

In Dust I Sing

By

Francis Brabazon

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IN DUST I SING

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CANTOS OF WANDERING

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STAY WITH GOD

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THE EAST-WEST GATHERING

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IN DUST I SING

Francis Brabazon

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To Avatar Meher Baba
the Pulse of whose Poetry is the expanding universe
and the Melodies of it are the yearnings of all hearts

PREFACE

The eternal Beloved, Avatar Meher Baba, over the years I was with him at Meherazad gave me the shape and content of these poems.

The form is based on the Persian *ghazal*, perfected by Hafiz 600 years ago and carried down in the Urdu language to the present day. The content is the relationship between the Lover and the Beloved – a relationship that is never wholly fulfilled until the Lover ceases to exist in himself and passes away in the Beloved.

This relationship has its root in the very nature of God, which is love. As Baba has explained it: *God is Love. And Love must love. And to love there must be a Beloved. But since God is Existence infinite and eternal there is no one for Him to love but Himself. And in order to love Himself He must imagine Himself as the Beloved whom He as the Lover imagines He loves.**

But besides making the ghazal, which was some 200 years old then, the ideal form for love poetry, Hafiz also used it as a vehicle for philosophy, teaching and general comment — for these are also part of the divine love game.

The ghazals of Hafiz and his successors were the only poetry that Meher Baba really *enjoyed*. Although occasionally he would quote a verse of Tukaram or Kabir, with the ghazal writers he was the Wine Master filling our cups with the various types and vintages. Similarly, although he sometimes listened to Indian devotional songs and classical music and to Western popular songs and spirituals, he only really enjoyed ghazal singing and its more popular form, *qawaali*. (He listened to the others to please those who got pleasure from them because their love pleased him.) But when there was a really good ghazal singer — one whose heart was tuned to the *cry* of love and its courtesies of complaint and whose throat was a threshold to the Beloved's presence — Baba would sit up all night listening, commenting, revealing the hidden treasure in the verses, until the dawn stole the Beloved's rose garland and flung it across the sky as a sign that another day in the Beloved's service was beginning.

* See *The Everything and the Nothing*, p. 1.

After some time I conceived the idea of an English ghazal. I wrote a few, and waiting a suitable time, told Baba about them. He had me fetch and read them to him. He seemed pleased and told me to continue writing in this new form and to read them to him in batches of four as they were done. Each reading brought the blessing of his embrace, and every embrace contained the seeds of the next pieces. In the years that followed Baba had them all re-read to him many times.

Why Meher Baba put the idea of an English ghazal into my head can only be explained in terms of *whim* – that he had a whim for a new kind of poetry for his entertainment and time-pass, a poetry with its root in the perfection of Hafiz but contemporary in language and image, and which would be the ideal vehicle for the new dialogue of the Lover and the Beloved which will be the New Humanity.

F. B.

We have waited all night for you, and now the dawn is come.
From distant places we came---there can be no returning home.

We know it is morning because of the dawn's cool fingers
Upon our hot eyelids, and we can hear her sweet singers.

We cannot be sure now whether it was our own yearning
That expected you, or you promised---it matters not in this burning.

Neither have we your brightness, nor will we behold the new day---
We lost our eyes in the darkness and are adrift on tears' waves' way.

Blind witless wretches whose song the wind carries with the seagull's cry;
Bold fellows brave enough to leave home, but not daring enough to die.

Still, we are wrapped in a glory to all other men denied;
We once touched the hem of your dress---this is our spirit's pride.

What is it to us that somewhere the world's sun will presently rise---
Sometime this darkness of nowhere will be lit by the light of your eyes.

What God or gods or men will care to hear our tale---
Blind witless fellows on waves' way who weep and rail?

On land we neither cut our names in permanent stone,
Nor scrawled them in dust for wind to whip into a tune.

Neither our song stirred the hearts of men, nor washes
Your beloved feet---but stains them where it splashes.

We were foolish enough to think that from sin's ore
We could smelt gold for a ring which you would wear.

We would gladly regress millions of years could our lips
Become a pearl-shelled cup from which your lover sips.

We would go back even to stone if we could trust
That sometime your mercy *did* turn us into singing dust.

Once we knew you, could see you---ah! love's glad day.
Now our eyelids feel the sting of seaspray.

Well have you called yourself the Ocean of Mercy---
For your shadow the sea has now rejected us,

Flinging us up on this inhospitable beach
Without even the ragged sail which protected us.

We know that a thousand times we have disobeyed you,
And a thousand times you have lovingly corrected us.

But it was not that we willfully turned aside,
But a sickle shape promising reaping that deflected us.

Our greatest error, Beloved, was our presumption
That out of this teeming world you had selected us

To carry your message and sing your songs in the sun,
And our secret desire that men respected us.

How faithful to you is your shadow, even this sea;
Impartially it has judged and rejected us.

Love loves not those whom love fattens, but makes destitute.
 From the orchard's winter ruin burgeons the summer fruit.

If you are desiring well-being it is not your time
 For the twists and graces of inconsequential rhyme.

One cannot become one with the beloved (whomsoever)
 Until one has severed oneself from selfness for ever.

The great lovers have always ardently pursued death:
 First they surrendered their hearts, then their minds, then their breath.

Like the deer and the dog they followed the scent afar;
 In the darkest night they gave birth to the brightest star.

Give up hope, foolish heart, 'there's no death worse than expectancy';
 Love for love's sake alone, and you have solved every mystery.

The path is a looped rope with both ends in the same place:
 One end was God's desire, the other is the Master's grace.

Though fate a thousand times makes you a pawn in its game---do not give up:
Cling like a child to the skirt of your Beloved's name.

Though the wave rises before you awful as a mountain---do not give up:
It's but a ripple on the pond of the Knowledge-Bliss fountain.

Though girls golden as goddesses come to you---do not give up:
Behind their smiles is the Ever-loving, the True.

Though earth be crushed under the hammers of the sun---do not give up:
When the wreck is swept away, before you will be the Beloved's form.

Though your Beloved may look at you askance---do not give up:
One day will come the invitation to the dance.

Think of the men who went before, those who will come after---do not give up:
Earth, millions of times---our troubles a matter for huge laughter.

The end of every affair was in its beginning---do not give up:
The conclusion of your journey is in your singing.

There are many gods and one God. How shall we find him?
 The search is not ours; foot without nerve-message is a dead limb.

The desire of the drop is a wind which keeps it in motion;
 So long as the wind blows, the drop is seeking the ocean.

When the ocean's love-pull is greater than the wind which sends it
 The drop falls back into the ocean. Journey? There ends it.

Each one must await the wind of his beloved's word---
 A wind scented with roses and sharper than a sword.

It is said, God is nearer to one than one's own breath;
 It is said, He is the breather---eternal, beyond death.

The truth is, we cannot see that which we already are;
 We cannot travel to ourselves, only to some blind star.

When the wind of love's word blows, the lover in the dust sings;
 When the rain of love's grace falls, the verdure of dust's heart springs.

All the world loves a lover; from his lips their song is sung.
 Youth is the time of greenness; but age should gild a man's tongue.

What then shall be said of us fellows that have no shame,
 And without youth or wisdom take the Beloved's name?

Surely a scurvy crew---magsmen doing Lovers' Lane
 With tinsel-tongued talk of love and palm-itch for coin gain.

A pickaxe for each and a stretch of road for gravelling!
 (Though why do others the disservice of smooth travelling?)

But do not let God know lest he weeps and a miracle is seen
 Of steel taking root and a stretch of road turning green.

For although our hearts are black with every nameable sin,
 The Master in his mercy opened his door and took us in.

The streamlet eager for the abyss is the sun's delight,
 And in still waters appears the lily's gold wrapped in white.

We have stolen our eyes to admire the passing clouds,
And sold our fingers to seamstresses to sew our shrouds.

Every ill thought, ill act, has a stubborn defender;
Unless love gives us courage we cannot surrender.

Strange that water seeks the lowest place, and we cannot---
For water and we were by the same Error begot.

Philosophy will get us nowhere---that's why the Mills were set up.
But it's a long process to dust---and once started, there's no let up.

If we can fall in love with the Grinder, the grinding's a pleasure.
Know one thing: a sieve cannot hold water, nor a man his own treasure.

That life should hand us a dish of sweet fruit we take for granted---
Yet we ourselves, in the Beginning, the knowledge-tree planted.

But don't worry. If no go now, seven hundred years will soon pass.
All one has to be sure of is that by then one has an empty glass.

You warned us that on this path was nothing but pain,
And we glibly assented, but now we complain.

We were assenting to what was our idea of pain---
Tangible enemies to be suffered for love's gain.

Something heroic we had in mind---battle's strain,
Great oaths and wild blood caught in a drunken refrain.

You told us to leave the matter in your hands---remain
Resigned to your will and whim. You made that quite plain.

What irks is the very ordinariness of this pain---
Not even our names on an honor-roll of the slain.

You told us that the only traffic in Lovers' Lane
Was when the wind blew---and one had become a dust-grain.

Beloved, another dawn sky bears drought's red stain.
Forgive us if sometimes hot stone cries for cool rain.

Since sleeplessness has befriended me I have begun to admire the stars---
The patterned silver stitches in the blue coat my Beloved wears.

I feel sorry for Sappho that she did not know this Man,
Although he knew her and was inspiring the songs she sang.

In this respect Mira was by the Fates better placed,
Though prejudice maintains it's merely a matter of taste:

I speak as a woman who also marks the set of the Pleiades,
A woman not quite admitted to the company of ladies.

But then are not all we women sailing in the one boat,
With the storm of desire winding our hair round our delicate throats?

God had to be a Man beautiful beyond compare;
Why then do we listen when our mirrors tell us we are fair?

Sleeplessness is our portion when we cannot see his face;
Admit it! there's not one of us who would not welcome disgrace.

Poets are queer fellows who go to a lot of trouble
Trying to describe to us their particular bubble.

They tell us nothing that we do not already know,
But they think that their saying it really makes it so.

Each one of our bubbles is essentially the same---
Just different color mixtures with a different name,

Different experiences of hunger and thirst;
Of what interest the tale, when each bubble must burst?

If singing doesn't take one into love's divine presence,
Of what avail the smoke of words offered as incense?

I-talk momentarily brightens the bubble;
But only its denial lightens its trouble.

Set sail! Set sail! Steer into the teeth of the storm's violence:
There also is the kiss that seals all lips in silence.

How can you even think of yourself as a poet
Unless when the banjos ring you can heel-and-toe it?

Poetry's in drunkenness---a lunatic distilling
Words from blood for a beloved who is never willing;

Whose eyes say, Love me---but who looks askance
At the poor singing fool's slightest advance;

Who hides the mystery of the stars in a wisp of hair,
Whose mouth (when given) is honey hiding stings of despair.

Are you willing, friend, to dedicate your verse
To one whose smile denies song's very purpose?

Yet, when the fool is silent, says, Has my beauty
Become so poor that you've forgotten your duty?

I tell you, dream not of a white-sheeted scented bed:
In the dust of Lovers' Lane must roll the poet's head.

To love is something other than what the word-mongers say.
Their words are cries of pigeons as the guns blaze away.

At one time it's the bottle, the book, the girl and the grove,
Or an orchestral setting of palm trees and sandy cove.

Another time they favor forests of chimney-stacks---
But concrete is hard on knees, and harder on backs.

Or they project the swashbuckling hero in high adventures.
They don't want forty years of being bound by indentures.

The cold fact is this love game is absolutely no go---
Whether with girl or God one is a donkey at a horse show.

Whatever, fight shy of all love pretenders. A thug
Is a safer companion---with him there's no humbug.

To love is something other than what the poet-merchants say.
Their words are rotten fruit shamelessly top-dressed for display.

A poet is a man condemned to exile
Because within his heart there is no guile;

A philosopher without a system's rule
Having mastered and transcended every school.

A poet is an old man in a child,
Wise to the world yet easily beguiled;

He goes to bed cold sober every night
And wakes dead drunk to welcome morning's light.

A poet is a ruin over treasure,
A deep ocean that none but God can measure;

He eats with dogs, his pillow is a stone,
He swings on gates of tide, and tunes bees' drone.

A poet is a stronghold you can trust.
A poet is a bit of singing dust.

Being in mid-ocean it's no good bleating like a ruddy goat;
After all, no one made you get on the ruddy boat.

No good hawing and humming, perhaps I shouldn't oughta
Have got on. Get off and walk on the ruddy water.

No good trying to think of fresh 'angles' or new quirks---
You, dear immortal soullet, started the whole ruddy works.

You don't like it? Well, who in great fortune's name said you should?
You didn't do it for someone else, only for your own ruddy good.

You don't like this Creation-game---they play it too rough?
But it was you yourself who made the rules so ruddy tough.

Enough! enough! Stay in the ruddy ship, or get out of it,
Even in drowning you'll find yourself a misfit.

But the best solution would be to make friends with the captain;
He *might* make you a ruddy good sailor---if you can bear and grin.

How easy was wayfaring with the crackling fire mocking
The rising wind outside, and glinting on a silk stocking.

Our host was very expert in mixing drinks
And in promoting from the conversation double thinks.

He talked as though he knew all states and stations
And all our ardencies, hopes and frustrations.

I did not realize that he was God playing a game
Till I saw him standing aloof like a column of flame---

A flame in grief because of our cupidity,
Our bauble values and general stupidity.

The rage of a thousand wasted lives tormented in my breast,
And I knew that only at his feet would I ever again find rest.

He glanced at me sideways with a glance remote yet warm
Which said, You will only find me out there in the midst of the storm.

Seeing us downcast the Master said, Twelve years of depression isn't much
 of a price to pay
 For the glance of my mood that will reveal to you the beginning of the way.

First there are twelve years of bright hope, then twelve of despair, then
 twelve during which the light grows.
 Put in round figures forty years all told---a drop of time as far as
 Existence goes.

Do not be like the children of Moses in the wilderness always complaining;
 Complaint makes the feet lead, turns greenness into desert even while it is
 raining.

Consider the long toil---millions of years of it---of evolution's grim gradients:
 From stone to a rose, from rose to an eye---an eye carved out of stone to see
 love's radiance.

I assure you there will come the day when both enthusiasm and disgust
 will seem
 But the last vestiges of vague volumes of some long-forgotten dream.

Or take it from another angle: men spend forty years merely cataloguing
 Words, objects, conditions, music-making, poetizing, or just money-hogging.

What I mean to say is, forty years is the usual price to pay for *any* success---
 So don't be complaining like Moses' children in the manna-dropping
 wilderness.

How simple was this matter of love in the beginning---
Glad night, sweet sleep and awaking to the magpies' singing.

