, co-act or combine,  
He alone is the Ergo Sum Id.  
He'll not go shoulder to shoulder,  
When he is the all, the whole of it.

172. He contravenes, he contradicts.  
I conflict, clash, and collide.  
I am the crosscurrent, I am the counter -  
I am creator and child.

\* 173-177 removed

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 2

### 2ND LEXICON

The Universal Being is everything substance and non-substance. Mankind's, anthropocentric interests quickly make Man tire of revelations about time and space. Man prefers to hear of himself and the world he inhabits. Thus the Second Lexicon, is about earthlings and their place in the continuum

#### 1 - SPACE AND PLACE

178. There is space and time continuum  
From here to spheres beyond dark Pluto  
To hell and back through black holes;  
There is extent, expanse and more:

179. While Earthlings - between two  
Poles  
Migrate towards the torrid zones -  
In split domains of country, land,  
Of province, state, canton, shire -

180. Nations swarm, republics spawn,  
Kingdoms come, and empires go.  
Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales ...  
They are one, but they are four.

181. There is rural rustic man  
Of the clods, of the sticks;  
Provincial, pastoral, countrified,  
Hickish, boorish, and farmerish.

182. There is urban, civic man  
Of the suburbs, of the slums;  
Burgher man hived in glass ....  
Where nothing unobserved can pass.  
\*

183. Location, situation, and place,  
Some strike root, plant themselves.  
Some drop anchor, hang their caps,  
Set up house, settle down.

184. Displaced, misplaced, dislocated,  
Some are square pegs in round holes:  
Some will never roost or nest,  
They're out of joint with all the world.

188. It's nice to be indigenous, native,  
Citizenship domesticates .....  
It's harder being naturalised,  
Adopted, tamed, and broken

189. By a populace, people, public,  
Incumbent, *'loco tenis'* folk  
With their slang ... *wog* and *dago*  
For those newcomers making homes.

190. Homes in lodgings, digs and bed sits.  
Abodes in hovels, huts and shacks.  
Homes in dives, dumps and dog holes  
With pig-sties out the back.

191. Nooks, corners, crannies, niches,  
Cold water flats, single-ends ...  
A commode as a bathroom  
Beneath a folding bed ....

#### 2 - TOWN AND COUNTRY

192. Cities - roly-poly, plump,  
Beefy, tubby, rotund, gross,  
Bulky, massive, ponderous, vast,  
Over sized and overlarge.

193. Hamlets - teeny-weeny, midge,  
Pee-wee, itsy-bitsy, wisp,  
Pint-sized, puny, tomtit petite,  
Smaller than a mustard seed.

194. Towns enlarge, expand, and increase,  
Spread, sprawl, span and stretch  
Potbellied to the furthest shores  
Bloated, forth they gassy swell.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

195. Nature - in the way - contracts,  
Shrinks, shrivels, withers, wastes,  
Till compressed-condensed, it puckers  
And gets strangled all together.

196. Wilds, distant, far, remote,  
One stride from the back-beyond,  
As far as east is from west  
to where the parkland spreads ...

197. That's where I'd settle ...  
Not near, not next to a town,  
Not two whoops, not a holler,  
Not a stone's throw, one spit closer!

198. Give me space! remove and break!  
Let gap and gorge and gulf divide.  
Keep the town and country rift!  
Where's the harm in that?

199. With their rubbish - packed,  
Loaded in a truck and lugged  
Out to the dump, abandoned ...  
Towns are ringed by muck.

200. Plastic bag, cardboard box,  
Newspaper, polystyrene cup ....  
Detergent bottle, soft-drink can  
Mountains out of waste land!

201. Give me hills, downs, moors -  
Bare steeps where desolation stalks;  
Alps on Alps, sun bright summits ...  
High monuments topped by hummocks.

202. Give me lowlands, the fens -  
Wetlands where marsh-birds wade ...  
Moss on moss, neap-levelled grasses,  
Wart hung banks where water passes.

203. Give me sand flats, shoals & bars  
Ripple-rung and driftwood skimmed ....

Where root & wrack get ebb-tide reefed  
Where fleet shell-creatures creep.

204. Give me the deep, the ocean bottom,  
The bosom of the bathyal sphere ...  
Draft on draft, depths unfathomed  
Below the shelf and shallows -

205. Where time shapes plains and  
prairies:  
Flat as a board or bowling green.  
Flat as a pancake or billiard table.  
Flat as the belly of a skate.

206. There weeping willows pendant  
droop  
Cernuous as a sunflower nodding -  
Pencil like a fuchsia dangling  
Or gargoyle from a cornice hanging

207. Off buttress, brace and mainstay  
Above rostrum, pulpit, priest ....  
Great '*locus standi*' on '*terra firma*'  
Beneath roofs of slate.

208. Shafts of ash, staves of maple,  
Rods of birch, staffs of oak,  
Stalks of rowan, sticks of hazel ...  
Jamb, spar, stanchion, post

209. Which stand, run abreast ...  
Correspond, match, equate ...  
Co-extend in such a way  
They collineate and collimate:

210. While outside at a slant, a tilt,  
Slew, skew, askance, awry,  
Kitty-cornered, catawampitious,  
A churchyard guards the sky.

211. Head over heels, and bottoms up,  
The soil turns and somersaults.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Who can say if fingers clutch  
To keep headstones totherway up.

212. Processions reach the intersection,  
The traverse of the thwartways round,  
The cross point and the carrefour  
Where whippetree's plough the earth

213. Around the weave of braid, and plait,  
The warp, the woof, and weft of wreath ...  
Intertwining, interlacing,  
Interthreading strands of grief -

214. Sewn together, seamed together,  
Funeraled by a fine drawn stitch ...  
Until the cloth wears and rents  
And the flowers fade unpicked.

215. This is surface, the outside world,  
A facet of the great out-doors ...  
The open-wide wild alfresco ...  
Beyond the starry glow.

216. Not recess! Not inness!  
The herein, therein the whole  
Within the inside of the keep  
Of the inner core.

217. Not the hub! Not the centre!  
Not the focal point, the kernel  
Midmost at the heart - the navel,  
The nucleus sheaved and levelled

218. Into endless tier and stratum:  
Layers, beds, belts and zones ...  
Laminated, furfuraceous ...  
Multiplied a zillion fold -

219. Where Nature's wrapped in a  
coating:  
Skin, scale, shell, and tuft  
Of human, snake, crab and bird

Muff, slough, scab and fluff.

220. Yet this is skin-deep information!  
Desquamation might be learned:  
Endermatic might be clever -  
But it's dressing on the mutton.

221. Where's the grizzle or the wisdom?  
The silvery livery of advanced age?  
There's many wanton riddle ringlets  
And cataracts of names -

222. Sure, you can tux Nature, tart it up,  
Dress it in best bib and tucker ...  
But strip the Sunday gad-rags off  
And what have you got?

223. Nudity, nakedness, the altogether,  
The state of nature in the raw.  
Does nature start in Spring?  
Or begin with the Fall?

224. Round and round the seasons go,  
Backdrop to the hinterland.  
The stage is re-set, *mis-en-scene*,  
The elements hot, then cold.

225. We know no termination,  
Limit to the stint of days.  
Though Nature is precise, exact ....  
Not partial ... nor halfway.

226. Yet there is limit to all things  
Length, extent and distance,  
Measure, span, reach and stretch,  
The footage of two steps trodden.

227. There is a shortness, brief and curt,  
Extent reduced, abridged, curtailed;  
The beeline that cuts a corner  
Quick and sweet and cruel.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

228. Sometimes there's width, expanse,  
Wide and wondrous as the world,  
Broad arched like a church  
With beam that's vast inside.

229. Sometimes - narrowness, closeness  
Is just a hairsbreadth off -  
A leanness that jaws and weakens  
To leave a brink of brick.

230. Sometimes filament, fibre, thread -  
Cord and line webs the earth,  
To strip, spill, spin and shred  
A white sky for the dead.

231. There are features, outlines,  
contours  
Where sea meets sky, shore meets bay -  
Where brow and brim, and ledge and edge  
Make brink and rim the same.

232. Woods enclose, and hills shut out,  
And fields hem in, hedge in the towns.  
Cloistered, closed, confined at first,  
Towns have grown to fence the world.

233. But only twixt the Thames and  
Severn,  
And Hampshire east to worn out Kent -  
For ... only north beyond old Derby  
Is there some wild country left.

234. There is Scotland, some of Wales,  
The Pennines and the few odd Lakes,  
And Northern Ireland wild wind-swept  
Where Nature's on the gain.

235. What snoop will chose to intrude in  
Or trespass on these barren lands?  
The usual thing's to cock a snoot  
With less than half a heart.

236. For there are those against, opposed  
To weeds and Nature as it is ....  
Vis-a-vis they tame the wilds  
'Till cities grow and towns collide.

237. And there at the fore - the farmer;  
In the vanguard are his cows ...  
In the front-line are his sheep  
Keeping nature down.

238. At the rear gnaws the cities  
Coming up the trails of tar ...  
Through the towns and ribbon villages  
Growing side by side.

239. Back to back, house to house,  
From valley head to river mouth,  
Night lights lamp the wilderness  
Of sea-mist and hill-cloud.

240. Yet, thru' a clockwise tick of time -  
Through a starboard tack of tide -  
Through a dextrous turn and twitch -  
Through a right-handed twist -

241. Through a flinger out of bounds -  
Through a southpaw rout of bouts -  
Sinister things may come about:  
Then switch around no doubt.

\*

242. Tiptop ... icing on the peak,  
Apex, zenith, apogee -  
There is crest, crown and cap  
Paramount above the sea.

243. Nadir, bedrock, base and built-on  
The under bellied nether side ...  
The fundamental primal hardpan  
That pours the magma out.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

244. Erect, uprearing, to rise '*a plomb*',  
Palisade, cliff and crag ....  
Basalt square, endways steep,  
Sheer rampant to the sky.

### 3 - CITIES

245. There is structure of a kind ...  
Pre-fab house, skyscraper tower.  
The anatomy of cities  
As formed in most minds.

246. Persistent, true to form ...  
Cast, mould, impression, pattern:  
Leicester, Coventry or Swansea -  
Are they differently fashioned?

247. Some may - say they are formless,  
Featureless and A-morphic -  
Pity we the citizens of these cities  
Living in their rough-hewn diamonds?

248. Some cities are well proportioned -  
Lancaster, York and St. Andrews.  
Symmetrically balanced, well-favoured,  
Trim, neat, clean and comely.

249. Some cities are thrawn, distorted -  
Stoke, Bradford, Leeds, and Dundee.  
Defaced ... disfigured by industry,  
Misbegotten by business folly.

250. Some cities are straight-lined, even  
With streets unswerving for a mile -  
Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow,  
The Scottish straight-cut style.

251. Some cities angle off akimbo ...  
Sharp cornered veer at every turn -  
Newcastle, Liverpool and Bristol  
Through nook and fork and quoin.

252. Some cities curve and circle ...  
Durham, Bath, Exeter and Lincoln.  
Cestus sashed, they loop and hoop  
About their own circumference.

253. Convoluted, winding, twisting ...  
Birmingham meanders crinkled.  
In tortured whorl, it rolls and curls,  
Corkscrews on the Midland soil.

254. Rotund and globular London splats  
Itself about its hinterland -  
The ice-cream cone of British towns  
Drips upon the countryside.

255. These bulging, swelling cities creep  
Towards mull and ness and spit.  
It makes me dream of coral reefs  
And lands far from this.

256. Give me a cave, a subterranean lair,  
A burrow underground -  
A subway tunnel to a hole  
That opens on the wild ...

257. A wild of thorn, bramble, briar,  
Fern, nettle, thistle barbed:  
I'd run the gaff of dale and combe  
To escape the city drab .....

258. The dull, blunt edged city life.  
"Turn! Turn!" the grey walls cry!  
"Run! Run!" they toothless mumble  
At those who march on past.

259. Unbroken slip the buildings,  
Walls smooth and made of glass.  
Slick and sleek and most discreet  
Shine the glossy polished banks.

260. Rough and shaggy, course, unkempt,  
Against the grain - are you like this?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

You might take the washboard road  
That some already tramp.

261. That's the score, the notch and nick-  
One cockscomb less won't be missed.  
The city's got folks enough  
To keep it on the turn.

262. In the rut, the well-worn grove;  
Trench, trough, ditch and gutter.  
Why carve, chisel, gash, gouge  
Ourselves in much further?

263. In the fold, tuck and gathered  
By a bank for a mortgage?  
Wrinkled, creased, purse crumpled  
To exit with what you've borrowed?

264. This is the passage to the chasm,  
The break into the yawning rift:  
Split, slit, crack and fissure,  
Not opening to a wilderness -

265. Where banks're grass brackened  
slopes;  
Where Nature borrows time from  
summer;  
Where life is rock and fern and stream  
And cities are a distant bother.

### 4 - MOTION

266. People are motion, movement,  
shift,  
Course, career, passage, and flow -  
Travel over distant lands  
For those who're on the go.

267. Stillness, quiet, peace, repose,  
Resting calm on shipped oars.  
Most people sleep, do not snore  
Enough to rock the boat.

268. Scamper, scud, scuddle, spurt ...  
The swift and swallow lightning dart.  
Under press of steam and fission  
Hell-bent are some folks driven.

269. Like a snail, slow as death,  
An easing off, a creep, a crawl:  
Life doesn't go fast enough  
For those in transit.

270. And so, en route, on the wing,  
On the high road, mid-progress:  
They are always on the move,  
On the run and not secure.

271. On the transfer ... car to bus,  
Train to plane, truck to van:  
They are hitching round the world  
And never looking back.

272. On the wander, roving, roaming,  
Traipsing, gadding on alone:  
Nomadic, vagrant knowledge-seekers,  
Drifting hobos ... fancy free:

273. They are bums and birds of passage,  
Knights of the road and lazzarones.  
Some are pilgrims, hadji, saddu's,  
Immigrants and refugees .....

274. They flee lands, run the wind,  
Voyage the sea, ship to ship ...  
Leg the world, port to port  
And never sleep ashore.

275. Here's to those galongee men:  
Lascars, tars, and devil dogs,  
Jacks, and pipes, and matelote's  
Steering full ahead .....

276. In their ships: spars of steel;  
In their splinters - dug from soil -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Buoyed upon the bob of Nature  
Others sail the blue-beyond.

277. Not bound by salty favour,  
They fly, wing, and ride the skies ....  
Soar, drift, hover, and cruise  
And touchdown where they can.

278. These aeronauts, these airplanists,  
These birdmen and these aviatrix  
Jet the world - then they're back  
Well before they're missed.

279. In their jets: in their choppers  
Above the cloud to higher spheres -  
Where fighter planes loop-the-loop  
Clear of surface gazers.

280. In rockets, spaceships, shuttles:  
They are trying to get to Mars -  
We know however that these seekers  
Are - very few, of course!

281. On thru space, on thru systems  
Beyond the dusk of solar light:  
Cosmic rays and blackout waits.  
Who'd be a hobo now?

\*

282. People impulsed, impelled, forced,  
Thrust, push, prod, and shove,  
Elbow, shoulder, butt, punch  
To have what others want.

283. On the rebound, on the bounce,  
They flinch, whinge and cringe,  
Shy and dodge, duck and kick  
And bite at everything.

284. At the fore, propelled and driven,  
They draw a bead on ambition:

Pepper. Pelt. Pump. Pick off.  
Let fly and never slacken.

285. Some straining, dragged in tow,  
Left behind, pull together ...  
Take the rope, snaked and ravelled  
And choke those to the fore.

286. They lever, pry for advantage,  
Reel in those who take the bait,  
Handspike in their flapping catches  
And oarlock their brains.

287. By attraction, by allurements,  
By the power of adduct awe,  
Some lure the unattached  
With magnetic draw

288. Then send them about their business  
Repel, repulse, chase-away;  
Keep at length, thus never learn  
Charm or wit or grace.

289. So what direction shall we take?  
Shall we drift or take a course?  
Most have been north or south  
But few have reached a Pole.

\*

290. Perhaps it's easy to digress,  
Lose one's way, go adrift,  
Double-back get side-tracked,  
Deviate - and go astray.

291. Perhaps it's hard to head the dance,  
Go in the van, lead the way,  
Shine the light, be the guide,  
Get out and set the pace.

292. Perhaps it's fine to follow on,  
Swallow dust, bring up the rear,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Tag along, be on the heels,  
Join the trail of hanger-ons.

293. Perhaps it's hard to make headway,  
Make up leeway, make up time,  
Fight one's way, forge ahead  
In strides through the crowd.

294. Perhaps it's hard to veer around,  
Turn a heel and face about,  
Retrace one's steps, fall behind  
And turn one's back upon the world.

295. Perhaps it's all to do with chance  
That some advance, get ahead ....  
Draw near enough to gaining on  
The get-at things they're dreaming of.

296. Perhaps it's all to do with luck  
That some diminish, fade away,  
Draw in their horns, then withdraw,  
Retire with their dreams stillborn.

297. Perhaps it's hard to come together,  
Come to a focus, to a point  
Where folk can meet, unite together  
And fall-in with converging thought.

298. Perhaps it's easy to diverge,  
Fly off, go off at a tangent,  
Take different roads to a crossroads,  
Take separate tracks at every fork.

299. Perhaps it's hard to achieve arrival,  
Get there safe, reach one's end,  
Attain one's goal, check-in fit  
And know the journey's end is home.

300. Perhaps it's hard to take departure,  
The sending off, the last adieu ...  
The leave take and the shoving off,  
The 'Come again!' and 'Keep in Touch!'

301. Perhaps it's fine - make an entrance,  
Set foot in, come breezing in ....  
Make way into lover's beds ....  
And pierce the minds of friends.

302. Perhaps it's time to make an exit,  
Bow out, run off, and go abroad ...  
Leave a lover, weeping loudly,  
Desert a friend owed some dough.

303. Perhaps it's down to introductions,  
The squeezing in, the cramming in  
Of things inserted in our nature  
That often surface on a whim.

304. Perhaps it's all these things removed,  
Pulled up, plucked out, raked away,  
Extracted from our better being  
Rooted up and left decaying.

305. Perhaps it's how we are received,  
Taken in, absorbed, installed ...  
C'mon let's have full report  
Let's have food for thought.

306. Let's feast and wet our whistles,  
Lick and smell and do our duty,  
Eat our fill, break bread, dine  
With no wolf or whaling down.

307. Let us cheer in creature comfort  
Without resort to short commons;  
Bring on the victuals and the tucker  
So we might toast our mothers!

308. Let's sup and spoon with regime,  
Let's knife and fork with diet  
And take our nourishment complete  
To alkali our acids .....

309. For we eject, expulse, disgorge  
With a puke, or wretch, or heave

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

All that is no good to us:  
Discharging - we defecate

310. Like at election - then -  
We fly the red flag;  
Bear the trots in mid-summer;  
And flush our flux with passion.

311. For we secrete and lactate much,  
Saliva with a spit or slaver....  
Which might be due to hormones,  
Glands or rotten guts.

312. For we are infringed,  
Infested, ravaged by the plague ...  
Rode roughshod over, beset, invaded,  
Overrun by countless things.

313. So - in motion, people fall short,  
Coming to nothing, fizzling out,  
Found to be lacking, they go amiss,  
Slumping, they don't make the grade.

314. People in motion - upwardly mobile,  
Climbing the ladder, scaling the heights  
Best be careful to watch for snakes  
At the head of the slide to decline!

315. Descent is a dropping, tumble & fall,  
A slumping - as the world gathers on;  
A sag - when you discover the snakes  
Weren't your friends at all.

316. People in motion, rampant, exulted  
Like poppies paraded every November:  
Fast elevators reach the top storey  
Before flooring again to the ground.

317. Lower than oak hewn for timber ...  
Lower than beech felled by high winds  
Lower than elm pulled down, diseased -  
People in motion can sink.

318. Hippy hop, skip, jump and vault,  
High hurdlers can be leap-frogged on,  
Pounced upon, bobbed and tripped,  
Sprung upon - left standing still.

319. People in motion in the water;  
People in motion brought to scuttle;  
People in motion sent to the bottom;  
People in motion in Davey Jones locker

320. While around & around the waters  
turn,  
Winding & twisting as the current runs  
Put a girdle around the world?  
Would those in motion falter at all?

321. For things whirl, and reel, and spin!  
Rotate, revolve, gyrate, wheel!  
Like a horse in a field ....  
Tethered up and left to feed.

322. If this is evolutionary growth ...  
Progress through advancing time,  
Are we blossom still unfolding?  
Opening up to flower?

323. To and fro - people go -  
With a flourish, flaunt or wave.  
People in motion, back and forth  
Move through every day.

324. Are you petrified, disturbed?  
Should you quiver like an aspen leaf?  
No. Look you quietly to yourself  
For the things you seek.

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 3

### 3RD LEXICON

Man has not created the universe. Mankind is part of the creation and is bound by it. In an attempt to explain creation to himself, Man has developed a science lexicon which reveals his ignorance.

325. There is belief in natural theory,  
Atom chain, ring and cycle ....  
Neutrons, protons, fusion, fission  
Governed by law and reason.

326. There is belief that creation  
Flash-burned, waved, mushroomed out -  
Charge-exchanged ... cascaded forward  
As a speeding blur of cloud.

327. Alpha, beta, showers of gamma ...  
Ray to particle, X to Vee ....  
Irradiate - charge invested  
The cosmos came to be.

\*

328. Whence stemmed the firstborn  
light?  
Prime creation, blaze and glow ....  
Radiating ... stream and glimmer  
Across the veld of all that's known.

329. Whence stemmed the flame that  
lamps  
Moon, sun and flambeau stars?  
Whence came the force, the power  
And the corpse of atoms - matter?

330. Or darkness - the palpable obscure,  
Creation in a pitch-black shade ...?  
What has fuelled the heavenly luminance  
To light and fire day?

331. What screens & shields and filters?  
Veils the day with blackout curtains?

What awnings drawn cover, shade  
Till all is overshadowed?

\*

332. Objects, lucent, lucid, clear -  
Chiffon, silk, and cellophane;  
Onion skin and tissue paper;  
Panes to liquid windows ...

333. Do these frost light - milky opal?  
Put mother pearl on all creation?  
Beryl, diamond, moonstone, quartz?  
What forces - glaze such crystals?

334. Creation is ... opaque and cloudy,  
Misty, fogged, smoked and murked.  
Dirty, turbid, obfuscated .....

\*

335. There is hue - colour tint,  
Bright, gaudy, rich and gay ....  
Exotic, intense, florid, vivid  
Chromatic coating, pigment grain.

336. Pale, dim, faint and sallow ....  
Pallor ghastly ... haggardness.  
Livid, sickly, pastel, blanched ...  
Pasty, wan, white as a witch.

337. Silver, frost, chalk and pearl,  
Alabaster, eggshell, hoar.  
Kelt and buckra, lily, snowdrop,  
Fair jasmine and albino rose.

338. Jet black sable, ebony, ink;  
Pitch, tar, coal and soot.  
Raven, rook, and night dark crow ...  
Noir, schwarz, dhu, negro.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>339. Gray, taupe, slatey ash ....<br/>Dove, mole, mouse and squirrel.<br/>Dappled, spotted, salt and pepper ...<br/>Steel, lead, zinc and iron.</p>           | <p>348. Day on Earth - heat and hotness,<br/>Fervour, ardour, steaming warmth.<br/>Atacama .... Kalahari .....</p>   |
| <p>340. Cocoa ... coffee ... coconut,<br/>Chocolate, chestnut, cinnamon.<br/>Bay, dun, fawn and tawny ...<br/>Hazel, olive, autumn corn.</p>                     | <p>349. Like - the fierce Sirocco flare<br/>Birch-brand burning - auto da fe;<br/>Or the blow-torch blast and blister<br/>Of the Baha scorch and sear -</p>            |
| <p>341. Rose, rouge, scarlet, crimson ...<br/>Blushing bloom, flush of flesh.<br/>Damask, puce, stammel, murrey,<br/>Cherry, carmine, ruby red.</p>              | <p>350. With its basting and its broiling,<br/>Roasting, grill and barbeque;<br/>The Gobi fry and frazzle ...<br/>Bake, cook and sand caboose.</p>                     |
| <p>342. Orange, ochre, peach and carrot,<br/>Morning sun and marigold ....<br/>Marmalade and tangerine ...<br/>Mandarin and apricot ...</p>                      | <p>351. All that heat: fuel and feed,<br/>Torch, taper, faggot, fuse,<br/>Thunder caps and detonators ...<br/>Tinder, touch-wood, amadou -</p>                         |
| <p>343. Lemon, daffodil and primrose,<br/>Saffron, amber, citron gold.<br/>Dandelion and sulphur yellow,<br/>Beige, buff, sand and yolk.</p>                     | <p>352. Against the night, against the chill,<br/>Against the glaze of jokull cold.<br/>Against the raw-frost feathered snow,<br/>Depth of winter, berg and floe -</p> |
| <p>344. Emerald, jade and olivine ....<br/>Fir, grass, leaf, and sea;<br/>Yew, apple, leek, and pea -<br/>Shamrock, moss, myrtle green.</p>                      | <p>353. Of Alaska - of Siberia -<br/>And the kvef Icelandic white.<br/>Creation sleeps in wolf's attire,<br/>Glacier capped or crowned -</p>                           |
| <p>345. Azure, turquoise, sky and sapphire,<br/>Electric, steel and cobalt blue.<br/>French, Dresden. Prussian, Persian ...<br/>Hyacinth .... forget-me-not,</p> | <p>354. Sugared by layers of cloud,<br/>Light, weightless, buoyant, airy,<br/>Feather, thistle-down and fluff:<br/>A bare touch, a cobweb's worth</p>                  |
| <p>346. Pansy, violet, lilac, thistle;<br/>Plumb, raisin, damson, grape;<br/>Orchid, lavender and mallow,<br/>Mulberry, mauve and bilberry.</p>                  | <p>355. Of dense, solid, thick, compact;<br/>Body, block, cake and mass.<br/>Clotted, lapped, bonny clabbered,<br/>Serried, heavy, firm, intact.</p>                   |
| <p>347. Multi-coloured - variegated.<br/>Poly chromed - kaleidoscopic;<br/>Creation is a striate prism,<br/>Rainbow plaid mosaic daedal.</p>                     | <p>356. Oh so rare - attenuated ...<br/>Refined, purified and cleansed.<br/>Defecated, filtered, winnowed,<br/>Subtle, tenuous - sublimated.</p>                       |

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

357. Cloud catching on callous mountains,  
Rigid, firm, stiff and tense.  
Inelastic, quite unbending ...  
To torrent gullies, o'er becks
358. As soft, gentle, pliant water:  
Tender, mellow, tactile, lax:  
Lithe, fictile, supple, limber -  
Over rock and shingle ....
359. Across the Earth's surface grain ...  
Jurassic wale, Cambrian weft,  
Course or rough or linsey-woolsey,  
Dainty, thin spun, fine and filmy.
360. With weight, gravity, tonnage, heft,  
Sinker, lead, plumb and bob.  
Avoirdupois, troy or metric ...  
Running on and on.
- \*
361. Yet, there is a stream, a current  
Through a field where no men go.  
A circuit, path, loop and break,  
Cable, cord and coil.
362. No machines can take Man there ...  
Image matched, output retarded.  
Should we drone on about it ....?  
When it's so dull and boring.
363. Folk would rather don headphones  
And tune-in on their radios ...  
Play a tape, or flip a disc  
Upon their personal stereos.
364. Or watch T.V. - their V.D.U's,  
Relay link and simulcast ...  
Than wrestle with the facts beyond  
Reflectors, discs, and telescopes.
365. Electric boffs try their luck:  
Radar pulse, and microwave ...  
Huff-duff, sniffer, cat and mouse ...
- Jam and spoof, sweep and scan -
366. With mechanics, statics, kinematics:  
Hydrodynamic engineering ...?  
Man exits by tools and instruments,  
Power machines and locomotion.
367. Knife, fork, spoon and chopstick ...  
Movement, action, motion, work.  
Machines are geared, wheeled & driven:  
Combustion, cam and piston rod -
368. Automated, self-pro pulsed ....  
Self-controlled and regulated,  
Robomatic, cybernetic ...  
Self-winding: moving freely -
369. Rubbing, scraping - scratching,  
Abrasive, grinding, rasping sounds.  
Machines with gnashing of cogged teeth  
Wear creation down .....
370. With elastic, flex, and rubber!;  
Whalebone, baleen, spring and gum.  
Vulcanised, strain and tension ...  
Give, yield and snap return.
371. Things - tough, resistant, stiff;  
Tenacious, viscid, fibrous enough,  
Even leathery, stringy, ropey ....  
For when the goings rough.
372. Things - fragile, brittle, frail,  
Easy crushed, easy cracked ....  
Shattered, shivered, splintered quick  
As light - through a pinprick hole.
373. Until to chalk, reduced to powder,  
Pulverised, churned to meal .....
- Beaten, pounded, thrashed and mashed,  
Creation's querned to dust.

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 4

### 4TH LEXICON

Bound by matter, Mankind has no knowledge of matter beyond his own solar system. This is reflected in the crude and small vocabulary that tries to equate that all known life is embodied in matter.

#### 1 - MATTER

374. Rotating constellations, times & tides

Inverted dish we call the sky,  
Surrounded by such golden fire  
Revolves a globe where we dwell.

375. Material, matter, substance, stuff,  
Ball-bearing in the cosmic hub,  
There exists ... length and breadth,  
Our flesh and blood ...

376. Bound by corporal mundane fact,  
We mortals live to disembody.  
We dabble in the unsubstantial,  
The psychic and the supernatural.

377. We are crazy! We are mad!  
We are brick, plaster, lath.  
We are lumber, timber, wood.  
We are textile, plastic goods!

378. We are oxygen at base ....  
Organic elements in trace.  
Atomic mass, molecular weight ...  
We are chemical in every way.

379. We are fat, grease and oil.  
Lubricated, waxed and soaped,  
We are lard, blubber, ghee,  
Tallow coated, bees-wax daubed.

380. We are resin, rosin, gum,  
Shellac joined and mastic tarred.

Lacquered, varnished, and veneered  
We are hand-glued souvenirs.

#### 2 - LIFELESS MATTER

381. What of all lifeless matter?  
Azoic, brute - the mineral kingdom  
Of regimes contained inert in  
Atom chains and rock crystals?

382. Is there life? We do not know!  
A mortal's interest is in gold,  
Silver, platinum, uranium ore.  
Men melt worlds to cast their own.

383. Rock, stone, gravel, shingle,  
The cosmos in a grain of grit ...  
What more to scoria, breccia, schist  
Than tombstones, shrines, & pyramids?

384. In *Terra firma*, we are rooted,  
Sod, clod, dirt and clay ...  
On this Earth, we are bound ...  
Shore, coast, strand and bay.

385. By ocean ... we are margined,  
Sea girt in an insular way;  
Island, key, reef and atoll,  
Isolated ... salt and wave.

386. By continent ... we are divided,  
Bordered and barb-wire walled;  
Behind strings of pointing missiles  
In defence, we fence off.

\*

387. Man is O ... or A ... or B,  
Ab ... Rh ... plus or minus.  
Blood, gore, claret, ichor ...  
Such liquid is our water.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

388. Creamy, milky, semi fluid ...  
Curd, clabber, goo and gunk.  
When male and female get together,  
Sperm, semen, gamete run.
389. O liquids racing, mixing, fluxing!  
Through the eons in suspension  
Evolution turns ... resolves  
In solution ... *Luxivium*.
- \*
390. Wet and moist dew-beads drop  
Seed of earth and sky begotten,  
Showers soak and impregnate  
Mortals tearful for the sun.
392. Arid, baked, parched and scorched,  
Too much sun or not enough.  
Burnt, shrivelled, seared to dust,  
Never drought. Always flood -
393. Rain, drizzle, scud and mist,  
Cloudburst, downpour, deluge, storm,  
Dogs, polecats, tadpoles, frogs,  
Dagger drencher, pitchfork drowner.
394. 4Rindle, beck, gill and burn ...  
Headwaters run, race and rill,  
Jets spout, whirlpools gush,  
Cascade, force, linn and rush.
395. Aqueduct, canal, and ditch ...  
Channel, trough, drain, sluice.  
Eddy, gurge, surge and swirl ...  
Clear of weir, the waters billow
396. To the sea ... the bounding main,  
Neptune's realm, soaked with salt,  
The wavy waste where men thirst  
Upon wild waters wound with wind -
397. Where millpond days, few and far  
Allow sick-travellers lakish hours  
To dream of lax lacustrine life  
By loch, lagoon, mere, or tarn;
398. By inlet, estuary, gulf, cove;  
By bay, bight, firth or fjord ...  
Where homesteads by the harbour stand  
Where men are want to be land-bound
399. By the salt marsh, quicksand mud,  
Bogged down in conventional mode,  
Where humans tearful for the sun,  
Sink, and slough in their abodes.
- \*
400. We humans are prone to vapour;  
gas;  
Fetid air; and chokedamp smudge;  
The reeking fumes and plumes of smoke  
We breathe in leisure and at work
401. Should we not enjoy our air,  
*Alfresco* go and fresh breeze take;  
Weather-beat our bloodless faces,  
And think about the ozone layer.
402. Should we not inhale the wind,  
Boreas, Notus, Zephyr, Eurus ...  
Eager stand their howling rage,  
And welcome gale and hurricane.
403. Should we not, shroud in cloud  
Enjoy the nebulous, sleepless sky,  
The wool pack banks, the cirro-tails,  
The pillows, curls, stripes and snails
404. That froth, foam, and bubble up,  
Spume, surf, and spindrift boil,  
Seethe, simmer, cap-cloud cream  
'Till culled of smog - the air clears.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### 3 - MATTER ORGANIC

405. We are ... protoplasmic,  
Organic, bion, morphon, zoon,  
And like all flora-fauna  
We die too soon ....

406. A bridge across a burning stream,  
We are chased by fateful forces.  
A ladder infinite climbed to safety  
Is fiction made from fact imagined.

407. Death follows life without arrest,  
There is no tribute cancels sentence.  
Across the bridge, the burning Styx,  
There's only sleep not more adventure.

408. There the Beast dwells eating  
mutton,  
Drinking wine knee-deep in water.  
No abattoir ... no aceldama ...  
All is quiet, there is silence.

409. There are no graves, no catacombs,  
The earth's grassed & sweetly flowered  
The Beast is all that's left of us,  
*Hic jacet* on it's tattooed arm.

\*

410. There is flora, plant and herb,  
Seedling, evergreen, perennial.  
Legume, cereal, fern and shrub,  
Tree, woodland, grove and scrub.

411. Botanised, it is vegetable,  
Thallus algae, fungi, moulds;  
Lichens, worts, rusts, mosses,  
Smuts, fuci, wracks and more ....

412. It is husband 'd .... cultivated,  
Gardened, lumbered, tilled and farmed,

Nursed, hot housed, cold frame forced,  
Grown, cropped, cleaned and stored.

413. There is fauna ... creature, critter,  
Creeping thing, brute and beast.  
Lion last, and foul mart first,  
A cuddly Jack ... a neddy ass.

414. There is insect ... vermin, louse,  
Bed-bug, tick, chigger, midge,  
Cootie, skeeter, gadfly, nit,  
Leech and worm ... such lovely things!

415. What's wrong with worms after all?  
Platyhelminths ... anneloids ...  
Nemathelminths ... what a mouthful!  
Don't let the name put you off.

416. Let's love worms! Let's love worms!  
What pleasure's found in such words.  
You cannot herd, drive, or goad  
Five billion worms to rule this world.

\*

417. Mankind, mortal, human Man,  
Biped .... homo sapiens.  
A false God made us as we are -  
A breath, a shadow, nothing more.

418. Our peoples, cultures, ethnic groups  
Are skin-deep to the cosmic whole,  
Like ants we swarm, our greed succeeds  
In keeping each racing each.

419. And were it not for *OOMPH* & IT,  
The facts of life, the birds and bees-  
The phallic male and vulva woman,  
The heat, the burning, and the itch:

420. Blokes and guys, bucks and chaps,  
Penis, gonads, testes, sperm;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

What point would there be to men  
And all their lust, desire for flesh

421. Without *femme*, and *frau*, & dame,  
Rag and bone and hank of hair ...  
What appeal would IT have ...?  
If the OOMPH became unknown.

UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 5

5TH LEXICON

Through the senses - Man feels the Universe. Such sensations effect Man's mind and body - and often when Man speaks of it, he uses a lexicon of love.

1 - SENSATION

422. We all have feeling, conscious or not,  
Sense of awareness, perception, response  
For all experience sensuous or nerval,  
Keenly exquisite, poignant, or raw ...

423. Till we faint, swoon, succumb .....  
Numb and dull ... fall out of love;  
Dazed, stunned in *dammerschlaf*,  
We return dead to the world -

424. Where suffering hurt, distress, pain,  
We pang, ache, fret, shrink ...  
Inflamed, festered, sore tormented -  
'Till time salves the sting.

2 - TOUCH

425. We contact, touch and feel  
With a whisper, breathe, or kiss;  
With a brush, graze, or stroke  
We run our fingers over ....

426. With a tickle, tingle, thrill,  
We titill, goose, and vellicate  
With tactile paw, wield and ply  
We palm, massage, manipulate.

3 - TASTE

427. With taste, relish, smacking tongues,  
Woosers sip, sup, lick and lap  
The savour flavours love supplies;  
Sample, specimen, and bite.

428. Goodness, zest, gusto, *gout*,  
Sapid season, sauce and spice,  
Provocative, piquant, larrup,  
Luscious, gratifying love!

429. Not nasty, foul, vile nor acrid;  
Not pungent, sour, bitter, gall;  
Not icky, rank nor nauseating ...  
Love sucks deep and savours on

430. Manna, nectar, *eau sucre*;  
Syrup cloying honey dew ....  
Mellifluous fancy, sweetened fervour,  
Rich sugar-candy bill and coo!

431 . It does not feast on sour grapes,  
Tart crab-fruit, acid diet ...  
Astringent vitriolic fare,  
Fermented citric pickled food.

432. Love does not nip the hungry  
tongue,  
Pepper hot and ginger kick ....  
Lively, tangy, racy, brisk,  
It pierces - but does not prick.

433. So, pull, puff, draw, drag,  
Chew, chow, dip, inhale ...  
Take the pill, spit and run,  
Through the smoke feed on love.

4 - SMELL

434. There is an odour, ... a scent,  
A whiff of fragrant perfume.  
Strong, heady, and suffocating  
That stops all lovers dead.

435. For is there aromatic equal ...?  
Attar, essence, balm or oil

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Of jasmine, musk, frangipani,  
Sandalwood or bergamot?

436. Malodor, fetar, stench, stink  
Of skunk, stinkhorn, rotten corpse,  
Offensive, reeking, fetidness,  
Stops all bipeds short.

437. So lovers fumigate and lime  
With sachet, spray and potpourri;  
Deodorize and ventilate ...  
Rose water, cologne, bay *pastille*.

### 5 - SIGHT

438. With bedroom eyes we lovers stare,  
Gaze, gape, gawk and glower,  
First blush, wink, *coup d'oeil*,  
We steal and spy and look.

439. Through a glass darkly mote,  
Mope-eyed dim, we boss-eye view  
Men as trees walking past  
And forty ways Sunday note.

440. Blind we ken not hair, nor hide.  
O bats! Amid the blaze of noon!  
Eclipsed without a hope of day.  
Dark, dark, we play at peek-a-boo!

441. Bystanders watch, behold as seers,  
Observe and witness our blind love,  
Spectate and see us lions slum  
And rubberneck like cooing-birds!

442. Bifocals, pince-nez, goggles, specs,  
Blinkers, lorgnette, contact lens,  
Horn-rims, monocles, glims and shades,  
Love is clean-cut, sticks out plain.

443. Perceptible, prominent, pronounced,  
We lovers live in homes of glass ....

*En evidence*, exposed, outcropped,  
Crystal clear, love's not blurred.

444. Invisible, faint, *'a perte de vue'*  
Hazy, misty, foggy, fuzzed .....  
Escape the notice, lie hid, dim?  
Blush unseen? .... don't kid us!

445. Love's own air, mien, demeanour  
Betrays itself, comes to light ...  
Bearing, garb, complexion, colour  
Flushes forth, flares into passion

446. Till time dissolves, leaves no trace,  
We lovers cease to be, fade out,  
Melt away, depart or flee .....  
Leave no shape or form behind..

### 6 - SOUND

447. Listen drumheads, conches, luggies!  
Hark, you cock-eared, long-eared house!  
Hear, you acute lappet audience ....  
Eavesdrop on these lips of mine!

448. For you are deaf or hard of hearing,  
Dull-eared to the sound of song.  
Attend! Oyez! you adder stoppers!  
Heed you now the voice of love.

449. Love is sonant, stressed, accented,  
Poly phoned, vowelled and thonged ...  
Timbre, tone, key and note,  
Lovers voice then voiceless turn

450. Silent, still, quiet, and mum.  
Mute, muffled, deadened, lulled,  
We save our breath. Cheese it. Choke,  
So hushed you'd hear a feather drop.

451. Faint and soft, dimly veiled,  
*Voce velata*, we lovers sob ....

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Mummer, whisper, sigh and moan,  
Waft a sigh ... sordo ... low.

452. Love resounds, echoes, rings,  
Peals and tolls - in hollowness  
Vibrates, rebounds in repercussion  
On all send backs, all returns.

453. So thump! Beat the lovers' drum!  
Rat-tat-tat! Tom-tom-tom!  
Tattoo a ruffle, rub-a-dub!  
Kettle, snare, and tympanum!

454. Thunder clap, crash and crack!  
We lovers take our knocks and taps;  
Burst, blast, bang and boom!  
Rumble, roar, roll and *rale* ...

455. Love hisses, fizzles, whistles out  
To snooze, snore and saw on logs,  
We lovers sniffle, splutter, lisp,  
Wheeze, sneeze, don't kiss but spit.

456. For love can be a shrill, course rasp,  
A croak, a caw, a growl, a snarl,  
A screech, a shriek, a scream, a whine  
A high-pitched, jarring, grating life.

457. A cry, a call, a shout, a hoot,  
A bawl, a yelp, a yap, a howl ....  
Love can be a *view halloo* ...  
A cruel sport - hunting you!

458. So you may gaggle, crow, or squawk,  
Cluck, clack, gobble, coo .....  
Love is not just ... chirp and cheep!  
It's not a tweet or twee cuckoo!

469. Love can be discordant, flat  
Sweet bells jangled out of tune.  
Above the pitch, sharp and sour,  
Chiming harsh and toneless hours.

460. Love is a melody, a Lydian measure,  
A mosaic of music, a canto of verse;  
A lay, a ballad, a carol, an anthem,  
A rondo, an aria, a lyric motet.

461. Arranged, adapted, harmonically  
tuned,  
We lovers vibrate, tremble and trill.  
Metrically cadenced - rhythm & pulse  
We scale and run. Minim and rest

462. We make music ... nightly perform  
In tin-pan alleys, where neckers know  
That no-one need play second fiddle  
To catgut scrapping troubadours.

463. So harp and lute, viol and flute,  
Zither, banjo, cello, horn,  
Guitar, bassoon and tambourine ...  
Love is string, and wind and drum.

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 6

### 6TH LEXICON

*Of all the things in the Universe - it is supposed that Man knows the workings of his own mind best. He has intellect - which he believes to be unique and singular in the Universe. To demonstrate that intellect - he has compiled a modest lexicon. The modesty of the lexicon reveals the modesty of his intellect.*

#### 1 - CONCEPTION OF MIND

464. There is intellect, sense and psyche,  
Sconce, reason, vernunft and wits.  
Faculty of mind, gifts, talents ...  
Pate, noddle, noggin, nouse.
465. There is intelligence and savvy,  
*Verstand*, comprehension, reach ...  
Astuteness, acumen and foresight,  
Canny cunning, geist, esprit.
- \*
466. Thus are sages ... Plato, Nestor,  
Solomon, Manu, Buddha, Christ!  
Sensible, prudent, knowing, wise,  
Oraclers, luminaries, shafts of light.
467. They are sober, sound and sane,  
Right in mind, *compos mentis*.  
They get things in proportion,  
Bring to reason all that's bonkers.
468. They know - with ken and savvy,  
Acquaint, grasp, master, grip,  
Have it pat, dead to rights ...  
Have it at their finger tips.
469. Brainwork, headwork, mental labour,  
Workings of the mind ... ideas.  
They weigh, muse and ponder all,  
Profoundly think ... Deliberate.
470. Rational, logic, dialectics ....  
Deduction, debate, deliberation,  
Argument, premise, postulation ...  
They don't break the bounds of reason.
471. Thus they're wise not ignorant,  
blind,  
Stupid, doltish, dense and thick -  
Chowder-blocked and turnip-headed,  
Foggy in their numbskull brains.
472. Thus, they're not inanely silly -  
Witless, crazy, goofy, daft;  
Wacky, batty, mute and dumb,  
Loopy, screwy, inept and mad.
473. Tomfools, nincompoops, noddies,  
Zany, gaby, sops and sots ....  
Dolts, dunces, dopes and dullards,  
Drivellers, doters, dunder, dummies.
474. Some conjure up their own  
psychosis,  
Schizophrenia prepossessed ....  
Maniacs well demented - with  
Rats and spiders in the head -
475. For some have bats in the belfry ...  
Others have a button missing ...  
Some have water topside (ugh!)  
And demons in their upper stories.
476. They are strange! odd and freakish,  
Eccentric, queer, crank and kinked,  
Non-conformist, nuts - screw balled,  
Quirked, twisted, beed and quipped.
477. Eggheads, highbrows, savants,  
pundits,  
Gents and scholars, men of letters ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

- Pedants, blue socks, dilettantes ...  
Triflers - who know no better!
478. Blind and naked, empty-headed,  
Vague of notion, ignorant, green ...  
They are cooks of half-baked ideas,  
They are wise in their conceit
479. Of notion, fancy, concept, image,  
Impression, statement and opinion:  
Receipt ... abstract or principled  
By slant or twist of inspiration -
480. They are fallow, vacant, empty,  
Vacuous, blank, with no idea.  
Pushed from their hollow thoughts -  
Riding in on hobbyhorses,
481. These vague ghostly dreamlike  
shadows,  
Don't perceive the things unseen,  
They do not see themselves around us -  
These 'little birds' live by hunches,
482. Claptrap, moonshine, pussyfooting.  
Such camel gulpers, hedging dodgers  
Beat themselves around the bush  
And beg no questions later.
483. All their talk is caption headings,  
Topic leaders, banner-lines ...  
It's the pabulum of the day!  
It is what the papers say!
484. Inquiry, search, quest and hunt,  
Rummage, ransack out the muck ...  
Question, quiz, grill and pump,  
Poke, probe, pry and plumb -
485. Press men don't allow reply,  
Riposte, retort, repartee ...  
They receipt response rebukely  
With quotes of butchered precis.
486. Not allowed answer, reason,  
Explanation, real denouncement ...  
Issues addressed to the public  
Remain unravelled, unresolved.
487. Thus HEADLINES - Caught in the  
Act!  
Caught Flat-Footed, Caught Off-Guard!  
Caught Out Napping, Pants Down - Off!  
'GAY VICAR HANGS SATANIC BOY!'
488. So - flying in the face of facts,  
Misjudgement warps, miscalculates,  
Misconstrues with misconjectures;  
Over-reckoning leads to censure
489. Till mountains out of molehills rise  
Because the most is made of least.  
Some overrate the worth of dung  
And under prize the worth of meat.
490. Some undervalue and underrate ...  
Minimise, make little of .....  
Think nothing of, set no store,  
Make light of all they do not know;
491. While others experiment and test ...  
Try it on the dog for size,  
Fly a kite ... just to see  
How the wind blows, how land lies.
492. Others measure, gauge and estimate  
...  
Load luck to the plimsoll line.  
Apply the yardstick to chance ...  
Square off - and with wide eyes -
493. Compare, contrast, and check,  
Match dope, stack up, note  
That candles melt in the sun  
And shipped water can sink boats.
494. Others - discriminate with tact,  
Know a poop from a prow ....

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Pick and choose, be diplomatic -  
Know the walrus from sea-cow.

495. For indistinct is half of twelve,  
And one half dozen of indiscreet -  
For those promiscuous, muddled up ...  
See their ships sink on reefs.

\*

496. But let us not judge, presume,  
Surmise, imagine, fancy .....  
All things considered - on the whole  
Taking one thing with another ....

497. That preconceiving, presupposing,  
Going off half-cocked in pre decision  
Is prejudice on the trigger  
By leaping to conclusions.

498. For suppose, I had a theory, guess ...  
An inkling, a hint, a notion, an idea,  
A shot, a stab into the dark  
And took a fancy into my head

499. That philosophy, that love of  
wisdom  
Was the summation of all folly in man.  
Would my supposition be preposterous?  
And deemed untrue - rather than a lie?

500. For some have belief, faith, a tenet  
They swear by, take an oath upon ...  
You can bet your bottom dollar,  
Bank on them, give them credit,

501. Trust that they will not swallow,  
Take the fly, hook, line and sinker,  
Or think the moon made of cheese,  
Believe in cats or broken mirrors.

502. While those from Grantham  
disbelieve,  
Doubt, mistrust, don't buy a word -

With a "Now, now ... I know better!"  
Take them with a grain of salt!!

503. They're the ones to turn an ear,  
Disposed to be no-one's fool ....  
Sceptical - and hard to swallow  
They kid themselves they're unguillible.

504. Such folks need proof of all belief  
To bring it home to prove some point -  
To make a vessel hold great volume  
They make a hole in it first.

505. What confute have we for blind faith  
That takes the ground from under us?  
Lets knock wind against the sails  
Of those who won't shut up!

506. Some would say we should exempt,  
Make proviso for their sconce ...?  
Mitigate, concede and temper ....  
Make concessions sine que non.

507. But with no ifs and ands or buts  
To certain express clear beliefs,  
With no strings attached outright  
There can be no fixed proviso.

\*

508. Yet - as luck may have it -  
By off-chance, all things considered,  
It's conceivable - on the cards  
Imaginable and remotely possible -

509. For some to weave a rope from sand;  
To catch the wind in an net;  
Go fetch water in a sieve;  
Gather thistles, think them figs.

510. It is plausible to believe-in  
Probability and *ben trovato*.  
I dare say one can assume ...  
Ten to one that everything's equal -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

511. Some can in two places be;  
And make cheese out of chalk;  
Catch a weasel fast asleep;  
And gather grapes from thorns.

512. Certainly, sure thing, it's a cinch,  
Rain or shine, sink or swim .....  
No buts about it, without doubt,  
Sure as fate, some are liars.

513. So - in a maze all turned around,  
Who shall decide when all disagree?  
Who will leap into the dark ...  
When up a tree or out at sea?

514. When the certain seems improbable,  
Some go blind, take pot-luck;  
Some buy a pig in a poke -  
Nil lay down, nought take up.

\*

515. Some hit the nail on the head,  
Some hit it on the nose ....  
Right as rain tell the facts,  
The truth, the real McCoy.

516. Phrases coined, said before -  
Dictum, adage, proverb, gnome ...  
Slogan, motto, moral, maxim ...  
Hummed tunes and quoted songs.

517. Errors, faults, untruths, wrongs.  
Boners, blunders, slips, *faux pas's*!  
Lapses gauged without one's host ...  
Aimed at a pigeon - wound a crow.

518. It's all a trick, a gross deception,  
A wrong impression, a warped illusion,  
A will-o-the-wisp conception ...  
Imagination and hallucination.

519. O rude awakening! Disenchantment!  
The bubble burst, the truth exposed.

With one's eyes open, un blindfolded  
With it comes the dawn for some.

520. So, let us assent - some are smart,  
Give the nod, our validation ....  
Put our Hancock to the thing  
And carry it by acclamation.

521. Let's not dissent, protest, object,  
Put up a squawk or a howl ....  
Raise our voice against the charge  
That some are sometimes clowns.

522. Let some avow swear and pledge  
To tell the world what they know,  
Maintain with their final breath,  
That they have taken an oath.

523. Let's not deny, disclaim, dispute,  
Not for love or money sell ....  
The issue some are joined on  
If we cannot help.

### 2 - STATES OF MIND

523. Outlook, attitude, point of view.  
From where I sit, my bent, my bias  
I'm warped by the way I feel  
In the climate of opinion.

525. I am broadminded, open, free ...  
I swear no oath to any master.  
I forbear to hand out judgement.  
I live, and let others breathe.

526. If I am narrow-minded, blind,  
And do not protest to aid a cause ...  
It's not because I shut my eyes  
But because I'm ill-informed.

527. As curious as a snooping cat,  
Quidnunc & questioning as Lot's wife,  
I would brave the Gorgon's eyes  
To get inside her mind.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

528. Elizabethan born, and heedful ...  
I look right or left with interest.  
I don't want to be indifferent  
Pursuing an easy life.

529. With attention, thought and ear;  
With observation, note and care;  
With concern, regard, respect;  
I'll smile while bored to tears.

530. Without disregard, distraction;  
Without unwatchful inadvertence;  
Without unwary, dismissive yawns;  
I'll bear the dullest simpleton.

531. And when my mind's made to swim -  
And when my head reels and whirls -  
And when I'm really made quite ill -  
I'll bear the jokes of bimbos.

532. I'll take care to groom my image -  
I'll take time to be most vigilant -  
I'll keep alert, take an interest -  
It pays to know others' business.

533. I'll not neglect to heed my needs -  
Nor disregard my own hushed voice.  
Muddled, fuddled, hazy, fogged ...  
I'll not let others knock me back.

\*

534. Flames of figment, fumes of fiction,  
All the dreams romance is made of -  
High flown turrets, flights of fancy,  
The rainbow's end, cloud-nine fantasy.

535. Some are staid, stuffy, dull ...  
They keep both feet on the ground;  
They burst balloons and say that stars  
Do not shoot the moon at all.

\*

536. Blind with hearing, deaf with sight,  
We forget things, and erect monuments.  
We collect trinkets, cherish treasures  
Like diaries to review in retrospect.

537. Blind with movies, deaf with music  
...  
There's lots missing and loads burdened.  
Bygone's - trickle through a sieve  
Like water - consigned to oblivion.

538. So wait! And watch! Bide your time!  
Or we will say 'What did we tell you!'  
That's how things are, the way it goes  
When something turns out as expected.

539. With a start, a shock, surprise ...  
We do not expect some things to be  
Unforeseen - dropped from the clouds  
Like cats and dogs on Christmas day.

540. It blights our hopes, leaves us blue,  
Frustrated, foiled and all forlorn.  
Letdown, it makes us sad and glum,  
We zip our mouths and bite our gums.

\*

541. Sometimes we feel it in our bones  
To see our way into the future ...  
There were no spacemen when I was born  
I was seven when Yuri flew.

542. I never thought I'd foretell  
Of men on Mars before my death.  
But who needs crystal balls  
When the Big One's overhead.

543. Warnings, portents and omens  
imminent,  
There are foreboding presage signs ...  
But I harbinger in the Space Age  
And proclaim auspicious times!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### 3 - COMMUNICATION

544. Word for word to the letter,  
We learn to grasp sense and meaning.  
Purport, import and implication -  
Not everything need be verbatim.

545. More than meets the eye sometimes  
That makes no sign, escapes notice.  
Unexpressed, unsaid, unmentioned ....  
Latent things can be suggested.

546. Sounding brass but tinkling crystal,  
A bunkum tale told by an idiot ...  
A load of bosh blabbed by a bumpkin ...  
Is something almost inexpressible.

