



SPLEEN

NICHOLAS MOORE

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/ubu editions
2004

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(Le Roi Roi Bonhomme)

Thirty-one versions of Baudelaire's
Je suis comme le roi ...

by
Nicholas Moore

Preface by Anthony Rudolf

Introduction by Nicholas Moore

Foreword by Roy Fisher

Afterword by Peter Riley

Edited by Anthony Rudolf

The Menard Press
London
1990

(The Twenty-first Birthday Book)

SPLEEN

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche, mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant tres-vieux,
Qui, de ses précepteurs méprisant les courbettes,
S'ennuie avec ses chiens comme avec d'autres bêtes.
Rien ne peut l'égayer, ni ibier, ni faucon,
Ni son peuple mourant en face du balcon.
Du bouffon favori la grotesque ballade
Ne distrait plus le front de ce cruel malade;
Son lit fleurdelisé se transforme en tombeau,
Et les dames d'atour, pour qui tout prince est beau,
Ne savent plus trouver d'impudique toilette
Pour tirer un souris de ce jeune squelette.
Le savant qui lui fait de l'or n'a jamais pu
De son être extirper l'élément corrompu,
Et dans ces bains de sang qui des Romains nous viennent,
Et dont sur leurs vieux jours les puissants se souviennent,
Ii n'a su réchauffer ce cadavre hébété
Où coule au lieu de sang l'eau verte du Léthé.

PREFACE

Spleen started life as an entry in the 1968 *Sunday Times* Baudelaire translation competition judged by George Steiner. Steiner drew attention to an extraordinary multiple entry, thirty-one versions of the same Baudelaire poem, obviously by the same hand and under a large number of pseudonyms, typed in brown or green ink and sent from various addresses all over the country. It emerged that the author was Nicholas Moore, who in the 1940s had been as famous as Dylan Thomas but who later disappeared from view. His last full-length book of poems had appeared in 1950, and that remains the case at the time of writing.

Peter Hoy and I had just founded *The Journals of Pierre Menard*, a magazine to be devoted entirely to the theory and practice of poetry translation. It was the forerunner of The Menard Press. I thought to myself: the Spleen poems will make an excellent issue of the *Journals*. I wrote to George Steiner and to Nicholas Moore. Permission was forthcoming from Steiner and the *Sunday Times*. And from Nicholas Moore. We began a correspondence. I am not certain at which stage Brenda Rudolf and I first visited him, but it must have been in 1969. Peter Riley has well described the atmosphere in Moore's maisonette in his essay specially written for this second edition. I am very grateful to him and to Roy Fisher for their important texts which will, I hope, focus the attention of new readers on the work of a forgotten poet.

In 1969 I asked Moore to write an introduction to his sequence, believing then as I do now that the translation of poetry demands explanation and defence. He duly supplied the introduction. And then began several years of non-publication for all the usual reasons small presses are heir to, the most important being delays in our out-of-town production department. But Moore remained faithful to *Menard* despite some complicated manoeuvres involving third parties, all of whom I now forgive just as I hope they forgive me. During the five years of non-publication of Moore, *Journals* (Hamburger issue), 3 (German poets of World War One), 4 (Griffin issue), *Notebooks* and 8 and *June Diary* and *Only*, were published. *Notebooks* 8 contained some poems by Moore. *Spleen* finally came out late in 1973, not as the projected *Journals* 2 but as a book, co-published with Blackswede Boot Press run by Barry Macsweeney and Elaine Randell.

Over the years Nicholas Moore sent me about 100 "pomenvylopes" which sometimes contained letters, sometimes *were* the letter. These cherished envelopes are covered with poems, jokes, quotes etc. One of them has a photo of a 1948 iris stuck on it called, amazingly, Pierre Menard. The catalogue clipping describes it as a very late iris", underlined by Moore, a professional horticulturalist. The underlining was a sardonic reference to the non-appearance of his book. Pierre Menard certainly gets around. Originally a character in a Borges story (Borges' first one I believe, and written in 1938) his latest incarnation, following the 1948 iris and the 1968 magazine, is as the second violinist in the Vermeer string quartet.

I do not envy Peter Riley his task of sorting out Moore's work. Undoubtedly I was not the only correspondent who received poems that may well be the only fair

copy, or one of several fair copies. . . in some cases in copying them to send to Steiner I would make emendations in the fair copy, and, of course, not have these in my original unfair copies” (letter dated 25.2.69). This same letter, by the way, reveals that “l’Eau verte du Lethe” is the first, and “Monsieur Boule de l’Air” the last, of the *Spleen* sequence.

Moore’s bibliography (see p. 60) tells one interesting story up to 1945 when he was 27: eight books or pamphlets; and another interesting story in the remaining forty years of his life. *Spleen* is the first of any of his books to be reprinted. The 500 copies published in mimeographed form in 1973, misprints and all, sold out very quickly. Having compared various typescripts and incorporated certain changes found in them as well as suggestions offered by Moore in various mis-sives after the first edition, Peter Riley and I are satisfied that the text offered here is virtually definitive.

I hope the forthcoming *Selected Poems* from Carcanet, edited by Riley and introduced by John Ashbery, marks the turning of the tide of Moore’s reputation. It is not every poet who is admired by, shall we say, John Betjeman *and* John Ashbery, Lawrence Durrell *and* Roy Fisher, Bernard Bergonzi *and* J. H. Prynne, or Rudolf *and* Riley for that matter. Moore admired Gavin Ewart. He also wrote me in 1973 that he considered Howard Nemerov “now almost certainly the best living poet (in English)”. But if Moore’s true Penelopes were poets like Stevens—whose earliest champion he was in England as the undergraduate editor of *Seven*—Tate, Ransom and John Peale Bishop, one side of his protean and mercurial talent can now be seen to have foreshadowed poets like McGough, Cope, Kit Wright and John Hegley. Another side appeals to the New York poets, akin in that appeal to another Menard Press and former Fortune Press poet, F. T. Prince.

The neglect of Nicholas Moore, a complex, many-sided, mysterious and disturbing poet is, well, a complex, many-sided, mysterious and disturbing phenomenon. It may be, in part, a result of the special pleading of the Movement poets with a vested interest in rewriting the immediate local history of English poetry. It may be, also in part, a result of personal factors on by Peter Riley and Roy Fisher. *Spleen* is a virtuoso entertainment of high seriousness, a parody of mandarin decadence Baudelaire himself could not have failed to appreciate. From one point of view it takes its place alongside such great personae sequences as *The Dream Songs* of his contemporary Berryman. While it contains specific references to outer aspects of his life such as irises and gangrene—both of which he offered to show visitors — it is finally as the oblique spiritual autobiography of an English poet of great quality, who loved flowers and cricket and jazz, that we read *Spleen*. *Spleen* was Menard’s first book of translations. Our twenty-first birthday hook, it may also be the last.

Anthony Rudolf
March 1990

FOREWORD

“One thing led to another” said Nicholas Moore by way of explanation of his multiple version of Baudelaire’s poem which, although not a sonnet, behaves like one, turning out to be capable of having its form reused, over and over again, without being exhausted. For Moore on this occasion the form to be repeated wasn’t just the eighteen-line matrix: it was also Baudelaire’s armature of notions, the fixed sequence of a dozen or so tropes which expand the master-simile of the opening line. Over and over again Moore inserts himself into the narrow space between the terms of the simile, the ‘I’ and the ‘king’, and, once in, is free to rove without inhibition through the waiting figures, which he tackles each time as a series of picaresque challenges, ducking his way through, scoring wherever he can and sometimes not being too proud to wriggle his way out by way of the final couplet without making too much of a work of art of it all.

The knowledge that each version is one of many lets him off the hook of a service-translator’s convergent caution and frees him from what would otherwise have been a deadening task, the attempt to reproduce in any one version what I take to be the steady, contained tone of the original. That disposition shows up here and there in Moore’s versions, and something like it is apparent overall; but the baroque assemblage which is the complete work shows how containment, a drawing-in of a set of conjured images to fix a self-image, wasn’t to Moore’s purpose. In his sequence, it is by the compulsion to repeat the same gestures that the self—which is not Baudelaire’s ‘I’ any more than the beasts, the clown, the bed are Baudelaire’s—is fixed. Baudelaire’s king can’t play; all Moore’s kings can, for a brief space this side of the absinth-green waters of Lethe. And they must: it’s like a mass audition of theatre directors, each allotted five minutes to market his ‘interpretation’ of the same classic.

Moore has his tropes point outwards to form a chaotic, knockabout world very different from Baudelaire’s metered, Poe-like manage of types. They’re often loose, and perky, and they take wild satirical swipes; the tone is seldom even. I imagine most English speakers will have their reading of the French accompanied by an unworded, spectral version of the English ‘meaning’; when I read Moore, I can feel his capering language working over that grey sub-English in my head, and I’m reminded of Hugh MacDiarmid’s or Robert Garioch’s way of twisting English so as to compel it, against its inclination, to make Scottish points.