The sun rose each morning as a peal of bells from the sky,
Calling our spirits to another day's glad journey.

None of us thought that that journey would lead to this bitter
Helplessness, with the stoutest an eyeless palm-joined sitter.

On these plains there is not even silence and peace---but love's scorn,
And the crack of the Bushman's voice breaking camp in the chill dawn.

But you can't go it alone. Go on with him, or return home.
For many a do-it-alone one a sand dune is now his tomb.

We had read about oases and stars like lamps at night;
No one told us of the dust-storms that blot out the sun's light.

Yet we pity the stay-at-home with his fireside chair---
For him the night wind never comes perfumed with desert-scented hair.

Who can gauge the mind of God, or sound the depths of love?
Yet the existence of God and love some seek to disprove.

They say that God and love do not exist. They have reduced
Us to mechanisms. We have been temporarily seduced.

Well, for deflowering the tender and fine they have lost their eyes,
For denying man-the-divine their hearts have been put into deep freeze;

And their words are mere wind against the mountains of spirit,
Flotsam and jetsam washing on the fountains of spirit.

It has happened millions of times---the reign of the egghead,
The iron heel on the rose for whom the nightingale bled.

And millions of times God-Man has brought down the holy fire,
And in the dawn of it we the sons of God have shouted in choir.

Arise! And sing, all you that dwell in the mire of materialism,
For the meek shall inherit the Word of the new ancient realism.

A scientist is an immigrant from outer space
Fondly thinking to tear the veil from love's beloved face.

The secret of life is not for men of unlove to uncover---
It is for the ruined-in-love dwelling in dust, love's faithful lover.

Wisdom herself seeks out the men of love to whom she tells her secrets;
To the men of mind she gives her immaculately precise regrets.

Smiling and arm-bangled, she comes to those with whom 'flat-out' is the
usual stance,
But on the vertical eggheads she bestows not even a casual glance.

No man has added a cubit to his height by taking thought;
But by love the miracle of heart-mirroriness has ever been wrought.

True, mathematics has forced matter to release its powers---
But the final power is God's which is in the Grace he showers.

The cruellest flower of man's mind is the violet of space,
When God has come to this Earth to show lovers the Rose's face.

Since it is the Beloved's breath which sustains the creation,
No man yet has uttered a love-speech without his permission.

Since every heart is a cup which the Beloved fills with wine,
No man may refuse the chance of cup-passing, nor one decline.

Since, with one glance the Beloved put light into all eyes,
Why dig the dark of the earth, or seek in black space, for paradise?

The Beloved has hidden all knowledge in a lock of hair;
Only sight of his face can give certainty and end despair.

Beloved God-Man has wrapped the Real in a veil of silence;
Even the lowest heaven cannot be taken by violence.

Ask the way to Lovers' Lane, and enter it soft-footed,
And when you reach his door do not knock, but stand tree-rooted

Till he sends for you and asks kindly your name and where you belong.
Then offer him your eyes for flowers and your lips as your song.

Drunk again! cried the hag Respectability.
 Madam, I replied with old-world civility,

One general erroneous notion I must debunk---
 Re: drunkenness, he who is drunk *again* was never drunk.

You are not drunk again with your self-satisfied rightness;
 The sun is not drunk again with his glorious brightness;

Nor bird with singing; nor worm with wormness; nor a hunk
 Of earth prodigiously putting forth grass, trees. Don't funk

The issue: every soul in creation is drunk with seeing
 Every other soul through the eyes of its own being,

Judging all by the values of its own precious junk.
 Sure, I am drunk---hopelessly, continuously drunk

With the beauty of one who is never in stupor sunk.
 Although to have made you and me he must have been a bit drunk!

It is the season of tiredness. Even the stones
Lie heavy. What to say then of human flesh and bones?

The days drag their feet, and the nights nod stupidly
Towards mornings of new vision's vacancy.

Dis-ease has become standard comfort; disease
Normal health; noise, love-speech on commercial frequencies.

It is the season of tiredness. Mind is an abstract abscess,
And spirit's joints rub like hemispheres about a rusty axis.

Friendship is a starved dog about the proligerous tenements, And
honor is a sleek cat rubbing against door-jambs of covenants.

Affections are market-patois in the interstices of sub-sonics,
And kisses are intersections reared into Crosses of economics.

It is the season of tiredness. Only rumor and rockets are inspired.
Nothing can happen till God-Man rouses himself and speaks.
And he is so tired.

The Beloved is kindness itself, he grants every prayer.
But it is a wise man who knows for what he prays---so beware.

Awake or asleep, on every breath is a smoking desire---
Yet who would believe his nostrils are a dragon's breathing fire?

Each thinks he is a lamb or a lily---or at least
Not stink-wort or one of the more obnoxious types of beast.

Smoothly, soundlessly the wheel of birth and death whirls round.
Only God's Grace can save one---but where can God be found?

All right! Whether lamb or ox or ass, the road is shorter
If you stop seeking pasture, and offer yourself for slaughter.

Slaughter! Well, why not? The Lamb of God is slaughtered every day.
If one objects to a little spilt blood one is not yet fit for the way.

The simplest way if you would really see love's lovely shape:
Sew up your lips so that you cannot ask, nor may complaint escape.

Worldly man or wanderer are the same to us
So long as they're honest---it's all God's game to us.

Also the recluse, he has his place too
So long as his fingers aren't in other men's stew.

For the most part the long-haired or the shaven head is a vulture
Eating the guts of the poor and returning no culture.

Though the earth provides enough for everyone's eating,
Half the world doesn't fill its belly because of cheating.

Because there are rich, there are poor. When will the poor
Stop standing in bread-lines---and line up at God's door?

Though none can prove to another God's mercy and all that,
Though even God's very existence is hearsay and all that,

Better to risk it and at worst die as a brave man loving him,
Than to live as a dog on political charity's whim.

Long hair or shaved head, clown's paint, tongs, bowls and rosaries
Are found to be a sure way of effecting 'the squeeze'.

Once, the men of the robe gave learning and light in exchange;
These fellows now are jackals and wolves roaming the range.

Vedanta used to mean 'the sum of knowledge'; now it hallows
Repetitions and commentaries out of cracked bellows.

As for the holy fist of Zen and the gallows of Sufism---
These words have become synonyms for any sort of goofism.

But things' being as they are is also the divine will---
Or how could God-Man come again to fill cups and Grace spill?

Stars whirl, worms crawl, beasts range, men shuffle, all at God's pace---
All so that God in men shall behold God's lovely face.

Let the long-haired and the shaven head put on clown's paint and
thumb rosaries:
They are finds the archaeologists have dug up from the last Great Freeze.

Everyone thinks he is the burden-bearing title-holder.
From the lover's viewpoint no burden at all does he shoulder.

Over the entrance to Lover's Lane is written: Refrain
From entering unless you have a strong back and no brain.

Behold love's champions! skinny-legged, hollow-cheeked, sunken-eyed---
Yet none anywhere carries himself with such pride.

They travel light these men, for nakedness is their fashion,
Yet each bears on his back the mountain of God's compassion.

Like Jesus their possessions are a cup and a comb---
Enough for a world traveler who never leaves home;

Who loafs all day and in the evening goes down the street
To the wine shop where the other shiftless out-of-work meet,

And the best singers pour out song to hand-clapping and eye-clicks,
And the Master fills the glasses with mature wine for nix.

Then there is the Law---the Law of unlove which binds;
Which feeds the worm and the bully in men, which blinds;

Which promulgates in the day what was conceived in the night;
Which says, 'An eye for an eye,' instead of giving clear sight;

Which, every moment, crucifies God-Man in men,
And turns the house of God, the heart, into a thief's den.

The Law, the Law: the Unlove, the Covenant, the Distrust
Which grinds men down---but not to singing dust.

But love goes on singing---though the throat of it is behind bars---
And its voice reaches beyond space and goes on before the stars---

The stars which do not obey Law, but in love's net swing.
And the swing goes in the rhythm of the song that lovers sing:

Swinging in the singing in the space of love's heart to man-state,
They proclaim to all mankind that only love is great.

These are not the times for the clean word, the straight sentence;
For the *turning* and the praise which is the true repentance.

These are the times to talk about machines and gadgetry.
To praise Big Business, sing markets and racketry.

Your commodity, poet, is superfluous in these times:
You may as well face it, once and for all, nobody wants clear rhymes

In verse or prose---words carefully, lovingly chosen,
Clean as bell-chimes at evening. That stock is frozen.

True, complaints of neglect have been voiced all down the ages;
But there have been times when kisses and gold were paid for fair pages.

But take heart, poet, conditions have now reached rock bottom.
God cannot stand any longer our Gomorrah and Sodom

Of words. In the creative silence of pure Existence he rehearses
His Song of Songs; and those who praise his Song will be well paid for
their verses.

Though you have remained aloof we have not sought other shrines;
Rather have we fanned with our sighs the flame that refines.

So it is that although you cover your face from our sight,
Its reflection within our hearts hourly becomes more bright.

When our eyes have been washed with blood we will see you as you
really are;
Your named qualities we let others hoist as flags in their holy war.

They will carry the message that they imagine you gave;
For us who know only you there will be no world to save.

Men labor only so long as they do not know that you
Do all, are all, from fiercely shining sun to cooling dew.

You will be their marching and their cry though they will not know it.
And your Grace falls on whomsoever you wish to bestow it.

Though you should remain forever aloof, we have made our choice;
Our tears are your compassion, our sighs are your own sweet voice.

It turns out that in one thing anyway the Bible is right;
The stars and the sun were created to give the earth light.

In straightforward terms: Earth was first in the Creator's mind
As evolution's goal, and springboard back to God for mankind.

Earth, a mere dust-speck, is the Center of the universe---
The only place where Beloved and lover may converse.

The other livable planets are for eggheads, some of whom get here.
At the present moment a lot have managed the trip---so it would appear!

Though they have no love, many super intelligent are drawn
To birth on our planet Earth whenever God-Man is born,

To experience the washing in his mercy's rain
And receive from him the heart that replaces the brain.

Only to Earth does God-Man come, for on Earth alone he created thirst
To be slaked with love's wine: the outward journey terminated
and reversed.

When a man pursues the secrets of the things contained in space,
He is chasing the flying shadows of the Beloved's face.

When a man dares dive deep within himself sharply eager for seeing,
He comes at last to the experience of Self's pure being.

We look out from the prisons we have built over a billion years
Not knowing that their very stones can be dissolved by love's tears.

When men were strong they were not ashamed of tears' meekness;
Now that we have become half-men we call them weakness.

It is good to look out, search, examine every spoor
Till one picks up some man tracks leading to the Beloved's door.

Our arrival there is the purpose of every road
Whether we go as freemen or as beasts under a goad.

More blessed are the stones of the road that takes us to sight of God's face,
Than a man who pursues the secrets of the things contained in space.

We have come to understand that whomever God loves he ruins.
Small beer is that god who deals in increasings and accruings.

Fair trade: charity the investment, priest to do the haggling;
And a sort-of-a-Kingdom-come for the poor and the straggling.

No man has ever increased his height by taking thought;
With works no man has ever bought that which cannot be bought.

Else it were that honors and riches are the tokens of love---
That the eagle and the lion are more blessed than the dog and the dove.

Every time God-Man has come he has told us the same thing:
Let the dead bury the dead; follow me for I am your king.

To those who are not ready he fulfils their desire;
To those who obey him he gives a consuming fire.

By ruin we have evolved to manhood from stardust;
From ruin God will raise us to Godhood---if we trust.

We have climbed up out of the pit of stone, of worm, fish, bird and beast
To see your face, Beloved, hear your voice---to keep love's tryst.

How gladly we went out singing in the dawn of your Song---
Like careless children, never dreaming the way was so long.

Then we found ourselves trapped in hard unyielding stone,
Each one in his little cell utterly alone.

The glad morning had suddenly become impenetrable night
In which was embedded, like a misted star, a faint point of light

Towards which we yearned and strained; in which we began
A new song---that carried us up out of the depths to Man.

Now we have arrived at your door, Beloved, a band
Of minstrels to entertain you, to beg wine at your hand.

If you do not open the door, if it is not the time of tryst---
We have learnt patience, Beloved, we do not mind in the least.

The evening pianos have faltered into silence---because of love.
 The night trumpets have wailed their last notes of violence---
 because of love.

How earnestly we pursue our roles in God's great game---because of love.
 The freshening dream...the kiss, ever new and the same---because of love.

Who, if he could hear his own voice, would go on singing---because of love?
 The end remains covered, else few would make a beginning---because of love.

The difference between being pelted with eggs and showered with roses---
 because of love,
 Is less one of talent than one's fate-share which time discloses---
 because of love.

We sleep; sometimes we dream; and awaken to a new day---because of love.
 A billion years of wayfaring: yet still we don't know the way--- because
 of love.

We would not yet even have broken out of the Beast-cage---because of love,
 If it were not for God-Man's compassion and holy rage---because of love.

Tomorrow is another day for the battle's violence---because of love.
 The few remaining hours of the night are for wine and silence---
 because of love.

This salt waste, and a sky that is the mirror of our grief---
How long can we survive unless you send us relief?

At first, tears were a warden that unlocked our hearts and set us free---
How could we know that in time they would become a raging sea?

That night when the stars fell out of the sky, you said:
But a little while, and you will be comforted.

The sun rose no more and we could not plot a course.
The curling wave; and the hiss of the wind like a curse.

How many lifetimes ago was that---or is it merely years---
Since we've sat huddled in a boat the wind and current steers?

The only light is lightnings that burn through the darkness and sear
our eyes;
Then we cup our hands to our mouths as the rain pours down from
the skies.

All this in a boat as frail as a bubble. Surely it is your mercy
Which bears us on and keeps us from the hungry mouth of the sea.

Iron plains, and then sea-stretch to new desert lands---grief's growth.
This is the mercy of the Beloved to heal our wrath.

If we had not opened a bank-account in the name of Anger
We would not need traveller's cheques---for where would we be stranger?

It is senseless to talk of brotherhood while Lust rules us;
First we must suffer otherhood while love schools us.

And peace-talk is verbal diarrhea so long as Greed
Deprives half the world daily of a decent feed.

Nothing can happen till we renounce our triple prosperity
And learn to establish ourselves in perfect poverty.

We can make a start now, or grind on for millions of births;
No need to worry about the bitch Science---there'll be plenty more Earths.

Hammers of hunger on anvils of grief forge the golden chains
By which we are dragged to the feet of God across the iron plains.

Those whom we love now soon we will have to be leaving;
 Why then let their changing moods be a cause for grieving?

Millions of times we have suffered separation;
 Time to begin the next stage's preparation.