547. For to get the idea, get the picture,  
To get it into our thick heads ...  
Some speak volumes of high English  
When single syllable words are best.

548. There's much Greek and Double  
Dutch,  
Way over my head and beyond me -  
Enough to puzzle a Law Lord judge  
With the word LOVE in the language.

549. Unintelligible too much of the world,  
Ambiguous and inequitably duplex ...  
Love's meaning is a four-letter word  
Or a five lettered one if you're French.

550. As a rule, in a manner of speaking ...  
Figures of speech make it difficult  
To partition parable from paraphrase,  
And to separate fable from rendition.

551. In other words, strictly speaking ...  
Explanations can be all wrong.  
To read between the lines is fine  
But not when sense is lost.

552. Abuse of terms, misuse of words

Puts a false construction on  
All that strains or stretches sense  
Or perverts, distorts the meaning of.

\*

553. I took a walk into winter ...  
Then came back, began to write  
A letter to the girl I love.  
We keep in touch across the miles.

554. We've learned to talk 'tween the  
lines  
She lives in the English south ...  
Open, out-spoken, we tell each other  
Of the traffic we've encountered.

555. We wear our hearts upon our sleeves,  
We face the day, bare and naked -  
Plain as the path to the parish church  
We lay our cards upon the table.

556. We confess, concede, own-up ...  
Cough-up our soft impeachments.  
I get it off my chest, she her breast:  
Without disguise - we plead guilty.

557. Kept informed, kept up to date,  
Made aware of all small changes -  
We give notice of impending strain  
Progressive love acquaints us with.

558. And here's a piece of news for you -  
We've no time for small town talk:  
The gossip sailing in blabbers' mouths  
Is filth to the normal child.

559. And I pronounce - We are young!  
Write in the sky - We are in love!  
Let it be seen the length of Britain  
And publicised by sandwich boys.

560. For when we're on the telephone,  
I can hear the call-girl's sigh.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

A long distance toll call signal  
Is all that keeps us silent ....

561. And in the chill of a winter day,  
I dispatch ... this newest letter.  
By van, by bus, by rail, by plane -  
We'll keep in touch forever!

\*

562. Teach a cock to crow, a dog to bark.  
Teach a hen to cluck, a fish to bite.  
Sometimes the blind lead the dumb  
When the dumb are born with sight.

563. From time to time, we're all misled  
And fall foul to the propagandists.  
Laputa leads the pack of wolves -  
Goody Snatch follows close on after.

564. These quack philosophers - so  
absorbed  
In extracting sunbeams from cucumbers;  
They turn students from high ideals  
And make them dwell on vulgar matters.

565. Till education is a live and learn -  
Lessons in the school of hard knocks.  
To burn the candle at both ends ....  
Means a Goody Snatch help yourself.

566. For we're in the hands of Coryphaei:  
We're witness to the New - Old Order.  
Our tongues are tied, we cannot chorus  
This schoolmam'ish kind of drama.

567. It's fee-boy stand and free-boy fall.  
It's fee-girl laugh and free-girl cry.  
One is privileged - Ten are not -  
Why teach worms to walk or talk?

568. Public, private, boarding, free.  
Fees! Fees! Fees! Fees! .....

See those mud holes by the road ...?  
Where state schools used to be!

569. With a gesture, with a nod,  
Di gave Charlie the hots ....  
Maybe they haven't such a lot -  
What have we got ...?

570. We've got regalia, emblems, badges,  
Lions, eagles, crosses, sickles ...  
Flags starred, barred, tri coloured,  
And Liz and Philip.

571. We've got records, rolls and annals,  
Memo's, memoirs, notes and minutes,  
Catalogues, lists and registers ...  
But give me hugs and kisses.

572. We've got clerks, scribes and writers,  
Ledgers, books, journals, logs.  
You can have my private diaries ...  
All I want is love.

\*

573. We're all dolls, puppets, dummies,  
Manikins and men of straw,  
Models, marionettes and statues  
In a spitting image show.

574. We're all mis-drawn, falsely  
coloured,  
Disguised, distorted by all art.  
Actors give the wrong idea -  
And painters camouflage.

575. Yet art is commonplace perfection,  
Time captured in a gasp of air.  
Meaning caught between two rhymes,  
Sense tossed between two lines.

576. Science is a still-life flower ...  
Man made man a crafted chore ...  
Sculptors tooling at their marble  
Till gargantuans roar.

577. Potters work the fine fire-clay,  
Shape and throw, turn and bake.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Glaze the world in a kiln -  
Day after day.

578. Snap-shooters shoot mugs and  
places,  
Blow up the world in their own way.  
Stop in the bath as a solution ...  
Before the picture fades.

579. Engravers needle, point and etch,  
Scratch, hatch, stipple, burr ...  
But like all high and noble artists  
They infer what they concur.

580. For artists conjure up illusions,  
Consent to dream the actual world.  
They cannot note how things are -  
But how things might become.

\*

581. My language is the speech of Time,  
My father's talk, my mother's tongue.  
I speak with a Northern Rrrrr ....  
And patter is my idiom.

582. My alphabet is Roman through -  
My script is cursive, sometimes print.  
My spelling isn't very good -  
My signature's a squint

583. My stock of words is very small,  
I use catch phrases when I can.  
I use slang and pick up fads.  
I swear and curse when mad.

584. My Christian tag is very formal,  
People call me mate or pal -  
And 'cause I like my Granada's name  
I use that as my handle.

585. What's in a name anyway ....?  
Is it wrong - being unknown?  
What's with being you-know-who?  
Such-and-such? Or so-and-so?

586. I'll never learn how to express  
In good set terms the way I feel.  
But I wouldn't trade all my Rrrrr's  
For a world of Quuu's and Peee's.

\*

587. Grammar rules parts of speech -  
Subject, object, case and tense.  
Some can parse and conjugate  
And that is very nice.

588. Some misuse, murder English -  
Caco on, lax and loose ...  
They misconstrue and malapropos  
But that is not abuse.

\*

589. Diction creates wide divide -  
It is the garment dressing thought.  
The wealthy - clothed with fashion:  
The educated - hung with language.

590. But O what elegance! Grace and taste  
In those who master language ....!  
The right word in the right place  
Upstages the snob or bastard.

591. Barbarous, uncouth - plain vulgarity  
Is most offensive to the ears!  
Well, is it not? Crude and rude  
And in bad taste, or what ...?

592. Far better we hear plain speech,  
Household words, dull and dry -  
Than bear a string of indecorums:  
Low stuff shrilly laughed-off.

593. Far better to be brief and curt,  
Crisp and terse, compact, succinct.  
Within a nutshell, all compressed  
The soul of wit's - a wink.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

594. Far worse it is to gush out words -  
To circumlocute with longiloquence;  
Expatriate ..... speak at length  
With circuitous protractedness.

\*

595. With wag of chin, yap of jaw,  
With a prattle, gaff or gab -  
Man may conceal the dawn of day,  
While breaking light upon the dark.

596. With bat at breeze, bump of gums ...  
With raise of voice, get in a word -  
Man may buttonhole a friend .....  
Or take the floor in self-defence.

597. Others - less articulate -  
Broken voiced, speech impeded ...  
Might stumble, hum, hem and haw,  
Stammer, stutter, falter, halt.

598. Others - loose tongued, idly glib,  
With a twaddle, tittle-tattle ....  
Might varnish twattle with a rattle,  
A jabber-gabble-gabber-blabber.

599. Others converse, have intercourse;  
They sweeten the banquet with chat;  
Feasting on emotion, each conversation  
Feeds on the fruit of the heart.

600. Others stand aside addressing walls,  
Hamlets .... apostrophise loud  
Soliloquise on - alone in the world.  
As life's monologue clowns.

601. Others - orators mounted on  
soapboxes,  
Lecturing, haranguing, tirade on apathy  
on sin, spending, and world concerns -  
Apartheid and the killing of whales.

602. Others - ride the tide of eloquence  
With ideas that breed, words that burn.  
They have tongues in their heads ....  
Going double-four at eight-to-one.

603. Such prose run mad - the gift of gab  
Turned sesquipedalian highfalutin -  
Is pompous bombast, rant and bunkum  
That's balder dashingly platitudinous.

\*

604. There are hacks and penny-liners,  
There are many mad scribendi ...  
Writers drafting '*coup de plume*'  
Black and white calligraphy.

605. Much is written - little's published,  
Proofed, set, plated, pressed,  
Left to run, pulled, reissued  
Or printed time and time again.

606. Few are fussed to write a letter,  
To communicate with those they love.  
The most they'll do is send a postcard  
When they go abroad.

607. Yet nearly all ... peruse books,  
Flick through art and fashion mags -  
Read the comic strips and stories  
And headlines in the daily rags.

608. But few review, write-up, report,  
Run a commentary on the world.  
There seems to be a billion views  
But few of any worth.

609. Perhaps we cannot compend life,  
Survey it in a few short lines,  
Abridge mankind in a draft  
Of words, condensed and rhymed.

\*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

610. Many fictions, sets of lies,  
The memory of man is gossip form.  
Legend, myth, and fairy tale  
And scrolls of wild romance.

611. There is poetry, verse and song -  
Emotion recollecting beauty;  
Painting with the gift of gods;  
Expression of exquisite feeling.

612. But poetry - that knot in the gut -  
The unison of man with nature:  
Is for all who love and feel great truth  
While cheering their own sweet solitude.

613. And prose - words in the finest  
order,  
Grand - can be plain and common place,  
Matter of fact and unromantic  
When written in a truthful way.

614. Then there's drama - prose at play,  
Poetry masked to stalk a stage ....  
Tragedy the art of masters:  
Comedy the fun of knaves -

615. Actors puffed and self important,  
Prima donnas primped with paint.  
Extras always out of work ....  
Like Pimpernels when paid.

\*

616. Other times, there is a mute silence,  
A reticence, a Laconic calm ....  
A tight-lipped, remote detachment  
I cannot understand.

617. There is a veil, a dark concealment,  
A screen of fog before my eyes.  
So I play dumb, put the lid on  
The coffins of my past.

618. I hide perdu, lie in wait,  
In the shade eclipse myself.  
From sight retire, and undercover  
Watch for tell-tale signs.

\*

619. Signs of falseness, tarradiddle,  
Fib and flam prevarication;  
Cock and bull exaggeration;  
Bosh and bunk and drivel.

620. With much cry and little wool,  
The tempest in a tea-pot poured -  
I come it strong and stir  
The truth with a silver spoon.

621. But I don't deceive, delude or dupe,  
Trick, jape, kid or spoof ....  
Play a bunko game of bilk  
Nor sell gold bricks to boobs.

622. I am no double-dealing Janus,  
A Judas or a Machiavelli ....  
An Artful Dodger or a Diddler,  
A cockatrice or Indian giver.

623. For I'm no gull, duck, or pigeon,  
Goat, cat's paw, mooch or chump,  
Fool, monkey, jay or coot ....  
Do you hear me? .... Good!

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 7

### 7TH LEXICON

*Humanity is gregarious, but each individual has a will that distinguishes him or her from the rest of humankind. This is commendable - but it also produces folly and madness which is counter-universal. Recognising this folly, and learning from it, requires Man to be familiar with the seventh lexicon.*

#### 1 - WILL

624. With a will, a wish, a fancy,  
With a mind to have one's way,  
Some take the law into their hands  
To have their own sweet way.

625. Jane ... far more un begrudging  
With willing heart and happy cheer  
Takes it ... on her own freewill  
To gladly volunteer.

626. Others ... more demurely scrupled,  
Balk, beg off, shrink and shy.  
With recoil, and an ill-grace  
They protest ... then fly!

627. Fly, flee, cut and run,  
Abscond, elope, welsh and truck ...  
Take it on the lam, scam!  
Lead the world a pretty dance.

628. Slip the collar, shake the yoke,  
Smartly leap into the lifeboat.  
Get off cheap, go Scot free ...  
By the skin of their teeth.

629. Abandon, forsake, leave, desert,  
Throw in the sponge, wash their hands,  
Azzle out of all commitment,  
Bid a long goodbye.

\*

630. Some do not know their own minds.  
They flounder between will & will not;  
They wait to see how the cat'll jump -  
Call the shot once the coin's dropped.

631. With a coolness - neutral air,  
Without a care, a hoot, a scat;  
Nonchalant, spineless, cold ....  
Desire can turn all black.

\*

632. Some have cause to incite, goad,  
Blow the coals, apply the torch,  
Wake the rabble from their sleep,  
Nettle, irritate and prick.

633. Others throw dust in the eyes -  
On some pretext or lame excuse  
Find a peg to hang their cloak ...  
Or pretend they're drunk.

634. Some allure with sex and glamour,  
Angle with a silver hook -  
Gild the pill, give the come-on,  
Vamp you with a wicked look.

635. Others bribe, corrupt and purchase,  
Soap their palms with all they grease,  
Oil the pan with all the graft  
They've sugared-off from thieves.

636. Others dissuade, dampen, deter,  
Play it cold, chill the air -  
Whoever they are, or their ends,  
They're a bunch of pains!

\*

637. Intent, purpose, design, aim ....  
The be-all end-all *raison d'être*.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Some take it in their dizzy heads  
To take no heed of progress.

638. Scheme, device, plot and plan,  
Many sketch out their whole life  
But few make arrangements for coping  
With the problems they'll encounter.

639. On the track, on the scent ...  
Jane bends each step to shape a course;  
Others chase the hounds in full cry -  
In hot pursuit of what?

640. Business, occupation, work ....?  
Task or stint, chore or job?  
There are careerists in the world  
But most are just employed.

641. Yet, there's a choice, a selection -  
You have a vote, a voice to barrack ...  
You have a yeah, a nay .... two hands  
To nominate your ballot winners.

642. You can reject, disown, rebuff,  
Do away with all those appointed.  
You have the right to brush aside  
Those who serve you badly.

643. And if you are compelled, obliged  
To make a virtue of necessity ...  
Then, the die's cast, it's in the cards,  
And you must act with urgency.

644. For all is preordained, foregone.  
Who can swear it is not so?  
Rough-hewn Time shapes your end,  
While some say that God is dead.

645. How would I know if it were true?  
A case is still being made for Him.  
Some say it is a put-up job ...  
Please put me up there too!

\*

646. Jane makes the most, turns to  
account,  
Applies herself beyond all price.  
She'll not impose, presume herself  
More profitable than her worth.

647. For others consume, expend, waste,  
Finish, eat up all the cake ...  
Light their candles all at once,  
Burn incense in a gale.

648. Some misuse, abuse, pervert,  
Persecute, do their worse ....  
Misapply their witch-like talents  
To profane and desecrate.

649. Others cast off, throw away,  
Adopt the order of the day,  
Rid themselves of all the trash  
Consigned to file thirteen.

650. Others labour on in vain,  
Take part in the great goose-chase,  
Whistle waltzes to the walls  
Shine their torches at the sun.

651. Such custom comes as second nature,  
Habit, practice, dastur, rule -  
There is a pattern that is fashion,  
There is the well worn groove.

652. Some break the mould, cure  
themselves,  
Buy a frock to dress old lines ...  
Do old things in a new way,  
Rid themselves of injured self.

653. Some glossed up in spiffy ideas,  
Adorn themselves in the latest thing.  
Stranger still - they keep in step  
With Jones - who's up-to-Dick.

654. Rather odd, but quite conventional,  
Good form, really proper, right ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

They shop for things on Main Street,  
As that's the approved style.

655. Some stand on ceremony, outward  
form,  
Prim and rigid, civil be ....  
Place social grace on par with riches.  
Well, on the surface, dear!

656. Deep down most cherish - sans facon  
-  
A free non-tight be yourself ....  
So let your hair down - en famille -  
Do things as you might.

\*

657. There is a path, a track, a trail,  
A road that leads to a door.  
To what extent the journey's light  
Depends upon the load.

658. You have resources, means and ways,  
Devices, measures, methods, steps,  
The wherewithal to get therewith  
If you are equipped.

659. Room and board, and the keep  
You eke each week to get by on ...  
Clothed, fitted, rigged and heeled,  
You're ready then for fun.

660. But what if you have no reserves?  
No stocks or shares to trade for cash?  
No nest-egg for a rainy day?  
No savings in the bank?

661. It is very nice to be sufficient  
And satisfied with what one's got.  
A wallet oozing milk and honey,  
The cupboards choked with grub.

662. But when you're woefully insufficient  
With none to spare ... short of change

Poor and hungry, lean and starving ...  
Shit! That's just tough luck!

663. It must be nice to have plenty,  
To have a cup running over ....  
To have the gold to gild the lily  
And the scent to dowse the rose:

664. To have all one can have ....  
And not have piss-all any more -  
To have one's fill, be satisfied  
Without being overdosed.

### 2 - CONDITIONS

665. Sometimes it's expedient, pis aller  
To make shift, manage, get along,  
Eat one's cake and have it too  
As a stop-gap, last resort.

666. Sometimes there's drawbacks,  
damage,  
Discommode to overcome ....  
Out of place, unfit things  
Not worth the hurt.

667. Sometimes mugwumps make ado,  
Ascribe importance to sine qua non,  
Parade their greatness, make a fuss,  
Play fiddle with the biggest frogs.

668. Sometimes trifles light as air -  
A paltry feather on the scales;  
A hundred years hence or back -  
Is counting hairs, splitting straws.

669. Sometimes the good (as good can  
be),  
The cream of the crop, the pick,  
The flower of the flock, the bunch,  
Are conditions well received.

\*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

670. Sometimes Jess endures all ails:  
The slug in an English rose ...  
The wasp on a Scottish thistle ...  
The flea up Ulster's nose.

671. Sometimes plague, blight and canker,  
Locus, fungus, moth and rust ...  
Toxins dumped into the ocean  
Are worse than any worm.

672. Sometimes perfection beyond praise,  
Sans peur et sans reproche ....  
Is quintessence - ne plus ultra -  
Polished, pure and highly-wrought.

673. Sometimes, defect, flaw and blemish,  
A hole in a brand new coat ...  
A crack in a piece of china ...  
Devalues the whole.

674. Sometimes scars, pocks and  
birthmarks,  
A freckle on a cheek of cream ...  
A mole on a snowy breast ...  
Add interest to the common.

675. Sometimes low grade, second best,  
Namby-pamby, milk and water ...  
Neither tripe ... neither offal,  
Doesn't mean it's awful.

676. Sometimes - there's improvement,  
Things turn out for the better,  
Jess seems on the lift, the mend  
And making up for lost time.

\*

677. Then all of a sudden, things worsen,  
There's a slump, Jess hits the skids,  
Things get out of joint, go wrong,  
A plane-load hits the drink.

678. Why this destruction? Ravage, ruin  
...  
How can Jess strike at the root?  
When the axe is aimed at the trunk  
After the branches are removed.

679. But, snatched from the jaws of  
death,  
Jess lives to live again .....  
Having weathered the storm  
Jess pulls through - to err again.

\*

680. Refreshed, pure and sweet,  
Her strength returned, she's new life:  
Perked and chipped, cheered & bucked,  
Jess joins a reconditioned world.

681. And then ... relapse! She reverts,  
She regresses, backslides, sinks,  
Eats her deeds, apostate crows,  
Turns about, and falls from grace.

682. So seizures follow - fevers, throes,  
Cancers, tumours, cupid's itch ...  
Heart disease, Aids and MS,  
Infirm - and on the danger list.

683. Remedy, relief, narcotics, balms,  
Cure-alls, heal-alls, elixir vitae's.  
Knock-out drops or Mickey Finns,  
Expectorants or stimulants.

\*

683. Jess wouldn't mind a Turkish bath  
To purify her washed-up skin.  
How she'd love a pretty boy  
To scrub and rub her fit.

685. If you think that's impure,  
And her body is a dump ...  
That's why she needs that pretty boy  
To scrape her clean of muck.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

686. No doubt, it would be good for her.  
Can you deny this truth?  
Jess thinks it's fine for one's health  
To care about one's looks.

687. And with full pep, a burst of health  
(Helped by the pretty boy)  
She'd feel her oats, and of course  
Enjoy the country air.

\*

688. The healing arts are nine-tenths  
sense  
And ten percent of medicine ....  
A bunion on Jess's big toe joint  
Is a fashion victim's paradigm.

689. So treat yourself, diagnose yourself  
Or end up like Jess - beneath the knife!  
It's not so nice to have a slice  
Cut away because of pride.

690. Perhaps we all have mental blocks,  
Obsessions sent to try our health.  
So wear broad shoes or be psychotic!  
You smoke and drink corned-neurotics!

691. For there is danger, peril and hazard  
When one sleeps on a volcano ....  
If one sails too near the wind,  
Or skates on ice that's thin.

692. For when one's name's on the list;  
When one totters near the brink;  
When one dangles over a viper pit -  
It's too late to run for it!

\*

693. There are those picked to guard Jess.  
There are those who watch and ward.  
And there are beasts sent to cordon  
Sent to beat her up.

694. In retreat she needs a rock -  
An ivory tower aloof from life;  
A refuge in a time of trouble;  
A door that she can lock.

695. For there is need for preservation,  
Conservation and all that stuff.  
There must be more reservations  
And sanctuaries for you all.

696. Sanctuary - in a place of salvage  
Where you may be *tirer d'affaire* -  
Where you may be liberated ...  
Free - and well at ease.

697. Do not wait for the red flag.  
Wait not for the yellow jack.  
Attacks advance the raised alarm.  
Read the signs ... or be undone!

698. With dismay, disquiet, distress,  
The cry of the wolf is clearly heard.  
But few believe that wolves exist  
Until the chicken's dead.

### 3 - VOLUNTARY ACTION

699. What's doing? What's up?  
What's cooking? What gives?  
What's happening? What's with it?  
What's buzzin', cousin?

700. Not a hoot! Not a stir!  
Not a sausage! Not a thing!  
Just Jim twiddling thumbs  
Leaving things as they stand.

701. Well! Where's the enterprise in  
that?  
Where's the itch to get ahead?  
Doesn't Jim have fish to fry?  
Other irons on the fire?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

702. No - he bums and loafes about,  
Eats the bread of idleness ....  
Swings the bat, whips the cat,  
Wastes what waking hours he has.

703. He sees no need to hurry, rush,  
To scammer, scud, scuddle, spurt;  
To bundle on and make short work  
In hot haste against the clock.

704. He has spare hours, time to burn  
With a creep and a crawl.  
Every tick he takes his leisure  
Every tock he lives for pleasure.

705. For Jim - it's all sweet repose,  
A take-it-ease sprawl and loll -  
Every day's a - dies non -;  
Every week's one long hol'!

706. His sleep - makes darkness brief;  
Knits-up the ravelled sleeve of bliss;  
Gently dons the hood of grief -  
That cloaks his idleness.

707. Jim has no wakeful nights,  
Restless, sleepless moonlit hours.  
He doesn't toss and turn 'til dawn  
To rise ulcered, tired and worn -

708. Like they who strive, struggle, strain  
Till they are black in the face ...  
Breaking arms, breaking legs ...  
Breaking necks, to do their best.

\*

709. Why undertake a task, a venture?  
Put your hand to the plough ..?  
Take the bull by the horns?  
Do all that's in your power?

710. With great effort, pain, and labour,  
Free the dog - the donkey Briton!

Free a slave, navvy, kefir!  
You workers try to pull together!

711. Fighting fatigue, wear and languor,  
Without being tuckered beat or pooped.  
Battling tiredness like a lion ...  
Without collapse, or dog-tired look.

\*

712. Hail you workers, makers, doers!  
Perform your tasks, do them well!  
If an actor, author, artist -  
Be a master, do things - else

713. Find your workplace, house or  
parlour;  
Install your skills and be yourselves!  
Hive away and work your engines,  
Be geared for life! Now try!

714. So why do men make no provision  
For tomorrow, live hand to mouth?  
Go unprepared in this world  
They haven't a clue about?

\*

715. If Jim had skills and knew his stuff  
If he could tell the hawks from doves.  
Would Jim be stinking rich like some  
Who cut a coat to suit the cloth?

716. Jim's unskilled, without the knack  
To start a business. Yet he's not daft,  
He has a brain, but what good's that?  
He hasn't got a credit card.

717. He's not cunning, crafty, sly.  
He can't outwit the blue-suit men.  
He'll pay his poll tax and his rent  
And watch all wealth elude him.

718. Though he is artless, simple, frank,  
He can look men in the eye ....

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

He can trust his honest self  
But not a blue-tied world -

719. Where all that might have - is  
undone,  
Not carried through, left half-hogged,  
Not implemented, nor finished off -  
And all's not worth a shout or bawl.

\*

720. All that fails, flops, collapses,  
That starts off like a rocket,  
Takes it on the chin, and sinks  
Falls to earth like a stick.

721. All that's ruin, rout, defeat,  
Overtuned, crushed, reduced ...  
Drubbed, licked, whipped, thrashed,  
A cooked goose served as hash.

722. All that's adverse, hapless, hard,  
A shock fall from one's high estate,  
To come down heavy in an ill-wind  
And left to bear the elements.

723. What a hindrance! What a shock!  
To have one's beak put out of joint.  
To have one's wings clipped so short  
That flying is a skip and hop.

724. All that's difficult, arduous, tough:  
To walk on eggshells, tread hot coals,  
To dance on crocodiles - What suicide!  
The end of the rope!

\*

725. Give Jim a world where that  
dispatched,  
Is not by halves brought to pass ....  
Realised, accomplished, done,  
Wound up, closed, capped and crowned.

726. Where all that comes good -  
succeeds,  
Makes headway on a raging sea ...  
So that which goes beyond all dream,  
Cuts a swathe through a world

727. Where all's comfort, well and fat -  
A cuckoo's life in a sunny hedge.  
Born beneath a lucky star ....  
Living high in a feathered nest.

728. Where all that's effortless and  
smooth -  
Catching tadpoles in a goldfish bowl;  
Stealing candy from a baby's mouth  
To live the life of Reilly's folk.

\*

729. To be good, be nice, behave, act  
well,  
Deport oneself with perfect manners.  
Easy said - hard to do.  
Perfection is the mien of few.

730. Mischief makers, rogues and devils,  
Pixies, pucks, minxes, rascals.  
Most people are a little elfish  
About their voluntary actions

### 4 - AUTHORITY

731. The government, authorities, them  
above,  
Old John Bull and Uncle Sam ....  
The past brought us Goody Snatch  
And her argumentum baculinium.

732. On the throne - on her broomstick,  
Potent, lordly, influential ...  
At the helm, puissant, powerful,  
Ex cathedra - magisterial.

733. Lawless, nihilistic, rule by lynching,  
Doing as disorder pleases ....

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Mice will play when Puss's away  
And eat the mouldy cheeses.

\*

734. You had no Lords, no Lower House  
You had a parliament of mice ....  
With one big rat on the floor  
Logrolling laws with Christian no-no's!

735. You had the UN, the IC laws,  
The EEC .... the IMB.  
God saved you not from crushing rule  
That changed to suit just one.

736. You were the pawns of dismay  
science,  
The guinea pigs of party line ...  
Nineteen-Eighty-Four come true  
By Nineteen-Ninety-Nine.

737. You were the biggest chumps to date,  
The greatest number ever sold ...  
And what you bought in exchange  
Won't help you when you're old.

738. And who's to blame for your greed?  
Who led you to get round God?  
Whose assets were such liabilities?  
Whose strengths were your own faults?

739. If you were properly guided, steered,  
Directed where you'd like to go.  
You would not let dictatorship  
Drive you to war.

740. If you were managed, stewarded,  
chaired  
Governed as you'd like to be ....  
You would not have been overseered  
By an Iron Moll.

741. If you were mistressed by a good  
wife,

Matroned by a gracious dame ...  
You would not have been governessed  
By a Madam T.

742. If you were served, chambermaided,  
Cinderella'd or Abigail'd ...  
You would not have had Wizard Man  
In to take her place.

\*

743. Jim sometimes fears the IRA,  
But only when he cannot hear  
Words of reason from Sinn Fein  
On his own TV.

744. Why is there so much censorship?  
Phone taps and ID checks?  
He does not know from day to day  
The real from rumoured in the press.

745. Is he a traitor to question these  
Precepts, maxims, canons, codes  
That hide the true facts of life?  
He has a right to know!

746. And if it's said he has no rights,  
Then now's the time to fight for them.  
He wants a Bill of Rights, and then  
A constitution to go with it!

747. He wants a free elected Lords,  
Ten year seats for all the shires.  
He wants to phase out birthright peers  
And join the modern world!

748. He wants a senate, free, impartial,  
Instead he has a bunch of cronies  
Once roped together by the Whip  
Of Goody Snatch the Witch -

749. Now conjured by the magic wand  
of Wizard Man the Rich.  
It is a sort of horror story,  
Demands, claims, upon Jim's rights.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

750. Sixt'n Scots peers, twelve from  
Ulster,  
The rest from England, dukes & earls.  
What right have they to govern Britain  
Or he to think them wise?

751. He'd send them back to their estates,  
And call elections for the Lords.  
And if a duke desires to stand,  
Well, let him if he wants.

752. But let Jim have his parliament ...  
Not some junta bashing god.  
No committee in a huddle  
Deciding for them all.

\*  
753. By force of arms, coercion,  
violence,  
At point of gun, hijacked, dragooned,  
Put under screws, duress and pressure,  
The fist, the big stick and the boot.

754. With rod of iron, stern austerity ...  
With heavy hand, grimly harsh ...  
With Spartan shrift, hard and rigid,  
Roughshod rode, no hold's barred.

755. With rope enough on a free reign,  
Lax and slack, loose, relaxed ...  
With remiss and pliant head  
With plenty yield and give ...

756. With lenient favour, mild  
forbearance,  
Easy going, decent, kind .....  
Pampered, spoiled and mollycoddled.  
Jim would think that nice!

757. Fettered, hampered, trammelled,  
shackled,  
Constrained, controlled, curbed, checked;  
Hog-tied to the ways of men .....  
Jim's had enough!

758. Captured, charged, confined to care,  
Consigned to a custodial cage ...  
Cordoned off, cooped up, committed.  
He wishes he were a bird!

759. Free to be at liberty!  
The right to live and live well right.  
Go unrestrained, run the wind  
Be free in will ... and wild!

760. Set loose, free to go ...  
The wish to want to and want to wish ...  
To whisper sweetness to the world;  
To whistle down the wind!

\*

761. Serf, vassal, thrall, slave,  
Bondsman, odalisk, villain, churl -  
Dare not call their souls their own  
And who can really blame the sods.

\*

762. Offer, proffer, presentation ...  
Submit, propose, bring up broach,  
Make a move towards advancement,  
But .. Jim, don't volunteer!

763. Appeal, cry, call, plea,  
Entreat, implore, beg, beseech ...  
If you please, for goodness sake,  
Don't cap in hand proceed.

764. For if Jim acceded - acquiesced,  
Surrendered to the rule of men,  
Bent a knee, bowed his head;  
He might as well be dead.

765. If he submitted - suit and service,  
Pleasure, nod, beck and call ....  
Had to lie down, roll right over;  
He would kill herself.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

766. To disobey, revolt, rebel,  
It is his right to counter cruelty,  
To fly in the face of tyranny ...  
Instead of dying cowardly.

767. To observe, respect, comply with  
All that's wrong in humankind .....  
With faith in justice, law and order,  
He'd have to be a hypocrite.

768. To disregard, infringe, transgress,  
Take the law into his own hands ...  
He would, because the law's a bitch!  
Life has taught him this!

\*

769. Promise, pledge, word of honour.  
Oath, vows, marriage contract ...  
There was Jim ... some time ago  
They slipped the ring ... oh bother!

770. Signed, sealed, arranged, settled,  
They broke it off, went their ways ...  
They had a bargain, an agreement.  
Instinct engaged their reason.

771. Deposit, stake, monkey money ...  
They had none - with none to sell.  
No insurance, bonds or stocks;  
They only had themselves.

772. Consent, assent, deign, comply,  
Turn a willing ear, approve ....  
Some voters have no objections, none.  
They nod their heads without a hoot.

773. Refuse, decline, reject, turn down,  
Repulse, rebuff, deny disclaim ...  
Some landlords up their tenants' rents  
And go off winter skiing.

774. Permission, leave, imprimatur ...  
Permit, license, warrant, pass;  
On sufferance archbishops vouchsafe,

Things they cannot authorise.

775. Ban, embargo, veto, bar,  
Forbid, prohibit, enjoin, preclude;  
Some governments license misery  
By making happiness taboo.

776. Repeal, revoke, recall, rescind,  
Retract, renege, reverse, abolish;  
Nobles null and void agreements  
That peasants have to swallow.

777. Select, they choose their nominees,  
The Party Man, committee backed ...  
Oh how Jim wishes he could have  
A candidate with heart.

778. Each Party Man's a go-between,  
An advocate of Party line ....  
A mouth piece for the Party boss  
And the Party mind.

779. Can he respect a Party Man?  
Promoted for the Party cause?  
Christ! Jim does not have a vote  
He can't pay his pole tax.

780. How can Jim remove the Party  
When they've removed Jim's voting  
power.  
Deprived of rights, the poor can't oust  
An incumbent oligarchy.

780a. Jim can't retire. He's thirty four!  
He'll not make enough next year  
To pay his tax, and get his vote -  
To stab the caesarean Party.

### 5 - SUPPORT and OPPOSITION

781. How can Jim aid, help, support  
A girl four hundred miles from him?  
Foster, sponsor, back, abet?  
Give manna in the wilderness?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

782. How can they ally, join hands,  
Cooperate, club together  
To get her through her college course  
Without a grant to keep her.

783. Must he consort, confer, collude  
To find a patron, friend at court?  
Is this how time has worked on him -  
On all who need support?

784. Must he join cliques, clubs & circles,  
Belong to clannish social groups?  
Must he enrol or be invited  
Without a pedigree ....?

785. How can he without connections  
Ignore the set, avoid the lodge?  
What hope has he in aiding well  
A girl who needs his love?

786. There are those in his way  
With bayonets crossed, daggers drawn.  
Yet, Jim'll make his stand against  
The fiercest queen or pawn.

787. Opponent, adversary, antagonist,  
Assailant ... rival on the field;  
Up in arms he'll do his worst  
And advance like a fiend.

788. Jim'll kick against all the pricks,  
Put up a fight to frighten God!  
He'll resist, repulse, rebuff,  
And stand on his tod!

789. He'll toss his glove into the ring,  
Pluck a beard, slap a face ...  
Raise his fist, bar his teeth,  
But take it at his pace.

\*

790. Such 'guerre a mort', 'a outance'  
Are struggles of the last ditch kind;

Hand to hand, contention, strife,  
A free-for-all, knock-down, drag-out!

791. Violence is an insane epidemic;  
A brain-bash wind-pipe slitting art;  
A feast of vultures; a waste of life;  
A by-product of the arts of peace.

792. Violence is the art of bullies;  
The trade of traders in ideas ...  
It does not determine who is right:  
Victory goes to those who survive.

793. Attack is for - the dogs let loose!  
Bloodhounds seeking out their game;  
The hunter stalking on his prey -  
Brought to bay, slain and eaten.

794. Defence is for the ready primed,  
Those who beat the yelping curs -  
The hunted, shielded, armed and waiting  
For the attack to begin.

\*

795. Combatants, soldiers, warriors,  
veterans,  
Rookies, draftees, and plain regulars,  
Mounted troops, reserves on foot,  
Fleets of forces, flying or floating -

796. Big guns; small shot; cannons;  
pistols;  
Munitions - ammo, missiles, bullets;  
Polaris; Trident; fission-fusion  
Nuked-up megatonned plutonium.

797. The world's a stage, a coliseum  
For slingshot, shrapnel, high explosive;  
A hippodrome of TNT,  
A theatre steeped in tragic hope.

\*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

798. Instead - let Jim seek fellow feeling,  
Affinity, sympathy, harmony, union.  
He needs rapport to cement community  
With people of the same mind.

799. He does not need a house divided,  
A rift within the lute, discord.  
If there's a crow needing plucked  
Leave him out the quarrel.

800. For peace of heart; peace of mind;  
Follow that which makes for peace.  
Be at peace, Jim, with yourself;  
Vade in pace! Pax vobiscum!

801. Wave the white flag: play the pipes;  
Shake hands on the truce agreed;  
Raise the siege; play in tune;  
Pour waters on the waters smoothed.

802. Settle troubles, Jim, come between;  
Intercede and referee -  
Negotiate, and arbitrate;  
Bring to terms a lasting peace.

803. Impartial be to point of means:  
On the fence; half way trim;  
Be neutral, Jim, strike a balance;  
Not hot, nor cold, just in between.

804. Be compromising - fifty-fifty,  
Adjust to steering a middle course;  
Make some virtue of necessity;  
Make it your measured most.

### 6 - POSSESSION

805. Nine points of the law - possession.  
Tenure; holding; ownership ...  
Mine; yours; ours; theirs ...  
Puts one's name to it.

806. Finder-keeper, those who have:  
Master, mistress, holder, host -

From year to year the lessee pays  
The bank the leaser owns.

807. For property is one's real estate,  
The visual proof of all endeavours,  
It does not show the inner wealth,  
Nor account for mental assets.

\*

808. Acquisition through take and profit:  
Make a penny turn a pound;  
Rake off gains, net the gleanings,  
Have money on the brain.

809. Retention through: holding on;  
Gripping firm to what one has;  
Clinging on as if for dear life:  
By always sitting tight.

810. Loss through waste, expense,  
depletion:  
By the board; into the red ...  
Out of pocket; cut off; bust;  
Without a single cent.

811. Relinquishment through: giving up;  
Letting go without a fight ...  
Disposing of, kissing goodbye to  
All chances to be rich.

\*

812. Commerce, trade, traffic, truck,  
Bull and bear and all that stuff ...  
Buy and sell, outbid, haggle.  
Mercury keeps his shop in London.

813. Share the snack, take your whack,  
Have your finger in the pie ...  
Divvy up, halve your part  
And have a jolly laugh.

814. Parcel out the cake, allot,  
Cut the melon, portion, piece ...

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Save a pittance, stave some crumbs  
For those who're having none.

815. Buy up, buy in, buy off, buy back -  
Bee Tee was a yuppie granny ...  
But Sid Gas was a come-on con  
Who got the suckers bidding.

\*

816. Transfer, convey, hand over, sign  
Seven years on before demise ...  
Why should Charlie pay death tax  
When Mam's estate's so fat?

817. Donation, present, gift, grant,  
Largess, gratuity, bounty, favour!  
Hand outs are the fad of gentry.  
Begging is the poor man's legacy.

818. Who shall now inherit the earth?  
Receive? Accept as beneficiary  
The birthright passed by primogenity  
That has displaced the many.

\*

819. Beneath the sign of three gold balls,  
A line of desperate wallahs queue ...  
The needy in the loan shark's jaws:  
The way it was between the wars.

820. Pawn; hock; - debtor's borrow,  
Raise the cash on credit, trust.  
They never pay the interest off;  
They soar like birds before they drop.

821. Sell up, sell out, sell the lot!  
That's fine if you've got some spare,  
But not when hunger knocks it  
Under the hammer of despair.

822. Sharks catch, grab, snatch, hold,  
Hook, snag, snare, spear,  
Strip, fleece, shear, skin

You out of house and home.

823. Do they restore, return, give back?  
Make restitution and amends?  
Remand the wrong? Reclaim right?  
Atone for all their wolfishness?

824. They pilfer, filch, purloin, swipe,  
Plunder, pillage, loot and sack ...  
They disregard the 'me' and 'you'  
And lift what they like.

825. Crook, gun, chor and prigger,  
Sneak thief - poacher, prowler,  
The biggest bandits of them all  
Are the stock market dealers.

826. Illicit business, racketeering ...  
Fair trade? What a piece of crack!  
These swag-looting marketeers  
Moonlight on your backs!

827. Perhaps Jim needs business kings,  
The egg and butter job tycoons -  
Merchants, salesmen, brokers, traders  
And the hordes of lesser mongers.

828. Perhaps Jim needs their  
merchandise,  
Their goods for sale, products, ware;  
But need he take the dividend  
They hand out as pay?

829. Perhaps - if there were ten-pence  
stores,  
Pound-post houses with his needs ...  
The open-market would be fair,  
Not fouled-up by greed.

830. Jim's not a - me first - speculator,  
No wheeling-dealing operator ....  
He mounts no raids, rigs no killings,  
Nor washes cash like dirty linen.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

831. Jess has no stocks or shares,  
No big Nats, Gas or Oil .....  
She could have bought her piece of State.  
Instead, it was sold for her.

832. Jane had a share in this country ...  
A dividend from National wealth,  
But Goody Snatch has stolen that  
And sold it to her friends.

\*

833. Money, cash, all legal tender  
Is at the root of most things wrong:  
The eagle on the dollar bill;  
The monarch on the one pound coin.

834. Financing backing, sound,  
substantial;  
You'd all like that, it's only natural,  
But there are greedy Midas types  
Not sharing El Dorado.

835. Made of money, bloated, pursed,  
There are those flush with wealth:  
Stinking, filthy, lousy rich;  
Who are also wadding sick.

836. There are those on narrow means  
Pissed off at not possessing much:  
Not worth a rap ... the going hard;  
They're walking in the crap.

837. Of course there's credit, trust and  
tick,  
But nothing's free, that's for sure.  
The interest compounds every month  
And doubles every year.

838. It's no surprise that there is debt  
Up to here - and in arrears!  
Repossession .... what a price.  
Death is not as dear.

839. Who will pay a living wage  
To clear and settle up accounts?  
Stand the shot? Recompense  
For Goody Snatch's work?

840. Who'll wipe off the Welsher's slate?  
Cancel out the bankrupt's bills?  
Who'll pick up the debtor's tab  
Before the system fails?

841. Spend, expend, disburse, outlay ...  
The cost of living rising daily.  
The boom is over so they say -  
Who now can spare the price of day?

842. Profits, earnings, gains, receipts,  
It's not enough to make ends meet;  
The yield brings in scant return;  
Expenses out-gross net-income.

843. Accounts outstanding, statements,  
debts  
Banks gnaw life like diseased rodents.  
Accountants gobble at the cheese  
And leave the mousetrap open.

844. The damage done, the quotes  
accepted,  
Tax and duty, vat and pole ....  
Direct tax, progressive levies,  
And tax to fill a hole.

845. No discounts, cuts, deductions,  
No rebates, reductions, none ...  
Perhaps the odd set-off concession  
And allowance for a child.

846. Precious, dear, and far too much,  
Overcharged, inflated, steep ....  
Through the nose; you onward go  
Without a wink of sleep.

847. Cheap, low priced, marked down,  
slashed;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The cost of life's a piggy bank ...  
A bargain-basement crock of chalk  
Cracked from being robbed.

848. Where are the Annie Oakley shows?  
The on-the-house Scot free gifts?  
The free-as-air get for nothings  
Life presents you with?

849. Now-a-days it's economics ....  
Frugal prudence, nothing free.  
Skimping witch-face Goody Snatch  
And her gobbling few.

850. Clean and smiling Wizard Man  
Is no miser, is no match  
For Goody skinflint-pinch fist Snatch  
And her venal pack.

851. She spared no expense,  
She lavished wealth with her wand  
On the backs of those who kissed  
Her butt and felt her hand.

852. There is waste, a down-the-drain  
End to all that you have known.  
Close your eyes, make a wish ...  
And dream the nightmare gone!

## UNIVERSAL BEING - BOOK 8

### 8TH LEXICON

*Mankind is affected by a weakness termed emotion. In sympathy, humans support one another. Yet, there are those who employ the lexicon of morality and religion to hide their weakness in order to foster their own superiority. In truth, there are no superior beings - there is only one - the Universal Being.*

#### 1 - PERSONAL FEELINGS

853. I have talked in brief of love:  
Of beings ruled by taste and touch;  
Of feelings roused by sight and sound;  
But not about what passion does.

854. Now I'll speak of lesser love:  
Emotion locked within the heart;  
I'll try to strike an inner chord  
Without peeling raw.

855. For there are those numb to feeling,  
Poor creatures lost: hard and cold  
With hearts of stone; callous; brazen;  
We must keep them warm.

856. We must not let them shirk  
excitement.  
We must help them get some thrills:  
Make them tingle, tremor, quiver;  
Let them thaw their icy selves.

857. And if we can't? Then we'll become  
Just like them ... sober, staid,  
Calm, composed, stiff and starched.  
We'll become straight-lace faced.

858. For what's the peeing point  
Of living life with a Rodin look  
With dark Da Vinci staring eyes  
And mouths forever crooked?

859. That is a pose meant for art:  
Not for people who have nerves;  
Not for those highly strung  
And living on the edge.

860. No! I shall forbear, brook, abide,  
Take it like a man, resist!  
I'll lay in the lap of good  
And make the best of it!

861. What's the point of being impatient,  
Fretful, restless, in a sweat,  
All hopped up and in a lather,  
Too breathless to submit?

862. For life is balmy, sunny, bright,  
Delightful, pleasant, sweet and nice,  
Divine, sublime, fetching, fine  
..... Most of the time.

\*

863. Sometimes life's unpleasant: sour  
Enough to make a preacher swear; So bad,  
that it becomes more  
Than flesh and blood can bear.

864. But let's be happy, just like larks  
Soaring high in joyful bliss.  
With -joie de vivre- pleased as Punch!  
Let's be four times blessed!

865. There's natural shocks enough to  
wound  
And ghost our lives in misery,  
Without arrows barbed with trouble  
Aimed at our closet histories.

866. I have no belly for such tosh!  
It shouldn't happen to a dog.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Of all the ills, the sickest pill  
Is a dose of vile gossip.

\*

867. For ease of mind, I'll not flirt  
The shadows of my own dull past.  
Instead, I'll now be reconciled  
To be well satisfied.

868. I'm not a grouch, a crank, a crab,  
A grumbling, griping malcontent.  
Why be displeased, vexed of spirit  
In a world that isn't bad?

869. It's not hard to raise a smile,  
By being chipper, crouse and canty.  
As merry as the day is long,  
The blithe will chase off melancholy.

870. Let the demure, grave and grim,  
Not be you, or who we know ....  
For who enjoys a staid long face: Morning  
solemn, evening sober.

871. There are those with heavy hearts:  
Penseroso; soul-sick; blue ...  
In the doleful doldrums; dumped,  
Sad-eyed, and forever glum.

872. Sometimes a sadder man is wiser,  
Wild with regret - the better -  
But what a pity when remorse  
Turns into a penance.

873. Worse still are those unrepentant,  
Unsorry folks - hard of heart -  
Who untouched by their own impenitence  
Are without any qualms.

874. And there are those wailers: weepers  
Who beat their breasts, and fall about;  
The ones who cry their eyes out; bawl -  
The world will end tomorrow!

875. Until at last there is a laugh!  
A rah! rah! ray! A hip hur-rah!  
A haw-haw! hee-hee! tee-hee guffaw!  
A whoopee! hoopee! yippie! Wow!

876. Such celebration deserves: a fanfare;  
A 'feu de joie'; a gun salute -But wait a  
mo! I'm blowing the trumpet  
For no reason worth a hoot.

877. This verse is but a small amusement,  
A diversion from the waiting world.  
It is a game, a sport of words  
To drive the hours on.

878. It is a dance: a Terpsichore;  
A hoof around the lexicon;  
A reel around the dictionary  
In lines of four.

879. Perhaps it's all a bit absurd  
That I should make fun of words,  
But after all - we're all fools.  
It's ludicrous to think we're gods.

\*

880. I'll admit, there are wits  
So quick their lips merely twitch:  
They tongue tunes like violinists  
Fiddling on a Stradivarius.

881. Such banter as a joke is fine -  
Kidding; ribbing; ragging; razing.  
Such jesting as a give and take  
Might lead to fists in faces.

882. But is there worse than those who  
are  
Weary, stale, flat and dull:  
Who pass through life switched off  
As dreary lumps of lard?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

883. What's more tedious than a bore?  
Ho hum! Heigh ho! What a life!  
Humdrum dead and near extinct? How do  
they survive?

884. And what of those who sow the  
wind?  
From bad to worse see things increase?  
Those who might round Cape Wrath  
To come to Pentland grief.

885. What would they give to have relief:  
To smooth their ruffled brow with rest  
Like lion fleeced to tempered lamb  
Meek with sighed short breath.

886. We all seek comfort from distress;  
So let's rejoice with them that do.  
Let's weep with them that weep!  
And laugh with them too!

\*

887. There are those when things are bad  
Who declare that all is well;  
Those who will come what may  
Say:- The blackest hour's heaven!

888. These optimists make the best  
Of all the worst thrown their way:  
They knock on wood, trust in God,  
Make promises from air -

889. Which is no worse than those of  
gloom  
Who fancy clouds - where no clouds are:  
Who dash the cup from the lips  
Of all *enfants perdus*.

\*

890. For I have thoughts, troubled, chafe,  
That vex, beset and plague me:-  
Worried sick, disturbed, distressed,  
In dead of night; I leave my bed.

891. Sometimes it's fear, a cowardness,  
A qualmishness of cold misgiving ...  
An afraidness brought on by years,  
A diffidence of shivers.

892. Scared to death, I stand in terror,  
Cowering in the black of time:  
Paralysed, pale as ash -  
I bear the pass of panic.

893. Dare I admit such dire fears!  
And still proclaim myself an adult?  
Be strong: quit yourself a man.  
Be bold! Beard the lion!

894. How can I - paper back boned,  
March up to the cannon's mouth?  
When my courage's made of glass  
And broken in a moment.

895. Yet advance I must - timid go  
Safely forward, right foot cautious:  
Tip-toe slow, across the floor  
Back into bed before the dawn.

\*

896. Often I'm overcome by life,  
The pernicketiness of urban folk,  
The nothing of their finicalness,  
The up-turn of a nose.

897. Dainty judgement - discerning airs,  
Good sense pertly put in force:  
Such culture of the conscientious soul  
Leaves the spirit low.

898. So base in fact, an angel dies!  
Such folk can be vulgar Goths:-  
To err is human, sin divine,  
And they submit to both.

899. What ugliness in refined taste;  
To see a clock stop a face

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Wry and baboon-made by art  
Like something a cat has pawed.

900. True beauty is without a name:  
A something caught with half an ear;  
Something glimpsed with a flick  
Or felt without a hand.

\*

901. Ornate array is foofarow:  
Make-up on a small girl's cheeks  
Tinsel round the head of Christ, Or rings  
on every toe.

902. Unadorned natural beauty  
Illuminates the common world.  
Fair is the lily gilt ...  
Fair sweet the wild rose.

903. Such air! There is no pretence:  
No posy in a piano vase;  
No bouquet breakfast jug arranged  
That we might love if wild.

904. For vain our species seems to be  
With all its trump and solemn pride.  
We may act the grand seigneur -  
The rose grows beyond all time.

905. Yet, what is pride? Self-esteem?  
Napoleon on a beggar's horse?  
Mussolini flying high?  
Or Hitler cross-armed posed?

906. Too few like Garibaldi, Gandhi,  
Descend to sing the small man's song;  
Too few with humbled hang-dog looks  
Stoop to conquer all.

907. Nay! Who would be in servile  
chains!  
Who would drain their every vein!  
Who would kiss the hem of Cain!  
Unless they were a saint.

908. The modest violet outshines the  
rose:-

With bashful blush it finds its fame  
In the shade beneath an elm  
Where timorous lovers play.

909. But oh beware! Also there  
The pansy in self-love - in bloom!  
Conceit and swollen cockiness  
With which to please a fool.

\*

910. Braggarts on their trumpets blow  
Louder than the big-talk daffs  
Along the shore - where Wordsworth  
Strode - head into the windy blasts.

911. Chatter, chatter, June to May,  
They rave and rage, fuss and fury.  
They are bound, yet sway free:  
Bluster, bluff and swagger.

912. Let he - whose arrogance values  
pride  
And all false traits so admired -  
Let him ride his high horse home  
Eight hands above the mire.

913. And those - whose insolent reply  
Gives the world a curled lip -  
Let them be the rose, the bud -  
And not the prick of it.

\*

914. Perhaps some forfeit our good  
opinion,  
Disgraced they fall from high estate.  
Exposed to infamy's black respect,  
They bid farewell to glory.

915. Honours lauded, credit given:-  
How the cited can be sullied! By disgrace,  
stripped of ribbon,  
Branded bad, and shamed.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

916. Distinction made with a title:  
Your Grace, My Lord, or just plain Sir.  
That conferred - can be annulled  
When favour shrinks.

917. And what of those born to rank?  
Those sceptred, orb'd and crown'd:  
Those exalted in an age  
When republics blossom.

918. The common man, the third estate  
Cannot fall - can only rise  
From out the waving multitude  
Where future kings are spawned.

919. Such wonder! Will such things be?  
Marvel! Miracle! and prodigy!  
Blow me down when such things occur.  
God bless me!

920. Unastonished - not a blink!  
History will accept new things.  
Of course! No wonder! but why the stink  
When queens spawn queens, not kings!

### 2 - SYMPATHY

921. What sympathy have we for friends,  
Our comrades in the common cause  
For fellowship and family joy  
Hand in hand familiar joined -

922. When snakes coil snug in the shade  
And spiders watch and web aloof,  
And scorpions wait self-contained  
To join the masquerade?

923. What know we of those forsaking  
A world forgot by those forgetting  
The kith less few fair forlorn  
Far upon a foreign shore?

924. How may we keep a light  
Or catch the latch in these times,

Or greet our friends with a kiss  
When we're not home ourselves.

925. Our door is barred, we are out:  
Displaced, we derelict move about;  
Proscribed, we pass the black ball  
Round - and sign the robin blind.

\*

926. Friendship stems from fellow  
feeling.  
The love of fault in spite of virtue.  
A friend in need is a friend indeed  
And who'd dispute such wisdom!

927. Thank God, said Kipling, for a  
chum!  
Someone with whom you are yourself.  
A pal with whom you are sincere,  
A mate not scared to give you hell.

928. For who needs folk to bear a grudge!  
Who needs fools with bones to gnaw!  
Who needs guys who throw a punch  
When you come to odds!

929. Who needs hate, dislike and odium!  
Who needs detest, wrath and loathing!  
Who needs abhor, adverse ill  
Eating at them like a poison!

\*

930. Love is the potion of my passion!  
Love is the fervour of my fancy!  
Love is the ardour of my enamour:  
Sweet, appealing, charming!

931. But O! La! La! *Faire yeux doux!*  
Coquets flirt and dig for gold.  
Philanders wolf and whisper sex:  
Osculate - do not propose

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

932. To make themselves like man and wife.

Would you have that if you were wise?  
Well - many tie the knot - unite!  
And take for worse a better life.

933. And some - the lone wolf on the prowl:

The bachelor girl blissfully wild;  
The monks, the maidens on their own;  
The misogynous world - all alone

934. The widow wearing dowager weeds;  
The widower grassed and weak;  
The lost divided by divorce;  
They're in need of love and warmth.

\*

935. A nice and very perfect gentleman  
The mirror and pink of courtesy:  
Regards one well, gives his love  
And always keeps a civil tongue.

936. A nasty vile and utter scoundrel  
Rude and scant of courtesy:  
Cuts one short, tries his luck,  
Cheats and never counts the cost.

\*

937. There is luxury in doing good:  
To friend the friendless, vice a foe;  
To help give the sick man health;  
To do as would be done to you.

938. There is no good in ill-will  
In man's inhumanity to man.  
No delight in sharp-toothed cruelty  
Nor kindness found in spite.

939. All misanthropes are anti-social,  
They're misfits ill disposed to man.  
Befriend the unkind? Hard of heart?  
Is like asking for a cold.

940. But I will don my public spirit  
For love of man, extend my hand,  
Embrace all hard malicious persons  
Until they stab me back.