This curious work gives something of a paradigm of the way Moore worked from his personal isolation. Striking repeatedly at a set of concepts—which happen not quite to be obsessions of his own—he produces deliberate variations, in the course of which, and around which, he populates the space about him— a space which sometimes seems dark, at others pallid as the paper of a cartoon—with fantastic personages, of no particular shapes or sizes and no consistent relation to reality. Although Moore’s stake in the game, the ‘I’ he substitutes for Baudelaire’s, is characterized clearly enough as the sequence proceeds, it’s relieved of autobiographical dead weight by his evident lack of possessiveness about his own name and identity. He allows himself to be liable, chiefly by anagram (Conilho Moraes, Alonso Moriches, Rosine MacCoolh, Lhoso Cinaremo) to

the same casual mutations as befall Alan Bold, Chatto and Windus, Richard Rodney Bennett, Mickey Spillane, Lord Goodman, Al Alvarez, Giacometti, Auden and the rest. The cast is heterogeneous and the criteria for it remain inscrutable: a naturalist, James Fisher, and a psychiatrist, Henry Yellowlees, turn up, as well as J. W. Lambert and Maurice Wiggin, Sunday Times writers of the period, and, quite possibly, the Motown singer Cindy Birdsong. There's no specific tone or direction to the 'black fun': it inhabits the classic bleak world of the satirist, where rudderless impulses for good struggle among scoundrels and impostors, and there's also an element of the wacky, knuckle-cracking, self-generated glee of the isolate who's not sure whether there's really anybody out there waiting to share his jokes.

For me, Nicholas Moore disappeared from view in the early 1950s, and the only indication I had of his continuing existence was, over the last ten or fifteen years of his life, the frequent mention of his name on the BBC Radio Three weekly *Jazz Record Request* programme; he was probably its most persistent client. So far as I remember, the records he asked for would be fairly venerable but never hackneyed. For anyone who knows the music, his borrowing for a pseudonym in 1945 of the name of the quite obscure black trumpeter Guy Kelly will give a good idea of his taste: Kelly's music was nervous, intense and plaintive; he played on a handful of memorable records in 1936 and died young. The jazz references in *Spleen* are affectionate and honorific; each is a talisman against the universal slither. Bessie Smith's *Cold in Hand Blues* crops up in the text on equal terms with phrases from Marvell and Shirley. Among the titles and marginalia, *Tail Sting Blues* is adapted from the Mound City Blue Blowers' *Tail Spin Blues*; 'Edward Kennedy Hellowell' shares forenames with Duke Ellington; Lester Young and Willie the Lion Smith are only lightly disguised, while Peewee Russell, Yusuf Lateef and Dick Wilson (again hardly a household name: he was tenor saxophonist in Andy Kirk's Twelve Clouds of Joy in the 1930s) appear as themselves.

Moore's *Spleen* is a barrage of signs of life and mischief. Helpless enough in the circumstances of his life, he was in no sense helpless before his gift, nor was he diffident or unknowing about his craft or purpose. In the posthumous collection *Lacrimae Rerum* there is superb poetry which can move in an instant from clear prose sense to unforced lyric, and back again; both of them tones unfamiliar in modern English. These versions show another part of the same enterprise.

Roy Fisher
February 1990

ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF TRANSLATION

“It is never what a poem says
that matters, but what it is.” — I. A. R[ichards]

These “translations” of Baudelaire’s “Je suis comme le roi” were not made so much for as because of the Baudelaire competition in *The Sunday Times*, introduced by George Steiner. They grew not so much from a wish to enter the competition as from a disagreement with part of Dr Steiner’s thesis in his introduction, namely that it was a good thing that so many modern poets were interested in translation. Though this was rather an exacerbation of feelings I already had than something new; and its impact on me was due to the cogency and good sense with which these—to me adverse—views were expressed. I had already noted a dismal tendency of many well-known poets to jump on this bandwagon of translation, and more particularly an eagerness of journalistic editors to print translations—often for small reason that I could see but that they were translations—rather than original work. I also rather objected to the implication that this interest was not only good but new. After all the poet laureate himself, for one, had engaged strenuously in the art for some years. This had led me some time before (in 1968) to write a sonnet about translation—not a very good one—and to intersperse a satire with lines taken from a translation of what for all I know may have been an excellent Czech poem, but which in translation at least seemed to have no other *raison d’être*. I also—both as a jibe at such translatory habits and for further satirical reasons—wrote a “Liverpool Scene” version of a John Peale Bishop translation of Rimbaud’s “Loin des oiseaux...”. I mention this because it explains the ancestry and nature of the following versions.

I had, of course, been familiar with translation before, and had somewhat casually attempted versions of various things from Catullus’ “Odi et Amo” to a poem of Paul Eluard’s—usually I think due to my irritation with what in my arrogant youth I considered the inadequacies of existing translations. There was, of course, Lorca, too, very popular in those days, who, I felt could hardly be as bad as his translations made him out to be. The striking images and ideas were there. But not the poetry. Which I imagined must be in the Spanish. I had even in my own magazine, *Seven*, published a translation—with some of the misgivings I always feel about translations—of Pasternak’s “The High Malady”. I had read in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, *View* and elsewhere translations of surrealist poetry (Benjamin Sachs’s red eggs, Neruda and other *divertissements*). Sometimes I was impressed by what I thought showed through of the thing translated, but seldom with the translation. Of course there were exceptions. I had been brought up on the classics, and John Peale Bishop’s versions from the Greek and Latin as well as from the French read as authentically as his own original poem-is. From languages I didn’t understand Arthur Waley and W. G. Archer had produced translations that read well in their own right. But these—especially Bishop—were the rare exceptions.

Well, this explains, if not necessarily excuses, to devotees of the art my attitude, and my reasons for disagreeing. I will go into them a little more thoroughly and theoretically, when I have dealt with the genesis of my versions of “Je suis comme le roi . . .”.

Basically they emerged because, having stated my disagreement, I thought it was at least incumbent on me to produce one reasonable version of my own. But then it occurred to me that—paradoxical as it might be—by doing several completely different versions I could in effect illustrate my own thesis of the impossibility of translation. Why I eventually did so many is simply that one thing led to another. It became clear, if it wasn't from the start, that there were many different ways of translating almost every Baudelairean phrase into Mooreian English (as well as into many other people's English); that the nearest in literalness was not necessarily the nearest in tone; so too with metre and the transmutation of idioms and references to fit different situations. I think one of the legitimate functions of attempted translation is to relate work translated to the contemporary world; that is to say to the world contemporary to the translator. That in the upshot this has resulted mainly in satirical versions is because I consider our world is one which particularly needs satire and attack of its many false and woolly concepts and cruel contradictions, and because I am in the main a satirist. The more violent the contradictions of belief in the world the more necessary, I believe, is an astringent wit, and a bite at things that need biting.

I think it is basically an accident that this particular poem of Baudelaire's has lent itself to such a variety of treatments. The various incidental themes have conjured up a great assortment of applications to contemporary cases, both personal and more public. For instance, the diabetic one is based fairly closely on my own illness. The knowledge that the fleur-de-lis (and, too, the "lilies of the field") is an iris (the "stylised" emblem of the fleur-de-lis is an exact representation of an onocylus iris) is due to the accident of my growing and breeding irises and belong to the British and American Iris Societies. G. S. Fraser, my friend, and Nanos Valaoritis (both of whom have made some good translations) are real people, as was King Judah of Bikini, but I would hesitate to say how far any of the other personages are real. Suffice it to say they have all grown out of or into the Baudelairean milieu of this poem and its variants. That such poets as Wallace Stevens, John Betjeman and H. D. have been sacrificed to its spleen may be misleading as I admire them all—H. D. for an extremely fine and interesting translation of the Ion of Euripides. I also admire the work of the Arts Council, the slanderous references to which are meant in black fun rather than anger. Of Baudelaire himself I have not read much; I don't have a particular interest in him, except that the epigraph to the version I have titled Spleen was written about me. I don't know that at the time I had read him at all. But I am concerned with language and with its idiomatic use; with poetry and its untranslatability; with the inviolability of a man's own language.

The ideal translator is someone who is sensitive to words and ideas and can put himself into the mind and place of the poet he is translating. But the poet is not that kind of person. He is more likely to be doing the opposite; to be putting the poem translated into his own mind and circumstances, and by implication at least, the author of it too. It might be said that putting someone else's poem into your own mind is in effect translation, or, if not that, parody or pastiche, but this is not necessarily so. Obviously there must be some kind of critical and emotional interplay between the poet and his material, whatever it is—whether it is a stone or a cow in a field, a political situation or an abstract idea. One thought calls

forth another, and it is from this interplay that the poem is born. This is clear even in so simple a poem as “O Western Wind, when wilt thou blow? “But strictly, in translation, this kind of thing mustn’t happen. The translator has to think himself into someone else’s mind, possibly an alien mind in an alien time, whose idioms and concepts are quite different to his own or to those current in his own time; and the conventions of whose language are also as like as not quite different. This is an almost insuperable difficulty. And particularly to the poet it is impossible. That is why so many versions, even when they are pretty literal in detail, take on the tone and style, and even reflect the views of the translator rather than those of the translated poet. This is fairly obvious in the two specimen translations [printed in the *Sunday Times*] of “Je suis comme le roi” by Roy Campbell and Robert Lowell. The former reads like a typical Campbell poem, the latter like a typical Lowell poem, though in each case, despite bearing characteristic felicities of language in places, somewhat below their best. Perhaps Campbell, being the more arrogant, and the more emotionally (though less intellectually) tough writer takes Baudelaire rather more into himself than Lowell, but in neither case is it Baudelaire speaking through a translator—even at that remove; it is Campbell or Lowell speaking, through or with the use of Baudelaire. The felicities where they occur (as also the faults) are not those of Baudelaire. They are where the words of Baudelaire have in their interpretation permitted a typical Lowellism or a typical Campbellism.