When the leader orders us to break camp all must obey,
 He will not listen to, This is a pleasant spot, let us stay.

May as well talk to a deaf man, he just doesn't hear you---
 He's single-minded and has journey's end only in view.

Yet he cannot do enough for us: from camp-down to camp-breaking
 He goes the rounds while we sleep, watching over us till our waking.

And all day on the march he goes ahead of us, his keen eyes
 Searching the horizon, scanning the ridges for surprise.

In the face of his love what are a fellow-traveller's smiles or frowns?
 The stars continue through the night what the sun began---all of our
 count-downs.

The beauty we see around us is a reflection
Of our Beloved's face---singing that perfection.

Whoever your beloved may be, the love in that one's eyes
Begot creation; and all things yearn towards it in glad surmise.

Do not on any account be dismayed if the one loved
Demands, through some impossible task, that your love be proved.

No one expects logical behavior from winds and seas;
The Beloved's whims are divinely sanctioned vagaries.

The lover's only freedom is freedom from desire of reward;
If this is too hard, better return home and lay aside the sword.

The field of love is a battleground only for heroes,
For those who are brave against themselves and endure the blows.

It is an advantage also to be a musician:
Serenading the Beloved helps to improve one's position.

Because you are the way as well as the goal, we rejoice;
 Because you are the song, in our hearts is always your voice.

Because you are merciful we pray that our enemies
 May never know our hardships: the miles of dust on our knees

(Since we became footless); the ache of emptiness
 (Since we became headless before your peremptoriness).

Sisyphus had it easy---at least he got his stone nearly to the top;
 We go a yard forward, then there is a crevasse into which we drop.

Tantalus was denied water---but of thirst he had only a slight notion;
 Wine is poured into our cups---and its bubbles become an ocean:

What was a proffered beaker becomes a breaker that dumps us sprawling
 Into the boiling surf with a gutful of salt water to stop our calling.

May our enemies never know our hardships. Yet we rejoice,
 For we were free men who became your slaves out of free choice.

Love delights in green places, in the songs of birds and fountains;
But the lover is led across sandy deserts and stone mountains.

He is sent to regions where the night wind freezes and the noon sun sears
To build a throne for his Beloved and make a garden with his tears.

In farness is nearness, in separation is presence;
And suffering is a sword that cuts away pretence.

Desire draws the lover towards a fulfillment which is separation;
Love drives him apart and on to union's perfect station.

This union alone may be called the Beloved's grace.
All else is thistle-down that little children chase.

But union is death to a man as it is to a bee:
Seek the Beloved's pleasure---and in that become free.

Love delights in green places, where birds sing and flowers dream
Along the banks of tears' meandering silver stream.

Love is lovely and lowly: it runs from high places
 As swiftly as summer rain down a mountainside races.

In the mountain passes of intellect the heart freezes;
 In the valleys of love how sweet are the scented breezes.

Mind toils like a spider that spins a new web every night;
 Love is as idle as flowers that bloom for the Beloved's delight.

Love is faithful to itself; intellect commits treason
 To its own integrity through perverted reason.

Love is a company of banners in the morning;
 Mind, a vain woman at night ignoring her mirror's warning.

Love is a kookaburra laughing at sun-up and day-close;
 Intellect is a violent cock that treads heart and foolishly crows.

Love is lovely and lowly: it seeks hollow places.
 At the feet of the Perfect Master is where God's grace is.

The dark still sea of night breaks into motion and its foam
Submerges the islands of stars. We are far from home.

The plain is treeless and the river bed is bone dry.
Nothing moves in sight and overhead no vultures fly.

We stumbled here in the night as dead men who walk,
Following what seemed the tracks of that one we stalk.

Have we been following our own fancy shadowed on the ground
To this place where nothing moves, where there is no living sound?

Our Beloved is so delicate that silk bruises his white hands.
Would he live here? We have been led on by our own outrageous demands.

The islands of stars have been washed away by the dawn's white foam.
The footprints we followed have been swept up by the winds that
ceaselessly roam.

The day marches up out of the east like thousands of hostile glances.
Where, O Beloved, is there a shield against these terrible lances?

The days wash over one another like waves towards a beach,
And time runs towards a meeting that we will never reach.

Still, now that we have finally abandoned all hope,
Love at least can breathe and not be strangled with desire's rope.

Romeo need not have gainsaid his father, nor Tristan betrayed his king,
If they had been content to serve their beloved, to die to sing.

Man is indeed a strange creature---he embarks on journeys,
When seas and stars wash and swim along his arteries.

He builds monuments so that men will remember his sword's song;
Yet the hand that wielded the sword, to whom did it belong?

No man can draw breath or take thought except in eternal debt.
And to desire that which is not-self brings infinite regret.

Sense turns outward; and man follows it to plunder, to weep, to beseech---
While his heart contains world and beloved, and there is nowhere to reach.

I wish that young swagman Rimbaud could have met this divine Juggler
Who spins the world of our hopes on the tip of his little finger.

He has thousands of other tricks, but he never displays ‘em;
He has come to awaken the people, not the more to daze ‘em .

The real difference between the true Master and the fakes:
The latter dope and rob you; the former illusion’s spell breaks.

There are more spiritual sharks in the world than price-riggers;
There are more guns aimed at your head than are fired by triggers.

Seership through hallucination? But what else could he think,
Child as he was of times that were gathering towards the brink?

His soul longed for a sunlike guru who would quell
The rebellion of dreams, who had nothing to sell;

Who for fame and following did not care a fig,
But just loved. Yes, young Rimbaud would have come in big.

The trouble with this business of illusion is its bright seeming---
The palaces and waters of it on the empty plain gleaming.

The thirst-crazed traveler thinks, This is the Beloved's city---
The end of travail; coolness and ease and dew-lipped pity.

Not to go forward is also to miserably perish
When the sun burns in an inverted aluminum dish.

To go on or not to go on, is equally disaster...
At this point one is ready to meet the Perfect Master:

The Far-traveler, the Journey-completer, the Returner;
The Cradler, the Builder of cities and their Burner.

He brings us mile after cruel mile to meet him on the plain
Of no palaces and waters to build him an arbored fane.

In dryness is greenness; in desolate places the Friend
Who is pilgrim and path and its stations and journey's end.

Water, by being in love with death, gives life to all things;
Desiring absorption in the ocean it flows, and sings.

The song of water is reflected in greenness; it assumes
Incredible tallness in men's hearts where it perfectly blooms.

It is so docile it goes wherever you conduct it;
So raging that it sweeps aside all that would obstruct it.

Its nature is female, it always flows in curves;
Try to grasp it, it eludes you; respect it, it serves.

It occupies the smallest place, yet spreads everywhere:
Its boundlessness can only be expressed by a tear.

As water are the lovers of God---tall in humility,
Forever passing away in eternal stability;

Falling ever at the Beloved's feet, they spring up in their fall---
And springing, singing like giant flowers, they shed perfume on all.

If anyone asks for proof that God exists---let him disprove
His own existence. Let him declare what makes his mind move.

It is not for the lover to prove, but to be.
God save him then from the slightest hypocrisy,

For with that he is both a witless fool and a liar,
A green log smoking making out it is fire.

Mind demands proof of what is entirely beyond mind.
One day it will learn to sit still and not ask, and find.

Whatever one can *say* is but a figure of speech,
Like, The sun rises; The moon sinks; The waves wash on the beach.

Love delights in poetry and parables, of itself it is sure;
Mind demands the prose of logic because it is insecure.

Let the demander question and sort---for trash is his treasure.
The lover has another occupation---his Beloved's pleasure.

I was fishing in the deep pools where the big fish loiter,
When the sun came over the hill and shone upon the water.

The awakened waters broke into smiles bright as lances,
Like the love-lorn cowgirls at Krishna's amorous glances.

I threw down my rod, on the best I had already feasted;
I would go to God's table where the bread of love is tasted:

Where God himself fills everyone's cup to the brim with sweet wine,
And the tales of lovers and heroes are told in measured line.

A man is not meant to labor and eat and sleep alone,
Still less to wrangle with others like dogs over a bone.

One may eat well alone or in company, and yet not dine;
But one can banquet on bread when there is song and wine---

When the secrets of love the gifted singer explores,
And the Master of love and song leads the applause.

I remember distinctly the beginnings of this love
About which it was easy to make vows so hard to prove.

A new moon hung from a blossom-laden apple bough,
And eternity hung in the silence of that *now*.

Presently the stars came out and got caught in your hair.
Then the dawn escaped from your eyes and spread everywhere.

Night followed night of dreaming and loving till the month's half-close,
When the moon came up and stood on the hill like a yellow rose.

You stole from my side sometime during that full-moon night.
When I awoke, my body was shrouded in white.

Gradually the moon waned to a chink in a curtained window;
Then died. And the dark took over to forever continue.

I left my house and orchard and came down to the seashore
Where my grief can be heard by none above the surf's roar.

When my Beloved's face first appeared over the rim of my world,
 Hundreds of flags of praise immediately were unfurled.

When his glance shattered my heart-mirror I lost my identity.
 My permanent address now is, Nobody, Somewhere-adrift-at-sea.

With fair winds and good sailing I may one day arrive at World's End,
 And the Pilot who comes out to meet me will be my Friend.

If you are content with your native place and the job in your hand,
 Don't be tempted to sea toil on the promise of a better land.

There are plenty who will urge you to travel, to 'answer the Call'---
 While they fly the ensign of Kingdom-come on their sitting-room wall.

Easy to be an Odysseus when no Trial by Circe is required,
 No Cave of the Giant, no Journey to Hades---only chants rum-inspired.

For my part, I waited till the sun of love shone over the rim
 Of the wineglass before I unfurled my flags of song for him.

After all, who are the worse off---the warm-housed heart-poor
Or us stumbling through the night towards the Beloved's door?

They pity us because they do not know the poetry of tears;
We know, having lived their way, that their laughter covers their fears.

It is as if the eave-nested sparrow pitied the eagle on the crag
Where the rising sun, while the valley still sleeps, plants his glorious flag;

As if the gregarious violet pitied the rose, alone---
Though it is to her that the golden-throated nightingale makes moan;

As if the loud-sounding drum pitied the flute's sweet voice
Each note of which is love's lips' discriminating choice.

We may never reach our goal, but we have companionship in sorrow;
The heart-poor are alone in their dread of what may happen tomorrow.

Our darkness is full of light; their lit ways are so dark.
Our tears may cause a flood---but our Noah has built his ark.

After the night's rain the sky was an inverted bowl of crystal
In which the kookaburra's laugh was a musical repeating pistol.

The sky fell down in a glittering broken chord,
Each note being a mirror reflecting a face of the Word.

Splinters of light flew into our eyes but did not wound,
And tears, bright as flowers, sprang up and fell on the ground.

A great gentle wind, like the breath of a sleeping child,
Arose and filled every corner of a silent world,

And we had visions of voyages in ships with huge sails
To the Islands of the Sun where song never fails.

Then we noticed that the women had hung their diamonds on the she-oaks,
And that children were forming into choirs to recite Sanskrit sloks.

Then the Silence effaced every image from our minds and hearts,
And a seed of new love was sown that would become our new art.

The tracks we follow lead back to the place from where we came.
We are mighty hunters---but we ourselves are the game.

The Beloved whom we have enthroned in our hearts
Is our own Self--- but of love we suffer the darts.

This is why we are the most foolish men alive:
Out of simple truth a great puzzle we contrive.

It was we in the first place who planted the vine---
Yet we take our cups to another to fill with wine.

We were born men---yet we turned ourselves into misses
Desiring more than anything else a certain Man's kisses.

Here, the 'monotheists' indeed will have a great laugh---
Yet, such is our fare, their food is nothing but straw chaff.

We know all about 'oneness,' but delight in love's game.
They are dry sticks, we are moths--- both fuel for the one flame.

The rains have come and the earth has put out fresh tender shoots;
But our drought continues and gnaws at our slender roots.

The trees have become thousands of praises and sweet cries;
At night our camp-fire burns brightly fanned by our sighs.

We do not keep a fire to boil water and cook a meal:
Its flame reminds us of you---a seeming in lieu of the Real.

Where are the brave songs of the morning we began this trek?
Look at these who were stout men---drift-wood washed up from ship-wreck!

We can hardly recall why we journeyed or where we started from---
Some tale I remember that somewhere out here you had your home.

Ah, if we had never seen your portrait we should not have been misled
By the sort of story that is read to children going to bed.

Since this dry land has turned green, our longing has flourished,
And by the bread of our hunger your beauty is nourished.

From the bush of our burning grief comes the voice of your singing,
But from the ash of our hearts never a phoenix is springing.

We have waited for you through many nights, our souls keeping fast---
We wonder how much of what we have heard are tales of the past.

You brought Joseph and David with you on your compassionate descent---
But Joseph's Egypt was not all famine and David's song all lament.

From our point of view the Children of Moses had it dead easy---
Manna for breakfast each day and a book of laws that read easy.

For Krishna's disciples life was all army games and flute-playing;
The Rose was not, by indifference, the Nightingale's song gainsaying.

And the Buddha's men---robes of honor and the schoolmen's debate
And the leisurely begging-bowl that never had to wait.

But, after all, what did Jesus tell or show his disciples? Our Master
Has opened before our wondering eyes vistas infinitely vaster.

I wish every man the love of a woman beautiful and tender.
 Unless he has first died on her breast, he can never fully surrender.

One must be victorious in order to know one is defeated,
 To appreciate that in dust the purpose of life is completed.

‘The good women for the good men.’ But a man is good
 Only to the extent that he loves God as he should.

The worst men are the guardians of the commonweal
 Who starve women into harlotry and make honest men steal.

Let a man but open his heart to one ray of his soul’s splendor,
 Then God will give him the love of a woman pure and tender.

Then I will station myself all night outside their window
 And praise those holy nuptials from which no sin can grow.

I will sing him as Odysseus from long wanderings returned
 To his faithful Penelope who ever for her true lord yearned.

Nearly fourteen hundred years since the orchard of desire was inspected---
During which time the trees have flourished as though hormone-injected.

Many a tree will have to be cut out by the root,
For progress has produced some exceedingly strange fruit.

Materialism now has its own theology;
Idealism quietly leaves the room with an apology.

It is childish to talk about brinkmanship when we are in the abyss.
Our return from it--God-Man's miracle this time will be just this.

We have reached the lowest point in post-glacial history.
That God will forgive us the violence of it is the greatest mystery.

Not all our tears could wash away our degradation
If God-Man were not already here for our salvation.

After our return from the depths naked, penitent and mute,
We will find him under the Knowledge-tree smiling, playing his flute.

The men of God are kingly men indeed---
Scions of light, not begotten from seed.