941. I will - be their benefactor;  
Be their present help in trouble;  
Be their patron - help, assist  
Until they're saved from this.

942. How brave I am! Befriending  
ruffians,  
Hoodlums, thugs, monsters, demons.  
It's just as well, I'm a saint  
And not a friend of evil.

\*

943. Tis a pity she's a whore!  
'Tis a pity he's a bore!  
Have mercy on all erring souls,  
You never know who's next to go.

944. There are some who give no quarter,  
Those who claim their pound of flesh:  
The heartless folk who turn an eye  
And cruelly call in debts.

945. Yet, why side with them that weep?  
Why weep with those who grieve?  
Why grieve with those condoled?  
Why console the weak?

946. Forgive and let all things pass?  
Rub out marks? Clear the screen?  
Exonerate all affronts ....  
And wipe the slate off clean?

947. Congratulate the desperado?  
Compliment the woman bruiser?  
I've pity for the bore or whore,  
But no sympathy for losers.

\*

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

948. So get down on your marrowbones,  
Thank your Gods, you are alive.  
There's many friends in the grave  
And many soon to die.

949. Bless the stars that we are here.  
*Je vous remercie tres beaucoup!*  
Do not forget the gift of life  
And the life that's gifted you.

\*

950. For the monster begot, born itself  
The green-eyed worm within us all.  
Suspicious, we distrust the world,  
And more so - those our lover knows.

951. Such pain of mind our neighbours  
cause,  
Our envy like a sickness gnaws -  
It eats the fibre of our souls  
And leaves us hungry all the more.

\*

952. So ghosts of the great! Immortal  
fame!  
The most recorded of all recorders!  
The name on everyone's tongue & lips!  
The pride of all posterity!

953. Let not ill-humour be your game.  
Bad nature is the trade of sulks.  
Hot tempers are the quick of shrews  
When a quarrel brews.

954. Resentment is a sport of teeth.  
Offence is a spray of words.  
Umbrage is the clash of fists  
When the humour hurts.

955. Until we take an eye for eye;  
Give in kind for that sustained;  
Pay off old scores '*en revanche*'  
And take reprisal for each wrong.

956. And brooding on our open wound  
We plan revenge before it scabs.  
We breathe vengeance, take an oath,  
And think not how vendettas start.

### 3 - MORALITY

957. People and the ten commandments.  
People and a code of ethics.  
People and their inner conscience  
T winged by right and wrong.

958. What is right or proper, mate?  
The seemly thing's not always decent.  
Some will steer clear of scandal,  
And some will have no shame.

959. The right of suffrage: that's justice.  
The defence of sex: that's indulgence.  
Some men knock their girlfriends up,  
Then sure enough, they do a bunk!

960. One must reap where one has sown!  
Do you believe this? Not me, nope.  
All that comes our way is Fate,  
And Newton's third is Karma, mate.

961. Give an inch and take a mile.  
Do you think I'd stand for that?  
All the gear we have for free,  
Cost our friends very dear.

962. We have a duty! But to whom?  
Friends pass the buck themselves.  
We have to lump it when we're conned  
And hoof it when we're wrong.

963. To hell with those who lay on  
hands?  
Impose themselves, palm off, fob?  
What respect have I for mates  
Who take advantage of a pal.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

964. I respect - the setting sun;  
The wind and the tide that turns;  
The lightning in the April sky  
And all the creatures in this world.

\*

965. Young Adam's sensual way with Eve  
As voluptuous carnal-minded girl -  
Was hedonism at its height  
Before the fall from Eden.

966. Then sometime after Plato thought  
That love should be virgin pure -  
Diana, chaste as unshined snow  
Chased the morning dew.

967. Then Jezebel, that queenly hussy,  
Her free-love an easy virtue -  
Strump't her way through Ahab's court  
In the service of Israel.

968. Yet men, in their obscene state -  
Lewd, bawdy, ribald, impure.  
Bring temples down upon themselves  
For loving living idols.

969. Perhaps it's well that some abstain:-  
The yogi in his mountain cave;  
The fakir in the cazzba shade;  
The monk in the vaulted nave.

970. They let passions dry to reason;  
Look not at wine when it's red;  
They mortify all fleshly lusts,  
And say no to excessivism!.

971. Too many indulge, debauch and  
orgy,  
Dine not wisely - but too well;  
Carouse; run-riot; squander health  
And wealth without intemperance.

972. And worst of all - the greedy eater,  
The swinish glutton wolfing down

Every morsel in the house  
And remaining hungry-minded.

973. Thank god for those who care to  
fast,  
Who dine with Humprey, Duke of Lent -  
Who share a crumb with Tantalus  
And make a feast of bread.

974. You'll not find them intoxicated,  
Soused and crocked on whoopee water.  
Not a dram you'll find them lip  
From the still burns of Scotland.

975. Sober as a judge they'll march,  
Beneath the Hope and Glory banner.  
As tipsy as the day they're born  
They'll teeter to the terra firma.

\*

976. Except for man, I have no scorn,  
No disrespect for all that's known  
Or all that which I cannot fathom  
In the universe beyond our own.

977. I look cool upon mankind  
Which cannot curb its arrogance.  
It is young and cares not for  
All the fruits in paradise.

978. Bah! Pah! Phoo! and all that boo!  
Some don't give a toss, a wink:  
With scoff, mock and caustic taunt,  
They laugh and jape at all as twits.

979. Not so I - I'm more concerned  
To praise, applaud, endorse, accept.  
But who's to say I'll not regress  
To smirks and jibes and jests?

980. For who's not prone to be a critic,  
A give-what-for Jesse or John?  
I'd be hanged if some could stop  
Their gobs from finding fault.

LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

981. Is there worse than blarney-mouthed  
Sycophantic taffy-talk?  
Or the patter of the urban snob  
Towelling on the butter?

982. Tell the truth and shame the devil!  
Be honest as the day is long?  
Be noble, upright, sterling, worthy?  
I try to all-the-while.

\*

983. But, in each man, betrayal lurks:  
He parts on some a Judas kiss;  
He breaches trust with the thrust  
Of steel between the ribs.

984. So be fair - do the handsome thing,  
See justice done, and all that's due  
With regard, respect or fear  
For persons near and dear.

985. For iniquity is a way of life.  
Injustice can be worse than death.  
As long as nepotism's rife,  
The wrong will judge the right.

986. Dogs in mangers! Mean self-  
pleasers!  
Fortune hunters, hogs and toads!  
How I dislike such self-considerate  
Self-absorbing bores!

987. Give me large-heart princely virtue:  
Do as you would be done by too.  
Put yourself in place of others;  
Make a sacrifice.

988. Do unwitnessed what you should  
Like to do before the world.  
Resist desires that have no virtue  
Of health - good or moral.

989. For vicious vice is not so nice:  
Bad habit is a devilish fault

That leads to weak and wicked sin  
And shameless loss of pride.

990. Such malfeasance, such scarlet foible,  
These deeds without an act I name -  
Transgress the laws of decency  
With a crime clenched fist -

991. They wash their blood-stained hands  
With looks like cats who've ate a bird  
Shame-faced they guilty-conscience  
Smile in a show of innocence.

992. It is said that there are those  
Pure of fault and not yet stained:  
I would like to think that - Yes!  
That some were clean of blame.

993. No end of fellows, likely lads  
And perfect lasses nobly planned,  
Salt the earth and pearl the world  
As jewels of paragon.

994. For who has time for ne'er-do-wells,  
Wastrel, worthless, human wrecks -  
Radically foul-mouthed whoreson knaves  
Who'd see us all in hell.

995. Such lampooners knock and slander,  
Rake the muck and sling the slur.  
They give a bad name to a dog  
And tongue the blackest words.

996. They swear until the air is blue:  
They curse with candle, bell and book;  
They blaspheme! Blast! Effin! Dang!  
Their way to Billingsgate, goldarn!

\*

997. Why disrespect canon, law,  
Regulation, dictate, bill;  
Lex non scripta, jus civile  
And jus commune for all.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

998. I'll not say that laws are right  
Or those who make the laws are wrong:  
Many set the law to nought  
And take it in their hands.

999. Perhaps there's need for bureaucrats,  
For ministers and secretaries,  
For magistrates and mayorships  
And all the sheriffwicks.

1000. Perhaps we need courts of law,  
Circuit, County, High and Lords;  
The mercy seat, the woosack bench  
Where privilege confounds tort.

1001. Perhaps we must respect our  
'Honours'  
As Musselmen respect their Mullahs -  
And like a Solomon or a Pilate  
Accept their weighty judgement.

1002. But what of lesser legal men?  
The green-bag mouthy friends at court;  
The slick-silk QC's, stiff-gowned men:  
The sentence never falls on them.

1003. In their suits of deposition!  
In their suits of litigation!  
In their suits against the world,  
At the bar they please each other.

1004. Should they make their  
impeachments?  
Accuse and charge and lay the blame?  
Should they cry out? Should they cast  
The stone that starts the fray?

1005. Many have learned to shut their  
mouths  
To let attorneys rest for them;  
To allow advocates to speak for those  
Who tend to pay them best.

1006. No legal man is above acquittal  
The law is not the right of lawyers.  
The law's no ass though attorneys ride  
It with a stick and carrot.

1007. Come, you lawyers, if you will,  
Denounce, condemn and sentence me.  
Let the punishment fit the crime.  
Convict - be rid of me.

1008. Come, you stiff-necked legal  
priests,  
Vacate your temples, view the light,  
Do not handicap yourselves  
By giving justice price

1009. If you must play right from wrong,  
Do it with an unmarked pack.  
A stacked deck against the poor  
Is a game non rightly bought.

1010. Take me to the scaffold now  
If I must live in a corrupt state.  
Better dead and half-way pure  
Than alive in a rotten system.

1011. Let him atone for all Man's faults  
At the gates to the world beyond.  
Let him beg pardon from those -  
Fit to judge him wrong.

1012S. uch louring does not menace me.  
I thumb my nose at clenched fists.  
I turn and watch the setting sun  
As in warmth - life moves on.

### 4 - RELIGION

1013. Upon the Almighty the world seeks  
Allah, Khuda, Kami, Dieu!  
The universal life force - Lord!  
The supreme soul - God!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

1014. Whichever gods that there may be,  
They are one, and one with us.  
Too many names flood the mind  
In the universal see.

1015. If there are Angels, then I believe  
That good will come of such belief.  
If there are heavenly beings -  
Then let them come to me.

1016. If there are Devils, then I believe  
That bad will come of such belief.  
If there are demons leashed in Hell -  
Then set the creatures free.

1017. If the're ghosts - and there may be  
Such spirits trapped 'tween two worlds  
Then help such spectres right the ties  
Of wrong that chain them there.

\*

1018. But take Man to the happy land,  
The place of mansions in the sky  
Where mortgages are all arranged  
And on the never-never.

1019. Do not leave Man in the pit,  
The nether-abyss far below  
Where rents are always overdue  
From years and years ago.

\*

1020. Religion, cult, sect and faith,  
Every one is stamped 'Man-Made'.  
There'll never be one reply  
To all that Man has questioned.

1021. Oh, there are scriptures, vedas,  
writs  
From Moses down to Joseph Smith.  
Words of prophets heat our thoughts  
The way the sun warms the world.

1022. Amos, Daniel, Joel, Isaiah,  
Confucius, Laotzue, Zarathustra.  
Many tongues, and many founders,  
*Vates sacer*, saints, disciples.

1023. There are creeds to shift  
mountains.  
There are beliefs to move large hills.  
There are doctrines to mount hummocks,  
And dogmas to level dunes.

1024. All, of course, are orthodox,  
The faith as given from above.  
Religion thrives on being right  
When the competition's wrong.

1025. And oh what names! Infidels!  
Pagans! Goys! Zendiks! Papes!  
How can truly holy men  
Belong to any faith?

\*

1026. What is this holy business then  
That's so ineffably inexpressible?  
What makes redemption and salvation  
So unutterably venerable?

1027. Why the bad press for things  
unholy,  
Unhallowed and temporally mundane?  
Why the bad crack about things secular  
Non-sacred and plain?

1028. For many Fight the good fight:  
Stand up for Jesus - Hip hip hoorah!  
I don't mind being saved by a saint -  
I'm heavenly-minded and sane.

1029. But I don't like sanctimonious zeal:  
The saint abroad who's a devil at home.  
Look at Tartuffe - need you more proof  
Of cant made snivelled and snuffled.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

1030. But hush my mouth blaspheming  
out loud  
About irreligion sacrilegiously sworn:  
Piousness ill-suits irreverent ranters  
And is wasted on those who have faith.

1031. Atheist sin and wicked agnostism,  
Clover & dock in the field of mankind:  
Undevoutness and sceptical scoffing -  
Are as common as weeds in the wild.

\*

1032. So with a latria, dulia, hyperdulia!  
Praise the Lord and his hosts.  
My God? I think I must be nuts  
Kneeling on the floor.

1033. But my, my, my, she ain't half nice  
That goddess statue over there.  
If stone could speak, I'd find strength  
To strip the idol bare.

1034. She does not touch the inner man,  
The vital spark that fires life.  
She is no psyche divinely breathed  
With telepathic mind.

1035. Yet, this idol is no voodoo doer,  
No juju jiggling vampire doll,  
No hex or hag or witchcraft moll  
Charming me - into a warlock.

1036. This idol casts no evil eye,  
No mumbo-jumbo leaks from her,  
No hocus-pocus makes her dance  
To place me in a trance.

1037. She is all stone, quiet and still,  
I see her, but she not me.  
I may touch her when I wish  
And leave her when I please.

\*

1038. And to the end I come at last  
To take my vows, renounce the world,  
To take the church, cloth & robes  
Of an ecclesiastic father.

1039. I take the ministry as a priest,  
A black coat Holy Joe styled life;  
For I have come into the light,  
No more will I go hungry.

1040. You, laymen, do not write me off,  
I will still be in your parish;  
For I am in every being  
And in every part.

1041. And should your rituals leave me  
sad;  
And should your service make me laugh;  
And should an unction be your last -  
I'll be with you - always.

1042. So let me don my robe and cloak;  
Let me take my staff and orb;  
Let me raise my cowl and smile  
And bless you - and mankind.

1043. And when you meet in your kirks  
Meeting houses, mosques and kiacks:  
Remember who you are one with -  
the Universal Being.



## RETURN TO SCOTLAND

### NUDE TO LOVE

[17th September 1988, Flateyri, Iceland]

Tomorrow strives to be tonight,  
Love is on the lips of dawn -  
Between the greying and the day  
We are fast, entwined, ensnared -  
Our lips bare touching, naked rest  
We are one in shy caress.

Daylight stays to end the night;  
Our mouths match the parting clouds -  
Between the haze and hue of sky  
We have heaven here on earth -  
Our sighs heave fresh, pared to touch  
We are open, nude to love.

### MOSQUITO

[12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> October 1988, Coventry  
Cathedral and Glasgow]

In the east, and in the west,  
In the south, and all points north ...  
There is a buzz, there is a hum,  
There is an airborne host of birds –  
Bees and flies and crowds of gnats,  
Swarms of midges, swirling black.

In the spring, and in the summer,  
In the autumn, before the winter,  
All the world is thick with life,  
There is a creeping insect sea –  
Cockroach, beetle, ant and worm,  
Earwig, spider, tick and flea.

There was one worm called George Facker  
Who stuck to his woman Heather;  
He was a wimp until his friend Pete  
Turned George into a sucker.

George was in love ... it wasn't enough

For Heather ran off with new lover Pete –  
And George midst the tears, swore he'd  
get even  
On all the women who'd treated him  
rotten.

Alone in his bed, the full moon rose  
And strange happenings took place in the  
light –  
He turned and tossed and dreamt he'd lost  
The use of his limbs overnight.

When he awoke, it wasn't a joke,  
He nearly choked at the sight of himself –  
On his back he had sprung two lengthy  
wings  
And his nose was the length of his arm.

He couldn't believe the state he was in,  
Or the thirst that strangled his throat –  
Before he knew what, he'd straddled his  
cat  
And drank all of its blood with his nose.

George passed out with the cat's last  
meows  
And awoke to discover it gone –  
He looked in the mirror and sort of  
remembered  
The pair that done him the wrong.

He vowed there and then to do what he  
could  
To take his revenge as the cuckold –  
George then knew what Jekyll went  
through  
Now that he was a bloodsucker.

Some mate he was, George cursed Pete,  
'I'll get the buggger back somehow!'  
And as his anger grew, his wings grew  
And his nose sniffed for blood.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

George headed for town to get himself drunk,  
His head was rushing with thought –  
'I'll get my own back on them both!'  
He had no time for sociable talk.

He frazzled his brains on McEwans ale,  
Until the landlord had him thrown out –  
He straggled and swayed along the high street  
Shouting 'I'll murder them both with me hands!'

At last he calmed down, smoked his last fag  
And fell over in a heap on a bollard –  
Someone helped him up, gave him a shove  
And he stumbled on towards the disco.

There he met Stella, a bit of a pisshead,  
Together they boogied, rocked and rolled;  
She booked the taxi, he paid the fare,  
And together they went to her hole.

Stella would not let sleeping dogs lie,  
So George did not transform but performed –  
Morning came, she drew him up,  
Then threw him on to the floor.

'Sorry, darling, I've got to rush,  
I've an essay to write for my course –  
My tutor's talking me out tonight,  
I'm tied up all the time. Adios!'

George went home to his flat ...  
The cat was still not back –  
'Where the hell have I gone wrong?  
Christ! The cat's crapped on the mat!'

He ate dry bran and drank black tea,

And smoked a pack of fags –  
The nearest George got to work  
Was looking at the ads.  
The cat came back just after noon  
As George was having a nap –  
The cat went up and scratched him hard,  
Then shot into his lap.

George stroked the cat and mumbled things  
As he watched the kiddie shows –  
Both were glad to have respite  
From being on their own.

Evening came, the cat went out,  
George hummed quietly over tea –  
And then as he did the dishes ...  
He said 'What's come over me?'

'Oh my God!' He said aloud –  
and then he buzzed, and buzzed about,  
then folded back his wings in pain  
as he pushed his nose back in again.

He took control, blurted out  
'I've got to have a woman!  
I've got to have some female blood!'  
And off he went to hunt.

Drunk once again, back at the disco,  
There he met Linda, a tart with heart –  
He sweet talked his way into her clothing  
And spent the night at her flat.

Linda awoke with George at her breast  
Sucking her blood up his long nose –  
She started to struggle, but all that was audible  
Was suck and a slurp and a croak.

George was flapping about trying to draw out

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

As she swatted him one with her fist –  
He staggered away in a lip-smacking daze  
Shouting ‘What’s got into, bitch!’

‘Get out of here! You bloodsucking male!’  
Cried Linda in a fury and rage.  
‘There’s enough of your type wandering  
the night  
You pervert! You keep away!’

‘You’re far too rough for my kind of  
love’  
Linda continued to fly at dazed George –  
‘I’ll need a transfusion after this evening,  
I’m weak, and feeble and faint!’

Linda passed out and George sneaked off,  
Back to his flat on the far side of town –  
The cat heard him coming and started to  
run,  
It was learning to say out the way.

George threw himself down on his bed  
And sobbed himself into a bad sleep –  
He had a dream about Heather and Pete,  
A dream that made him quite sad.

The sun came up, George didn’t get up,  
He somehow passed and wasted his time –  
Cleaned his toenails, scratched his  
bollocks,  
The cat watched, keeping it distance.

Thus he spent the whole day in bed,  
For the night before he’s been amply fed–  
He groomed his wings, blew his nose  
And slept until the half-moon rose.

He slumbered on and dreamt some more,  
The cat came and went, meowed for food–  
George flapped his wings, spat out blood  
And the cat hid under the cushions.

Time went by, and George remained  
Lodged in bed in hibernation –  
His cat pined and moaned and gurgled,  
hung around in hope of a meal.

George awoke – he was hungry,  
He hadn’t had a suck for weeks –  
His cat was ill and anorexic ...  
George got up prepared to hunt.

He prepared himself to find a girl,  
He no longer cared about freewill –  
He was now a dirty Devil!  
A dirty laughing fiendish insect.

The cat lit out broken hearted.  
Escaping through a broken window,  
George tried to grab it by its tail,  
The cat screeched, took a leap of faith.

It leapt down into a pile of snow –  
disappeared into the whiteness  
George thought him lost forever,  
And broke down in abject remorse.

George grew worried, put on his coat,  
donned his wellies, braved a blizzard -  
Searched for tracks, called for the cat,  
In the street, the park, and the lanes.

In despair, George threw himself down,  
Lay in the waste, would surely have died,  
If a girl called Lily coming out of the  
Chinese  
Had not seen him lying covered in snow.

She dropped her trash, stooped to  
discover  
That George was a man she had admired  
from afar –  
A regular customer in is days of sobriety  
She had liked his looks and his charm.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

She helped him home, put him to bed,  
Started to clean his mess of a flat -  
She nursed him daily with chicken soup  
Until the pain he had - left his heart.

George had no desire to attack his saviour,  
He had fallen in love with this Lily –  
For in her arms she had his lost cat  
Wrapped up in a bundle of woollies.

She struck George dumb with her beauty  
As he lay in his bed like a wally –  
She took his hand as he started to cry  
And tell her about Heather and Pete.

George agreed to go for treatment,  
Discovered his wings and nose were  
figments –  
His emotional distress of being deserted  
Had made him imagine himself an insect.

Such low esteem is common enough  
For those who sustain emotion rebuff;  
His need for revenge - manifest thus  
As a weird desire to suck human blood.

His counsellor said the cure for his pain  
Was to find a good girl and love again –  
And sure enough George quite agreed,  
He rushed home - gave Lily a squeeze.

A squeeze? George was a changed man;  
No more sucking ladies breasts -  
Well, not in revenge. We'll say no more.  
They got married. Isn't that nice.

### BRIDGE OF FEUGH

[4<sup>th</sup> November 1988, Banchory, Aberd]

In the weak November sun  
On the Bridge of Feugh,

An icy autumn downward wind  
Whites the raging burn.

Stumps of brackened birch,  
Fir and copper beech,  
Twisted mountain ash,  
Banks of lichenized schist.

Depths of black slow river,  
Cascades of swift foam white,  
Parts where violent rocks  
Push up where ripples fight.

Leaves down on the water,  
Needles on the stone,  
Debris smashed and carried  
Along and seen no more.

### CASTLERIGG

[12<sup>th</sup> January 1989, Keswick,  
Derwentside]

The black clouds swirled about the stones,  
Across the fields a rainbow rolled,  
Sepulchred the grey day moaned  
Hail, and sleet, and snow.

Greenhouse winter blossoms withered,  
Silver birch and thorn bush quivered -  
Ravens rode the dry-dyke currents  
As sheep lay cold together.

### NEVER THESE DAYS AGAIN

[6<sup>th</sup> May 1989, Glasgow]

Enclose me in your eyes  
Or just forget about me -  
Never will these days return.

Love, love secret, no one knows -  
Think, think blush, I have found  
A sweet dream - the touch of love.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Within my heart I'll hide you,  
Truth, let no omen be on you -  
Slave I am to your eye.

These cool breezes, join our sighs,  
These clear springs shower our joy,  
Sing a song to flower the world.

Without you here I cannot smile,  
My eyes are never tired of you -  
I never can forget, you my muse!

### **TAM TAR TIN** ( a fragment)

[19<sup>th</sup> May 1989, Glasgow]

Tan Tar Tin, the Mac of Man,  
Made in Scotland, so its thought  
Without the consent of the clan  
Without the tying of the knot:  
This boy, on Lady's Day late March  
Was born, weighed, wrapped and brought  
By a stork starched and large  
And put into a foster's arms.

No clocks rang out, 't was that time  
Between five and six past twelve  
When all the clocks are spent with chime  
And once again renew themselves  
Except one clock - St. Thomas's Church  
Behind the hour began to bell  
With thirteen doleful blows struck true  
And never struck again till two.

### **SAUCHIEHALL STREET BAR**

[May? 1989, Glasgow]

Here in the bar on Sauchie' Street,  
Tapping our fingers, stomping our feet,  
Pretty girls frumping under the lights -  
I think it's going to be a good night.

Hot is the air on this August eve,

Hot is the passion pumping the heart,  
Hot is the body next to mine -  
Looking divine and ready.

Don't know what to think of this,  
Who can say what it is -  
Who can argue with the truth  
Or the passing with youth.

On and on into the dark,  
Hard is the way coming back,  
Round the world ever which way  
Standing still in the day.

Sun coming up on the trees,  
Blossom falling on my hair,  
Breeze in the branches of thorn,  
Around me friends travelling on.

Over we go into the morn,  
Over we go into the future,  
Beyond the horizon eternity stretches -  
Dancing to mark time's passing.

### **MIDSUMMER SPEEDS**

[18<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Glasgow]

Midsummer speeds to aural height  
And we are caught in the heat  
Of days that bring more than rain  
And wind that is the norm.

### **WE MUST THINK AGAIN**

For Dawn

[18<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Glasgow]

Two years ago on Dinafawr  
We wined and toked and read our plays  
And all the world lay before  
Beyond the green Welsh valleys.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Now we've come two summers on  
And know not what waits ahead  
Beyond the Scottish urban life  
We must think again.

### LITTLE INDIA

[27<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Halt Bar, Glasgow]

Can I watch the world go by  
When I am part of it?  
The man who sits and views the world  
is of no use to it.

### URBAN LANDSCAPE

[27<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Halt Bar, Glasgow]

In the urban landscape north -  
North in the haze of summer,  
Jazz steals through the rainy nights  
And music thieves all culture.

Here - the north west light of Europe,  
A throbbing bursts the strictured brain:  
Love is on the lips of strangers;  
Art's in the mind of dreamers.

Here - no structure, only chaos,  
Anarchic freedom to be oneself.  
Here - no pressing common order  
Forcing denial on its people.

Why? Should pressure come to bear  
And force us all to be prostrate?  
Here - the weak sleep through the night  
And the strong embrace the day.

### WOKE UP THIS MORNING FOR REHEARSALS

[28<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Glasgow]

Woke up this morning - window open  
wide.

Summer's here for sure - June-time.  
No festivals this year, just performances  
Taking place all over town.

Rehearsals drag out in the east -  
The dandies dress up in the west -  
The hours turn slowly on  
To the performance in the south.

### MAISIE MADRAS

For Isadora Mann

[28<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Glasgow]

Darker than a gypsy girl,  
Nimbler than a ballerina,  
A quick-tongued shrewish lass  
With a hot curry temper.

Who would cross Maisie's path?  
Who would chance to kiss her?  
Who would lay a hand on her  
And not regret it?

In all the wide theatre world,  
No leg or eye's like Maisie's.  
Take heed, boys, she's too hot  
A dish to have for starters.

### THE GREENHOUSE SUMMER

[26<sup>th</sup> July 1989, Glasgow]

If this is how the future is,  
Then lets be thankful of our past;  
Summer once was rain and cloud,  
Now its drought and fire.

## THE WANDERER

### THE FIRST JOURNEY OF THE WANDERER

[Composed Aug 1989 - Nov 1990]

*At the age of seventeen, the Wanderer leaves Scotland to discover the world and himself. He passes through seven European states, sleeping where he can, learning what he will, before returning home to his own people. However, it is seventeen years later that the Wanderer finally returns to his native city for good. He wishes to re-establish contact with his former childhood friend and arranges to meet him in a bistro in the most bohemian part of the city. What follows is the story of the first and shortest of his journeys which is related to us by his boyhood friend (The Narrator).*

### SCOTLAND

NARR: It was summer and the sun was going down:  
Northward, the multi-storey windows glared  
Above the chimneys; but to the west  
Beyond the Clyde at ebb, the evening sky  
Reflected by the waters round  
Strathclyde's isles,  
Glowed red and created shadows eastwards  
To shade Glasgow from the august day.

I met the Wanderer by the riverside  
Beneath the Kelvin Bridge, close by the subway  
Where friends and folks from different walks  
Of life relax by the breaking Kelvin waters  
And talk their troubles out over drinks  
In a bistro-cafe well-known to beggars  
Who block the pathway to the cafe entrance  
And ply their trade, take their chances  
With the intellectuals and the artists  
Who patronise the bistro out of habit.

I was late and the Wanderer had gone:  
Then I saw him standing on the bridge  
Staring into the Kelvin water, which barely  
Trickled as it had been a scorching summer,  
So hot in fact, it had been the hottest  
Summer of the century; but there he was  
My childhood friend, just now returned  
From seventeen years of wandering  
perpetually.

At first I thought it was not him -  
I looked away but soon turned about to see  
That he had noticed me standing there  
Thin and greying from a life half-lived;  
And he - elbows perched upon the parapet,  
Hands cupped beneath his chin, his eyes  
A piercing mystery of a thousand tales  
That I would never get to hear -  
He stepped forward and took my hand  
And pulled me to his bosom in a movement  
That made me put my arms around him.

He made me feel that we had never parted  
All those years ago when we were  
seventeen  
And fresh from school.

We were friends again: in a Glasgow vale,  
At a table, we relived our schoolboy days  
Of how we two had faced the world  
Of childhood and never lost a fight,  
Nor failed a test; how we had spent  
Our time together playing games, chasing girls  
the names of which we could still recall,  
One of whom, I had engaged, and who  
As my lover had given me one child.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The Wanderer smiled, and said he envied  
Me my happy home and family bliss,  
And when I protested that it was not so,  
He cut me short and began a tale  
Meant to make me cherish all I had.  
But I would not let him start his cant  
Until I had laid my troubles out before  
him -  
How city living was a mental drain,  
How family life was dull and boring,  
How children ate into a father's soul,  
How a job for life made life a job -  
But my friend laughed and called me  
A happy man searching for unhappy joy,  
And as I disagreed, he began his tale  
But I stopped him short with my all.

"While you were traipsing the world,  
I was bettering myself the best I could."

WAND: "Do not feel threatened,  
travelling is not a life to envy.  
If I were to live my youth again  
I would not take the road to freedom -  
For freedom is an ideal manufactured  
By individuals shackled by their  
upbringing."

NARR: These words passed on top of  
mine,  
and I recalled the faces of his parents -  
His patient, warm and endearing mother  
And the father who adopted him as son.  
For it was common knowledge as boys  
That he did not know who his father was,  
And thus half of him was a mystery -  
Half of him was secret and unknown.

And now my interruption had silenced  
him,  
He rose and said that he must go -  
I pressed him for his address,  
But he stated that he had no home.

I gave him my card and made him  
promise  
That he would come and visit me soon.

The hottest summer of the century  
passed,  
Autumn came as autumn always does -  
The leaves lingered high until December  
When the grey of winter finally closes in.  
Cheered by the lights of Christmas,  
New Year came, and a new decade too,  
And with it floods and gales so severe  
That thousands were cut-off, marooned;  
Vast tracts of land joined the ocean.

It was on the eve of Saint Valentine's  
With a howling storm ripping at the eaves  
That there was a soft knock at my door.

It was the Wanderer!

Without hesitation he entered my home  
But did not speak until tea was served.

WAND: "People blame others for the  
depletion  
Of the Amazon and the ozone layer.  
Why?  
And why do people pay this evil Tax?"  
He banged his fist on my coffee table.

"Like rats cowering in holes!  
Like rabbits in fear of a fox!  
Educated to live like cowards  
frightened to face the hunter's dogs!

Fear makes people cunning and devious,  
They cannot face losing what they have,  
Nothing makes them relinquish  
possessions  
Though they arrive with nothing in the  
world  
They shackle themselves to wealth."

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

NARR: The wanderer looked me in the eye  
Then cast his eyes about my house  
I thought I lived a modest life.

WAND: "You have enormous wealth -  
Wealth of education and a solid house,  
In my travels I have been in palaces,  
But most of the world lives in huts  
And shacks or homes less grand than this  
-  
In wealth you are a fortunate man.

Once I saw a holy man in India  
Beneath a date palm in the shade,  
Cross-leg seated in the dust, bowl in front,  
Eyes fixed on the great above -  
A crust of bread, dal or rice,  
Some fruit or nuts - a little cake,  
Students flocked to him with food  
But none could make him part his lips.

Every dawn - the crowds collected  
And swarmed about until night fell,  
They slept by him or talked til dawn,  
They would not leave him on his own,  
They asked him questions, begged replies  
To things that any man could answer,  
They pleaded, but were met by silence  
Or cruelly jeered by the attendant throng.

Too often violence riddles heaven  
And breaks the brittle bones of children;  
Too often pleasure eats the perfect  
And pain feasts on the discarded;  
Too often destitution steals  
And richness robs all happiness.

I too wished to ask that holy man  
Many things - find great truths,  
But I could not ask those things aloud:

I was filled with my own lies -  
Lies that shut me out from beauty,

Beauty flawed by my existence;  
My craving for each moment different,  
My need for every second quickened.

We all have wealth shut within us,  
Locked within us, trapped within us.  
I have tried six years by six  
To steer a painless course through life,  
But I have suffered more for this  
Than those who tightly close their eyes  
To all out there - the pitch-black void  
Where lurks the total of our past."

NARR: I could not comprehend his drift,  
He seemed to contradict himself -  
But something in his traveller's words  
Made me see all there was -

Killer whales snatching seals  
Off the sands of Patagonia;  
Squibs bashed on the rocks  
Of Mykanos and Kos;  
Turtles netted and deshelled  
On the Pondicherry coast;

These were the kind of scenes  
I thought I'd hear unfold  
As I listened to the tale  
Of his first sojourn abroad.

WAND: I first left these British Isles,  
when I was seventeen, naive and innocent  
our shores were all I knew;  
our mountains were all that I had climbed;

Our people white-skinned and Lalloned  
was the world of a boy taught to know  
that out there lay an empire once so vast  
that one third the globe was British.

Those days were gone, and none knew  
where Britain stood in the minds  
of Sikhs or Kenyans or any nation freed  
at last from colonial rule.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The memory of the Third Reich years  
was still imprinted on a new built Europe  
twenty six years after Berlin fell  
and the Allies split - East and West.

### ENGLAND

I began to journey south -  
Through England I travelled by thumb  
to leave Dover on the midnight tide  
like Harry Four on his way to Agincourt.

### BELGIUM

I first set foot on foreign soil  
four o'clock one morning late July.  
I slept with young folk like myself  
beneath an up-turned boat on the shingle.

Daylight came too soon from behind the  
town  
beyond which lay continental Europe  
stretching eastwards to the Orient.

In that Belgian channel port, I knew  
nothing of the world beyond.  
I left my pack in a luggage kiosk  
and went walkabout in Ostend.

With my friends we hired bikes,  
but a puncture cut short our time  
on the cobbled alleys of the town.

We spent our afternoon on the  
promenade  
drinking coke, baring chests  
to the scorching sun of summer.

I tried chatting up a local girl -  
she was tall and dark and pretty,  
she spoke in stilted French to me  
until her boyfriend appeared on the sand  
and broke our friendship in its infancy.

Such is the life of travellers:

We ate our bread and cheese for tea  
then shuffled into a crowded bar  
where drinks were too costly to get drunk.

In sober hunger we returned to the station  
and in possession of our belongings,  
we cooked sausages on a beach fire  
and spent the night on the Channel sand.

Passing through this Belgian world,  
I knew nothing of Flemish customs  
beyond that which I had read in books -  
books weighed with facts and dates about  
the creation of Belgium as a buffer state  
to protect the French against bully  
Germany.

History repeats itself despite the will  
of men bent to make sure it does not.  
Life turns full circle within a lifetime  
though men believe they travel a straight  
line.

Now the Berlin Wall is down - new fears  
spread in France that Germany will rise.

Europe, close to being one, shrinks from  
unity -  
the ideal of a community with no  
frontiers dies.

When I was seventeen, no date seemed  
fixed for the end of European fellowship.  
Ours was a continent of young  
ambassadors,  
a post-war generation free of death and  
hatred.

I vowed I would join no army,  
nor take a rifle in my hands -  
I was a new breed of man.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I was not alone - all across western  
Europe  
the youth were on the road,  
hitchhiking to discover our new world.

A shower woke us from our slumbers.  
Full of hope and belief in human nature  
we tried to hitch lifts from cars  
driving off the channel ferry in from  
Dover.

Two ferries - no success,  
we took a train to Brussels,  
on arrival at the Gare D'Nord,  
we found a nearby hostel.

We went in search of the Pissing Boy;  
we made our jokes well heard to others  
then took ourselves to a cafe for drinks.

We ran out of time -  
the hostel barred the door at eleven,  
we forsook the demon alcohol for bed.

Next day I passed on through to Flanders,  
and I should remember more than I do ...  
At Bastia - I rested by a rusting relic,  
a Sherman tank cemented by the roadside  
left by Patton of the Bulge.

How could I forget the movies,  
the comics that depicted war,  
the tragedy of dying in a foreign land,  
sermons preached to the young.

Show me the man who has no enemies,  
I'll show you that man has no friends.

I was educated - had no enemies -  
except for the Russians and the Pact;  
I was warned about the yellow peril.  
But Marxist life remained intact,  
Clydeside lived on strikes and sit-ins.

Overthrow of empire was everywhere,  
there was no-where left to plunder,  
no-one to exploit except ourselves.

The hills of Scotland came under the  
plough,  
swathes of moorland given to the tree,  
I endorsed the arrival of forestation,  
regretted the loss of scenery -  
barren waste and bog, aesthetic beauty.

There are those who might have left  
our country naked for deer and grouse,  
blood splattered gumshoes -  
wiped upon our Scottish soil.

We Europeans - a sky covers us,  
the same sun lights us in turn.  
The same rains make our blood.  
What is race? We are one.

### LUXEMBOURG

I hitchhiked on to Luxembourg,  
through battlefields of past misery,  
through landscape once battered by  
artillery.  
Quiet now, the summer fields lay  
stretching peacefully on to Alsace.

Past a grove of trees, the Duchy's  
frontier:  
A pleasant country caught like a pea  
in a mattress shared by Germany and  
France;

Enchanted by fairy castles and bridges  
I spent two days wandering the City,  
I shared a dormitory with two Quebecois,  
spoke with some citizens of the world.

Kenya? India? Brazil? or Alaska?  
What dreams had I - a boy from Glasgow?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

In Luxembourg I drew breath -  
I sat out in the hot August night  
listening to the homesick talk of  
strangers.

Captured by the white tales of trekkers,  
journeyers fresh from Greece and Italy,  
drifters up from Spain and Portugal.

New codes of conduct for the young -  
part imported from the new world:  
anti-violence, anti-foreign wars,  
abhorrence for hunger in Bengal.

There had to be more to life,  
there had to be more than death,  
there had to be something to it all?

Such questions never leave the lips  
of those born to see the world -  
youth rushes at us all ablaze  
before old age snuffs the flame.

The answer is plain,  
the answer is always the same,  
the answer comes with the pain  
by asking the question again.

A travel-weary Californian,  
too old to make the draft for Nam,  
had lived the beatnik life in San Francisco  
on the Golden Park side of town.

Haight had flowered into hippy love  
when a singer gifted weeds into a crowd.

Drugs became an aspirin to violence,  
love became the solution to war.

A composer became more popular than  
Christ,  
and a President more hated than the Devil  
who had butchered a Hollywood star.

Outcast - but reborn  
like the circle of life  
going on and on.

Californian Bob was the first of many  
I met from the new Atlantis -  
a state where dreams come true  
like some Disney tale of fancy -  
living legends and self-made fortunes.

And I lily-white from my parents care,  
fresh from a council house in  
Pollokshaws,  
I swore I would reach the furthest shores  
or die within along the way.

Time grants the wish of those determined,  
fate takes those whose time is wasted.

My future was already charted -  
I was to be - a civil engineer.  
I had the choice of two universities.  
Which one? I was still undecided.

I had no idea of the great cosmic whole,  
I was traipsing where will had no  
authority,  
I was journeying where I was welcome  
and arriving where I had - no home.

At seventeen I had no awareness,  
I had no notion of my own self,  
I had no concept of inner forces,  
my mind was set on the here and now.

### GERMANY

When I crossed into Germany,  
I cannot tell you what I felt,  
a cloudburst sent me scurrying  
beneath a railway bridge for shelter.

I hitchhiked eight kilometres,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

walked seven to the outskirts of Trier,  
nightfall dropped like a curtain,  
I kipped down on a railway embankment.

In the morning I awoke blackened,  
I had bedded down on burnt grass.  
I looked into my pocket mirror -  
I was black. A child pointed.

I was too filthy to hitchhike,  
I entered Trier looking like a tramp.

I was young!  
A night on the road beneath the stars,  
a night in a bag on burnt grass,  
a night outdoors like a bum.

Eight to one, I exchanged marks for  
pounds,  
booked into a hostel for a scrub -  
wanderers must take refuge where they  
can  
or sink to being hobos short of luck.

For the now - I was in ancient Trier,  
a Roman town with splendid baths and  
fountains.

All gone to ruin, modern Germany  
stood brash and imposing on the past.

I looked for signs of history -  
no spirits spoke, no voices whispered  
as the Moselle rushed to join the Rhine.

### **Bavaria**

Next day I set off for Munich,  
three hundred miles at the whim of  
drivers,  
left me stranded in the heart of  
Nuremburg.

I dined out that night with a Dane  
who spoke of home life in Copenhagen.

He was going on to visit Prague,  
just a thousand days since Dubcek  
had been toppled by the tanks.

Revolution fights regression,  
independence fights oppression.

In Nuremburg's rebuilt square  
destroyed in nineteen forty-five,  
we watched the figured clock strike  
twelve,  
then slept within the castle walls  
and rose with the dawn.

I headed south and outside town  
I met a blonde-haired Berlin girl,  
We hitched together, got a lift -  
then another - we spent the journey  
eyeing up each other.

An English lecturer from Reading Uni'  
took us to the fringe of Munchen.  
He was on his long summer break  
making the best of his substandard pay.  
He was on his way to Salzburg and Vienna.

We hitched into the city centre,  
we parted with a kiss,  
since then I've met Berlin girls  
around the world canning fish,  
playing chess, or being chaste  
while chased by unchaste pricks.

Kim in the Alaskan wild,  
Ula on a Carib isle,  
Bettina in sweet paradise -  
What I've come to miss!

Faded images of imperial Munich,  
cobble streets, parks and tramcars,  
a touch of coldness in the air  
brought on by Scottish gibbering's.

I found the hostel fully booked.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

With Dublin bouys, Pat and Ger  
and Joel, a Californian guy -  
I went to eat, then returned  
to sleep in the public park.

At midnight the cops came by  
said - we may sleep upright  
but lying down broke the law.

We climbed a metal fence  
into a small sports ground,  
and dozed beneath some limes.

In the morning we awoke  
a herr with a shepherd dog  
silhouetted over us.

We explained our restless night,  
the janny let us use the showers  
in the school sports house.

With my friends I spent the day  
in and out the Munich stores,  
we made a meal of rolls and cheese,  
then ran to the hostel grounds  
to escape a heavy downpour.

Later, hot dogs and bier,  
we squeezed into a photo-booth:  
I have a photo of us four -  
all hairy heads and beards.

That night it was too wet to kip  
out on the sports ground grass.  
We slept beneath a building arch  
on a slab of marble.

Stiff - we awoke, played in the park,  
shared our yogurt and our choc-o-milk.  
I spent all my marks on ice-cream.  
Another night on marble followed.

In the morning, I regretted

spending all my change on ice-cream.  
Breakfastless, I hitchhiked to Austria.

I saw no point changing sterling  
into Deutsche marks just for breakfast.  
I swapped addresses with my pals,  
and set-out for the Salzburg road.

An hour's walk took me to the autobahn;  
I joined the hitchers on the ramp.  
The traffic was ferocious, in no time  
I was halfway to the Austrian border.

Then it started - three hours passed,  
a short lift of a few kilometres -  
three hours more, and another ride  
dropped me on a deserted slip-road.

Darkness descended, hunger gnawed,  
Salzburg was a distant dream.

I took my stove from my pack  
to heat some soup in a pan;  
I stuck a match -

A car pulled up, a door opened,  
a long-haired youth got out  
to take me to his house.

Eric was the local doctor's son.  
Life in a tiny village in Bavaria,  
not a stone's throw from Bertersgarden,  
was dull and boring much of the time.

He was soon to do his army service,  
he did not relish the cropping of his hair,  
he saw no need for a German army,  
he was against all things military.

The house stood back from the road,  
there Eric had watched me wait  
an hour in which three cars had passed.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I had eaten nowt all day,  
I was weaker than a mouse,  
I would've ate horse that night  
if he had set it out.

Out came the rye breads and bratwurst,  
the salami's and an assortment of cheeses  
-  
I eat a donkey-full and brayed contently.

"My father is still marked by the war,  
scarred by Stalingrad and Warsaw,  
he feels the hands of six million Jews,  
resting on the shoulders of his generation.

Now, there is an ashamed silence  
there is a numbness - a self-humiliation  
that makes me believe we should forget  
and forgive the crimes of the past.

Germany went to war - and lost;  
East and West and Berlin walled.  
Never again will the Reichstag rule  
the West and East as one."

I spent the night on the surgery couch  
Dachau and Auschwitz on my mind -  
I was clear about right and wrong,  
bible class lessons and the Boys Brigade  
had made me a righteous snob -

I was as Presbyterian as they come;  
I would borrow ten pee and pay it back,  
I was an irritating sod.

In the morning Eric gave me breakfast,  
drove me back to the Autobahn.  
He gave me some Austrian schillings,  
to buy a coffee on the other side.

How many people have helped me since?  
Stuck in the Saharan waste and dying,  
tired and lonely on the Baha coast,  
broke and hungry in the Transvaal,

miserable with love in the Bali hills,  
ill and trapped in a Lucknow hotel,  
swept out to sea in a Brazilian ketch,  
under arrest in Panama city,  
alone and afraid in a Kurdish village.

What use has such travel been to me?  
Where is my wealth? Show me my riches.  
Memories do not make a man secure.  
Stories do not shut out the cold.

Twenty years on - I am a loner  
living in the damp of a Glasgow basement.  
I am here, but my mind is on -  
the waters of the Victoria Falls.

My eyes are on the Taj Mahal,  
my heart is in a dozen countries,  
I am spread across the globe.

This is the price I have paid:  
experience feeds on variation,  
variation has ruined contentment,  
ambition steals every second -

There is always one country more;  
one more sight left unvisited,  
one more temple to explore,  
one more beach to stroll.

My eyes are bigger than my mind -

the cupola on a minaret;  
the turret on some ancient fort,  
the arch into a black bazaar,  
the inscription on a soldier's grave  
"Here fell a man no-one knows,  
May God safeguard his faithless soul."

In a dark Glasgow bedsit,  
February's light, short and fading,  
the blue skies of mountain Spain,  
the green canopy of Siam's bays,  
the red hue of Sudan's plains -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I am home to stay.

The season's pull my heart apart,  
I want to up, leave, depart -  
throw off the chains of urban life,  
trade in my all for cash - and run  
to haunts where happiness exists,  
return - to life in paradise.

Who does not crave for perfect days?  
Who does not dream of sand and waves?  
Who does not wish their life away?

Here now - I stay to quietly rot  
in my Glasgow hobbit hole,  
I struggle on to find my place  
in the cosmic whole -

Despair creeps-up on me at times  
and lingers as a festering sore.

Spring rushes, summer fades  
till autumn golds wash the earth,  
there they melt into the soil  
or cover the grey clay walkways  
between the rows of graves.

Not so when I was seventeen!  
The snow capped Alpine peaks  
traversed the length of my horizons.  
Over those mountains lay fresh prizes.

I had the faith to chance my luck  
in search of love and fortune.

I knew nothing of transience,  
I believed - youth and exuberance  
would carry me to greatness!

### AUSTRIA

That night I slept in Zell-am-See  
beneath the span of a roadway arch:

it was cold - the mountain air;  
the ground was dirty, damp, and hard  
as I lay my head on Alpine stone.

I rose at six hunger-pinched,  
I marched into the sleeping town  
twee with schloss and austro-kitsch,  
I waited for the banks to open.

I changed ten pounds into schillings,  
I bought some yogurt, bread and cheese  
and hitchhiked on up the Pass -

Gross Glockner at eight thousand feet,  
mist about it's sheeted peaks  
five thousand feet over me.

I felt small 'neath nature's wild  
rugged edge revealed that day -  
my mind expanded with each view,  
my heart pounded on each curve  
that left me gaping at abyss.

There was no earth as we turned  
and wound our way down the pass,  
a mile beneath us - pasture land,  
while in the distance, mountains rose  
not as high as those we'd crossed  
but breathless still - to one so young!

A family bought me lunch at Dollach,  
and let me out at quaint Lienz.  
I found shelter for the night  
in Gastof Neuwirt - with outside loo  
and washroom in the yard.

I settled in, washed off the grime  
of travelling three days with a pack,  
I toured the town as tourists do  
and listened to the town's brass band.

It had been a pleasant day -  
I slept between linen sheets  
beneath an eiderdown.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I awoke to a deluge of mountain rain.  
I made a cup of tea on my stove,  
and I thought of the road before me.

The downpour stopped, I set off south  
I opted for Venice as my goal -  
I had counted my cash and concluded  
that Venice, that ancient merchant city  
was to be the turn-round of my sojourn.

Who can say if I chose wisely,  
tradition has the grand tour end in Rome,  
but I was not versed in culture then  
or the ways of Oxbridge men -

I am still not acquainted with the latter,  
they're not acquainted with me either.

A German family - their son hitchhiking  
in Denmark - took me short of Sillian.  
I walked three miles, reached the village  
where an old man took me to the hostel.

We waited patiently until it opened,  
myself, an Italian cyclist, an Irish couple  
with another - an Austrian from Vienna.

The cyclist's shorts were brown  
but such details do not matter now,

### ITALY

Friday morning - thirteenth of August -  
I walked two miles to the Italian border,  
and two rides later I was in - Cortina.

Perched high in the Dolomite mountains;  
ringed by rugged arete-edged peaks;  
summer's snows melting in the heat -  
alpine blossom blooming on scree.

I waited by the roadside  
longing to be by the Adriatic sea.  
Two hours of Italy passed me by,

I had no shade from the mid-day sun,  
the mountain air was thin, but warm.

My dark Celtic skin, once pale - now  
burnt,  
my hazel eyes more green than brown,  
my auburn hair part streaked blonde,  
my body changing each hour abroad,  
my mind absorbing all it saw.

On that hot Ampezzo road!  
What cared I for future life?  
I had the there and now  
high upon the Dolomites!

I pushed my thumb out at cars,  
none would slow, none would stop;  
an hour more passed me by,  
then - to my shock - a biker!  
a Dutchman on a Bayern bike -

"Where you go?" "Venice" I said.  
I clambered on the back -  
and we set off south!

A hundred miles downhill we raced,  
cliffs and curves and devil bends,  
a hot-rod ride towards the sea,  
six hundred cc's taking us  
through village towns like Langarone  
and Ponte Nolle Alpi, Vittorio;  
on highway fifty-one we sped  
to join route thirteen near its end.

I was dropped eight miles from Venice,  
seat-sore, stiff and weather beaten.  
I hitched a lift into the city  
along the Ponte del Liberta.

### Venice

A vaporino from Piazza Roma,  
took me down the Grand Canal -  
some say - the world's finest street.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We passed beneath Sealzi bridge  
by the ancient church of St .Jerome  
wherein the relics of St .Lucia lay.

Then a palace gazed my thoughts,  
my eyes fixed on its balconies -  
the port where Richard Wagner died.

Beyond the fifteenth century Ca d'oro,  
the smell of fish caught my breath.  
It was the Pescheria!

I disembarked at the Rialto Bridge,  
found a hostel, booked in for two nights.  
Some potash des legumes did for supper,  
banana ice-cream as a sweet -  
I was tucked away in bed by ten,  
no lover in a gondola as in dreams.

Is there something wrong with me  
that I experienced so little at that time?  
Is there something missing in the man  
not living life while he can?  
What was I searching for in Venice,  
naive and young and seventeen?

I did not find it, or for sure  
I would recall what it was.  
Perhaps you do not see importance  
in noting that I ate ice-cream.

Next day I marched to St.Mark's Square,  
cheese and bread by the Procuratie,  
I was impressed by the Basilica,  
it was an architectural jewel.

I still see the panelled doors,  
the hush of the baroque interior,  
a rival to the grandeur of St .Sophia  
I was to visit one year later  
barefoot and broke in Istanbul.

Let not the mutterings of a wanderer  
reduce Venice to a nothingness,

I saw too many things to tell  
as the midday heat did me in.

Ninety three degrees, give or take,  
I retired to the hostel shade  
to watch young Venetian boys  
retrieve coke bottles from the canal.

Five liras for every bottle cashed,  
the water was polluted with oil;  
foul smelling and algae green,  
they dived head-first into the deep;

Cheerful loud-mouthed dark-skinned  
youths  
performing for the likes of me.  
I saw these young Venetian boys  
without the eyes of Thomas Mann.

Lost in my self-made world  
I planned my route for the morrow -  
Up the Po valley to Milan,  
then back into the high Italian Alps.

Short of company, and tired,  
I took another early night,  
my mind upon the day just gone  
and not upon the years ahead.

For had I fixed upon a big house,  
a house so grand I filled twelve rooms -  
I would not now have wandered, no,  
not spent my youth in exile.

I know better now - a wiser man,  
maturer in my thoughts, my looks,  
these give hint of all I've done.

Now I've come to some dead end  
where my spirit climbs a wall  
in order to be free of what?

Caged I cannot live out life,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

behave as though I'm civilised,  
I cannot smile nor greet my friends  
nor live with purpose or with point -

Four billion years of history -  
I am just thirty six.  
I've not seen nor felt a thing  
worth passing on to anyone.

All you'll hear from me  
will find its place in the wind  
and pass round and round no end  
with no start to it.

My time in Venice is small worth,  
my journey fruitless to the hungry,  
I cannot say I enjoyed burnt hours  
hitching west on the Pisto Quatro -

### Como

Happily I said goodbye to Padova,  
the slip roads of Vicenza and Verona.  
Night descended as I flew past  
Brescia, Bergamo and then Milano.  
About two a.m., I found lodgings  
on a park bench in Como.

This is the life of the traveller,  
this is the way of the wanderer,  
weary miles across vast lands  
to sleep wherever time allows.

I awoke to the still blue waters  
of a resort the rich possess -  
the beauty of the lake - spectacular  
after the hot dusty plain.

The mountain air revived me greatly,  
I felt at home in the mountains -

Dear is the Highland blood in me  
passed down the generations,  
I hear the skirling of the pipes

when danger presses in on me.

I heard no pipes on Como's side,  
I left my bench, went into town  
and booked into the hostel there.

Drowsy from lack of sleep, and heat  
I found a spot beneath a tree  
and slept a couple of hours.

I tried to rise, but with no strength  
I lay until late afternoon  
wrestling with some sort of pain.

In my gut was diarrhoea,  
I stole some public-loo sheet paper,  
in case an accident ensued.

By nightfall, I was normal,  
I shared a pizza with Johnny,  
a youth from outer London.

Next day I washed all my clothes,  
my jeans, my four tee-shirts.  
and dried them in the sun.

I had my lunch in a park,  
sunbathed, then ambled back  
to talk with Pete from Coventry.

Jean, Jenny and Israeli Ehud,  
more like names than faces now,  
they became new friends.

This is how time's a swine,  
it leaves you nothing worth a dime.

### SWITZERLAND

Next morning Ehud hitched with me,  
we planned to travel to Luzern,  
but who can plan anything  
when you're at some driver's whim.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We found ourselves on foot for hours  
dwarfed beneath towering mountains,  
at last a ride took us on,  
but left us short of Lugano.