Nevertheless such “translations” may provide the best versions, particularly if the characteristic foibles of the translator-poet match those of the translated poet; though there may still be the difficulties of language, idiom, time and locale. An English poem of the first Elizabethan age presents small difficulty to the reader of this Elizabethan age. Even though certain word, and certain usages, may have changed their meaning in the intervening centuries, it is a common language and the gap is not unbridgeable. Poetic language, anyway, is always “slightly out of tune”; the poet has his own idiom which, though it may partake of (more or less in different cases) the idiom of his time, is also different from it. If it weren’t so, all poets would write alike, yet in most ages even minor poets all have their own easily distinguishable characteristics. Likewise they may show interest in, agree or disagree with, various aspects of the beliefs of their own time, preoccupied with some, ignoring others. All this is fairly straightforward in the poetry of one’s own language; though the poetry of the past that appeals most will on the whole be that which most nearly corresponds in its range and method to that of the present. But when it comes to translation from a foreign language, there is an added difficulty; not only the transposing of one language to another, but one set of idioms to another, and beyond that the capturing of the translated poet’s own idiomatic use of words—his style in general, and his personal use of words in particular. In this respect I think the non-poet translator possibly has an advantage. He has more chance of putting himself fully into the mind and place of his victim if he is not handicapped by having a strong personal style and language of his own. On the other hand there is the question of the poetry of the thing. If he hasn’t a strong poetic style of his own will he—no matter how much he can correctly translate what is said, implied and meant—be able to recreate the poetry of the original?

All I have against translation is that it can't be done!

Nevertheless there are, of course, many admirable versions that are rood poems and, if unable to reproduce the original in any but its own can convey something of the spirit of it or at least a measure of rapport between the translated and the translator. There are also verujons too which may be very wide of the originals both in literalness and feeling, but which nevertheless make very good poems in their own right. What Fitzgerald did to Omar Khayyam may be an outrage of scholarship and an entirely fictive performance — the Rubaiyat may be completely wrong-headed as an interpretation of its original, a stringing together of disparate lyrics into a coherent whole— a quite wrong thing to do, perhaps—but it is a whole, and, though not perhaps a poem everyone likes, it is a poem. So, too, Ezra Pound uses bits of translation of often dubious accuracy, to reinforce his own themes. Indeed as a poet he is a translator par excellence; it might almost be said that everything he touches he translates, into something strange, if not always rich. Chinese, the classics, Mussolini, the theories of Major Douglas are all digested, whole or in fragments, and spewed up as Poundian translation. And of course this is the poetic process. A poem is the result of translating any subject-matter, seen or heard or read or felt, smelled or tasted, imagined or perceived, into poetic terms; and not only into poetic terms, but into the particular terms of the poet who writes it. That is why translation from one language to another in poetry is so impossible. The translation of the poems' materials into what they have become has already been done. It cannot be done again other than differently. The difference is not between one language and another or even one culture and another in the general sense. It is the difference between the language of one poet and another's. If George Steiner is right, and I think he is, in describing man as the language animal, it is an identity that has to be preserved. And it is in fact selfpreservative as long as language means anything. But Steiner may also be right in thinking that the human being is in danger of turning into something else—and it would really be something else. Without this distinction of language man would become a different, non-human creature. Nowadays Communication is a big thing. But Communication is a concept that is self-destructive. Much-beloved by journalists, pop stars — “I wanna communicate — bad actors, ad-men, all abusers and misusers of language, and those who abjure language altogether (communication by “feeling”, “sensing”, through gods or spirits, or simply by some extra-sensory rapport) communication, if it were to become complete, would mean there would be nothing left to communicate. People would follow their coded signals like ants—in fact they would not be “people” in our terms but something akin to the giant termites of Ben Hecht's delightfully sly story about Professor Emmett.

Language, whether or not it is a built-in physical grammar with which man is endowed by his inheritance, is virtuous precisely because it can't communicate"; it can only indicate; the communications people have with it are *ipso facto* imperfect, and precisely because of this lend their lives interest and value they would not otherwise have. It is precisely the fact that each man within the limits of his own society and culture speaks his own language that makes him human. When he is angry with his fellow he may say of him “We don't speak the same language”. But it is a very good thing we don't. It is each individual's own language

that is his *raison d'être*. And with no-one, of course, is this more so than with the poet. He does not communicate. He creates. His language is his own, and untranslatable. It may, of course, contain a mixture of the currency of his own time, references, borrowings, “translations”, but it is not these that make it untranslatable — these the historian or the historian of language may decipher. It is his own personal idiom that makes the poem, whatever its kind or type, his own. It is the grammar of his being — as indeed is the language each man speaks, the less as well as the more articulate—and it is this that is untranslatable. When, if ever, an identity transplant is possible, things may be otherwise.

Nicholas Moore

LE ROI ROI BONHOMME

(or How to Translate Private Ennui into Public Spleen)

for *Fred Marneau*—himself a translatee—
in memory of *Angy the Liggle Hung*

“Jung wisst die velt when Yong Englin
Aroidin wenten forth.
He mist his kist and anny felth
Amidthrips anglekorth.

No, no, annoinee, sangt dee Bin,
Ananglung, sarst dee Brung.
I willt not wenden for my sole,
Sang Angy the Liggle Hung.”
— *The Jungegoastener Graib*

“He would like to be something of a popular entertainer, and be able to think his
own thoughts behind a tragic or a comic mask.”
— *T. S. Eliot: The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*

“You know for seex mon’s of my life
“Effery night when I go to bett, I say to myself:
“Noigandres, eh, noigandres,
“Now what the DEFFIL can that mean!”
— *Ezra Pound: Canto XX*

“We were not born to survive, alas,
But to step on the gas.”
— *Andrei Voznesensky: Italian Garage*
(trans. W.J. Smith)

DESUETUDE

(for Stuntington Bairns—that Hurt Consul)

I'm like the laird of many rainy acres,
 A rich man, but gey powerless, young, but jaded,
 Distrustful of advisers and smooth talkers,
 Whose joy in dogs and coursing too has faded.

Nothing can make him happy, grouse nor eagle;
 Nor his clan dying by the castle wall.
 He finds the dances of his pipers feeble,
 And no distraction from his vice at all.

His gay betartened bed is like a tomb.
 His lasses, who revere and love all princes,
 Can't by immodesty disturb his gloom
 Or draw a skeletal smile for these advances.

The smith who does his goldwork can't contrive
 To rid it of its smell of rank corruption.
 Glencoe and other bloodbaths that survive
 In history can't rouse his young dejection,

A corpse too old for any warmth to flood,
 Whose veins are greened with Lethe, dry of blood.

Alan Boldero

c/o Scatto and Findus,
 King Elizabeth 2nd Street,
 Hair

ON THE ISLETS OF LANGERHANS
(King Midas in Reverse)

(for Nicholas Moore)

I'm like the monarch of a damp, cold islet,
Live, but cut-off; young still, but, when I smile, it
Hurts almost, and my doctors' precepts irk me.
I'm bored with living things. Nothing can jerk me
Out of this sluggish gloom, nor sport, nor plaything.
My family's decline is not a gay thing.
Lenny's sick jokes; the ballads of Jacques Brel
Don't quite, in face of this cruel sickness, jell.
My bedroom iris, scrawled on Thotmes' tomb,
Is deadly as the fat dames who presume—
Worshipping princes—to disclose their wares
Quite nakedly—but bore this corpse to tears.
The Income-Tax Repayment in the bank
Can't win from this too-sugared heart one thank
You, nor the bloody slaughter in Vietnam
Raise in my diabetic bones one damn
Of youthful fire; my frozen limbs turn green—
Where flows not blood, but Lethe —with gangrene.

Conjiho Moracs

c/o The PBS,
4 St. James' Square,
S.W.1

PRINCE OF WAILS

(for Pee-Wee Russell — a prince in his own right—and that wailing clarinet)

I'm like the Prince of some old rainwashed isle,
Whose youth's impoverished—rich, but no smile,
Whose upbringing his tutors meet with bows
And scrapings: dogs—he has no use for those.
He can't be made to play, not sport or game;
Russian roulette can't bring this last heir fame.
His comic's futile and improbable tales
Can't purge him of the fate at which he quails.
His bed, so flowery, 's like a graveyard slab.
The lecherous girls—to whom each "king" is fab—
Can't rock and roll lewdly enough to steal
Even a passing smile from this schlemiel,
Whose carcase, gloating on its pounds of gold,
Can't rid flesh of the cancers it must hold;
This nude, young skeleton no crimes excite;
Pogroms, gas chambers, Brodies, Hindleys—quite
Impervious to these, no ire can heat the
Blood in his veins: it's water—green as Lethe.