Their palaces are huts, their thrones in gutters;
Their gardens need no walls, nor windows shutters.

Easy and yet majestic is their walk,
And parables in pure verse is their talk.

Their drooping eyelids are the gates of dawn,
And from their silence all true songs are born.

Heedless of our homage, for heaven obeys
Their slightest whim, and at their word suns blaze.

Drunken without wine and filled without meat,
The earth herself adores their holy feet.

Behold them! In their ruin is their treasure:
They are the sons of God-Man---his dear pleasure.

Today I looked in the mirror, and saw a dead man's eyes.
A mirror when questioned always faithfully replies.

It's no good thinking that once these eyes were alive and young---
Love requires that we return to stone, from which we have sprung.

Stone is the first stage on the path to dust---so stone-station welcome!
Now there's the chance for the impress of God's feet---and that comes
seldom.

The whole world is in thralldom to material progress.
In the heart's still center is the kingdom I would possess.

It is fitting that the eyes should die first before the breath escapes,
For the eyes invested my Beloved with a thousand false shapes.

My eyes have been two serpents that fed on my sense
And grew fat at my immortal spirit's expense.

Now my mirror has given me some hope. Questioned about my eyes
It answered, Stone-dead.---And a mirror never tells lies.

Nowadays men are concerned with structures of bones,
The bones of machines and buildings—never with thrones.

Yet a man's heart is meant to be the throne of his King.
And his senses five classes of angels ever choiring.

Upward and outward into black silence our spirits thrust;
But God's footprints are only upon the Earth in singing dust.

We would go far, at huge expense, for that which is so near.
Is it because we are driven by some terrible fear?

What is our vast sin that we sweat blood in preparation
For escape into a new Eden of separation?

In that garden, also, there will be one fruit forbidden;
Without love the secret of life will ever remain hidden.

There we will still be hiding from God because of the *fear*.
And all the time God is breathing in our breath---God is so near.

Dawn is a friend who comes to rouse the lover from grief,
And enemy, for from his pain he wants no relief.

Without separation's pain how can he be aware
Of the Beloved's presence in the perfumed air?

The deep night breathes quietly as a woman sleeping;
In the silence of it song's harvest spirit is reaping.

With the rising of the sun the world's day begins,
The day of the market and gossip---the sowing of sins.

In the daylight of the world the lover is like a fish
Hooked and thrown up on the burning sand to writhe and perish.

He longs for the ocean of night with its islands of stars,
And the white hand of his Beloved that heals the day's scars.

In the silence continues the siege of the Beloved's beauty;
And his soul's sigh steals out and goes on sentry duty.

Our tears are a fountain of self-deception, a waterfall
Between us and the Reception being held in the Diamond Hall.

You sent invitations written in gold letters
To us of the lowest stations, neglecting our betters.

We arrive at the open palace gate and cry, We are shut out---
And later accuse the watchman of acting towards us like a lout.

You even sent baskets of fruit and flagons of wine,
Which we found didn't suit our palates so had to decline.

We are more stupid than sheep which balk at an imagined fence,
Or a millionaire with pencil and paper totalling halfpence.

Cattle, when brought to water, stop lowing and start to drink;
We, with your Grace continuously flowing, stop to think.

No wonder, Beloved, you smile at our tears which are a waterfall
Between us in our slums of mind and you in the Diamond Hall.

Put a pig in a drawing-room, they say, and it remains a swine;
And a 'metho' drinker's palate is dead to vintage wine.

They reproach us, Why do you remain living in a slum
When your Beloved, you say, rules a great kingdom?

Little do these respectable ones know of the poor---
Their real lowliness, their great pride; they need no more.

It would be a black shame to ask love for anything but love;
And even to ask that would be a sort of backhanded reproof.

That beloved from whom one may ask favors and gifts
Is not the Beloved who remains through time's huge shifts.

They despise us for our drunkenness, for living in hovels;
We despise that one who for position bootlicks and grovels .

The rich have their pastimes, the learned their books---and that's fine.
For us, the poor, what have we to do but drink wine.

It's a queer lot that fortune has brought together round this camp fire
From different walks in life in a common quest and desire.

To God butcher and banker, poet and plumber are the same
So long as ambition is dead and the heart is lit with love's flame.

All those things which the world arduously pursues as prizes
Are beribboned bubbles of various colors and sizes.

As for painted prophets and false teachers---they are manure
To the roots of God's saints and to lovers whose hearts are pure.

In one drop of love's wine the worlds of the universe swim.
Is it not wisdom then to stake one's life on love's whim?

There is no affair in the world that is not settled by a coin's toss;
At every step one takes the road forks to profit and loss.

To lose love's favor is real loss, to lose the world is real gain;
This is what has drawn these fellows together on this empty plain.

In the Street of Barefoot Lovers there are peddlers of song, clowns.
Dancers and acrobats who have come in from the surrounding towns.

Most of them are drunk, all have failed in their respective professions.
They perform solo, or gather at corners in jam sessions.

They are creators of new and fabulous forms of prayer
Which eventually become the art at which men wonder and stare.

Strung between lamp posts and slung from balconies are flowerpots
Containing botanical gardens and suburban plots.

There are churches and mosques and pagodas and temples
Where spirit is not cowed, but sings to the sound of timbrels.

In them there are no priests, no rituals---only a flame
Burning in a crystal bowl as a sign of love's name.

There is a wineshop of which few know, where a vintner debonair
Sells for a good song, an act or story, a vintage most rare.

In the matter of love and art I have never been a niggard:
That the woman was loved, the poem written, was my reward.

I have never hated a better man; rather I would
Strive to tune my spirit to the pitch and tone of his blood.

What did hurt was when the woman or the poet stooped, for that
defiled them;
But I sweated out the pain of it alone and never reviled them.

Beauty is too precious a thing for jealousy.
Beauty is the goddess that sets a man free;

Sets him free and gives him the direction to the Master's door---
That one who is God and Man, who takes one to the further shore.

She does this at the cost of no small sacrifice---
For a goddess still has her own problems of paradise.

Knowing this, a man cannot but respect art and love, her maids.
Who go before her singing along the paths of secret glades.

In this game of love don't think that you can take a trick.
To begin with, the cards are stacked, then the play is slick.

All right. You get a good hand---and your partner dumps you;
Or you find that a card you held suddenly trumps you!

Switch the figure to cricket---our Master's other favorite game---
You go in to defend your wicket---and return after one ball in shame.

It's just no go. Whatever you do, the call or the ball
Defeats you. The Beloved is all in all.

But one still has to play the game---rich man, poor man, politician, thief,
You can't just sit down in inaction on government relief.

The point is, you are an idiot if you expect to win.
There's only a razor-edge difference between goodness and sin.

That is heaven which you do for your Beloved, and do well;
What you do for yourself closes round you as a prison cell.

These are mature men gathered round the camp-fire tonight,
Men with discriminating palates, trained ears and love-sight.

You cannot serve them any old song, any sort of wine,
They are connoisseurs of vintages, tone rhythm and line.

They have been under a master vintner-poet-musician since childhood;
Their ancestors were all hermit-kings, men of fierce spirit and mild blood.

The qualifications for the path of love are these:
A gale of destruction to oneself, to others a soft dawn-breeze.

When a man can suffer heart's tempests while his forehead smiles
He is fit for sea travel, deserts and mountain defiles.

When he becomes both the fabled lion and lamb at play
He will meet that master who can set his feet on the way:

That master poet-musician who is a seller of old wine
For the price of a love-song that is true in tone, rhythm and line.

In this drought all has died except our crop of griefs;
And it flourishes, each day putting on new leaves.

These leaves are not green, they are bright tongues of fire
That glorify the Name of our heart's desire.

In the acceptance of loss is security:
In the perfection of this is purity.

It is no easy matter for a man to become a child---
One must be a hero not to fight back when reviled.

So small the feet, so long the road to travel;
So weak the fingers, so tight the knots to unravel.

So short the arm to pluck the high sweet fruit;
So weak the purpose even though resolute.

No wonder our crop of griefs flourishes day by day,
And we wonder whether we are even on the way.

Now am I a resident in the street called Love Street,
That river of dust which flows around the Beloved's feet.

Isaiah told the dust-dwellers to arise and sing.
But because I remain in the dust my songs take wing.

To where else than dust would you go to find the lord of hearts---
For dust is cups that catch his blood which drips from the world's darts?

Blood is of the First Supper, which is of time and place;
At the Last is poured the pure wine of the Master's grace.

Our unending sorrow is our reward, for our tears
Enhance the Beloved's beauty---or so it appears.

The truth is our happiness only reflects his bliss;
The lover is the shadow of what the Beloved is.

And where else can a shadow dwell but in the dust?
Of what else can love's singer tell but love's sweet trust?

When, one day, the Master looked at me sideways I saw
Compassion and mercy and forgiveness and---oh, so much more.

That is why I joined these scoundrels who hang around outside his door
With the hope sometimes of seeing him---just that, and no more.

Of course, one day he might ask me to come in and sweep his floor
Or go an errand: that indeed would be heaven---and more.

We do not blame you who give us a wide berth, we deplore
Our own condition: a grain of love to give him---no more.

Oh, that we had great wealth, or talent, or learning's store
To give him fit comforts, to entertain him---and much more.

But ah! last night when the street was quiet and sleep totaled each score
He brought us in and gave us such wine---we desire nothing more.

Now we are dead men, dead men with our eyes fixed on his door,
And hands held out grasping glasses---that he might fill once more.

In Love Street there is the Church of the Sacred Vine
Where the master of ceremonies pours out wine,

And breaks the bread of the Message of Truth and Love:
God alone is, and in him all things live and move.

The altar candles burst into flame at his word,
Revealing the picture of *Christ with Lamb and Sword*.

(But others see *Krishna Playing Flute under Tree*,
Or *Noah in Ark Riding the Waves Wild and Free*.)

The worshippers pay for the holy drink and food
With heads on platters and hearts surrendered for good.

The singer adorns God's throat with a rope of pearls,
And the dancers foot it to a bag-piper's skirls.

The Master pours out a second round of red wine,
And on his dear John's breast his lovely head reclines.

Misfortune is the ingredient in my food that nourishes;
And grief is the water round my song's root, and my song flourishes.

How little do they know who seek wealth and increase of pleasure!
In trouble is health and under ruin is the best treasure.

Without separation how could the Beloved's beauty increase?
My tears are mirrors of loveliness---I pray they never cease.

Even these myriad mirrors are not sufficient to show
All my Beloved's charms, and ever more restless I grow.

It is the restlessness of wind that sustains fire's leaping flame.
I pity those who want comfort and peace---how pale their lives, how tame!

The wind and the shuttling sieve are pipe and drum to the dancing grain;
The Beloved's breath makes the dust dance madly along Lovers' Lane.

A grain from Song's harvest fell in the dust, and this my grief nourishes;
And since my Beloved is pleased with my songs my whole life flourishes.

I would never have troubled about love if love had not troubled me;
I would never be on this raft if I had not been chunked into the sea.

Anyone who enters upon this trackless path of his own accord
Should be shut up in an asylum, with hard labor to earn his board.

When God loves a man he sets about arranging his ruin,
Puts a great pot on the fire for him snugly to stew in.

Then he fishes him out and cools him with a sideways glance
That says, Maybe you'll become my lover---there is just a chance.

The poor fish (he is now neither man, beast nor fowl)
Thinks that world's end has come, and sets up an awful yowl.

This is the beginning of his love-song, a clearing of his throat;
After many lifetimes of attempts he strikes the right note.

Now it is all plain sailing---with only storms and shipwrecks
(For the sake of diversion and other sundry aspects).

I suppose my gallows-humor will not be much relished
By those who like the bare facts of love clothed and embellished.

I am referring to those who prefer tea-talk wayfaring
To the raft and the wave, to blistered feet and sightless staring.

But hasn't Jesus already told them, Not peace, but a sword?
Do they expect less than death from this Man of the Silent Word?

Jesus was God Absolute---but the Same One here now
Must turn over a vaster anti-God acreage with his plough.

By God! this is no time for talking about how sweetly love grew;
If you escape the bombs, don't look back---this Man will be stalking you.

For what else do you think he comes to this rotten muck-heap of places?
Do you think he enjoys our stinking breaths and desire-swollen faces?

When you talk tea-talk about love and the beloved you would own,
Each verb you use is a hammer on each coffin-nail of a noun.

There are men and women. And there is the third sex who wear robes
 of saffron or black---
 Eunuchs, not for the kingdom of heaven's sake, but for belly and
 treasure-stack.

They toil not neither do they spin nor set hand to truck-wheel,
 But they are not as the lilies of the field that had Jesus' seal.

They sow no food-crops; neither plant trees nor build dams nor dig wells
 Nor draw water for field or garden in the long dry spells.

They build no houses or wayside shelters against storm
 Nor with their hands raise up stone to delight and inform.

Never do they take pruning hook and with song loud and free
 Cut away the brambles that choke the knowledge-tree.

They tell not the Name of the living God-Man to the young,
 The pure and eager; rather they poison them with their tongue.

They are neither women in surrender nor men in daring---
 They are the third sex who saffron or black robes are wearing.

Think of all the desire-heated branding-irons of lips that sear
God-Man's cheek. It makes small suffering of thorns, nails and spear.

Then there is the molten metal of false tears that blister his feet
And the protestations and prostrations with intent to cheat.

Small wonder that the Cloud of Grace so seldom breaks and pours Rain---
No one is willing to bear the cross of his own kisses' pain.

The hot stars are cooling to our eyes, but our cool eyes are burning
With millions of desires other than the desire of returning.

We cannot even work out a just and simple economy,
So we bring up our sons for war and our daughters for harlotry.

Our unlove is God-Man's suffering. *Turning* would be so easy
If we did not always pick the wrong fruit from the great knowledge-tree.

How sad is God-Man's journey! He stoops down from his glory for this:
That just *one* is ready for the wedding-night, for its knowledge and bliss.

Instead of handouts wouldn't it be better not to have any poor?
 Instead of locks wouldn't it be better not to have any door?

Childish questions, yes. But I've been wondering did Jesus' lilies
 Set gates up, or hold out a petal for food? But perhaps they were sillies.

They raised banners---their faces---high and marched over the hill
 (But they carried no slogans, they were only playing at drill).

Wouldn't it be grand if there were no poor and no food-clothes donors,
 But all were rich and strove in friendly strife for poverty's honors---

Marching to the City of Love, to the Beloved's palace,
 Sweeping the steps with their eyebrows to force him to show his face?

And he sitting in the Diamond Hall welcoming everyone---
 And his feet white as mountain snow and his face shining like the sun.

From such a world I would never wish to be absent for long---
 Men and women and children like lilies of the field, full of song.