Late afternoon, hot and tired,  
Ehud took a train to Luzern,  
I could not afford the fare,  
so I hitchhiked on alone again -

Six hours I waited, walked, and passed  
trying to circumvent Lugano,  
til at last I reached the town  
and met Graham 'Hockey' Henderson,  
the ex- vice captain of the Academy  
that I had left that summer.

Accompanied by his girlfriend,  
a girl who'd been forms above me!  
we chatted for half an hour or so,  
then they went south towards Milan,  
heading for the artefacts of Florence  
and the great monuments of Rome.

I was mere pleb to such a hero -  
Hockey Henderson four years my senior,  
he had seen half of Europe's treasures,  
all I'd seen - two thousand miles of road!  
If there was be some justice  
then "God" I prayed "Let me see more."

That night I slept on a wooden bench  
in the waiting room of Lugano station.  
I was comfortable, considering -

An early start saw me outside Bellinzona,  
but four hours followed in blazing sun.  
It all seems so innocent now  
when we are faced with war -

a half million Christian men  
against a million Musselmen.

Stupid pride will bring about

needless deaths to aliquot.  
In time - shrines will rise  
to glorify those who died.

I will not justify aggression,  
I will not back imperialism,  
I will not put my voice to war  
or call for retribution.

It is no joy to fry in the sun,  
he who waits blisters and burns.

A ride at last! south of Lichtenstein;  
three lifts more left me near Zurich.  
I spent the night in Rapperswil,  
between bug-free hostel sheets.

### **Bern**

I was in Zurich for breakfast,  
then in Bern, just in time for lunch.

I studied zoology at the Bear Pit,  
studied history in the national museum -

I re-met Robert, an Australian  
who'd been in Rapperswil the night before.

I befriended Christian and Liz,  
and Jimmy, a boy from Bishopbriggs,

I visited an exhibition on pollution  
'Uberleben': I left somewhat touched.

Survival, I was into that - depicted  
as the dove of peace Picasso drew.

That night I felt alive, aware;  
I walked the streets of Bern glad  
some folks were trying to 'Save the  
World',  
I knew not how they would succeed  
but I endorsed the whole ideal.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And now? I am a trash of past,  
I consume and waste and junk,  
I contribute to the filth  
that floats or sinks to slime existence.  
Who is God? Where is he now?

### Lausanne

I left Bern for Neuchatel,  
quaint and old and not so new.  
On I went - to Lausanne  
where Eliot wrote his Wasteland -  
where Spender penned his first lines  
on the shore of Lac Leman -

Placid in the summer haze;  
south, rose Mount Blanc.

I pre-ambled in the hostel garden,  
and spoke to a pretty girl,  
at first I thought she was Swiss,  
but she was from San Diego.

Yet, we were young and knew not  
how to bridge the wide divide -  
I, from my land of rain;  
she from a sunshine State.

Our bodies were athletic, yes.  
She was twenty one -  
I kept quiet about my age.

In the fall of evening cool,  
we shared our yogurt, cheese and rolls,  
we gazed into the lake land depths  
and coyly flirted - innocence!

Youth flushed our faces, in a blaze  
we rushed into a quick embrace  
of minds; our bodies never touched,  
my finger tips never brushed  
nor touched a hair of hers  
though we were made for love.

Respect and fear, hand in hand  
kept the two of us apart,  
yet we both knew, felt desire  
tug at us, but we were strong.

We walked to the railway station;  
enraptured by her sunshine voice  
I gazed into her deep blue eyes  
concealed behind her straw blonde hair  
flowing down her woman's back  
where it was tied by a clasp  
used to the La Jolla sands  
and the courts of Kellogg Park.

She was not from Chula Vista,  
La Mesa, or El Cajon -

I knew not then what I know now  
of girls from such foreign lands.  
Abe Lincoln! You may rest -  
your girls are amongst the best!

Late, we wandered slowly back  
to the hostel by the lake -  
all the while we talked and talked  
and still we did not touch.

We said goodnight, and as we went  
we shook each other's hand.

Romance? I hardly think so now,  
who knows, it might have worked  
if I had been some Don Juan  
or some modern William Tell.

I was just a Glasgow boy -  
that doesn't ring so well.

Wrapped in folds of eiderdown  
I woke to heavy Sunday rain;  
mingled thoughts of getting drenched,  
thoughts of San Diego Teri.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I lay in bed made my plan  
to stay another day.

We walked to a boulangerie,  
rolls, tomatoes, broke our fast,  
bananas as an after course,  
we squatted on the harbour wall;

Out of wind, out of rain.  
We played I-Spy, observed the lake.

We put English names to things.  
Far away - snow covered peaks -  
Mount Blanc hidden in a mist;  
I know we should have kissed.

Side by side we espied all  
except the souls within ourselves;  
Greek and Latin poets speak  
of the myths we make from dreams;

Delusion feeds alternate worlds  
that no-one knows for long.

So too - as I re-live  
and tell you of my young life,  
the truth will out despite desire  
to make it more than it was.

On the shore of Lac Leman  
I had no interest for the Swiss,  
all my thoughts were centred on  
the girl I was with -

All the wishing in the world  
cannot change this little truth.

So let me take you back again  
to the wind and rain that day -  
I was glad that I had found  
a girl to share the break;

Far too much sun without some love  
cannot make the difference up.

Cold and damp we returned  
to the hostel hand in hand -  
No! we kept ourselves apart,  
desire gnawed at our hearts.

By then in fact, we had no hope  
of being more than friends.

Two hours sitting by the lake,  
our dreams had not matched,  
Teri was a language student  
with plans to teach high-school kids;

I hoped to be an engineer  
to live and work in foreign lands.

Our worlds were - poles apart -  
I cooked some soup, gave her some,  
then spent the afternoon in bed;  
alone, and tired, and worn

From travelling Europe like a bum,  
my home upon my back -

Years of wandering were to come  
though I was not aware of that,  
when I awoke, I was fed  
by a little bloke from Brum.

Macaroni cheese for tea!  
I'd never had such food before;

I was a simple Scottish boy  
brought up on beans an' toast;  
lunches of soup and pudding,  
evening meals of pies and spuds.

See, I was born in fifty-four,  
reared three miles from the Clyde  
in a Southside council house.

At seven - too big for the sink,  
I went every Friday with my dad

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

to the public baths.

At eleven, we were re-housed  
when they pulled down old Pollokshaws;  
we got a toilet and a bath.

I was angry - my childhood  
was erased by bulldozing men  
who then put up high-rise flats.

They filled them with families  
decanted from poor Govanhill,  
the Gorbals and Kinning Park.

I was a native of the Shaws -  
and baited by new inner-city indians,  
wars erupted, battles were fought.

It brought me many victories  
before I sustained defeat  
at the hands of Glass-Eye Gillespie!

What a name! Even now I shake  
when I recall his steel toe-caps,  
his shoddy tweeds and freckled face.

Ginger hair - like Irn Bru,  
his one good eye fixed on me  
as he aimed his hob-nailed boot  
towards my sweet angelic face.

Innocence itself - a Shaws boy  
standing up to all he could  
in the name of good!

Where were my pals on that day  
outside wee Pollok Annexe school;  
Hamilton, Houston, Mackay and  
Kennedy,  
cowering like wee timid beasties!

Not a word to spur me on  
Glass-Eye grabbed me by the throat,  
I fought to catch my breath,

my face turned beetroot red.

Like a ton of church roof lead,  
Gillespie pinned me to the earth.  
Twelve years old and I had lost  
my first fight since I'd punched  
Gibson's nose and made it bleed  
when I was seven years old.

I had never lost before,  
ten years of scraps, kicks and bites  
since my first success at two  
when cousin Hughie caught my blow  
and cried because I got to ride  
on his sister's three-wheeled bike.

Cousin Marjorie says I was an awful child,  
until my battle with G-Eye Gillespie;  
there I was - bruised and hurt  
and in a heap against a wall,  
jibed and jeered to go on home  
to let my mammy hear my cries.

Such things flood back on their own,  
and in Lausanne as I drank tea,  
the pain of defeat shadowed me,  
for I had had a violent youth;  
now I wished to turn my back  
on acts that made men beasts.

There was more to life I sensed  
than the confrontations found  
daily in the Glasgow that I knew.

I walked to a patisserie -  
and bought a bag of broken sweets,  
nabisco biscuits, dry and crumbly -  
how I craved for real shortcake.

Then thoughts of Teri came to me,  
I returned to search for her,  
to kiss her while the night was young,  
but it was not to be -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The warden sent us all to bed,  
I fumed and cursed at hostel life,  
it was only ten o'clock,  
who could call that fun.

So love was ruined - next day we parted,  
Teri Sher of San Diego - (sob!)  
She is just a memory now,  
a name on a diary page

There is a note - Fell in love!  
Left unkissed! End of tale.

### Geneva

Through Narges, Rolle, Nyon,  
I thought of love - it of me;  
I hitchhiked past Fournex, Versoix,  
by midday I reached Geneve;

the city where John Knox heard  
the truth and gained the light  
with Calvin and the Lutherites.

I found the hostel closed,

but a helpful passer-by  
informed me of a place near there  
where drop-outs had encamped

in a hospital no longer staffed.  
Off I tramped to dump my pack  
in this novel makeshift place,

and there I made my peace  
with some cool cosmic freaks –  
and secured a space on the floor.

I went outside to lie about  
and sleep upon the garden wall  
in sight of the Jet d'Eau -

That night I ate a heavy meal  
promenaded by the lake,

I ambled on the cobbled streets.

The old town spoke to me -  
history mingled with the now,  
this part of Switzerland I liked!

I forgot all the miles,  
the nights sleeping in the wild,  
the days burning on the road;

I enjoyed some pleasant hours,  
not a traveller anymore  
but a tourist on his rounds  
strolling as a happy person might.

Even then the past was catching up;  
I ran into Shaun I'd met in Bern,  
he was looking to kip for the night.

I lead him to the hippy place  
now candle-lit and Indian incense.  
Half the road seemed bedded down;

We found ourselves bagging by  
three blokes from Glasgow -  
knocking back the vino tinto.

Oh well, such is the wandering life  
to sip wine with one's compatriots  
while dossing in a foreign country.

### FRANCE

I rose with the dawn - in blazing sun  
I hitched to the French frontier;  
on to Gex, and then - mistake!  
I crossed the high Faucille Pass  
in a fast car with a rally driver.

He put his foot to the floor,  
and deafened by the whining engine  
we crossed the Jura Mountains -  
even now I still shudder and think  
of how we might have come a cropper.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Alive and shaken at La Cure,  
I thumbed a sedate ride to St .Laurent,  
on to Champagnole, then ill-luck,  
a woman took me to Arbois  
and left me stuck outside a farm.

Between Mouchard and Besancon  
This was France - cow dung and straw,  
rural life - pigs and chickens.  
I loved the sense of openness,  
despite being stranded by a dung heap -

Three hours later a farmer stopped  
and took me into Besancon,  
and there I spent another night  
underneath the summer stars,  
off the road, in a field –

I slept beneath the sky.

During the night a heavy dew  
settled on yon poor hobo,  
he awoke wet and hungry  
as factory workers filled passed  
along a lane some yards away.

Faces peered over the hedge.  
Red-faced I gathered up my things  
and scrambled back on to the road;

I hitched through Marnay to Gray,  
took buttered bread for nourishment,  
then thumbed on north to Champlitte.

My luck broke - mid-afternoon -  
a ride with a girl from Geneva;  
she left me off in Verdun -

Who has not been to that town and not  
had white crosses etched in their mind.  
Criss-crossed with neat white crosses,  
everywhere one looks - white crosses,  
white crosses to the ends of the earth.

No trees grow on the hills of Verdun,  
white crosses grow with each new sun.  
Lest we forget those white crosses,  
buy poppies to paint the white crosses  
that criss-cross the hills of Verdun.

Sombre, I walked far beyond the town  
shadowed by the Great War dead;

A lorry stopped, and in six hours  
we chugged into the outskirts of Paris.  
A few hours rest, the driver in his cab,  
I kipped in the back with the cargo.

We drove on to Rouen - where dropped  
I slept under the porch of a restaurant  
avoiding the fierceness of the rain;  
fuelled by a storm in from the Atlantic.

Daylight came and on to Abbeville.  
My luck held out as I took a ride  
with a lecturer from Croyden Tech  
who took me to Bologne and Dover.

### ENGLAND

Up to London, and deposited at Brixton  
I caught the tube across town to Hendon  
where the M1 once began, and where I  
could hitch-hike back to Scotland.

I'd visited seven states in Europe.  
It was only the start of my travelling,  
I'd had a taste of the life  
that was to make me a wanderer."

### SCOTLAND

NARR: The Wanderer stared into his  
empty glass.  
I looked to the clock - it had unwound,  
We knew not the time, nor what day  
Or if it were night -  
Or if time had halted or sped on -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We had travelled through the seasons  
And it was now Guy Fawkes.

I could hear fireworks outside,  
Yet he had begun on St .Valentine's night.

And while I pondered how and why,  
He rose and said he must go.  
Go where? He would not say,  
I must assume to his hobbit home  
Or to his parents house,  
Three miles south of the Clyde.

He said goodbye, and off he went  
Into the crisp November night,  
I wondered if I would see him soon,  
I was not convinced he was home for  
good.  
I regretted that I had not been  
To the furthest corners of the globe;

There was wisdom in my friend's  
rebellion.  
I had to seek him out, make him stay  
So I might use his knowledge to  
advantage.  
For if Scotland was to be a nation again  
And independence taken in the lion's jaw -  
The wanderer was needed for the cause.

## IN THE SLUMS

### MORNING ROWS A BOAT

[11.39pm, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1989, Ashley St,  
Glasgow]

At ease my mind floats beyond  
To dream of things to come -  
There is no past to recall  
Or years of troubled words.

Time soothes the turmoil's of youth,  
Emotion falls with the leaves -  
Rain dowses any thoughts  
Of wishful drifting, free.

Clouds carry off balloons of dreams,  
Sleep sends off bottled hope -  
Darkness brings the rainbow out  
And morning rows a boat.

### ART IN PLACE OF REVOLUTION

[7pm, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1989, Glasgow]

Art drives the world crazy!  
As world walls crumble -  
People throng through streets!  
Elsewhere freedom marches.  
Democracy bumbles, tumbles  
As taxes fuel the grumbling.

### TOWARDS THE END OF DINOSAURS

[11<sup>th</sup> November 1989, Glasgow]

I wonder where time has gone -  
How much time was spent  
When reckless mankind marches on  
Towards the end of dinosaurs.

Active minds still the feet  
Of those bound to rule us all,  
A finger pointed like a wand -  
Presto - and the world jumps!

I'm not one to wave a stick  
Proclaiming peace in our times -  
Never were the times so rife  
To split us with black magic.

Fragile is our grasp on life -  
A movement here - then a flash!  
Gone like sulphur in a fire  
Shot from volcanic vaults.

Still, our idle rulers sit  
And watch the worlds collide.  
No man can shape his own end  
Nor God forgive his crimes.

### SWIFT AND SHORT

[10<sup>th</sup> December 1989, Glasgow]

At the centre of the universe  
We find ourselves conditioned,  
Ruled by inner forces  
And all that yet may be.  
We are pressured by great powers  
Weighing down on us -  
Yet still we will ourselves  
To be above - and free.

At the end of our being here  
In our reconditioned slums,  
There will be no reckoning  
Of all that has passed.  
No time will be spared  
(To list the rights and wrongs),  
Our departure will be swift  
And the journey short.

### SO THAT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY

[25<sup>th</sup> December 1989, Glasgow]

So that was Christmas Day Eighty-Nine.  
Twelve hours in bed.  
Twelve out and about.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

No Christmas comes easy -  
Each is crammed with prior obligations,  
Arrangements with family.

Escape from conviction is painful  
When mothers weep for sons  
Not yet home.

I cannot be more hopeful than I am  
That Christmas staves off isolation  
Bourn all year.

Now almost over - the goodwill shared  
Will not last the week ahead.  
Bring on the New Year.

### **POETRY COMES EASY**

[Midnight, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1990, Glasgow]

When poetry comes easy to the lips,  
Words slip out that should not be heard;  
Meaning takes a backseat to melody  
And sense rides uneasy on the metre.

### **THE SECRET CUPBOARDS**

[13th January 1990, Glasgow]

I try to unlock the secrets kept  
concealed behind large bolted doors.  
I have a set of keys weighing me down  
and a thousand locks waiting to be opened

There are no markings on the key chain  
there are no numbers on the locks -  
I have only luck and desperation  
before time rusts the unopened doors.

### **I AM NUMBERED AMONG THE DEAD**

[14<sup>th</sup> January 1990, Glasgow]

I am numbered among the dead.  
I exist but I do not exist.  
I am at one with the dead  
But I am also part of the living.

Everything I do is already old,  
Though everything to me is fresh;  
I measure the past with the now  
But the present has no length.

### **GETTING ON FOR THIRTY SIX**

[14th January 1990, Glasgow]

I am numbered with the dead.  
I exist, but I do not live.  
I am at one with the dead -  
But I am also partly flesh.

Everything I do is already old  
Though everything is fresh.  
I measure the past with the present,  
the now I measure by the then.

This is why I am with the dead,  
Here I am, but I am gone.  
I am awake to nothing living.  
In sleep I cannot raise the dawn.

### **THE MIDNIGHT STORM**

[12.35am, 18th January 1990, Glasgow]

It rained until the cows came home  
and then it rained some more -  
The grey city met the sky ...  
so grey they merged as one.  
The lightning grazed the black rooftops -  
peels shook the walls ...  
the January gales howled wild  
on the midnight storm.

### **A STUDENT OF LAMBRUSCO**

[27th January 1990, Glasgow]

It all began as little sips  
to get his mind off exams,  
and would you know it, soon enough  
the exams passed he never sat.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And why? you ask. What transpired?  
A student once so ardent minded?  
What made the laddie leave his books  
in search of El Dorado?

Was it chance? No, not at all,  
it wasn't fate that brought him down.  
It was - it is fair to say -  
his love of vino blanco.

No woman could have brought him lower.  
No drug could have doped him more.  
He bade farewell to book utopia  
once he was on the blanco.

So heed! You wayward scholar types,  
stick to books - and don't imbibe!  
The student of Lambrusco drowned  
in a vat of vino blanco.

### **AN UNOPENED BOOK OF MASTERS**

[27th January 1990, Glasgow]

It fell open at Milton on about  
Shakespeare,  
a few pages on, Keats, Byron and Shelley  
weren't far away from Blake and  
Wordsworth  
and Robbie Burns chasing Highland Mary.

Not all these names are names to a pleb,  
Perhaps they're like a stick to a donkey -  
Beaten too often open wounds fester,  
until a past master becomes a dead ass.

### **THE HOWLING NINETIES**

[12pm, 5th February 1990, Glasgow]

February - and the gales blow  
ships on to the shores of disaster.  
Storms rage on the warm winds  
howling up from Africa.

Floods and melting Arctic waters,

greenhouse effect and ozone destruction -  
who can say if God exists  
or if this is man-made weather.

Tying down the attic windows,  
roofs rip off Barratt houses -  
sixty-degrees to the blasts  
wild nights bring disaster.

Welcome to the howling Nineties.  
Who'll survive - then who'll remember?

### **RACISM IN GLASGOW**

[13<sup>th</sup> February 1990, Glasgow]

Militants and Nationists clash at  
St. George's Cross,  
They rip the faces off the foe;  
They smash the limbs and crush the skulls  
Of those opposed.

### **THE ST. VALENTINE'S TRAMP**

[1.23am, 14th February 1990, Ashley St,  
Glasgow]

Another day for lovers comes,  
I find myself alone ...  
Not on some craggy mountain peak  
but alone in my home -  
a rented room, an attic box  
containing all I own.

Dawn filters through the yellow blind,  
I curse and turn to sleep ...  
not slumbering on a tropic beach  
I sleep on dirty sheets -  
a bed in a Glasgow slum  
the wine inside of me.

### **THE CIRCUS**

[2am, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1990, Glasgow]

Laugh comic, laugh, laugh, laugh.  
Circus makes the world burlesque,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Parody pokes the Satire's ribs,  
Pantomime tickles laughter's lips.

### **THE FLOW OF THE FLAME**

[12.36am, 28th February 1990, Glasgow]

I can't decide too much about life,  
where it will take me, when it will stop.  
I go along with the flow of the tide -  
to see the eddy out when its time.

I can't believe all that is happening,  
I have the luck, the chance to be free -  
free like the fleeting moorland deer  
to run in the wild breeze.

Perhaps I can see the light in the tunnel,  
the candle that burns in the howling gale.  
I nurse the spark that ignites the fire  
that fuels some inner flame.

### **AYE AGAINST THE POLL TAX**

[1.28am, 1st March 1990, Glasgow]

It comes to me in these days of business  
That we ride the road to revolution.  
Pressure bears down on us!  
Who will snap first? Regret later?

Tighter the screw is turned and turned  
Until there is blood.  
I can't back off ... this is destiny.  
I must stand as counted.

With the sheep march the cattle,  
I must face my own conscience.  
My back is now against the wall  
With the Bruce and Wallace.

### **TODAY I FACED A SHERIFF'S OFFICER**

[11.48pm, 1st March 1990, Glasgow]

Today I faced a sheriff's officer

eviction writ in his hand,  
repossession order number blah blah  
seven days since notice served.

I'm not a man of broken finances,  
how could I be stern with him?  
the roof above my head remains  
even if ownership changes.

Not any more - no more rights,  
eviction - no appeal, no protection.  
Property is number one today,  
a sheriff doesn't argue.

He came alone and left quietly  
warning me to make provision -  
who can live through these times  
without a revolution.

### **WHO IS GEORGE**

[3.39am, 4th March 1990, Glasgow]

Pushed into a corner full of drunkards,  
backed against a wall by a mob -  
Speak up now - or be dead tomorrow!  
Don't mess with me - George's a murderer.

Who is George? Who is George?  
The cavern echoes 'Who is George?'

George will kill you in an instant,  
inside him sleeps a tired warrior -  
inside George Prometheus rages,  
his fire stolen by ignorant forces.

But who is George? Who is George?  
Mock the ignorant so-and-so's.

George has witnessed Armageddon!  
He has killed - escaped oblivion!  
George has faced a thousand horrors.  
Let him be - condemn him not.

Who is this George? Who is he?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

He must be guilty. What's he done?

George has harmed none but himself,  
his nature is to give not take;  
alcohol blunts his wits -  
who is not a slave to something?

But murder is not mere mistake!  
It is crime - it is horror!

George is flawed - unto death  
guilt's a noose around his neck -  
George has been the pawn of innocence,  
the weapon of the righteous living.

Who says George should be forgiven?  
Who can wash the sin of criminals?

George has paid for us all,  
he has lost so you might gain.  
The soldier home from the wars -  
So let him go - or die!

### **LOST SINCE CHILDHOOD**

[1.48am, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1990, Glasgow]

Such fantasies come my way.  
I cannot turn or turn again.  
Home is found in every street  
And gone just as quick.  
Lost since childhood days  
I cannot halt to think.

### **LIGHT WILL SHINE AGAIN**

[1.01am, 15th March 1990, Glasgow]

Sometimes life runs away  
with all the things dear to us,  
in it's place it leaves a hole  
that none but past can fill.

Most lament the race of time  
that leaves them staring at themselves,  
but nothing quite gives a shove

like the hand of death.

Sunshine always follows rain,  
life is ordered night and day,  
the downpour might be falling now,  
but light will shine again.

### **ELIZABETH**

[1.29am, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1990, Glasgow]

Today I met Elizabeth -  
Young and free and seeking help,  
I could not shut my eyes to her -  
And now we're friends.

### **GLASGOW GIRLS (song)**

[March?1990, Glasgow]

East Coast girls are good with talk  
And Northern girls are slim and tall  
And Southern girls have got the lot  
But Glasgow girls are warm.

Highland girls can do the fling  
And Geordie girls can dance and sing  
And London girls - they know it all  
But Glasgow girls are hot.

### **ABLAZE THIS SPRING**

[12.41am, 30th March 1990, Glasgow]

The streets are ablaze this spring:  
Burnt out vans in alleys;  
Mosques set on fire;  
Fascist arson and beatings.

Here in Nineties Britain  
Things are going wrong.  
The wrong corner turned -  
I welcome police protection.

There are no innocents:  
Children doping up on stairways;  
Alkies passed out on the pavement;

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Dossers begging spare change.

No-one here pays the pole tax:  
Barricades in tenements;  
Demonstrations every day;  
Fascists on the black-hunt.

Blue is a dirty ideal:  
Masons with funny handshakes;  
Try finding honesty in men  
When poverty's on the gain.

I predict no happy end,  
I foresee no coming utopia.  
I take no interest in the future  
When hell gapes before us.

### **APRIL FOOL'S HAS COME**

[1.45am, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1990, Glasgow]

Narcissus in the window  
Peeking through the curtain  
Resting in a water jug.  
April Fool's has come!  
Spring has sprung!  
Winter now is done!

### **BALMAHA (LOCH LOMOND)**

[1.43am, 2nd April 1990, Glasgow]

Wagtail at the water's edge,  
Driftwood dry upon the bank,  
Tree-roots bare to the shore,  
Garnets in the pebbled stone,  
Narcissus edging on the bay,  
Wood-smoke in the gladed shade,  
Ancient rocks perched to drop,  
Footpaths washed away in part.

Ash, elder, bramble, gorse,  
Holly on the highest hilltop,  
Hawks hazed against the cloud,  
Gullies gashing through divides,  
Craggs and cliffs everywhere,

Spring in a skylark's craze,  
Fossils in the softest shale,  
Crystals in exposed quartz,  
Contentment in the still collect,  
Peace down by the loch.

### **THE OLD RUSTS ALL THE MORE**

[1.18am, 8th April 1990, Glasgow]

Time marches on like some Goliath  
Trampling on the smallest things.  
I am an ant in creation,  
I huddle in a hole.  
Blow breeze, blow fresh air  
Before suffocation wins.

Down wind success gathers,  
Fame clears away barriers.  
No girl comes to me from America,  
Nor any place I know.  
Rain washes nothing new -  
The old rusts all the more.

### **NO MORE WORDS**

[12.11am, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1990, Glasgow]

No more verses for posterity  
No more verses for prosperity  
No more lines for infidelities  
No more words from me.

### **ITS NOT WITHIN MY POWER (song)**

[Glasgow Girls, 2.40am 18<sup>th</sup> April 1990]

If you think I can  
Then think again, my friend  
You must think I'm a fool, alright.  
Can't you forget all  
The talk that you've heard  
And see me as more than just a man.

Its not within my power  
To make you mine.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### BARBERS SONG

[Glasgow Girls, 3.07am, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1990]

I shoo the sun  
I shoo the stars and moon  
I yeah I do -  
O yes, I surely do ...  
My heart smiles  
When I'm sure of her  
Sure that she's fine, oh yeah  
For sure, fine  
For I'm sure of that girl of mine.

### THE PUPPET MASTER

[from Glasgow Girls, ? April 1990]

In the morning I've a booking  
Then two more in the afternoon.  
I can see the children's faces  
Lighting up the gloom of adults  
Briskly going to and fro  
Trying to make a living -

Up and down the Merchant City  
People rush as if on wheels,  
While I - in my tethered booth  
Move both hands and squeek,  
And cry, and laugh, and croak  
To make ends meet.

I move the world with my hands;  
From every continent they come  
To stand and watch in awe;  
My puppets bow - they applaud.  
They throw their coins into my hat,  
I wave goodbye, and they are gone.

### THE ARTIST'S AGENT

[from Glasgow Girls, ? April 1990]

To see him take his high percentage  
Makes me boil - I want to - Phah!  
Would I drink the wine of leeches?  
Suppose I would - when it suits me.

When you're alive no-one knows  
How many paintings you've done,  
How many copies you've made,  
How many you've stored away.

Life treats me like I'm dirt,  
I don't care - that to them!  
The world can be a pile of dung  
With flies as thick as .....

Have you seen the starlings swarming  
above Jamaica Bridge in autumn?  
The pigeons flocking in George Square  
like agents at an opening?

### THE ARTIST

[Glasgow Girls, ? April 1990, Glasgow]

Is this the price of one week's work,  
gone for less than half its cost?  
There are those who rule the arts  
who think artists have no worth.

I'm not one to paint a cause,  
I see the universe as dots:  
Within each dot - a million more  
Specks of life elude my vision  
Til I'm blind - beyond myself  
I cannot view a new horizon.

It's then I turn to booze and fags  
And drown and burn my talent -  
For when the musics plays -  
I'm free of all that's bad and nasty.

### THE BOBBY AND THE BUSKER

[Glasgow Girls, ? April 1990, Glasgow]

I know it's not a crime to play a tune,  
And it's certainly no offence to sing to  
the moon -  
And it's hardly illegal to stand in the  
street,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But to ask for donations is not the law for  
sure.

Know what I mean.

I'm a Glesca polis, I take pride in my job,  
There's hooligans and ruffins around  
every block.

There's drunks and drug abusers and those  
that give the eye,  
I just nab them by arm - just like that!  
Get my drift.

I'm waiting for this lefty to stick out her  
cap,

I've heard she did it up the street right  
behind my back.

I'll catch her at it one day, sure enough,  
Then we'll inform the Tax man, the  
Brew, and she'll be done.

Know what I mean.

### **YOUR PICTURE DONE**

[Glasgow Girls, ? April 1990, Glasgow]

People going up and down  
Round and round the town,  
And all those faces going past.  
'Heh, mister! Your picture done?'

Everyday I come down here  
And sketch this and that, you know.  
Sometimes a tourist comes along  
'Heh, darling - I do portraits!'

Faces pass by .. zip .. and zap,  
The someone stops, I look the part,  
And just as they're about to ask,  
They run. 'Come on, come back!'

For sure I'll never make it pay -  
For sure most days it always rains.  
This is all part of fame ...  
And being a struggling artist.

'Be done by a struggling artist',  
Why do I cheapen myself like this?  
Well, it's better than office work.  
'Oi, special offer! Three pound only!'

Silly way to make a living.  
I must be mad to consider it.

### **TAKE WHAT YOU CAN (song)**

[Glasgow Girls, ? April 1989, Glasgow]

If you're ever going to make it,  
Take what you can when it comes.  
No-one's going to give you favours  
If you can't give any in return.

You've got to be nice in a hard sort of  
way;  
You've got to be firm, but polite.  
Even if it's 'Come back another day'  
Take what you can when it's right,

For you'll never get to make it that way,  
So take what you can and run.  
No-one's going to give you favours  
If you can't give any in return.

Any chance you get - take the whole  
thing,  
Snap it up, squeeze out the life.  
Don't throw it away when it comes your  
way -  
Take what you can when it's right.

### **LET THEM BREAK IT DOWN**

[1.18am, 8th May 1990, Glasgow]

Once more the bailiffs at the door  
like the curs of robbers.  
Is this life in the hands  
of tomorrow's doyens?

No sense comes of homelessness -  
people die in the streets.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Around the world resistance leads  
to a loss of freedom.

What place is left- what peace?  
Hounded out of home by crooks,  
men without moral thought  
in the name of duty.

Tired of talk, tired of niceness,  
against the wall prepared to fight.  
Bailiffs at the door - pounding.  
Let them break it down!

### LEFT TO ROT

[19<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

The world is going at a crazy pace,  
No place to hide, no escape from thought.  
Where will tomorrow go and what found  
When all is left to rot.

### SANDRA

[3.24am, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

One cannot pursue the sun, the stars;  
One cannot pursue the wind, the sea;  
One cannot pursue the fleeting day  
Or a Wexford lass running away.

### BODIES AND MINDS

[1.17am, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

What are bodies to those of minds?  
The flesh comes apart in the hands.  
The eye grows weak with time.  
Beauty of form turns to memory.

Scars across faces and broken backs.  
Scars with no traces containing no past.  
Scars where smiles hide bad luck.  
Scars where love has had no return.

What are minds to those with bodies?  
Those with muscles? Those with health?

Those who ridicule life's pale bookworms  
Those who cannot flaunt themselves?

### MY LOVE IS LIKE A COFFEE (song)

[1.25 - 1.41am 26<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

My love is like a coffee  
sitting on its own -  
My love is like a rainbow  
just beyond the road -  
My love is like an angel  
hovering above -  
My love is like a mountain  
never big enough.

But when I see my lover  
I am not alone -  
And when I see my darling  
I have my pot of gold -  
For when I kiss my angel  
just lay me down -  
For my love is like a fountain  
and I shall not drown.

My love is like a bottle  
tossed upon the sea -  
My love is like an apple  
fallen from a tree -  
My love is in the heavens  
too far to see -  
My love is spring blossom  
raining down on me.

### IN BED WITH YOU

[1.52am, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

And when in bed I am yours,  
And in the dawn's glitter'd dew,  
Curlew's cries say it all,  
To close our eyes to love.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **THE BELL TOLLED**

[2.13am, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

The bell tolled loud beyond the wood,  
A taxi ticked into the gloom,  
A drip of wax trickled through  
To mark the dark hours passing.

### **TOMORROW'S A DAY**

[2.54am, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Glasgow]

Tomorrow's a day and a half behind!  
Question each hour to find lost time!  
Forward the workings with all haste!  
Wind up the past to now.

### **A SOBER MAN TALKS TO THE LIVING**

[June 1990, Glasgow]

McDiarmid, Burns, Morgan, Muir,  
I cannae talk with youse nae mair,  
I'm up tae here wi' pritty wurd,  
Youse auld boys must move owr,  
Gie the living life again,  
Let Scotland's gobs wance mair roar.

### **THE NEW GLASGOW FAIR**

[15th July 1990, Glasgow Green]

O Yea, you old fashioned fair,  
back now to haunt the new,  
try as we might to dance,  
we sing the same old tune -  
puppets beat the children,  
clowns play the fool.

### **THE FOSSIL GARDEN**

For Germana

[11.50pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1990, Glasgow]

In the fossil garden, I thought of you -  
You whose perfume fills my heart,  
You whose fragrance lingers fast,

You who has me in your grasp,  
Till I am crushed and spent aside.

### **IF EVER LIFE**

[12am, 3rd August 1990, Glasgow]

If ever life were less confusing -  
If ever love were less a losing -  
If ever fame were less elusive -  
I would be less choosy.

If I had all I'd be contented -  
If I had nought I'd be without -  
If I had something in between -  
I'd only be part right.

### **OUT OF THE FUTURE**

[10.39pm, 15th August 1990, Glasgow]

Out of the future-winter came  
Rain on the roof of human decay,  
Love running down the gaping drain  
On a night mid-August in Scotland.

Where in eternity will faith enter,  
Hope in form of happiness arrive?  
Out of the wet when will need falter  
And not be turned down again.

### **NANCY NOBODY (song)**

[10th September 1990, Glasgow]

Nancy Nobody was going somewhere,  
Everywhere she went - people stared.  
She was held back by Tom's and Dick's;  
She was held back by all sorts of pricks;  
She was hassled by the weird and the sick;  
Nancy was a nice girl at heart.

Nancy Nobody went cheerfully to church,  
There she was safe from all the nurds;  
There she could hid behind holy words;  
There she could feel she belonged to God  
Until she discovered God was a man!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Nancy gave religion the shove.

Nancy Nobody cared for her country,  
She was patriotic to her undies and bra;  
She was true blue and honoured the Queen;  
She respected the police, justice and all;  
Until the appearance of the horrible  
witch!  
Nancy couldn't stomach the bitch.

Nancy Nobody was trying her best  
To buy a flat in the trendy West-end -  
Rents were too high - she wasn't dejected;  
Her earnings were half of what was  
expected;  
She wasn't a liar - she was just selective  
And coy when asked awkward questions.

Now Nancy Nobody's living somewhere,  
Everyone wonders how she got there -  
She has everything a nice girl needs;  
She has it all without the greed -  
Nancy Nobody will not go to seed!  
Nancy's a girl born to succeed.

### DOWN IN THE BASEMENT

[2.43am, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990, Athole Grdns,  
Glasgow]

Down in the basement  
The window facing south  
Trees as a morning view  
Voices of children going to school,  
Leaves on the pavement,  
The traveller home from abroad.

Across in the gardens  
Behind the old pailings,  
Cascading seclusion -  
Voices coax a kite into flight.  
Air stiff with a frost,  
Not a leak on the tops  
I'm lost in the wild.

### IN THE CHILL OF NOVEMBER

[12.14am, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1990, Glasgow]

We sat alone in the chill of November  
We talked of things that we could  
remember,  
And when we forgot why we had argued  
We couldn't recall why we had parted.

We kissed in the dark - it was romantic,  
We looked to the future across the  
Atlantic,  
And when we returned both broken  
hearted,  
We couldn't resolve why we were angry.

Entwined we stretched out across the  
mattress,  
We touched the edge of our own  
circumference;  
And when we dressed, we were strangers -  
We grew cold, then you departed.

### AS THE END IS BEGUN

[1am, St.Andrews's Day, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 1990,  
Banchory]

In bed in a daze brought out by pleasure,  
Lost in the waves of evening and winter;  
Embracing the play of time in the hours;  
Who would trade life for another's?  
Who would fade and not be a stranger?  
Who would crave that which is possible?

Into the depths of night we journey -  
On through a tunnel to emerge for  
eternity,  
Sleep for posterity, and dream for  
tomorrow;  
Scream for the past, and laugh at the  
horror.  
Who would go forward knowing the  
outcome?  
Who would begin as the end is begun?

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **KNAPPACH (BANCHORY)**

[1.04am, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1990, Glasgow]

Four on the floor before the fire,  
Exploding coal atop Scots pine.  
Where went the hours of the full-moon  
night,  
An hour's walk from a Deeside town.

Whistle down the wind without return,  
Fleeting flames - December turns  
Rooks on currents that seabirds sail  
On the tail of an Indian autumn.

### **MARCH IN THE NIGHT**

[3.14am, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1990, Glasgow]

March in the night, my best friends -  
File through everything old age brings.  
Look back in anger at bad luck,  
Curse the fleeing of youth and love;  
Find no beginning in goings -wrong,  
Search for the key to unlock it all.

March in the night, thunder, rail!  
Unravelling questions unanswered remain;  
Lost is a scene never explained;  
Perdu is all gossip lacking detail;  
Request an audience with my past,  
Travel the distance, march, march,march!

### **LONELY PEOPLE**

[12.32am, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1990, Glasgow]

Hey! All you lonely people,  
I've been there too -  
Nights in the rain alone,  
Dinner on the stove for one,  
All in bed on my own  
Before twelve o'clock.

I've been there more than once,  
Its not fun, not at all -  
Coming home, empty flat,

Feeding coins into slots,  
Watching tv close to dawn.  
Still breathing - I carry on.

### **THE WAY WILL OUT**

[2.14am, Christmas Eve 1990, Glasgow]

The way will out when there's a will  
To succeed beyond the dreams of others;  
Fantasy exists in the slumbering's of  
hoppers;  
Reality comes to those who are workers;  
Gambling is for those used to losing,  
Sure-bets come to those used to choosing;  
Don't say that wealth is not for you -  
Happiness is now, not in heaven!

### **THEY'VE HAD THEIR LOT**

[1.54am, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1990, Glasgow]

Beyond, between, there is a view  
I cannot see, cannot hear,  
Something which you sense or feel,  
Not something they can use.

I wish I could work it out,  
I dream that we share - that thing;  
I hope you get my gist,  
And don't ignore my drift.

For I cannot say more than this,  
We must not think less of it,  
You will not carry on unheard,  
Or they will think it strange.

Still - within a drumbeat pounds,  
Outside we think that all is sound,  
Beyond you bobs to the swell  
All they make from the tide.

I pray you understand my thought,  
Bent, we make time of nought;  
You wait - all will be revealed.  
They have had their lot.

LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

**NEW YEAR, NINETEEN NINETY ONE**

[6.30am, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1991, Glasgow]

Six a.m. on New Year's Day,  
Full moon one hour from the west,  
Six full swings from Uni-tower  
This side of the Kelvindale.

## THE WANDERER - 2

### THE SECOND JOURNEY OF THE WANDERER

[Composed 1st Feb 1991 - 13th Jan 1992]

*It is 1991, the same night the Allies invade Iraq that the Narrator, sequestered in his bohemian hovel in the west end of Glasgow is visited by the Wanderer. Against the backdrop of the world news, the Narrator hears about the his childhood friend's second journey to Europe when he was eighteen.*

### THE GULF

It was the night the Allies bombed,  
massacred a ten-mile column -  
January was all but gone  
and February all but come;  
ground frost made the evening cold  
for war! war! war!

There is no escaping blame -  
wells pouring flames and smog;  
treatment plants clogged with oil;  
all in the name of God!

Will we forget those bloody hours!  
those bloody weeks, those bloody  
months!  
those bloody deaths without count!  
those bloody wasted lives!

Is it dharma brings about  
slaughter to cleanse our guilt?  
Is it greed that leaves us nowt  
but blood on the butcher's knife?

Each answer given prompts a question:  
each question asked meets with silence.

Career the wild on to war!  
Push the weak to stop them short!

### SCOTLAND

NARR: I, meanwhile, in Scotland,  
relaxed by the fire reading Crawford,  
kept warm by North Sea gas  
I thought of my oil-rig days -  
the wild howling winter gales,  
the ninety foot wrecking waves.

Snow fell that evening. Perplexed,  
I set-out for the Wanderer's.  
I had been to see his mother,  
a woman of retirement age,  
she had told me of his place  
on the slopes of Dowan Hill -  
basement bed-sit, dark and damp,  
the type of room students take  
in over-crowded terraced streets  
let to Scots by prosperous Greeks.

I found myself at Atholl Gardens,  
wet and dreary from the trudge;  
I climbed the icy-sandstone steps  
and pulled on a big brass bell -  
behind me on Gilmorehill  
the college clock chimed half-ten.

A student came to the door,  
I enquired about my friend -  
invited in, she led the way  
through the house, down stone-stairs,  
to the right, along a hall,  
the smell of dampness pungent, strong  
until we came to a door  
the scent of incense masking mould;  
the student smiled, wished me well  
and left me there all alone.

I put my knuckle to the wood,  
tapped as lightly as I could;  
I chapped again, silence reigned,

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then came a muffled cough,  
but no-one came to the door -  
I waited some minutes more,  
turned the knob, entered slowly,  
and there! sitting on the floor  
limbs crossed, in a trance,  
mind non-conscious to the now,  
his back to an old gas-fire  
the tell-tale signs of simple life  
effused in the subdued light

The Wanderer!

I could hear a sitar dancing  
with a tavla in a rag.  
Oh church of Scotland kirk men cry!  
Krishna lives! Christ has died!

What place had my faith there  
in that dim-lit heathen room?  
I had intruded on his prayers,  
I tried to turn and get away  
but I stood there just the same  
to spy and gape and stare.

I had not seen such a place,  
not since my student days,  
that which comes out the past  
some call fashion, some call art,  
candle in a Buckfast bottle,  
incense ash on the rug.

I was older than I thought,  
I tip-toed to the wee recess,  
I put the kettle on to boil,  
a ritual no-one minds at all.

The Wanderer came out of his trance,  
saw me, smiled, rose and coughed,  
pulled the curtains in one draw  
"Earl Grey, Robert. One's enough."

He was older than he thought,  
we talked about by-gone times,

we had no common present,  
we made a present from the past.

"And Chrissie Campbell?" he asked me,  
"Where is she - about or not?"  
I replied "We're divorced -  
I love her though we've lost touch."

"And Jilly Hickman?" he inquired  
"Lorrie Irvine? And Jean Love?  
"Ruth Young? And Lyndsay Rourke?  
"And Dorothy from the Tennis Club?"

We drank our tea, and chatted on  
about the girls at school we'd known,  
about our wait to be eighteen  
and what we did to look much older.

WAND: It was the wait that done me in,  
made me idle, made me a dosser.  
After Venice, you might remember,  
I worked with you at the Bank of  
Scotland,  
six months of short-hair, tie and suit,  
saved nine pounds, spent three a week.

I'd got my place at university,  
An English one, I felt good,  
I couldn't wait until September,  
the bank-job was such a boob,  
I wish I'd done something else,  
I was such a stupid fool."

NARR: And so began a lengthy tale,  
which in part I will retell -  
about the Wanderer's second trip  
which in all took sixteen weeks,  
which led barefoot to Istanbul  
and changed his life for good.

### ENGLAND

WAND:"The Ides of May, my eighteenth  
year,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

with ninety pounds, I set off  
down the A1 in a pick-up  
in the back with two Yanks.

Eight that night dropped in Brixton,  
I walked south to Blackheath,  
I got a ride with Mister Quine  
who thought I was his long lost son.

He let me stay the night in Bekesbourne  
in his Jacobean home,  
I had never seen such wealth,  
oak beams and Persian carpets,  
leather uppers, crystal cabs,  
paintings older than the house.

Mister and Missus Q were very nice,  
they were lately from Mauritius -  
diplomatic service - ambassador she said,  
home at last from foreign climes.

Oh what I'd give now to live  
in quiet Kentish countyside!

Orange juice, toast and eggs,  
Mister Q wrote his address,  
I pledged to drop him a line  
from someplace that he'd like.

That afternoon, down in Dover  
I found my passport stolen!,  
Or lost! I did not know -  
Left in Bekesbourne? Dropped in  
Brixton?  
I spoke with Q on the phone.

I waited til nigh on six,  
the police had nothing to report,  
and with a new passport form,  
and snaps from a photo booth  
I hitched north back to Bekesbourne.

That night I watched T.V. with Dave,  
the son who looked a lot like me,

long-haired, tall and thin -  
Mister Q slept in a chair.

Mister Q drove up to London,  
with Missus Q, me in the back,  
parking close to Petty France,  
we went straight to Clive House,  
and with his diplomatic manner,  
I got a passport - twenty minutes!

Oh Mister Q, my hero forever!  
swore he'd known me all my life.

How different then, eighteen and free,  
from thirty six and going grey -  
Vietnam was raging on -  
I cared, but it was far away.  
It seemed a crazy senseless war,  
unlike the liberation of Kuwait.

No sense is made of human strife  
without some loss of life.

Back to Blackheath - by bus,  
on to Canterbury, beyond and south  
to Dover spilling over cliffs  
forever England to the last.

Who has not crossed by boat  
the silver streak that makes G.B.  
different.

Who has not had a glimpse  
of France in the distance.

### FRANCE - Calais

Eight that night the rain poured down  
as we docked in old Calais;  
two Bangor girls said goodbye,  
a Scottish pusher pushed on by,  
skipping bail for Amsterdam,  
his goods inside his bag.

Stamped and checked beneath the lights

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I asked a couple "Que route Paris?"  
"A Paris?" .... "Oui, soi Ecosses."  
They took me in for the night.

They were Chris et Marie,  
they made an omelette thick with cheese,  
oozing with fresh young brie,  
something odd and new to me.

On the stroke of half-past-nine,  
tucked in bed, hot-bottle too,  
I awoke eight next morn  
to Calais shaking off the world  
invading it from dawn to dawn.

NARR: Carried by the Wanderer's words,  
I saw myself rising out of bed  
I gazed out that French window,  
the May rain came on again,  
cherry blossom fluttered down,  
narcissus drooped beneath broad elm,  
magnolia buds opened up  
to bleed their sweet scented musk;  
a thrush emerged from a hedge  
that edged a walled-in back.

I love beauty, art and good,  
distaste all that's evil, bad,  
all that which corrupts a child  
or turns the tender hard -

I am a man reading books  
who's turned his back on the world.  
How can I assess the words  
of my friend - so vastly miled?  
How can I doubt his encounters  
when my own are so short?

Taking refuge in my garden,  
weekends and evenings in the soil,  
I bury my hands in memories  
and let time pass, as uninvolved  
with all but my own thoughts,  
I dream of being by the Taj Mahal,

or on the steps of Macchu Picchu  
above the lost Inca world.

Such romantic thoughts are the norm  
of those, like I, meant to die  
where they are born, like a flower  
root-bound in a pot.

These days, I am in bloom,  
open to the night stars,  
open to the morning dew,  
wind and water, sun and earth.  
I am one with nature and myself:  
until I am taken from my world  
by the words of a friend;  
a friend not tied to homely things,  
a friend long lost to wandering.

WAND: What did I find, or indeed  
did I seek from the nomad's life?  
End to end the countries stretch,  
end to end, until back they come  
til memories are all but hazed  
by the doubts others have -

For who can say yeah or no  
unless with their own eyes  
they've seen a leper with no nose  
or a dog roasted whole.

I am a man of peace, not war.  
I have gone where tourists go.  
I have been where life is sweet  
and stayed where pleasure grows.

### Paris

In France, then, to be undone  
I left Calais for the world;  
three lifts saw me reach Parea,  
I came upon the Arc D' Triumph.

Down into the bowels of Paris,  
confused by my own bad French,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I made friends with Steve and Pete  
with whom I shared a dorm.

Thirsty that warm May night,  
we bought three two-litre beers,  
gutter-sat, as wide-boys do,  
we drank and watched Paris move.

We drank Stevie's lager too,  
he was too engaged in talk  
with a tall Finnish blonde  
with whom he hadn't a hope at all.

He said he'd like to give her one,  
we just laughed him off,  
we went to our hostel beds,  
I dreamt of girls all night long.

Up at seven, showered and dressed,  
I was off to sunny Spain,  
our football team, the Glasgow Gers  
had reached Cup Winners Cup,  
the final was in Barcelona.  
Up the Gers! Here I come!

Or so I thought at the time,  
odd how life takes strange turns.

Breakfast in the Kellerman Park,  
Steve told me all about Mannheim,  
three days of rock extravagance  
at a village called Germansch.

I may have been a Rangers fan.  
I may have been football daft.  
I even had my Rangers scarf!  
But it was not to be.

Fate steered me then to Rock-an-Roll,  
I was ready for the road,  
no more going to Barcelona,  
but the road to rack and ruin.

I took the Metro to the suburbs,

and hitched with ease on to Meaux,  
half-an-hour - on to La Ferte,  
then minutes late on to Metz.

Metz

Nine o'clock and in Lorraine  
by the Moselle yet again,  
now one year older, wiser too  
I wandered Metz's platzs and rues,  
twice German, French for now,  
I spent two hours touring round.

In the station, washed and clean,  
my long hair normal for that year,  
a traveller bought me two cold beers,  
then left to catch a train. To where?  
I could not say - I left the gare  
to find a park-bed for the night.

A cool May breeze with a bite,  
I perched on a wooden bench  
in my feathered sleeping-bag  
with newsprint round me tight  
to stop me getting sogging wet  
and drenched by morning dew.

I woke at five cold and damp  
and hitched a ride into Deutschland.  
Two French freaks picked me up  
they were driving to the festival.

### GERMANY - Germansch

In Mannheim by nine o'clock,  
we got directions for Germansch.  
Three days of bands had been arranged  
by some G.I's. fresh from Nam -

The Second British Rock Show - man!  
that's what a road-side banner read,  
we waited two hours in a jam  
paid twenty marks at the gate.

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Through a wood to the field -  
I lost the Frenchies in the squash.  
I pitched my tent within sight of  
the biggest stage I'd ever seen.

Remember I was young, naïve,  
a Glasgow boy from the Shaws,  
I wasn't used to seeing culture  
or being close to hippy stuff.

A German boy from somewhere north  
asked if he could crash with me -  
sure thing, love, peace and dope,  
Franz spent three nights at my abode.

Oh life was so simple then,  
an easy life - quick made friends,  
no need to find next month's rent  
or pay off a decade's debts.

I found a place stage-front left  
to listen to the rock-an-roll -  
Max Merritt, Linda Lewis, Quiver,  
Beggars Opera - and Pink Floyd -

flashing lights and zooming rockets  
to the dark side of the moon -  
I dozed off - hitches sickness  
and dragged myself off to sleep.

I rose at ten, took a wash,  
then wandered round the site;  
a seething mass of hair and sweat,  
naked bums in the sun.

The music went on all day long -  
Chicken Shack and Lindisfarne,  
Osibisa, Mungo Jerry,  
Uriah Heep, Rory Gallagher -

The String Band folk, Tom Paxton too,  
Spencer Davis, and many others,  
names past, names forgotten.  
All music is a passing fashion.

In the evening, shy and tired,  
I lay in my tent in thought  
listening to the sound of drums,  
guitars with their Clapton runs,

the smell of hot dogs in the air  
being cooked by Frankfurt freaks  
who gave me some hund to chew  
before I fell asleep.

Next day I rose at ten again,  
washed as the day before  
at a small slow flowing stream  
in a clearing in the woods -

me and a hundred other dudes.  
And there - while half-dressed,  
besides me, almost in the nude  
was Pinky, a peach from New York,

long dark hair and slightly plump,  
but formed in such female ways  
she made my boy's heart thump.  
She was all of twenty-two,

and as the stream ran-off her skin,  
I saw how dark she was, and firm -  
She eyed me with her charming looks,  
and soon she had me in her arms.

That quick? No, I lie ....  
it took all day to get that far:

We spent the afternoon with Sandy,  
Pinky's boring Queens companion;  
we smoked the hash the G.I's passed us,  
and sat and ate their army rations.

A sergeant with a headband on,  
and his platoon ex-Nam pals,  
had a hash connection chain  
that went Kabul-Saigon-Weisbaden.

Stoned, we missed Humble Pie,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

the Riders of the Purple Sage,  
Wishbone Ash, The Kinks .... The Doors  
who didn't show with Country Joe.

But as the night finally fell,  
Pinky came back with me,  
we got to touch and kiss and play  
before the drugs did us in.

Pinky helped me pack next day,  
no fond farewells, no sweet adieus.  
I said I'd meet her in Karlsruhe,  
and sure enough, we rendezvoused –

She was distant, cold, withdrawn;  
she said we were two different folk  
with very different needs and wants.  
But what use now are memories –

when in business I find myself at war  
with my office landlord - Harry Singh,  
small time garage owner, who thinks -  
an old cow shed's prime space in the  
West-End.

What a joke! Four months I went  
without a door to my cubby hole,  
no window to the outside world,  
an asbestos roof hiding me from God.

Every nail, every screw - my own hand -  
not a bit of help from miser Singh.  
There every week for his sixty pounds,  
six weeks now I have not paid the rent.

In response, the electricity is cut;  
what use is an office without power?  
I must now call it quits.

NARR: The Wanderer left me in a rush,  
that was the last I saw of him  
for some weeks, when by chance  
I saw him one mid May Sunday  
in Kelvinpark lying in the sun

between bush myrtle and gorse.  
And almost as if no time had passed  
he began where he had left off -

### Southern Germany

WAND: Pinky shunned me in Karlsruhe,  
there and then I quickly learnt  
how hard it was to make firm friends  
with those you meet on the road.

You may be bosom pals one day  
then not recall their names at all.

Still friends, we all went for biers;  
two Yankee boys, the girls and I -  
and after tea we smoked an orange,  
a hashish pipe of hollowed fruit –

before the rain coerced us in  
from the jugenherberge lawn -  
alas, in German youth hostel fashion  
we were all in bed by ten.

As I was on my way to Greece  
I changed my plan to go through Munich,  
Olympic year and full of tourists  
it was no place for me; I missed breakfast  
-

hitched to Stuttgart, then travelled on  
to Ulm in a Coca-Cola truck.  
I struck Kempten, stayed at the hostel  
where I met Mike and sister Doris –

The warden, mistaking her for a boy  
had put her in our small dorm,  
and there, with her clothes shed off,  
blonde, fair skinned and seventeen

the prettiest German thing I'd seen,  
more lovely than the upper Rhine,  
more divine than Reisling wine,  
I discovered she liked me -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But I was shy, reserved and quiet,  
a Shaw's boy to my very quick  
that night at least I was warm  
in that dorm with angel Doris.