Alonso Moriche

c/o Private Eyeballs,
The Cook-Sweeney-Moore Dispensation,
Richard Rodney Greenhart House,
105 Piccadilly,
W.1

A BAD DREAM RECURRING

As the Ruler of a storm-flooded country, I
Am rich, but powerless, young, but terribly
Ancient, and all my ministers' sycophancy
Doesn't make up for my boredom with the beastly.
I can't take joy in all-too-gameless sport;
From my balcony seeing my people dying. Caught
In this dilemma, our Pop Queen's meaning ballad
Only reminds us of our present bad.
Our bed-covers are like the flower-girl's tomb.
It's said women make every Ruler room,
But none can wear a dress libidinous
Enough to warm a dead man's boneyard rictus.
Nor can that sick man, managing our trade,
Make it look healthy with corrupter's aid.
Nor would pogroms—however Stalinesque—
Raise any new life that's not quite grotesque
Or warm the cockles of a skeletal
Heart—pumping water green as fear, and lethal.

Ion Lomas—Roche
8g Oakdene Road,
St. Mary Cray,
Kent,
BR5 2AL

MCBOULD IN HIS LAIR

(for G. S. Fraser and the cobbles of Aberdeen)

I am like a Chieftain of the Isle of Skye,
 Wealthy, but powerless; still young, but gey dry.
 Sick of my slick advisers and their jests,
 Tired of my dogs and all those other beasts,
 Nothing can make me gay, not chasing deer
 Or shooting capercailzie, nor my clan
 Dying before the castle; nor the bagpipe's queer
 Lost threnody distract me from my bane.
 My bed among the iris is a tomb.
 The lassies—for whom every chieftain's fine—
 Can't find a lewdness braw enough to flame
 This young craw-lickit skeleton of mine.
 My smiths have wrought me golden ornaments,
 But can't strain out the baser elements.
 The bloodlust of the cruel invading English—
 Which foreigners have copied—can't bequeath the
 Excitement of blood to this fey corpse, where languish
 Instead of blood the gey green burns o' Lethe.

A. O. Melihone-Ros

A. O. McIlhorne-Ros, do Prof. G. S. Fraser, Leicester University English Dept.

“Oho for the braw black Lauchter o' Beau de L'Air”
 —*Stew M"acFiarmid: Ode to Robespierre*

I tak it yon competeetion canna be seerious. Why even the good poets are gey bad
 at it, you say, yoursel'. Shades o' Aytoun!
 A.O.M.

KING JUDA OF BIKINI (THE LETHAL RIVER)

(for Adrian Mitchell)

I'm like the king of a too clouded atoll,
Rich, but quite powerless; young, but in a squall;
Distrusting precepts, sick of Werner Braun;
All dogs and beasts dead; nothing left to own.
I can't enjoy myself with great steel birds;
Nor does my tribe's erosion leave me words.
As for the clownish military, singing
Glory of our return, my heart is wringing.
The royal bed I slept in's just a tomb,
The women useless, when they have no home.
Their lovely prince can't pluck their breasts or thighs
From this unsmiling isle of obsequies
Where gold's been poured to leave skeletal planes,
Things sticking from the sand, blown limbs, bruised brains.
The Roman bloodbaths weren't a patch on this;
If they made old men smile, this is death's kiss.
Strontium can't warm anything but weeds;
My blood grows green with gangrene in the reeds.

Nicholas Moore
89 Oakdene Road,
St. Mary Cray,
Kent,
BR5 2AL

SONG

("Grün, grün... die Welt ist grün
Über über Die Jungfrau")

Brown blotch grey veins
petal of iris
on my canopy:
cool beauty

Breast and throat.

Ion,
Boy King of gold

Blood, war,
the chorus
prancing like a fool

Death of the Race

O Rome...
Corruption in green veins,
snake-coiling Lethe,
green

(green as the green of youth)
green as decay.

H.N.

(Helga Nevvadotoomuch)
c/o Lord Godmanchester (Gumster),
The John Peelcroft Hadmanchester Podgoets,
Night Slide Clubb,
P.O. Box iAA,
B.B.C. -wise,
W.I

KING OF THE SKIDS

(“In the evening comes your harlot
 And on Wednesdays it’s your charlat-
 an analyst;
 He’s high up on your list.”

—*Ray Stevens: Mr Business-Man*)

(for Nicholas Moore)

I am like the Father-Figure of a haar-damp island,
 Wealthy, but impotent; still young, but dry, and
 Unable to stand my psychiatrist’s bon-mots
 And equally hung with dogs or chasing does.
 None of it’s fun. You play, but you’re not winning.
 Nor is your family’s death a cause for grinning.
 Your favourite group’s way-out howling distracts you
 Not one small wit from the illness that so wracks you.
 Your bed, beflagged with iris, is a tomb.
 Your whores—for whom each Business-Man’s a bomb—
 Can’t find postures obscene enough to cull
 The slightest smile from your womb-naked skull.
 Your banker with his smoothest manner can’t
 Gift you the kind of credits that you want.
 Roman blood-baths; Picasso’s Guernica —
 Both potent pills for the old pleasure-seeker—
 Can’t warm your corpse, where, bloodless, seethe like Lethe
 The green tides of an unborn lethargy

Rosine MaCoolh

(“Ginny” Rose Lee of the Go-Karts
 and Strip Arts Council)

SONNET 117

(for Translatio Rex and the Bodell Airs)

Battered by storm and swept by flood,
 I'm king, but hapless, and no good
 Find in old counsellors or young,
 Nor in the beasts I stroll among.
 It isn't my idea of sport
 To see my ailing people brought
 To nothing or hear comic songs
 About our ever-present wrongs.
 A bed as stony as a tomb
 Is indispensable to gloom,
 While whores in shocking disarray
 Are not the thing for corpses' play,
 Nor any slick magician's gold
 A recipe for evil's cold,
 Nor bathing in a bath of blood
 A resurrection for my mood.
 Nothing can warm, or force to breathe, the

Green inheritor of Lethe

Jerry Wearyman Lambell

Wigginsell Close,
 Thomson Terrasse,
 200 Gray's Inn Road,
 w.C.I

(author of *Saeva Indignatlo*, *Here I Come* or *Death at the Laurels* by Nicky Stillwain)

the last line to be repeated to the way-off accompaniment of the Abrordio
 Skeelectric Organ, played by L. P. Charity-Daywizz of the Which-Izz Console: the
 tune Eine Steine Klassmusik composed by The Mo's Art Bisky-Wisky Skintet (sher-
 ry by request—but absinthe makes the Art green ponder)

TWO KINGS AND I

(after Charlee Faux deVert and Charlay Foe Deux-Père)

stuck i

Head of a government in a damp climate,
I've a high hope but feel too old to climb it.
Tired of persuading colleagues or of watching
Their beastly antics and the plots they're hatching.
From my vantage point I'm saddened by their habits.
Nor do the Left, dead on their feet, like rabbits
Nor Private Eye's too thought-provoking bites
Make me forget my too-cruel appetites.
My splendid flag-strewn bed is just a grave,
Nor, though the party women find me brave
As any leader, can they quite contrive
To tempt this skeleton to come alive.
Jenkins, play though he will with gold and silver,
Can't by his magic steal corruption's quiver;
Nor can the students, seeking baths of blood,
Nor the police, make old bad seem new good.
Nothing can warm a corpse from disillusion,
Whose blood's as pale as a green-tea infusion.

stuck ii

I'm like the Leader of an Opposition
Soaked to the skin by new-old prohibitions,
Sick of my colleagues' jibes and jealousy
And of the kind of things these mad dogs say.
None of it seems like fun. Swimming or sailing,
Seeing my backers trapped, my Bow Group failing,
My Quintin Hogg dancing upon a tightrope
Can't bring to my unhappy plight much hope.
My laurel crown is like a crown of thorns;
Nor can the girls —for whom leaders are swans —
Find in their ritziest costumes titillating
Feathers enough to charm my bones to mating;
Nor all the business man's and bankers' gold
Cozen my blood's corruption to be bold.
As for old Mosley's bloody book of wrath,
It can't revive this young corpse in its bath.
This old-hat skeleton can't be re-rubbered;
No blood, just lymph-green water in its cupboard.

Harrowsmith Blamesworthy

89 Oakdene Road,
St. Mary Cray,
Kent,
BR5 2AL

KING BOBO OF URINOCO

("Why don't you come with me
 To the Isle of Kitchymiboko?"
 —*On the Isle of Kitchymiboko*
 pop song of the 'thirties, sung
 by Maxine Grey with Hal Kemp's band)

I am like the king of some old rainy land,
 Well-off, but impotent and cold-in-hand;
 Rejecting the tutelage of his servile priests,
 Bored with the company of dogs and other beasts.
 Nothing can make him happy—croquet or hunting—
 Not even the pleasure of genocide under the bunting,
 And the croaky singing of his private Armstrong
 Can't wean him from this sickening sense of wrong.
 His iris-canopied bed is like a gravestone
 And his playgirls—for whom each prince is a poem—
 Can't find an indelicate enough costume
 To dredge a smile from this shrivelled young cocoon.
 The learned man who mints his gold can't rid
 It of its corrupting influence. The baths
 Of blood the Romans thought up and their aftermaths—
 Copied, in their old-age, by our potentates, can't breathe the
 Warmth of life into this body that's dead;—
 Where dribbles, in place of blood, green urinous water of Lethe.

G. Martian-Foldero

G. Martian-Foldero, do Shell-Eel Wild Oil Preservation Trust,
 James "Humanist" Fisher-King, c/o B.B.C. P.O. Box 1AA, W. 1

(for the attention of the MacBeth-Blood-Hand-Bimpany Consortium)

WRETCHED MAN

(for Histon and Morden, and Lethe Gateway-Porter,
that indomitable games-player)
("Not to be born is the best for man"—*Mr W. H.*)

I feel I'm like the King of rainy Cornwall,
As rich as tin, but crumbly as a cliff,
Young, but too old, and, though my tutors fawn well,
I feel distrustful of that Oxford life.