Last evening there was a crescent moon telling me
Of the time of fullness, of perfect poverty,

When I will no longer be a dust dweller in Love Street,
But dust itself kissing, oh, so lightly, my Beloved's feet.

Then the wineshop keeper, seemingly knowing my desire,
Had me called, and gave me wine which lit in my heart love's fire

Then ordered the musicians to tune their drums and strings,
And poured wine for all; and the bird of song took wings.

So we spent the night---I, at last, the seeker who no more seeks.
And now over the house-tops steps the girl with the rosy cheeks.

The morning breeze bears the scent of honeycomb and bark;
From the ocean's rim shoots up the sun's first burning spark.

In a fly's wing-space I see the world I left, the world of pain---
And I brush his hand with my lips as he fills my glass again.

The poverty which is wealth. The darkness full of light.
The mirror, itself nothing, contains love's face so bright.

Those who multiply riches simply do not know they are heaping
Up nothingness within nothing, and that their souls are still sleeping.

In dream they go to World's Fair to dream sell, to dream buy;
But it all vanishes as they change sides with a sigh.

The lowly who are exalted. The slaves who are kings.
The valley adoring the mountain from the mountain-top sings.

The path of love is the shortest distance between two points;
The work of science is in servicing sinews and joints.

They mouth Jesus', Today is enough ---And hoard goods and cash.
The lovers of God spend all on wine; the rest they treat as trash.

Jesus said, Let him who would be the highest take the lowest place.
In emptiness is fullness. In the mirror the Beloved's face.

We urge on our endeavor to conquer the world of the senses,
 Confident as a horseman putting his mount at the fences.

So far we've achieved eggheadedness and animality
 And the singing word lost in abstraction and banality.

We would annex the moon, ride on to the planets---for what?
 We don't know---vaguely, they may have something that we have not.

A cosmic joke! For God-Man opens no wineshop there.
 Wine, life's crowning pleasure, may be obtained only here.

God! How many times have we ridden out towards new horizons---
 And brought back merely slaves and gold to bolster our orisons!

Achievements are all in past tense: the grandeur that was Rome.
 Security now a broken column and a fallen dome.

Beloved, it's a rum go---and a long time between drinks.
 My song comes to a close, and the lovely moon palely sinks.

I dwell in dust and sing, and my song is most sweet;
For although I lie prostrate I do not entreat.

I would not wish to be less than the seasons which wait their turn,
Nor than fire hidden in wood to burst into life and burn.

My Beloved spins the earth on the tip of one finger;
Why should I cry for gifts, he will not forget his singer.

They who ask God to fulfil their desires have no faith in him,
For the essence of faith is to abide the Beloved's whim.

I hold out my cup for him to fill at his pleasure---
Now, or at World's End, it will be the same full measure.

Waiting is easy for me---I spent a million years as a stone,
And then millions more shaping my ears to receive song's golden tone.

Now my waiting is praising, and my praising is sweet,
For although I lie prostrate I do not entreat.

God is all-merciful—but don't expect from him
Kindness according to your own mind's cut and trim.

If he had entirely tempered the wind to the shorn sheep
We would never have become men, but stayed in stone asleep.

Mighty the buffetings from God before Self in stone burst
From its prison to become moss and tree---and suffer thirst.

If we had not tramped the plains with burning feet
We would not have found the Beloved's house in Love Street.

If we had not known the curling wave and the taste of brine
We would not have developed a palate for vintage wine.

The Beloved is all-merciful and compassionate,
Ever concerned about our arrival at true Self-state.

He drove us up out of stone-dwelling, out of leaf, out of sheep.
If he had tempered the wind entirely we would still be asleep.

The income from an industrial complex cannot buy
That which the meanest of God's lovers obtains with one sigh.

The men of the path though ragged have long arms to pluck the high fruit
The mere smell of which the well-tailored are in earnest pursuit.

A 'Degree' is a work-ticket and has nothing to do with learning;
Knowledge begins with the Beloved's glance which sets the soul burning.

There is much grand talk nowadays about nuclear energy;
But even God can be brought low by a lover's threnody.

Let it be recorded once and for all a man's a fool
When he sweats to make a machine and becomes its tool.

Instead of by the length of his arm one is judged by his suit
The wool or fur or hide of which was once the coat of some brute.

Our theories of trade, culture and science and our party line
Begin from our Beloved's glance and end in a glass of wine.

Materialistic progress is our present Pharaoh;
But our Moses has come to demand, Let my people go.

The priests of science demonstrate their magical arts.
But God-Man's word makes their atom-blasts little farts.

Pharaoh withholds the straw, but requires the same tale of bricks;
And orders extra booze for his boot-licking sidekicks.

We come to the Episode of the Divided Sea
And the walled waters collapsing on the enemy.

The film runs on: He has brought us to the wilderness,
And, slave-hearted, we complain, You have brought us under duress.

So we stick up a golden calf the moment he is gone,
In order to enjoy captivity in Babylon;

In order that a poet might compose the Lament,
In order that Jesus God-Man of himself be 'sent'.

Eyeless are we in Gaza, chained as slaves to the wheel
Of progress, with the threat of the bomb for our doom-seal.

The machine was supposed to lighten our work. A dream
That got lost like a little child in the traffic-stream.

Mr. Ford's vision was every family a car.
But the ten-mile-an-hour crawl makes the dell just as far.

But the cruelest of all progress' terrible hoaxes
Was taking music out of our fingers and putting it in boxes.

And now it is coming about that the minimum degree
For the most idiot occupation is a Ph.D.

The little children are forbidden to come to Christ,
For by another set of values their souls are priced.

The strangest of all things is that the treadmill and the doom-seal
Were brought into being and are maintained for the commonweal.

We are the displaced persons of the world, the dispossessed
We present protests and complaints, but no wrongs are redressed.

We are herded into a train which crawls on and on
Past stations we've never heard of towards some Babylon.

Somewhere in the middle of a naked plain the train stops,
And we are ordered out to plough the land and grow crops.

We weep by waters; and our masters heap wrong upon wrong.
Commanding us, Sing us a few verses from your Lord's Song;

A praise of the Lord who will lead you out of affliction.
Behold! the bright noonday sun gives you its benediction.

We remember our brave who died on the battle-field.
Would that they were with us to be our strength and shield.

It is rumored that tomorrow we will go on again
To plough and sow and clothe another piece of this naked plain.

We sat down by the River of Dust and made a new song
In praise of our Lord the Innkeeper whose wine is sweet and strong.

We have been taken into captivity, and we rejoice---
For in bondage we are free and in chains we have found our true voice.

When we came here first we planted a seed of poverty;
And now, watered with our tears, it has become a new knowledge-tree.

Our Master said to us, Sing me a song of the olden days.
And we ordered the stars to repeat their first shout of praise.

After a night of wine and song, when the morning came
The rising sun kissed the hills and they burst into flame.

These wonders, by his compassion, when in no way has our worth been
proved
And we have not yet even begun to love him as he should be loved!

The laws which Moses brought down were lees from the cask of this one
Whose wine keeps us captive by the waters of a new Babylon.

The destination of all roads is the wineshop door.
Some are direct expressways, some wind round the seashore.

Which means that all men sometime will meet the beloved Master;
Which means that all men sometime will be put out to desert pasture.

We have been brought up on the false doctrine of green fields,
Of a small God who answers prayers and increases yields.

The petal-cheeked wineshop keeper has told us that the scriptures
Are rotten bones rotting, food for worms---not for free men their strictures.

The free men, they who have freely embraced dust dwelling,
Hold to the dogma of drink, and Grace's whim-welling.

That this is the true teaching is proved by the fact that the world has
 been drowned
In one drop of the Master's wine, and no trace of it now can be found.

However, my advice is, stick to the road by the seashore.
Delay as long as you can arrival at the wineshop door.

The promise that was in 'Tomorrows' is fulfilled tonight.
Your face is the true form of the one eternal light.

I wander in the cool valleys behind your eyelashes,
And along the white beach of your cheek which the night caresses.

I walk through the laden apple orchard of your breath,
And hang on your brow's precipice between life and death.

Your eyes hide the light that the suns worship without cease;
Your breast is my tumult of waters, and utter peace.

This kiss is the Now of all past and future tendernesses.
The veil in the temple is rent---and your beauty all men blesses.

The wind outside is the voices of lovers in peril---
For their promised 'Tomorrows' this night will not fulfil.

The line and hue of your lips is reflected as the dawn.
I died during the night---and now find I am reborn.

These down-at-heel companions of mine whose beat
Is from dust to the door of the wineshop in Love Street

Are as beautiful as lilies which toil not, nor spin;
And, also as lilies, their hearts have no sin---

For the same reason. Work is not in the line of these fellows;
They are the knights of the Cup, the mighty at bending elbows.

Though easy-going, they are strictly disciplined in duty,
They shoot all that bear not the seal of the Beloved's beauty.

Beware of this battalion which slew the great Fears,
For its weapons were tempered in the water of tears.

They are lilies that have earned their place in the fields
Because they never work nor pray for increased yields.

They are the knights of the Cup, the champions of Song;
They watch all through the night till the sun strikes the sky's gong.

Do not feel too secure in your houses. Though they keep
The rains out, the Word prepares its speaking while you sleep.

People in olden times also grasped Truth's dress in their hands;
Faith reared their towers, and a loose word leveled them with the sands.

When rock cannot bear the burden of love's word, and breaks---
Concrete will not respect honest men's bones more than fakes'.

When the Word's wind (through all God's places) shakes the city in its teeth,
Where will be your Beloved of the radiant smile and perfumed breath?

The unreaped songs and the untrod journeying
Will remain buried awaiting love's next spring.

Fortunate will be those who have only God's feet for roof
When God-Man breaks his silence, and also becomes aloof.

'Gone on holidays,' will be scrawled on the wineshop door.
Inside, there will be two or three left drunk on the floor.

These rags have become too thin to keep out the wind that blows
Down from the mountain where the hearts of the eggheads froze.

On the path of love one must become naked. But this is mere
thread-bareness!
And of the world, rather than of my Beloved, is my awareness.

Truth has ready for each one a coat of perfect fit---
But our bodies are so ill shaped that one can't wear it.

One must serve a Perfect Master through many lives
To get that love-shaped form which on misfortune thrives.

We are increasingly intoxicated with some-whitherness,
And distort our image-of-God shape by wearing a dumb beast's harness.

The only way out of the madness is to take a chance
In dust and on the Beloved's perhaps sideways glance.

Drunkenness is our nature, but sobriety is our duty;
Otherwise how can we ever praise the Beloved's beauty?

The pre-dawn wind billowed my blanket, and I awoke.
And the dust that pillowed my head entreatingly spoke:

Do not brush me from your hair till you reach your Master's door,
So that at his feet's touch I may rise and be dust no more.

He may even (his grace has no limits) give me birth as a rose
To shed my petals along the path where he walks at dayclose.

And (his grace is limitless and covers the absurd)
In God's next advent I may be a praise-throated bird.

Do not laugh (for his grace is endless) if I speak again---
Next time after that I may reach creation's goal of man-pain.

I thought, indeed fancy is often stranger than dreaming.
The next time I woke, the sun's flag on the hilltop was streaming.

I arose and went to the Master's house. Arrived there
He at once ordered me to shake the dust from my hair.

Last night while we slept gentle rain fell over the land.
The valley at daybreak was a crystal cup in God's hand.

If my heart were like this the Master would not stint me wine,
Nor would the rose of my sweetheart's lips my proffered song decline.

Soon love's virtue locked in the orchard will make it fruit again,
But the singer's mouth will utter no new song without love's rain.

Though the pain of singing is too much for the poor singer's heart,
Since the Beloved's glance robbed him of sense he knows no other art.

Honor him with banquets and titles or kick him down the street,
Somehow or other he will find his way back to the Master's feet.

Happy is he when he remains unknown, a dweller in dust
With an empty glass in his hand and in his heart perfect trust.

But when the Master fills it from the crystal jar in his hand,
His song goes as a perfumed breeze over the face of the land.

This morning the dust in Love Street was a stream of flags,
And every scrubby beggar had shaved and patched his rags.

For last night word went through the street that set all afire:
Tomorrow the Master will satisfy our hearts' desire.

Some idiots had dashed off to the surrounding towns
To round up all the down-at-heels singers and clowns.

By the time I got to the wineshop there was a queue a mile long,
Each with an enamel mug in his hand which he knuckled as a gong.

The musicians and singers were belting out a round,
But the sweetest music was the wine-jar's gurgling sound.

The beloved Master's face outshone the rising sun,
And his eyes were seas in which was drowned all sin we had done.

From daybreak to dayclose the thirsty beggars filed by;
And some drank, and shouted, and some passed out on a sigh.

When Dawn tended her rose garden in the eastern sky
I passed along Love Street and heard a distraught one sigh:

Though your house is in this street I am far from your door---
For my tears have become an ocean that has no shore.

What strange tune is this, Beloved, in what mode and mood
That brings your lover to you and puts between a flood?

The moon rose and shone over the winecup's lip,
And, O God---I was adrift like a derelict ship.

Then the wind blew your hair across the sky, and black night
Fell on the tossed waters and covered the moon from sight.

What I thought was a star, came out---but it was your tear
Which hung and burned through the night and took away all fear.

I would leave this raft and swim back to you---but alas!
Now that daylight has come the waters are broken glass.

The eternal Awakener of lovely spring
Has waked all the earth, and hearts and birds and flowers sing.

We the Love Street pavement poets do not lag behind
In praise---praise is our sickle through the garden of mind.

When the garden is desolate of all but one flower,
In that flower's heart we are discerning the wineshop door.

With foreheads on the doorstep we hold up cups to him,
Our Master, to fill or not at his pleasure and whim.

Who, or what, should we hymn but the one from whom was born
(At his whim) men, green earth and white suns in the first dawn?

He transmuted love's tears into dew and stone into fire,
Hearts into song-light and light into holy desire.

Now flowers and birds and hearts of springtime earth awake and sing
To the beloved Awakener of eternal spring.

Unless one takes up the matter of apprenticeship
To love, one will never kiss the winecup's gleaming lip.

This learning is how to demolish first the facade,
Then the whole structure of mind where dog-faced self keeps guard.

There is the way of dust, and that of some Golden Rule;
But mostly with love we think we don't need any school.

Of the first way we have not heard, the second is old hat---
Get out on the tiles son/daughter and learn from the cat.

Don't go to Love Street to the dilapidated shop---
Range the town for your quarry, but look out for the cop.

Of this and like things one could weep gutters of blood
If it were not that God-Man is here, and soon the thud

Of his Word in the rocks will shatter the foundations
Of mansions and hovels and establish love's generations.