In the morn we took frustucke,  
said goodbye, and travelling on  
two lifts later I came to Fussen,  
crossed the frontier post by foot.

### AUSTRIA

Two German girls - Heidi and Rene  
swept me up in their beetle,  
carried me forth to Heiterwang,  
Lermoos and over high Fern Pass;

down through Telfs, Zirl and Innsbruck  
to climb again the Brenner Pass,  
through the checkpoint into Italy  
on the south side of the Rhuetic Alps.

The beetle coasted down to Brixen  
and beyond the turning east ...

NARR: The Wanderer went on and on,  
but by this time I was thinking  
'Where was I when he was there?'  
and then it all came back to me -

I'd been on the Campsie Fells  
with my girl whose mother had died  
the day before aged forty five.

It had been a warm Spring evening  
the waters in the burn were clear,  
we saw the sky in the pools  
and talked of swimming there some day,

but not that night late in May,  
there to take the clean fresh air,  
we walked a mile up Campsie Glen,  
a dead sheep lying by the stream.

Death! My girl, Cindy, quivered  
as up ahead a black crow hovered,  
picked a morsel 'neath it's claw,  
saw us, flew up, circled round,

then settled on a grassy mound  
and gazed at us, sideward glanced,  
then foraged in the wild morass  
as we approached it from below

it swooped up, circled round us slow  
and watched us as we turned to go  
down across the Campsie knolls,  
the dark eyed creature hovering low,

we, three souls, all alone.  
Re-incarnation touched our every  
thought,  
Cindy talked of spirits freed,  
of cremation, and a need for God.

As the Wanderer in Yugoslavia  
passed through Lubliana and Zagreb,  
we lamented the loss of her mother.

We walked through the blue bells  
near the Forth and Clyde canal -  
off its tow-paths of matted reed,  
we cried in an aspen wood -

We were eighteen in lowland Scotland  
while my friend was on his way to Greece.

### YUGOSLAVIA - Serbia

And as he recalled his won past,  
I ignored his trivial passings by train  
through Beograd, and south to Skopje  
where he had become shadowed -

by Findlay - a boy from Kilmarnock!

Was it fact that we had once been  
the closest of childhood friends -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

biking through the Pollok woods  
or hanging over Cartcraigs bridge

that spanned the Glasgow-London line  
spotting trains and looking up  
our Allen books to underline  
Robin Hood or Princess Caroline.

The days of steam! We were happy then,  
racing up the Greenknowe road  
to the cows fields that overlooked  
sleepy Pollokshaws and the Kirky Hill

with its wild plum trees, now concrete  
little boxes served by orange buses.  
Childhood days on Shuggies milk-float  
along the Auldhouse road to the dairy

where Davie MacMillan's dad's garage  
was a place that smelt of grease,  
where tyres could be rolled down the road  
and lobbed into the Auldhouse burn.

We had no cares, but if I had known  
my friend would spend his adult years  
travelling to discover what? Himself?  
and leave me behind to struggle

and to carry on day to day with existence  
amongst those also, likewise bound,  
who do not know what it's like to leave  
home behind - then, be damned!

Suddenly I was aware of silence -  
The Wanderer stared at me intently;  
I felt that my mind was being read.

WAND: Don't despair. No place  
is more sacred to me than home.  
This you will discover if you listen  
to the tales I have to tell of towns –

where no man would wish to live  
unless it was the place of his birth.

For now, I will not name such places,  
for when I was eighteen, optimistic,  
I did not wish to spoil too soon  
my belief that I was pure and uncorrupted.

But travelling changes a boy -  
the world must make him a man  
or he has no purpose for the world.  
How I resisted! I was a Spartan!

Strong willed, I slept where I could,  
Hardy made, I ate what there was.  
I had no thoughts for home -  
I was looking forward all the time.

I lived for tomorrow! Not the present.  
Ahead! That is where I lay in wait  
for my own arrival. My dreams  
were of distant lands, their treasures –

the secret monuments of men,  
the mysterious mountains of nature.

I was glad to leave behind  
the repetition of life in Glasgow -  
There on that second journey,  
I encountered something I had not;

evidence of a world that was hostile -  
Serb, Croat and Montenegrin,  
Macedonian and Bosnian  
Slavs living Tito-ised as one.

I was in Belgrade barely an hour,  
at midnight aboard the Orient Express,  
at the rear in a second class carriage  
with Findlay I'd met at Zagreb station.

Along with two Kiwi's - Gale and Carol -  
we'd been with Croat musicians  
eager to learn John Lennon's songs  
to busk on the streets of the world.

They put us up in their rented home,

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we smoked from a bong, as hippies did,  
until the church bells of a Zagreb morn

brought up the Sunday dawn.

Four in the morning we halted in Nis,  
the Orient Express sped on to Bulgaria,  
we recoupled, chugged out of Serbia  
and into the wine lands of old Macedonia.

### **Macedonia**

There was no time for breakfast in  
Skopje,  
Findlay went hitching with two guys from  
Brum,  
I hiked for two hours, left them behind,  
trekked six more miles onwards to Greece  
—

Three Ozzies stopped, took me to  
Thessy,  
I booked a bed in a room with a balcony,  
re-met Findlay boring an Albertan,  
who skinned up and gave us a puff.

NARR: The Wanderer rambled on about  
hashish,  
I yawned, and thought about sex -  
I gazed over at his bedside clock  
which stood on his Mockintosh desk.

Heavens! if only it was original Tosh,  
a work by Glasgow's Jesus of Art -  
He, who had a penniless end,  
is priceless now he's dead.

### **GREECE**

WAND: I sold blood in Thesalonika.  
Do you think I'm not aware,  
that you are bored by my talk?

Perhaps you don't want to hear

that I was too young to sell blood,  
or that night, on a bar verandah  
I watched Ajax beat Inter Milan.

Football, you ask - the European Cup,  
who has interest in such things?  
Not those who's life is art -  
not those who's hands are soft –

But let me tell you what I know,  
football is the common man's art,  
not the Parthenon on Acropolis Hill,  
nor bronze Poseidon on display!

Art is posters of guys like Gazza,  
magazines with strikers on their covers.  
Art is not the national costume,  
the tourist gifts and homemade trinkets –

I saw when I arrived in Athens  
down on the stalls of the Plaka.

Eighteen then, thirty seven now,  
I had only thoughts for the Aegean  
islands.

Findlay was whinging in my ear,  
chasing me round Omonia like a flea,

I liked him well, he was a Scot,  
but he was from Kilmarnock after all,  
and there we were - in sunny Greece -  
the time had come to go our ways.

I took the subway for Piraeus,  
and met a Tahoe boy onboard,  
his name was Henry French the Third,  
a Nevada lake boy going on twenty one.

### **Mykonos**

We took a ship for Mykonos,  
seven pleasant hours passed on deck,  
we palled up with a Gail and Sue  
though I was pure and virtuous still

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

despite attempts with Dot, a Hutchie girl  
who I had met by the cricket ground.  
Dressed in whites, she should have been  
on the courts of Poloc Tennis Club –

instead, her racquet behind a bush,  
we rolled in the grass by Pollok House.

She was such a proper spoken girl  
castled in a mansion in High Shawlands,  
we met several times without friends,  
and hand in hand, we styled the fence,

to be amongst the Hielan' cattle herd.  
Wary, their piles of dung, we climbed  
the old stone dyke beyond, and made  
our way through private grounds

to where the ancient beech tree stands  
on a massive mound of earth -  
made by the tree itself it's said  
eight hundred years of leaves being shed.

We carved our names into the bark  
and through the blubell copse of birch  
we came unto the garden path  
that led us past the honeysuckle

and on beneath the rhododendron,  
so thick - the petals fell on us  
like winter snow on Cairngorm.  
And on we went beneath the willow,

copper beech, scarlet maple -  
hedgerow bound on either side  
at last we came upon our spot  
sheltered by a garden wall

beyond which fell sandstone steps  
topped by nymphish statuettes.  
There, secluded, not a sound  
would penetrate our secret lair -

perhaps a blackbird would pip,

a robin would lightly ribble,  
but Dot and I, just sweet fifteen  
had no time for the birds.

One hand upon her tennis blouse,  
one against her pearl skin,  
her fingers on my blue jeans,  
five others lost in my hair,

we touched, kissed, lingered there  
her eyes closed while I stared,  
her eyes open, mine now closed  
I trekked my hand beneath her blouse

soon to climb her little mounds  
while she descended mine.  
Then our youth would spoil things,  
embarrassed by our own desires,

panic forced us oft apart  
to talk about our adult acts  
till soon the guilt of being alone  
in the woods of Pollok Park

would make us both insecure,  
unsure if we should pursue  
our trysts beyond that hour -  
our youth in its finest flower.

O Dot Fleming! tall and blonde!  
we showed each other what we had,  
but we knew from the very start  
that love was never in our charts,

and thus annoyed, we disagreed  
and argued as we left the trees  
fell silent through the field of dung  
'til parted at the Tennis Club.

And after that we met but once  
at Shawlands Church on Christmas Eve,  
you coyly smiled, looked away  
as your friends nudged and winked,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

our friendship well at its end,  
our reputations made by then,  
we were older than the rest,  
but hungrier in our youthfulness.

Three summers later, there, aboard  
a ship out on the blue Aegean,  
I conversed with Gail and Sue  
with the hope of union.

The barren Cyclades to the south,  
the cliffs of Paros within sight,  
we rounded Thermia, slid past Seriphos,  
and rugged Naxos by her brother's side –

We came upon the Golden Isle.  
Delos! isle where Apollo dwelt  
to be adorned by Mykonos men.  
Where men are boys, boys are toys.

There - on that isle of Delos,  
long robed Ionians once gathered  
to dance and praise Apollo  
on the soil of his godbirth -

tyrant Pisistratus, chronicler of Homer  
had purified the sacred earth  
removing the lesser mortals buried  
to the island's sandy edges.

Such a place is a robin's cry  
removed from the weeping daisies  
and the sighing of beech and sycamore  
by Crookston Castle's remains

where Mary Stuart fled Langside  
through the Shaws and Pollok trees,  
through the dark of Crookston Wood,  
to harbour in the Maxwell keep.

NARR: There now, the Wanderer told me  
that he had moved to the suburbs,  
left his seedy West-End room  
to live life as others do - in Crookston

with a girl, all but half his age,  
in a three room reconned flat,  
hot water, carpets, car bay, grass  
out front, grass out back.

How time takes care of things.  
It makes the poor think their rich.

WAND: Ten nights I spent in Mykonos.  
At first we slept on Bruce's beach,  
the west-bay sands outside town -  
with Tahoe Henry as my pal –

we watched U.S. Navy ships  
anchor half-a-mile off shore.

In droves came these navy boys  
from their nuclear warhead hulks  
with grilled steak and burger pats  
they barbequed on the sand.

They partied all afternoon  
and left us with so much food  
we took twenty hippy folk  
to eat with us at Spiro's –

a taverna on the rocky shore  
below the west bay windmill.  
Who knows or cares to visit places  
to see them as I saw them so;

few would recognise my world  
and fewer still would go  
to many of the towns I've found  
off the track tourists trek.

Not Mykonos! The Windmill Isle  
where pelicans are sacred birds,  
where life is made from the sea,  
fish, and squid, and lobster claw,

where Apollo's sons gaily dressed  
hand in hand walk bare-chested,  
where old men sit playing cards

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

sipping ouzo by the glass,

while the women make baclava  
and children ride donkey-back  
along the dusty vineyard tracks.

Idyllic Greece in fascist times!  
The Junta ruled with heavy hand,  
no-one spoke with foreign folk  
unless a stranger spoke out first -  
plain clothed police checked passports  
and spies hung on every word.

Too young to fully understand,  
I was a happy tourist lad -

Eighteen and free of all commitment,  
I shared my tent with Tahoe Henry,  
and Gail and Sue from Houston, Texas.

Gail's eyes were iridescent blue,  
sparkly like a Transvaal diamond,  
yet something was amiss with her,  
as if there was no mind attached .

I have seen that look in others,  
that glazed-eye stare they have  
in common with a salmon.

Beware, you boys, of such women!  
You may pour out all your love  
to find a sieve-like bottom -  
You may empty out your soul  
and never fill the chasm -

that void between Timbuktu  
and the shores of the Sahara

The girls went B and B,  
two wild boys, they'd had enough,  
we brushed our teeth in the waves,  
wished them bon voyage!

I lay on the beach and talked

to B.C. Glenn, Ash and Steve -  
while Henry slept, Sue arrived  
to see how we'd survived -

That evening we met the girls  
they took us back to their room -  
we downed four pints of white rum,  
Gail, of course, threw up, then swooned.

We left her in, hit the bars,  
slammed the ouzo with a vengeance -  
Henry propositioned Sue,  
she clung to me and shouted 'Rescue!'

Next day, hung over, Henry slept  
'til the girls came on the beach,  
sunned their bones until time  
to meet the tourist policeman.

Policeman? Gail was seeking work!  
Henry and I went slinking off  
for toast, fried eggs, Turkish ,  
but soon the girls caught us up,  
made us eat with them - spaghetti!

Gail had got herself a job  
in a bar, she 'trusted Greeks' -  
That night we ate stuffed egg-plant  
and drank another bottle of rum -  
Sue once more led Henry on,  
Gail spoke of the guy she loved.

On the beach next day they came  
to be with us - they always did.  
We were pissed off, told them so,  
gave them what for, made them go.

That evening we dined alone,  
we climbed the hill to Billy's club  
stayed 'til we were well past bored  
then built a fire on the sands,  
and lo, our lives changed after that.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

While wandering through the narrow streets

I met Lynn, a Glasgow girl,  
we talked a while, met again,  
then made our way to the beach,  
kept a fire until there was no wood.

That night Lynn moved in with me,  
while Henry was out chasing Sue,  
but he came back just as we  
were on the point of being one.

And thus we two, three became,  
three young adults making plans,  
Lets all hike our way to Morocco!  
We bought our tickets for the mainland.

We relished our youth and nerve  
at crossing the length of the Med!

What did I know at eighteen?  
Full of my own esteem -  
God might as well have been in space,  
as within every being that tenth of June –

for soon the Bader Meinhof would kill  
the spirit of the Olympic dream.

NARR: The Wanderer's eyes glazed like  
Gail's,  
he drifted off on some low cloud,  
he was stuck between hell and paradise  
between this and that and Grecian life.

I meanwhile had been working nine to five  
in the Bank of Scotland Ibrox branch  
stamping cheques and licking stamps,  
and inking figures in ledger files,

taking home twelve pound a week  
when a pint of beer was all of ten pee;  
I hated my short hair, shirt and tie,  
and my suit that made me look a pratt.

I worked to live my weekends for Cindy,  
we'd walk on the hills, in the glens,  
Lomond, Glencoe or Aviemore  
or the sandy duned Ayrshire coast,

to the fells of Tay or Killin,  
the Forest of Jed, or Rannoch Moor -  
there we took our wandering souls  
with our pals, or sometimes alone.

But, my friend, that far-flung sage  
counted time by clocking miles -  
a postcard from a Grecian isle  
mentioned distance, food and girls.

There were no insights, inner thoughts  
we average folk daily truck - no  
Who are we? What's life about?  
that those we're close to often sigh.

How life turns full circle like a wheel,  
we find ourselves upon a hill  
viewing change that time has brought  
but which, despite all that's past,  
has left us nought, changed us not.  
We are no different from our youth.

Upon our hill, our native land,  
layers of dwellings upon the old,  
that is all that time has built.

Let them dig and find a church,  
a primary school beneath it all.

All that marks my churchyard now  
is an elm tree - gone the holly,  
or poplar that lined the dyke  
which faced upon the old schoolyard

sunken from a century of children  
playing above the old mine works  
that fuelled the print field looms  
that bleached the old Shaw's fields.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

By church and school ran Maida Street,  
bare twelve feet wide wall to wall,  
across the road, Station West, where  
we would wait for trains to come –

trains that went on south to England  
through the station with a roar,  
or if they stopped, we would peer  
into ill-lit coaches at weary travellers

from other countries, and wave,  
not out of recognition of their  
foreignness,  
but to let them know we existed,  
that we were boys from the Shaws.

On they would go hauled by *Excalibur*,  
or *Lord Clyde*, or the *Queens Own  
Borderers*.

It is from those trains we learned of *Fiji*,  
*Sierra Leone* and *Mauritania* - lands we  
later looked up on the map together,  
the Wanderer and I, thirty years ago.

Scoff not at those who tick off names.  
A name is knowledge, the first seed  
out of which experience grows,  
for without a name, nothing's known.

The railway linked us to the world.  
*Trinidad*, *Aden* or *Singapore* -  
Through Pollokshaws the world roared!

On Maida Street, between church and  
school,  
we crowded up this narrow vestibule,  
squeezed through railings beneath crab  
apple  
to see tiny snowdrops droop their heads –  
we marvelled at such wilderness.

Almost seven, I remember still  
the beauty of that first wild sighting,  
in mid February's luke sunlight

such welcome prelude to the Spring.

And then! tragedy on our young lives,  
a smoggy lunchtime February day,  
Neil Dickson ran across the road.

We never saw our pal again -  
run down by the bus to Ayr.

In the smog his soul remains  
For we were three at that age,  
The Wanderer, myself and Neil;  
In the class we were tops –

except for swotty Leonard G  
who couldn't run or kick a ball.

Neil was the fastest one,  
I was the smartest one,  
the Wanderer the tallest  
and the leader of us all.

After the death of Neil we were lost,  
we hung out with older boys  
like Specky Smith - train spotter  
who was all of ten and a bit!

What a drip! - he tried to bully us,  
but we ganged up, kicked this shins,  
pulled his ears, renamed him "Specky  
Git!"

Then we joined the One Seven O,  
the Life Boy group in our church,  
there we found new things to do.

Most boys were at our school –  
the Hammy Twins, the Hutchie Boys,  
Houston, and a few Home Boys  
in the days before Gillespie arrived.

And those above us - Primary Five -  
Gordie, Fishy, Nivie, Bean,  
and those in lofty Primary Six

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

who taught us knots and discipline.

They made us march two abreast,  
the Wanderer learned to march the best -  
A left-handed, left-footed boy,  
they never broke his natural stride,

so he would lead us round the hall;  
and for eight years he led us on  
through into the Boys Brigade  
and out into our Higher Grades.

And yet despite his leadership,  
his natural flair to lead us all,  
at school I was the teachers' choice  
for prefect and the honour roll.

They knew not of our boy's world,  
or saw the Wanderer as we boys did;  
I got the prizes for my brains,  
but the Wanderer was our champion.

And now years on - at thirty seven  
he sat there greying, thin on top,  
the boy who'd been around the world  
and knew not when to stop.

He spoke with a distant voice  
of leaving Greece and Mykonos.

### Adriatic Sea

WAND: The night boat from Mykonos  
docked six o'clock in Pireaus;  
we took the subway to Omonia,  
wasted time having breakfast -

missed the first train for Patras.

Five hours on the Ionian Express,  
four hours on the Patras docks,  
we set sail on the 'Appia'  
across the dark blue Adriatic -

that I had glimpsed the year before  
from the steps of St. Mark's, Venice.

I washed two weeks from my hair,  
remembered how soft a mattress felt,  
meanwhile my pal Henry, my girl Lynn,  
were getting on far too well.

Morning brought Corfu into view,  
we anchored half a mile outside  
the hidden reefs a million sails  
had lightly skipped in over.

H and L were tete a tete,  
there and then I read the signs,  
I knew not then what I know now  
about how fleeting love can be.

Sometimes love fades away  
'til nothing's left but the grave  
filled with partners long time dead  
who haunt the romance newly laid.

Time and time again they rise,  
lover's cherished, partners dumped  
'til every kiss becomes a cross  
to hang all past lovers on.

Criss-cross they ever onwards come  
every face of every love -  
until the last becomes the first  
and romance and death are one.

### ITALY - The South

We steamed towards the Bari coast,  
starboard Brindisi, we veered to port  
and docked and cleared all controls  
to pass into a shiftless town,

grey, asleep, and like a fool  
I let myself be split from Lynn,  
she hitched on south with Tahoe Henry  
so much for pals upon the road -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I was left to hitch alone.

In Taranto I checked the station  
to see if they were waiting there;  
they had said they'd meet me there  
and I believed their every word.

On the road south-west to Reggio,  
two baccalaureates transported me  
to a beach house in Lido di Cass.  
There we picked up some vino,  
went next door to a villa -  
where three pretty Roman girls  
attended by a hag of a matron  
swooned us with their flirtation  
and graces until the hag grew wary,  
and waved us out into the midnight air.

It was a dream I barely recall.  
Awake at nine, they dropped me off  
on the road that went from Heel to Toe.  
All day I travelled the Sole of Italy,  
five hours to travel thirty kay,  
lunch a half-baked calzone -  
three hours by a Fina station  
before a tanker ride to Crotoné.  
That night, assaulted by mosquitos,  
I slept in a ditch by the road.  
Half-five I rose into the fog,  
packed my stuff, hitched anew  
a trucker slid to a halt,  
took me somewhere near Reggio.  
I hitched on to Giovanni,  
crossed the Straits of Messina.

### Sicily

Sicily looming ever nearer,  
I felt the hairs on my back prickle,  
I fingered the hilt of my hip blade  
and mentally prepared for a fight –

but it was all just silly self-delusion,  
I was frowning, but I began to smile

as I passed through Sicilian farmland  
on the last Palermo train of the night.

In Palermo I dined on the waterfront,  
bread and tomatoes, nothing else,  
I sat legs dangling over the waterbreak,  
industrial, smoggy, and polluted,

I fought to cope with the Etna heat,  
for it was the Ides of June,  
the hottest night I'd ever known,  
the ship for Tunis delayed for a day,

it shimmered in the dockland haze  
though it was dark, the moon was up  
as I stretched out on stony ground  
behind the bright lights of a fair,

but I turned and tossed all night,  
slept and dreamt in fitful fear,  
I clutched my knife in case  
some Sicilian ventured near.

That night was all thick sea air,  
mosquitos darted everywhere,  
night gave to damp cold day  
in old Palermo.

No music in my head -  
no poetry to make it memorable,  
my only thoughts were of moving on,  
across the wide blue Med.

What did I know then! Senseless  
way back - so many years ago,  
eighteen and floating aimless,  
like seaweed wrenched from rock.

How was I to know someday  
that youth was the treasure,  
not the search for some hidden truth  
that only time could unravel.

You out there - listen well!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I have seen the four corners of the world  
but I have never found the edge  
to all that has no whole.

Look! but you will never find  
an answer to it all.

Yet I arose that Palermo day  
hopeful that life would bring  
some joy and laughs as I  
progressed on my way.

My way! How now I laugh  
that I saw my journey then  
as a route from town to town  
in one straight line.

At eighteen - I saw clear,  
my young man's logic made me believe  
that I was right, I was educated  
too much, too quick, too Calvinistic.

I knew nothing of Italians,  
my Latin was no use at all,  
I had to learn to wave my hands,  
move my tongue around new vowels –

I was less learned than a child.  
I wandered down to the quay,  
lodged my rucksack at a kiosk,  
slept awhile by a road,

ate some breakfast - bread and milk,  
returned mid-morn to the quay  
to find pal Henry cuddling Lynn.  
Oh what tales they told me –

about their night in a barn,  
in a haystack with each other  
fending off the farmers brothers  
who wished give Lynn their love.

A likely tale - it made me jealous,  
it made me doubt them as friends;

Lynn with her brown eyes smiling,  
I smiled back, but she knew  
I could see right through their sham -  
She couldn't fool a Glasgow man!

Lynn was from Newton Mearns,  
three miles south of Pollokshaws;  
six months later she would come  
to my parents council home

to tell them she was back for good,  
she had joined the Renfrew Police.  
So much for the hippy life -  
she grew up far too soon.

But there on that Sicilian quay,  
Lynn and I, and Tahoe Henry,  
were still resolved to reach Morocco,  
and we were joined by Brighton Pete  
who'd travelled in from distant Crete.

Now a band, we grew worried,  
we'd be turned away at Tunis.  
Why I said? We're not Hippies,  
we're all under twenty-one.

The ship cast off at six o'clock.  
Concerned that I looked so rough,  
I shaved off my fuzzy beard,  
tied my hair up with a clasp.

I looked tidier in the face,  
despite the jeans and tie-died shirt  
and their four weeks of dirt.  
Oh Southern Mediterranean -

the fresh open sea -  
what now is sea to me!  
Chained to these Northern days  
of mist and sleet and rain.

Where are the years fanned by breeze?  
the scent of brine, the feel of spray,  
an untamed sea in my sight,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

the taste of waves and free?

There are moments in our lives  
when we are free of all mankind,  
when we are on our own and glad  
no-one's there to rein us back.

How many times have I felt so?  
regretted not a single note,  
called the tune and listened not  
to any but my own.

### TUNISIA

Most mornings dreams dissolve,  
and so it was when we arrived  
in Tunis harbour where dolphins swim,  
to discover we were Freaks!

I, and Lynn, and Hen, and Pete,  
and a guy called Jurgen from Koln -  
they would not let us go ashore,  
aboard they kept us under guard.

We were they said 'Filthy Hippies!'  
The captain had to take us back.  
Back to where? No-one cared,  
the ship set course for Sardinia.

I watched astern, Africa fade,  
I vowed one day I would return.  
I have since fulfilled that vow,  
I shall not talk about that now.

### Sardinia

Thus we arrived in Cagliari,  
against design, without plan,  
we disembarked and in disgust  
drowned on Sardinian wine.

Sardinia! Drunk we all agreed  
it was no place for the young.  
I was angry, needed peace,

I opted for return to Greece.

Lynn and Hen and Brighton Pete,  
older, richer, than poor old me  
had set their hearts on Marrakech,  
via Marseilles and coastal Spain.

And thus we finally parted ways.  
I hitched with Jurgen, good enough,  
seven rides took us north,  
we reached Sassari close to dusk.

We kipped out beneath the stars  
in a haystack - it was warm.  
I felt all my worries go,  
I listened to the evening song.

I felt the on-shore breeze come up  
and fan the hay we slumbered on;  
the sea now dark - the sky aglow,  
above - Orion's Belt and Bow;

I slept the best I had in months,  
what I dreamt I can't recall.

Perhaps dreams come, another kind  
that later years bring to light -  
How I had turned my back upon  
the culture that was my life -

Scotland - how proud I was,  
yet restless to see the world  
to find my fortune there - abroad!  
to turn my back upon my home.

And now? matured by that search,  
I discover not by chance  
that which I have so long denied -  
that I am home at last!

Reconciled to live and die  
where I entered from the past,  
I have travelled earthly lands,  
I have come to know of man.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I am ready now to pass,  
let atoms split, let stars be born,  
let new things take shapes unknown,  
let unknown things known become.'

NARR: My friend began to glow with  
light,  
his Eastern ways had spaced him out,  
candles, incense, music, fire,  
had made his brain run wild.

We were back in his basement,  
Ravi Shankar blasting loud.  
I heard no more about the trip  
that left him on Sardinia's shores.

WAND: You think I'm mad, a little  
crazed  
living life as I do -  
what chance have I without profession,  
poverty is an endemic problem!

Do you think it is my choice  
to live life at the bottom?'

NARR: I offered help, but he was proud,  
he said he'd fund his own salvation,  
he'd survived past misfortune,  
his present life was a dawdle.

On this he took out a pipe  
and put some hashish in the bowl;  
he lit the stuff, took a puff,  
then spoke with softer tone.

WAND: Judge not a man by his  
surroundings,  
what you see is not his -  
time destroys all he has,  
all he's gathered soon decays.

All he has acquired or stolen  
when he goes shall have no use,  
but is baggage on his back

as he tramps the heavenly road -

guided by a clever sod  
whose wealth is in his soul.

At eighteen, thinking wealth would come  
I fought off creature comforts,  
for how could I be a man  
if I was over-weak from over-eating

or lazed in baths, avoided exercise?  
Thus, not ready to surrender  
I had to go - see the world!  
I had to go in search of fortune

before I could take a wife,  
have myself a child,  
a boy, a girl, one on the side  
in case of war or accident.

So much of myself unknown,  
I began now on the real sojourn -  
the exploration of my being.  
Who was I? Boy from the Shaws?

The answer was no clearer then -  
we slept late; a cock crowed,  
we left Sassari, hitched to Osila  
ate salami, fruit and dry bread.

Jurgen, in his stilled German manner,  
restless to be on his own  
shrugged his ringleted shoulders  
and lit-out on up the road.

I waited by the kerbside pensive,  
counted out my dwindling cash.  
In Tempio Pusanìa, we met again,  
Jurgen in the back of a Fiat -

I joined him, backbacks on our laps,  
onwards went to Santa Teresa Gallura  
where beyond the Bocche di Bonifacio  
crumbled the white cliffs of Corsica.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We spent the night on the rocks,  
hungry for hot Italian food -  
we met Lynn and Henry in the village,  
where having bought some pizzas -  
we made our way to the beach  
and ran into Brighton Pete.

So once again we were five  
about to depart another island;  
we had a swim in the Bocche;  
I visited the castle ruins –

briefly won by Totila the Goth,  
rewon by Justinian's Belisairus -  
lost five centuries later to Saracens,  
lost again to Pisa, then Genoa.

Who can say how many Princes  
occupied Sardinia before Spain  
gave the isle to Austrian Savoy  
in exchange for the riches of Sicily.

Napoleon freed the isle from Savoy,  
Garibaldi claimed Sardinia for Italy!  
Restored it to Savoy's Victor Emanuel  
by making him first King of Italy.

I felt something of that history  
as I sat by castle Santa Teresa;  
I still see this image now,  
the sun setting on the western Med

and ancient ships slipping by unseen;  
but what did I ken of ghosts then  
as I slept on Sardinian bedrock,  
I was a Jacobin, not a Jacob.

### Corsica

Sixty pence to cross to Bonifacio,  
fifty minutes, cold, but pleasant.  
Jurgen didn't like the town much,  
he hiked out shortly after –

Pete and I, bread and cheese for lunch  
spent the afternoon on the beach,  
a rock quarry doubling as a dump.  
What about Lynn and Henry?

They caught a bus to Ajaccio  
to catch a ship for Valencia;  
Pete - on a tighter budget  
Took the ferry from Bastia.

And I, poorest of them all,  
had to wait for five days  
to take a cheap ship to Livorno.  
Jurgen hung-out with me.

That night, kipping in a field,  
we passed out on the vino.

Midsummer's Day in 'Seventy-Two,  
or Christmas Day in 'Ninety-One -  
I am as I always was -  
journeying on, not yet home.

It is rest I seek from debt,  
favours spent I cannot pay;  
if there is profit from my life,  
I've made no savings from the labour!

In me, there is an echo ringing -  
'Fifty years left to get ahead!'  
A plaque in a crematorium,  
is this to be my only mark?

Then, all is well, I am free  
to live without fame or fortune;  
I will love my fellow man,  
I will not rise above my birth –

I'll be third part commonwealth,  
part God, and part of Earth.

Alas, hitching through Sardinia  
I had no philosophy as such,  
a driver gave me his in French

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

as I sat nibbling some bread.

A lorry took us to Bastia,  
we had sausage, beans for lunch,  
we met Jurgen in the street,  
we all camped out on the beach.

So mundane, but oh so free!  
God watching over me.

NARR: Did you not miss family ties?  
You were gone for seventeen years,  
no Christmas union with your kin,  
none you knew when you were wee?

WAND: I had to break the family bond,  
so I took on foreign ways -

Yet I was always looking in  
like some keeker at a window,  
I was there, but not in spirit,  
dining with a world of strangers;

it was never to my ken;  
Christmas lacked the love of childhood,  
surrounded by those who're dear.  
Not so this year, home for good,

my Auntie Mary licked her lips  
and Cousin George in paper hat  
read aloud the cracker jokes  
while Cousin Nan sucked a bone.

Yet all the while the world whirled,  
we ate and wined to the news  
of Gorbachev's last Kremlin hour  
as Soviet Russia finally died –

the red flag lowered into hell  
and Yeltzin's dream just begun.

Who could have foretold such a thing,  
when I was sleeping on a beach  
waking to the sound of waves,

bananas as the fasting break,  
our bags at a beach cafe  
as Pete left for Marseilles?

Hands in pockets - promenading,  
we watched stripped men beneath the  
palms  
throw their boules, inhale gauloise,  
laugh and joke and swig cognac.

We took some citrones from a park,  
bitter fruit, but we were glad  
of something free in that land;  
we returned to the sands,  
read books till it was dark,  
then lay and watched shooting stars.

At dawn I found Jurgen gone,  
to re-appear with two French loafs,  
a bag of fruit - we ate the lot,  
then I washed beneath a tap.

It was early, it was quiet,  
I brushed my hair free of knots;  
I was young, I was free,  
I didn't care who saw me.

That morning on the beach, bored  
we tried to hitch to Sant Florent.  
It wasn't very far at all - no-one stopped  
so we returned, ate two loafs.

We walked along the harbour wall,  
looked back upon the town and saw  
bonfires on the highest slopes.  
What the hell was going on?

A celebration? I asked a man –  
The Feast of Jean Jacques! Who was that?  
And to this day I do not know  
though I believe he is well known.

Ah well, another day, nothing done,  
more dirty, one more day less young.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Next morning I woke to find  
my rucksack missing from my side.

We searched about, found my clothes  
scattered all about the beach,  
my passport, traveller cheques and maps  
lying with them in the sand!

As for my rucksack, tent and stove,  
my camera, torch, cape and shades,  
my spitfire knife, toothbrush bag?  
Gone the lot! I nearly cried -

The police wrote down the particulars,  
gave me a typed claim certificate -  
and that *c'est ca*, we returned,  
searched some more for my things,

found nothing else that was mine.  
I went to cash a traveller's cheque  
and woe! The pound was going down!  
I cashed a fiver just in time.

I bought an ex-French legion pack  
that set me back thirty francs.  
I sat awhile in the square,  
then I returned to the beach.

I was running out of funds,  
enough to get to Greece - not back.  
I brooded, watched the grey Med lap,  
then Jurgen came, in his hands

a bag of goodies for our lunch -  
bananas, bread, tomatoes, yeah!  
My spirits soared, but later fell;  
I walked the water's edge a while.

We wandered through the town again  
eating bread as we went -  
Another night on the beach,  
this time our packs beneath our heads.

Half-six I rose, washed my jeans,

my t-shirts too, in the sea  
and waiting for these things to dry  
I washed my hair beneath a tap.

It was Sunday, the shops were closed,  
we made do - one loaf each.

The ferry for Livorno came,  
amongst the disembarking folk  
a German hitcher spoke with us,  
then off he went without a wave.

Half nine that night, we gave in,  
the smell of grease luring us;  
we each bought a bag of chips  
and a sandwich with meat in it!

What a splash out! Five francs each!  
All day we'd spent ninety centimes.

### ITALY- The North

At ten next morn we set sail,  
left Corsica and France behind -  
soon Capraga Island rose  
white and cliff-sheer out the blue.

Then, we saw a light aircraft  
circling off the ship's portside,  
and soon we came upon a boat  
drifting in the Genoa tides.

The crew and boat winched aboard,  
the spotter-plane veered to land,  
we docked Livorno high-tea time,  
lost an hour to Italian time.

Because the pound was going under,  
the banks would not cash my cheques.  
I changed six quid with a lender  
who made quite sure I lost out -

I paid off Jurgen what I owed,  
and I was left with just six bob.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Money! How it comes between good friends.

How money makes life a hell!

Jurgen bought my evening meal - two pizzas, pan-e-torte, cider; I bought a loaf and a banana. I was preparing for the morrow

and the road that left Livorno. We walked five kay, parted ways, tired of each other's company - I made it to the autostrada;

a sea-breeze brought some dampness, darkness came, and feeling tired I kipped down by the highway. Oh God - when I woke up -

my face was one mass of lumps - the mossies had done their stuff, my lips were swollen, my eyelids shut; no frog would have kissed such bumps.

No better than a dirty tramp, a priest took pity on my plight. He stopped and took me in his car via Pisa's leaning tower -

He left me outside Lucca town, and on I went to outskirt Florence; four hours by a service station with twenty hitchers - Italians, Germans;

I prayed for clouds to screen my bites as I blistered in the midday sun.

Yankee doddle-dandy day!  
Two G.I's rescued me -  
dropped me off at Padova  
and on I went to Monfalcone.

I walked a bit; bought salami, bread; took a ride for ten kilometres,

then found a lonely spot to sleep just off the Trieste road.

That night I slept really good but paid for it - mosquito food!

### **YUGOSLAVIA - Croatia**

I rose, waited for a while, a lift took me to the border. My last lira spent on bread. I crossed into Yugoslavia -

that part now known as Croatia.

The sterling crisis still full blown no bank would change my traveller cheques, so I hitched on without dinar towards the resort of Rijeka.

I trekked uphill out of town, the Adriatic on my right - towards Karlovac I journeyed. It took till night to reach Zagreb.

I plodded mile after mile to escape Zagreb's lights, but tiredness came upon me quick, I stopped to sleep in a ditch.

### **Serbia**

Next day, hunger gnawing at me, a driver bought me some lunch - another bought me a coke, before a Lebon man picked me up, bought me a coffee every stop.

The windscreen of his car had gone, we got smeared with flies and gnats, and when we got to Belgrade - oh my god! he tried it on!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I told him there and then 'Piss Off',  
I only kissed pretty girls,  
I kept away from guys like him  
with his strange foreign ways.

What'd he take me for I asked?  
My hair was long, I was lithe  
but I was not a nancy man.  
I was an A1 Scottish lad!

Still no money, I couldn't eat,  
no-one wanted Scottish cheques.  
I trudged south towards Nis  
and slept in an urban park.

Woe the tramp who dares to stop;  
dark is no protection from the law.

Half-past four a policeman nudged me,  
told me to be on my way -  
He trailed me through the morning streets  
tailed me down along the sidewalks.

Eventually, tired, I had to stop,  
but with his stick he coaxed me on  
out his patch and well beyond  
and on towards the edge of town.

Tired from too many nights outdoors,  
weak from far too little food,  
I slept on the table of a closed cafe  
until the cleaner shoo'd me on.

I had no rest that morn as the birds  
sang up dawn on the Balkan world.  
Was it fun to be alive?  
I felt fit for nothing but to die.

Seven o'clock work began,  
the shutters of a bank went up.  
I went in, tried my luck  
and sure enough, crisis over –

I changed two pounds into dinars,

bought a loaf, two tubs of paste,  
a pint of milk for twenty pee  
and praised the Lord for manna.

How life can turn on three dimes,  
life once more became a triumph,  
a Dutch pair took me on to Nis,  
I crossed the road, bought a loaf –

and heh, another couple stopped;  
I had refound hippy luck.

Jurgi and his love Marina,  
he - German, she - Italian,  
were into Pink Floyd and the Dead.  
We spent the night at a campsite.

I remember now, how bright the stars  
shone that night south of Nis,  
how content I was with life.  
I had found two fellow souls

who were pleased to share with me  
the simple comforts of the road -  
bread, coffee and free chat  
that views the world for all its worth.

I loved all my time with them,  
I helped them pack away their tent;  
we ate well, hit the road,  
and past Kumanova, we turned off,

went down a dusty road -  
found the church of Saint George.  
What piety it evoked this church,  
the relics enshrined in its walls.

Of all the churches, I believe  
this is the holiest of the lot.  
Don't ask me why. I was touched.  
Religion is about belief after all.

**GREECE**

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We drove to Skopje, ate mousakka,  
crossed into Greece, passed Katerina,  
put up the tent at the coast -  
I slept out beneath the stars!

No dream is sweeter than the one  
forgotten with the rising sun.

Fifty miles short of Athens,  
we parted ways, said goodbye.  
On to Eribus they went,  
I picked up by other friends -

a pleasant Greek and teenage son  
who bought me a mousakka lunch.

### Athens

An hour's walk I reached Omonia,  
I carried on towards the Plaka -  
and first, resting at the bottom,  
I climbed up to the Acropolis.

A young boy spoke with me,  
bought me a pineapple crush;  
all we could speak about was football,  
the universal sport of the world.

I continued up the winding road  
to the stairs of the Pantheon -  
I clambered over the ruined shrine  
and let its history become mine.

At eight they threw me out;  
on the Agora, looking down  
I smoked the hash Jurgi gave me  
and sat content for two hours,

the lights of Athens far below,  
the journey of three weeks over.

Out there in the dark Aegean,  
lay the Mykanos I'd left.  
Since then, I had changed,

I could survive anywhere now;

I was back in sunny Greece.  
I slept on the Acropolis without a care.

### Mykonos

I stayed six weeks on Mykanos,  
on the beach east of town -  
fifty pence a day, I ate eggs,  
soup, spaghetti, and green beans,

drank ouzo, chatted up the girls,  
behaved as any youngster might.

The days passed, the nights went,  
friends were made - Glenn, Klaus,  
friends lost to time - Dave and Jan,  
who cannot be had back- Carl, Darryl,

they were a beginning and an end.

For struggles may rack T blisi,  
fighting may divide Osijek,  
faith may split Beirut  
and people see no end -

end is beginning it is said.

The end came on the glorious twelfth,  
I had all of two pounds left.  
Glenn, Carl, Darryl and I  
said goodbye to Dave and Jan,

and on a stormy Sunday night  
leaving from Saint Stephen's beach -  
a small boat thrashed through the waves,  
wet we stepped aboard the Patras,

and below the stars Homer charted,  
I found a place to sleep on deck.

Though thousands go every month,  
all these years - I've not returned.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Mykanos remains unspoiled,  
and as it was when I was young.

I have no wish to undo life  
by seeing again that lovely isle.

### **The Road to Istanbul**

Athens; I gave blood, got three quid;  
saw Glenn and Darryl off to Crete..  
Carl fronted me five pounds  
as I was going to Istanbul –

he wanted one gold, one silver ring,  
the puzzle types that interlock;  
he was flying out for home,  
a house he rented Bromley Road;

he was just an Aussie bloke  
who had a job by Earls Court.

I walked miles out of Athens,  
my sandal broke just at dusk;  
I had lost my walking boots  
while sleeping on Bastia beach;

now I found my sandal bust  
I was barefoot hitching north.  
I met two French girls and a guy  
and kipped beside them in the dark.

Morning - dirty, hot and hungry,  
I tried hitching with my pals;  
no good came of that -  
three hours on, a Greek took pity

and then a London couple stopped,  
looked at me, my dirty clothes,  
my matted beard, my bare feet,  
and muttered 'Jesus Christ British?'

'What size sneakers do you wear?'  
Threw me out a size ten pair.

Newly shod, one size too big,  
I reached Larisa, got a lift -  
a French couple with two young kids,  
a caravan attached behind,

they left me out near Thessalonika.  
The rest of the way by scooter  
behind a Greek who tooted everyone;  
a hearty meal of rice, green beans,  
then a trek through the centre -

to the road for Istanbul  
where I slept on stony ground.

Next day, five hours in the sun,  
I waited for a ride to come,  
the ride that would take me on  
to where Constantine had sat,

where Justinian's Byzantium  
gave way to Sultan Ahmet's rule,  
then Suliman, then Ottoman,  
had given sway to modern Istanbul.

An English couple, twenty-odd,  
with their trendy hippy look  
took me in their 2CV -  
through what was left of Greece;

we supped on bread, soup and tea,  
and camped off the road in peace.

An early start across the bridge,  
one side blue, the other red,  
the days of fighting not long done,  
the tension of the past alive;

we crossed the frontier pretty quick  
and drove pell-mell on to where  
the roads to Istanbul-Izmir split.  
They went south, I went east;

I have their London address still.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

On I went with some Swiss,  
we arrived at six at the city;  
they mucked about, darkness fell,  
they let me out at a hotel –

the Gungar, near the Pudding Shop  
between the city's two great mosques.

### **TURKEY - Istanbul**

I had a wash, combed my hair,  
descended to the Pudding Shop -  
a place where travellers going east  
talked with those new returned.

With their many tales of woe  
and stories that had all enthralled,  
these travellers bent my young ear  
with scores of Asian city names –

Tehran, Herat, Kabul, Lahore,  
a Canadian with talk of Delhi -  
his friends about Kashmir and Bombay;  
I listened till they grew weary,

the shop lights dimmed, the shutters  
closed;  
I shook their hands - they were heroes!  
They were the knights of the road.

I slept in room one-o-seven,  
in a bed - the first for months,  
but in the morning, hot and bitten,  
I changed my room to the roof –

to have the most splendid view,  
Saint Sophia left, Blue Mosque right,  
and in between the Golden Horn.

I meandered through the Grand Bazaar,  
searching for the gold ring shop;  
dazed for hours in it's maze -  
copper urns on human heads,

donkeys whipped, flies on fruit;  
it all seems so normal now,  
but then - at eighteen, young and green  
I was a naive European -

Time teaches what tales cannot,  
and tales are nowt but idle talk  
until you've seen the lot yourself.

At last I found the factory shop,  
a first floor room up wooden stairs,  
and there in three metres square,  
hunched fifteen boys on three leg stools.

Candles lit the tiny room,  
charcoal smoke filled the lungs,  
the smell of sulphur, silver, gold,  
the tap of hammers, snip of shears,

the grate of files on the ears;  
the look of boys, tired, scared,  
and I amidst the rag-clothed throng,  
a tramp amongst my own kind,

bought from them thirty rings  
for little less than seven pounds,  
one year's wages for a boy -

I returned to the Gungar,  
washed my long flowing hair,  
brushed it dry on the roof  
listening to the muessin's call -

carried over from the Blue Mosque,  
one of Islam's most treasured shrines.

Barefoot I crossed to the mosque  
that Sultan Ahmet built so well;  
I washed my feet at the fountain,  
covered my flesh the Muslim way.

At the door, armed guards stood;  
they turned me back, my feet were dirty;  
I went to the fountain, washed,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

but by the time I'd reached the door  
my feet were dirty once more -  
the guards shook their sticks at me  
and chased me from the sacred door.

That night - a meal of rice and beans,  
simple fare for most Turks,  
I was at the edge of all I knew;  
I'd been wayfaring a hundred days,

there was more to life than being alone;  
in the morning I would turn for home.

Thus began my homeward journey,  
fourteen days of trampish existence;  
south-east edge to north-west fringe,  
four thousand kay across Europa.

It all began six next dawn,  
I bused it to the city walls  
where I hitched for three hours,  
picked up by the Swiss again!

### **TURKEY/GREECE - Macedonia**

At Terkidag, I hitched anew,  
a lorry stopped to load some straw,  
the driver pointed to the back,  
he drove me six kay short of Greece.

A taxi-man took me free of charge  
to the frontier's painted bridge,  
I walked ten kay in the heat,  
and just before onset of dusk

met a Frenchman Athens bound;  
we shared some bread, a little water,  
slept the night in an orchard.

We woke at four to pouring rain;  
the sky had opened, torrents fell;  
I scrambled out my sleeping bag  
and as I did, the downpour stopped!

We slept an hour, then got up,  
dried our bags, picked some plums,  
said goodbye, then split up.  
This is the way it is with bums.

I hitched on to Alexandropolous;  
nine hours passed 'neath blazing sun,  
then a scooter, next a three-wheeler  
took me to Makri five kay further –

where sunset came, and I found sleep  
in a Macedonian field.

Next day turned out a little better,  
some Germans dropped me off in Zanthi;  
three Italians - to Salonika  
and on beyond some twenty kilometres

where I waited till it drew dark.  
I pulled out my sleeping sack  
just as a Swiss-reg beetle stopped  
a Bavarian with the name of Axel –

took me towards the Yugo border,  
but he ran out of petrol.

He waved down a passing car,  
bought some gas to reach the frontier,  
filled her up, and on we pushed  
to a bar near Tito Veles.

We ate meat-bean soup with salad,  
drank black coffee and biscuits,  
put down some shots of slivovich,  
and slept in Axel's car.

### **YUGOSLAVIA - Macedonia**

It pains me now to think back on  
the next few days we were together;  
Axel - wearing contact lenses,  
woke to find his eyes infected;

he could not drive on that day,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

we spent the day in Tito Veles;  
Axel slept, while I more restless  
wandered that Balkan hillside town

that overlooked the Vardar river;  
the hills were dry, the soil poor,  
it's people rustic, dull-clothed, sincere.

### **Kosovo**

Next day, Axel's eyes improved,  
on we drove Skopje, Prizren,  
on through Dakovic to Pec  
and up the Cakar Pass we went.

Forty miles of dirt track road  
though the forests to Murino;  
this region known as Kosova,  
they have their problems with the Serbs;

Albania's mountains to the west,  
past a frontier post we flashed,  
border guard and wilderness,  
on to Andrijevic we sped –

dust and trees and broken road,  
a part of Europe so remote -  
though I have made it not sound so.

### **Montenegro**

At Kolasin we turned south  
on Highway Two for Titograd;  
Tito was alive those days,  
he was the father of the nation –

The Yugoslav federal state  
which in the year ninety-one  
became a war-torn ruined place.

We made Petrovac by dusk,  
we stopped for coffee and some booze;  
drunk, we slept in the car  
above the Adriatic cliffs.

### **Dalmatia**

On we went to Dubrovnik,  
ate salami, bread and honey,  
toured the ancient city walls  
and marvelled at it all –

Here was a city time had loved  
and left intact despite the wars.

Up the Dalmatian coast we drove;  
Split, Rijeka, Trieste - the West!  
We left the East in the wet.  
Stopping once for some tea –  
Vicenza's roughly where we slept.

### **SWITZERLAND - Zurich**

Dawn we travelled on - Milano,  
and sometime in the afternoon  
we reached Axel's cosy flat  
in the heart of modern Zurich.

Oh rejoice! what a trip!  
Four nights, five days on the road.  
Washed and shaved, in clean clothes,  
Axel took me on the town.

I met his friends, told my tales,  
they wondered at my nerve -  
to sleep in fields, live carefree  
when life cost so much these days.

Axel laughed, told them off,  
they were just a bunch of snobs,  
he said they should chuck their jobs  
to be like me - they all agreed!

Three days I spent in Zurich,  
Axel and his friends were warm;  
they treated me as their own;  
they gave me money for my trip –  
northwards home to Scotland.

**GERMANY/BELGUIM/ENGLAND**

Another night outdoors, near Koln,  
next the boat Ostend to Dover;  
I got to London around mid-day,  
found my way to Bromley Road;  
there I gave Carl his rings  
and spent two nights on his floor.

**SCOTLAND**

September First, I hitched home,  
back to grey stone stoic Glasgow;  
my parents were relieved to see me,  
I was a shade near black -  
which came off with a bath;  
and thus I was back.'

NARR: Here, the Wanderer stopped  
the story of his second trip;  
to a point I knew the rest,  
three weeks later he had departed  
for university in England.

The candles had gone out,  
it was late, he showed me out.  
The snow had gone, I was amazed,  
he looked at me with his gaze,  
there was something strange in his face.

I felt as though I'd been bewitched,  
and sure enough, when I got home  
I found a year had passed  
since I had gone to see him.

How this was, I do not know,  
the year was nineteen ninety-two.  
Yet, life is too short to dwell  
on things that take place in the past.

I knew intrigue would have  
me speak with him again.  
When that was to be  
I could not say or guess.

## ESCAPE INTO THE MOUNTAINS

### THE BONNY FALLS

[2.23am, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1991, Glasgow]

Up the Bonny Falls we climbed  
Beyond the slums and the power,  
And on we climbed beyond the linn,  
And on a crag overhead,  
We climbed up through ash and heather,  
Beneath a pine we lay together,  
Rush of fall and words together,  
Sundown raining on forever.

In the bracken, sky and river,  
In the wild, tree and lichen,  
We let the world go down river,  
We let the future fly to heaven,  
Forgiven not, forbidden never,  
In the new moon's silver glimmer  
We worded wishes to the stars,  
And listened to the roaring river.

### DEAD POETS FORM NO SOCIETIES

[March? 1991, Glasgow]

Eliot lies in ashes in Coker yard -  
Betjeman rots not far from Harrow Hill;  
Thomas haunts nightly the shore of  
Swansea Bay; McDiarmid pushes daisies  
where thistles used to be.

### ESCAPE INTO THE MOUNTAINS

[7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Sept 1991, *West Highland Way*,  
*Scotland*]

(I)

Leave the grey city streets,  
leave the office work behind;  
leave the sleepless nights - go!  
Escape into the mountains.

On by bus to the foothills;  
on by foot into the woodlands;  
mile for mile along the footpaths -  
deep into the Highlands.  
On through Mugdock, to Carbeth,  
to the standing stones of Goyach;  
beneath the shadow of Dungoyne -  
hay rounds and dry stone dykes.  
Smell of whiskey, pine and moss,  
through Gartness, near Killearn -  
the Endrich burn bubbling on:  
north - Loch Lomond shimmering.  
Into the trees Drymen fades,  
the forest gobbles all it sees;  
silent, still, the Scots pine squeeze  
the oaks out of existence.  
In Woman's copse - Garadhban,  
storm dead the past is strewn;  
In the hot September sun,  
the hottest Scotland's ever known -  
Dusty leads the Western Way  
dreams and debris blown.  
No fire has pyred the romance yet,  
perhaps one day before too long.

In such heat Strathclyde scorches,  
ground dry like the Gobi waste;  
woodland plants limp and brittle,  
dwarfed blackberries hanging shrivelled.  
Out on the open moorland,  
across the ebbd Kilandan burn,  
on past hikers puffed and blistered,  
on and up steep Conic Hill.  
Aye! the view across such country!  
Ben Lomond snowless to the north,  
Balmaha beneath in oakwood,  
Loch Lomond sail-lite hued.  
Across the water - Alps of Arrochar,  
the Argyll peaks beyond Loch Fyne,  
to the south the knolls of Bute  
just beyond the Renfrew Heights.  
There! - the Clyde, distant, white,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

where Arran's sleeping giant aye rests -  
where Celtic legend outlives life  
in names, beliefs, and rights.  
But there, below on Lomond loch,  
man-made islands, three thousand years;  
the Isle of Old Queens - built upon  
cranogs we'd like to know about.

Our history! know we ourselves?  
Us Celts, our trust is in the past -  
See that rock by the road?  
It's a cyst for the dead.  
Yet, bathers swim in Craigie's waters,  
speedboats brave Inchcailloch channel,  
wind surfers skeet by Arrochymore,  
and flaunt their city manners.  
Have they have been to Mallorca?  
Have they have done Waikiki?  
Have they have sunned in Cancun,  
and lain on Bondai beach?.

Such is the drudge of urban life -  
while sap seeps from a weeping pine,  
silence heals the shed of tears  
in the hollow of Amair.

Glimpse of pasture, grazing land  
along Sallochy's oak wood path,  
tumbling over sheer-drop crags,  
stumbling over fern-crowned rocks.  
Ross Wood, Black Tarn, Rowardenan,  
beyond - respite, human comforts -  
black beer in a hostelry;  
and a broad bed of white linen.

### ( II )

Red Robin sitting on a fence,  
Rowardenan left behind -  
through the trees to Ptamigan Lodge  
then steep down to the lochside.  
Hereabouts Rob Roy roamed,  
his prisoners kept on a crag;  
he was more a nationalist

than any Campbell swine.  
Thus his fame outlives his deeds  
despite being a cattle thief;  
in the Rostan trees he hid  
and lived his secret life.  
He knew Rochoish and Cailness burn,  
the gnarled root way to Inversnaid  
where the Campbells did their worst  
to put the chiel in chains.