I don't like dogs, and other beasts all bore me.
I'm not the one for fishing or the hunt.
The Death of a Cathedral cannot draw me
Nor seeing Czechs or Ibos cracked or bent.

I'm not amused by Milligan or Dylan;
I find their way-out ballads hard to cheer.
My sea-pink-covered bed just makes me sullen;
I feel it's more like bindweed on a bier.

The Cornish maids or Oxford's jolly game-girls
For whom a man like me is splendid stuff
Can't now be as enticing as the same girls
Once were when this young skeleton could laugh.

My publisher who pays me lots of money
For writing things I do not want to write
Can't make my bread-and-butter look like honey
Or filthy lucre pure as driven sleet.

As for the bloody internecine struggles
Of poets seeking avidly for fame,
This old, once-dedicated, mind now boggles
At such a waste of energy and time.

O for that old and glorious enthusing;
O for the red blood and love's youthful aches!
Now this old body's taken such a bruising
Its veins run green as Isis, or the Styx.

Henri Yellowwine

do The Adventitious Publicity Dept.,
John Murray Ltd., Alhermarle St.

POOR BOBO (DEATH OF A CLOWN)

(for Deirdre-Ann Ilurnphri)

I'm]ike the hero of a rainswept farce,
 The impotent playboy, young, but such an ass,
 Failing to heed advice and always fumbling,
 Surrounded by large dogs, but always grumbling;
 Chaplin who never smiles at game or sport,
 The dying little man who's always caught
 In the absurdity of his own clowning;
 Deep in his own malaise, in which he's drowning.
 Sleeping in flowers, he finds it's someone's tomb,
 Nor can the milling women staunch his gloom
 With the absurdities of *déjà- vu*;
 There's nothing a young skeleton can do,
 Not even smile; nor can an alchemist,
 Turning such dross to gold, make health persist.
 The bloody battles — cops and robbers — pall;
 The old, who laugh, are not young after all;
 While this young corpse can't warm himself or breathe the
 White heat of life, whose veins run green as Lethe.

Lhoso Cinaremo
 89 Oakdene Road,
 St. Mary Cray,
 Kent,
 BR5 2AL

THE SWAMPLAND (“Je Suis Comme le Roi . . .”)

(for William Lyon Smith —The King!)

m like the king of a rainsoaked countryside;
ch, but without power; young, but old inside;
of his mealy-mouthed advisers and their smarmy manners,
But equally bored with the company of his curs.
No game or sport can give him fun or solace,
Nor the view of the crowd dying before his palace.
The absurd gyrations of his favourite Elvis
Cannot distract him from his wicked illness.
bed’s turned into a tomb, flags at his feet;
The women of court, for whom every prince looks sweet,
‘t find a sufficiently topless style in gowns
- drag a smile from this young bag-of-bones.
LL Treasurer who issues him his wealth
Can’t rid it of its inner lack of health.
Nor in the blood-baths that the Romans brought
Js—which, in their age, our own power-boys have sought
Again—can he rewarm that dead body or see the
Flow of red blood drive out the green water of Lethe.

K.J. Waine

C. D. L. Oxenham-MacQueen

from Rosine MaCoolh, Girton College, Cambridge (online bigetta)

TO A GREEN THOUGHT IN A GREEN SHADE

(for Rogers Lorentz Greenheart)

(“. . . projected on a raft into a soft green landscape”
— *William Jay Smith: The Angry Man*)

I’m like The Winner of The Competition —
The one who wrote the strong, rewarding phrase
About the sycophants or the condition—
Betes Noires and Bluebirds—of The Human Race:

Of how The King of Nowhere wasn’t gay
And saw the poets die before his palace:
How his pop-singer’s Jabberwocky lay
Kept his head still turned inside-out like Alice;

So that his canopy of rose and iris
Made his smooth bed seem only like a grave,
And he could find no pleasure in the ladies
Nor smile at all the sexy gear they’d wave.

The Agent who could get him cash could never
Make such pot-boilings seem less than obscene,
Nor could the Kitchen-Sink Sade-Marats ever
With all their blood and fucks begin to mean

A thing to this young skeleton, whose art
Was pure and bloodless as the River Dart.

Jago McFaithful Fabb
do MacBeth’s Firefighters,
Radium i, 2, 3 or 4,
P.O. Hoax 1 aaaaaaaaaa,
(pub. section)
The Stone Tower House.
W.I

ACCIDIE

(“ Plutonium, Plutonium,
I smell the green blood of detergent scum”)

(“In much of his writing there is a sense of justice, a morality
that refuses to have anything to do with any morality bespoken
by rulers or bewildered crowds

—Kenneth Gee: *New English Weekly*; circa 1945)

I'm like the Pluto of a rainy hell,
Rich, but powerless, young, but too old as well;
Whose counsellors' kow-towing he distrusts,
Bored with his dogs and sick of other beasts.
Nothing can cheer him, neither games nor hunting,
Nor his whole people dead under the bunting.
The mad buffoonery of his pet Milligan
Can only serve to make him cruelly ill again.
His flower-strewn bed becomes a flower-decked tomb.
For every potent prince call—girls find room,
But can't display themselves in wild wild clothes
Enough to wrinkle this young bone-bag's nose.
Gold everywhere— but no wise man so apt
That he can render it quite uncorrupt.
And, though the Nazi blood-bath's over, still
New tyrants spill new blood —the same old thrill:
Yet it can't warm this carcass back to breath,
Whose blood's only the green green lymph of Death.

Nicholas Moore
89 Oakdene Road,
St. Mary Cray,
Kent,
BR9 2AL

TWO DREAMSCAPES

(for Nanos Valaoritis)

I

I stand, a too-old king
In a too rainy country, curbed
By distrust of too-plausible advisers.

Dogs,
Other faceless animals,
Small birds, hawks
—but I'm bored:
A whole race fails beneath my balcony.
The Beatles, dressed like grubs,
Sing mournfully "Hey, Jude",
But I—I cannot laugh.
I suffer from the same malaise myself.

My bed is a mound of flowers,
Lily, iris;
The flower-girls offer me charms
And suddenly strip —
Beautiful, clean young bodies.

But this mound is a tomb
For this dried-up young mummy.
The gesturing girls can't raise a smile

From the dead.

II

An alchemist makes gold in his crucible;
A white-bearded savant
With delicate fingers.

He stands close, as in a picture,
Before a Dali-like landscape
Of bones and blood.

A river twists in the distance;
The gold watch has no face,
And, instead of hands,
The twitching sting of a bee.

A harvest-field of stone
Gravestones each bear the legend "Rome..

But none of this is exciting to my young eyes.
No vice of blood can warm the dead.
"Join me" I hear my own corpse cry,
And, winding through my veins,
Instead of blood,
The slow green waters of Lethe.

Nichos Omolares
c/o 105 Piccadilly,
W.1

TAIL-STING BLUES

(for Edward Kennedy Hellowell)

I'm like the king of rain-douched Scorpios,
Quite rich enough and game to take a toss,
Hater of journalists and hoi polloi,
Not fond of dogs or animalculi.
I can't get really pleased at sport or journals,
Nor at Greeks kept captive by the colonels.
Maria Callas's dramatic yell
Finally didn't serve to make me well.
My eiderdown, embossed with antique flowers,
Reminds me of those sad Egyptian towers
Where mummied princes lie beside their drabs
Unsmilingly with dead dogs and scarabs,
Where all the wealth of golden ornament
Can't raise the proud Egyptian in his tent.
Though glories of our blood and state contrive
With bloodbaths frequently to keep alive
Old rou6s, none can warm this skeleton
Whose green blood, Lethe-like, just pooters on.

Aldila Varese

do Dr Enid Starkie,
Department of Romance,
Oxford University

FOR THE TOMB OF A PRESS BARON
(from the Greek of Atticus Banalicus [the Greek Leach])

“Green, green—it’s always green
On the far side of the hill.”
—*pop. song* (trad.?)
“I was a Big Man yesterday,
But, boy, you ought to see me now”
—*pop song*

I’m the Alexander of a flooded empire,
Rich, but still powerless perhaps. I tire;
And grow distrustful of my editors,
Tired of my dogs, afraid to back a horse.
I don’t find fun in birds—of flesh or steel,
Black Power or genocide. My fools are real,
But all their potent, slanted, madcap tales
Can’t pull me out from my sick, private hells.
My hotel room becomes a catafalque.
The “actresses” — at moguls they won’t baulk—
Can’t with their topless dresses draw a smile
From this once young and powerful crocodile,
Whose skeleton smart bankers can’t enring
With gold enough to hide corruption’s sting.
Nazi putsches, hydrogen bombs, fanned strife
Of the bloodiest kind can’t bring this corpse to life,
Whose young-old bones contain, instead of blood,
The pale green waves of Lethe’s death-frothed flood.