When we have become tired of the mind's shiny new toys
I'll seek the adult occupation which manhood enjoys:

The winning to the Beloved encircled by fire
In the castle of heart will be our only desire.

The head of the state will be he who uses his voice
For singing love's praises, not in polemical ploys.

The best business man will be he who can show a loss;
The honored employer, he who submits to a boss.

The wonderful shiny and durable new alloys
We'll seal in space-bins along with all level of noise.

Abiding in the still center with rose-petalled lips'
Love-talk while the nothingness of nothings to nothing slips,

We'll play all day with suns and moons for shiny new toys
Born from the bubbles of the wine that a man enjoys.

There are two things that concern all men: tomorrow's bread
And a star to shine in that darkness we call our bed.

An egg-headed State can never supply these two things;
It bumps along Progress Road in a bus with no springs.

Its sore buttocks it takes to be pains from heart's love-burning
In its goals-glimpsings it thinks soul's track it's discerning.

Eggheads, being eggheads, have very tiny heart-spaces,
And even they are corseted from bulging in places.

Alas! they lead the poets (at arm's length) by their noses,
Promising pay-dirt from planets where rocket bulldozes.

To the mugs (you and me, mate) they promise a paradise
Of girls in bottles to be poured out whenever we please.

Half the world still asks from where to get tomorrow's bread;
And all the world still seeks a star in a dark wide bed.

The wells are drying up, but the mercy of God flows on;
The dust storms obscure the sun, but the shining Word goes on.

Though this may not make sense one need not be an idiot---
One cannot see a minute, yet the stream of time flows on.

If one asserts self, one cannot deny self's creator;
Though one stays outside the theatre, the dialogue flows on.

God *is*; and he is merciful. Then why not rain's healing?
The pupil labors at spelling, but language still flows on.

If you believe in rose, you must believe in that virtue
Which engenders rose for you; though she dies, it still flows on.

Future is already becoming out of this moment;
The debtor is already solvent in time which flows on.

Don't put the Master in mind's dock. If we have to rehearse
Death by dying of thirst, it's because God's mercy flows on.

Don't talk to us about science and spirituality;
That subject is the eggheads' and egglets' partiality.

Our concern is with hunger and love, bread and bed---two vast
Caverns in one small body through which we chase and are chased.

We are iron mouths munching sand and foam and bones
Of sea creatures; our ribs are wrecked spars through which the wind moans.

Hunger is love; and love is nothing but unending hungers...
Don't come near us you science-spirituality mongers!

Go on climbing your mountains till your little hearts freeze---
Leave us before our Beloved on our naked knees.

Go on defining areas of domestic space---
We pull in our belts and rely on the Master's grace.

We know we must die. Let it be through hunger and in love...
You must live miserably on, God's existence to prove.

They have taken us away to a desolate land
In the midst of waste waters, an island of sand.

They laugh, Here you may grow wheat in the sweat of your faces---
For you have told us that in servitude your Master's grace is.

They demand a song; so we hang our hearts on a bough
In the midst of the Tree of Life through which God's winds sigh:

Long ago our hearts were pierced with holes as his flutes,
And the songs they make we offer to him as his fruits.

Strange, our barbarian captors seem touched by our songs---
For they multiply our burdens and increase our wrongs.

Our Beloved, our Master and Friend, is with us---
For the blows and burdens are his benign, Thus and thus.

We have found priceless treasure in this hope-forsaken place:
Nothing now can distract us from contemplating your face.

Just before sunset a beautiful blue cloud snapped the gold chain
Which imprisoned it and poured down a huge, still, warm rain.

The dust was a million mouths that drank up the downpour
And their sweet breath drifted to us through the open door

It had been a long dry, the renascent fields had withered;
For all the first promise and sweat poured, small fruit was gathered.

Many had lost faith and had left the land to work in factories;
And when men never see the stars they forget to pour courtesies.

We poured scorn on old gods, and blood to crimson a new dawn,
And pushed the sky back and back to a point of no return.

Now the rain has come men will pour their hearts into a new mold
And set up a new image of God---a blue cloud rimmed with gold.

There is no sense in affirming or denying God's mercies.
He pours rain; but the light within rain he withholds from our eyes.

The burden of dust is the hardest burden to bear---
Dust that has a heart and nerves and eyes which stare and stare.

Eyes' stare into nothingness, waiting, forever waiting
News from beloved behind curtain, of brother behind grating.

Dust's flesh dully aches. The doctor says, Vitamin lack in food.
How can its food be used when dust is existence without blood?

Mind mirrors messages from beyond the season's coiled scope,
But interest is unengined by sweet unreason's hope.

Dust is the end glory of evolution where actions cease
In resignation to the Beloved---but it knows no peace.

The Beloved's cool, rose-scented breath stirs it to ecstasy---
But its burden is greatest when it dances feeling itself free.

Then grief overwhelms it, ripening it for new birth.
It was dust's weeping in the Great Dark which formed the earth.

When the wheel of fortune stopped at my number I did not ask
 Another turn---it had completed its billion years' task.

When, on that billionth year night, love came to me I did not seek
 Another brow of dreams and honeyed mouth and petalled cheek

I fear that faithfulness will be the cause of my undoing---
 In this dark night I cannot be comforted by other wooing.

Even now I am as an ant under a horse's hoof---
 A safe enough place, but one from which I cannot move.

When our house is destroyed it's certain that we will remain living.
 Why don't men grasp this simple truth and put an end to grieving?

Astronomy's and agriculture's accomplishment is in proving
 That under no circumstances can death quit one of loving.

The wheel of fortune may turn (as in my case) for a billion years
 Before it stops at your number and your true Beloved appears.

The Lord protect us from the false saints of God, all those who slit
Hungry men's penny-purses while mumbling verses in Latin or Sanskrit.

(May God show his great mercy by giving them hard labors
So that they may become worthy to be loved as our neighbors.)

And protect us from politicians whose glib gabble
Gobbles up wheat-ears and leaves the poor to eat stubble.

(May God beat them with little hammers and reap them with sickles
So that they may become pure enough to be song vehicles.)

And protect us from scientists with their dangerous toys---
Grown men with the curiosity of irresponsible boys.

(May God take their hearts out of deep freeze to throb with mighty song
Along with men and beasts and birds and worms and the starry throng.)

The Lord protect us from all devils that incite us to false progress.
(May God reduce us to dust with hands to hold on to his dress.)

Whenever our Master speaks to us millions of flags are unfurled
In hearts and on hills and mountains all over the world.

This is not surprising since he is the sun of creation
And the moon whose bright face inspires the seas' tidal elation.

The really strange thing is that when people's hearts start to open
They don't know it's because their Beloved has spoken.

From his heart-homes scientists and priests have driven God out;
How can they know that an unfolding rose is love's shout?

We, misled by them, have forgotten that droughts, famines and floods
Occur because we have not spoken with love nor obeyed God's words.

So beloved God-Man will speak his great Primal Word again---
The fire of a sword in our throats, on our spirits a healing rain.

Meanwhile his mere conversation unfurls flags everywhere,
Which set old men dreaming and fill young lovers with despair.

I have not yet met one who had not grief engraved on his face,
And everyone I've met longed for the divine Beloved's embrace.

Yet all, all were running as fast as their legs could carry them
Into the arms of distress that was waiting to marry them.

What a strange stage is this world on which is played contradictions,
And the players, both noble and base, are nothing but fictions.

The only thing that is real is suffering---and that only is
Because in our mad pursuit of happiness we fly from bliss.

We hang on by the thread of breath between accomplishment and shame,
Instead of stitching our lives to the Beloved's golden name.

The play goes on scene after scene without anyone quite knowing
Why roses of lips stop singing and sunflower eyes keep on growing.

When, at last, travelling hard, we reach perfect separation,
In that place at that instant is love's final consummation.

I had never reckoned on the Beloved's infinite courtesies
Which mow down the grass of his lovers to make them into tall trees.

I had expected for my garden a sort of sun that would inspire,
Not a moon ocean-born bending down to set a forest on fire.

I had hoped for a drop of some drink that would exalt me to pure gladness,
Not a cup of this wine which has reduced me to absolute madness.

Now, however, I am in love with fire for it creates thirst,
And wine has so metered and rhymed me that I am wholly versed.

I am amazed that men want to climb mountains and to measure space
Rather than make mirrors to reflect the Beloved's lovely face.

My Beloved glanced sideways at me, and in that glancing
I beheld the universes of stars and men dancing.

I had never reckoned on the Beloved's infinite courtesies.
Somehow or other it seems impossible to rise up as far as my knees.

Sometimes I wonder how it was that I wandered into this street
Where each grain of dust is a bell that chimes under the Master's feet,

And upturned, is a glass held out to him to fill
With sweet wine on the occasions of the flow of his sweet will.

How was it that I, a barbarian from a far land,
Unschool'd in love and song received both as a gift from his hand?

In the mountains, it is said, there are great hermit-sages
Who have not yet been privileged to suffer love's sweet rages.

In cities are men of honest learning who are not called
To God's wineshop to buy drunkenness with the coin of verse-gold.

And there are men who in men's service keep themselves poor,
But never in a lifetime are summoned to his door.

Yet I, an ignorant and mean fellow, was led to this street
To mingle my voice with dust-bells which praise the Beloved's feet.

I leave those to desire union who have taken leave of their senses---
The flame of their love is still smothered by the smoke of recompenses.

In dust I sing: that, I conceive, is the ideal station---
A tempered tongue expressing the eye's bright jubilation.

Pleading for union unmans a man; protesting love is absurd,
For the night and the wave will make a mockery of that word.

Times when I turned from the path to take the worm-way of crawl-cry,
I found myself shut out by the steel door of a fragile eye.

There's only one way to overcome the giants and the beast---
Become so much nothing that you're less than Jesus' 'the least'.

When you can hide among the grains of dust, the very worst
That can befall is some dragon's hoof—but at least you'll be housed!

And should this happen while you are watching before the wineshop door,
Rejoice! The Master may call it in and give it space on the floor.

When one's Beloved is truly so, there is no need
To grovel and whine, to importune and plead.

It would be a shame to take one's hovel habits to love's palace,
To make a display of one's meanness in that holy place.

'The good women for the good men,' and God for those who would die;
And neither the heaven nor the Bliss can be won by a lie.

Since fortune has smiled on one in the Beloved's courtesies
One should walk upright as a man and not dig in dirt with one's knees.

The sun has kissed the hills millions of times since one was worm.
And thousands of times one has crossed mountains and weathered
 sea-storm;

And marched out against self to the brave music of the drum,
And toiled to heap up a banquet for the day when the Beloved would come.

The *way* is to surrender to the Beloved with perfect trust,
To walk upright like a man to the exalted station of dust.

There was brave singing in the street last night for the vintner declared
An end to grief's winter and many springtime secrets with us shared.

And many a knight of the cup threw discretion to the winds
And unwound one of those melodies only a lover finds.

By God! but those glances that the Beloved was flashing
Were nut-crackers to our hearts, and floods from eyes were splashing.

How lovely the moon looked as the dark-edged clouds scudded past her
And she emerged like a swimmer from foam to glimpse her dear Master.

The real melody was the wine pouring from the demijohn's throat---
Each singer was a descant recklessly pledging note against note.

Our beloved Master was hugely amused at the loving quarrel
Of each singer with each, to outdo him and win the night's laurel.

When the last cups were drained and song settled into a sigh
Young dawn was scattering rose-petals all over the sky.

One can muddle along with a sort of catch-as-catch-can,
But to win to dust one must be a very warrior man.

Thousands have perished on this path thinking they could travel faster
Alone, than under the discipline of a Perfect Master.

For myself, I have become the slave of him who bound me
To his shining feet which illumine the darkness around me.

He who puts bright songs into my mouth and slakes my thirst with wine,
I cannot regard his lightest word as less than divine.

I went about the city searching for my Beloved,
And the watchmen and thieves set on me and left me as dead.

My Beloved found me and raised me up and took me home
And inquired lovingly about my country and the way I had come.

After I had served him awhile he promoted me to dust dwelling
And set me the task of molding song into pure Name-telling.

It is cold under a rag blanket in the early hours---
 Yet no eiderdown was ever embroidered with such flowers.

In Love Street there is a rose garden where sea and desert meet
 In which swagmen become nightingales who for song's prize compete.

When the Beloved opens his door even the sleepers speak;
 What then of us who have sought him in long vigils---and still seek?

The unlucky ones who travel without a Master enjoy each station;
 We, the fortunate, suffer only the agonies of separation.

Yet longing for union is a web of desire spun
 By a spider-mind; shall a candle go to bed with the sun?

The only way out is to get drunk, and drown---not even try to swim;
 But, by God, even this much doing depends on the Master's whim!

I think of those I knew in penny-farthing prosperity---
 I would give them abundant gold from my present poverty.

Though your Joseph has gone away and your cheeks with hot tears burn,
Do not neglect your mirror---for one day he will return.

Though the sun has fled and the long nights are cold and desolate,
Do not cease to weave a wreath of new songs for love's timeless date.

Your night of bliss was laid down at the beginning of time;
For ages men have labored that they might enclose it in rhyme.

Don't let the promises of that old man Hope turn your young head---
He has only one thing in mind, to bring you to his bed.

Though the orchard seems ruined under the winter hail---
The time must come when each tree wears its bridal veil.

Though drought puts iron bands round the earth and her mouth is
wounded---
The rain must fall that the horn of the wheat shall be sounded.

There is no room for hopes and fears when the issue is certain;
The scene for Joseph's Return is being set up behind the curtain.

Long before the morning stars sang together I started my journey.
A million times have I been born, yet never was I born free.

Citizenship of one form or another bound me to its law,
And now love binds me before the steps to my Beloved's door.

Bondage is the natural state of man, only as Truth are we free;
There is far too much loose talk about freedom which is and will be.

The past weighs us down, the thought of the future fills us with fear---
So we stick to mill-treading and back-slapping and a glassy tear.

Each one of us was with Jesus in his Is-ness
Before Abraham the father of nations was.

The trouble is that travel darkens the mind, and so we have forgotten
That each one of us is the dearly loved son, the only begotten.

You, dear heart, may accept this or not: in my own case I had to start out
Long before the stars sang in order to join the sons of God in their shout.

Since we slew that lecherous old man Hope one nostril
Breathes clearly, we have freed one wing of spirit's kestrel.

Let us now do in Hope's old woman Help that we may
Free the other wing and soar aloft on our way.

Because you can't understand the Master's sayings don't arraign
Him before mind's court of justice; he has at heart only your gain.

He has been back and forth over this road millions of times---
But being a poet he riddles his knowledge in rhymes.