And still - something in these woods  
makes the past come alive -  
Loch Lomond lapping on block-rock  
that some ice-age dislodged.  
Until at last - at the Snaid,  
a bridge high above the falls -  
this darksome burn, horseback brown,  
this rollrock highroad roaring down;  
This coop and comb fleeced in foam  
to the loch falling home -  
takes the traveller to the Lodge  
for tea and morning scones.

Tired, yet the legend lures  
the trekker on to Rob Roy's cave,  
a crevice in the fallen rocks  
above the Lomond waves.  
What waves? such calm days  
man-made from speed-ski tows;  
a blonde-haired lassie scooting on  
I Vow Isle's shores.  
And there, watching from the beach  
beneath the Fritihich crags,  
a lone hiker bathes himself -  
his lunch a slab of cheese.

While through the trees the way leads on  
through a cull of fern,  
burns dry to their boulder beds;  
ten days since the heavens bled.  
The wreckless carry on regardless  
along the River Falloch track,  
and on they go for their reward  
to drink from Falloch falls.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Such are the waters from Ben More,  
three thousand feet above - a source  
first a trickle, then a gush,  
then a roar towards Loch Lomond.

Further north - across the river,  
the way meets the Military Road,  
the road that General Wade constructed  
to bring the Southern hordes.  
I will take the Highland cause,  
though I am but a Lowland man,  
to hell with better British life  
the breaking of the clans was wrong.  
Wrong? One wrong made another wrong;  
cruelty in the name of progress.  
Exiled by English law,  
the Highland man exiled the Redskin.  
And on this old military road,  
trekkers now traverse the West,  
on they trudge to rest the night  
in Crainlarich beds.

(III)

Through Herive wood from Crainlarich,  
the morning dew still on the ling;  
munros peaking through the mist:  
skylarks, swifts and swallows.  
Sun breaking out on Fillan glen  
up the strath to Tyndrum's gold -  
If there are other lands like this  
they must be up in heaven.

Down the braes to Fillan's side,  
shallow, clear and flowing south,  
banked by the old lead mines:  
there's gold in Fillan's waters.  
Celtic history is all mounds,  
more ancient ruins oak-tree bound,  
where Saint Fillan, Ferdach's son,  
built his chapel by the burn.  
Five relics of that holy prince,  
five durach held his holy parts;  
Bruce sent for Fillan's arm

on the eve of Bannockburn.  
Thirteen-fourteen hundred years,  
Fill's parts have healed the sick,  
now glass-cased in Edinburgh;  
all that's left of him is, limbs.  
The fate of all famous men  
is to have their parts preserved -  
Westminster kirk or some museum  
how saintly can such action be.  
So onwards - past Fillan's well  
where once the insane were made well,  
until the magic was destroyed  
by throwing a black-bull in.  
Such Scots there shall always be -  
Scots who'd have us all believe  
that doing good is a disease -  
Thank god for old Saint Fill.

Past Auchtertyre, across White Bridge,  
Cononish stream tricking on -  
through the fields of Dalrich  
where McDougall beat the Bruce.  
In the woods of hewn timber,  
along the banks of Crom Allt,  
past the bridge of croft Glengarry  
by lower Tyndrum's walks  
Where Wordsworth walked in a storm,  
crouched on naked rocks rain swollen,  
saw the cloud sequestered heights  
and marvelled at mountain life.  
Still not a town, a village yet,  
big business now is moving in,  
tourism fostered on the back  
of the gold mine boom.

If this is Scotland here and now,  
a Scottish accent hard to find,  
then Scots must ask themselves -  
Can we call Scotland ours?  
What have we lost? Our history?  
Our lochs now lakes? Our bens now  
peaks?  
We are a nation of three kinds -  
Celt, Pict and Anglophile.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Too few can claim Pictish blood;  
Too few wholly Celtic thrive;  
Too many now of Angle tongue  
buying-up and selling.  
Yet, still the munroes tower above,  
impulsing those far below  
to climb into their shrouding clouds,  
wild about them churning.  
Till pangs of nationalism ease,  
the world beneath beyond control -  
the rain lashes down the glen -  
God has no existence then.

And on the trekker treads his way  
along the route by Ben Odhar;  
along a way time has passed  
and left it's scarring mark.  
Dorian shades the whole terrain,  
the larch of Auch to the west,  
Horseshoe Bend across Auch glen  
and the Allt Chonoghlais.  
Dorian's crags roll with scree,  
to crash into the Coire Chailein,  
and climbers with their mutton feet  
descend the leacann side.

And on towards Bridge of Orchy,  
The Clach-a-Ben on its own -  
a rock the size of a house  
in a moor of bleached sheep bone.  
And on, in cold to the clachan,  
Twilight on the western sky,  
no stars out above the bunkhouse;  
rain to come before the dawn.

### (IV)

Mist hanging on the Tulla hills  
of white-beak sedge and clubmoss -  
the smell of myrtle in the air  
by asphodel and sphagnum bog.  
Between Mam Carraigh and Doire Darach,  
the rock-cliff pap and wood of oak,  
down the hill to Inveroran

to a mound goes the road.  
A shot rings out from the woods,  
a gunman stalking his wild prey;  
past the Forest Lodge and up  
towards Black Mount and Little Beag.  
Towards An Torr, then Ben Toiag,  
Wade's old road twists and turns  
until it crests the watershed  
to cross the Rannoch waste.  
Few men have ever made a home  
Though out the world on land like this,  
where in an instant mist is down  
and summer turns to howling gale.  
Deergrass, sundew and tormentil,  
bog pondweed and cladonia spore;  
this is the world of Rannoch Moor  
ringed by rugged bleak munroes.  
To the east - Schiehallion,  
sacred peak of the Pict,  
towers over a small yew wood  
containing Europe's oldest tree.

No trees stand on Rannoch Moor,  
bog, bog, peat, peat, peat;  
water flows in off the hills  
to saturate brooding fen.  
Hence, The Moss and the Ba,  
where Wade bridged its raging burn,  
a few rowan in the lee  
or on the rocky brink.  
And there upon a sheep-gnawed knoll,  
trekkers rest, make their tea  
until the midges drive them on  
towards windswept Chaorach.  
Past Raven Crag and Wailing Knob  
where deer rut in the booru winds,  
where cairns stand for the dead  
that death stalked on the moor.  
And on towards White Corries tow,  
into the valley of Glen Coe,  
into the shadow of Shepherd Mount -  
the black rock face of Etive Mor.  
And those weary of the wild -  
shelter in the Kingshouse Inn

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

until they gather up their strength  
and march towards Ben Beg.

Up the slope of Rocky Hill  
to reach the Cliff of Extent  
down which seeps the Boggy Loch  
from off the Little Ben.  
And once again on Wade's road  
across the West Highland hills,  
snaking up the steep cliff side  
of the Devil's Staircase.  
The way climbs MacMartin's Stob,  
descends towards the Sallow stream,  
rounds the nose of Odhair Beg  
and on towards Loch Leven -  
Down to where the myrtle's tall,  
where rowan's fruit, the heather crawls  
down to where the waterfall  
washes Kinlochleven.

(V)

Is there land like this on Earth -  
Loch Leven in the morning sun,  
birchwood giving out to ash  
beyond old Mamore Lodge.  
The wheatears chatter up the glen  
where Lairig men had their crofts.  
Ruins now - a silent place  
where Lairig stream trickles on.  
What clan of men homed the mor?  
Stob Ben as their high munro -  
where have all the children gone?  
Mamore ridge no longer crossed.  
The house of the mountaineer -  
Ben na Caillach - Old Woman's Hill;  
the Great Pass between the Ranges  
is quiet and deathly still.  
Time moves against those who try  
to tame the land for their needs;  
the ruins of Lairigmor are stones -  
stones once more the glen's.  
And over these stones, trekkers go  
in the burning Highland sun -

they have never known such heat  
in this end summer month.  
Until the Moor of Rowantree Hill  
meets the Loch of Wooden Quern,  
the way in line for Callous Cleft  
beyond the round of Hollow Ridge.  
Down this road fringed by ling,  
down the banks cross-leaf heathed,  
down the way bell-heather lined  
to where the cinquefoil gives.  
And there, above, the highest crest  
Ben Nevis broods with cloudy eye  
as trekkers drop through pine and spruce  
below T uft Pin' and Eagle Peak.  
And there by the banks of Nevis burn,  
the journey ends for the few -  
An Garrison looms tourist bright  
and the seals of Linnie sing -

'You who've trekked the Himalayas!  
You who've climbed the High Alps!  
You who've hiked the Central Andes  
Welcome to Lochaberside!'

And there a hundred miles on -  
and a hundred more after that,  
lies Knoydart, Assynt, the Gaelic Isles  
where few are want to wander far,  
escape their inns for the wild -  
the wide beyond the city grey  
far beyond the Highland Way.

### **THE WORLD FREES BUT WE ARE CAUGHT**

[2.37pm, 18th Sept 1991, Banchory]

There is no quiet, only storm  
And gale where peace was found;  
A place where tranquil calm hung out  
Is but a sphere of violence now.  
For shifting sands and changing tides  
And dunes all drift with time -  
Waters frozen on winter's lakes  
Thaw to turn winter out -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And where silence held supreme  
Chatter echoes through the trees;  
Stillness in the undergrowth  
Stirs awake and loudly breathes.  
Oh where can rest now be sought?  
The world frees - but we are caught.

### LYNDA

[11.26pm, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1991, Glasgow]

Oh sweet gentle sniffing faun,  
Winter comes as Autumn falls  
Into the future no one knows  
Or where or when a cold goes.

We are left with tissue days  
That leave us duvet-sofa bound -  
Ah for perfect summer walks  
And sweat upon our brows.

For now we itch, scratch and flake,  
Our noses stuffed - we are weak,  
We cannot work, we cannot sleep  
And soup is all we eat.

Oh is there some answer to it all?  
Why those we love bug us most.  
A kiss upon a cheek - then woe!  
Their germs strike us low.

Yet we brave a smile and sneeze  
And break a laugh before a wheeze.  
We will not give into the foe!  
We fight until it goes.

And so sweet dear Lindy love,  
Kiss goodbye your sniffs and bugs.  
Greet the world with all your must  
And set about your stuff!

Work!

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

For the Lyons of Hull

[11.30pm, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1991, Glasgow]

I am old beyond my years,  
I've seen time pass me by,  
I've seen many left behind.  
I've seen the road many trek  
Without a look or backward glance –  
Yet here you see, I stand!

Older still I am by years,  
I have lived through war and peace,  
I've gone through famine, feast;  
I have thirsted, I have supped,  
I have praised and I have cursed;  
I am as you see me, thus!

Middle in all things I am,  
Neither one nor other thing –  
I have steered a centre course,  
I'm neither young, nor old,  
Neither small, neither tall,  
I am between and halfway so!

I have all things recent done,  
I live for now, for the present –  
I have no use for the past,  
The future is beyond my grasp;  
I take all things as they come,  
Take me now, as I am!

I am young, bright eyed, fresh,  
I am full of life's full breath –  
Give me sun and wind and rain,  
Give me hills and lashing waves;  
I've no time to waste or lose,  
I am free to pick and choose.

Younger still, I am growing,  
I am sapling, supple, lithe –  
I will bend, I will flex,  
I will make many friends;  
Tomorrow will be better still.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Better that, if you will!

Soon the old will be the new,  
Soon the recent be the past,  
Soon the present will be recent  
Soon the now will be the bye;  
Soon the future will be here –  
There will be the new year come!

### MY NAME IS MARY

[11.59pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 1992, Santa Ponca,  
Mallorca]

I went stand-by to Palma, to buy me a  
beer bar,  
I wanted some sun, sand and air -  
Instead I got lonely, went on the bottle  
And reflected on all my lost years.

Then one night, on a bar stool in Paguera,  
Alone I sat counting my change -  
A voice at my shoulder asked for a vodka  
And I turned to look at her face.

There what I saw I'll always remember  
Was a lady with a suitcase and coat,  
She sat down beside me, lit up a menthol,  
And these were the words that she spoke.

“My name is Mary, I'm alone and I'm  
lonely,  
Do you think I could buy you a drink?  
I've left my husband and kids back in  
England,  
I don't know if I'll see out the dawn.”

We went down to the beach, sat on the  
cold sand  
And spoke of the partners we'd loved.  
After awhile, we went to a hotel  
And took a room for the night.

We lay together sharing a bottle

Until the coming of dawn and the first  
light -  
Then up she got without saying goodbye  
Picked up her case and lit out.

I watched her get into a cab for Palma,  
She looked up, and then she was gone -  
An hour later, I saw a plane pass over  
And recalled the first words she had said.

“My name is Mary, I'm alone and I'm  
lonely,  
Do you think I could buy you a drink?  
I've left my husband and kids back in  
England,  
I don't know if I'll see out the dawn.”

### VALDEMOSSA

[8pm, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1992, Santa Ponca]

Bitter is the olive flesh,  
Tart the orange and sour  
In the terraced fields and groves  
Of Mallorca winter time.

Rotten is the almond nut,  
Dry the black fig fruit,  
Shrivelled the Valdemossa vine  
And pomegranate seed.

Yet never have I seen such  
Sweet melancholic beauty -  
I close my heart and die  
When I think of Glasgow's grey -

Walnut, date, palm, lemon,  
Apricot, rose and elder flower  
Where green oak, carob, pine,  
Poplar, cypress, all entwined.

Varied hues in leafy tangle,  
Perched above the deepest chasm -  
I will chew the olive flesh  
And smell the almond blossom.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### SON MORAGUES

[8.50pm, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1992, Santa Ponca, Mallorca]

Ancient walls, ancient trees,  
Lined ancient roads to ancient ways;  
Almonds in the valley bottom,  
Olives terraced to the sky;  
Mountains rearing into void,  
Tumbling into wild ravines;  
Secret paths, secluded parts,  
Shaded regions beneath ramparts;  
Cellars, tunnels underground,  
Earthy soil, ancient footprints  
Of soldiers long departed.

### SANTA PONSA

[15<sup>th</sup>? January 1992, Santa Ponca, Mallorca]

Who would not winter wisely  
Where wind and wet are winkled,  
Where weather will not wicked be  
Or women need wear wrinkles.

Santa Ponsa - you have rescued me,  
I see the way life should be -  
Not a head of greying hair  
But a life of sand and sea.

Grey city life wears man down,  
Makes him chase the buck -  
Leaves him sleepless every night  
And further into debt.

Money! Root of death, decay,  
Wasted lives led astray -  
He who has - has all the say  
With those who want the same.

In this place, ice-plants droop,  
Date palms hang the squares,  
Eucalyptus line the roads  
And pine tress hem the bay.

### THE LADY IN THE FUR WRAP

[16.24pm, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1992, Pollok House Library South Window, Glasgow]

In a fur wrap by the fire,  
April rains on the green chestnuts,  
Wooden beams masked by casts,  
Bare floorboards worn by hordes.

As they tiptoe through the par terre,  
Through the window bays they pry,  
To see the lady in the wrap,  
The coy Goya of Pollok Park.

She listens to their shaking steps,  
Their creaking flirting with the past,  
Their whispers knowing not what is,  
Claims for this, or that, all false.

Four hundred years of vigil thought  
Of viewing backs from other lands,  
They gather 'neath her sneering gaze,  
They know not who she is or was.

Silence never comes 'till five,  
After which the park owl howls,  
She looks at them, and I at her -  
She'll outlive all of us.

### THE WANDERER - 3

#### THE THIRD JOURNEY OF THE WANDERER

[Composed 6th April 1992 - 20th March 1994]

*The Narrator, taking a walk in a park in which he spent much of his childhood is surprised when The Wanderer emerges from the bushes and greets him. His appearance is changed and there is something in his tone that suggests that all is not well.*

#### SCOTLAND

NARR: Two nights before Election Day,  
I took a walk through Pollok Park,  
saw narcissus 'neath a beech,  
my name carved in it's bark.

Red rhodos edged the path  
that led down to the River Cart  
where crouched beneath cherry blossom  
I watched young anglers cast.

My eye carried to the west  
where grey cloud merged with red;  
I wandered through the par terre;  
paused by the beggar's tree,

then broke upon the Highland cows  
head to head in youthful play;  
heavy drops of April thumped  
upon the fresh hooped clay.

Images from movies, destruction, war,  
Eastern Europe still in turmoil,  
I'd crossed that dung-filled field before,  
the year Armstrong took his leap.

Now, I leant upon the fence,  
a fresh-leaved chestnut overhead,  
one with all, and all forever,  
no winter chill, no winter shiver.

Spring had come, banished winter,  
hither came the songbird quiver,  
I heard the murmurs of the river,  
saw the last hint of a glimmer –

before the evening star's faint glitter.

Then I heard a crack! a break!  
the rustle of a laurel bough;  
in a spin I turned and saw  
a hand, an arm, then a brow,

and with a shock that took my breath,  
the twilight catching his wild eye  
that gave no flicker of surprise -  
there before me stood my friend.

The Wanderer!

His handshake firm, his greeting short,  
we quickly fell into talk;  
he brought me up to date with life -  
he had moved to the Southside.

WAND: I'm living with aging parents,  
sleeping in their small front room;  
I cannot say that I am rich,  
nor say that I am poor –

my mother cooks every meal,  
my father slips me cash.

Times are hard - not just for me,  
it makes me sick to see the gap  
between the have's and those who don't  
bridge the shark-filled gulf.

So I have been to George Square  
with my saltire and my voice  
to fly a flag for our Scotland,  
for common cause and freedom!

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I have been to Calton Hill,  
to meet the six who came from Syke;  
I have clenched fist, raised my arm  
and held aloft a burning brand.

NARR: For what? For who? I asked;  
after all this time a Brit,  
had he awoken from a sleep  
to find himself a nationalist?

He would not look me in the eye,  
and hung his head as if the world  
had passed from others' troubled backs  
to rest on his.

WAND: At last I am for the cause!

NARR: What cause is that? I replied,  
I could not quite grasp his drift –

A cause that frees us from oppression?  
One that redistributes wealth?  
One that makes our children strong?  
One that makes us one with God?

We walked the drive from Pollok House,  
up the slope to Bluebell Wood,  
o'er the brow into the Field  
where now the Burrell broods.

WAND: Man preserves the things he  
makes,  
yet cannot store the cherry blossom,  
nor the harebells, nor himself;  
in my own way, like the rest,  
I keep mementos of the past  
I hope that will survive -  
for memory is a flickering film  
with a live sound track.

NARR: My friend, obscure as ever,  
took me down through Nether Pollok  
and out upon the south by-pass,  
into the Old Swan for a jar.

I bought the drinks, for he was skint  
though he was doing puppet shows  
for kiddies groups - for forty quid  
schools and parties where he could.

### ENGLAND

WAND: I wish I'd stuck with Civil Eng  
and got my degree at the uni -  
but when I quit, I'd had enough;  
seventeen years of education,  
nineteen years, four months old,  
I couldn't wait to see the world.

My tutor said I'd have to change,  
switch to Mining Engineering -  
I said 'No way', I wasn't daft,  
'Two years down the copper mines!  
Get someone else out to Lusaka.  
I'm a Scots boy, not a mug!'

Looking back, I blew big bucks,  
I'd be living high by now -  
but money's not the only thing,  
I made sure I lived while young;  
for all the money in the world  
cannot make youth return.

A drop-out, unemployed. I signed on,  
shared a flat with Barnsley Steve,  
Barnsley Tony, Barnsley Nora,  
ended up with Barnsley Mo.  
I fell in love, I met her parents,  
but she ran off with a sailor.

Renamed Maurice, she had his baby,  
it broke my heart. I needed saving.

Oh transcendental meditation!  
it raised me to another station;  
self awareness, one with one;  
two was a crowd, three a mob;  
Om became a sacred word  
that promised me eternal love.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Soon my troubles blew away  
like balloons in a gale.

It came to me as a vision -  
India - the land of wisdom;  
I would seek my fortune there;  
to hell with the English way,  
for I was not an Oxbridge boy,  
I was a Scot fae the Shaws.

I'd reached lesson thirty three;  
I was earmarked for their ranks,  
they'd booked me for their Zurich class,  
summer season in the Alps -  
a disciple of Lord Krishna.

I quit the Transcendental school,  
forewent the rules of Natural Law;  
they were sorry when I went,  
yet what knew I of yoga life,  
how could I take the path  
leading eastwards to the Alps?

I'd been there! Twice and back!  
on my tod without mishap.

No, I had to find my own way,  
head out East all alone,  
turn cant dreams into knowledge,  
go in search of myself,  
not in search of a guru;  
for many lead, few guide,  
and fewer still get on with life.

Oh Maharishi Mahesh Yoga  
are you to blame for my roving?  
Not at all! I am Scottish!  
I was meant to see the world.

So, eleventh August, seventy-four,  
six months conducting on the buses,  
off I went with Maggie Slack,  
a clippy from the Fenham run,  
hitchhiking south from Low Fell,

standing there with all our gear.

We waited on the old A1,  
ten hours later arrived in London.  
Tubular Bells in Petty France,  
Maggie clipped her long toe-nails;  
We stayed in an M.P's flat -  
James Whyte, the Pollok Labour man;

I read the Anti-Room that night,  
chewed my toothbrush thoughtfully.

### FRANCE

Next day on the Dover Quay,  
with some francs from a bank,  
we put ashore in Calais, France;  
we hiked out, and near Arras  
I took my stinking gutties off  
cast them in a field of corn.

I ripped my shirt off my back,  
I was white, but France was hot.  
Maggie bitched. We walked a lot.

Two days later, Marvejois,  
stuck out on the Massif Central -  
the air was clear, the water fresh,  
but hitching was a nightmare.

Next day, Pezanas, Cote d'Sud,  
Maggie felt like getting drunk.  
What an alky, what a pig,  
she sipped, then took to swigs,  
the vino ran down her lips.  
We spent the night in a ditch.

### SPAIN

Vive Catalonia! Barcelona -  
in those days under Franco's power;  
the city was an army town  
and not a tourist haven.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

On towards Madrid we hitched;  
a truckie stopped, took us west,  
tried to get in Maggie's vest,  
her pants and all the rest,  
but I declined his money.

We had ourselves a room that night,  
Hotel Espana, in old Lerida;  
floors tiled, walls white,  
beds matted, sheets pinstriped;  
Maggie smiled, joked and laughed,  
she was happy, so she said;  
we slept sound till midday.

### Madrid

We reached Madrid, went to stay  
with some Divine Light Mission folks;  
we weren't allowed to drink or smoke,  
eat meat, fish or dairy produce,  
or wash our clothes with washing powder,  
or have sex within their walls.

Sex? As if we would -  
with Ma-Jee watching us?  
He was the Lord omnipotent;  
we were guests at his lodge.  
Oh praise the Maharaji!

I'd heard it said on T.V.,  
he was a dwarf who'd kidnapped God,  
but there was good in Ma-Jee,  
that's why he had such devotees  
who were too good for me.

I little knew ten years later  
his wayward clan would woo my wife,  
whisk her from the family home  
and make her see the Light -

This is another tale itself,  
for in Madrid I was free,  
I could stand back, pick and choose  
what I thought was good for me -

Now much older, Maastricht rules  
my head and chokes my national voice;  
while across the blue divide  
Clinton takes the purple robe.

Time moves on and freedom stales;  
things of conscience get in the way;  
clashes against our rulers rise  
and wither, then remain as pain.

The seasons change, bring forth rain;  
life falls brown on potholed roads;  
those who're rich splash the poor  
and the downtrodden sleep all alone.

Their are no answers in revolutions,  
no happy smiles on history's lips;  
caught in the maelstrom of hurricane time  
we perish to rebirth again.

Travelling in circles, passing through  
hoops,  
You have no answers, nor do I;  
you follow my journey, I shadow yours;  
someday we'll meet down the road -

you will be me, and I, you of old,  
and between us we'll make the same  
mistakes.

Soup kitchens open in our towns  
as more and more die of cold -  
is it fair to feel self pity  
when Major's world makes us old?

The youth within me, shrivelled, wan,  
the sun has left this gloomy land;  
I find that only in the past  
did dreams come true (though did not  
last).

NARR: The Wanderer was on a tangent,  
we stood beneath the Shawlands bridge  
on 'Shaws Road, and cleared his chest.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Winter, yet again, had come  
and bonfires lit up the sky.  
A firework knocked out a star,  
it fell at our feet and glowed.  
We stamped our boots, rubbed our hands;  
Guy Fawkes night, I was sad.

That afternoon I'd been to see  
a girl in Greenhills, East Kilbride;  
her house was filled with warm sunlight,  
healthy plants on every sill;  
we talked intense one whole hour,  
I could have talked into the night.

But with her husband due home soon  
she was anxious she'd be found  
and took a harshness to her voice  
that made me ask her the time;  
we both agreed I should go  
before her husband found us so.

What now I asked as I left,  
not of her, but of myself;  
had I invaded her fine world  
to covet someone else's wife?  
Had I transgressed the tenth law?  
Would I try to break their bond?

Knowing what I did was wrong,  
Oh god of Gods! I needed help.  
Did I turn my back on love?  
Was there better judgement found  
in making friends, and not divide?

For he whose anger unjoins vows  
can find no peace in return.

WAND: Love and bible clash like steel;  
like red and green do not mix,  
like oil and water ever split,  
like two poles that never meet;  
the heart warm, full of fire;  
the head cold like icy water;  
and in between, accused of sin;

first you'll burn, and then you'll sink.

NARR: The Wanderer in his own void,  
making light of my turmoil,  
driveled on about the rain  
that fell when he was in Spain.

WAND: Britain seemed a long way north,  
Scotland, Glasgow, Shawlands Cross,  
the rain brought back many thoughts  
of youthful times I'd forgotten;  
the days when summer came and went  
and winter passed on to Lent.

I had no cares, gave not a toss  
if it rained or if it poured.  
The rain always cleansed the streets;  
I'd tramp about them with wet feet,  
Mum tried to keep me indoors  
saying I'd catch my death of cold;

I'd disagree and off I'd bolt,  
a thing I'd later much regret  
when Dad cuffed me on the head.  
Kept in, I'd have to pass time  
by the Burgh Hall quarter chimes;  
I'd watch the rain-drops steady fall.

Ripple puddles, pools and holes;  
the steamed window my artist's pad  
where I drew pictures of our dog;  
sketching the world of an infant  
which I believed unimportant,  
but prepared me for the world.

The rain stopped, childhood faded,  
I found myself back in Madrid;  
the sun eased through heavy cloud  
and splattered rays upon the sands.  
Once more free to move outside,  
I chose instead to stay inside.

I read about Gerald Ford -  
Nixon barely gone, resigned.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Now nearly two decades on,  
Bill Clinton in the Oval Office,  
no doubt there sits in wet Madrid,  
a Scottish guy mulling over –

all that has and been before  
and all that will become in time.

### **Ibiza**

When we sets eyes on the Med  
which we saw from Valencia's shore;  
where young Don Juan's ship was wrecked;  
where Twelve Night left Shakespeare's  
head;  
we met Flock and Hanni,  
two frauleins from the High Tyrol;

They had come from Algeciras,  
escaping from Moroccan thieves.  
Their tales of woe were so exciting,  
sex, and drugs, and near death misses -  
Maggie sat with open mouth;  
I let the sand slip through my fingers.

In Spain I was eager for the morrow,  
I knew nothing much of sorrow;  
big the world, big it's fortune,  
small the problems there before me.  
Simple needs, simple life,  
and Maggie with her simple smile.

We shipped out for the Ibiza,  
out to the Balearic Isles -  
for we had enough of guards,  
of Franco's strong-arm bully boys,  
for we had tried to share a room,  
we were shunned at every turn.

Perhaps if we had not slept rough,  
love with Maggie might have blossomed;  
yet we sensed we were friends  
who felt our friendship near it's end.  
She was such a pretty girl,

full of life, a lovely smile.

Her hair was black just like night,  
her eyes a rich chestnut brown;  
her nose petite, her skin milk-white,  
her mouth sensuous, straight-toothed,  
wide;  
her chest broad, her breasts round,  
her waist slim, her belly tight;  
her buttocks curved, her hips broad,  
her legs and ankles like a horse.

A horse! I can hear her voice now,  
the high-pitched lift of Eyemouth town.  
And when I think, just twenty then,  
she must be all of forty now.

We landed on quaint Ibiza,  
crashed out drunk on the beach.  
In short - Ibiza was a dump,  
a place where all the hippies went  
out to swampland Formenterra.  
We hung out on Sabana beach.

I wouldn't give a fig for it!  
It rained, it shone, it rained, it shone,  
it rained, it rained, it rained, it rained;  
we spent the night cold and damp  
and in the morning - the cops arrived  
and told us all where to go –

a hundred poor bedraggled souls,  
they shipped us out on a boat  
back to Barcelona.

NARR: The Wanderer droned on and on,  
my mind was many miles away;  
for suddenly, I had recalled  
an evening in the Fintry Hills -  
fireworks, bonfire, drugs and booze  
on a farm near Carronbridge.

There I met a gymnast girl  
with whom I strolled beneath the moon,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

we kissed, embraced so tight  
her body stretched to equal mine  
before her toes left the ground  
and we went spinning round and round  
until the cold conquered us  
and we once more went inside.

WAND: What is there to life but giving  
love?

What is worse than none at all?  
All the travelling in the world  
cannot make life love more.

NARR: And with that quip he passed on  
to talk about his wandering world.

### Perpignan

At Perpignan we said goodbye  
I put Mag's on a train for Lyon  
accompanied by two German boys -  
Andy Steiber and his friend.  
I waved her off with no regrets  
Though Maggie didn't want to go.

But I had plans of my own -  
She was already short of cash,  
and unless I set out alone  
I wouldn't get to Istanbul,  
to start on the Hippy Road,  
and the long miles to India.

Focused and selfish, both are true,  
my dreams were made by lonely choice,  
I started north upon the road  
but found myself going west -  
a couple in a Citroen bedstead  
took me to their Toulouse home.

A tenement flat, sun-washed, old,  
they gave me cheese, bread and meat.  
Bad luck! I broke a china cup  
but spent the night in a bed,  
safe in France as August went;

I never had such sound sleep.

How months pass with no recall.  
How seasons fly, do not return.  
How lives exist, then cease to live.  
How all that's known, repeats itself -  
for few can understand, or see  
What is now is all there'll be.

Which rivers did I cross next day?  
Garonne? Lot? Dordogne or more?  
Towards Limousin I hurtled,  
twisting through cobbled villages  
to wait in Brive, to wait in Tulle,  
for a ride - that ended in a ditch.

I should have left him to his dent,  
I helped him change a tyre instead.  
He bought me a meal in Ussel sur Diege,  
I spent the night in the Auvergne -  
beneath the shadow of Mount Dore,  
I slept on stone in a tenement close.

Next morning I met Phil from New York,  
we jumped a train to Clermont Ferrand -  
hotfooted it out at the terminal station,  
showered and washed at a hostel.

NARR: The Wanderer gave me mundane  
facts,  
I tried to keep my thoughts on him,  
But I could not concentrate that well,  
I dwelt upon my gymnasts woes.  
The night before, at her small house  
two bricks came through her front  
window.

Passion driven, chard glass flew,  
showered us both on the sofa.  
The police came and took away  
the two bricks marked exhibit A.

How did such a thing come to pass  
in sleepy little High Blantyre -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

where fog hangs on the lights  
and people huddled move about.

Was it something in the sky?  
Was it Venus sectoring Mars?  
Was it the Moon on the wane?  
Or the cause a quart of Ballantines?

No excuse is good enough  
that scares a woman to the quick,  
the hidden hand of a beast  
quick to chide and slow to cease  
the torment of the poisoned tongue  
twisting every decent thing -

no good comes from such words,  
evil eats all honest love.

And when insults no longer whip,  
the hand becomes the spoken word,  
it wraps around a fragile neck,  
chokes resistance, gurgles up  
two dead eyes, a lifeless stare  
giving into all but faith -

a faith that keeps the mind intact  
after each cruel attack.

Hate, the product of blind faith,  
how are such things resolved?

In dead of night, evil lurks -  
for when the police were finally gone,  
And all the glass was hovered up,  
with the windows boarded over,  
the door locked, a silence reigned -  
every sound become a nightmare.

Every creak a shot of fear,  
every trick of ear, a terror -  
Until the grey of dawn appeared.  
I bared my worries to my friend  
but the Wanderer, he was ranting on,  
without a clue about my world.

WAND: On by Lyon, north to Thiers,  
up the Rhone alone to Geneva -  
to sit upon the hostel steps  
with two young Welsh Medeas.  
Chit as chat, and chat as chit,  
they talked about planting mint -

about the garden they would grow,  
about work permits, things like that,  
and books in vogue - Catch 22 -  
I promised them I'd write a book  
And put them in it!

They laughed and kissed me on the  
cheeks,  
I blushed and read aloud to them  
From a book I carried with me -  
Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

NARR: There I had to interrupt,  
he was out of touch with people:  
Europe was much different then?  
Now revolt is everywhere,  
we have the wall at our backs.  
The Maastricht Bill stumbles on.

They listen not to countless calls  
to dump the old dead ideal  
of Europe one, and one for all,  
new times have come these thousand days  
since they took down the Wall.

East looks West, and West looks on  
as Europe prepares itself for war.

WAND: Not then.

NARR: He smiled smugly, made me angry,  
I had to give him my own view.

Time becomes Time that halts,  
for still the politicians stumble on -  
their power crazy fool ideals  
leading us into Europe,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

when we an island people, different,  
have no borders to contest.

The cliffs of Dover are our frontier,  
the Cape of Wrath our last domain,  
the white sea waves bounding us,  
we know the lands of our birth.

WAND: When I left Geneva for  
Germany-  
Crossed the frontier near Lorrach,  
did I think that I was European?  
Not I, a young Scottish guy  
in a town where people frowned,  
the old looked rather trodden on.

A Germany not yet awakened,  
non-one idle, the young polite.  
I could not see a driving spirit,  
work was the only guiding light.

### **Munich**

Once more I came to Munich,  
twenty seven years after the War,  
took the S-Bahn to Ammersee.  
Andy Steiber - at the station  
drove me to his Hersching home -  
his parents were such perfect hosts.

I stayed three days in Schillerstrasse,  
with Bach playing softly in my ears,  
Her Steiber set out his onyx chess  
and badgered me to play my best.  
Somehow I tried too hard,  
I beat him with such success –

he took huff and puff with me,  
demanded a rematch immediately,  
but I feigned tiredness, fatigue,  
in truth I lied, was selfish, yes -  
and he with Bavarian pique  
took himself off to bed.

Frau Steiber took one look at me,  
eye brow arched as if to say -  
'You young folks must always win,  
have your way and pay no dues'.

And with a wink of an eye,  
She led me to the grand bathroom,  
handed me a spotless towel,  
ran the bath - I got the message,  
while I soaked in the suds  
she threw my clothes in the twin tub.

Oh such was life in those days -  
who would wish them fade away.

In reflection my weekend stay  
at the Steibers of Ammersee,  
merited my best behaviour,  
brought out in me my finest nature.

We went to Munich in the rain,  
sat in a nice clean restaurant,  
drank coffee, ate choc-cake,  
listened to a jazz quartet  
playing fine Dave Brubeck,  
made pleasant conversation.

We went to Andechs Monastery,  
where the monks brew black beer -  
and there we saw a nun,  
ambling on the verdant grass,  
a monk on her arm -  
and smoking a long-tipped fag.

Geoffrey Chaucer would have smiled  
At the halo round her head -  
not from doing pious work,  
but from the tiny little puffs  
emitted from her pink pursed lips;  
flirting with her courting monk -

fingering her necklaced cross,  
her rosary dangling from her belt.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

This is the way of the world!  
Let no-one think it is a lie.  
Andechs beer-brewing monastery -  
I could not quite believe my eyes.

I bade farewell to the Stiebers,  
I left Herrsching, set out for Salzburg,  
Took a lift that carried further  
Deep into the Austrian night.

### AUSTRIA

The driver said I could stay with her,  
I said yes, then found out  
She wanted ten marks for that right -  
I said 'No way', got out the car,  
Found a haystack, crawled inside.

At dawn I woke to driving rain  
As through the hay, I poked my head,  
Read a sign - Bad Mittendorf -  
A scant peopled, rural place,  
I slept a few hours more,  
Then rose, got wet on the road.

The rain drove down, cars were few,  
I took shelter from the storm,  
Stood close against a log-hut wall,  
Huddled, watched the mist roll down  
The steep Alp-sides, to flood the vale  
Just like a Highland morn;  
I waited hopefully for a lull,  
Three hours passed, I huddled on.

### YUGOSLAVIA

Evening saw me in a hostel  
Close to the Yugoslav border -  
Next day a lift from Graz to Zagreb,  
Left me where two years before  
I'd waited more than one whole day,  
Burnt, eaten by mosquitoes,  
Ignored by the Croat people.

I dreaded another awful wait,  
Contemplated taking the train,  
Then to my joy, a Jordanian stopped,  
Offered me a driving job;  
He had eight cars for Amman,  
A driver short at Istanbul,  
I could drive to Ankara -  
He waved down a passing car.

Paired with a Turk called Yas,  
He'd been picked up in Bavaria,  
He said the Chef was a big-shot  
Who bought cars at German auctions,  
Ran them to Amman for resale

Was he a crook? I asked the Turk,  
He smiled weakly, shrugged his shoulders,  
And on we drove, Belgrade, then Nis,  
All night we drove towards the Orient.

### BULGARIA

Across the frontier, into Bulgaria,  
We drove until the sunrise broke,  
Brought us to the cobbled streets  
Of Sofia - dead to the world,  
Across the main square we chattered,  
Soviet flags on every pole,  
Thirty years of Russian friendship  
Since the Soviets freed the Bulgarians  
From German occupation.

Two hundred kay from Istanbul,  
The Chef's car caught us up -  
Eight vehicles once more grouped,  
We set off for the Turkish border.

### TURKEY

And there somehow I found myself  
With the car stamped in my passport;  
I wondered why this was so,  
The Chef told me not to worry,  
I could drive on to Syria -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

He'd pay me once we got to Jordan.

Jordan? That was not in my plans,  
We reached 'Stamboul, two hours past  
noon,  
And there Yas left me with the car,  
Wishing me the best of luck;  
I nearly died from utter shock,  
Right there, at the Golden Horn.

What had I let myself in for?  
No one had asked if I could drive,  
I had taken fifteen lessons,  
But hadn't yet taken my test –  
And there I was at the Bosphorus,  
The strait between the West and East,  
Trying to second gear a BMW,  
Across two planks on to a ferry!

Oh woe betide the weak of heart  
Who take to the travelling road –  
For cheap is the price of life  
When your neck is in a rope.

I crunched the car off the ferry  
With alarming jumps of jerkiness,  
I'd had no time to meditate,  
I was in Asia Minor now –  
The Chef's face was thunder clapped;  
I waved, and stalled the vehicle twice.

We convoyed slowed out the docks,  
The noise and smog left behind;  
We reached the open Ankara road,  
I hit fourth gear, cruised till dark.  
Then WHAM! I ploughed into a truck,  
SMASH! The windscreen went down,  
I blacked out.

When I woke, I found two iron rails  
Lodged either side of my head –  
Six inches, left, five inches right,  
And I would have been decapitated.

I sat there stunned, miming prayers,  
God had watched over me,  
Then in a flash I felt my breathe  
Leave me with a gasp of air,  
And there, leaning through the screen,  
His hands about my gasping throat,  
The Chef with his popping eyes,  
Trying to choke me to death –  
All the while with his foul breathe,  
Cursing me in Arabic.

Well, what a do, I must admit,  
I sat and let him choke me dead –  
I could not believe I was alive,  
I'd been to Hell and back again.  
I had cheated certain death,  
And seconds later, death again.  
The crowd pulled the Chef off me,  
Checked to see if I was injured –  
They carried me from the car,  
And marvelled that I had not a scratch.  
I was still in deep shock –  
I couldn't hear a word they uttered,  
They put me in Chef's own car,  
Drove me to a cheap motel,  
A seedy joint by the highway.  
He checked us into a room,  
Had a man bring us food.

I lay on my bed, shocked, exhausted,  
Until a hand reached up my leg –  
The Chef was having his revenge  
By trying to have some of my flesh,  
I fought him off with all my strength,  
The greasy toad ran out of breathe,  
Rolled over on to his own bed,  
And lay there panting in the dark.

Surely I was brought up right  
To put up such a manly fight?

I feared the Chef would slit my throat,  
I gripped my knife beneath the sheets,  
Stayed awake till first light broke,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Prepared to tip-toe out the door,  
But Chef awoke, coughed and spat,  
Said it was time to hit the road.

My battered car brought up the rear,  
We stopped five hours short of Ankara;  
The other drivers and the Chef  
Ate lunch together, I was shunned,  
They spoke with vile contorted mouths,  
Spat their words with crooked smiles,  
Then finally, their huddled heads  
together,  
Plotted my imminent murder.

I left the keys in the ignition,  
Took my pack, started walking,  
The Chef shouted – I ignored him,  
We were in a Turkish tavern garden,  
A public place, with many watching,  
I kept walking, hit the highway,  
Not once did I look back, out of fear  
In a sweat, under the blazing midday sun.

Five kays I walked to forget death,  
All the while expecting Chef,  
To chase me, have his way -  
Instead I found myself free again,  
Free now to embrace the East.

Will I forget that Friday, thirteenth day,  
ninth month of the year, seventy four?  
Hardly an auspicious time –  
Yet I lived to tell the tale.

NARR: The Wanderer broke from telling  
me  
About his Turkish misadventures;  
By now, we'd sheltered in a pub  
To escape the torment of a blizzards –  
Gale force twelve battered hard  
Every window in the nook  
Where friends together mulled events,  
Shook their heads about the *Braer*  
Breaking up on Shetland's rocks,

Spewing oil upon its shores –  
Sumburgh Head to Ninian's Isle,  
Shag and salmon, otter, seal,  
Poisoned by the killer slime.

The Wanderer was in his own world,  
The blizzard but a small diversion,  
He still talked of Turkish sun,  
The swish of dust in his throat -

### Ankara

WAND: I arrived in Ankara,  
I was going up Cankaya Hill,  
A stranger, stopped me in concern,  
Asked if I needed help –  
He had sensed my distressed state,  
Took me in a *domush* taxi,  
To his parent's plush detached house.

Haldun Ozen, an Ankara boy,  
Went to school in McLean, Virginia –  
He was studying economics,  
Planned to be a Turkish big-shot,  
His dad connected with the government,  
His mom stayed at home all day.

He smuggled me into his basement,  
His play-room out of bounds to parents,  
I could stay the whole weekend,  
His dad had gone to Istanbul,  
Left him as the head of house.  
I met his sister, she was nice.

With Jimi Hendrix on his stereo,  
Blasting our *Star Spangled Banner*,  
He told me about D.C life,  
In a Maryland hip-jive voice,  
Showed me how to play tabla,  
Backgammon till it went midnight.

He set out a canvas bed,  
Said goodnight, went upstairs,  
And in the dark, tired, worn,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I could hear the scratch of rats –  
But it was Asia after all,  
Where man was closer to the wild.

Half-nine, a servant brought me breakfast,  
Then I headed for our embassy –  
A journey full of winding turns,  
A long trek of sun and dust;  
No visa needed for Iran,  
Yes, one needed for Afghanistan,  
And Nepal, not Pakistan,  
Nor India where I could stay  
Ten years if I wished.

Not so now, and rightly so,  
Three months your wack all told.

Next, I dolmushed to the station  
To buy a ticket for Tehran –  
The train went once a week,  
And four pounds second class.  
Four days, two thousand miles -  
*Baba bar! Tesekhur Allah!*  
That was what I called value.

I returned to Haldo's house,  
Sat outside, watched the day –  
The trees swayed in the wind,  
Too few birds to make for song.  
The children's cries echoed loud,  
I fixed on the distant clouds,  
I watched a man hose his lawn,  
The sun still warm, going down,  
People strolling past, heads lowered,  
Caught up in their daily chores.

Haldo made me take some pills,  
Off we went, out on the town,  
He took me to a whore's house,  
But she was on her business rounds.  
I felt sleepy, awkward, shy,  
I did not want to wait around –  
I was desperate to read a book,  
To fill my empty Scottish mind.

Too late, the lady returned home,  
A bulky, well worn, swell of flesh –  
Her hair was matted, her breasts huge.  
She came at us like a tank,  
And even Haldo turned and fled,  
Escaped the thrust of her embrace;  
We returned to the basement,  
Smoked some hash, played chess.

Next day, for the Afghan visa,  
I tried to pay with Scottish pounds –  
The Consul simply shook his head,  
'Bank of England, marks, or dollars.'  
A Danish guy helped me out,  
Bought two from me as souvenirs.

He was one of forty kids  
Travelling east in six old buses  
Some Afghans had bought in Munich.  
Their plan, to start a bus company,  
To run a service Heart – Kabul.

They'd got aboard in Istanbul,  
Some paid less than the others –  
Ten pounds to get to Kabul,  
They were on the Magic Bus!  
Freaks from around the world,  
Stockholm, Dublin, Rio, Texas,  
Drop-outs, students, and Nam dodgers  
Like James Ballou, Keene, New  
Hampshire,  
Or Retta Ratts of Weather Ford,  
Or Jeffrey Jennings from California –  
Like me, they were on the road,  
Heading East full of hope;  
The world seemed a better place  
Going east than staying home.

Next day was start of Ramadan,  
The month of fasting, dawn till dusk,  
Seven a.m, till seven at night,  
Few would pass food or drink.  
But being a heathen Christian boy,  
Not prone to Muslim ways,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

I ate bread, drank tea –  
I was young, knew not how  
To respect the fine Islam faith,  
That wiser now I can accept,  
And not abuse like Rushdie has,  
Despite the flaw that woman's worth  
Is not the equal of a man's.

Carsamba went, Persembe came,  
I said goodbye to Haldo Ozen –  
He was off back to school,  
Is Haldun Ozen a big shot now?  
Who can say if he thrived?  
Or got himself a Yankee wife?

I got aboard the Tehran train,  
Found a carriage full of Freaks  
.....

NARR: The Wanderer rattled on and on,  
But I had drifted off myself –  
I heard a voice on television  
Talk as if the world were fine,  
That all the ails of our day  
Were not the faults of politicians?  
He said the poor held us back,  
The unemployed must do something,  
No longer can the state provide  
For those who live on state handouts.

Not yet a bud on a tree,  
Nor green shoot signs of recovery.  
I cannot help but think that I  
Failed to grasp John Major's sense.  
Was I alone in my world?  
Or did I share it with my friends?

While I thought on this matter,  
My friend made a pot of tea;  
We were in his mother's house,  
It was the tenth of February –  
Time had skipped yet again,  
Spring was but a month away.

As I sipped the fresh brewed tea,  
Ate a chocolate coated biscuit,  
The Wanderer picked up where  
He'd left off, some time before.

WAND: When I reached the Iran border,  
I was taken off the train,  
My passport was not in order.  
Where was the car? Sold for profit?

The guards marched me up the hill.  
I watched as the train departed,  
My heart sank as it went –  
Bare hills and open wilds,  
There was I in Kurdistan,  
Facing years in Turkish jail.

They took me to the Kommandant,  
A captain – he spoke good English,  
His lieutenant fluent too –  
Listened to my woeful tale  
About the Chef and his car,  
How I'd wrecked it, nearly died,  
And how the Chef in his anger,  
Tried to strangle me to death –  
How I'd escaped the evil man,  
And spent six days in Ankara.

They asked if I could find the car,  
I said it's probably in Amman.  
The scratched their heads –  
Talked, low in Turkish  
Called a guard to take me out,  
While they discussed my situation.

It was midday and baking hot,  
It was the autumn equinox -  
I kicked up dust in the compound,  
Baked hard earth, top layer cracked.

It was a well manned army post,  
In all, perhaps forty soldiers,  
Out on patrol most of them,  
Keeping a watch on the Shah's men.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Who would have guessed five years on,  
The Shah, the richest man on earth,  
Would flee Khomeni's black-clad hordes,  
And quit Iran to Shi'ite force.

Called back into the sea the Captain,  
We drank mint tea, mulled things over –  
If I could somehow lose my passport,  
How would I get another one?  
Well, I said, I am British,  
It's not that hard to get things done.  
I'd go to the British embassy,  
And ask them for a brand new one.

They were astonished, no, impressed,  
Clapped their hands, patted me,  
Poured arak, we all took sips -  
And that was that, I was free.

And all the while I thought back  
To Mr Q, lately of Mauritius,  
Who two years before in Petty France  
Got me a passport in twenty minutes!

Not so easy this time round,  
The embassy sited back in Ankara,  
A two day trip by bus and ferry,  
Across Turkey's hinterland –  
But I was cheerful, only slightly miffed  
That I would be going back there.

As dusk fell, the post flag lowered,  
I was well advised to keep  
My backpack, money, and my goods  
In the Captain's safe for safety.  
My boots were put in there too,  
Perched on a stack of papers.

So it was I spent the night  
On some ancient Kurdish rugs,  
I slept as sound as any might,  
Between the walls of Kurdish daub,  
Beneath the roofs of thatch and wood,  
Cold the night as hot the day.

The lamp turn't out, there I lay  
With half a dozen Kurdish folk,  
Exhausted by the day's events,  
The smoke-hole gaping overhead,  
The sky aglow with unknown stars,  
That filled the emptiness.

Too many stars in my life,  
Not enough bright moonlight,  
Dark is the universe to its end,  
A bit like life in old age.

Next day, the Captain drove an army  
jeep,  
across the dry, wild terrain,  
Took me west to a village,  
Warned me warmly - don't return by  
train.

He bade farewell, and I caught  
a mini-bus on to Van -  
where by the shore of the lake,  
I caught the ferry on the run.

Ten hours across the placid lake,  
Night fell as I reached Tatvan,  
The muezzin called the end to fast,  
The faithful broke from their Orug,  
Ate like no tomorrow mattered.

The bus horn sounded, all aboard -  
The bus for Ankara heaved with folk,  
Filled with smoke, loved ones embraced,  
Made farewells, parted sad.  
The luggage creaked in the racks  
As we waited, as mothers cried  
And sons declared they'd be back;  
Until at last we departed, and  
Tatvan's lights turned to black.

Eighteen hours, through half of Turkey,  
We reached Ankara next afternoon –  
I hurried to the British embassy,  
A consul clerk took my details,  
And in a polite official tone,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Said come back tomorrow morning.

Outside, I clutched my old passport,  
Should I throw it, burn it, what?  
I scratched my head, then remembered,  
A week had passed since I had washed  
My hair - I needed respite,  
Instead of agonising over tosh.

I met a French Canadian freak,  
Who led me back to his hotel,  
Where we talked dope and girls,  
About our days still to come.

Life. What is it without hope,  
In between the booze and dope?

New day, new passport issued,  
And safely put in my neck pouch,  
I got on a bus to Erzerum,  
Trundled east hour on hour,  
Saw a flag draped coffin pass  
Sticking out an old car boot,  
The way a bodger carries wood,  
No end could be less becoming than  
Travelling luggage class to heaven.

Dogubayazit, beneath Ararat,  
Where Moses docked his home-made Ark,  
Cows idled on the road,  
Ducks waddled where they pleased,  
Goats gnawed at all things green,  
Trucks ran horse-carts off the road.

Day and night they merged as one,  
As on I travelled to Iran,  
Eastern Turkey, dust and chaos,  
Barren land and stoney fields,  
So poor a man may sell his soul  
And receive a bill for his labour.

### IRAN

Oh what a difference in Iran,

Fertile, green, with long straight roads,  
The land of Shah's Palava, oil  
On which the Persian lion roared,  
While all around her, Afghan, Iraqi,  
Ran before its mighty claws.

Proud Iran, how it has fallen  
From mighty power to friendless nation;  
If there is hope for its future,  
Its in the history of its people –

Allah has found his disciples, ready  
To spread his teachings and the life,  
But failed to quell their warlike-minds  
So Aryan, so like ourselves –  
Let not us not judge them bad,  
The British are by far much worse.

NARR: I thought about what he said,  
Our country now, suffering under Major,  
The selling of our forest lands  
To privateers and speculators.  
I was angry, and rightly so -  
But powerless to find a voice.

The bad summer was almost gone,  
The worst for well on fifteen years,  
The sun had barely shone at all –  
It had rained all May and June,  
July cloudy, cold and grey,  
Most of August much the same.

Now the kids were back at school,  
It grew dark by nine o'clock,  
Every day seemed the same,  
The Wanderer had moved to Garnethill,  
Two up, left, in a slum,  
The windows rattled, floorboards creaked,  
But with a view from the lounge,  
The Campsies, the spired West-End,  
The sun going down every night,  
The way it had four years before  
When I'd met him in Kelvininside,  
Staring into the Kelvin Water.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Not now the hottest summer of the century,  
I shivered sitting by his window,  
Watching the motorway traffic chug  
Nose-tail through the rush-hour.

I had come to talk of Sarah,  
How we had parted, gone our ways,  
How she as one of many lassies,  
Was now just mere history,  
But he did not appear to listen -  
He was busy pouring vodka.

I talked to him about the house  
I was trying to buy in Dunoon,  
It was all of half a villa,  
On Cowal shore, at Sandy Beach,  
That overlooked the Ayrshire coastline,  
The Bute and Arran ferry passed;  
And in its big grassy garden,  
Stood a giant Californian Redwood –  
The largest thing I'd ever seen.

With the mention of California,  
The Wanderer took a sudden interest,  
He had spent a year in San Francisco,  
viewed the Sierra Nevada peaks,  
he had strolled round giant sequoias,  
and felt their sweet sap seep.

WAND: A redwood in your garden!  
Buy it, man, I'll move in!  
I hate this grey shit-hole city,  
Where everyone is so insincere -  
It's the worst town in the world,  
All you meet are wasted dead-beats.

NARR: I dismissed his observation  
As that of a man without a wife,  
Or more, a traveller without a reason  
For getting off his boring backside.  
Or was it now, close to forty,  
He was having mid-life crisis;  
Though once I'd downed two voddies,

I began to feel he was right.

WAND: I mean, man, in Iran  
No sooner was I over the border,  
Some kids stared hurling rocks at me,  
Like something straight out the bible –  
A stoning! And I the victim  
Because I was a long-haired Hippy?

Yes, it was. They screamed at me  
'Two Metre Man!' I was a giant,  
to those titch-sized stunted Kurds,  
I towered like a Goliath.

It was just another happening,  
Four thousand kay in a week –  
Army camp, Ankara and back,  
I survived, went on my way,  
Travelled on by bus to Tabriz  
Where I saw a herd of camels.  
Dear pal, what a thrill to me,  
A young man from Pollokshaws,  
Finally in the Middle East  
Like Lawrence in the movies.

I took the train to Tehran,  
Eight of us in a carriage –  
Trundling across Qezel Owzam,  
Through Zanjan and Takestan,  
Shadowed by the Rashteh Mountains,  
Bloating out the Caspian Sea.

At Qazvin, as the train pulled out,  
An Inspector climbed aboard;  
In our carriage, a ticketless youth,  
Hid beneath the seat duckboards,  
We all shuffled, sat up straight,  
Draped shawls across our knees.

The Inspector, with an armed soldier,  
Peered into our smoke-filled void,  
Drew back the door, entered,  
One by one, checked and scored  
Our third class ticket stubs.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But woe, he dropped one on the floor,  
Stooped – but just in time,  
An old man stamped his foot on it,  
The Inspector straightened, frowned –  
The doyen held his ticket up,  
He inspected, ticked, returned it,  
Backed out, slid the glass door shut.