*So here lies Alexander. May his bones
Not quite outlast, perhaps, our worthier ones.*

in the churchyard at Nunc

Phil Okes-Box-Wunnayay
c/o Radio 3 Spots Report,
Thomson’s Thoughtomobiles,
K-Kennedy Corner,
Onassis Isle,
200 Gray’s Inn Road, W.C.1

GREEN RIPPLES IN A BLACK SHADE
(L'Eau verte du Lethé)

“No, no; go not to Lethe” —K.

“Cofined in greenweed. . .”

—N. Al.: *Recreations of a Blue Sonneteer*

“Natives of poverty, children of malheur,

The gaiety of language is our seigneur”

— W. S.: *Esthdthique du Mal*)

(for Charles Osborne— “Nolan, me tangere” — aussi!)

I am like a too ancient king in a too rainy country;
Rich, but powerless to effect an entry
Into the world of my advisers with their fawning moues and ha-has,
Boring myself with similar antic beasts such as chihua-chihuas.
Nothing amuses me—not cricket, nor bowls, nor the mynah;
Nor the sight of the Ibo dying beneath my veranda.
The grotesque rock-and-roll of my favourite idiot
Can't distract me from this hellish disease I've got.
My bed, with its iris decor, turns into a sarcophagus
And the girls of the establishment — for whom all kings are gorgeous—
Can't think up anything out of Quant or Dior
Sufficient to raise a rudimentary grin or guffaw,
Nor can the canny men who mint my note and coin
Remove from it the corrupting base of gain.
Even those blood-baths the Romans introduced —
Which our own rejuvenated Old-Boys of Power have used
In the corridors — are not enough to ignite this skeletal body with the
Ardour of blood: where now twist only the piss-green waters of Lethe.

Notes The mynah and chihua-chihua are taken as more appropriate bird and animal than falcon and foxhound to our present civilization; bowls is used as being an old-man's game; the stylized fleur-de-lis has been pretty certainly identified as an iris; a flower also recognised on the tomb, for instance, of Thotmes III.

L'EAU VERTE DU LETHE

“No, no; go not to Lethe” —K.

“Confined in greenweed. . .”

—N. M.: *Recreations of a Blue Sonneteer*

“Natives of poverty, children of malheur,

The gaiety of language is our seigneur”

—W. S.: *Esthétique du Mal*

(for Charles Osborne — “Nolan, me tangere” —aussi!)

I am like a too old king in a too rainy country;
 Rich, but powerless to effect an entry
 Into the world of my advisers with their degrading pow-wows,
 Contenting myself with the boredom of similar, cringing beasts, like bow-wows.
 Nothing amuses me—not cricket, nor bowls, nor the mynah;
 Nor the sight of my people dying before my veranda.
 The grotesque mouthings of my favourite idiot
 Can't distract me from this terrible disease I've got.
 My bed, with its iris decor, turns into a sarcophagus
 And the girls of my establishment for whom all kings are gorgeous
 Can't think up anything out of Quant or Dior
 Sufficient to raise a skeletal grin or guffaw,
 Nor can the canny men who mint my note and coin
 Remove from it the corrupting stench within.
 Even those blood-baths the Romans introduced
 And which in their old age our own power-mad boys have used
 Again and again are not enough to fire my corpse or fill
 Its languid watery veins with blood or will.

Nicholas Moore

89 Oakdene Road,

St. Mary Cray,

Kent,

BR5 2AL

LE ROY DELYCIEUX DE L'ICI

“Don’t let your mind go gaga,
 Don’t let your eyes go goo-ga,
 Don’t let yourself get hotcha,
 Don’t let your love go wrong.”

—*Ovie Alston* (singing with
Claude Hopkins’ band, mid-’30s:)
Don’t Let your Love Go Wrong

(for Pierre Emmanuel)

I am like the T. S. Eliot of new wastelands;
 Fertile, but powerless; young, but with tied hands;
 Despising pettiness in those who teach me.
 Bored with this rat-race, poodle-love can’t reach me,
 Pussies don’t make me feel good, nor dumb birds;
 Nor dying poets begging *me* for words.
 Bob Dylan’s witty, but grotesque new songs
 Can’t tear me from the sick thought of *my* wrongs.
 My bedspread, flowered with iris, is a grave’s.
 My sweeties—for whom all such poets are braves—
 Can’t dream up feathers half depraved enough
 To crack a smile from this young boneyard tough.
 The week-end mags. or BBC, who pay,
 Can’t charm the guilt of filthy gold away.
 Nor can the bloody struggles of old days
 That warm our power-professors in new ways
 Whip up the corpse of poetry: as it were
 Grown brackish in green inlets by the Cher.

Nicholas Moore
 Trinity College,
 Cambridge

A KING AT THE POOL

(“Yes,—absolutely”, said Myfanwy to Morfydd.”
 —*Rhys Angeloglou; Corruption in Classic Guys*)

(for the reading voice of Richard Burton)

I am like the Dave Ap-Gwilym of a wet English county,
 Well-greased, but gormless, ancient, but randy,
 Fed up with the tutelage of my old Welsh masters,
 Bored with the pit ponies and collies and tip disasters.
 Nothing can make such a chap happy, not chasing the fox
 Nor stoning the village Dylan among the rocks;
 Nor can the absurd abandon of the Tonypandy choir
 Distract him from the disease that’s like hell-fire
 In his belly. His flag-strewn bed’s a tomb.
 His Megs and Lilies—for whom each poet’s a bomb—
 Can’t find a torn enough blouse or skirt to put on
 To get a rise from this young skeleton.
 His Da, who’s made him gold, can’t extirpate
 Its corrupting heritage of in-bred hate.
 The Roman jousts of bloodlust, which remain
 Through centuries to thrill old hearts again,
 Can’t warm young Dai’s cadaver, which instead
 Of blood sucks the green water of the dead.

Swingsby Swingsby-Glamis-Swingsby

c/o The Wild Hart’s Council,
 late of St. James’ Square,
 now in with-it Piccadill.

(“Je suis comme le Roi-Roi Goodman—mais je suis mauvais—comme Ithell’s
 Gouffres Amers —o quel malade!—ou les impuissants de M. Tchelitchew—Vive
 l’Amer!—mauvais comme Le Jazz Hot ou les dring-a-drings de Django, ou Bill
 Coleman de Paris trompetant des tutoyers au Hugues, ce gross Panassié—comme
 M. Baggot, Le Maggot de Charlee Boule cle L’Air—ou le bink-bink double
 d’Henri Millaire — ou le Roi-Roi s’amuse d’habitude comme un Bubu d’Ubu—
 roi et moi.)

from *Le Go-Go de M. Apostrophaire*
 par Jacques-Jacques Prevelle

JO-JO, THE BUSH KING

(“ So cold and pianissimo
Grows love that once burnt footsteps through the snow”
—*Rosine MaCoolh: Freako Charlotti*)

(for Whirly-Bird — I’ll be see’n ya, Schizophrenia!)

I’m like a King of the Antipodes;
Rich, but undone; young, but as old as these
Milk-tooth philosophers who drool advice,
As suave as dogs, as delicate as ice;
XVhose jokes don’t draw a smile from bird or beast,
One of a tribe itself half-way deceased;
Nor does the sap who sings or plays with mojo
Hang up this weird psychosomatic go-slow,
Where beds are tombs, and dancing girls bent wire,
And neither decked with flowers or cleansed with fire.*
All heathen kings are magic to such creatures,
But raise no jojo from these skull-like features.
The golden ornaments around his neck
Seem like a noose of inner doubt and wreck
And all the fetiche charms of blood and hair—a
New *zeit* revival from an old *zin* era —
Can’t raise a *geist* in him, whose corpse is green,
Its veins now Lethe, where once blood had been.

Lester Youngold

* This is not meant to be a jibe at Jacko Mitty or Regg Butler, Lord Portpheasant. The former, at least, whose pin-thin girls are very much my scene, I have long admired.

SPLEEN

(for James Laughlin—and all the old directions)

“ It is as though Baudelaire were to be re-written, over the biscuits and sherry, by Walter Bagehot”

—*Kenneth Rexroth: New British Poets*)

I'm like the Laureate of a clouded empire,
 Whose words are gold, but powerless: whose entire
 Youth has been spent on old men's vanities.
 Bored with mad dogs and life's inanities,
 Nothing can make him giggle, bird or ape,
 Nor all his tribe half-dying at the gate:
 Nor all the loony japes of Lennonese
 Distract him from this self-imposed disease.
 He's filled his bed with flowers; it's still a grave.
 Women, however lewdly they behave,
 Can't reconcile him to his princely rule,
 Nor raise one titter from this grave, young fool.
 The golden tongue of Dylan can't contrive
 With all its bone and gore to keep alive
 Through all the bloody rain of death's dominion
 One sickly cry from this sick skeleton,
 Nor can Analysis warm up this Case.
 There's no blood there: just green spleen in its place.

Kenelm Sexnoth Pope

The Poetrie Diabblers' Union,
 New Directions,
 Norfolk,
 Conn. (U.S.A.)

PEPE-LE-MOKO AU MONTRACHET-LE-JARDIN

(for Mrs Alfred Uruguay)

(“. Ay-mi!
 One feels its action moving in the blood”
 —W.S.)