Remember that the disciples of Bayazid were such goats
That in one night of doubt they all turned and cut their own throats.

For God's sake don't venture into this street where swings the axe of love
Unless you are either a lion man or a lady dove.

That, to date, our Master only allows us to dwell in dust
Is because of our shortcoming, we do not yet trust.

The glory of God is expressed in the lover's sigh,
For he is one who longs for death but cannot die.

Miracles are amusements he has left far behind,
Yet his every breath is a healing---for God is kind.

Our faces, even the fairest, are battle-begrimed;
His face, though in the dust, is nightingale-veined and rhymed.

You may abuse God if you wish, and not be admonished,
But if you insult his saint you will surely be punished.

False saints are dung with which God nourishes the true;
The charlatans are legion, the genuine are few.

The false fill your ears with many words and your hearts with vain hope.
The only way to strangle these devils is with a loose rope.

The true saint seeks no following, he longs only to die;
The nightingale of his soul sings its whole song in one sigh.

Oh, for that grand day when the bones of mind have crumbled to dust,
And the flesh of heart has been shredded to pure song-stuff without the
least lust!

My soul will sing on each exhalation of your sweet breath
And on each inbreathing nestle back to your heart in desired death.

Only those who live in intellectual slums
Of creeds and hypotheses beg mere angels for crumbs.

We who have been blessed with the Beloved's glance neither hope nor
repine,
But are occupied with the matter of mirrors and the commerce of wine.

Our singing---still staved in flesh and barred by bones---is to entertain him
Who published his Song of Creation as the worlds of his whim.

Light-speed and sun-pulse are but metronomic indications
For love's evolutionary theme and its involutory stations.

And so I await the grand day when mind has crumbled to dust,
And heart has been shredded to pure song-stuff without the least lust.

Though winter has caught the world and your heart in its iron grip,
Do not let your faith's hold on your beloved Joseph slip.

Your love was a bright thing when you sat at night making his coat,
And your heart tugging gently at anchor like a tide-borne small boat.

You had dyed the stuff with the color of love which is bright flame,
And you stitched it with the thread of your breath and the needle
of his name.

How handsome he looked in his coat in the mirror of your eyes,
How charming and considerate in the light of your courtesies.

That is not love which flourishes and fails with the seasons---
In presence is whole-tissued, in absence is full of lesions.

Joseph has the affairs of all Egypt in his care;
Has he not left you his locketed brightness to wear?

But if you want your Beloved always to be present,
You yourself never for a moment must be absent.

These songs I sing I assure you are not of my choice,
They are because my silent God delights in my voice.

He is the lovely Rose which teases its nightingale
Into endlessly repeating love's endless tale.

There is nothing concerning love that anciently was not dealt with,
Yet each succeeding age must needs produce its own verse-smith.

The great poets of old were all dust dwellers begging wine;
Though I beg, I am not of them---I but record and define.

If my clear definitions cause my critic to stammer,
Let him cool himself in the lake or beat his head with a hammer.

My Beloved is lord of song, and once he wept a tear
At the turn of one of my lines woman-lipped and eye-clear.

In the end all words turn out to be acts of violence
Which are weighed, and forgiven, in beloved God's silence.

The light of poetry has lit all language-camps;
It is time for it to burn in modern English lamps.

But first we will have to chuck out the embalmed muse from its show case
And set our sights on the target of the Beloved's living face.

If the muse were flesh and blood and we knew her nakedly,
That would be an error the Master could correct easily.

There is no point in pilgrimaging to some distant shrine
When in our own city there is a man selling vintage wine.

Jesus ousted Dionysus because phylloxera had spoilt his vineyards.
And Venus because her hair had lost its sea-tang and smelt of spikenard.

One's heart must become a sunflower which turns to the source of light---
A rim of yellow petals round a hive of pregnant night.

When gardens of such flowers have been seared and begin to turn into mold,
Someone is given a license to mine a new field of poetry's gold.

The ship is sinking, but no one can tell the captain,
He has left the bridge and locked himself in his cabin.

The first mate writes letters patching up family wars,
The bosun mumbles, the purser recounts cricket scores.

The crew tie flags to lifebuoys and chuck them into the waves.
The flags bear messages such as, God is love, and, He saves.

The fish, singly and in pairs, come up to the surface,
Read and form into circles on the wake's scarf of lace.

Why do men ever sign up for long sea voyages---
Is not God in small houses and picture-book pages?

I am by nature a landsman, a lover of quiet streams;
Somehow or other sea and ships got woven into my dreams.

Now this ship is sinking, and, strangely, it seems no disaster.
Men also die in houses---why not at sea with the Master?

All that I have proved up to now is that I have as much
Wisdom as most fools, and more than those who don't know they're such.

This is the real knowledge I have gained after many years
Of wineshop companionship and weeping a sea of tears.

So I have shed my fears, knowing that a drunk who is poor
Is richer than the mighty who are kept outside the door.

Again, I say, better through poverty to lose one's health
Than to dislocate one's shoulder stretching out for more wealth.

A pinched belly is no hardship when there is wine in the head;
And love on the pavement is better than a too wide bed.

The world is divided into two classes of asses:
Those with spectacles seeking love, those who know it through glasses.

But far, far beyond these is the willing slave who sweeps
The wineshop floor with his eyebrows and the Master's order keeps.

When in the Great Darkness the desire for knowledge surged,
From the light of that Whim the dawn and the stars emerged.

Then I and the other sons of God had to hurry up
To join the stars' song with our shout---and each fashion a cup.

Alas! alas! The shout died away into a groan
As each of us with his brightness got locked in dull stone.

Only God knows how long it took the hammers of sun and the fingers of rain.
To release me from that prison and bury me in fresh pain;

How long to complete all the evolutionary stages
And to record in my flesh the history of those ages;

How long from the first shout of love till now to fashion my cup for his
wine's grace,
To fashion my song-mirror to reflect some likeness of his beloved face.

Beloved! I am too weary to continue further this journey---
I will stay here in this dust singing and leave the rest to your mercy.

How at young Dawn's clear call my spirit used to leap!
 Now I draw the blanket closer and would sleep and sleep.

The world is words, and words are pellets of lead on my skull,
 And my brain has become as lead---as heavy and as dull.

These singers are parrots screeching news about Kingdom-come,
 And to give senselessness rhythm some fool keeps beating a drum.

Two processions pass: one, To promote it; the other, To ban it.
 Our beloved Master is the world's pain sculptured in granite.

Was it yesterday or last year that we were sitting on the wineshop floor
 Singing like the morning stars, and like the sons of God shouting, Encore!

That was the time when our spirits travelled faster than light,
 And we could cover the universe of song in a single night.

I could sleep the whole world's bedfuls of sleep and still reap
 The abundant harvest of all its sowing of sleep.

I who was one of the sons of God now dwell in dust;
God is the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Just.

My shout (with the other sons) was my act of separation;
Reunion would require an immense journey to reach self-abnegation.

And beloved God covered my nakedness with loving care
And sent me out to earn bread through sweat and song through despair;

Promising me a distant garden and the voice a nightingale
And a moonlit night to tell to the rose of his heart journey's sweet tale.

Beloved God has kept his promise---and the time has not been long
From the cry of that leave-taking and his listening to my song.

The silver fountain murmurs and the breeze is scented with pine;
At the end of each song my Beloved fills my cup with wine.

God is the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Just:
He transmutes fire into dew, and dew into singing dust.

The world is being run on vogue words, clichés and outright lies;
And every virtue must be prostituted, or no one buys.

In half the world's bellies the song of wheat is not fulfilled,
And the cry in the dark of the bed for light cannot be stilled.

Everyone knows in his heart that Godhood is his ultimate goal,
Yet every year countless shrines are built to Molock and Baal.

We don't need the seas to sing us our high destiny,
Nor lightning to write it for us across the sky.

Trying to get through above the noise level has made the angels hoarse;
The Christ-figure above the advertisement hoardings hangs on the Cross.

Until the Word in the heart becomes the chime of a bell,
He may be a good fellow---but all will not be well.

But God-Man is ever merciful and compassionate:
He has dammed back his Grace, and set a wall against hate.

There is a high lake in the snowy mountains to which I would airlift
 All sons of bitches who mislead simple people by their gab's gift.

There I would strip them and dip them in the clear waters to purify them
 And bid them walk home; the march, and love, would, or would not,
 revivify them.

What a fine world it would be if all the sons of bitches became sons of God,
 To join in the stars' song and labor lovingly towards the whim of his nod!

What a fine time we would have! What grand fiestas
 To stitch the old fear-wounds and heal the heart-blisters!

But think of the queues stretching across the world to the Beloved's door!
 But God's vineyard would be vast, and there could be no limit to the wine
 he could pour.

Think of the poet-musicians and dancers all competing
 For the smile of his eyes and the wave of his hand in greeting!

At work, craftsmen and statesmen would exhibit new love precisions,
 And, 'There but for grace goes---' would determine all legal decisions.

I am being killed by millions of beaks of words pecking at my brain.
 Heaven is a place where words are few and soft---but heaven is man's bane.

No matter how much I desire a quiet life, I know it is escape;
 The vine is not fulfilled in its leaf, but in its grape.

Perpetual drunkenness is the only sane way of living,
 The only way out of recurring hoping and grieving.

The road to the divine wineshop skirts heaven and ploughs through hell---
 Even that of built-in-obsolescence and the fast sell.

There is no place left where a man can build a quiet home.
 Noah has built a Shelter to save a few from the Bomb.

Because of the state of the world I once wept a great flood
 Which I had to cross to come to my Beloved who is my God.

Now love-weeping has weakened my will and I cannot ward off the voices
 Which utter no *words* at all, but are dull hard wood-pecking noises.

I would wander at night along a wide, white empty beach
Glistening under a rising spent moon, beyond voices' reach.

But how without head can I find that desired quiet place,
And without feet walk into your infinite embrace?

How gladly I first set out on this journey to dust!
But stone is so hard and strong---where to get stronger trust?

Storms have not worn down this manshaped stone by a skin's thickness;
Love is so huge and slow despite its first lightning quickness.

Stone alone was endured---but *this* stone strung as a violin?
No one at the time knows that such could be the wages of sin.

It was bad enough the disaster of love's first lightning flash---
But what about that glance of release when all the worlds will crash?

The Beloved smiles: Some difficulty in patience you are finding?
Don't give up now; soon I will begin the crushing and grinding.

It is not for memorial's sake alone
That men hew likenesses of men from stone.

Stone was the first form God took towards becoming men,
And men must become stone to become God again.

Stone is the last stage before attainment of dust-state;
Once this is reached there's only a million years to wait.

Becoming one's self is the longest ranged of projects---
One has got much further out than one suspects.

Never mind, the stars have yet to arrive where one is---
Attainment of man-state is their concept of bliss.

Crawl on hands and knees---if you can't walk---to Love Street.
Safety is not in numbers but at the Master's feet.

Should even your coat become stained with one drop of wine,
The pleasures of a permanent heaven you would decline.

We have all been faithful to Cynara in our fashion:
To our woman, our work, art, science, play---to each passion.

Yet we have failed her, and she us, because we made her an end---
An insupportable burden to each---instead of our friend.

We have put the poor girl up on a pedestal, serving
Her as God with service ever faithful---ever swerving.

She never meant her wine in place of that which the Master serves,
Nor her kisses more than music plucked from diapsonal nerves.

All this soul searching that goes on, all these textures of bitter-sweet---
Dump them in a dustbin and go search your city for Love Street.

Inquire of the dust---it hides the Beloved's feet from all eyes
That have not been opened by the rites of wine to love's mysteries.

When our true Beloved becomes the only object of our passion,
Even beautiful Cynara desires to serve us in her fashion.

When the screen of day was slid aside revealing night's peacock-eyed
tapestry

I took up my post of prayer---remembrance of my Beloved's courtesy.

Not desiring anything, mind fasting, heart content,
The time from dark to dawn was an eternal moment.

At some point in this nothingness a tear welled up and fell in the dust
And split, and I was carried to the Master's door by love's thrust.

He was sitting in the doorway enjoying the rose-scented breeze
From the garden of his lovers' hearts, and its harp-like melodies.

With his permission I brushed the dust from his feet with my eyelashes,
And there was a roar in my ears of surf that on a white beach crashes.

He smiled and stroked my head, and my head burst into flame,
And I began to understand that Mercy is God's chief name.

When I came back I found I was still at my post of praise
With an empty wineglass in my hand which caught the sun's first rays.

How simple this business of love seemed to us at first!
Wine of kisses and pearls of tears---now blindness and thirst.

My face is bloodless because my once stout heart is choked with grief;
The dawn breeze that once brought news of your hair has become its thief.

Do whatever the Master tells you, though the law forbids;
God never intended law to be put under love as skids.

On this fearful voyage who is not thinking of home---
With the bell clanging and the decks awash with foam?

The ship shudders at the waves' thud and lurches through the black night.
What can the fireside enjoyers ever know of our plight?

Through self-centeredness I have acquired nothing but shame;
My eyes smart with the smoke that smothers love's clear, bright flame.

'If you really desire the Beloved to be present,
Let the world go---and never for a moment be absent.'

It was my heart and hands that brought me to the wineshop door;
But my head and feet our respectability would restore.

Are you content, they say, not to cut your name in durable stone?
Better, I reply, the immortality of scented dust wind-blown.

The greatest shame would be a monument our Beloved never noticed;
Dust, at least, can sing on the wind and boast: His feet I once clung to
and kissed.

Become headless and footless, the Masters of the path say,
Give both to the Beloved's service if you would enter the way.

Yet I thank you, feet, that suffered the stone-strewn plain,
And you, head, that always reckoned every loss as gain.

It is more comfortable to be airborne than to be locked in proud stone
That the sun's hammers will break and rains' rakes will level for grass
to be sown.

Listen! my friends, how sweetly our nightingale tongue sings to the rose:
Our history will be published wherever the wind of God blows.

The whale-way is unending, and the nights on the wide plain are harsh;
But fear sits on affection's fences and there is much binding in mood's marsh.

Whether one's flesh feeds fishes, turns to dust or becomes green sod,
The journeys from now to then will be but a crying to God.

Our cherished persons are masks we put on to take off,
And at each Curtain fools applaud our acting, or scoff.

Yet take courage O my immortal soul,
Your hardships are millions of stars' immediate goal.

One comes to realize that one has been guilty of every crime;
Best to hold one's accomplishments as trash under the broom of time.

God is deaf, or if he hears, has a memory like a sieve;
But for the slightest service the Master never neglects to give.

The journey to the beloved Master's door is the best pilgrimage;
If one faces bravely the hardships of the way he will give one courage.