Just in time, the youth coughed,  
Came up for air, dust in his throat,  
We banged his back, offered water,  
He would drink a single drop –  
He'd rather die than offend God,  
With Ramadan just halfway gone.

NARR: My friend went off on a tangent  
About religion, and all that stuff –  
It was now mid-Septeeber,  
And in my van with him along,  
We drove around mid-Argyll,  
We travelled up Loch Lomondside,  
In the dark overcast night,  
Parked the van in a lay-by,  
Had some hash, then we crashed.

It'd been months since I'd slept well,  
We didn't rise till ten o'clock.  
We set off down the Loch Fyne road  
To take breakfast at Inveraray.  
I made a call in Lochgilpied  
To the lender for my house,  
All the way down to Tarbert,  
I talked about my move to Cowal;  
The Wanderer listening, staring out  
Across the choppy tops of Fyne.

After coffee and a snack,  
We trundled down to West Lock Pier.  
Their catch packed in a Spanish truck,  
We watched the fishers stow their nets  
Aboard their battered west-coast ketch,  
No name upon her rusting bow,  
White number-letter on her side –  
Tee Tee Two Seven, was her mark,

Her three-man crew hauling chain,  
Pulling, on their drift net weights.

We met friend Kenny in Ardpatrik  
Who toured us round his laird's estate;  
The house walls cracked, sashes wormed,  
The garden overgrown, forlorn –  
We walked upon a broken road,  
By broken walls and broken posts,  
We came to the fishing shore  
Of broken sheds, huts and boats,  
Doors flapping in the North-East wind,  
Decay, neglect, and nature winning  
Over all that man had built.

And there upon the swelling loch,  
A yacht, moored to an orange buoy –  
The third son's toy anchored there,  
Awaiting some mighty gale,  
To wreck it upon the shore,  
Now people-less beyond his know.

That night we stayed with our friend  
Loyal to the cause of freedom –  
We talked into the early hours  
About the fight for independence,  
While on the elderberry wine,  
Our passions ran and never dried.

In the morning when we left,  
We were neared such an end,  
The sky was clear, an azure blue,  
Except for one cloud above –  
A white cross! Jings oh, Lord!  
Of us three, who was the prophet?  
Our friend, the Wanderer, or me?  
An Argyll man, two Shaws boys,  
We looked for another sign –  
There were none I could see.

We travelled north to Dunadd,  
Clambered up its mossy ramparts,  
Put a shoe in the footprint,  
Declared myself Kings of Scots –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The Wanderer killed me with a look,  
Declared himself my overlord.

Onwards north to Kilmartin,  
Sacred place of ancient time,  
Standing stones and bronze-age cysts,  
Cairns of quartz, white in the sun,  
Stones on which no moss grows,  
Unlike the crosses in the church,  
Broken, mismatched, spiked together,  
Recalling Reformation hysteria  
and anger with the Celtic Church

We made a fire by dark Loch Awe,  
Cooked fish, made some tea,  
The Wanderer took a pipe of hash  
And floated off to other lands -  
Left behind Loch Awe and me;  
He was back in Tehran.

We came into Carradale,  
Took some tea at Izzy's van,  
Listened to the old wife's tales  
Of fishing in Kilbrannan Sound,  
Her tears rolling down her face,  
Reliving the Antares drowned,  
A nephew lost, son's friends gone,  
Pulled down by a nuclear sub -  
Oh such waste of life for nowt,  
In Carradale the wound was raw.

South upon Campbeltown Loch,  
The shellfish gatherers, waders on,  
Accompanied by their joyous dogs,  
Dug into the sea-pool sands,  
A harvest in their honest hands,  
Cockle catchers stretched their backs,  
Shivered in the autumn blast,  
Turned towards the town near dark.

At Land's End, Columba's caves,  
His footprint left upon a rock,  
Seals basking in the setting sun,  
Beyond the break - Malin Head,

Rathlin and the Giant's Causeway,  
Ireland but a stone's throw distant,  
We upon the Kintyre sands,  
Cooking simple Scottish fayre.

What then of the well known Mull,  
Made famous by the Beatles boy?  
A lighthouse midst a barren waste,  
The ruins of Balmavicar shore,  
Now just lines, rough hewn stone  
Where wind was once a source of power;  
Fish and wool a crofter's life,  
And the view - the Emerald Isle.

Further up the coast we stopped,  
Stretch our legs, watch the seals,  
Parking on a private road,  
Towards us with a dog, approached  
A man who shout at us thus -  
'This road is private, do you know?'

I said to him 'This beach is Scotland.  
Are you going to make us move?'  
But he was a Dalmarnock man,  
And couldn't give a toss 'You see,  
This road is owned by a Brum,  
I can't stand his English ways.  
Destroy the signs if you want,  
It would make me more than pleased.'

Eddie was ex M.O.D,  
Told us all about his world.  
He took us to his house for tea,  
Told us of the owner's paln  
To build more houses by the sea,  
And turn this little spot on earth  
Into a rented village dream.

Oh wild west sea, waves of seals,  
How many dreams have you wrecked  
On your barren, rocky fringe?  
How many came to rue their ways  
In the grave, and left behind  
Deeds of Ozymandias kind -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Desert sands, but for a sign  
'View my works and despair',  
nothing left but sandy waste  
of Private, Keep Out, and Beware.

Back upon the Loch Fyne side,  
We waded through the Clachan stream,  
Made a fire on the drift,  
Watched the oyster catchers home,  
Viewed the twilight coming down  
On Drisaig's dark Ben Buide shore.

WAND: I am Home, here at last,  
I've refound the land I love.  
These past few days, I am whole,  
Once more Scottish at my core.  
How could I have been so lost,  
To lose such a wonderful thing.  
This is the home I left behind –  
I can now forget the past.

NARR: The Wanderer let some tears  
escape,  
Went down on his knees, cried –

WAND: What can I say of foreign lands,  
I've been a fool to go away.  
What use has all my roaming been,  
When here before me, in these hills  
Is all there ever was for man.

NARR: I could not see what he could see,  
I did not have his worldly vision.  
He rose and put the fire out,  
Bade me pack all our things.

We went by Luss, where at eighteen,  
We got guttered as wild boys –  
Beer and girls, and naked joy,  
We'd go swimming in the loch.

As we hit the Glasgow lights,  
I found out too, I'd been lost –  
Now I knew – we'd left Heaven –

And crossed the Styx, back to bedlam,  
Crime, deceit, and urban betrayal –  
Goodbye again to good intention.  
The Wanderer lost his radiant look,  
Turned his back on the future.

WAND: On a bus to old Mashad,  
And onwards more towards Heart,  
At the Afghan Border post,  
The Customs Man handed over  
A lump of hash to this guy Bob,  
Who'd been down that way before.

### AFGHANISTAN

Welcome to the land of hashish!  
Party time! Goodbye Iran!  
We smoked out way into Herat,  
Where Alexander built his fort,  
The walls still standing, mud and clay,  
A score and three centuries gone,  
Standing by the Silk Route trail.

The next three days I got smashed  
With Bob and Minnesota Doug McCoy,  
A frontiers boy from St Paul,  
Checked shirt, jeans, and hiking boots,  
A backpack bigger than a moose,  
His mind fixed on the Himalayas -  
The Everest trek from Katmandu;  
His blue eyes dull, his speech slow,  
The nicest guy you'd ever meet.

Sometimes niceness breeds plainness,  
Produces awful boring folk  
Who make you want to grab them,  
Shake some sense into their brains;  
For what is worse than a *Mr. Nice Guy*,  
Whose niceness makes you want to sleep;  
What is worse than a lovely fellow  
Who cannot swear, does not scream?

Oh yes, we all seek a nice life,  
But Jesus! Take some names in vain,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Curse the world, act insane,  
For every hour is not the same,  
We take our knocks, soak up pain –  
What goes in, comes out again.

I'd rather hear a lover rave  
Than have her stare into space.  
I'd rather have my friends go nuts  
Than have my friends say they love  
Everything and everyone –  
For he who loves all the world  
Sees none of the world's flaws.

Doug McCoy was so perfect,  
He was fruit for every con-man.  
Yes – he could climb snowy mountains,  
He could kayak down white rapids,  
He could hunt and trap wild animals,  
He could light campfires - matchless,  
He could lumber with an axe-blade,  
He could fight fires barehanded,

He was Minnesota Man –  
Big and strong, tough and Spartan!  
And there he was. Afghanistan!  
Desert waste and rocky nothing,  
Not a tree, a stream, or cabin.  
He was Minnesota Man –  
Defenceless without his gleaming axe,  
His kayak, and the moose outback.

Flaked out on the bus going south,  
The Hindu Kush always to our north,  
He slept and dreamt about Nepal,  
The temple city – Katmandu;  
Afghanistan, so dry and barren,  
For him was not the real McCoy.

Across Registan to Kandahar,  
We lodged at the Peace Hotel – there,  
Those heading West draped in beads,  
Like Gods in their wisdom and daily deeds,  
No longer travellers on the road  
But the children of Shiva and Krishna

In their cotton pants and lungi skirts,  
Modern-day Christs, in latter-day robes,  
Rings on fingers, bells on toes,  
Hearing music in the singing of birds,  
The rustle of leaves, barking of dogs,  
Flying higher than the circling hawks,  
Dowsed with pure jasmine and musk,  
They placed their movements, every  
word,  
Passing round chillums with a *Dum Dehra  
Dum!*  
Muttering *Boom Shanka* for the world  
lost –  
India behind them, return westwards,  
still to come.

McCoy and I entered Kabul, October  
Fifth,  
To aggressive dogs in barking bouts,  
Woodmen chopping, their axe-echoes  
Bouncing back and forth across the  
mountains.

I re-met Jacques, Bob and James,  
And many others on the trail,  
The way that stretched from Istanbul  
Onwards forever around the world –  
There seemed no end to the road  
Each morning we faced into the sun,  
For though we knew where it slept,  
We knew nothing of where it rose.

Green grass, and calling birds,  
Acacias swaying in the wind,  
I mounted a camel in the bazaar,  
An Afghan joke, they slapped it hard,  
It bolted in a fit, and with a spit  
Threw me, and I crashed to earth.

They laughed! I was embarrassed.  
Covered in dust, they offered me tea,  
A smoke on a shish. A boy from the  
Shaws,  
They were men of the Hindu Kush,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Tall, good looking, erect and proud,  
They held their heads high like warriors.

Bowing to those who were their elders,  
There was not one beggar amongst their  
number,  
No man so poor, he had no rifle,  
No boy so poor, he had no sandals –  
These were men from Bamian and Kyber,  
Men from the Pamirs, Hunza and  
Wakhan,  
Men from the hills and valleys of  
Helmand,  
Men from the towns of Sharif and  
Baghlan.

I, the lad from the Central Lowlands,  
Drew breathe at their colourful clothes,  
Their flowing beards and Afghan caps;  
They were heroes from my boyhood past;  
They were the sons of Kubla Khan,  
In them flowed Iskanda's blood.

A camel, the price of two ugly sisters,  
Four whole days in Kabul gone,  
Down into the Kyber Pass we headed,  
Down past lairs perched on high,  
Slits for windows, fortress built,  
The Kyber Gorge was a fortress still,  
Every home an eyrie post,  
Every bend a bottleneck,  
Every twist a dice with death  
As down into the plain we went.

### PAKISTAN

There beyond the sheer cliff edge,  
The desert fringe of the Indus Valley,  
A grey-black smog in the distance –  
Peshawar! Den of vice and virtue,  
The Mecca of the hashish business.  
And there, awaiting the Rawalpindi bus,  
I watched the Peshawari melee –  
Now and then someone would stare,

But most were polite, glanced away.

As Doug drank tea, hubbed a pipe,  
The air was thick with petrol-cide,  
The fumes of stoves used for cooking,  
Three-wheeled taxis puttering for custom,  
Night upon us by half past five,  
It was Pakistan, an October evening,

They say first sight forms opinion,  
but what I discovered of that great nation,  
I learned when I returned eight months  
later,  
For I was in a rush to be in India,  
By bus, by train, towards the Punjab,  
And ancient Lahore in all its squalor,  
The last of Pakistan before the border.

NARR: The Wanderer stopped – as if  
reflecting  
Upon his experience of that far place.  
I meanwhile, looked towards my future,  
I'd bought my coastal house near Dunoon,  
Called Hazelbank – on the shore road,  
Where now we sat by the window  
Looking out towards Wemyss Bay.

The January winds howling wildly,  
I nursed a coffee 'neath my chin  
Listening to the Wanderer's wisdom,  
Though thinking about my lover in  
Kilbirnie.  
You see, I was to be married that Spring,  
On the morning of my fortieth birthday,  
We were to be blessed by Reverend  
Conkie,  
Have our reception in the house.

It was to be a modest do -  
Fifty folk with a sprig of heather,  
Kilts, some whiskey, and a blether,  
Escape to Rothesay by ferry  
For our honeymoon in Bute.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

But there I sat with the Wanderer  
Droning on about Amritsar –  
He was twenty in India,  
Searching for a personal guru.

### INDIA

WAND: Of all the places in the world,  
There is none to match Bharat.  
I have been to the furthest parts,  
I have seen many mighty sights,  
But deep set in my heart is the jewel –  
My treasured India.

Indeed, what I've told you to this point,  
Is a preamble to the misty months  
I spent in my perplexing quest  
To find myself in India.

Is there a need to tell tales  
About the daily toil and trouble  
Surrounding me every hour  
In painful heartache India.

Or the bliss, the days of joy,  
High, or in the deep abyss  
Of meditative happy thought  
In carefree sunny India?

There – I undid twenty years,  
Rewound to my infant days,  
Recalled the moment of my birth,  
While there in holy India.

But it took time - in Amritsar  
I was down three days with the trots,  
Holed up in the Golden Temple,  
Deserted by that weasel Doug –  
He was Minnesota Boy,  
He wasn't going to be a nurse.

Illness shows us all the truth –  
I lay fevered in the heat;  
But I was young, strong within,

As I lay in the Temple refuge,  
Shared with a hundred pilgrims,  
I fought the sweats for three nights,  
And on the third dawn I rose,  
Went with the multi-pilgrimed horde,  
Sat cross-legged upon the marble,  
Banana leaf laid out before me,  
I took my alms from the Sikhs,  
A little rice, dahl and chutney –  
Had my being filled with kindness  
Before the shrine of Guru Nanak.

I'd been deserted by my own kind,  
Six thousand miles, far from home  
I had found a greater friend  
In faith, and hope, and in mankind –  
In all the world, ne'er again  
Would I believe I was alone.

My illness gone, my hunger stayed,  
I travelled on to the north,  
On by bus to Chandigarh –  
Stretching fields of wheat and rice,  
Until the bus, with a BANG!  
Shuddered, veered off the road,  
Came to rest on a grassy slope.

We disembarked, and as the crew  
Threw a tyre from the roof,  
I sat upon a little knoll,  
Watched them labour in the heat,  
The punctured wheel, thumped and  
knocked,  
Sticking fast despite the kicks.

I saw an old man pick some leaves,  
From some tall plants by the road –  
He had found a ganga patch,  
So I likewise helped myself,  
Filled up my woolly hat.

A woolly hat in such heat?  
I was just a big Shaws boy  
Who knew not what was right to wear,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Who knew not where to buy such gear  
Without at first feeling silly -  
I learned to discard it quickly.

Then it rained! What a miracle,  
The first since leaving Austria;  
The tyre changed, on we went  
To Chandigarh – till stopped again  
Outside a town, protesters chanted –  
*Power Workers! Stand United!*  
A doctor strike. A student strike –  
Half of Chandigarh was out,  
The other half without lights.

It is the same the world over,  
It was the Heath years afterall –  
Half the world for worker rights,  
Indira Gandhi taking on the workers

### Simla

On into the Himalayas –  
The night sky hemmed in by shadows,  
Chevron stripes marked the edge  
Of plunges to the deepest chasms;  
Until at last the Tata stopped  
Upon the crest of Simla town  
Where once the bastards of the Raj  
Had escaped the summer drought –  
Built a hilltown for themselves  
And lived upon their Indian wealth.

Colonial patronage, racial power,  
They gifted snooker to the world –  
The white ball struck coloured balls,  
A metaphor for all that's wrong  
With Empires throughout the ages,  
Thank God, Britain's shame is gone.

I spent the night at Lord Grey's,  
Woke and went into the world,  
I had not then such fixed views  
For what I saw was not a system,  
But mountains beyond all description!

The Himalayas! Oh so beautiful,  
Monkeys in the hillside trees,  
So much to see, say and do –  
Tibetans, sacks upon their backs,  
from truck to shop, shop and back,  
up and down steep rising streets  
filled with chanting army squad.  
Merchants crowding Grindlay's Bank,  
sun filtered through sublime cloud,  
a road down that turned upon a dime,  
six thousand feet above sea-level;  
I looked up, saw twenty thousand more,  
There beyond in brilliant snow.

I had thought Ben Nevis huge,  
The Swiss Alps sheer colossal,  
But now I knew, nor surprisingly,  
The Alps were small by comparison –  
Ben Nevis a lump on the horizon.

### Himarschal Pradesh

Through great chasms of space,  
And into Himarschal Pradesh –  
I came upon the market town of Mandi,  
Perched upon a hilly, exposed place  
beneath the shadow of the Swalik chain;  
there it rained nearly every day,  
torrents from Swarga filling Bhakra,  
mixing with the water fallen from Kailas.

Drenched by the vapours, I sheltered  
In the cold of that cloistered market  
town,  
Then ran for shelter to a nearby hotel,  
paid six rupees for a sick-pink room,  
the crummiest room in the whole world –  
Biled window shutters, puke blue door,  
Scraps of food on a dust thick floor,  
A room alive to kitchen sounds,  
Clattering dishes, chattering staff,  
The waft of a culinary aftermath –  
My stomach turned, but I was well,  
Fit and whole, despite all else.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

From that Hell, next day I entered  
Paradise in that land –  
The Kulu Valley, apple heaven,  
Green and filled with ripening orchards,  
The scent of blossom in the nostrils,  
The clear, sweet air through my hair  
As on I sped to Manali.

NARR: And thus so, my friend prattled on  
As we clear-cut rotten wood,  
The ides of February gone –  
We were now at Hazelbank,  
Burning stumps and severed limbs,  
Stacks of sycamore just felled,  
Briar and holly on the fire,  
It sparked and flew into the sky,  
Hazed and humid from the snows  
That lay upon the seaward grass.

Driven in the day before,  
Blizzard fashion on the shore,  
We had stood on the Point,  
Counting seals in the blast,  
Sipping coffee from a flask,  
The Rothesay ferry ghosting past.

Stormy days at their last,  
Spring a month away at most,  
The Wanderer spoke more of India  
While I gazed out on Inverkip,  
Scanned the long Ayrshire coast,  
Cumbrae and Goat Fell's white slopes.

### Manali

WAND: In Manali, high on hash,  
I met my Minnesota buddy;  
He had rented out a shack  
In the pines high up the valley,  
Shared the space with two travellers,  
New York Jack and Bernese Klaus.  
I joined them in their rustic board  
Where we all slept on the floor.

The nights were falling bitter cold,  
We burnt a fire with windfall wood,  
We rubbed and took the ganja weed,  
Comatosed – each evening stoned  
To wake upon the golden sun  
Breaking through the shutter slats.

We'd boil tea, have a toke,  
Then wander on the valley slope,  
Through the terraced paddy fields,  
Along narrow hamlet paths  
Where children barefoot played with us,  
And adults called out *Namaste!*

We roamed and wandered where we could,  
Took our baths in a stream –  
On days when overcast or grey,  
We'd trek, and bathe in a hot spring,  
Inhale the hot sulphur airs,  
Emerge pure and chaste again,  
The weariness of life washed off,  
The mosquitos and the bed-bug bites,  
Gone but for small red marks,  
Soon faded in the bright sunlight,  
As we wound down the mountainside  
To eat fruit or go inside  
A little hut full of smoke –  
Be served a bowl of noodle soup,  
Prepared by an old Tibetan man,  
Exiled from the Forbidden Land.

Back at our own humble abode,  
An old haggard crow sold us milk;  
She was the owner of the shack,  
We bought her *dood* every morn,  
Every night took the can back.  
In exchange we gave her cash,  
We listened to her biting bark.  
Was it Punjabi? Hindi? What?  
Yet we understood what she meant –  
We were four backpacker boys  
Who made a mess where'er we went,  
At the stream, out the back,  
Where nature called, which once used,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

We ne'er left the same again.

We cleaned our act up very quickly,  
We learned about their social order;  
As guests upon their terraced slopes,  
We used no soap at the stream  
From which they also drew their water,  
And used no tissue for our toilet.  
But cleansed ourselves, again with water.

We bought no tins to leave lying  
Where animals might snare their tongues;  
We cut no wood from the trees,  
But burnt twigs to make our tea.

Such simple things thus observed,  
Made life simple there for us –  
Our Old Hag began to smile,  
Left the milk-can overnight;  
We smoked our dope, twigged our fire  
And lived as rustic ancients might  
Have lived if they were living now.

One whole month in that Nirvana,  
Passed like one long Summer's day ....

NARR: The Wanderer, lost in Time's  
mists,  
Brought me back from despair;  
For my marriage now – was off,  
The girl of my dreams, unsure –  
Had packed her clothes in poly bags,  
Left for her small Ayrshire town,  
Moved back to the council house  
Her Mama kept in old Kilbirnie.

Listening thus to the Wanderer,  
Sitting now in her best chair,  
I thought of all the things I'd said,  
The many things I'd forced along,  
The silly things I had done,  
Knowing not where I'd gone wrong.

Gone! Two weeks before the nuptials,

And I, just two weeks short of forty –  
I could not sit any longer,  
Listening to my friend the Wanderer.  
I had to act, go in search,  
Of my frightened, lost fiancé.

But the Wanderer carried on,  
Described his journey south to Delhi,  
How he fell –in with some crooks  
In the throng squalled Paharganj;  
Dodgy deals and crooked barter,  
Three weeks of selling student cards,  
Arranging con-man kilo deals,  
He could not bear to see go through.  
So he took a bus to Katmandu  
ringed himself in snow-capped mountains  
In the Valley, close by Swayambu.

I could not comprehend the beauty  
Of such a foreign, far-famed place;  
My thoughts were all for my Jean  
On the Heights of Glengamach Way.  
I had to rise! Leave the Wanderer!  
Go and see her right away.  
The Wanderer said I was foolish,  
To chase someone who had escaped,  
But on the phone my brother said  
If I loved her, I should seize the day,  
Not to give up just because  
She'd lost her will to say *I do!*  
Go after her! Take some flowers!  
Tell her you love her just the same.

So I rose, the Wanderer with me,  
Caught between Nepal and Bengal,  
We took MacBrayne across the Clyde,  
Drove through rain, sheets of sleet,  
And crashing waves Skelmorlie way,  
Until we reached the lights of Largs,  
The icy bends above Largs Bay,  
As on we headed beyond Kelburn,  
Snow hemmed-in by roadside banks,  
Into the mists of Muirhead Dam,  
Then down into Kilburnie town,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Where I screeched through the narrow streets,  
I turned into Bankfauld Estate,  
Halted outside Jean's Mamie's gate.

All this while the Wanderer rambled,  
The journey made his tongue wag,  
He spoke of reaching cold Darjeeling,  
Eating Christmas dinner there,  
Tucking into turkey roast,  
Fruit pudding and a whiskey toast,  
Which made him ill, made him boke.

I knocked on Jeanie's Ma's back-door,  
And fell into Jeanie's arms,  
We hugged and cried, cried some more,  
Declared the fighting now was over;  
I took the ring, clasped her hand,  
Slid it on her third finger –  
I put my hand upon her breast;  
We kissed with such tenderness.  
No words would give full expression  
Of what it meant to be with her,  
Instead of with my Wanderer friend –

I left Kilbirnie all alone,  
For now I'll finally tell you that,  
The Wanderer is not a friend,  
He is but part of myself –

I am the Wanderer! Inside me  
He shadows everything I do,  
And on the way back to Dunoon,  
He talked to me about Calcutta,  
The squalled filth of Sutter Street  
Where he had stayed for a week,  
Toking hashish, eating opium  
Before going on to Puri  
To bathe in the Indian surf,  
To lie about getting burnt,  
Eating peanuts, sucking melon  
Outside the gates of the Temple  
Where Jaganath, lord of Heaven,  
Hauled juggernauts in procession,

In honour of the three great Gods –  
Brahma, Shiva and his favourite,  
Vishnu, lord of all creation –  
Krishna, and our Jesus Christ,  
Avatars like Rama, born as man.

Texts tell of Vishnu on our earth,  
Though some would say these are lies;  
Tell us God may never enter Man,  
For Man is godless, sinned from birth;  
He cannot be a God within,  
But must instead let God in.

As the Wanderer travelled south in India,  
I along the Clyde Coast road,  
I the Wanderer, or I as poet,  
Conclude – there is only one world,  
And in this lifetime, we live but once,  
However much we are told  
About the void beyond the whole  
About the quasi mass of holes,  
Like caves in the cosmic glow –  
We know nothing at all.  
Who of us will ever go?

Yes, I may dwell on India,  
Dwell upon my learnings there –  
A boy, all of twenty years with  
A rolled up mat as a bed,  
canvas bag beneath my head  
containing all that I possessed,  
except my money round my neck,  
resting against my bare chest  
in a purse beneath my shirt.

And there, heading back to Dunoon,  
Almost forty, greying, balding,  
Home, car and own employment,  
Time to spare for enjoyment –  
I felt empty, lost and scared  
Of life without someone there,  
To share my days, and my nights,  
The lover I had left behind,  
Jeanie Boyd of Old Kilbirnie,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Who had awoke, run away  
Across the bonnie banks o' Clyde,  
To say her love for me had gone,  
That I was now to carry on  
Without her smile, without her eyes,  
Without her in my daily life,  
While all the time she would not say  
She loved me dearly – she was proud,  
So proud she'd rather go to Hell  
Than say she needed any help  
With all the things troubling her.

Oh God! How love hurts,  
How love is blind at times,  
How clear it all becomes,  
How murky it can turn.

Not so in India, in Madras,  
In Pondicherry, then Madurai,  
Where on the twenty fifth of March,  
My twenty first year arrived;  
I celebrated with a flight  
From Truchi to north Sri Lanka,  
Landed on the Jaffna airstrip,  
Happy to be alive –  
For I was full of *joie d'vivre*,  
Enjoyed all things Ceylonese.

The world was an uncut jewel  
As I went about that Garden Isle  
From coral coasted Hikkadua,  
To the misty heights of Adam's Peak –  
Here was a land steeped in culture,  
Painted caves and sculpture rock,  
With the oldest man-planted tree –  
Buddha's boa; brought to that spot  
By the wandering saintly man,  
That so many speak of as divine,  
Though he declared he was mortal,  
That God was in everything,  
And everything was part of God.

As I crossed the brooding Clyde,  
Looking over the ferry's side,

I saw what Siddhartha saw  
In everything, and chided myself  
For having been where I had been  
And having not put aside  
The torrents of the inner self -  
I had lost myself to perfect love,  
Found myself in Jeanie Boyd.

I knew then, the time had come  
To bury all my pasts for good;  
I said goodbye to the Wanderer  
And cast him down into the Clyde,  
Watched as he bobbed, then drowned.

And as the ferry decked at Kirn,  
And I drove towards Innellan,  
I knew he was gone from me –  
At last I was once more free,  
The weight of my past, now gone,  
I looked towards a new dawn –  
I'd fight to win back Jeanie Boyd,  
Talk not of my wandering days.

I was finally home to settle,  
To take my place, pay my taxes,  
Spend weekends in the garden,  
Have my Jeanie make me weans,  
Have our home full of friends,  
Take long strolls on the sands,  
Climb the hill behind the house,  
Look out upon my native land –  
For home now was the Wanderer,  
once a boy, home to settle as a man.

## THE LAND WE LIVE IN

### FRANKIE BLACK (kids song)

[15<sup>th</sup> June 1992, Glasgow]

Frankie Black went for a walk,  
He could barely even talk -  
He saw the gate wasn't shut!  
Now he's in big trouble.

Frankie Black the tiny tot  
Escaped while his sisters fought,  
Sitting on a tip, he coughed!  
Now he's in big trouble.

Frankie Black the bully boy  
Liked to make the girls cry.  
He didn't have pals at all.  
Now he's in big trouble.

Frankie Black was rather wild,  
He liked to swing through the sky.  
He couldn't sing but he could fly!  
Now he's in big trouble.

Frankie Black was really tough,  
He liked to jump, kick and run.  
He didn't listen very much.  
Now he's in big trouble!

### VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

[8.45-9.00pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1992, Pollok  
House Bridge, Glasgow]

Gone are the fishers, gone are the visitors,  
Gone are the lovers, blossom and west  
wind -  
Instead runs the river, northwards in  
winter,  
Wearing the weir-stone and walls of the  
mill.

### PRIDE

[3<sup>rd</sup> February 1993?, Glasgow]

Fair is the lily gilt ...  
Fair sweet the wild rose.  
Napoleon on a beggar's horse?  
Hitler cross-armed posed?  
Too few like Garibaldi, Gandhi,  
Descend to sing the small man's song;  
Too few with humbled hang-dog looks  
Stoop to conquer all.

Nay! Who would be in servile chains!  
Who would drain their every vein!  
Who would kiss the hem of Cain  
Unless they were a saint.

The modest violet shadows the rose:-  
With bashful blush it finds its fame  
In the shade beneath an elm  
Where timorous lovers play.  
But oh beware! Also there  
The pansy in self-love - in bloom!  
Conceit and swollen cockiness  
With the itch to please a fool.

Braggarts their trumpets blow  
Louder than the big-talk daffs  
Along the shore Wordsworth strode -  
Butting the windy blasts.  
Chatter, chatter, June to May,  
They rave and rage, fuss and swagger;  
They are bound, yet sway free;  
Bluster, bluff and fury.

Let he - whose arrogance values pride  
And all false traits so admired -  
Let him ride his high horse home  
Eight hands above the mire.  
And he - whose insolent reply  
Gives the world a curled lip -  
Let him be the rose, the bud

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

And not the prick of it.

### **RIGHT, MATE**

[3<sup>rd</sup> February 1993?, Glasgow]

What is right or proper, mate?  
The seemly thing's not always decent.  
Some will steer clear of scandal,  
And some will have no shame.

The right of suffrage - that's justice.  
The defence of sex - that's indulgence.  
Some men knock their girlfriends up,  
Then sure enough, they do a bunk!

One must reap where one has sown!  
Do you believe this? Not me, nope.  
All that comes our way is Fate,  
And Newton's third is Karma, mate!

### **BANNOCKBURN**

[4.40 - 5.30pm, 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 1993,  
Bannockburn]

Oh much is the woe in our time,  
This land one hand above the mire –  
We've laid our future out with fools.  
Citizen John! We cannot laugh,  
Our train sets run right off the track.  
I'm too disgusted to express  
The way I feel about our times,  
We live in a free-for-all,  
Where the weak get trodden on.  
If this means that to survive,  
We have to draw in our horns,  
Then Scotland rise!

At Bannockburn, Bruce's statue,  
against the skyline, facing south,  
modern Scotland plays football,  
girls in jeans, four-a-side,  
snow upon the western bens,  
coal smoke ringing Stirling town,  
the castle there in our times,

our nation lives – the winter sun  
warmer now that springtime comes  
upon the echo of the birds,  
punctured by a Piper Cub.

In the past repeats our future –  
On which side the Langs and Stewarts?  
For whose rights Forsythes and Frasers?  
Is all mankind doomed to failure?

In the land is our deliverance –  
Take it back from individuals?  
Divide it out to politicians?  
To their friends and their minions?

On Bannockfield, alone in February,  
Back against King Robert's statue,  
The white granite feels not cold,  
No wind blows, the sky is gold  
In parts where silver cloud  
Catches the last rays of the day.

A mackerel sky to the west,  
The north one large school of whales,  
The east herring-boned and blue,  
The south a deep ocean view.

What ails our sick land?  
When we have skies as rich as these.  
Our bare hills weep their snows,  
Pine-sap zaps the peaty floor.

Children – not in servitude,  
Ride their bikes up Bannockfield,  
They may smoke a fag or two,  
They have hopes, all children do.

Yet can I, an aging man,  
Tell them that all life is fair?  
That they will stand an equal chance  
Of being equal in this land?

Forgive me now, the wall grows cold,  
The sky grows dim. It is an omen,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

The future for our raped land,  
Is in the sword, not the tongue.  
No talking now will change minds,  
The gun, the bomb, the knife –

They too can have no effect,  
For we are infested from inside,  
Diseased, a cancer eats our nation,  
Our intellects, our men of action –  
Infiltrated by good souls  
Who fool us long enough to finish  
Our resistance, eat our thoughts,  
Undermine us with their talk.

The enemy remains the same,  
We have one border with the world –  
Across the border comes disease,  
Unless we cure it, we will die.

Mister Bruce – you did your bit,  
Where shall we find the likes of you?  
Across the seas in Ontario?  
Or in a village in Lochaber?  
Where is the new Scots Messiah?  
Is he a soldier or a minister?  
Or must we find a foreign general  
Like Bolivar or Che Guevara?

### **TRALEE**

[1.30am, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 1993, Tralee, Kerry]

The streets were empty,  
(The bars were full)  
On a chilly Tralee night -  
Talk was of the fair Rose  
Etched on The Green stone.

In search of a Kerry wife,  
An old boy thick with the brogue  
Laid his wealth on his tongue  
For a lass from Barrow.

Beneath James Street the river flowed  
Whispering tales of ancient Ireland,

Running west to the Atlantic,  
'Cross which half of Kerry parted.

Two girls born to every boy -  
Neckers in the burger bar,  
Petters up against a wall,  
Snoggers in a glass call-box.

Goodnight to the Western World  
Upon a quiet November night,  
Sleeping in the county town  
Beneath those famous mountains.

### **THE OLD PUPPETEER (fragment)**

[1.45am, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1994, Hazelbank,  
Innellan]

Once upon a time in our land,  
When times, like now, were very hard  
And life most times was very sad,  
A kind old fellow with a good spouse  
Who'd lived all his life in the same house,  
In the same bed with the same wife .....

### **GEORGIE**

7.42pm, 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1994, Hazelbank]

She came to me in her red clogs,  
Took me by the hand and led  
Me off into her velvet bedroom,  
Laid me down without a word,  
Stripped me of all my raiment,  
Took me on a lover's voyage  
Across the wildest seas of anger,  
Through gale and fervent storm,  
And out into brilliant moonlight  
Where all about was utter calm.

### **CLAUDIE AND ME**

[6th July 1994, Hazelbank, Innellan]

In Oban and in Inverness,  
me and her were best of friends.  
On the gull Lochinver sands

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

we bathed together, stood upon  
Clochtoll broch, walked the strand,  
hand in hand through the land  
we travelled where no other had  
thought the thoughts we two shared  
in Smoo Cave's chasmic depth  
or on Edinburgh's Castle steps  
we meant all that we said  
in Lochalsh or in Durness  
or by Europe's oldest tree.

We were not Swiss, were not Scots,  
we were lovers first and last  
at Inverewe or Fort Augustus  
we entwined, exposed our hearts  
to the Scottish summer sun  
thanked God for being young  
and whole enough to take our fun  
through the glens, up the duns,  
to laugh louder than the rain  
to take joy from the grey -  
the grey wet of Inveraray,  
where we first fell in love  
more quickly than a hungry gull  
can swoop upon Kylestrome's waves  
more swiftly than fleeing deer  
can cross the East Ross moors.

We came to test ourselves  
as we passed Dalmally by  
renewed ourselves in Dunoon  
and in Glencoe's Clachaig Inn  
went onwards out into the wild,  
sharing all we had to spend,  
meaning every word we said,  
knowing that the past was dead  
for we had just begun to sing  
the song of the Toward seals,  
the tunes of the doodlesack  
we heard in every street -

This was mine and Claudie's Scotland,  
a time so lovely we did not cry,  
we did not pass one bad word

or do a single thing of harm,  
we embraced the whole wide world  
and it became part of us,  
I became some part Swiss,  
and she became part Scots.  
This was love.

### IN THE RAIN

[8th Sept 1994, Sissach, Switzerland]

In the rain the world stops,  
it doesn't pour out its heart,  
it dries up like a desert,  
sand blows across the land,  
all that's living hides,  
all that's open cries.

In the rain the mind closes,  
it doesn't hear the singing,  
it cannot smell the roses,  
petals drop upon the floorboards,  
all that's pretty's covered,  
all that's beauty quivers.

### THE WOODEN BRUCKEN

[12th Sept 1994, Luzern, Switzerland]

Bats on the black night waters  
beneath Luzern's wooden brucken;  
a bum drinks his budget beer  
waiting for the swans to come  
with their white angel-wings,  
to carry him carefully up  
from the cold concrete quay  
to a bed made in heaven.

What hope has he in hell on earth  
as the rain runs down his face;  
his bottle empty, made from sand,  
he throws it wilfully at a swan -  
but with a splash the waters part,  
all is lost, his hope departs,  
he flees his wet worthless life  
across the ancient brucken spars.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### **DOWN A DUSTY ROAD**

[11.45pm, 16th Sept 1994, Grez-sur-Loing, France]

Down a dusty road the way all travellers  
go,  
That's how I saw life in Grez-sur-Loing -  
Off the beaten track, no back-pack on my  
back,  
I was on the slippery slope and didn't care.

I had beer to my lips, I was tobacco  
finger-tipped,  
I had the stars above as my light -  
It was Friday night. Should I dress for  
town?  
No, be damned! To hell with  
Fountainbleau!

The moon peered thru trees like a big  
French cheese,  
I ate it up as if I were Ben Gunn -  
I was happy having fun, singing out my  
lungs  
Down that dusty road all on my own.

### **THE LAND THAT WE LIVE IN**

[4th - 8th Oct 1994, Hazelbank, Innellan]

What do we know  
of the land that we live in  
of the soil that we turn  
the earth of our ancestors?  
as we dig with our shovels  
as we scrape with our fingers  
as the leaves of the trees  
drop on our dreamings? -

I see a ship sailing this way  
sail of the Dugall  
shield of the Fingall  
an island offshore no longer there  
washed by the tides  
swept off by gales

the beach is all empty  
where once there was fighting.

Beneath the clods of drowning clay  
bones still fresh from yesterday  
the sky moves like shifting sea  
but the earth spews it's history.

What do we know  
of the land that we walk on  
the burnt open heath  
the wilds of upland?  
where forests took fire  
where oceans ran dry  
where seed on the wind  
fell on our future? -

I hear a voice growing much louder  
tongue of the Gael  
song of warm welcome  
pipes and drums gone to the grave  
drone of the pibroch  
rap of the snare  
the hills are all forests  
where once they were bare.

The worms traverse the embalming caves  
rabbits warren where badgers lay  
the rain descends upon the raised  
walking and sharing the invisible.

What do we know  
of the land that unites us  
of the boundaries we guard  
the mainland and islands  
what do we know .....?

### **TA, DA, TA.**

On The Occasion of My Father's Sixtieth  
Birthday, 18th Oct 1994  
[11.08am, 16th Oct 1994, Hazelbank,  
Innellan]

I have a dad, a great dad,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

This poem is for his sixtieth birthday -  
For when I think back all the years,  
The things he's done to make me - me,  
I cannot help but smile and say  
'Ta, Da. Cheers!'

He taught me how to kick a ball,  
How to fight, how to swim,  
He even showed me how to row,  
To use a hammer and a drill,  
How to mend a leaking tap -  
'Ta, Da. Cheers!'

So many things come to pass  
Between a son and his dad -  
Too often son with outstretched hand  
Has his dad rescue him  
From hunger, debt and foreign places -  
'Ta, Da. Cheers.'

So here's to you, Da, thanks again,  
Without you here I'd be lost ...  
Oh by the way, my cistern's leaking  
And the bank are on my back -  
You couldn't just help me out ...  
'Ta, Da. Cheers!'

### **THE CROWN COURT KARAOKE**

[Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 1994, Crown Bar,  
Dunoon]

This is the place for karaoke –  
Try and tell a simple joke  
An' people break into song.  
How can a man compete  
With women singing 'Baby, baby'  
Or guys like Perry crooning 'Rock-an-  
roll'?  
Oh God, put me out on the road  
Where I can find stars above me  
Before I reach another pub.

### **THE KARAOKE SINGER**

[12.47am, 24th Nov 1994, Hazelbank]

Sing into the rafters, mate,  
No-one knows, no-one cares,  
No-one guesses you are sad,  
No-one sees that you are down,  
All about them's in a dance,  
You are but the moment's voice  
Belting out cheap romance -  
A tune that makes someone cry,  
A song that makes someone laugh -  
While in the backroom of your mind  
You are taken through a door  
Leading out into the past,  
Where you once stood in light,  
Where someone once held you tight,  
Where you were once left behind,  
Left to get on with your life -

The crowd may not know it so,  
Your song is not a string of lines,  
Your voice is from another time,  
Your thoughts are sunk in your sublime,  
That place where all your memories go,  
The sad, the bad, the untoward,  
That guilt has hidden far within,  
Where pride has covered up the sins  
Which each of us will not admit  
Except through songs others wrote -

So sing, mate, without reserve,  
Sing your tears without reproach  
While the world about applauds  
Your song - dredged up to mask your  
voice,  
Your misplaced thoughts in a song  
Upon your lips in the pub!

You are alone before the world,  
No-one knows, no-one cares -  
All about you's in a dance  
Listening to your cheap romance,  
Inside you are a mixed-up mess -

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

What'd you mean it's my turn next?

### **OUT OF LOVE**

[3.58am, 26th Nov 1994, Hazelbank]

Out of love, no special one,  
no girl to keep the winter warm,  
no tressed-head upon my chest  
no sweet lips pressed on mine  
no whispered words willing me  
to do what I have not done -

I sleep alone, content and sound,  
I rise and naked go about  
all the things I might hide  
if I were in love again -  
I may miss the warm caress,  
I do not miss the arguments.

### **MRS HAUSER**

[1.03am, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1994, Hazelbank]

If I were to say to you  
All the things I felt inside,  
All the beauty that I see  
In your eyes and in your smile –  
Then I would talk about the stars,  
The bees about the honey flowers,  
I would wax about the moon  
And wane upon the changing tides;

I would chase the free-born deer  
And run upon the linged brae-sides,  
I would catch the breeze-borne seed  
And dwell beneath the towering pines;  
I would swim below the linns  
And come to shore on lochan isles,  
I would touch the spreading fern,  
Inhale the breezes from the south.

For if I were to kiss your cheek  
And tingle as I surely would –  
All the troubles of the world  
Would melt and never freeze again,

For I would feel your soft skin  
Against my face, upon my lips,  
And I forever smote by you  
Would never kiss another then.

I would for all time be charmed,  
Bewitched beyond a heavenly earth,  
I would softly kiss your brow,  
Your eyes, your cheeks, and your nose,  
I'd gently kiss you to your toes,  
And whisper through your scented hair,  
Then listen for your whispers back  
Like drifting smoke upon a gale.

### **SHE WAS THE AGE OF BYRON**

[10.12am, 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 1994, Dunoon]

She was the age Byron died,  
Burns too when he went  
to that happy land of bards  
where poetry's never dead.

I must admit she wrote no verse  
that we might view now she's gone,  
she left no marks upon a page  
we might judge her for.

Her poetry was in her touch,  
the way she reached out and loved;  
a single word whispered low,  
barely more than a moan.

Yes, now she's gone – up to  
get the kids dressed for school;  
she'll be back at five to nine  
with poetry in her hands.

### **FRAGMENTS OF TIME (1995)**

[11.57pm, 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1995 Dunoon –  
10.36pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 1995 Hazelbank,  
Innellan]

Let no man say he's found  
God in the eyes of his wife –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

nor any wife declare aloud  
that her spouse despises love –  
too few are here a hundred years,  
too few are wise enough for us.

Ten years ago Roderick announced  
that he was free from his bonds;  
he was done with family cares,  
free of all the twosome ties.  
The time had come to finally live  
to do and try the yet undone,  
yet none of those he'd befriended  
liked or shared his new lifestyle –  
they abhorred his evening jaunts,  
they discussed his fickle wants,  
they whispered in the lowest tones  
behind his naked back.

The bells still ring every Sunday,  
and every Monday sure as rain,  
the children pull on their black tights,  
tuck their blouses into waistbands.  
All those sleepy puffed eyed faces  
splashed and made bright and shiny –  
there goes the future up the hill,  
lunchboxes swinging in the wind.  
Ba ba blacksheep, Jack and Jill ...  
no man can sing such honest tunes;  
time passes like a speeding train  
across us lying on the track –  
we lose a limb, perhaps a hand  
until we are beyond repair.

Lord! If you are out there somewhere,  
Don't hide away like some recluse;  
There's folks down here need some help,  
who haven't had a chance in hell,  
snatched from the void of birth,  
thrust into the dark of life –  
who knows where to find light  
when all about is deathly pale.  
Mystics, yes, but missing too;  
gurus, yes, through and through,  
knowledge enters, knowledge leaves –

the wisest men are also fools.

Susan laid her tarot cards upon  
the carpet when the light went out –  
and by the candlelight she read  
the future through the night.  
The wild wind blew gale force twelve,  
the river broke the sea-wall front,  
cars washed over the watery edge,  
their headlamps, to the turmoiled depths  
sunk into the briny waste  
while Susan dealt out Death.

Know we nothing, nothingness –  
Empty is the human head.  
Stand upon the highest hill –  
See you the distant universe?

Maxwell smoked a cigarette,  
tossed it half-done in a bin,  
gulped his coffee, rushed his lunch,  
burped and paid the hotel clerk.  
His brief case sagged in tiredness,  
his suit hung like Frederic West;  
he crashed through the one-way door  
out into the wilderness.

Tuesday always brings the same –  
children staying home from school;  
mothers take their headache pills,  
go screaming through another day;  
while on the phone officials moan  
that they're hated by their peers,  
that they are grey, as others spend  
the tax they should declare –  
such envy in their petty words,  
malice in their righteous airs.

Who is honest now, dear John,  
point him out, or her, and croon  
that out there - who's never tried  
to cheat, nor steal, not told a lie  
in this land of broken numpties,  
where broken things are never fixed.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

On the ghats of old Benares,  
bodies for the pyre await –  
the flies are warded off by incense,  
harm is bayed by mantric chant,  
pensive mourners cleanse their ills  
as holy helpers beat on drums.

Mr. Watson packed his bin-liner,  
left behind his pile of bills,  
he ran off to a Russian mistress,  
promised her he'd go straight –  
but time repeats itself like Accurist;  
he ripped her off, fled to Spain.

Such episodes are all too common,  
we shall not speak of him again;  
life is shorter than a toothbrush,  
a little longer than a pen –  
toothpaste tube squeezed, discarded,  
ink running dry before the end.

Lovers know what others don't,  
that time is short, running out –  
they cling despairingly in tears,  
count the hours they are apart,  
send intruding friends away,  
walk in wind and rain, and go  
where few seldom make a path  
upon the edge of a cliff –  
a ledge above a violent gorge  
beneath a pine by raging falls.

Lovers know the fruitless aims of man,  
they give themselves no false hopes,  
they breathe, the wind, the rain and laugh,  
catch time in their clasping hands,  
pass their eyes across the sky,  
across the wide world expanse,  
they return to walk and move  
from wooded wild to windy moor.

Time makes all drift apart,  
this is the way all things –  
the Sun deserts the day at dusk,

the Moon denies night at dawn;  
for when the morning rays come over  
the hills beyond the ebbing tide,  
the evening sinks into the waves  
beyond the other side of life.

Meanwhile on this side of time,  
Bobby rubbed his pot-marked nose,  
Daphne laid him on her bed,  
wrapped a towel about his face,  
made him lie still and quiet,  
squeezed his blackheads one by one.  
He cried in pain, thrashed his legs  
as she cleansed his filthy snout,  
wiped it raw with a cloth,  
then daubed his agony with ice,  
eased the hurt with natural oils,  
kissed him softly on the mouth –  
made love to him for an hour,  
then made lunch while he dressed  
and went to look at himself –  
skin gleaming, face now cleansed,  
his beak a beacon, totally red.

Beauty in the seeker's eye,  
mirrors rarely every lie –  
what you view is what you know  
about yourself however dark.

Children never know themselves,  
they change, grow, daily learn  
that what they were yesterday  
can be altered on a whim –  
a few tears shed undoes wrong,  
a sideways look defeats authority,  
a simple 'sorry' earns more love  
than any adult lover claws  
by care or service to a mate.  
For children are raw creation,  
animals born to be instructed  
with all our foolish human traits -  
we take their wildness, break their will  
and substitute their good with guilt.  
We were once children too –

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

we know what was done to us;  
we need not dwell on such things  
for it makes us mostly sad.  
For sad are many folks always,  
never shown or offered joy,  
lost in some murky past,  
they through life stagger on –  
some waiting for a Prince to show,  
or fearing a knock at their door.

There are those in fitful sleep  
receiving visits from the dead –  
a grandma's scowling angry face  
scolding them for guilty deeds;  
its little wonder they are ill  
and fear the coming of the night  
when every sound is a ghost  
come to haunt, rob their rest,  
leave them useless in the day,  
wracked with pain, terror ridden  
they cannot function, smile or laugh,  
they are tortured every thought,  
brought so low they crave love  
to save them from pointless death.

Not so James with his hammer,  
making shelves with his toys,  
tools that boys dream of owning,  
electric drills, saws and sanders,  
cleaned with care, love and thought,  
used to hone and dress hewn timber,  
endless hours in his shed  
shaving down boughs of lumber.  
Each piece is James's Mona Lisa,  
or products of his misty faith,  
such as a Christ on a cross;  
for James is sick of facing life,  
so he hides in his shed –  
enjoying the rest, his quiet pursuit  
shaping bits of forest wood  
that harms none, so no one cares  
he puts his shelves up, places there  
all the artefacts he's made –  
while all the time his house is bare,

lacking carpet, curtains, chairs –  
a simple life is all he craves,  
and so he lives day to day.

Meanwhile in far Macedonia,  
Trevor teaches what he can;  
eager eyes and cocked head kids  
listen to his English words -  
for he could not speak to them  
in Greek or Serb or Albanian.  
He is there 'cause no one else  
wished to work in distant Skopje,  
and now in all his thirty years  
he's never been quite so happy –  
he is free of all his past,  
he's got himself a Veles lass,  
he has plans to let time pass  
in love in Macedonia.

Walking to the beauty parlour,  
swept before a north-east wind,  
Madge has made another boob –  
she's dyed her hair shocking blue.  
Quick rinse set from a tin,  
she pulls down her floppy hat,  
and 'cause she is a size eighteen  
her mink coat bulges at the hips.  
She really must get rid of it,  
place an ad in the Gazette,  
exchange the beast for a car -  
she's had enough of taking cabs,  
she'd rather risk a heart attack  
than have a cabbie make a quip.

Then in a gust, her hat blows off,  
tumbles down the crowded street;  
all the world turns to stare ...  
poor Madge in complete despair  
runs into a baker's shop  
throws some flour in her hair.

Now she looks more her age,  
white from years of toil and wear,  
a pensioner lifts his hat to her

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

as she wobbles on her way  
a block or two to the parlour  
to have her hair re-dyed grey.

Time shows on our faces  
Time leaves all its traces  
Time cannot be evaded  
Our time is now.

### DEAR LOVED ONE

[Spring ?1995, Hazelbank, Innellan]

A thousand kisses on your lips,  
A thousand hands upon your hips,  
A thousand thoughts when you're missed -  
I am yours, oh loved one!

### THE ALBANIAN TRADER

[10.36pm, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1995, Piraeus,  
Greece]

Cold blew the wind across Attica  
North-east down from frozen Russia  
The coastline grey and uninviting  
The sea cruel, the tide-line garbaged  
As evening darkened the horizon  
The ill drove to buy their medicines  
Taverna owners washed their salads  
Widows mopped their floors of marble  
The lonely clenched their packs of  
Marlbros  
Curators locked away their statues  
As I flew into dismal Athens  
On my way to far Tirana.

I missed the kids and their mother  
I remembered all past horrors;  
Life upon the road is empty  
When love is traded for a hotel  
And the whine of cars and buses  
The pain and shudder of the city  
I could not hear the lapping waves  
Nor the gulls I'd left behind  
At my home, by the sea

In tranquil, quiet, sweet Argyll -  
Where horses pound along the sands  
Where seals bask upon the rocks  
Where redwoods tower to the sky  
And garlic grows upon the cliff.

Instead, I had picked Piraeus  
To spend a lonely night in Greece  
In a spartan Attic room  
Waiting for the time to go  
Recalling slowly all I've done  
To bring about all that's passed  
To make me leave the perfect dream  
Of life in an idyllic land.

Hazelbank! My cottage house  
Where every day is happiness  
Gazing out upon the sea  
Out across the Firth of Clyde  
With the kids and their mum  
Who I loved more than Greece.

I always knew I'd come to lose  
That which I knew I had  
When at home in the garden  
With the children in the mud  
Trying to tame the mountain burn  
That gushes from the rocky cliff  
That we hoped to bring to flower  
To plant and make work for us  
Which in our hearts we did not want  
We were doing it for the fun  
For in Argyll, nature wins.

And now, discontent with happiness,  
I had come to the Balkans  
On some wild business scheme  
Some mad idea to make a fortune.  
And if this meant a night in Greece  
In some wayward room in Piraeus  
It was not for myself, but for the future  
So we might someday tame the burn  
Girth with rocks, guide it seaward  
Make it gurgle, sing and sparkle

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Make it babble over stone  
Let it travel fully noticed  
Let it not seep and leach  
Into the earth of Argyll.

Too many men seep into the unknown  
Lives lived that never sparkle  
Existence sinking without trace  
Seeping in and never running.  
Therefore, a night - a Greek hotel  
Was a journey to the beach  
To gather up, carry stones  
Over which I might run.

If not, it was with the knowledge  
That I did not desire change  
But had to prove to myself  
That what I had was beautiful  
By the shore of the Clyde  
Far away in far Argyll.

### TIRANA URCHIN

[Midnight, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1995, Tirana]

In the folds of the mountains  
Neath the peaks of Dahti high,  
An urchin slept in a doorway  
Nowhere home, nowhere to go;  
Left behind his childhood dreams  
Beyond a distant mountain pass.

### LOST

[10.22pm, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1995, Tirana]

I am a child in search of a mother,  
I am a boy in search of the child,  
I am a man being a father,  
I am a father being a boy.

### HOXHA'S BUNKERS

[2.27pm, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 7km from Tirana]

Sitting on a Hoxha bunker  
On my birthday in Albania,

Tirana spread out below  
Like Katmandu or Managua,  
Nothing big on the horizon  
Ringed by mountains, grazed by goats,  
Third world housing in construction  
In a nation long cut off.  
Europe where is your compassion  
For a people few of us know?

Here a people poor and hardy,  
Here a nation hungry cold,  
Here a people warm and friendly  
Like the Afghans and the Poles.  
Here a nation with no tourists,  
Here a people badly clothed,  
Here a nation full of smiles  
Despite the Hoxha years of old.

In Albania on my birthday,  
Far from my own wealthy land -  
I have money in my pocket,  
One year's wages here at least.  
Is it right that I am rich  
In a land, dusty, poor?  
Europe, where is your guilt?  
Albanians are one with us.

All through time, Greek and Roman,  
Turk, Italian, German too  
Have trudded across Albania's soil  
Taken what they wanted, gone.  
Communism gave them nothing  
But a system doomed to fail;  
Where now Albania? What future  
With your new dawn?