Beau Roi of Serpentes in thunderous mish-mash!
 Golden glissadings, 0 empty effendi of air,
 The tutors' fulgurations, fine flickerings of frenzy, leave
 You like a Dodo in the abattoirs;
 Louis with all his dogs and falcons fou,
 Watching the hatchet-men a-chop a-chop.
 The sun, in clownish yellow, but not a clown,
 Could not distract from "pain torturing itself".
 The inflorescence of Nuit stood like a tomb.
 And all the stark address of Jacqueline or Dudu —
 For whom all Rois are Major—couldn't jack
 A flicker from this bone-and-graveyard master,
 Mister of gold, but gold of massed corruption,
 Greening to copper of its drei-mal hue.
 And once and once again the blood of the gladiators
 Shrives Rome into the *jeunesse* of our age.
 Of corpses and the candlelight green night
 Teaching royal veins a greener lap, of Lethe.

P. L. Moko-Destaches

c/o The Wally Shakespeare
 Anti-Sado Society,
 Ploomer-Alvarez House,
 Littlejohn College,
 Coaxford

(author of SOCK IT TO ME, LITTLE ZSA-ZSA, WITH A GREAT BIG DADDY-O)

RAT-KING

(" I wish I loved the Human Race.
I wish I loved its silly face"
—*Sir W. R.*)

(for Stergene MacArthur and Lesbert Blowall)

I'm like the Ffhrer of some Southern State,
Too young for President, too old for mate,
Sick of the intellectuals, whose advice
Is dog-gone nigger-talk, all peas and rice.
But I'm not happy; chasing possum's fun
Or wiping out the niggers with a gun:
But long-haired clowns keep singing filthy songs
Which can't distract me from my burning wrongs.
My country bed's become a fiery tomb;
The nigger women jig round me like doom,
Inviting me to pleasure like a rat,
And this mad skeleton can't grin at that.
The rich men pay me, but corruption seeps
Behind the eyeball, and the gold eye weeps.
Not all the lynchings of the Ku Klux Klan
Can make me sure I am the man I am.
I seem a marionette strung up on death,
While stragging Lethe greenly twists beneath.

H. R. Fixon-Boumphrey

(President Elect of the Society
for Multiple Injuries)
do The Hamerican Impassy,
Growvenal Square,
Westpoint 1

JADA (GREEN WATER BLUES)

("Jada, Jada, Jada-Jada-Jing-Jing-Jing:
Jada, Jada, Jada-Jada-Jing-Jing-Jing.

I looked at my coffee; my coffee was cold.

Sweetheart said You must be getting old'.

Jada, Jada, Jada-Jada-Jing-Jing-Jing"

—*Jada*: a classic jazz song (as sung and performed by Ovie Aiston and his band in the '40s [Columbia 78])

(for Yusef Lateef— who shared an admiration for Dick Wilson —and poetry)

I am like the king of an ancient swampland,
Wealthy, but impotent, young, but cold-in-hand,
Who distrusts his advisers and their flattery,
But is bored with his dogs—and his horsery and cattery.
Nothing makes him laugh — neither blood-sports nor pets,
Nor his tribe cut down like grass on the palace steps.
His pop-singer he regards as a grotesque clown
And as no distraction from the cruel sickness that gets him down.
His flowery, flag-bedizened bed is like a coffin,
And his fancy-women, who find it lovely to let any toff in,
Can't display a sufficiently indecent dress
To rub up a smile from this skeleton's nakedness.
The sorcerer who conjures up his gold
Can't rid it of the corruption it's forced to hold,
And in the baths of blood the Romans brought us,
In which new age-mad potentates have caught us,
He can't warm up that jaded corpse, where seethe the
—instead of blood—green everglades of Lethe.

Henry Rirdsong

105 Piccadilly,

W.1

AFTER THE DELUGE

(for Letty, Lys and Fleur—those undying graces)

Not riches, power, advisers, pets, sport, gold
Nor even naked women cheer the old
In heart. Bones will be bones. All that remains
Instead of blood, green water, clotted veins.

C. H. Bare: Ire

Art C.,

Pic.,

W.I

I'VE GOT A RIGHT TO SING THE BLUES

(Down Along the Riv-ah)

(" We are cold, the parrots cried
In a place so debonair"

— *W. S.: Anything Is Beautiful If rou Say It Is*)

I am like One who rules a Land of Rain;
Young: rich; but impotent and I complain
Like an old man: sick of Theology;
Bored with dull dogs: hung with Biology.
Bird-watching, games with scouts, now turn me cold;
Old Boys — that dying race — are just too old.
Playing the fool, singing *Frankie and Johnny*
Or *Victor*, don't distract me from lobectomy;
Nor dreams that make my flowered bed seem like a tomb.
Women—for whom Man's grand—can't bid me come;
Some Freudian inhibition turns to stone
Before their lewd dress my young skeleton;
Nor can it smile at all the wise men's gold,
Knowing the inner sickness it must hold.
O Berlin, O Vienna ! — all your blood
Can't fill this carcass with some saving good,
Nor Sally Bowles or Maharishi teach
Its green Lethean skull warm human speech.

W. H. Laudanum

do Smith and Smith,
24 Russell Square,
W.C.

MONSIEUR BOULE DE L' AIR

Father X takes a corrupt look at himself,
 remembering the child's rhyme
 "Father Xmas comes down the chimney,
 He gives to me a drum.
 Then he takes off his coat and his beard
 And jumps into bed with Mum."

(" My soul is black,
 Oh—Oh Yeah!, ich bin allein")

— *German pop-song heard on Deutschlandfunk*)

I'm like the Father Christmas of a wet
 And ungay country; rich and youthful, yet
 Powerless, outmoded; learning from the snows
 Of my regalia nothing but more woes,
 Not laughing at my dogs or reindeer, nor
 My legend dying on the nursery-floor.
 I'm not enticed by the grotesque swing-song*
 Of Brenda Lee from the intrinsic wrong
 Of my cruel illness; and the holly-decked
 Beds that I visit seem like tombs; erect
 Before the dollies with my Christmas tree,
 Whose silver leaves are plastic, without glee
 I die—as skeletal as the new pence—
 Gold-papered chocolate-rings — that make me wince
 With all their falsity; toy guns and soldiers
 Don't raise in me the bloodlust of the elders,
 Nor can I warm my bones in any chimney,
 My body Lethe-green, my red coat dingy.

Papa Nicolas

(Leader of the Airstream Coolibar Band)

* *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree*—undoubtedly the zingiest of the perennial crop
 of Christmas songs.

SPLEEN RESULTS

“...over 1,200 entries from poets, playwrights, MPs,
bishops, generals, sixth-formers and students.”

The Sunday Times

The bishop and the general
Sat by a bleeding brook.
Said the bishop to the general,
“There goes my life-blood, look...

That water, from the brook side
Here, looks red as molten fire.
But in my veins the blood runs green—
Because the blood must tire .

“That’s funny”, said the general;
“There’s something on the tide.
It glows green like a skeleton,
It glimmers like a bride.

In all my life there’s never been
A gentler thing than love.
Yet when I hear the horses scream .
What am I dreaming of ?“

“You’re thinking “, said the bishop,
“It’s the effect of spleen.
You think of bloody forays.
I ponder the obscene.

It’s the reverse of pretty,
The reverse of what we are:
I with my wholesome pity;
You with your holy war.”

“But what’s this seely spirit
Goes riding down the flood?
Is it a guilt inherited,
A green within the blood?

A schoolboy reading Baudelaire,
I swooned with sick desire.”
“And I”, replied the bishop,
“Quite suddenly caught fire.

I felt the wimble of the world;
The blood-wash in my veins.
But now it's on that carmine flood.
Only the green remains.

The general's got his gangrene;
The bishop's got his curse;
The MPs have constituents,
The poets blood-drained verse.

The students have their mind-blocks,
The playwrights have their queues,
Sixth-formers have their growing-pains,
And Cambridge dons their blues.

But still the river Lethe runs,
Cam, Cher, and Thames forgot,
While the bishop and the general
Argue about their lot.

And spleen results and green results
From faults within the blood;
While Baudelaire's young skeleton
Moves life-like down the flood.

Nicholas Moore

AFTERWORD

In 1984 I found a genial, brusque and quite proud man in his late sixties living in a wheelchair in a small ground-floor maisonette deep in suburban Kent, where he had been since 1948. Steely grey hair, glasses, brown jacket, wiry determined face, rather twangy “educated” voice with a slight London cadence, a small round body enthroned in the chair. The place seemed to be a total disaster, but acquaintance revealed this to be “organised squalor”. The living-room was like a miniature mountain landscape. There was a valley-like route for the wheelchair, with turning-bays, from door to fireplace with a branch to the table and work-desk, through precipitous mounds of domestic substance—books, newspapers and magazines, records, papers, old chocolate and cigar boxes, seed packets, wine bottles and general detritus, most of it with something spilt over it and the whole under a coat of brown dust from a continually smouldering coke-fire. An aroma as of decayed perfume. Somewhere under these heaps were the furniture of the premises and about three thousand poems typed onto sheets of thin quarto paper. The windows were opaque with dirt and cracked here and there by the past activities of stone-throwing youthkult, for locally, which was vast homogeneous suburbia, he had at times developed the repute of an alien being, to be baited for no reason.