My grief is so deep and my trouble is so wide that one tear
Has become the five oceans across which the ships of the world steer.

From the beginning of time I myself have been my own goal,
Yet I have done nothing but serve time and get released on parole.

The whole creation has become for me an out-of-time joke
Which must be suffered in time until time's final stroke.

Love is beyond scythes and sickles and the winnowing wind;
But love is not for the careless heart unschooled and undisciplined.

Love may not be stormed, nor demanded, nor taken in haste---
It is a gift from God to those who are drunken and chaste;

A gift for those who grieve, yet are at pains to entertain
Their Beloved with songs and jokes in season, and do not complain.

If you ever think that what the beloved Master says is wrong,
It means that in the fellowship of beggars you do not yet belong.

Even after obtaining residence in Love Street
The journey seems unending---each breath is so indiscreet.

Obedience is impossible; and one is always caught
Off beat and off pitch in the song of this one one had so sought.

But this isn't surprising since all the galaxies dance
In the light and rhythm of the divine Beloved's glance.

Amazement seizes one, and the earnest desire for death,
Because one cannot love truly for the length of a breath.

To think of union is madness; and for what else could one ask
But a change of habitat and a slightly different mask?

I know I was mad in the first place to have entered this street:
My eyes were led by my nose which trailed a scent so magically sweet.

This scent was compounded of hints of wind and hair and lips---
The same, after all, which sets other men sailing in ships!

Now am I also with my face to a wall, Raferty, aplaying music unto empty
pockets;
Eyes without light---not blind as you were, but stone of stupor sunken in
sockets.

Such has been the fate of poets in all ages. No wonder that on the whole
as a tribe
---And in this machine age more than before---we are the butt of ridicule
and jibe.

We should have taken up weapon-improvement or designing architectural
oddities,
Instead of being beggars at doors for love---for love is in shortest supply of
all commodities.

No wonder we take to drink, and in drunkenness are unashamed---
For in wine is nearness to our Beloved, and, drunk or sober, our way of life
is blamed.

What can the easy-talkers with their heaped tables and air-conditioned
and companioned sleep
Know of our plight who plough and sow but no golden harvests ever reap?

Let them condemn us if it pleases them---we, being poets, have always the
last word:
We can make cradle songs for mothers and equally well forge a keen sword.

What does it matter, Raferty, that we play unto empty pockets,
That we must go our way by the light in our hearts because our eyes are
stone sunken in sockets?

This piece of ground that I have cultivated with much sweat
Yields me a harvest of straw with no ears of golden wheat.

Which, of course, is my blessing---for with labor's returns
The eye becomes fat with hope, and with tears no longer burns.

Also, when one's belly is empty, wine has more effect;
And without drunkenness one courts the disaster of respect!

Many a young lover has been ruined by success---
His heart does not get curbed by the barred-bit of distress.

This heart-crusher, our Beloved, only loves thin-necks---
With special favor shown to survivors from shipwrecks.

If you would not increase the lovers of God death-rate,
Then take up Science or Art or work for some Welfare State;

But when on some summer night scented and magical
Your soul cries out for love---you will obey the ancient call.

No one knows the pain of stone---its dull dream and slow lust.
Yet this is the halfway stage from man to singing dust.

No one could endure this state but for the Beloved's smile
Supporting, and urging one on mile after static mile.

This non-travelling is what is called the spiritual *way*
By which is made living the image which God wrought in clay.

The moon rose tonight in all her beauty, yellow and round,
And I wept for the chains of distance with which she is bound.

Nearness and farness: these are the only two words
That make sense to the lover: kisses and wine, and swords.

I could not endure distance if my Beloved were not near.
But the nearer I draw, the further away does he appear.

Then suddenly he is beside me pouring wine between my stone lips.
And in a moment the night and the pain are gone. How quickly time slips!

All lovers are poets: only some have voices and some do not.
They are the Life-tree's sap thrusting beyond materialism's rot.

They are flags of innocence above the marshes of corruption.
They are white sails on the shark-infested waters of religion.

Their purity protects them from the false, the outworn and the shoddy,
For they woo a divine beloved though they imprison him in a body.

Give us time, Beloved, give us time to rightly read and obey your sign---
For you yourself have said that true vision is only in your gift of wine.

Give us one drop to make a flame in the dark of our trouble;
Give us one glass and we will reduce the temple to rubble.

If now we are intoxicated with some fair face,
Your Word will sing us clean and prepare us for your Grace.

All lovers are poets; and poetry is the state of perfect trust.
In the end the green sap, the flags and the sails turn into singing dust.

Since I cannot remember one moment of my immense journey,
Time is an aberrative viewpoint having no reality.

Time is present, only in absence from one's Beloved;
And in the magic of one glance absence itself is removed.

There remains only the waiting for the bestowal of Grace,
And that waiting, being an act of love, is beyond time and place.

To desire union is to become again time's slave,
And time puts a shovel in one's hand to dig a grave.

Waiting is really resting in the Beloved's pleasure;
Self-desire blinds one into accepting trash as treasure.

The Pearl of selfhood which lies on the Truth-ocean floor
Is already in the hand of him who seeks no more.

Until the timeless act of Grace the Master, ever benign
Encourages us in songship with little cups of wine.

When the sun flew his flag from my house-top, the bird of my throat
Soared aloft into the empty morning on its wildest note.

At that moment poets and angels did me obeisance,
And the word of today announced tomorrow's renaissance.

For this new lovely song a billion years I had toiled
With oceans of ink, and continents of paper had spoiled.

By God! there is more to a song than wild horses of words made tame;
One must sew up one's lips with the thread of the Beloved's name.

Yet there are many who still talk about the poet's craft!
Shove them out to sea on a sail-less and rudderless raft.

There was disaster in heaven last night when the Master filled my cup,
And the ranks of angels and past poets cried in grief for one drop.

By the time the sun sang from my house-top his first golden note,
My spirit was a snuffed candle's smoke that had become a throat.

There will come the day when I shall go forth in love and trust
As a bride to my Lord Myself's house in the Street of Dust.

He-myself has promised me this final consummation,
Ending this impenetrable night of dull stone's station.

I see the world of creation as a vast ocean
Escaping from itself, yet trapped in its own tidal motion.

Across the black waters shines my Beloved's glorious face
As a sun newly risen, compassionate, shedding grace.

If I did not believe he is my own reality
I could not trust my Beloved's huge prodigality.

I have hoisted the seven-hued rainbow as my banner,
And bound myself with indentures to the trade of dust's manner---

So that on that glad morning when I go forth as a bride
Nothing shall ever take me from my Lord Myself's side.

52 After all, who are the worse off---the warm-housed heart-poor
53 After the night's rain the sky was an inverted bowl of crystal
147 All lovers are poets: only some have voices and some do not.
128 All that I have proved up to now is that I have as much
7 All the world loves a lover; from his lips their song is sung.
14 A poet is a man condemned to exile
20 A scientist is an immigrant from outer space
40 Because you are the way as well as the goal, we rejoice;
15 Being in mid-ocean it's no good bleating like a ruddy goat;
62 Dawn is a friend who comes to rouse the lover from grief.
93 Do not feel too secure in your houses. Though they keep
104 Don't talk to us about science and spirituality;
22 Drunk again! cried the hag Respectability.
143 Even after obtaining residence in Love Street
27 Everyone thinks he is the burden-bearing title-holder.
87 Eyeless are we in Gaza, chained as slaves to the wheel
56 From the bush of our burning grief comes the voice of your singing,
84 God is all-merciful---but don't expect from him
130 How at young Dawn's clear call my spirit used to leap!
12 How can you even think of yourself as a poet
16 How easy was wayfaring with the crackling fire mocking
139 How simple this business of love seemed to us at first!
18 How simple was this matter of love in the beginning---
134 I am being killed by millions of beaks of words pecking at my brain.
83 I dwell in dust and sing, and my song is most sweet;
48 If anyone asks for proof that God exists---let him disprove
112 I had never reckoned on the Beloved's infinite courtesies
111 I have not yet met one who had not grief engraved on his face,
114 I leave those to desire union who have taken leave of their senses---

73 In Love Street there is the Church of the Sacred Vine
79 Instead of hand-outs wouldn't it be better not to have any poor?
67 In the matter of love and art I have never been a niggard:
66 In the Street of Barefoot Lovers there are peddlers of song, clowns,
70 In this drought all has died except our crop of griefs;
68 In this game of love don't think that you can take a trick.
50 I remember distinctly the beginnings of this love
37 Iron plains, and then sea-stretch to new desert lands---grief's growth.
76 I suppose my gallows-humor will not be much relished
118 It is cold under a rag blanket in the early hours---
136 It is not for memorial's sake alone
23 It is the season of tiredness. Even the stones
65 It's a queer lot that fortune has brought together round this camp fire
31 It turns-out that in one thing anyway the Bible is right;
140 It was my heart and hands that brought me to the wineshop door;
49 I was fishing in the deep pools where the big fish loiter,
131 I who was one of the sons of God now dwell in dust;
57 I wish every man the love of a woman beautiful and tender.
45 I wish that young swagman Rimbaud could have met this divine Juggler
75 I would never have troubled about love if love had not troubled me;
135 I would wander at night along a wide, white empty beach
106 Just before sunset a beautiful blue cloud snapped the gold chain
80 Last evening there was a crescent moon telling me
96 Last night while we slept gentle rain fell over the land.
120 Long before the morning stars sang together I started my journey.
26 Long hair or shaved head, clown's paint, tongs, bowls and rosaries
41 Love delights in green places, in the songs of birds and fountains;
42 Love is lovely and lowly: it runs from high places
4 Love loves not those whom love fattens, but makes destitute.

86 Materialistic progress is our present Pharaoh;
74 Misfortune is the ingredient in my food that nourishes;
142 My grief is so deep and my trouble is so wide that one tear
58 Nearly fourteen hundred years since the orchard of desire was inspected---
146 No one knows the pain of stone---its dull dream and slow lust.
61 Nowadays men are concerned with structures of bones,
144 Now am I also with my face to a wall, Raferty, aplaying music unto empty
71 Now am I a resident in the street called Love Street,
123 Oh, for that grand day when the bones of mind have crumbled to dust,
117 One can muddle along with a sort of catch-as-catch-can,
63 Our tears are a fountain of self-deception, a waterfall
11 Poets are queer fellows who go to a lot of trouble
64 Put a pig in a drawing-room, they say, and it remains a swine;
17 Seeing us downcast the Master said, Twelve years of depression isn't much
148 Since I cannot remember one moment of my immense journey,
21 Since it is the Beloved's breath which sustains the creation,
10 Since sleeplessness has befriended me I have begun to admire the stars---
121 Since we slew that lecherous old man Hope one nostril
113 Sometimes I wonder how it was that I wandered into this street
39 The beauty we see around us is a reflection
24 The Beloved is kindness itself, he grants every prayer.
107 The burden of dust is the hardest burden to bear---
43 The dark still sea of night breaks into motion and its foam
44 The days wash over one another like waves towards a beach,
90 The destination of all roads is the wineshop door.
99 The eternal Awakener of lovely spring
35 The evening pianos have faltered into silence----because of love.
122 The glory of God is expressed in the lover's sigh,
85 The income from an industrial complex cannot buy

126 The light of poetry has lit all language-camps;
109 The Lord protect us from the false saints of God, all those who slit
59 The men of God are kingly men indeed---
28 Then there is the Law---the Law of unlove which binds;
81 The poverty which is wealth. The darkness full of light.
95 The pre-dawn wind billowed my blanket, and I awoke.
91 The promise that was in 'Tomorrows' is fulfilled tonight.
55 The rains have come and the earth has put out fresh tender shoots;
6 There are many gods and one God. How shall we find him?
77 There are men and women. And there is the third sex who wear robes
102 There are two things that concern all men: tomorrow's bread
133 There is a high lake in the snowy mountains to which I would airlift
116 There was brave singing in the street last night for the vintner declared
150 There will come the day when I shall go forth in love and trust
69 These are mature men gathered round the camp-fire tonight,
29 These are not the times for the clean word, the straight sentence;
92 These down-at-heel companions of mine whose beat
94 These rags have become too thin to keep out the wind that blows
125 These songs I sing I assure you are not of my choice,
127 The ship is sinking, but no one can tell the captain,
54 The tracks we follow lead back to the place from where we came.
46 The trouble with this business of illusion is its bright seeming---
103 The wells are drying up, but the mercy of God flows on;
141 The whale-way is unending, and the nights on the wide plain are harsh;
132 The world is being run on vogue words, clichés and outright lies;
105 They have taken us away to a desolate land
78 Think of all the desire-heated branding-irons of lips that sear
97 This morning the dust in Love- Street was a stream of flags,
145 This piece of ground that I have cultivated with much sweat

36 This salt waste, and a sky that is the mirror of our grief---
38 Those whom we love now soon we will have to be leaving;
5 Though fate a thousand times makes you a pawn in its game---do not give up:
124 Though winter has caught the world and your heart in its iron grip,
30 Though you have remained aloof we have not sought other shrines;
119 Though your Joseph has gone away and your cheeks with hot tears burn,
60 Today I looked in the mirror, and saw a dead man's eyes.
13 To love is something other than what the word-mongers say.
100 Unless one takes up the matter of apprenticeship
47 Water, by being in love with death, gives life to all things;
88 We are the displaced persons of the world, the dispossessed.
137 We have all been faithful to Cynara in our fashion:
34 We have climbed up out of the pit of stone, of worm, fish, bird and beast
33 We have come to understand that whomever God loves he ruins.
8 We have stolen our eyes to admire the passing clouds,
1 We have waited all night for you, and now the dawn is come.
3 Well have you called yourself the Ocean of Mercy---
89 We sat down by the River of Dust and made a new song
82 We urge on our endeavor to conquer the world of the senses,
2 What God or gods or men will care to hear our tale---
32 When a man pursues the secrets of the things contained in space
98 When Dawn tended her rose garden in the eastern sky
110 Whenever our Master speaks to us millions of flags are unfurled
129 When in the Great Darkness the desire for knowledge surged,
51 When my Beloved's face first appeared over the rim of my world,
72 When, one day, the Master looked at me sideways I saw
115 When one's Beloved is truly so, there is no need
138 When the screen of day was slid aside revealing night's peacock-eyed
149 When the sun flew his flag from my house-top, the bird of my throat

108 When the wheel of fortune stopped at my number I did not ask
101 When we have become tired of the mind's shiny new toys
19 Who can gauge the mind of God, or sound the depths of love?
25 Worldly man or wanderer are the same to us
9 You warned us that on this path was nothing but pain,

For information concerning other books by Francis Brabazon, write to Meher Baba Information, Box 1101, Berkeley, California, 94701.