Here in Albania on my birthday  
I have no answers to the past,  
I have some questions for the future,  
Man is never equal born.  
There is no succour in religion,  
There is no faith in politics,  
Yet I can hope for better times  
Though many doubt an optimist.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Oh Albania, free of Europe,  
Perhaps its better to be lost  
In your mountains, on your beaches  
Which still yours, are not yet sold;  
For once the sharks, the piranha  
Arrive from Europe with their bucks,  
A few of you will surely profit  
But most of you will suffer loss.

Loss of what? The open question,  
Time has shown you are naïve,  
A nation open to suggestion,  
You've fallen foul of foreign greed.  
So beware the Anglo Saxons,  
The Italians, French and the Greeks,  
Remember Hoxha's concrete bunkers  
And why there was once a need.

### STOLEN LOVE

[12.41am, Easter Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> Apr  
1995, Hazelbank, Innellan]

Too soon in love, yet not quick enough  
I fell in love with a lady –  
On the arm of a man abusing her charm  
Without any qualms, without a delay  
I said to myself 'She is for me!  
I'll set her free!' and hatched a plan  
That only a man in love understands.

For there before me across the floor  
At a table she sat, unable to laugh  
With the man with his hand on her wrist.  
With a twist, he took the blood from her  
face,  
Blackened her eyes with a snide aside,  
Made her lips colour like an icy river  
Forever shivering over a frozen weir.

I was right in deciding to fight –  
A beautiful woman being slowly destroyed,  
A toy in the hands of a childish man.

### NAPPING

[10.52pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995, Hazelbank]

Let no man know a single sound  
That he has not some knowledge of,  
For if he comes upon a crash,  
A bang, or some unprepared smash,  
His heart will jump and faint attack  
At having thus been caught out.

### LOOKING FOR A DIRTY WORLD

[11pm, 29<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995, Hazelbank]

There is more than I can say herewith  
About the months I've let pass –  
I have left the ink pen down ...  
Instead let my fingers type  
A novel spanning twelve decades  
In which I barely reach the truth  
Of all the things I want to clean  
From my cluttered inner cave.

I have not missed my verse,  
Thought or pined for its loss.  
No! I am free to fictionalise,  
Break from true poetic mood;  
For who has want of trite confession  
When there is sex within a book,  
Who would not read of murder,  
Deceit and fortunes made from war.

Poetry's for corrupted spirits,  
Cleanser of the wild debaucher;  
Prose is for the clear of conscience  
Looking for a dirty world.

### THE SECRET WATERFALL

[1.56pm, 12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1995, Hazelbank,  
Innellan]

There is beyond my house a hidden glen  
Down which a tumbling stream cascades,  
With sides so steep it takes a man  
From brink to brink of gaping death.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

No fool would lightly scale down there  
With outstretched arms descend by  
choice,  
Except in search of what he'd heard,  
But what as yet he had not found.

There is – so village folk recount,  
A secret pool below that fall –  
An enchanted lair of ages past  
Where lovers hid and murderers drank.

I descended, found that pool -  
Stood mute beneath the thunderous spray,  
Half blinded, saw the cascade foam  
And curdle all my senses.

### NEIDER SACHEN

For Nadine and Vanessa

[15<sup>th</sup> September 1995?, Hazelbank]

When the days were not right,  
We crossed the sea, we three  
Drove into the night, six days  
We slept out upon the moors,  
Turf stacks, across the fields;  
Deer hid in the aspen.

### NO ONE TRAVELS ALONE

[1.07pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1996, Route 90(84)  
circa Sturbridge, Mass]

No one who travels alone, travels alone,  
There's always someone to meet on the  
road.  
Speaking in Spanish to grey-haired  
Italians,  
Or listening to Yale grads talking in  
Gaelic;  
Bussing from Mass, thru Rhode to Conn.  
If you travel alone - its inside your head.

### RUNNING FROM THE HURRICANE

[1.36pm, 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 1996, Mile 77 (84)  
southbound, USA]

Boston to New York, the green slips by,  
The scoured bedrock blasted by time,  
The pre-autumn trees touching the hem  
Of the hurricane clouds marching by.

What is beyond the grassy soft shoulder  
Edging existence mile after mile?  
Signposts hint of satellite cities  
Beyond the aspen, cedar and pine.

Rolling black tarmac bridging brown  
springs  
Flowing from sources still not found;  
Out of the green New York rises  
Into the grey of the hurricane night.

### WASHINGTON CATHEDRAL

For Maisie Gordon Whitman

[17<sup>th</sup> September 1996, Washington DC]

There on a hill in the white water rain  
flooded in light, the evening song -  
the swish of a tyre, the pull on a brake,  
a cut of an engine, and a headlamp fade.

High heel upon limestone steps  
beneath vaulted arch and buttressed nave -  
beyond the trees on Capitol Hill,  
Congress wrestles with the devils's ways.

Conscience weary and heavy souled,  
shoulders wet and hurricane blown -  
as the choir recants a godly tune,  
a lost soul prays by Wilson's tomb.

Embalmed in a mantle of cathedral stone,  
shed of sins and skinned with hope -  
presidents seek and senators uncover  
a higher law than the laws they order.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

There on a hill in the spiraling rain,  
tail-end to another hurricane,  
above the flood and Washington's ways  
a whiter house prevails.

### SILENCE

[1.03am, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1997, Priesthill,  
Glasgow]

Never is the quiet moment so silent,  
So still that life is stagnant;  
For always there is a stirring,  
Somewhere there is a movement,  
Somehow there is always something  
Not quite settled, nor married  
Enough to tarry, or stay.

### POPPING OFF AND LOST

[10.54pm, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1997, Priesthill,  
Glasgow]

Waiting for tomorrow in the twilight  
hour,  
Summer on us now as in younger days.  
What becomes of time in the silent fall;  
Heavy dyed clouds heading this way.

No one can remember the minute just  
gone,  
Who will have recorded it all anyway?  
Life's a button hanging by a thread,  
Popping off, and lost on a rainy day.

### SHOPPING TROLLEYS

[Near midnight, 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul 1997, Hazelbank,  
Innellan]

Near the Auldhouse Burn near Newlands  
To Levern Water, just past Crookston,  
A dozen little streams feed and nourish  
The River Cart edging on to Renfrew.

Somewhere between Pollokshaws and  
Paisley,

Out of Barrhead, drops Brock Burn,  
Draining Barrhead, Nitshill and Darnley,  
Its shopping trolleys rusting in its mud.

### TOWARD POINT

[12.49am, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1997, Hazelbank]

Sand through the hands on a rocky shore,  
Altars for prayers near standing stones,  
Crystals of coal washed by the sea,  
Sharded clay icons on black feathered  
scree.

Breaking of boulders lodged by white ice,  
Mountains of pink cliffs atop of debris,  
Walkways of paving, child like created,  
Below strong lights shadowed by techno.

War in the distance on a ferned slope,  
Cone gatherer silhouetted under Welsh  
slate cope,  
Hatless cyclist and coatless barefooted  
wife  
Search the seal-less water for signs.

### DOON VALLEY - DUNASKIN

[3.29pm, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1997, Dunaskin,  
Aryshire]

The legacy left by spirits now gone,  
Pit-rows demolished traced by moss,  
Wind mixed music scraping the rust  
Of machines and structures abandoned.

Deep in the dark of watery faces,  
Deep within the empty brick kilns,  
On the slag slopes overlooking vast acres,  
The waste of man's labours remains.

Hot are the hills steaming in winter,  
Owls nest snoring in craters of flux,  
Green is Doon Valley hedgelessly gardened  
Out of the ashes of work.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### NIPPED AT

[11.12pm, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1997, Priesthill,  
Glasgow]

Lost in the anger of unfinished business,  
Left to the torment of bitter exchanges,  
Red-faced and tempered, over-extended,  
Reaching for objects to signal distress -  
Such is the outrage of patience that's  
ended,  
Such is the outcome of lovers at odds.

### EL NINO'S YEAR

[15<sup>th</sup> January 1998?, Hazelank, Innellan]

Marked by memories, turns another year  
obscured by cluttered recall, void of  
resolutions.

Gales lash south of wild isolation,  
sandbags discarded, lie in doorways;  
the Little Bay calm, swans in ceilidh;  
second-hand shops empty of all rainwear;  
mist halfway down the snow-topped ridges  
ice-aged and scarred by all that's passed.

Lerag Cross shattered in three pieces  
stands iron girded guarding Kilbride glen;  
moody vapours swirl the crippled chapel;  
the roofless tumble stoned MacDougal  
graves  
stacked so high the churchyard gapes  
upwards  
to engulf the overtired blue Argyll sky.

Near to distant whispers reach the ocean  
travelled by those dispatched by angry  
hands.

Time offers no escape nor solace in this  
landscape  
from city life's grubby deals and money  
grabbers;

seas and lochs and tumbling mountain  
chasms  
do not erase an old year, and bring  
another -  
time is mindful, minds are full of time,  
times of failure, times of doubt and  
sorrow.

A fish box grinding on the lochside gravel  
by shore paths tread for centuries, now  
uncharted;  
mated herons skimming outbound,  
homeward going,  
carrying the crofting ghosts of  
Ardentallon.

Sleep contains no cave to hide from  
history;  
closed eyes hold visions worse than living;  
faces rising out the night marsh, gatecrash  
oblivion.

Grey rising dawn, grey falling evening;  
wet scud morning, wet dreary gloaming;  
the driving drench of Western kenning.

Bridges built to belittle mighty oceans  
cannot save the damned from Christian  
forces;  
rock wracked slathey Easdale is St. Helena.

No escape from destiny by moral action;  
doomed to failure by a labyrinth of  
choice;  
New Year brings no new beginning.

Kilmelford churchyard shuttered, fenced,  
locked;  
salvation in the ran there shall not be.

If there is hope in the wail of winter  
within the shadow of black mountained  
Mull;  
if there is faith in the fists of Morven

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

or the fissures of Ossian's fabled world -  
ruin stands between ambition and fortune  
in the shelter of Kerrera's horse-shoe  
coves.

If darkness ends in the caves of Olaf,  
respite must ripple back from Lismore;  
Dunollie bleak, broken, haunts the  
treeline;  
Dunstaffnage black and barren haunts the  
shore -  
it's bleach barked beeches limed on buried  
bone.

Sunlight breaks through on Ben Cruachan;  
Ardchattan repels the wrack and fuming  
loch;  
in a near-by glen, a white spate falls.

Out beyond the mainland, island driven  
the future runs between Aros and  
Tobermory;  
cliffs of road, and crags of single highway,  
plunge and rise double-crossed by  
tomorrow -  
Christ-crushed by Columba of Iona.

Rock-wrecked smack at Creuig Point,  
broken pier and derelict houses rubble  
ruined,  
minor shadows flirting in the lichened  
oaks,  
sirens screaming in the wind by  
Dutchman's Cap,  
deadly pools and eddy's round Staffa's  
stacks,  
deserted Ulva haunted by Kilninian's  
ghosts -  
wailing for the return of the young.

Sleep is no escape from weary winter,  
upright standing sentinel guarding Lonan,  
ancient birch and alder ripe with catkin,

oak and larch, and one lone red Scots pine  
-  
all that's left from Bonawe's charcoal  
smelting,  
pig iron for the ploughs, post Culloden.

January blows and spring has passed -  
Sirocco breezes buffet as El Nino comes.

Falls of Lorn, silent running, black and  
brooding;  
Linn of Avich, cascading, raging  
lochwards;  
crannogs and causeways long since out of  
usage;  
drover roads traversing Loch Awe clachan  
strewn;  
Carnassie Castle tower, a virtual ruin;  
Kilmartin's cysts and cairns stripped of  
treasure;  
ring and cup marks, on the march to  
Dunadd.

In the landscape, only ghosts can hunt -  
in our time, the dead are large in number.

There in the fields with their tumbling  
dykes;  
there in the streams, in the forests, on the  
lochs;  
there in every boulder, stone or rock -  
there in the past where our ancestors  
dwelt;  
the living and the dead jointly walk.

### LEAVING HAZELBANK

[1.22pm, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1998, Dumoon-  
Gourock Ferry]

A house where laughter rung,  
Empty now with death is hung,  
A garden filled with children's singing,  
Now's overhung with brooding laurel -  
Sands where lovers took long strolls,

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

Now are strewn with wrack and litter.

Time puts its hand upon my shoulder,  
I dare not turn and look behind  
At all that's withered during life;  
For still ahead lies the hope  
That what I want is still to come,  
And that which comes will bring me joy.

### **FAR AWAY FROM THE FUTURE**

[8.20pm, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1998, Cayton Bay,  
Yorkshire]

Why fret away the future before today is  
gone?  
All about is finer than it was ...  
My house of ill-repair is rightly sold,  
I stand upon the threshold of a new abode.

Welcome friends come bearing lucky  
charms,  
The composer, countess and banker laugh  
-  
My duchess lover climbs the stair to bed;  
I linger on as master of all past debts.

Fortune winks at me in the evening sun,  
Warm winds flow through favoured  
haunts;  
Children's laughter covers all my  
cowering doubts;  
Today is with me now, and tomorrow  
walks.

## GLIMPSES OF THE NEXT QUARTER

### AELLE'S POEM

[9.50pm, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2001, Tyndrum, Argyll]

Wounded by warring, worn with walking  
High in the hills, hankering for home  
Wrestled from women, wrenched from  
wenching  
The weary warrior stands alone.

Blooded by battle, axe blade broken  
Spear shaft smashed, helmet hewed  
Chanting war cries, stirring the sleeping  
The warrior waits, bereft of brew.

Thirsty for fighting, hungry for hunting  
Slinging of shields, singing of swords  
Proud in his posture, brave in his bearing  
The warrior wishes to fight his foes!

### AERIC'S POEM

[9.03am, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2006, Camden Market, London]

Sailed from shore, shipped from storms.  
I sought and slayed my kin's killer  
avenged in anger, Aeric's axe  
fell foully on Aeric's foes,  
cruelly cleft Fingal's naked neck  
claimed his land with Woden's word.

### NOT TO BE SEEN

[12.13am, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, Crick Bung, Denham, Bucks]

Not to be seen, not to be heard,  
The voice of the naked, the face of the  
child,  
Wandering the alleys and lanes of the  
West,  
Straggling the roads stretching no end.

### LEAP NOWHERE

[12.17am, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, Crick Bung, Denham]

Leap nowhere without faith  
And never look back  
On the deeds of the doer  
Or the sins of the pack.

### THE ROAD OF NECESSITY

[10.01am, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Crick Bung, Denham]

The road of necessity is the way of  
despair,  
The need of the poor is the want of the  
rich;  
From heaven to earth, mountain to sea  
The traffic is heavy on the path to the  
cliff.

### SHE LIKES TO RUN

For Suzie  
[11.19am, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Crick Bung, Denham]

She likes to run in beautiful places  
Far from the cry and hue of the city,  
Where she can be ordered and perfect,  
Her breath the wind wed to the wild.

### QAWRA

[1pm, 2<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Qawra, Malta]

Free in the sun to swim and run,  
To pound the sand, brave the surf,  
Take the shade in the terrace trees,  
Stare at the stars in the midnight breeze;  
Find the dawn in the rising east,  
Kiss your lover and feast till lunch.

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### SEVENTH DECADE

[10.15am, 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2010, Crick Bung,  
Denham]

Each decade turns the pages of time  
Between the sheets the sun revolves;  
The heat of the day, the ice of the night  
I wake to eat, I wait in line,  
I walk the moors, I wade my brooks,  
I whittle every passing hour -  
Watch the waves turn the sand,  
Wish and want my fading child  
To turn, retrace the wandering road  
I first trod so well alone.

### SUZIE

[7.54am, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011, Estonia]

I am an island in a sea of dreams  
Caught in a storm - harbour with me.  
I am fresh water, shelter and calm -  
A rock in an ocean of wild drowning fear

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

### TIMELINE TO THE POEMS

To put the collection into a context, the following pages will give the reader an idea of the underlying events and references to the works that appear in this collection.

### IN SEARCH OF A GURU {1974-75}

These poems are my earliest, and as a result they lack technique, contain forced rhymes, but they reveal something of my journey to India as a twenty year old. I had saved up enough to be away for a year by working in Newcastle as bus conductor. I had dropped out of university the previous summer, found myself a bit lost, shackled up with a Barnsley girl, had my heart broken, got into transcendental meditation, got employed on the buses (I was too young to be a driver), then went of to India in search of a guru.

### CAN'T FIND THE BEACH [1975-76]

Twenty one and itching to be off again. I moved to Edinburgh for three weeks and worked as a pot washer, then went back to Newcastle, signed on for six months, then got a job car cleaning. In April I got employed by the Parks Dept. It was the hottest summer of the century and I got bust for having three roaches in my bin (those were the days), but I'd saved enough to be off to Africa.

### ROAD TO AFRICA [1976-77]

This was quite an adventure. Desert, swamp, more desert; disease, quarantine, frustration. I learned patience in Africa. I started my first novel while in quarantine in northern Kenya and most of my

writing went into that, so the poetry does not reflect the true scale of that continent - the people, the landscape, the teaming life.

### ROAD TO SOUTH AMERICA [1977-78]

I made this trip with Charlie Bado from Newcastle. I was twenty four, he was nineteen. I had done various jobs before setting off - as a librarian in Newcastle Poly, a three month non-destructive testing course in Stockton-on-Tees, a industrial relations worker for Tyne and Wear Transport Executive interviewing bus drivers as potential train drivers for the new Metro system. I was having endless affairs that weren't working out. I moved to London (Kentish Town Road) to be with Diana. I lasted five days. I was not ready for London. South America seemed a better option. The journey ended with Charlie and I repatriated from Panama, and our passports retained on arrival back in the UK.

### ROAD TO THE AMERICAS [1978-80]

Back from South America, broke and with a second novel to write up. I moved into a squat in Akenside Terrace - well, the place was deemed uninhabitable but I managed to make it into a home of some sort. When I finished the novel, I travelled to Aberdeen and got a job on the Brent Delta oil rig as a roustabout. They were still drilling back then and it was a tough job. By coincidence, a Brent D barrel of oil is still the benchmark for all European oil prices. Once done with the rigs, I got my passport back from the FCO and flew to Seattle. The poetry sort of gives its own account of what happened for the next

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

year. There is a more detailed account in my third novel.

FROG (an illustrated collection) [1980]  
[22<sup>nd</sup> Jun – 25<sup>th</sup> Jul 1980, 2 Victoria Sq, Newcastle]

This collection of poems is omitted from this edition as the original text published in 1980 is in illustrated format. However, a number of the poems that form the basis of the tale can be found including the original Froggies poem composed in May 1975.

SIX MONTHS IN ENGLAND [1980]

I had returned to Newcastle with Laura and her son Chris. It was not an easy time for us, after all the travelling, I felt caged. However, I did put out my first poetry collection SWEET SURRENDER. Laura's grandfather was a bookbinder and he had taught her how to make books. This information was enough for us to set up Palm Tree Books to publish my work.

BALLADS FOR THE PACIFIC BEACH [1981]

We moved to California in Dec 1980. Something clicked with my poetry. I was warmly welcomed into the Bay Area Poet fraternity by Mary Rudge and performed at a large number of poetry readings. They seemed to like my work and were immensely taken by my ability to move around the world like a hobo. For some reason I seemed to be stuck in the ballad form - perhaps because it came naturally for me. I found out why - the ballad form introduced into Britain in the twelve century from France, died out almost everywhere else in Europe except the Borders of Scotland, Northumberland

and parts of Ireland where it remained very much alive as the main poetic form. When the Scots / Irish moved to the Appalachians, they took the form with them where it melted with African rhythm and became the Blues. American County music is traditional ballad 4 x 4. The early Beatles music is the same ballad form. Note - not all of the poems in this section are ballads.

PARADISE AND HELL [1981-82]

We had to get out of California, it was driving us crazy. I was just another immigrant and just seemed to be working to eat, pay the rent, and smoke pot. Everybody smoked pot! It was like there was no tomorrow, no yesterday, and no today. Ambition seemed to be something that other people had. It was a fine place to be if you were healthy and from the Third World, but if you were sick, Black or in a brush with the law, it was a fascist state. The poetry reflects this - it dwells on crime and wrong-doing. I'm not a moralist per se, but the things I saw going on in California did not make me want to stay even though I had a Green Card.

THE NORTH COUNTRY [1982-83]

Laura, Chris and I moved in a two bedroom flat above a cafe on Shields Road, Byker, Newcastle. We were worse than penniless and unemployment in Thatcher's Britain had hit four million. Signing on was the only option - it paid the rent and gave us enough for food but little else. I got on with typing out my fifth novel - *Mungo*. I still was not making a penny from my writing (it would be another nineteen years) but I was artistically content. The poetry reflects a

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

gentler life , a family life, though it is not a very conventional one. During that time I decided that I would like to go back to university to prove to myself I was not a quitter, that I could get a degree, and that if I could do it, so could Laura who'd had Chris the month after she had turned seventeen.

### THE CANDIDE OF A YOUNG SCOTSMAN IN ENGLAND [1983]

Started on 19th Feb and finished on 24th July apart from the last fifteen lines which were added in Dec 83 and Jan 84 during my break from Newcastle University. The poem partly addresses the cultural shock that awaits a young Scot in England. Whether it is Newcastle or London, England is culturally very different from Scotland. The needs of the people (sex and drugs) might be similar, but the way in which Anglos and Scots go about getting these things is very different.' The work was first performed with music at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1984 and received a brief line or two of review in the Scotsman (25th Aug). The recording that co-exists with this poem was recorded in Banchory in 1988.

### THE UNDERGRADUATE - DIARY OF AN ENGLISH STUDENT [1983-86]

Original entitled Ninety-Weeks, then The Undergraduate, and also the Diary of an English Student.

Returning to Newcastle University as an undergraduate for the second time (unknown to the Registrar, the first having been aborted in 1973), I put aside my prose fiction writing as it was too time consuming. Between essay writing

and reading for my language and literature degree, I wrote five plays, put together a two hundred page guide to the works of C.P.Taylor, and despite myself, half wrote the novel Christine and the Tea-Chest. Much of my energies also went into the Diary of an English Student which I typed out at the end of every term which I photocopied and anonymously slid under my tutors' doors. By Week 52 my anonymity had gone and I was given a lot of negative criticism by Anne Stevenson the resident Northern Arts Literary Fellow based in the department, and by Robert Woof, later my final year tutor, who was at that time chairman of the Arts Council Literature Panel. They told me to keep my work brief and the poem of Week 52 is the result of this advice. It is the shortest of all the Weeks, and having kept the previous Week so short, I promptly ignored their advice as I felt I had to say something about a trip I had made to the Lakes. Thereafter, I stopped typing and distributing the work in the English Department, but carried on composing the Diary just the same.

### Manuscript Notes

WEEK 1 – 16<sup>th</sup> Oct 1983

WEEK 2 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1983

WEEK 3 – 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 1983

WEEK 4 – 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983

WEEK 5 – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983

WEEK 6 – 20<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983

WEEK 7 – 24<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 1983

WEEK 8 – 4<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983

WEEK 9 - 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983

WEEK 10 – 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1983

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 11 – 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1984. This poem is in Chaucer's Rime Royal 7-line stanza form. The content as can be read, deals with the snow falls that had come heavily in January 1984. The mention of the Royal Shakespeare Company is due to the fact that every year they came to Newcastle and the leading actors were usually invited to the University English department to talk about their roles (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 12 – 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1984. The first three stanzas deal with the genres poets has at his disposal when composing a poem. in this case, the poem is written in imitation of Donne's eleven line stanza ABCBDEFGHHH, though I haven't been clever enough to maintain this throughout. The latter part of the poem deals with two lovers in bed, rising, then separating. The last stanza is merely a reminder of the texts I had read in the week (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 13 – 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1984. An escape from the heavily academic composition of the previous week. It celebrates the merits of smoking marijuana and drinking beer to clear the mind of worry, overwork and despondency. Stanza AAA+0.5B. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 14 – 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Feb 1984, Glasgow. Each of the stanzas allude to a number of places in the world, most of which I have experienced for myself. The idea is to show the world beyond life as a university student, and a reminder of the fortunate ten years I had as a traveller. Written in Glasgow in by brother's flat during Reading Week, hence perhaps the change in tone.

Stanza - 6 line blank verse. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 15 – 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 1984. Inspired by the Winter Olympics in Yugoslavia which triggered me to recall my own experiences in that country. The small rural churches of Yugoslavia are very old, and I remember visiting one that had Renaissance religious paintings covering the walls. However, the religion aspect of the poem comes from a number of different experiences of Catholic churches throughout the world (St.Francis Xavier, Goa, in particular for the relic aspect), and three lines come from a work of Sir Richard Burton, before ending on the inevitability of death. Stanza - none. Free Verse. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 16 – 4<sup>th</sup> Mar 1984? The diary approach was to show a week's happenings in the life of a first year undergraduate English student. The idea and style is my own, though the initial short line form is an adaptation of the latter part of the Wakefield stanza. Stanza - irregular ABCDB.

WEEK 17 – 4<sup>th</sup> Mar 1984. A spoof on a student-tutor conversation which would be highly unlikely to be quite as patronising. It covers the work I had been reading or read for the week. Stanza - AA+BBCCDE. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 18 – Date ? Commences with mention of my play (The Heatwave Lovers) and the reason why I had done no work for the week, before going on to talk about late-night writing and the folly of such exercises. Rhetoric. Stanza - free verse. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

WEEK 19 – 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> Mar 1984. I was incensed about the Conservative Government's squeeze on civil liberties and social services. Stanza - rhyming couplets. I read this poem at the Tyneside Writer's Workshop in March 1984, abd at Castle Chare Arts Centre, Durham 18<sup>th</sup> May 1984.

WEEK 20 – 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> Mar 1984. Written at Lumb Bank, Yorkshire, the poem readily reflects the change of environment. Term had ended, and it felt good to rest in the quiet Dales. Hence the way it is. Stanza - A(+connecting word B)CD (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 21 – 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> May 1984. The beginning of this poem is about Laura who went to the beach for the day with some friends while I had to stay home and write an essay 'The Concentration Camp'. The poem then spans a few hours of thought.

WEEK 22 – 13<sup>th</sup> May 1984. This poem is initially a translation of a Lorca poem (Poem del Cante Jondo), but developed into a compilation love poem about two lovers under the orange blossom. I composed this in Heaton park while lying in the grass with my shirt off to catch a sun tan. Despite being late spring, it has a sense of summer about it. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 23 – 27<sup>th</sup> May 1984. Written keeping in mind 'The Heatwave Lovers' which was being performed the 23rd/24th May. At one stage I felt that the play had corrupted the morals of Alice, the rather innocent girl who played the part of

Cathy. Stanza - 4 line couplets and ABCB variants. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 24 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 1984. This poem is a compilation of modified extracts from Leech's 'A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry', though what emerged was a story about a man jilting his lover (younger than he). Stanza - 4 line blank verse. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 25 – 5<sup>th</sup> June 1984. The first stanza is an attack on Empson's 'Seven Types of Ambiguity'. The remainder of the poem is a play with alliteration and stress, the content being centred around a wet June evening and my strong desire to go to Spain for a vacation after my exams. The reference to the workers is meant to infer the miners and their wives who have been out on strike for almost three months. Stanza - 3 line alliterative. (Orig.Text, 5/6/84)

WEEK 26 – 14<sup>th</sup> June 1984. This poem started as a ditty I composed orally during a birthday party. I continued it as an attack on the wealthy, but I soon dropped off back to the lifestyle that I was once more familiar with than now. Stanza - 5 line AABCB (Orig.Text, 16/7/84)

WEEK 27 – Dated ? I was feeling lazy this week. Exams were over and I didn't give much o a damn about anything. Stanza - 4 line ABCB (Orig.Text, 16/7/84)

WEEK 28 - 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1984. Set in Spain, and written on the beach of Nerja, the poem is self-explanatory. I did in fact have a group of players come and rehearse under the same olive tree while i

## LAST QUARTER - Robbie Moffat

was writing this poem, and it turned out they were from the E15 method school of acting (London). The poem breaks about two-thirds of the way through, and picks up two days later with me lying on a sun-bed in Burriana Beach, Nerja. Stanza - mixed free verse. (Orig.Text, 16/7/94)

WEEK 29 - 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1984, Granada. I sat at the foot of the Albaicin astride a wall that banked the river that runs through the old part of Granada, and composed this poem. The city is rich in imagery, and most of what appears in these ten stanzas are direct observations. The simple style of the poem reflects the relaxed mood I was in, and perhaps out of the whole Diary of an English Student sequence (to date?), it has been the easiest and most enjoyable to compose. It reminded me of my many years travelling, and the fact that at one time, much of my poetry was composed out of doors or in public places. If I were to criticise this whole academic sequence, it would be for the stifling atmosphere of books and learning that it imposes on the reader. I blame the English weather. Stanza - 5 line end rhyme with the occasional blank last line. (Orig.Text, 16/7/84)

WEEK 30 - 15<sup>th</sup> July 1984. I had just read C.P.Taylor's play 'Lies About Vietnam' (1969) when I came to compose this poem and somehow I wanted to put on paper what I felt about war and killing. I really wanted to attack the media, but big business came out as a greater menace than newspaper proprietors. The poem is in two parts (plus a tail-end piece to wind the first year (Thirty Weeks) of study, the first part dealing with the callousness of war profiteers and the death of men

that they engineer; and the second part, tries to show the idleness that exists for today's youth due to unemployment and lack of opportunities. To big business, today's youth are ready slaves of the war machine, a sad and pitiful reflection on a mentality that may find support amongst the most right-wing thinkers of society in the not too distant future. Stanza - 4 line ABCA, ABCB, and AABB plus variants and interceding rhyming couplets. (Orig.Text, 16/7/84)

THE NORTHUMBERLAND PICNIC - 29<sup>th</sup> July 1984. This poem was written after returning from a most beautiful day at Rothbury Crags near Cambo, Northumberland. It was Laura's 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday and in all there was about twenty of us in the picnic group. It was wonderful, the weather was slightly breezy high-summerish, and the moors were bone dry and fern high. The 'lady of the lake' is Sarah McCarthy (video maker), and the artist Al Davison. (Orig Text 29/7/1984?)

BECAUSE I LOVE YOU - 29<sup>th</sup> July 1984. Original called 'To Jane', this poem was written for Glenn, 88 Stakeford Crescent, Chopwell, N/Land, after he had read the ad I'd placed in the Sunday Sun which stated that I wrote pomes in return for donations to the Tyneside Writer's Workshop. Cost of poem £5. (Orig Text 29/7/1984)

WEEK 31 Prologue - 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 1984.

WEEK 31 - 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 194. 'Where ploughs the cofter?' is a reference to a poem of mine *Wild Hebrides* written in 1981. 'In terror, desolation and dismay' is referenceing *The Prelude* Bk 10, line 20.

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WEEK 32(i) – 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> 1984. Inspired by concern over my growing estrangement with Laura during the running of the Newcastle Festival Fringe. The first stanza is how I felt about myself. The second stanza is about our arguments, though by the third and fourth line, I have begun to move away from reality, and move into a creative, illusionary, imaginary world. The third stanza is totally unemotional, it was composed with calmness and thought that wished to twist away from conventional sop. It reminds me a little of the speech Frog makes to the Girl Frog which I wrote in the spring of 1976 [See 'Frog - A Tale For Adults']. However, as a piece of biography, the third stanza is not how I feel, or even how I felt about my relationship with Laura. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84)

WEEK 32(ii) – 22<sup>nd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 1984. This section of the Week concerns itself with the political upheaval, and the rise of a militaristic government. The first three stanzas allude to a dictatorial government deciding to use force to settle an international dispute. In this case, the Falkland Island War with Argentina 'a sinking puddled nowhere' being the Falkland Islands. The next three stanzas try to convey the loss of human life in any war, and harks back to the age of the Anglo-Saxon warrior ('Seafarer', 'The Wanderer') where it is believed that the spirit of a slain warrior returned to his homeland over the wave tops. The gannet and the whale both possess sad soulful cries that symbolically are the voices of the dead. The last three stanzas indicate a return to a wider commonwealth of nations (EEC) yet show how it is

impossible to ignore that Britain is an island with it's own insular outlook on brotherhood enforced upon it's people by the government in power. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84)

WEEK 33 – 28<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 1984.

WEEK 34 – (i) 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1984. (ii) 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. (iii) 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984.

WEEK 35 – 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. 1- 'Pruffrock' was a very frustrated man floundering in the dilemma of sexual inaptitude. 2 - 'Making out ....' A New Zealand girl I met in Isla Mujeres (1980). A French girl in Madras (1975). A South African national who seduced me on my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday (1977). 3 - 'Hughes or Heaney ....' Poetically they have succeeded in finding large publishers to print their work. 4 - 'As the tone .... ne'er knows thirst'. The double talk language of T.S.Eliot in the 'Four Quartets'. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84)

WEEK 36(i) – 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. Searching for a source of melancholy without it being my own. More a pastiche of past and present sensations. November has been a record-breaking wet month. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84) (ii) – 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. Taking Meissener's 'Latin Phrase Book' (trans.by H.W.Auden), I composed a very rough poem using phrases from Section XI - Religion-Scrupple-Oath-Vows. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84). I studied Latin for two years at Shawlands Academy. I used to hate being belted by Mr.Cowan the Latin master and Deputy-head. So did everyone else. (Footnote 29/10/94) (iii) – 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. This poem is a reaction to the

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previous over-bearing Latinate composition. Literally out of my head, it is an attempt to merge the classical with the popular. If my knowledge of iconoclastic relationships was more extensive, the ballad could be made to carry more allusion. As it is, it is rough, though the love affair of Venus Dove and Mercury Mar is an eternal love. In the third last stanza, nature description conjures us 'wilderness' or attempts to, the loss of all, i.e. that emptiness that they have fled to out of apparent misery through love for one another. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84). (iv) & (v) - 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984.

WEEK 37 – 22<sup>nd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. Three sonnets. Very loose indeed, but they capture the melancholy which has turned to depression. The first stanza I wrote with an inner anger, i.e. I actually felt the emotions laid out in the fourteen lines. The second stanza which I wrote after reading Dryden's 'MacFlecknoe' and a chapter on the Restoration period whilst studying in the library - in this stanza I try to continue some of the thread I had developed three days earlier. The opening line however was something in the hope of breaking away from the reflective inward looking poetry of the last three weeks (ever since reading Wordsworth during Weeks 34-35), partly due to the Norton Anthology biography of Dryden which stated his surface (neo-classical) impersonal view of contemporary life. However, I failed to break away from 'serious brooding' and explored further depths of loneliness in a creative zest that is chilling rather than warming. I'm not really like this at all. By the third stanza, I'm back on the reality of weather, the process of aging. Another day has elapsed, the November winds are up to gale-force,

and the narrator's voice turns to summer memories i.e. 'summer beach', Spain (WEEKS 28-29), 'mountain lake' (see poem Northumberland Picnic 29/7/84). My flesh does not sag like the narrator's, the aging analogy is taken too far, but the idea behind it is universal - age overwhelms us all. Yet while the narrator suffers the inclement of Northern life, he knows that somewhere else on this planet 'goddesses and princes' make love in his lost paradise. (Orig.Text, 26/11/84)

WEEK 38 - (i) 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 1984. (ii) 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1984. This poem ran around my head for a week before I finally put it down on paper. It is more lyrical than poetical i.e. meant to be sung. (Orig.Text, 3/12/84) I remember that this was about two women who came into my life – the singer was Penny, and the dancer Emma of later poems. Emma Ellis had just moved into the flat downstairs from us (171 Helmsley Road). (note 24/01/2014) (iii) 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1984.

WEEK 39 – (i) 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 1984 (ii) 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1984. The end of my marriage to Laura. The poems are pretty self explanatory, its how I felt at the time. I was pretty cut up by it as I really loved her, and she me. It probably took me about seven or eight years to get her. (Note 24/01/2014)

WEEK 40 – (i) 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1984 (ii) 10<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1984. I have to comment about this poem. It was in the Highbridge Hotel back bar overlooking the bridge and the Tyne during the Miner's Strike. There were two poetic factions – the Lefties led by Keith Armstrong, and the small group of Art's Council luvvies headed up by Neil Astley. I was running the Tyneside

Writers group with Keith at that time and we had done a few readings during the strike. The bar was full of pickets in their donkey jackets and yellow overvests that marked them out as pickets. Anyway, when the poets kicked off at one another, I thought it was time for me to part ways with wine drinking politico's and malcontents. The poem is a reflection on that Saturday afternoon? NB. Armstrong, Astley and Cleary are still writing poetry today (2014). I have a lot of respect for Keith, he's been true to his following. Neil, of course, is the owner of Bloodaxe Books, and if you know anything about British poetry, he has made many careers with his publications. Brendan is still writing poetry and is based in Brighton. Paul (Beadle) was an English teacher who dabbled with poetry. The poem, when they read it, particularly upset Paul. In hindsight, the invective was unfair, but it was meant as a lesson i.e. don't put people down because they have a different point of view. (Note 24/01/2014) (iii) & (iv) 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 1984.

FIFTH TERM, PROLOGUE – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985. Inspired by the vocabulary I picked up reading a dictionary of architecture. (Orig.Text, 20/1/85)

WEEK 41 – stanza (i) 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985, stanza (ii-v) 1pm-3.20pm 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 1984.

Inspired, or should I say, provoked by Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (1819), a poem upon which I have to write a seminar paper. Naturally, the paper has not been written yet, all the time I should have been spending on it, has gone into my 'Ode to the East Wind' (1985) instead. I don't think this poem is as fine as Shelley's, but I think it is different. I did

not refer to his text very much, and I was half-way through part (iv) when I realised I had one stanza too many in (ii) and (iii). In total, the poem must have taken three hours to write, some of that time very painfully. I'm not my happiest at the moment, I feel a great loneliness since Laura and I separated. I have received no visitors for a whole week, which considering the railway station our house (173 Helmsley Road) has been this last year. is a sign that our split has radically reoriented our friends' attitudes towards us. I feel slighted and a little used, I can't remember the last time someone invited me for dinner. I'm sure things will change, and that winter has a lot to do with everything. One thing for certain, I've managed to shake off the melancholy that descended on me a few months ago [Weeks 31-38]. I'm starting to feel old, but the girls still seem to like me (Orig.Text, 20/1/85)

WEEK 42(i) – 4.13pm, 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985. 'Stella' was girl I met Friday night (Jan 18th) at a nightclub. She had seen me perform 'Frog' at the University Fresher's Conference. I think it was the green tights that did it. As a first year student, she has just completed her phonology exams and is very self-conscious about her articulation, and thus speaks with refined vowel intonation. I'm sure it will soon wear off, as it did for me. She now attacks my syntax. (ii) – 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985 Composed in about five minutes during a lecture on Byron (given by John Saunders). It has no real poetic merit. (Orig.Text 28/1/85).

For some reason Ken Robinson (Newcastle Literary Festival coordinator) my second year tutor, at the Easter break, told me he thought it more the type of poem I should be composing. (Footnote

28/10/94) (iii) – 4pm, 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1985. Nothing like a bit of nonsense. After writing an essay on Swift's 'Tale of a Tub', it is easy for the imagination to fly off into realms of excrement and anal fixation. However, beyond the first stanza, it is meant primarily for the ears of young children. (Orig.Text, 28/1/85). Interestingly enough, just as an afterthought, I briefly skipped through parts of Joyce's 'Finnegan's Wake' yesterday. Is this the reason for the nonsense? (Orig.Text, 29/1/85) (iv) 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1984. A short attack on the new disregard for the environment that government legislation encourages with it's grant cuts and 'cross my hand with silver' concessions to big business which doesn't care a toss about health and safety hazards to the public. First and foremost, they care only for themselves and their shareholders. (Orig.Text, 29/1/85)

WEEK 43 (i) 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1984. The opening lines are from a conversation I had with a fellow student (Karen) that poetry is about love and death and not much else. (ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1985. More about my separation from Laura. She visited me for a few hours after a gap of ten days and we made love. But our differences were not resolved, and she left with my emotions safely wrapped up and stored for her to play with. She has left me, and who can say if she'll ever want to be back with me. She doesn't know herself. (Orig.Text, 11/2/85) (iii) 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1985. Written on Newcastle - Liverpool train. (iv) 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, Liverpool. A crap poem I wrote while sitting in Lime Street Station waiting for my train back to Newcastle. I was only in Liverpool for five hours, four of which I spent in a meeting (I [am] was a member

of the executive of the Federation of Workers and Community Publishers). I resigned five days later, and cancelled my place on the Irish Tour in March. (Orig.Text, 11/2/85). I went on the tour after all (Footnote 28/10/94) (v) 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1985. A tribute to Keats, or should I say, an imitation of Keat's stanza form and subjectivity as demonstrated in his Odes. I was going to add a few more stanzas, but I was drawn away into other things and did not return to it. As it stands, it is complete. (Orig.Text, 11/2/85)

WEEK 44 – 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. Not melancholy, but an attempt to put my life into perspective with student life. I had to look in the mirror before I could write part of the poem. 'Less than twenty kilos ...' Literally true. Laura, Chris, and I returned to Britain from Asia with only the clothes we wore and a few small personal items we each carried in our own small shoulder bag. Chris also had a guitar. 'I have lost ...' The loss of eastern spiritualism for western materialism. 'A son ...' Chris, at sixteen, is trying to make it on his own, but it is difficult. There is no employment, and he makes what money he can selling drugs. 'I have ... a girlfriend' is Stella of Week 42. (Orig.Text, 11/2/85)

WEEK 45 – (i) 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. An adaptation of Blake's form in his poem 'The Tyger'. The subject, however, is contemporary, the emphasis on 'will' rather than 'what' as in Blake's poem. i mean no disrespect to Margaret Thatcher, but I honestly believe she has no idea of what hardship she is causing amongst the low paid and the unemployed - the majority of the country's labour force if

we talk in 'real' terms instead of the P.M.'s 'real' which has come to mean 'middle-class and upper-strato' society. (As a Scot I consider the notion of class distinction as a purely English hang-up.) Today, Mrs. Thatcher, on the tenth anniversary of her leadership of the Conservative Party, announced she would be running for a third-term of office in 1988. She has become a megalomaniac who will hold on to power as long as she can so that she will go down in history as the longest serving P.M. this century. Yet, the country is against her, and she is probably the most hated person in this country this century. I no longer believe in the term democracy, we are close to totalitarianism and the complete exploitation of the 'working class' who wish only to work and be happy in their leisure. This country is sick. If I were not a student bound to my studies, I would not be living in the United Kingdom. (Orig.Text, 11/2/85) (ii) 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. Partly based on a story Kevin told me about a Kiwi girl he fell in love with in Israel. They were engaged, but seemingly the girl was a little unbalanced, and when Kev took a party of people from the kibbutz down to the shores of the Galilee for a couple of days, the girl took an overdose of pills and died. It is quite a sad story; both of them were only eighteen. (Orig.Text, 24/2/85) (iii) 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. (iv) 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985 (v) 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. Inspired by watching the movie 'American Werewolf in London' which opens with scenes in the Yorkshire moors. After that initial imagery, political undertones creep into the poem, the eagle and the hawks the present predatory government. (Orig.Text, 24/2/85)

WEEK 46(i) 18<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. A girl I met at the Cooperage Nightclub on the Newcastle Quayside (15<sup>th</sup> Feb). She had recently separated from her husband after six years of marriage. She had a three year old daughter and lived in Blaydon, a town some miles up the Tyne Valley. She came into Newcastle most weekends and stayed with a friend she'd met at college a few years before. Her younger brother also lived in the same flat. She had beautiful long auburn hair and a slender well-proportioned body, but as yet after marriage, she was still a little shy about taking sexual initiative. Yet when she caught my eye when I first entered the nightclub, I knew she had spotted something in me that immediately attracted her. The rest is history, though I must admit, it even surprised me that we ended up at a party together and that she took me home to her friends' flat, one who had gone away for the week and left her large double-bed vacant. I never had to press her, it was all so casual and pleasant it was like a dream. (ii) 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. A word play poem that evolved into a message about the fruitlessness of resistance against a foe who tortures to break opponents of their imposed system. The experiences of a prisoner and a martyr combine to give the poem a sense of the horrific, but the crux of the piece is that people wronged do not turn and flee but remain to see justice done even if it means the death of the whole community. For in reality, few people have the option of running anywhere in the face of oppression. It may be foolish, but most times there is nowhere to run. (Orig.Text, 24/2/85) (iii) 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. Keith Armstrong mailed me. Of late I've been trying to terminate my relationship with

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the Tyneside Writers Workshop after all the work I did for it and got nowhere and won no friends worth having. A bit cynical, but I've just got to the stage of being so overworked I can't continue at this pace of involvement in so many things without going do-lally. The poem, I suppose, acts as a sort of release. (Orig.Text, 24/2/85) (iv) 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1984. Thurs 21st went to Fran's (STELLA) brother's place in Whitley Bay and got absolutely blotto'd on six bottles of home-made rosé. Naturally, we had to spend the night as it was after two o'clock before we collapsed. My hangover in the morning was one of the worst for a long time. I had to use the North Sea like smelling salts, but what a beautiful calm and sunny day it was. (Orig.Text, 24/2/85) (v) 24<sup>th</sup> Feb 1984. Thought it up on the way back from the pub on Saturday night (23rd Feb), the first four lines anyway. The subsequent verses still reflect my unrequited love for Laura. I still have hopes of continuing our relationship, for the longer we are apart, the more I realise how happy we were together. I still don't fully understand why she left except that she was under too much stress from the Fringe, her course, her grandfather's visit, Chris's problems etc. We're going out together Wednesday (her suggestion) and I'm looking forward to it. If only we could come to some compromise to settle our differences. I know the onus is on me to convince her that i am worth having, but for the time being it is more important that we continue to like and love one another. I'm sure she is full of fears that she hasn't told me about since she left. But then again, I've only seen her three times. I know we could work something out. It's going to take a long time, but I'm very patient. But back to the poem –

WEEK 47 (i) & (ii) 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 1985. (iii) & (iv) 1<sup>st</sup> Mar 1985. (v) 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1985.

WEEK 48 – 11<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985. Holyhead-Dun Loughaire Ferry.

WEEK 49 (i) 12<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, National Gallery, Dublin. (ii – v) 12<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, Trinity College, Dublin. (vi) 16<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, Queens, Belfast. (vii) 16<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, Belfast (viii) 17<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, Dublin

WEEK 50 (i) 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar 1985. (ii) & (iii) 27<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985. Purity was a girl (Elaine) who was on the FWWCP Writer's Tour of Ireland with the Federation. She grew very friendly with me on the train from Dublin to Belfast but I never thought beyond terms of companionship. It was a great surprise (and pleasant delight) that impulse made her jump on a bus from Manchester and arrive unexpected in Newcastle. She was only twenty four and a sensitive British black girl who had spent the last three years of her life on the gay scene. However, she came with a complete desire to give herself to me, and told me this much by giving me a letter she was going to post to me. I like her very much, but her love is greater than that I can return. However, she is a sweet girl, and it was a great pleasure to awake on my birthday with such a warm giving companion. (Orig Text 27/03/85) (iv) 27<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985. (v) 30<sup>th</sup> Mar 1985, Newcastle – London train.

JUNE – A wet Tuesday afternoon in Gateshead with June (real name Julie), a writing girl. (Orig Text 9/7/85)

WEEK 51 (i) 28<sup>th</sup> Apr 1985. A poem for Basil Bunting who died that week. I didn't particularly like Bunting's idea of poetry should be. I never met him though I had the opportunity to do so many occasions. I think he has inversely damaged poetry in the North East, and has misguided many of the the poets of my own age, and slightly older (Pickard, Astley etc) who viewed him as a god. But the man is dead now, and was after all a friend of Auden, Eliot and Pound. (Orig Text 9/7/85). (ii) 28<sup>th</sup> Apr 1985. 'If a man have not order within him, he cannot spread order about him; and if a man have not order within him, his family will not act with due order' – Ezra Pound, canto xiii. (iii) 28<sup>th</sup> Apr 1985. Wordsworth style amble upon the weather.

WEEK 52 – 6<sup>th</sup> May 1985. I was given a lot of negative criticism by Anne Stevenson (Northern Arts Literary Fellow) and Robert Woof (Chairman of the Arts Council Literature Panel), one of my tutors. They told me to keep my work brief. The poem of Week Fifty Two is the result of this advice. It is the shortest of all the weeks. (Orig Text 9/7/85)

WEEK 53 (i) 6<sup>th</sup> May 1985. Having kept the previous week so short, I felt I had to say something about the trip to the Lakes. (Orig Text 9/7/85) (ii) 8<sup>th</sup> May 1985. A translation of Caedmon's Hymn from the Northumbrian rather than the West Saxon version which seems highly corrupt (Orig Text 9/7/85) (iii) 9<sup>th</sup> May 1985. Ofermod is taken from the Battle of Maldon, and means 'over –pride', 'bravery before wisdom' – that sort of

thing. (iv) 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> May 1985. I did in fact shave my moustache off. \this is only the second time since I was seventeen. The other occasion was in Johannesburg in January – February 1977 when I fancied myself as a clean-cut geologist working for De Beers Anglo American. It was laughable, I looked more like a convict than an executive.

WEEK 54 (i) 13<sup>th</sup> May 1985. (ii) 15<sup>th</sup> May 1985. In retrospect this poem seems like a fore-taste of what I was finally to grasp in MacHack (Week 57). The success of MacHack lies in its less personal tone than this particular work of Week 54. (Orig Text 9/7/85).

WEEK 55 – 26<sup>th</sup> May 1985. This poem is fairly autobiographical. Fanny is my wife Laura, and Dick myself. It is a little stretched in places, but gauges my feelings while wrestling with Old. Thank god, that is all behind me. (Orig Text 9/7/85).

WEEK 56 (i) 3<sup>rd</sup> Jun 1985. (ii) 4<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985. Rachael's real name is Sarah Stone. (iii) 8<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985.

WEEK 57 - 10<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985. I published 500 copies of *MacHack* on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1985, the last day of term. I sat down and wrote the poem (on the 10<sup>th</sup>) in just under three hours. At first I thought it was just going to be an other preamble, but I imagine that all the hostility I had been carrying in me for all the other poets I'd rejected or stopped associating with in the last six months, prompted me to produce *MacHack*, a satire on the State of Poverty in England. Anyway, this note is a little incoherent and does little in

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explaining the underlying sentiment of the poem. (Orig Text 9/7/85)

WEEK 58 (i) 15<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985. (ii) & (iii) 20<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985.

WEEK 59 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun 1985.

WEEK 60 (i) 24<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985. (ii) & (iii) 30<sup>th</sup> Jun 1985

### NORTH SOUTH DIVIDE [1987]

Started on the 7th Dec at Cothelstone, Swansea 9th-12th, Monmouth 13th, Leeds 13th, Newcastle 14-16th, Bradford 17th-18th, finished at Cothelstone 22nd-27th Dec 1987. Part of the work written for a North-South project funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain. The idea of the project was to discover the cultural differences between the people of the North of England and those in the South of England. As I belonged to neither peoples, but had lived with both, it was reckoned that I would not carry my prejudices on the tip of my pen. This was not the case, but I did my best. Meant as songs to accompany the 50 sketch Playmenu I wrote in three weeks for Gog Theatre Company. In the preface to the Playmenu, I wrote 'Please do not ignore the lyrics, as one good song might have better effect than five mediocre sketches' (3/1/88)

'Over the last six months I have not been in the position of full-time writer as my job as administrator of the Swansea Festival Fringe left me little time for anything but worry. 1987 has not been a good year for my poetry. I have lost direction and purpose. I feel occasionally

inspired, but quite often my skills are not up to the occasion. Of late all my best writing has gone into my stage work, and perhaps it is there that I now find my best poetry. I am being corrupted by the lure of money, my writing is becoming less and less timeless and more and more immediate.' (Diary: Cothelstone 30/11/87)

'For the first time in eight months I feel as though I am home. Yesterday I spent Christmas with Pete Goldfield and Susie Dyer and it was very nice, a true yule-day. At present I am on my own in the cottage and have been so since my return on the 19th after my two-week jaunt around Northern England researching for the North-South project.' (Diary: Cothelstone 26/12/87)

### PILLOCK [1988]

Begun on 18th March in Ko Pee Pee, Thailand, continued at Lake Toba (Sumatra), Jakarta & Joygakarta (Java), extensively composed by 16th April in Ubud (Bali), and typed May 1st in Moscow during a fifteen hour stop-over. 'I was hurting the whole way through writing this poem. I had ten very agonising days in Ubud before I met Debbie from New York who was on her seventh day of suffering from the same malaise. As it happened she was in the bungalow next to mine, and we cured each other by going to Lombok together for a week. Life is very strange, but wonderful.'

### PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

In recent years I've spent too much time pursuing the life of the dramatist. As a poet, I wrote my first verses in 1969, but it was not until I left England for India in

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1974 that I began in earnest. In later journeys - Africa (1976-77), South America (1978), North and Central America (1979-80) - while writing my first three novels, I kept developing my poetry.

In summer of 1980, I published SWEET SURRENDER in Newcastle, which was followed by FROG later in the year. In 1981, just prior to leaving California for Hong Kong, I issued another collection BALLADS FOR THE PACIFIC BEACH.

Back from Asia, my POEMS OF THE EAST (1982) never got to press, though some of them were issued on a cassette

AFTER THE ELECTION (1983). In 1984, POST POEMS were published, and in 1985 MACHACK, a satire I published anonymously. I completed THE UNDERGRADUATE in 1986 which consisted of over two hundred poems of varying length and quality.

This was the extent of my poetry credits when I came to write PILLOCK in 1988. I cannot base any claim to being a poet on the strength of such produce, and once you have read PILLOCK, I dare say you will conclude that I should give up trying. Perhaps I shall, for I have heard that I am to be bought off with an Arts Council grant.

### UNIVERSAL BEING [1988-1989]

This poem ruined my eyesight. It also took twenty five years to correct and put into its present form. I did publish a couple of copies in 1989 and make several attempts to format it in 1998, and again in 2005, but it always seemed too large a poem to do anything with. I recorded Parts 1-5 in 1989 and I still have this recording. Extracts of this poem have cropped up in my films *Nudes In Tartan*

(2010) and *I Know What I'm Doing* (2012).

Using the language of Roget's Thesaurus, it covers the English lexicon - not all of it - but a fair amount of the words and expressions that make up our limited way of expressing what we see, hear, feel taste and touch in our attempt to make sense of God's world.

### MOSQUITO [1988]

Begun on 5th October in Coventry Cathedral while working on Space and Place of the 2nd Lexicon of the Universal Being

### THE WANDERER [PART 1] [1989-90]

Begun on 1st Aug 89 and completed at midnight 6th Nov 1990 and thought to have been written almost exclusively in Glasgow. I was nearly finished with the Universal Being. I had the idea to create a poem based on my travels - something along the lines of Don Juan. Initially my character was going to be called *Tam Tartan* and I began with a modified Byronic verse form (octava rima with 5th line free of end rhyme). However, I found the stanza form inflexible for my needs - the metre and rhyme made a mockery of the content. Although this was something I wanted to begin with - having put aside the work because I wasn't happy with it - I realised that I had to find a different form for the story I wanted to tell. And then, by sheer fortune, my collected works of Wordsworth fell open and exposed The Excursion! I was saved - there was the model for my own work - The Wanderer. I abandoned *Tam Tartan* (begun on 19th May) and commenced with The Wanderer

## ROBBIE MOFFAT

The author was born in Glasgow in 1954. He studied at Newcastle University. At the time of this publication, he is living in London. He has been prolific film-maker but his poetry and prose works are still relatively unknown to the wider public.