The poet was eating himself through advanced diabetes largely with French chocolate biscuits and cups of tea. One leg had been amputated because of the development of gangrene, but he remained outwardly fit and active, with occasional crises. His talk seemed, like his failing sight, to peer out over these derelict hills towards a further country which was both repellent and energising. He was by turns bitter and resentful of his brutal neglect, and then again confident and resilient, delighted at the slightest interest anyone took, sending more ill-typed bundles of poems off to the most unlikely places. But the main point was that he never stopped. He continued to the limit of his powers everything he had normally done since the 1940s, and he abandoned none of the virtuosic performances that made life worth living by establishing perfections: he followed the cricket, he listened to the jazz, he planned the garden, he wrote the poems. The garden was now under long grass but he was a professional and knew perfectly well that it was still there; the rare tulips, Michaelmas daisies and especially irises of his own breeding were rooted there in the pattern he had set them and would emerge next spring, helped by some elementary clearance which he hoped to get down to when he felt a little better. The sempervivums survived by definition. (There are reports of him at work in the garden not long before this time, precariously planting bulbs from a wheelchair tilted at 45 degrees). The latest garden blooms sometimes garlanded the room, stuffed into Lucie Rie pots. The chaos was only the temporal blur in front of a kind of island paradise he had established for himself, a perfumed garden, a 1940s cell of advanced culture and finesse islanded in vast mud-flats of denial.

And the poet wrote. He could hardly see at all now, but he leaned forward in the wheelchair till his nose was an inch from the typewriter keyboard and letter by letter, very slowly, hammered out the poem already completed in his head. If the ribbon stuck, as it often did, he wouldn't know and would type on, filling the

sheet with faint and then blind impressions, then cursing and starting again. When the poem was typed it joined the heaps, but he could always find a poem when he wanted it, or a jazz record or a neglected cigar, at least those less than ten years old, by a kind of opencast mining. The secret was not to stop. He ordered more jazz records, more claret, more crocus bulbs, conceived another poem, always looked forward to “getting better” and to being acknowledged for his work. A wodge of fluff half an inch in diameter adhered to the stylus. More music. His small front garden was filled by a magnificent Japanese flowering cherry; the neighbours upstairs had complained constantly because it impeded their view of the council-houses opposite and eventually managed to get it brutally trimmed so that its branches spread upwards and then halted abruptly on an absurd horizontal plane just at the ceiling level of his living-space. But from inside it filled the front aspect with blossom in spring and in autumn shed large and brilliant golden leaves in profusion. The not stopping was an immense gardener’s patience.

This was the workshop from which *Spleen* came, this the kingdom which the poem mirrors and inverts towards the world. In 1968 he would have been somewhat fitter and the domestic chaos rather less extreme, but the tone of things would have been much the same. For Nicholas Moore’s life was split in two by the sheer reversal of fortune which occurred at the end of the forties and which was only partly a personal fate. In 1945 he was a conspicuously successful and prolific young poet living in Cambridge and working at Tambi’s office of *Poetry London*, author of eight books, writing and editing at the centre of a vigorous new national poetry. By 1955 he was living obscurely in his Kent flat working as a horticulturalist; he had lost his publisher and his public, and all contact with the literary scene, and was involved in a continuing series of personal disasters which had left him without wife and children, without income, and eventually was to leave him without health. For the rest of his life he remained isolated and was unable to get a further full-length book of poems published or even to place poems regularly in periodicals. More importantly than this, he had lost his theme. For Nicholas Moore’s achievement in the forties was founded on a new realisation of the poem set in the individual life-experience, not in the reductive and self-distanced mode of the poetry popular in the fifties, but as richly as possible, bearing the entire lyric past on a personal fulcrum. There are many registers and much of the spectrum is observed, or extrapolated into fiction or into surrealistic displacement, but I think the centre was an optimistic, celebratory and serious engagement with the distances of poetry grasped in the success of personal experience, and especially inter-personal love. All this was gone. The self reeled back as from an extraordinary blow and the poetic drive was cut off from its source. For some ten years he wrote next to nothing.

Spleen lies towards the end of the first of two large episodes of regenerated writing, in which the search was on for a recovery of purpose, and of self-esteem, in a less specific engagement, the best of which gains continuity of substance from the forties on a shifted basis. It is obvious enough in *Spleen* that the self is now a young/old king betrayed by the world and his own body but full of virtuosic energy and good humour, ready to change places at any moment with the world powers which oppose everything he values. He was casting out into the nation at

large on a lyric front and saw his main purpose, perhaps mistakenly, as satirical: hence for instance the rather strange obsession with pop music, which he saw as having usurped, even by direct theft, the role of jazz as a music of the people and of youth. He was still determined to believe that the forces dominating the public and commercial world were party to what had happened to the poetry he believed in, almost by conspiracy. Indeed that poetry, from its opposition to the war onwards, had seen itself as a public event, even in a special sense a popular one. But everything popular had been stripped of its contrariety and fluffed and sugared into the great hype, as the hope and response-potential of his poetry and what it stood for had been delivered into a waste-land. The rich optimism of his 1940s writing carried a necessary belief that the world was with him and the future must be bright; it was a long time before he agreed to a wholehearted confidence in despite of the loss of this momentum.

Spleen bears centrally on these conditions and is a more serious poem than it at first appears to be, partly because Moore deliberately set up a smoke-screen of whimsical mockery in front of its seriousness. But he seized upon Baudelaire's poem fortuitously thrown up by that absurdity, a poetry competition (though he would have been glad to win a poetry competition), not only for its parade of ennui in the face of the public world, so apt to contemporization, but because its more deeply felt tone and images were such a paradigm of his own state, down to the biological ache itself. The French poem seemed already to hold, especially in its ending, the sensual image of the diabetic experience which Moore properly played on (The Islets of Langerhans are not some Baltic resort); Moore's favourite flower, of which he had become a specialist breeder, was there in the middle as the ornament of his bed now his tomb; and the opening of the poem evoked immediately the Northernness which Moore had so often realised in his poetry as the figure of refusal (the displacements to Scotland are not just parody). The best tropes in Moore's cycle of galloping poems (in fact occurring most frequently at those three points of the text) are where he wins the self back to the centre of the discourse through these cues, and in doing that regains also the sonorous and poised rhythm, close to Baudelaire's, which had always marked his best work. It is for me the accumulation of these points, however genial the updated gibing that goes on between them, which keeps the sequence alive and leads to the proper ending we are so fortunate to have discovered in *Spleen*. Results, a real 1940s ballad if ever there was one, settling at last into a resigned confidence of true poetic stature, as Baudelaire's skeleton, or Orpheus' skull, floats down the bloodstream.

Peter Riley
January 1990

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: 1973

Born 1918: educated Dragon School, Oxford; Leighton Park School, Reading; St Andrew's University; Trinity College, Cambridge. Son of the late G. E. Moore, O.M., the Cambridge philosopher. Editor (and cofounder) of *Seven*; editor of the PL Book of Modern American Short Stories (incidentally translated en bloc into French and published in France by Correa as *Courtes Histoires Américaines*, 1945); etc. etc. Contributor to many little magazines in the 40's, *Accent*, *The Chimera*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Horizon*, *View*, *New Directions*, etc. Won the Contemporary Poetry Patron's Prize in 1945 (judged that year by W. H. Auden) for *Girl with a Wine Glass*, and also the *Poetry* (Chicago) Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize in 1947 for *Girls and Birds* and various other poems. From 1950 (approx.) to 1964 engaged unprofitably in various forms of horticulture (including writing a now out-of-date book on *The Tall Bearded Iris*). Became ill with a gangrened foot and was found to have diabetes. Thanks to this unlucky accident has since February 1967 been well enough and had the time to write again. Most recently has had poems in R. D. Smith's *New Poetry* (BBC Radio 3' 1967-8) and contributed a long poem (and summing-up!) to Tambimuttu's *Festschrift* for Marianne Moore's 70th birthday. Also poems reprinted in the anthology *Erotic Poetry* (Random House 1963, editor William Cole). Used to work as editorial assistant (i.e. the first line of defence) to Tambimuttu during *Poetry* (London)'s life as a publishing firm.

(Nicholas Moore died in 1986)

ALSO BY NICHOLAS MOORE

<i>A Wish in Season</i>	1941	Fortune Press
<i>The Island & The Cattle</i>	1941	Fortune Press
<i>A Book for Priscilla</i>	1941	Epsilon Pamphlets, Cambridge
<i>Buzzing around with a Bee</i>	1941	Poetry London Pamphlets
<i>The Cabaret, The Dancer, The Gentleman</i>	1942	Fortune Press
<i>The Glass Tower</i> (<i>Selected Poems 1936-43</i>)	1944	Editions Poetry London (Nicholson & Watson)
<i>Three Poems</i> (with Fred Marnau & Wrey Gardiner)	1944	Grey Walls Press
<i>35 Anonymous Odes</i>	1944	Fortune Press (published anonymously)
<i>The War of the Little Jersey Cows</i>	1945	Fortune Press (published under the pseudonym 'Guy Kelly')
<i>Recollections of the Gala</i>	1950	Editions Poetry London
<i>Identity</i>	1969	Cadenza
<i>Resolution & Identity</i> <i>Covent Garden Press</i>	1970	Anthony Rudolf at
<i>Spleen</i>	1973	The Menard Press & Blacksuede Boot Press
<i>Disguises of the Soul</i>	1986	Poetical Histories (Cambridge)
<i>Lacrimae Rerum</i>	1986	Poetical Histories & Open Township
<i>Longings of the Acrobat</i> (<i>Selected Poems</i>)	1990	Carcenet Press, Manchester

